

FIVE DIRECTIONS

an improvisation score for four players or groups

martin bartlett (1972)

this piece is based on the concept of the mandala, and a text from ancient Tibetan practice.

there are five directions, east, south, west, north, and center. each is associated with a colour, an element, a sound, a passion, and a transforming wisdom. the distribution of these is:

EAST: white, water, flutes, hatred, the mirror-like wisdom

SOUTH: yellow, earth, drums, pride, the wisdom of equality

WEST: red, fire, bells, lust, the discriminating wisdom

NORTH: green, air, horns, jealousy, the all-fulfilling wisdom

CENTRE: blue, ether, silence, stupidity, the wisdom of the
real essence.

in this realization there are four musicians or groups of musicians seated in the appropriate directions and with the appropriate instruments. the representation of the directions may be extended to include objects of appropriate colour, the presence of the four grosser elements, and theatrical or dance activity.

the musicians play in turn, first EAST, then SOUTH, WEST, and NORTH. finally for the CENTRE, all play together.

NORTH

horns (trumpets, saxophones,
etc.)

"PHAT!
When dancing in the Northern Continent of Unpleasant Sound,
The Heroes and Heroines move round in a square dancing-arena;
Their feet flash as they dance upon the prostrate heads of the
 mischievous Sprites of Jealousy;
The tiara of the All-Fulfilling Wisdom glisteneth brightly.
HUM. HUM. HUM."

starting in the lowest register
HOOT and HONK and WAIL and GASP and SHRIEK and HOWL
with increasing intensity and increasing range
until you reach maximum force
and highest tessitura
then, when you are reaching the limits of your energy
take out the force and the intensity
leaving high notes that are soft and pure
and when you have attained this
stop.

if more than one player, help each other to build a greater
intensity than each would be capable of alone.

SOUTH

skin, wood

"PHAT!

When dancing in the Southern Continent, the Human World,
The Heroës and Heroines move round in a triangular
dancing-arena;

Their feet flash as they dance upon the prostrate Head of
Pride, embodied in the Lord of Death.

They drum upon the skull-drums of the Wisdom of Equality,
with a peculiar sharp tapping sound.

HUM. HUM. HUM."

play a sound-event of recognizable character or timbre.

keep repeating it, not necessarily regularly, varying it
if you like but maintaining its recognizable integrity.

introduce a second event series without discontinuing the first.

then a third

and a fourth

and so on until you have so much to do that you cannot keep
it all together

then allow the events to blur and fade.

if there is more than one player, the others do the same,
trying to keep track of their own event series and those
of the other players.

EAST

flute

"PHAT!

When I beat this measure in the Eastern Continent
of Superior Physique,

The Heroes and Heroines move round in a crescent-shaped
dancing-arena;

Their feet flash as they dance upon the prostrate forms of
King Spirits, who symbolize Hatred or Wrath;

They sound the flute of the Mirror-like Wisdom.

HUM. HUM. HUM."*

play a single note over and over again

then introduce the octave, above or below

work with these for as long as possible, then

introduce a third note.

gradually give this note more and more prominence

until it is finally alone

end with long tones.

if there is more than one flute

the others do the same

choosing their pitches carefully in respect of each other.

*all quotations are from the Tibetan Chöd ms. in
W.Y.Evans-Wentz, Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines, Oxford
University Press, 1958.

WEST

metal percussion

"PHAT!

When dancing in the Western Continent, blessed with cattle,
The Heroes and Heroines move round in a circular dancing-arena;
Their feet flash as they dance on the prostrate head of
the Ogress of Lust;
They tinkle the bells of the Discriminating Wisdom in
sweet harmonious tones.

HUM. HUM. HUM."

establish a rhythm, at first very slow

then accelerating to maximum

and decelerating to minimum

accelerating again

and so on.

then establish another rhythm without discontinuing the first.

this other rhythm is subjected to the same acceleration and
deceleration

but the periodicity of its tempo changes is different.

keep the two rhythms clear and independent.

when this is under control

accelerate the rate of change of first one tempo and then
the other

until the work becomes too complex to manage

then give up and make each rhythm perfectly regular

and of decreasing intensity until you stop

if there is more than one player each player may have
one or two rhythms

CENTRE

all instruments

"PHAT!

When dancing in the Centre of the Perfectly Endowed Spot,
The arena for the dance of the Heroës and Heroines is blessed
with their divine influence;

Their feet flash as they dance upon the prostrate head of
the Vampire of Stupidity;

The joyous songs of HUM, of the Wisdom of the Real Essence,
sound melodiously.

HUM. HUM. HUM."

the centre is the silence, the space between

play only about one fifth of the time--one part sound
to four parts silence

use material you have played before

and, as you proceed,

gradually interpenetrate with the other players

taking ideas from them

giving ideas to them

but always coming out of silence

and going back in.