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Title

for instance, today

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2013

Peer reviewed

for instance, today

Amherst-San Diego version, composed for
(in San Diego) Mark Dresser, Nicole Mitchell, Myra Melford and Michael Dessen; and
(in Amherst) Marty Ehrlich, Jason Robinson and Bob Weiner

Composed by Michael Dessen for *Virtual Tour: A Reduced Carbon Footprint Concert Series* (2013)

Program note

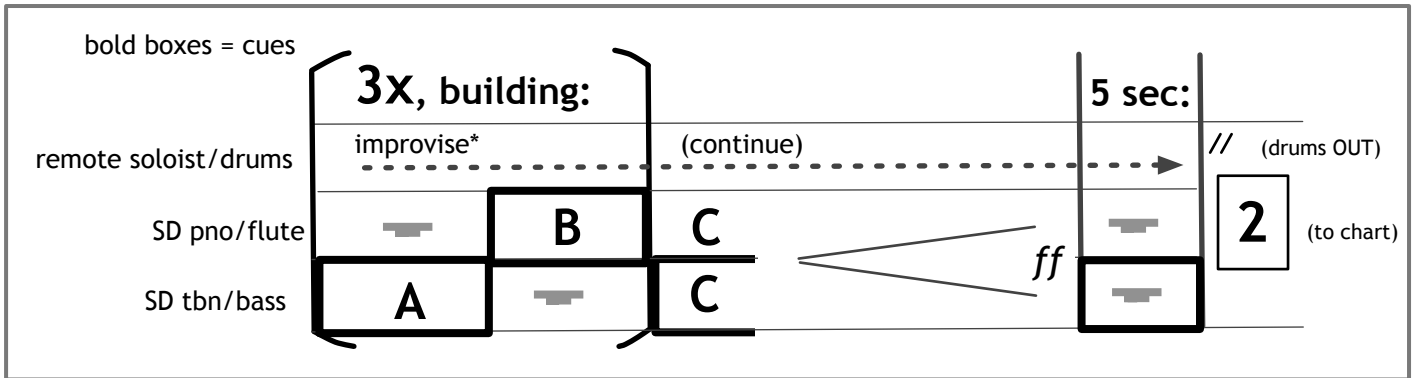
"for instance, today" is a variation form with a telematic twist. It takes the same set of musical materials through a wide terrain, and extends this idea of variation to the possibilities of the co-located stage itself. At the distances we are experiencing in this concert, even with very high bandwidth, there is a small but perceptible amount of audio delay, a tangible expression of the physical distance between us. Some parts of this piece are composed to eclipse this latency by creating sensations of synchrony through loosely defined pulse feels, or through moments of sonic intimacy with no explicit pulse at all. But in other sections, the music embraces that feeling of distance, and uses it to create a kind of simultaneous variation across the two locations: At one site, the musicians lock in tight synchrony with what they hear coming from their remote collaborators, articulating a composite polyrhythmic texture with clarity; at the other site, where their sounds arrive slightly delayed, the effect is more malleable, shifting, and multilayered, but is designed so that it can still have a strong sense of overall rhythmic flow and counterpoint.

Another level of variation at work here is that we're performing three different arrangements of this composition during the Virtual Tour, and each performance will be unique because of the individuals involved. I wanted to build a piece that my fantastic collaborators at all the sites would enjoy playing, and that would be open enough at times for each of them to share their unique sonic presence. Many sections of music will sound very different from one night to the next, because each of the non-CA improvisers will find his or her own way into the materials, and because the California-based musicians will respond differently in turn.

The title of this composition is a line from a poem by Amanda Nadelberg called "another interpretation."

SECTION 1 INSERT

San Diego trombone and bass
[m. dessen - for instance, today]



A

Microtonal glides in these pitch neighborhoods
Lazy, detached at first, gradually building:

(w/ valve)

gliss.

gliss.

tbn:

bass:

C

Not in sync, but build slurpy layer together:

tbn:

bass:



Gradually more dense, lower, louder
Eventually to gritty waves of microtonal trembling, around these pitches:

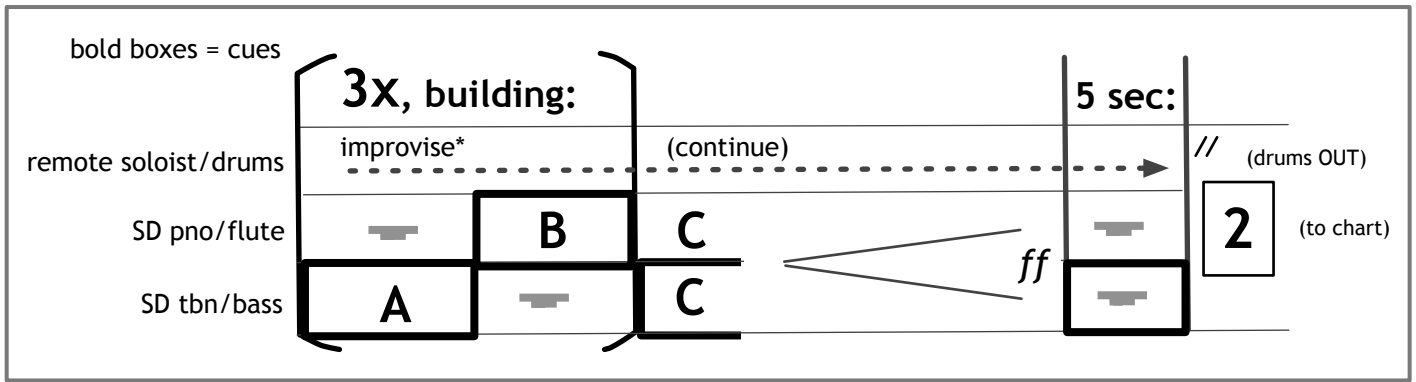
tbn:

bass:

Michael cues
SD cutoff

SECTION 1 INSERT

San Diego piano and flute
[m. dessen - for instance, today]



Alternate gestures, jerky speed shifts, no clear pulse
Start fragile, slowly build, repeating each more, and sustaining keys for clusters

B

C

Pointillistic textures:

Building, clusters
Flute/pno pitches in sync, but not rhythm

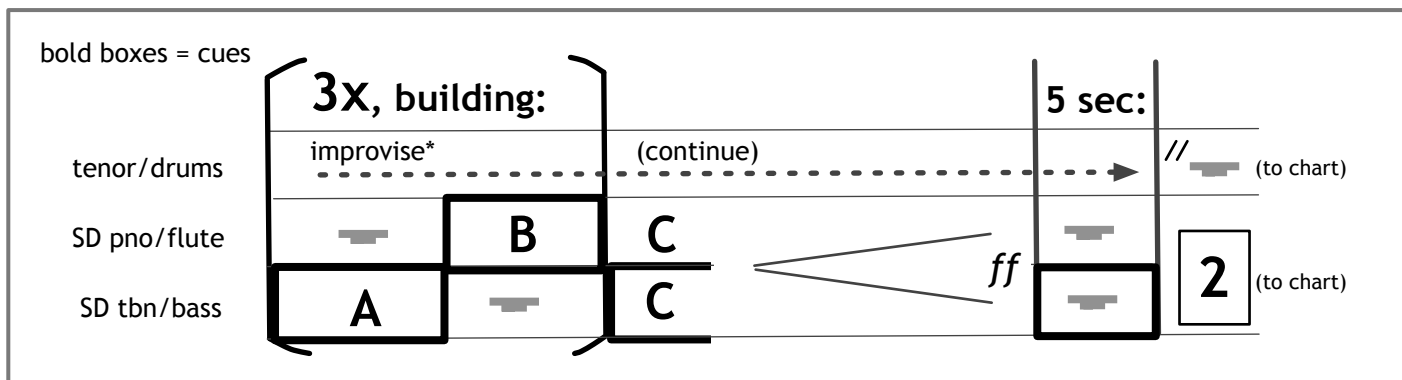
Pno: Pounding.
Flute: Reinforce top +
add flourishes, trills

Michael cues
SD cutoff

SECTION 1 INSERT

Amherst performers

[m. dessen - for instance, today]



Jason:

Start solo with sparse gestures, extreme ranges

Gradually more dense, loud

When all SD musicians cut off, play 5 more seconds then cue loud cutoff with drums

Bob:

Rest on 1st time through A/B, then join Jason improvising.

Sparse at first, gradually more dense, loud.

When all SD musicians cut off, play 5 more seconds then follow Jason's cutoff (loud until end)

Marty:

You don't play on this first section. Please follow along so that you can enter (on the regular chart) at #2, immediately after the loud drums/tbn cutoff at the end of the graphic above.

1

See INSERT page for section 1

Musical score for section 1, featuring staves for Alto Sax/B. Clar., Ten, Dr, Fl, Tbn, Pno, and Bass. The score is mostly blank with some initial notation and rests.

Alto Sax/
B. Clar.

Ten

Dr

Fl

Tbn

Pno

Bass

2

Winds/pno texture, crossfading w/ bass solo

Play half as slow as piano, in your own time.
Establish texture then slow cross fade with bass.

Bass Clarinet
in B \flat

2

B. Cl. *sub p*

Ten

Dr

Play half as slow as piano, in your own time.
Establish texture then slow cross fade with bass.

Fl *sub p*

Tbn

In your own time, very legato, delicate. Winds play same figures, but much slower.
Slowly dissolve into next section

Pno *heavy pedal, let ring*
sub p

Ped.

Wait for pno/winds texture to establish, then brief arco solo, flautando/harmonics feel

Bass

6 Slow fade to bass/pno

B. Cl.

Ten

Dr

Fl Slow fade to bass/pno

Tbn

Pno As winds fade, hover around this pitch with bass, then cue next line together

Bass As winds fade, hover around this pitch with piano, then cue next line together

arco

3

Pno/bass descending line 2x, Nicole starts solo

2x

7

B. Cl.

Ten

Dr

Solo around this pno/bass line, sparsely at first

Fl

Tbn

Pno

Bass

2x loosely w/ bass, then to next section together

2x loosely w/ pno, then to next section together

(still arco)

4

♩ = 136
4x

Pno/bass start groove, Nicole continues solo
Long, slow build...

13

B. Cl.

Ten

Dr

Fl

Tbn

Pno

Bass

1-2x - don't play
3-4x - Sparse colors, no time yet

Continue solo, slow build
Improvise around pno/bass pitches
Pno right hand:

1-2x - Left hand only
3-4x - Add right hand

8^{vb}

pizz

17 **5** 4x To Alto Sax.

B. Cl.

Ten

Dr

Fl

Tbn

Pno

Bass

Lock in time w/ pno and bass, start long, slow build.

6 4x

Alto Saxophone

21

Alto Sax.

Join solo w/ Nicole, sparse at first. Impvise around pno/bass pitches pno (concert pitch):

Ten

Dr

Continue solo w/ remote partner pno:

Fl

Tbn

Pno

Bass

7

4x

Play with this line loosely, not strict time:

Alto Sax.

Musical notation for Alto Saxophone. The staff begins in 4/4 time and changes to 2/4 time at the third measure. It features a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, including a phrase that spans the time signature change. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Continue solo, w/ tbn
Pno:

Ten

Musical notation for Tenor Saxophone. The staff begins in 4/4 time and changes to 2/4 time at the third measure. It features a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, including a phrase that spans the time signature change. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Dr

Rhythmic notation for Drums. The staff shows a consistent rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in 4/4 time, which changes to a pattern of eighth notes in 2/4 time at the third measure. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Gradually end solo and move to notated line:

Fl

Musical notation for Flute. The staff begins in 4/4 time and changes to 2/4 time at the third measure. It features a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, including a phrase that spans the time signature change. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Solo w/ remote partner

Tbn

Rhythmic notation for Tuba/Euphonium. The staff shows a consistent rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in 4/4 time, which changes to a pattern of eighth notes in 2/4 time at the third measure. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Pno

Musical notation for Piano. The staff is split into two systems: a right-hand system and a left-hand system. Both systems begin in 4/4 time and change to 2/4 time at the third measure. The right-hand system features a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, including a phrase that spans the time signature change. The left-hand system features a bass line with eighth and quarter notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Bass

Musical notation for Bass. The staff begins in 4/4 time and changes to 2/4 time at the third measure. It features a bass line with eighth and quarter notes, including a phrase that spans the time signature change. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

29 **8** 4x Sim.

Alto Sax.

Ten

Dr

Fl

Tbn

Pno

Bass

Continue solo, w/ tbn
Pno:

33 **9** 4x Sim.

Alto Sax. 

Ten 

Dr 

Fl 

Tbn 

Pno 

Bass 

End solo, move to playing notation:

SOLO w/ trombone:

If no Ray, keep soloing w/ drums

37 **10** 4x

Alto Sax.

Ten

Dr

Fl

Tbn

Pno

Bass

Continue solo, build

41 Extend, build density/intensity: Group improvisation, 1' to 2'

Musical score for group improvisation, measures 41 to 44. The score is written for seven instruments: Alto Saxophone, Tenor Saxophone, Drums, Flute, Trombone, Piano, and Bass. The time signature is 4/4. Each instrument part contains a slash (/) in every measure, indicating improvisation. The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes Alto Sax., Ten., Dr., and Fl. The second system includes Tbn., Pno., and Bass. The Pno. part has a circled '8' above the first measure. The piece concludes with a 3/4 time signature change at the end of measure 44.

11

Play line on your own at first, out of sync vary tempos, building
Eventually find a loose tutti unison, repeat and fade together

42

Alto Sax.

Ten

Dr

Fl

Tbn

Pno

Bass

To B. Fl.
except Zurich
To B. Fl.

Brief cadenza
soloist w/ drums:
Solo w/ drums, spacious, delicate

48

Alto Sax. 

Ten 

Dr  Duo, colors, no time

Fl  Zurich: Solo w/ drums
Others: rest

Tbn 

Pno 



Bass 

12


Slow, delicate. Pno/flute/drums play phrase 3x, Bass+soloist brief fills after each time.

49 Continue solo, delicate, loose call/response feel with bass

Solo fill w/ Mark:

Alto Sax. 

Ten 


Dr 

Sparsely color phrase line with ensemble

Mark+Soloist fill:

For Zurich concert: Continue solo, loose call/response feel w/ bass
For Amherst/NY: Loosely with pno, coloring/abstracting pitches with airy timbres

Zurich: solo fill w/ Mark
Amherst/NY: rest

Bass Flute 

Tbn 

Pno 

Improvise w/ soloist, delicate, loose call/response feel
pno/flute line cues:

Fill w/ soloist:


Bass 

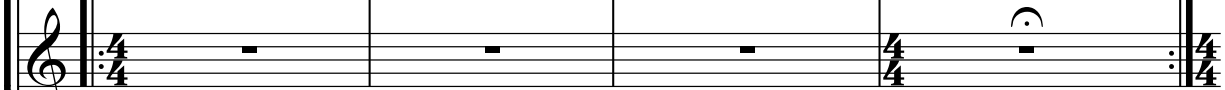
13

Same idea, also 3x (pitches change)

Solo fill
w/ Mark:

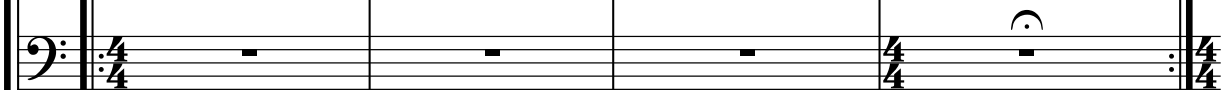
53

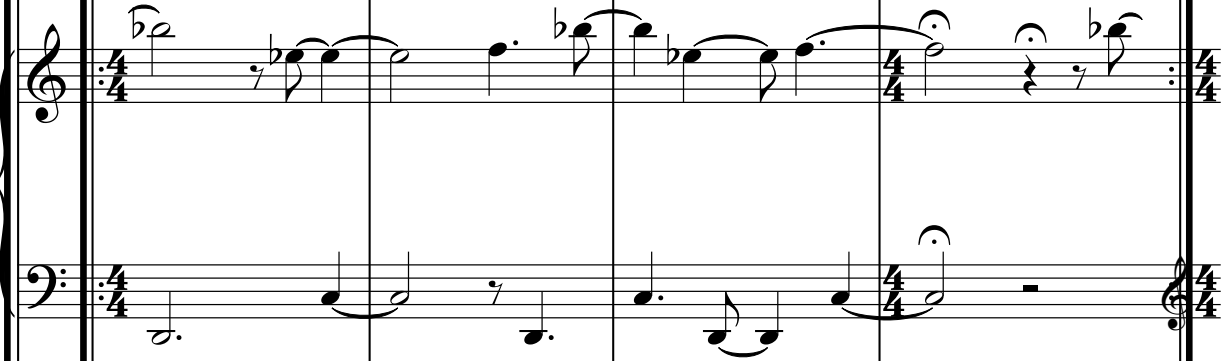
Alto Sax. 

Ten 

Dr 

B. Fl. 

Tbn 

Pno 

Bass 

To Fl.

14

3x, very slow

1x - rest
2x and 3x - solo w/ piano
pno pitches:

57

Alto Sax.

Ten

Dr

Flute

Fl.

Tbn

Pno

Bass

1x play chords alone, mostly as written but freely
2x-3x - remote soloist joins you

Short duo improvisation
Find cadence then
pno starts next section.

15

61

Alto Sax.

Ten

Dr

Fl.

Tbn

Pno


Bass


Pno starts very slow - long accelerando + build.
Soloist joins, then Mark, then others layer in.
Joyful cacaphony till end

16

62 pitches (loose):

Alto Sax. 

Ten 

Dr 

Fl. 

Tbn 

Pno 

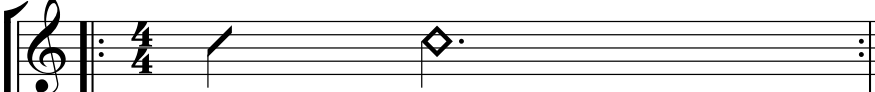



Bass 


Wait a while then add layer, loosely w/ pno but freely:


Eventually pno/bass/drums repeat waves of this gesture to trigger a quick tutti dissolve (no long fade)

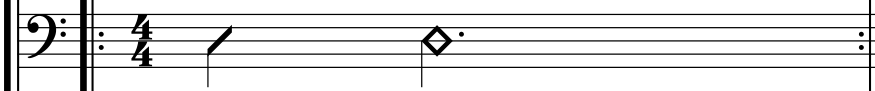
66


Alto Sax. 

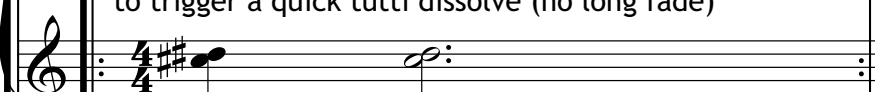
Ten 

Dr 

Fl. 

Tbn 

Pno 

Bass 

Eventually pno/bass/drums repeat waves of this gesture to trigger a quick tutti dissolve (no long fade)

Eventually pno/bass/drums repeat waves of this gesture to trigger a quick tutti dissolve (no long fade)

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some kind of harmonics zone around this sonority