

Workshop Timbral Music EIMC-2024 Basel

This workshop is about collectively improvising subtle timbres and textures at mostly moderate dynamic levels. Participants will be involved in close (deep) listening. It's intended for all kinds of instruments, including percussion and vocals.

OBJECTIVES

- Creating awareness of the beauty of timbres and textures when playing not very loudly.
- Developing a strong group concentration.
- Creating a palette of different group timbres and textures, possibly consisting of different layers.
- Creating the ability to shift into different timbres and textures collectively.
- Improvising and soloing as a (sub)group as opposed to playing as soloists.
- Creating the ability to collectively shift from pp to ff levels while keeping transparency.

COMPROVISATIONS (from simple to more complex)

1. Wind & noise (WN)

Wind instruments play aerial sounds with almost no pitch.

String instruments are played by rubbing the strings or stringing them without making specific pitches. Add some vibrato now and then.

Piano(s) are being played on the inside, directly onto the strings by rubbing these.

Percussion instruments are being played by e.g. rubbing.

Listen carefully to the overall sound and really try to blending in, i.e., be aware of why & when you are playing or not...

Imagine the sea, where waves rise and fall. Let these waves really roll in and out.

2. Harmonics (H)

Wind & string instruments play different pitches at pp level. Play the same pitch as an harmonic. This may cause microtonal variations. Try not to tune. Change pitches sparingly.

Piano(s) are being played on the inside by plucking a string. Experiment with harmonic alternatives by damping & plucking strings and letting them go.

Percussion instruments explore different ways of playing.

Again, listen carefully to the overall sound and really try to blending in.

Imagine the air, where wind gusts come and go. Let them really appear and disappear.

3. Simple texture (ST)

All players play notes or noises in at most one breath. Change pitches sparingly.

Different ways of starting a pitched sound:

- blending in without attack (from ppp to mp),
- start with a slight attack (from mp to pp),
- from noise to pitch by transforming the sound.

Listen carefully to the whole, make your sounds fit in.

Imagine a large school of small or big fish moving in the ocean. They move as a whole following each other, which can be quickly or slowly.

4. Pointillism (P)

All players play staccato or short notes or noises. Change pitches sparingly. Everyone plays at pp and very occasionally at mf levels.

Play with the density (from sparse to dense) of the whole.

Listen carefully to the whole, make your sounds fit in.

Imagine the sky with planets and stars. They barely move... and blink now and then...

5. Layered textures

Choose one of the preceding textures **WN**, **H**, **ST** or **P** from above.

Join others in their texture or start your own. The number of textures should be limited to 2 or at most 3.

At some point change texture(s). Make it a (sub)collective decision...

In all cases feel part of the sound. It's is not about your sound only but about the complexity of the composite.

Note that the composite might breath as a separate organism, or move forward, or just be itself without any perceptible motion.

6. Circles (C)

One player starts a long note at a certain pitch playing softly.

Another player blends in at the same pitch.

A third one blends in after the first player stopped.

After that, the first player blends in again, maybe at a different pitch, then the second one, then the third... Etcetera.

Then, another trio of players starts another *circle* at a different pitch.

The two playing trios make up two different layers with different timbres.

(Note: in this example we took trios, we could also have taken four or more players.)

Visualise two moving circles of different colours, sometimes intersecting.

The circles fade in and fade out, maybe at different speeds.

7. Imprint of a circle — a notion of a soloing subgroup

The group plays the texture **WN** (see above).

A trio starts playing a **C** (see above). This trio is not selected beforehand, but emerges...

During the piece, a new trio/circle might develop. The number of circles is limited to two.

Listen carefully and visualise.

Imagine being in a misty environment where a circle of light becomes faintly visible. It might become the case that you are all blinded by that circle at some moment in time... and then it fades away...

8. Complex texture (CT)

All players play melody like lines, -2, -1, 0, +1, +2 semitones from individually chosen pitches, at pp level.

Play with note length, limited dynamics, vibrato, silences, and tempo. Change your individual, central pitch sparingly.

This time you might visualise being just a voice in a polyphonic piece of music.

Listen and go with the flow... feel part of the complexity...

9. Moving textures with soloing subgroup(s)

Everything is open from the start.

Gradually, a texture, **WN**, **H**, **ST**, **P** or **CT**, emerges from nothing.

After some time, it changes to another texture, etcetera...

It's intensity varies from ppp to mf, and, maybe, to a loud ff.

But the sound is always together and transparent.

At some point one or two (sub)group **C** solos come out of the texture and disappear again.

The process repeats itself, just like the seasons that come and go.

Hans Tonino

© CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

20-23 June 2024,

Rijswijk (ZH), The Netherlands,

hans.tonino@gmail.com

@htonino (Soundcloud and Bandcamp)