

“Contretemps/Soliloquy (via Fred Moten)”

for ensemble and electronics

by Laure M. Hiendl (2019)

Notes:

This piece is an attempt to create an environment in which chamber musical negotiations of time and timing, the “dis/possession [of time] that we call music,”¹ take place in an semi-improvisatory fashion.

It is for **four or more players** and is divided into 24 sections of various lengths. The players move through the sections in order, but at a pace that is decided upon by the each individual in relation to the ensemble, according to the needs of the current musical situation. It would be desirable for the sections to **vary greatly in duration**; rough suggestions are given for the duration of each. Unless notated otherwise, **beginnings and endings may overlap** and don't have to be synchronized among the players.

The instrumentation for each section is either:

TUTTI: Everyone in the ensemble should play most of the time in the section.

OPEN: Players decide themselves whether and how much they play.

SOLO: Soloists are indicated in parenthesis.

Certain segments require a leading voice (indicated in parenthesis), that has to play the entire section.

Each section consists of a unison line, that has to be played in **staggered repetition**: Slowly move through the bars from beginning to the end by repeating each bar or groups of adjacent bars ad lib. Once a bar has been omitted, it may not return. With every repetition material can be left out or added back in, while maintaining its position in the bar. Once you reach the end go back to the beginning. Examples (numbers = bar numbers, brackets = repeated sections):

[1] [1 2] [1 2 3] [2 3] [3 4] [3 4 5] etc.

The unison line in each section should be octave transposed according to the following:

- relative to the line

LOCO: No transposition, play as written.

CLOSE: Play one octave above or below the written line.

FAR: Play two or more octaves above or below the written line.

- relative to the instrument

XLOW: Play in the lowest possible range of your instrument.

LOW: Play in the lower range of your instrument.

MID: Play in the mid range of your instrument.

HIGH: Play in the higher range of your instrument.

XHIGH: Play in the highest possible range of your instrument.

ANY: Play the line in any desired transposition.

The **PIANO** should always double the line with both hands (except in **LOCO**) and vary distance of the two voices with each new transposition.

¹ Fred Moten, *Black and Blur* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 107.

The tempo of each section is one of the following:

fixed: If a tempo indication is given, everyone in the ensemble follows a common, synchronized pulse that is coordinated among the players.

flowing: Everyone follows an individual tempo, while maintaining an active relationship to the tempi of the ensemble, to “touch and go like adjacent variations out of one another’s time but bridged by an imperceptibly reminiscent tempo.”² Tempi may shift gradually over the course of the section.

free: Everyone follows their individual tempi, ignoring the rest of the ensemble as much as possible. Tempi may shift rapidly and frequently over the course of the section.

Live-electronics play an important role in this piece, insofar that instruments sometimes are barely audible in their instrumental sound and used merely as highly amplified, highly sensitive interfaces for the electronics. Each instrument needs a microphone that is not directly attached to the instrument, so that players can **play with the distance of their instrument to the microphone**, according to the given dynamics.

Score and parts are identical in that there is only one score/part everyone plays from. It is **written in C** but transposed scores are available.

² Moten, *Black and Blur*, 107.

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1. (very long)

SOLO ♪ = 114

LOW (*tumbling, choked*)

ppp (*very close to mic*)

- very airy, almost no pitch
- play with accents on different off-beats
- switch once to new octave transposition on each ↓

2. (medium)

SOLO ♪ = flowing (fast)

LOW (*unremitting, erratic*)

pp (*close to mic*), occasionally to *niente*,
or short *f* outbursts (*away from mic*)

- create repeating phrases out of all or part of the pitches
- rough, noisy, rumbling sound – pitch fully audible

3. (very long)

OPEN (Cello leads) ♪ = free

MID (*light*)

ppp – *p* (*close to mic*)

- maintain one pulse (alter instantly if desired)

4. (play twice)

OPEN (Cello leads) ♩ = 114 (all in unison)

start **LOW** (*tumbling, choked*)

ppp (*very close to mic*)

- synchronized **START**
- very airy, almost no pitch
- play with accents on different off-beats
- switch once to new octave transposition on each ↓

5. (medium)

TUTTI ♩ = 152 (common pulse, independent positions)

start between **LOW - MID** (*murmuring*)

pp (*close to mic*), with few short *f* outbursts (*away from mic*)

- airy, but with sharp, bright sound – some pitch audible
- synchronized **START** with starting points distributed on each ↓
- switch once to new octave transposition on each ↓

6. (short)

TUTTI ♪ = flowing (fast, individual tempi)

LOCO (loose, light)



stay between *ppp* and *p* (close to mic)

- play short, repeating and changing excerpts of either of the two lines (never the entire line)
- slightly airy, with a soft, almost pale sound – more pitch audible
- maintain one pulse (alter gradually if desired) and continue playing silently if you have to take a break

7. (very short)

TUTTI ♪ = flowing (fast, individual tempi)

LOCO (loose, light)



stay between *f* and *ff* (away from mic)

- as before

8. (play twice)

TUTTI ♩ = 114 (all in unison)
start **LOW** (tumbling, choked)

ppp (very close to mic)

- synchronized **START**
- very airy, almost no pitch
- play with accents on different off-beats
- start **LOW**, switch once to new octave transposition on each ↓

9. (very long)

SOLO (Piano) ♩ = 152

start between **LOW – MID** (*murmuring*)

The musical score for exercise 9 is written on a single treble clef staff. It consists of three lines of music. The first line starts in 4/8 time, moves to 2/8, then 3/8, and ends in 4/8. The second line starts in 3/8, moves to 4/8, then 5/8, and ends in 4/8. The third line starts in 4/8, moves to 3/8, then 5/8, and ends in 4/8. The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including triplets and quintuplets, and is marked with dynamic instructions: *start pp*, with few *f* outbursts, build energy. Downward arrows indicate octave transpositions at the beginning of each line.

– switch once to new octave transposition on each ↓

10. (long)

SOLO (Piano) ♩ = flowing (fast tempo)

LOCO (double voices 8va↑ or 15ma↑) (*loose, light*)

The musical score for exercise 10 is written in a grand staff format, consisting of two staves. The top staff is in bass clef and the bottom staff is in treble clef. The music is a continuous, flowing line of notes, starting in the bass clef and moving to the treble clef. It is marked with dynamic instructions: *start pp* and build towards *f*.

- play short, repeating and changing excerpts of either of the two lines (never the entire line)
- slightly airy, with a soft, almost pale sound – more pitch audible
- maintain one pulse (alter gradually if desired) and continue playing silently if you have to take a break

11. (long)

OPEN ♪ = flowing

LOW (unremitting, erratic)



start p (close to mic), then build energy

- create repeating phrases out of all or part of the pitches
- rough, noisy, rumbling sound – pitch fully audible

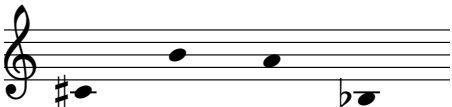
12. (medium)

TACET (electronics)

13. (short)

OPEN ♪ = flowing

ANY (unremitting, erratic)



*start p (close to mic),
then build energy*

- as before (14.)

14. (long)

TUTTI ♪ = free

ANY



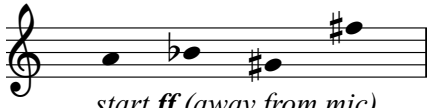
f – ff (away from mic)

- maintain one pulse (alter instantly if desired)

15. (medium)

TUTTI ♪ = flowing

ANY (unremitting, erratic)



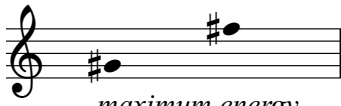
*start **ff** (away from mic),
keep building energy*

- create repeating phrases out of all or part of the pitches
- rough, noisy, rumbling sound – pitch fully audible

16. (very long)

TUTTI ♪ = flowing

ANY (unremitting, erratic)



maximum energy

- as before

17. (short)

TUTTI ♪ = flowing

ANY (unremitting, erratic)



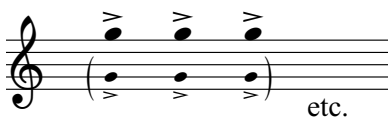
*maximum
energy*

- as before

18. (medium)

TUTTI ♪ = free

ANY



(maximum energy)

- maintain one pulse (alter instantly if desired)
- synchronized **START**

19. (medium)

OPEN (Cello leads) ♪ = free

ANY



(keep energy)

- as before
- loose players but keep energy

20. (long)

SOLO (Cello) ♪ = free

ANY



(keep energy)

- as before

21. (medium)

OPEN ♪ = 184 (common pulse, independent positions)

start **XLOW** or **XHIGH** (*biting, erratic*)

The image shows two staves of musical notation for exercise 21. The top staff is in 4/8 time and features a series of notes with a slur over the first four notes and a fermata over the last four notes. A downward arrow points to the start of the first slur. The bottom staff is also in 4/8 time and features a series of notes with a slur over the first four notes and a fermata over the last four notes. A downward arrow points to the start of the first slur. The notation includes various articulations such as slurs, fermatas, and accents. The dynamics are indicated as *ppp* (close to mic), with few short *pp* accentuations. The notes are marked with '5' and '3' below them, indicating fingerings or groupings.

- airy, but with sharp, bright sound – some pitch audible
- synchronized **START** with starting points distributed on each ↓
- switch once to new octave transposition on each ↓

22. (short)

TUTTI ♪ = flowing (fast, individual tempi)

LOCO (*loose, light*)

The image shows two staves of musical notation for exercise 22. The notation is in a treble clef and features a series of notes with a slur over the first four notes and a fermata over the last four notes. A downward arrow points to the start of the first slur. The notes are marked with 'p' and 'ppp' below them, indicating dynamics. The notes are marked with '5' and '3' below them, indicating fingerings or groupings.

- play short, repeating and changing excerpts of either of the two lines (never the entire line)
- slightly airy, with a soft, almost pale sound – more pitch audible
- maintain one pulse (alter gradually if desired) and continue playing silently if you have to take a break

23. (long)

TACET (electronics)