

Augur

for one judge and two performers

Stephen F. Lilly

(2009)

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This piece is for one judge and two performers. Both performers must have access to the same sound producing objects (traditional instruments, found percussion, radios, etc.). For example, in the case of two percussionists, both should have the same instruments with nearly identical timbres and tunings. For two vocalists, both must be of the same vocal type. Seated or standing, the performers should be downstage, facing one another, on either side of the judge, who should be seated at upstage center. The judge should have some relatively silent means of keeping score (pencil and paper, two mechanical or electronic tally counters, etc.) and a chronometer. Neither performer should have access to any timekeeping device.

Rules

- 1. Initial Determinations:** The judge signals the beginning by raising both arms and dropping them when the chronometer is activated. The first performer to make a sound after five seconds of silence is the initiator. If either player should play before the chronometer signals five seconds, he/she is automatically the challenger. The judge signals the initiator by extending out the arm (left or right) on the side of the winner. If a tie should result, then the judge restarts the piece by raising both arms and dropping them when the chronometer is reactivated.
- 2. Goal and Structure:** The piece consists of multiple rounds, the outcomes of which determine the scoring and/or the victor. In each round, the initiator may play only a single sonic event, while the challenger tries to predict and match the initiator. The challenger either successfully mirrors when and what the initiator plays, matches attack point and perhaps a few other sonic parameters, plays too early, plays too late, or fails to play at all. The judge signals the end of each round by indicating a winner or a violation.
- 3. Sonic Events:** Each sonic event may be pitched or non-pitched, short or long, loud or soft, but should not vary unnecessarily over the course of the event (e.g. sequential pitches, glissandi, re-articulation, erratic dynamics, etc.). Rolls, scraping, flutter tonguing, tremolos, etc. can be considered single sonic events as long as they remain relatively static for their duration.
- 4. Timbre:** The initiator may use his/her instrument, voice, or any nearby object to articulate a sonic event as long as the challenger is able to match it (e.g. if a female instrumentalist is competing against a male instrumentalist and wishes to use her voice, she may not make high utterances that are out of the range of the challenger).
- 5. Violations:**
 - a. Using overtly theatrical physical gestures. What constitutes overtly theatrical is at the discretion of the judge.
 - b. Playing multiple notes or attempting to modify in mid-performance any aspect of a sonic event (e.g. the initiator alters the timbre of a sonic event to confuse the challenger or the challenger utilizes a pitch bend to better match the initiator).
 - c. The initiator employs a sonic event that is not performable by the challenger.

6. Scoring and Role Reversals:

- a. If the challenger's sonic event begins after the initiator's, the initiator is awarded one point.
- b. If the challenger's sonic event begins before the initiator's or if the challenger plays alone, the initiator is awarded two points.
- c. If, in the opinion of the judge, the challenger's sonic event matches the initiator's as close as humanly possible, the contest ends and the challenger automatically wins the game, despite the score.
- d. If the challenger matches the attack point but not all parameters of the initiator's event, *the roles of initiator and challenger are reversed (the challenger is the new initiator and vice versa)* and the challenger is awarded one point for the simultaneous attack points and one additional point for each of the following conditions that are met:
 - i. The dynamic levels are identical
 - ii. The durations are identical
 - iii. If pitched, the pitches are identical
 - iv. If non-pitched, the timbres are identical
- e. If and when the judge perceives a rule violation, the current round is immediately terminated and the offender is penalized two points (for ease of scorekeeping, the judge can choose instead to award the non-offender two points). Additionally, *any violation on the part of the initiator, automatically results in a role reversal: the challenger is the new initiator and vice versa. Any violation on the part of the challenger, however, does not result in a role reversal: the initiator remains the initiator.*
- f. Whoever is the challenger when time expires is awarded ten additional points.

7. The Judge: The judge should remain silent throughout the contest. To indicate the winner of a round (and thus the initiator of the next round) he/she simply extends out the arm (left or right) on the side of the winner. In the case of a penalization, the judge should first raise both arms, and then leave the arm on the offender's side up while slowly lowering the other. After this, the judge should indicate the initiator of the next round by extending the arm on the side of the non-offender.

8. Duration: The contest is played for a preset duration. This duration should be decided in advance by all three participants. During the piece, the judge may not make any indication of the time elapsed to the performers before the ending. Furthermore, the game should never be terminated mid-round. When time expires, the judge should wait for the conclusion of the current round before signaling the end by holding up a hand in a stop-like signal. Whether determined by perfect imitation or by points, the judge signifies the winner of the contest by calmly walking toward the victor and stopping at his/her side.