

it is the behaviour that a
system tends towards
and encourages that
needs to be understood

/ James Saunders

/ 2021

it is the behaviour that a system tends towards and encourages that needs to be understood (2020-21) is a piece that explores the way individual decision-making can invigorate community action to change a local or wider environment.

The title is drawn from Owen Jones's *The Establishment* (2015), in which he notes how 'an ever more unequal distribution of wealth leaves those with power feeling that they have every right to even greater slices of it'. By focusing on a localised decision-making process and distribution of resources and agency, the resulting piece evidences the priorities that emerge from the players as a group and how they might shift over time. The aim of the piece, socially, is to explore how placing decision-making power in local levels of social organisation (individual players, immediate neighbours) might lead to broader consensus. It focuses on participatory decision-making instead of representative decision-making where power is ceded to selected others.

The piece involves players verbally cueing selections from a pool of material to create connections with each other, with other cues modifying the way the material is played. Players can give cues themselves and respond to those of others in order to investigate how concerted activity might emerge.

At a time where communities are being separated, divisions are emphasised, and autocratic government is prevalent, my hope in this piece is to explore how people might work together at a local level to generate change rather than have it imposed on them by external forces.

large mixed ensemble (at least 15 players)

duration: variable (ideally at least 20 minutes)



Commissioned by Neue Musik für Alle e.V. funded by the Ernst von Siemens Music Foundation.
First performed by KNM Campus Ensemble with CoMA ensembles from the Netherlands and UK at KNM campus days, Klangwerkstatt 2021, Haus Bethanien, Berlin.

RESOURCES

each player needs:

a pitched instrument

and at least one of these items where available:

cardboard takeaway coffee cup(s)
surface (any material, ideally a different one for each player)
bow
object(s) (for bowing)
polystyrene block(s) (preferably with large surface area)
paper (a few sheets, any type and size)
harmonica (tuned in C)
whistle (referee whistle, toy whistle, penny whistle etc.)

general

megaphones (c. 1 per 10 players)
table for each player

SETUP

The piece needs a large, flexible space, ideally allowing players to spread out a little. Players should be dotted around the performance area rather than in a more regular ensemble setup. Try to avoid similar instruments being close to each other where possible.

Each player needs a chair, table and music stand (if not using the table).

Megaphones (c.1 per 10 players) should be placed in an accessible place(s) in the performance space in advance.

PERFORMANCE INSTRUCTIONS

GENERAL

In general terms, the piece involves players cueing material verbally, and then playing it, creating connections with what other players are doing through explicit instruction or careful listening.

Players work individually or together, giving verbal instructions that co-ordinate and disrupt the structure of the group as a whole.

STARTING AND ENDING THE PIECE

The piece begins with one player giving the cue 'START'. Other players then individually choose what to play first, giving a cue, and then playing. Players do not need to start together; some may choose to wait to respond to the choices of others.

The piece ends after an agreed duration, with one chosen player giving the cue 'END'.

PLAYER ACTIONS

The score pages comprise a series of 100 numbered cues, each of which indicate the starting point for the material chosen to be played.

Players repeatedly undertake the following actions:

1. Give or listen for a cue

Players may give a cue by speaking the number or cue word so that it is audible to (some) other players, and the audience. Any language may be used, but this may have an impact on the understanding of other players and the audience.

e.g. if a player wants to play material in the first bar of the second page, the player would say '26' out loud.

Players may use one of the megaphones to make their cues more prominent at any point. A megaphone can be collected by any player from its current location, and then used on returning to their seat. Other players may subsequently claim the megaphones for their own use.

A player may also listen for and respond to a cue given in the same way by another player.

e.g. if another player says '47', then the responding player may choose to follow that cue even though they did not give it themselves.

Players must respond to their own cues, but do not necessarily have to respond to cues given by others.

In addition to the numbered cues (1-100), the following cues may be given:

START	The beginning of the piece. Start playing.
END	The end of the piece. Stop playing.
1-100	Jump to the pitch/sound indicated by the circled number and continue from there.
FASTER	Play faster than your current tempo.
SLOWER	Play slower than your current tempo.
HIGH	Play the pitches in a high register. Try to transpose all pitches by an octave and maintain the contour, making adjustments as needed.
MIDDLE	Play the pitches in the notated octave.
LOW	Play the pitches in a low register. Try to transpose all pitches by an octave and maintain the contour, making adjustments as needed.
BACK	Play the material in reverse, working backwards through the sequence of sounds
FORWARD	Play the material forwards as normal
HOLD	Sustain the next pitch until directed to <i>continue</i> . For non-sustaining instruments, hold the playing position even if the sound dies away (do not repeat).
WAIT	Stop playing, and stop any currently sounding pitches, until directed to <i>continue</i> .
REPEAT	Repeat the pitch played immediately before the cue, playing it in the same manner, until directed to <i>continue</i> .
LOOP START / LOOP STOP	These cues mark the beginning and end of a looped group of pitches. After the cue to start remember the starting pitch and continue playing until the stop cue, remembering the stopping pitch. Then loop the sequence of pitches between these points until directed to <i>continue</i>
CONTINUE	Cancel the current wait, loop, hold or repeat cue.

2. Play the cued material or its modification

After giving a cue or choosing to respond to a cue given by another player, players play the cued material or modify what they are playing as directed above.

The material begins at the given cue, indicated by the circled number.

e.g. if the cue '62' is given, a player responding to the cue begins playing the pitch indicated at cue 62.

If the cue is a modification, then the modification takes effect immediately

e.g. if the cue 'HOLD' is given, a player responds by immediately holding their current sound.

3. Repeat the cued material or move to the next bar

After beginning to play a cue, a player may either:

i. proceed sequentially through the score

e.g. if a player begins playing at cue 16, then they could continue along the same system playing material sequentially in the following bars through 17, 18, 19 etc.

ii. repeat the material in the bar containing the current cue.

e.g. if a player begins at cue 16, then they can repeat the bar containing cue 16

Players continue in this manner until they choose to either give a cue and play it, or respond to a cue given by another player.

PITCH

If the notated pitch is off the range of an instrument, transpose it to the nearest octave to bring it within the register of the other pitches.

If playing a monophonic instrument, for the dyads either choose the upper or lower pitch, or take one as a grace note to the other.

Pitches with an accidental above/below may be inflected as preferred. Where there are two pitches, an accidental above the stave refers to the top pitch, and below the stave to the bottom pitch. If a pitch is inflected, then all pitches with accidentals in that bar, on that repeat, must be inflected. A new choice may be made on each subsequent repeat as preferred.

Pitches in brackets may be omitted as preferred. If a bar is repeated, it may be included or not in each repetition.

RHYTHM AND TEMPO

The score broadly uses time-space notation, so that distance on the page is approximately equivalent to the spacing of events in time.

The tempo (and rhythm) is very flexible though and can be altered individually by players as preferred. Generally, the spacing of events should be broadly proportionate for any given tempo however.

Short (filled) and long (empty) noteheads further indicate the quality of each duration.

DYNAMICS

Dynamics are relatively free, and should emerge from the expressive choices of players individually and as a group. Generally the piece should be fairly quiet, and all players should be able to be heard when playing.

The object and vocal material on the fourth page (cues 76-100) should all be quiet and in the background however.

OBJECTS

All of the object and vocal cues (76-100) should be very quiet and sit in the background. Occasional moments of greater presence may occur however, especially when many people are playing these cues.

harmonica (cue 96)	Use a C harmonica. Any combination of pitches from the given chords may be played (or equivalent depending on the specifications of each instrument), from a single pitch to a denser combination. Each breath should have a stable selection though (do not alter chord once you have started to play it). Each chord should be a full in or out breath, so very slow.
whistle (cue 97)	Use any kind of simple whistle (e.g. referee's whistle, toy whistle, penny whistle, dog whistle etc.). Play a long sustained drone pitch lasting a breath length. Any pitch from the indicated possibilities (in any octave), although deviations are also possible.
hum/sing/whistling (cues 98-100)	Three different vocal sounds, produced at a very quiet dynamic. Always a long sustained drone pitch lasting a breath length. Choose any pitch from those indicated (in any octave), or double any that can be heard at the time.

GENERAL COMMENTS





Always do the best you can

NOTATION

The example stave below shows some features of the notation.

- 1: numbered cue
- 2: barline (repeat point if repeating the bar)
- 3: a bar
- 4: filled (shorter) note
- 5: empty (longer) note
- 6: optional omitted note
- 7: optional accidental

The example stave below shows some features of the notation. The stave contains musical notation with various features highlighted by numbered cues (1-7) and arrows. Cue 1 points to a circled number 36 above a note. Cue 2 points to a barline. Cue 3 is a bracket under a bar. Cue 4 points to a filled note above a circled number 38. Cue 5 points to an empty note above a circled number 39. Cue 6 points to an omitted note below the staff. Cue 7 points to an accidental (sharp) below the staff. The stave also includes other musical symbols like a treble clef, a key signature change to one sharp, and various note values.

$o-pppp$ (-----)	The sound should be on the edge of silence, and stop and start irregularly, or have an inconsistent quality due to any associated playing techniques.
ppp (<>)	The sound should centre on the indicated dynamic, but allow any micro-variations to emerge naturally (do not try to play them though).
	Circling friction movement of bow/cup/finger/palm on specified object
	Linear movement of finger/palm on specified object (more stable and continuous than circling or tremolo)
[drag]	Drag the cup towards you across the surface
[push]	Push the cup away from you across the surface (it is more likely to catch and then jump irregularly)
	Coffee cup upside down with open end on surface
	Coffee cup with open end facing up
[finger tip] [palm]	Indication of body part to be used in the prescribed action
[manipulate]	Slow continuous movement of object in hands
[crumple] [uncrumple]	Gradual and slow crumpling and uncrumpling of paper sheet
[shake]	Fast continuous shaking of paper suspended from fingers to produce a continuous sound (not rhythmic)
[strike with fingers]	Rapid irregular drumming with fingers on suspended paper
[out] [in]	Breath direction for harmonica, resulting in different chords.

it is the behaviour that a system tends towards and encourages that needs to be understood
/ James Saunders
/ 2021

The musical score is presented on five staves, each containing 25 numbered notes. The notes are marked with circled numbers 1 through 25. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings. The first staff contains notes 1 through 6. The second staff contains notes 7 through 10. The third staff contains notes 11 through 15. The fourth staff contains notes 16 through 20. The fifth staff contains notes 21 through 25. The notes are primarily quarter and eighth notes, with some rests and dynamic markings such as *pp* and *ppp*. The score is written in a single system with five staves.

Musical staff 1: Treble clef, measures 26-30. Measure 26 has a sharp sign above the first note. Measure 29 has a sharp sign above the first note. Measure 30 has a sharp sign above the last note.

Musical staff 2: Treble clef, measures 31-35. Measure 31 has a sharp sign above the first note. Measure 32 has a sharp sign above the first note. Measure 33 has a sharp sign above the first note. Measure 34 has a sharp sign above the first note. Measure 35 has a sharp sign above the last note.

Musical staff 3: Treble clef, measures 36-40. Measure 36 has a sharp sign above the first note. Measure 37 has a sharp sign above the first note. Measure 38 has a sharp sign above the first note. Measure 39 has a sharp sign above the first note. Measure 40 has a sharp sign above the last note.

Musical staff 4: Treble clef, measures 41-45. Measure 41 has a sharp sign above the first note. Measure 42 has a sharp sign above the first note. Measure 43 has a sharp sign above the first note. Measure 44 has a sharp sign above the first note. Measure 45 has a sharp sign above the last note.

Musical staff 5: Treble clef, measures 46-50. Measure 46 has a sharp sign above the first note. Measure 47 has a sharp sign above the first note. Measure 48 has a sharp sign above the first note. Measure 49 has a sharp sign above the first note. Measure 50 has a sharp sign above the last note.

51 52 53 54 55 56

57 58 59 60 61

62 63 64 65

66 67 68 69 70

71 72 73 74 75

START END 1-100 FASTER SLOWER HIGH MIDDLE LOW BACK FORWARD HOLD WAIT REPEAT LOOP START LOOP STOP CONTINUE

