

AXIOM (a battle) Op. 3

Sam Britton, London, August 2010

DESCRIPTION:

Axiom is a piece designed for any number of musicians and a prompter and seeks to explore questions of compositional decision making by highlighting the roles of reflection and production that inform music. The piece is conceived as a simple collection of elements whose combination can lead to increasingly complex musical propositions. The interpretation of these signs and signifiers through the act of performance produces differing musical genealogies which must be reflected upon from a semantic point of view. It is this reflection and the identification of meaningful passages or otherwise that can be seen to condition the broader sense and form of the music itself.

STRUCTURE:

The score consists of two discreet parts:

I. A SHEET OF PROPORTIONAL GRAPHIC NOTATION (Divided into zones and sub-sequences)

The sheet of proportional graphic notation is provided which is intended to give a concrete indication as to what should be played. It is important to note that, in keeping with the general proposition of the piece, the graphic notation is not arbitrary, but in fact derived from prime number sequences. In the same sense that the overall piece proposes to construct a more complex edifice through simple building blocks, the notation here is built from the proportions of one of the simplest, yet unresolvable sequences in mathematics.

The score is separated into ZONES (I - 5), which are read from left to right and from top to bottom. REGIONS within the ZONES are also indicated by triangular MARKERS. A black triangular marker indicates the beginning of a region and a corresponding white triangle indicates the end of a region. The distinction between REGIONS and MARKERS is an important one and can be defined by the fact that whereas REGIONS have a designated endpoint MARKERS simply indicate a starting point and therefore can refer to any length of material after that point. Note that not all MARKERS have endpoints, meaning that a REGION may span two or more markers.

There are also LOOPS indicated in each sequence ►| (forwards) and ►◄ (alternating forwards and backwards). When called, LOOPS should be played as many times as deemed relevant by the individual. They may also involve a pause between repetitions, although the pause between repetitions should not exceed 30 seconds.

When playing REGIONS or MARKERS, any LOOPS contained within should be played and the relative TEMPO indication, found in the track above the timeline should also be taken into account. TEMPO is relative and is calculated by each player in consideration to the speed at which they start playing each cue.

The sections delineated by dashed areas and marked with **U** are UNIQUE events, to be chosen by the player and played once. These UNIQUE events differ from REGIONS and MARKERS in that they exclude any LOOPS contained within them and are free from the TEMPO references above the timeline.

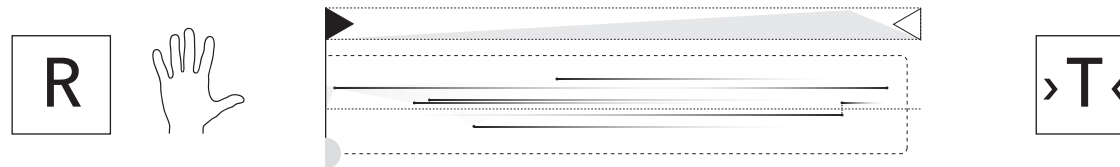
Another thing to note is the fact that LOOPS and UNIQUE events are sometimes nested within each other. When playing MARKERS and REGIONS the nesting is relative to the convention of reading from left to right, meaning that only the lowest level, self-contained LOOPS in the cue are read and the UNIQUE events ignored. However when a LOOP or UNIQUE event is called specifically, the nested structures must be read hierarchically, starting with the smallest element and preceeding upwards.

Ultimately, it remains up to the individual performer as to what level of detail they wish to render their performance and how they wish to interpret each parameter (the score allows for any number of levels of interpretation). Naturally, familiarity will always play a role in this kind of a piece, but it is also important to note that the desire to engage with the notation and the way in which the piece is played is in every respect much more important, without this, there is nothing.

2. PROMPTERS CARDS

The prompter (or conductor) has at his disposal a series of cards which control the actions of the piece (outlined on page 4). The cards indicate regions within the sheet of notated material and how these regions are cued, the cards also indicate modifications to the current state of play and also permit functions such as storing a particular configuration, to be recalled later on in the piece.

In addition to the cards, the prompter uses his hands to indicate which players the cards are intended for and additionally, which zone of the notated material the players are to interpret. So in the example below, the card R with five fingers held up would indicate that players called can pick any REGION within ZONE 5 on the score to play:



The prompter then might also choose to modify the way the region is being interpreted by calling, for example, a TEMPO variation (which would be indicated by moving the card UP for faster and DOWN for slower).

SELF ORGANISATION

Finally, the players are also able to make suggestions to the prompter. If any particular player feels that there is something they wish to see happen in the course of the performance, they can relay this to the prompter by indicating which of the sequences they wish to have played (by holding up the corresponding number of fingers) and by pointing at the player(s) they wish to have interpret it. In this way, players are able to influence and suggest paths for the composition to take. It should be noted however that the prompter can take on or ignore suggestions at will.

M

MARKER - Play from any black marker in the indicated zone for as long or short a period as you wish.

Mx

[M]

›T‹

TEMPO

S1

SOUND MEMORY - A particular combination and state is recorded during play and may then be recalled at any time.

R

REGION - Play from any black marker to the next white marker, starting in the indicated zone.

Rx

[R]

›V‹

VOLUME

S2

L

LOOP - Play any loop in the indicated zone as many or few times as you wish.

Lx

[L]

F«

FOLLOW - A leader is indicated and other players MUST accompany the leader

S3

U

UNIQUE - Play any unique event only once.

Ux

[U]

H«

HARMONISE - A leader is indicated and other players MUST harmonise with the leader

- 1

REVERT - Players must revert to the previous state of play before the last SWITCH card was called.

SWITCH

Players playing MUST stop, those indicated by the prompter MUST come in.

CROSSFADE SWITCH

Indicated by bringing the card down from top to bottom to fade between one state and the next.

SUB-GROUP

Players playing CONTINUE, players indicated JOIN the others.

MODIFIERS

Indicate operations that modify the current state of play.