

Poem

for Chairs, Tables, Benches, etc.
(or other sound sources)

La Monte Young
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Sound Production:

Etc. in the title means anything that can be dragged across a floor.

The chairs, etc. are to be pushed and dragged around on the floor, fast or slow, loud or soft, taking up much or little space, upside down or on the sides or right side up. Chairs without metal, etc. on the bottoms of their legs as a rule produce more different kinds of sounds.

Any sort of floor surface may be used and the sounds may come from any part of the room which holds the audience or outside of it.

The sounds may also move in and out of the room and travel long distances away (up and down halls, etc.).¹

Most of the touch necessary to produce the sounds is to be left up to the performers or the director, except to say that once the sound is begun the performers should not try to introduce new starts and stops before the sound is finished (although naturally the unevenness of floor surfaces, etc. will cause a certain amount of unspecified stopping and starting within the determined duration of the event.

Percussive effects should not be used.

The structure of the composition may be used for any other sound sources,² especially: squeaks, soft sounds and the sounds from Vision. Any sounds may be combined with each other, including sounds from the version for chairs, tables, benches, etc.

As many sound sources as there are events may be used in a version, or any number less than the determined number of events, e.g., if there are seven events, all seven could be different or the same, but if only one sound source is used and if some of the events over-

lap, it will be naturally necessary to have one or more duplicates of the one sound source, so that the various sounds may enter and end independently.

If the sounds from Vision are employed their usage could be expanded, i.e., sounds notated for a specific instrument, such as bassoon, could also be executed on other wind instruments, and it would naturally not be necessary to avoid using any sound more than once.

If sounds are used which cannot be sustained for the determined duration of the events, they may be repeated at irregular intervals for the specified duration. The irregular intervals of repetition may be determined in any manner.

Structure and Construction Procedures:

The composition may be any length, including no length. Any number of events (0 being considered a number) may be used, each with an individual point of entry and termination. The number of events will be limited by the number of performers available. All of the above considerations are to be determined by chance in the following manner.

Length of Composition:

Decide what size units (1/4 seconds, minutes, hours, etc.) will be used to measure the time available. This could be worked out by the same system of units used for measuring the length of the composition (see below). Turn by chance to a page of the random digit book and take the first number from the left hand corner of the page which

falls within the time available for the composition. This number will be the length of the composition measured in units the size of which was originally decided. That is to say, if the unit of measure is $1/4$ seconds and the number drawn is 1034, the length of the composition will be 1034 4ths of seconds. If much time is available and the number found is short (perhaps only a 4th of a second, etc.), several versions of the composition may be played, each with a suitable amount of time between it and the version following, although it is by no means necessary to have more than one version, no matter how short, within the available time.

Having thus determined the length of the composition, measure it in units according to the following plan:

Determined Duration of Composition	Unit of Measurement to be Used
Between 10 sec. & 20 min.	4ths of seconds
Between 20 min. & 2 hours	Halves of seconds
Between 2 hours & 12 hours	Seconds

If the length of the composition is more than one day it will probably be more convenient to measure it in slightly larger units. For instance, if the composition were 10 days long, one possibility would be to measure it in minutes. If the length of the composition is less than 10 seconds, the director may measure it in units which are as small as he thinks are practical.

Number of Events:

The number of events to be used is also to be determined by opening

the random digit book by chance to a page and taking the first number in the left column. However, first write the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 each on a separate small piece of paper and shake them up in a hat. Draw one out. If it is number 1 use only the first digit in the number. If it is number 2 use the first two digits, if it is number 5 use all five digits in the number, etc.

This number of events will be limited by the number of performers at hand. For instance, if the number of events to be used is 1406 and there are five performers available, it may perhaps only be possible to use eleven events.

Durations of Events:

To determine the durations of the various events, again select a page by chance from the random digit book and take in their order all of the numbers which fit within the length of the composition. Thus if the unit of measurement being used for the length of the composition is 4ths of seconds, the length of the composition is 1034 4ths of seconds, and the first number on the page is 332, it would mean that the event which receives this duration will be 332 4ths of seconds long.

Points of Entry and Termination:

List the numbers found for the durations of events in the order in which they appeared on the page and then use the numbers from another randomly chosen page for the points of entry of the events, giving the duration first on the list to the first usable duration on the page being employed for points of entry. The numbers which

indicate points of entry will be interpreted as follows: if the composition is 1034 4ths of seconds long, the duration of event is 332 4ths of seconds, and the number under consideration on the page being used for points of entry is 413, it will mean that this event will begin on the 413th 4th of a second in the composition and will end on the 744th 4th of a second, thus lasting 332 4ths of seconds. Any point of entry which would make the duration of event under consideration last longer than the determined length of the piece should be passed over. Move on down the page being used for points of entry and termination until a number is found which does allow the sound to fit within the determined length.

Distribution of Sound Sources:

The director of each performance may decide by any method which sound sources to use in the composition, but the assignment of each individual sound source to a duration should be by chance.

The Number of Events to be Used When the Number of Events Determined is Greater than the Number of Performers Available:

It will be possible in many cases to have each performer enact more than one event. The events with their durations and points of entry may be distributed among the available performers in whatever manner makes it possible to include the greatest amount of the determined number of events in the composition. However, each event should be included in the composition in the order that its duration appeared in the random digit book, and when a duration appears (after all of the performers available are enacting at least one event) with a point of entry which would require one more performer than is

available (assuming the distribution of events among performers has been worked out to allow the greatest number of the determined number of events possible), that version of the composition is to be considered finished. That is to say, do not skip over the unusable duration and point of entry in order to find durations and points of entry which could be enacted by the available performers.

Measurement in Performance of Points of Entry and Durations:

Each performer should be given a small piece of paper with his entries, durations and terminations indicated in relation to the starting point of the piece. Performers should use stop watches or watches with second hands. It should be pointed out, however, that 4ths of seconds etc. are used in the piece more for the working out of the structure, although this should not discourage the performers from trying to be reasonably accurate.

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1. Also, the performers may be encouraged to go directly into the audience (up + down the rows - actually involving the spectators) and entirely outside the building, if they like.
 2. Any other kinds of events besides sounds may be used - events involving other senses: sight, smell, touch, taste and any of the others, most of which are different for each person and vary from time to time.