

# codex IX

Richard Barrett

2008

for 9 improvising musicians (any instruments or voices)

first performance 5 October 2008, Judith Wright Centre, Brisbane, by ELISION:

RB, electronics; Daryl Buckley, electric guitar; Richard Haynes, clarinets;

Michael Hewes, sound projection; Benjamin Marks, trombone; Peter Neville, percussion;

Joel Stern, electronics; Peter Veale, oboe; Erkki Veltheim, viola; Tristram Williams, trumpet

duration: 33 minutes approximately

(1) The score consists of a single page divided horizontally into two. The upper half consists of five “tracks” and the lower of nine “parts”.

(2) The score is played through **three times**, with the “tempo” varying each time. In the first playthrough, the 36 markers at the centre of the score should be about 15 seconds apart, in the second 20 seconds and in the third 10 seconds. In practice the durations may vary quite widely around these “average” values. Each playthrough ends with three minutes of free improvisation for the entire ensemble (not necessarily all playing at once!). The time structure is thus:

- (a) playthrough 1 (9 minutes)
- (b) improvisation 1 (3 minutes)
- (c) playthrough 2 (12 minutes)
- (d) improvisation 2 (3 minutes)
- (e) playthrough 3 (6 minutes)
- (f) improvisation 3 (3 minutes)

(3) In each playthrough the nine performers are **differently allocated** to the nine parts so that the instrumentation is different at every point each time. Therefore the three playthroughs should end up quite different from one another, sometimes perhaps almost unrecognisably so. The ninth part might be allocated to the same performer each time since this part has a directing role in the “coordinated events” (track 3 - see below) and may also indicate the passage of an entire playthrough by signalling the ten rehearsal numbers above the time-markers, and perhaps even some of the intervening markers as well.

(4) When a player's part indicates that he/she is to play (although it is **not** intended that he/she should necessarily play *continuously* through the indicated duration but just that the latter is a "frame" within which he/she should structure sounds and silences), it also indicates "**S**" (solo), "**T**" (trio) or "**Q**" (quintet). These do not indicate types of behaviour as such but rather types of interaction. A "solo" should not necessarily draw attention to itself except by being **distinct** from its musical surroundings. A "trio" or "quintet" involves paying particular attention to the other members of that group, for example making musical "sense" of a series of sequential entries and/or exits.

(5) A player's activity may then utilise **one or more of the tracks** active at that time, perhaps combining them, alternating them or transforming between them.

(6) Tracks 1 and 2 consist of indications of **texture or movement**.

(7) Track 3 consists of **coordinated events** which are "conducted" by player 9. Each time player 9 gives a cue, the other players active at that time may respond as suggested in the score, or in some other way (or they may of course ignore it completely if they are involved in another track or combination of tracks at the time).

Cues should be timed **irregularly**, mostly but not exclusively between 1 and 6 seconds apart.

(8) Track 4 consists of a **gradually-transforming "harmony"** which may, where no further indications occur (for example in tracks 1 and /or 2), be sustained or otherwise continued in varying ways according to improvisational factors and/or the nature of the instrument(s) in question: sustained sound with or without small (microtonal) undulations, glissandi from one pitch to the next, regular and/or irregular iterations, and/or tremoli, and/or gradual transitions between any or all of these possibilities... a simple *sostenuto* is not out of the question but the approach should leave sufficient space for improvisational reactivity to occur.

The pitch-material occupies three octaves; transposition by octaves outside this range may be used as necessary, but **not** consistently - instruments like guitar, piccolo or contrabass should not transpose the entire pitch-system!

Changes of pitch are aligned in the score to the time-markers but this doesn't necessarily imply that they should be precisely coordinated to them. The extent to which pitches overlap should however be closely observed.

(9) Track 5 indicates only **free improvisation ( $\infty$ )** and is active most of the time, so this is almost always a possibility. At the three places where it is not indicated, however, the indications in the active track(s) should be observed.

(10) As in previous compositions in the *codex* series, one possible approach to interpretation would be to regard the score as a fragmentary relic of some unknown music, distant in history or geography, and on the basis of these fragments to make an intelligent and expressive “reconstruction” of what the “living tradition” in question might have been, analogously to contemporary approaches to troubadour songs, instrumentation and realisation of early baroque continuo parts, and so on. This doesn’t imply that performers should be self-consciously “archaic” or “ethnic” of course, but that the attempt to adhere precisely to the score should not get in the way of imaginative spontaneity.

An important aspect of performance technique should be the attention paid by each player (during the performance) to imagining and creating interrelationships between the sound-structures implied by the skeletal notated materials, and between the activities of the other players.

(11) The allocation of players to parts in the first performance was:

<u>part</u>	<u>playthrough 1</u>	<u>playthrough 2</u>	<u>playthrough 3</u>
1	Erkki	Peter N	Ben
2	Joel	Richard H	Peter N
3	Peter N	Daryl	Joel
4	Peter V	Joel	Richard H
5	Tristram	Erkki	Peter V
6	Richard H	Ben	Daryl
7	Daryl	Peter V	Tristram
8	Ben	Tristram	Erkki
9	Richard B	Richard B	Richard B

Each player had three copies of the score marked for playthroughs 1-3 respectively and each with the names of all performers at the left-hand end of the “parts”. Additionally a tenth performer (Michael Hewes) diffused the sound over a three-dimensional sound system with reference to the groupings in the score.

The allocations were changed for subsequent performances with slightly altered personnel.

Codex IX

RB 2/10/2008

TRACKS

1  
2  
3  
4  
5

cue = stop or start or change

cue = stop or start

cue = change in sustained sound

cue = brief burst of sound

echo/imitate/transform/distort what the soloist plays (or has played)

melodic phrases highlighting pitches from track 4

abrupt stops/starts independent of tr.3 and each other

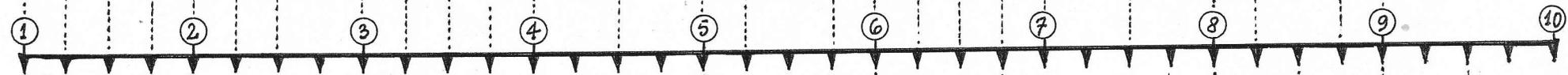
unpitched noises only

regular/irregular pulsations on tr.4 pitches

absolutely static

as fast as possible (varied phrase-lengths)

"pointillist" texture



PARTS

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9

S

Q

T