

Music and Algorithms Seminar 2 – Alice Eldridge

PROCESS BASED COMPOSITION.

Following on from yesterday's lecture, we will look at some examples of various process based composition. We will try some simple exercises and you will have a go at writing some rhythmic process based compositions.

Part one

We will look at examples of work which can be understood as process based composition of various varieties.

Terry Riley's *In C*

Hugh Shrapnel's *Cantation* (volunteer pianist please)

Christopher Hobbs' *Voice Piece*

Part two

We will then try some simple exercises:

Exercise one: simple rhythm study.

Preparation

Pick two different percussive sounds which you can make by hitting objects in your immediate surroundings. Sound A should be quiet, sound B should be loud.

Pick a number between 3 and 7 (time interval 1). Pick another number between 6 and 12 (time interval 2). Write them down but don't show each other.

Nominate one person as the 'pulse'. They will provide a (quiet) regular beat at half the selected pulse (ie if crotchet = 60, then they will beat out minims)

Nominate another person as 'caller'. Their job is simply to indicate moments of 'change'. Changes can be in either sound, or time interval. This should be done silently, eg using pre-agreed hand signals or written signs.

Procedure.

The 'pulse' starts and continues metronomically throughout.

Each other person joins when he wishes, producing percussive sound A at interval 1.

Continue until the caller indicates change. At this point, switch either sound or interval or both as indicated.

Exercise two: listening study

We will try a version of one of the movements of Christian Wolff's Burdocks:

Each choose between one and three sounds. These can be vocal or produced with any instruments/ objects available. Using one of these each time, play as simultaneously as possible with the person nearest you. Then play the next sound with the next nearest player. Then the next after him. And so on until you have played with all the other players.

Part three

In the final part of today's session you will have a chance to start trying out some ideas for your composition coursework. Aim to have something that we can try out in the session.

Think about the pieces we have looked at, many of these include a mixture of repetition and sensitivity to players decisions.

Riley's *in C*, Shrapnel's *Cantation*, Feldman's *four pianos*. These are all based on simple fragments of musical material which are put together at the discretion of the player(s)

Eno's *Music for Airports* or Reich's *Four organs* or *Its gonna rain*. These are all based on creating changes in phase between parts – by having rhythms or samples of incommensurate length.

Wolff's *Burdocks*, Oliveros *Learn to Fly* both take 'people processes' in a very pure form, focusing in on the performers sensitivities to each other. Think about how you could use this to musical effect.