

Blocked Piano for piano player(s)

//Alexis Porfiriadis

//2011

Blocked Piano (2011) is a verbal score consisting of 26 different verbally instructed parts. Performers (at least two persons) are invited to make a group realization of the composition using any amount of this material. The order of actions and their respective timings should be decided collectively prior to the performance. The resultant realization should be the product of a conversation between the performers and it should by no means be decided by one single person. In the case of a large group (more than 10 persons) the players should at first collectively decide the duration of their performance and then they should form subgroups. Each of these should decide for themselves upon the material to be played in the predetermined duration. It is not necessary for each sub-group to know prior to the performance what any other is going to play.

The actions of *Blocked Piano* may be combined in any manner (based on the performers' choice), so that an action can continue while another starts, more than one action can be performed simultaneously etc. An action can be repeated by the same person provided that one or more other actions are inserted between repetitions to avoid successive appearances of the same action. The order in which the actions are presented in this score is random and reflects no structural preference on the part of the composer. The duration of the performance of the piece is indeterminate but it should not be less than 5 minutes.

Blocked Piano may be performed on its own, or together with *Aria for voice(s)*. In this case both pieces can be performed as solo pieces (one performer for each piece) but all decisions regarding the combination of the performance of the two pieces should be discussed and agreed between the participating performers, and should by no means be made individually.

In order to perform a realisation of *Blocked Piano*, a grand or baby grand piano is required. The piano lid and keyboard lid should remain closed and the damper pedal should be depressed continuously (except during actions where the opposite is mentioned). The continuous depression of the damper pedal can be achieved by placing a heavy object on the pedal itself, or by using a long narrow object, such as a mallet, to jam the pedal from behind. You are encouraged to perform your chosen action(s) as naturally as possible. Extreme displays and theatrics should be avoided, even in actions where this is not explicitly mentioned. Each version should be agreed on for the specific performance; it may not be rehearsed or played at an earlier performance.



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Through

lie under the piano

close your eyes

stretch your arms

touch the instrument's belly with your fingers

pierce through the wood and reach the strings

play

Finger

try to open the piano lid using only your index finger,
while keeping that finger upright

if you succeed, keep the lid open

and play calmly on the strings using your other hand

Fingers

approach 3-4 audience members and speak in their ears,
requesting their assistance in opening the piano lid.

ask them to open it with you by using only their index fingers
(in an upright position!)

if your collective efforts succeed, put an e-bow on one of the strings

let the e-bow play even when the audience members are getting tired
and have to close the lid

thank the audience members, one by one

Alexis Porfiriadis, 2011

Blocked Piano (actions: *Through, Finger, Fingers*)



Open

open the keyboard lid without making direct use of your hands

if you succeed, play calmly for 2 minutes,
using whatever you chose to open the lid with

close the lid in the same way, without making any noise

Quit

cover the piano with piano scores

act calmly and keep fully concentrated on this task

sit opposite the piano and observe it for 1 minute

Keys

sit on the piano stool

close your eyes

imagine that the keyboard lid is open
put your hands on it and feel the keys

do not rush

feel the keys

play the first movement of one of your favourite sonatas from the classical
period

(do not pretend you are playing. Perform the first movement of the sonata as usual)

Alexis Porfiriadis, 2011

Blocked Piano (actions: *Open, Quit, Keys*)



Lie

lie on your back, on top of the piano
close your eyes

feel the gravity pull your body towards the ground

when you feel you have entered the piano's interior and are touching the strings,
calmly step down

(note: perform this action calmly, avoiding any excess theatricality when climbing on and off the piano)

25

play a short sound on 25 different points of the piano using 25 different objects

calmly
without strain and with the utmost concentration

Help

approach a member of the audience you do not know

speak in their ears, requesting their assistance in playing inside the piano
ask them to help you by lifting the piano lid
and holding it open for as long as they can

if they do not accept, continue until you find someone that accepts your request

play on all the strings, one by one, from the lowest to the highest,
keeping a steady and relatively slow tempo

once your helper is tired and wishes to go, stop,
thank her/him and escort her/him back to their seat

Alexis Porfiriadis, 2011

Blocked Piano (actions: *Lie, 25, Help*)



Small finger

open the keyboard lid with the small finger of your left hand
as much as necessary in order to be able to play on the keys with your right hand

play 12 different pitches, separated by 12 different time intervals

Toothbrush 1

turn on 5 electric toothbrushes
place them on top of the piano lid, near the edges
leave them there, and approach the audience

close your eyes
listen to the outcome

the action is completed when all the toothbrushes have fallen onto the ground
do not pick them up from the ground, and do not turn them off

Toothbrush 2

lie under the piano
play on the piano's belly with a switched-on electric toothbrush on each hand
for 2 minutes

Guiro

sit on the piano stool
close your eyes and imagine that the keyboard lid is open

place your hands on it and feel the keys

do not rush
feel the keys

open your eyes and play the first page of Helmut Lachenmann's *Guero* from memory

Alexis Porfiriadis, 2011

Blocked Piano (actions: *Small finger*, *Toothbrush 1 and 2*, *Guiro*)



Listen

invite 4 audience members to come to the piano
and place their ears along the instrument's sides

lie under the piano

play on the instrument's belly, using your fingers and/or 2 soft mallets,
so that the audience members can listen to the inside of the piano

calmly, without a regular pulse, without a climax

(note: the invitation for this action should be written or printed in individual cards before the performance,
then handed out to the audience right before the action. This should be done calmly, with the utmost
concentration)

Wire

search every inch of the piano
and try to find a way to reach through to its strings without opening the lid,
using a relatively hard piece of wire

If you succeed, try to produce sounds from the strings
(for 1-2 minutes)

Play

play with the closed piano using only your hands
no blows, no violence, no theatrics

play
using only your hands
for 2 minutes

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Blocked Piano (actions: *Listen, Wire, Play*)



Move

release the damper pedal and the piano brakes
move the piano a little and listen carefully to determine if the ground
or the piano itself is making any noise

if so, play around with the sounds of this movement until you wear yourself out
if not, stop (and jam the right pedal again)

Conducting

invite 10 members of the audience to come near you
whisper in their ear that they should each make a short, quiet sound
using the body of the piano

the sounds should all be performed simultaneously, following a signal from you

Hug 1

invite audience members to join you for a group hug with the piano

invite as many audience members you think necessary, so that the seated,
remaining audience can no longer see the piano when the action is performed

(note: the invitation for this action should be written or printed in individual cards before the performance,
then handed out to the audience right before the action. This should be done calmly, with the utmost
concentration)

Resound

play on the belly of the piano using your fist
without violence or strain, slowly and almost ritually

do not hit the piano

play and enjoy the resonance offered by the continuously depressed sustain pedal

for 2-3 minutes

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Blocked Piano (actions: Move, Conducting, Hug 1, Resound)



Observe

come out on stage

sit on the ground a few metres away from the piano

let all the lights go out now

let there be only one spotlight, illuminating the piano

observe the instrument for 1 minute

Pedal

release the damper pedal (if it is pressed)

play a calm, steady rhythm with the pedals

for 1 minute

(note: when you are finished, ensure the damper pedal is depressed again)

Hug 2

try to hug

as big a part of the piano as you can

repeat from 5 different positions

Light

illuminate the piano's belly using a non-electrical source of your choice

perform calmly and with the utmost concentration

when you are finished, observe the piano for 1 minute

total duration of the action: no more than 5 minutes

(note: put out the source(s) of lighting after completing the action)

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Blocked Piano (actions: *Observe, Pedal, Hug 2, Light*)



Love

love the piano

avoid any vocals and any histrionics

Items

invite all audience members to come to the piano, one by one
and to offer the piano an object that they are carrying with them,
and that they no longer need

ask them to return to their seats and observe the piano when they have done so

when the process is completed and the viewers have returned to their seats

let all the lights turn off and let the piano be illuminated from a spotlight for 2 minutes

(note: the invitation and accompanying instructions for this action should be written or printed in individual cards before the performance, then handed out to the audience right before the action. This should be done calmly, with the utmost concentration)

Alexis Porfiriadis, 2011

Blocked Piano (actions: *Love*, *Items*)

