

DEEP LISTENING PUBLICATIONS

By Pauline Oliveros

Earth Ears : A Sonic Ritual



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A Sonic Ritual

Pauline Oliveros

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EARTH EARS

A Sonic Ritual

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Any instrument or voice capable of the following the given instructions may be used in the performance ensemble. For this reason *Earth Ears* lends itself well to a cross cultural ensemble. Softer sounding instruments should be carefully amplified in order to balance with the louder instruments in the ensemble.

Earth Ears is a cyclic form consisting of four sections per cycle. The sections are:

Pattern – Transition – Change – Transition

Timing: A performance consists of at least four and a half cycles from 20 minutes to several hours depending on the skill and concentration of the performers. Any part of a cycle may be prolonged by performer consensus.

Pattern: each player invents and plays a repeatable **pattern** of tones, chords, sounds and/or silences during each cycle of the piece. The rhythm and tempo of a **pattern** is established independently by each player. For each cycle one **pattern** is to be repeated consistently, exactly, in the same rhythm and tempo. Very simple **patterns** are recommended as they are easier to maintain and easier for other players to hear. Gradually a consistent, stable, composite, **pattern** representing the sum of the total group should be clearly heard by all players.

When the group **pattern** is clearly established and stabilized, players try to match tones, sounds or rhythms, articulations and dynamics from another players' **pattern without** changing their own **pattern**. The matching should be exactly together with the other player's rhythm while maintaining the rhythm and tempo of their own **pattern**. The **pattern** must be repeated consistently whether very simple or complex in order that others may hear it clearly and be able to react to it. A rich coloring of the basic group **pattern** is expected.

Transition: options from **pattern** to **change** are as follows:

- ∞ Being **silent** for shorter or longer durations.
- ∞ **Decreasing** by playing less and less of any element of the current **pattern**. For example; gradually slower, gradually dropping parts of the **pattern** or fading out slowly.
- ∞ **Increasing** by playing more and more of any element of the current **pattern**.

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∞ **Soloing** by creating a bridge between the stability of the **pattern** section and the instability of the **change** section. The **solo** should grow from the material of the **pattern** to **change** or from the last sound of **change** to the new **pattern**. A **solo** may be simple or complex, short or long. A **solo** may overlap another performer's **solo** for short durations.

During a **transition** a performer may either choose any one option or sample all of the options, including a return to the old **pattern** or **change**. For example after choosing to be **silent** a **solo** could be played, or after **decreasing, increasing** and/or returning briefly to the old **pattern**, etc.

Change means no repetition, imitation or echoing of any element or any unit of sound produced by any individual player or players in relation to one another. Each unit of sound should be different. Each silence should be of different duration, each **change** section should be different from the previous cycle.

The same options for a **transition** from **change** back to **pattern** as **pattern** to **change** including a return to **change** and/or **pattern** are to be used. For the options **increasing** or **decreasing** reference is made to the last sound produced during the current **change** section.

After the second **transition** when a new cycle begins performers may be more or less together. Lagging or leading into a new section should be done with musical awareness that the new section has, or has not, begun.

NOTE:

Players should spread out appropriately in the performance space, surrounding the audience if possible, so that sounds pass through the audience from player to player.

During **transitions** those players who are mobile should indicate **transitions** by moving gradually to a new location in the performance space.

- First cycle:** Use only one tone, chord or sound in the **pattern**.
(The **pattern** may be more or less complicated rhythmically).
Use only one option during the **transition**
Use only one sound/silence during **change**.
Use only one option for the **transition** to the second cycle.
- Second Cycle:** Use only two different tones, sounds or chords in the **pattern**.
Use only two options during the **transition**.
Use only two sounds/silences during **change**.
Use any two options during the **transition** to the third cycle.
- Third Cycle;** Use only three different tones, sounds or chords in the **pattern**.
Use any three options during the **transition**.
Use only three different sounds and silences for **change**.
Use any three options during the **transition** to the fourth cycle.
- Fourth Cycle:** Use any number of tones, sounds or chords in the **pattern**.
Use any options during the **transition**.
Use any number of different sounds/silences during **change**.
Use any options during the **transition** to the fifth cycle.
- Fifth Cycle:** Use only one tone, chord or sound in the **pattern**.
suggest a **transition** using any options but continue returning to the **pattern** until an ending is felt.