

THEME IN SEARCH OF VARIATIONS III

FOR FLUTE, TRUMPET, PIANO, & PERCUSSION

MARK APPLEBAUM, 2008

Theme in Search of Variations III

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for Beta Collide

with thanks to the Stanford Institute for Creativity in the Arts

Duration

approximately 4 minutes

Instrumentation

flute — doubling piccolo & alto flute

trumpet in C

piano

percussion

* * *

Although it is an autonomous piece that may be performed on its own, *Theme in Search of Variations III* invites musical responses in the form of other pieces—variations that might be performed in succession on a given concert. It was originally composed as a provocation to my students of the undergraduate composition seminar at Stanford University, composers who then wrote individual pieces—variations—of their own.

Theme in Search of Variations III consists largely of colorful and frenetic, yet intimate and quiet “sound constellations,” frequently constituted by abundant noise components (as distinguished from focused pitches). The notated events are accompanied by very restrained dynamic indications. However, the performers are correct to adjust these upward—according to the acoustic circumstances of the performance space—in order to convey the music to the audience. (To that end, amplification, judiciously applied, may be considered.) Although the ensemble will wish to “project” (in the sense of expression, not dynamic) the musical detail, a quality of smallness and intimacy should be maintained. Although challenging, the players should strive to contain the amplitudes of counter-idiomatic gestures that might speak more comfortably at a greater dynamic.

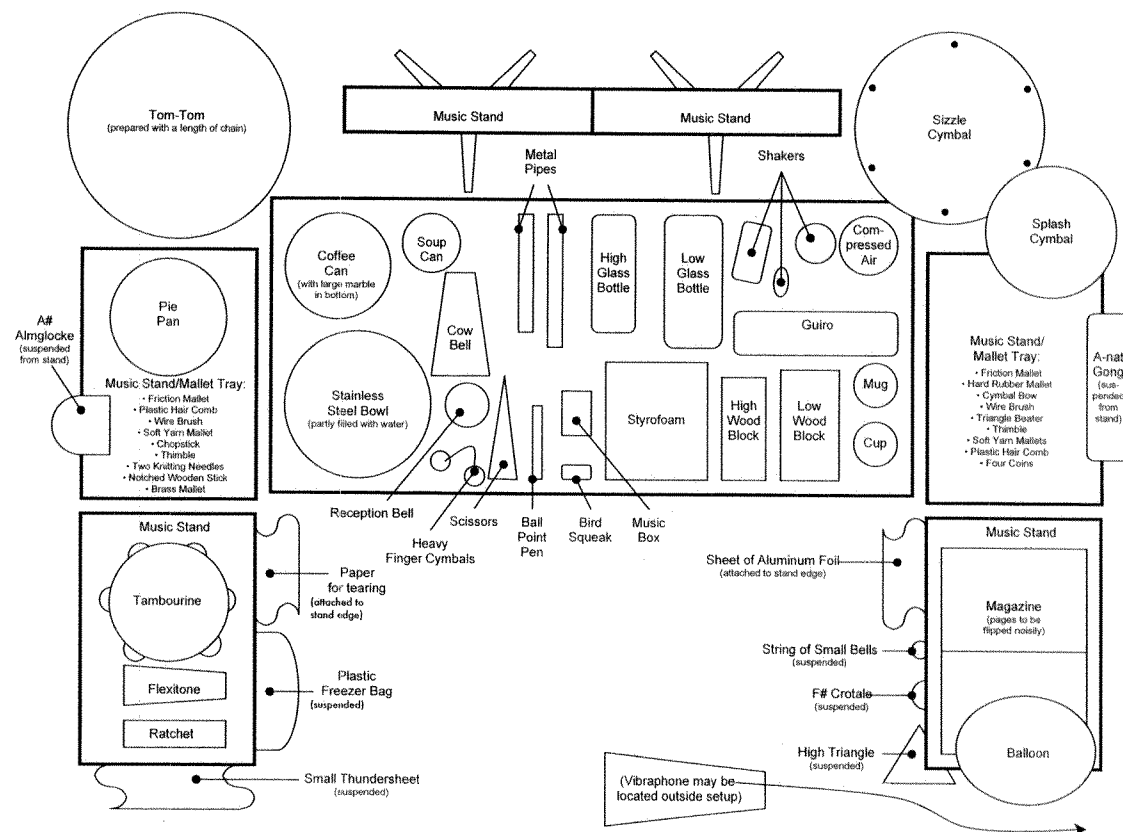
PERCUSSION INSTRUMENTATION

- Vibraphone (with motor off)
- Small thundersheet
- Ratchet
- Flexitone
- Tambourine
- Plastic freezer bag
- Paper for tearing
- A# almglocke (suspended, but without clapper)
- Metal pie pan
- Tom-tom (prepared with a length of chain)
- Metal coffee can (with a large marble at the bottom)
- Metal soup can
- Stainless steel bowl (partly filled with water)
- Cow bell
- Reception bell
- Heavy finger cymbals
- Scissors
- Ball point pen with thumb click
- High and low metal pipes
- "Music box" (a hand crank mechanical musical movement)
- "Bird squeak" (Audubon bird call—metal key twisted inside red wooden enclosure)
- High and low glass bottles
- Piece of styrofoam
- Three varied shakers (e.g. maraca, egg shaker, caxixi rattle, goat hoof or nutshell rattle, plastic baby rattle, tin can rattle, basket rattle, aluminum tube shaker)
- Spray can of "aerosol" compressed air
- Guiro
- Ceramic "coffee" mug
- Styrofoam (ossia: paper) cup
- Suspended sizzle cymbal
- Suspended splash cymbal
- Small or medium A-natural gong (e.g. Thai/Burmese)
- Sheet of aluminum foil (suspended)
- String of small bells (e.g. Indian)
- F# crotale (higher octave)
- High triangle
- Large magazine or catalog with pages to be flipped noisily
- Balloon to be massaged

MALLETS/BEATERS

- Friction mallets (e.g. superball wedged on the end of a pointed Revlon nail file; 2)
- Hard rubber mallet
- Cymbal bow
- Wire brushes (2)
- Thimble
- Soft yarn mallets (2)
- Plastic hair combs (2)
- Hard yarn vibraphone mallets (4)
- Wooden chopstick
- Aluminum knitting needles (2)
- Notched wooden stick (e.g. ridged "rhythm stick")
- Brass mallet
- Four large coins (e.g. U.S. quarters)

The proposed percussion layout has two principal advantages: the physical placement of instruments and mallets are optimized according to the composed musical phrases; and the layout allows the performer to rotate from left to right once over the course of the first half of the piece, and from right to left once during the second half. The layout is, however, only a proposal and may be modified to suit the performer.



FORMAL STRUCTURE—A POSTMORTEM FOR THE CURIOUS

Through fastidious analysis, or dumb luck, the musicians will discover that the piece is divided into three sections corresponding to the appearance of alto flute, concert flute, and piccolo. In the first section the quartet plays three sequences of unison ensemble articulations. The first sequence consists of musical events that are unpredictable in nature ("what will be next?") and temporality ("when will it be?"). In the second sequence events are unpredictable in nature but predictable in time (occurrences at a regular rhythmic interval). And finally, events in the third sequence are predictable in nature (a repeated sound object) but unpredictable in time. This triptych, whose three parts might be represented by the letters ABC, is repeated during the next section featuring concert flute, except now the quartet has split into two duos: flute+piano & trumpet+percussion; furthermore, the order of events has rotated, with the latter duo explicating the cycle BCA while the former duo explicates two cycles: BCA and then CAB. In the final section, featuring piccolo, the group dissolves into four solo voices. The piccolo articulates four cycles: ABC, BCA, CAB, and ABC; the trumpet completes three cycles: CAB, ABC, and BCA; the piano articulates two cycles: ABC and BCA; and the percussion explicates one cycle: CAB.

Among these three sections four interruptions of contrasting material occur, the first featuring solo alto flute, the next a duo of flute and trumpet, the third a trio of flute, trumpet, and piano, and finally a quartet of piccolo, trumpet, piano, and vibraphone. These interruptions share a common harmonic reservoir (a particular palindromic canon) and progress from monophonic to highly polyphonic, contrapuntal settings.

All in all it doesn't really make a whole lot of sense, but that's what happened. Perhaps of more relevance, the players should know that the interruptions are intended as expressively conventional material, whereas the sequences of sound constellations are intended as much as acts of *musical choreography* as of *musical composition*, a fact that will become abundantly evident to the pianist and percussionist who are asked to undertake expansively corporeal enterprises.

TRANSPOSITIONS

Alto flute sounds one perfect 4th lower than notated.
Piccolo sounds one octave higher than notated.

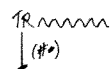
ACCIDENTAL POLICY

Accidentals apply only to the noteheads to which they immediately adhere. Additional "courtesy" natural signs are often supplied.

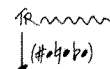
LEGEND



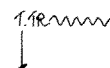
A grace note figure to be played as fast as possible. The sound of the figures may be shorter than they appear graphically on the page.



Trills are made to the note given in parentheses.



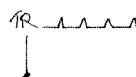
A trill made to the parenthetical notes in a rapid, spontaneous, and unpredictable order.



A "timbral" trill made to the nearest alternate fingering or microtone.



The trill speed changes.



"Limping trill"; instead of an even oscillation between the base note and trilled note, the duration of the base note is substantially longer (approximately 3:1 or 4:1) than the trilled note; the pattern should be regular, however.









Glissandi occur over the entire duration given. Stems are provided to depict duration and do not suggest moments of re-articulation or emphasis—unless accompanied by an accent mark. The end pitch is heard as such, albeit briefly.






Progression from one state to another.



The vibrato speed and depth changes.

	Quarter-tone flat.
	Quarter-tone sharp.
	Lower (flat) by a microtone.
	Niente.
	Flutter tongue in flute and trumpet; rapid, unmeasured tremolo in percussion.
L.V.	Let vibrate.
	The sound is stopped suddenly.

Vocal Sounds

	The pitch class is hummed in any octave; this often accompanies the same note played on the instrument.
	Kissing, smacking sound; for flute and trumpet this can be made against the instrument's mouthpiece.
	Tongue click.

The adopted notational convention of the following sounds is the international phonetic alphabet which is widely referenced, including appendix 11 of Alfred Blatter's *Instrumentation and Orchestration*, second edition.

S	Hissing sound: "s" as in the English word "silence." This may be a short articulation or sustained.
ʃ	Hushing sound: "sh" as in the English word "hush." This may be a short articulation or sustained.
tʃ	Explosive CH sound: "ch" as in the English word "chance." This is always a short, staccato articulation.

Flute(s)



An alternate fingering is applied to the repeated note.



Pizzicato articulation, a plosive "pah."



Tongue ram; sounding approximately one major seventh lower than the notated pitch.



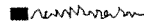
Voiced key slap (cover the blowhole).



Unvoiced key clicks.



Spitty, noisy sounds; cover lip plate and avoid clear pitches.



Whistle tone.



Inhale audibly through the flute.



Exhale audibly through the flute.



Inhale audibly through the flute while rapidly moving the fingers on the keys.



Exhale audibly through the flute while rapidly fingering in order to produce the approximate pitch contour.

Trumpet

The trumpet requires a harmon mute, stem in.

o Open.

+ Muted (with the hand).



Exhale audibly through the trumpet while rapidly and noisily fingering the valves.

AIR TR



Exhale audibly through the trumpet while trilling rapidly and noisily—but regularly—among two valve combinations.



Spitty, noisy sounds.



Unvoiced valve clatter.



Hand pop; produced by striking the mouthpiece with an open palm.

In the following explanations the word *chromatic* suggests a scale of individual half steps; in contrast, *glissando* refers to a continuous pitch continuum (portamento), often employing half valves.



Lift; the note is approached by a chromatic ascent.



Rip; the note is approached by an ascending glissando.



Doit; the note is followed by a short ascending glissando.



Slow Doit; the note is followed by a significant ascending glissando.



Half-valve portamento to the highest note possible; like a slow doit, but continuing upward excessively.



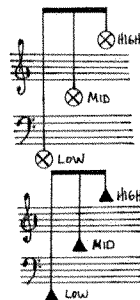
Fall; the note is followed by a descending glissando.



Spill; the note is followed by a chromatic descent.

Piano

As the inside of the piano is accessed frequently, the pianist may find it helpful to remove the music desk and place it further inside the piano, at an angle across the rails of the harp and the front edge of the case.



Three percussive sounds—low, middle, and high—made by tapping a fingertip or rapping the knuckles. The sounds may be made on the case, harp, lid, soundboard, and/or bench.



Pizzicato; low, middle, or high register string, as indicated, is plucked with the fingernail. (The short, over-strung portion of the string—that beyond the bridge—may be used in the high register.)



Fast "guiro" scraping of a low, wound string with the fingernail.



Slow "guiro" scraping of a low, wound string with the fingernail.



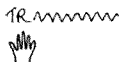
Fast strumming of several strings with the fleshy part of the fingertip, sounding like one articulation; the arrow indicates descending pitches. When notated beneath the bass staff, lower register strings are strummed; notations occurring between the staves indicate strumming in the middle register.



Slow strumming of several strings with the fleshy part of the fingertip, sounding like successive individual articulations; the arrow indicates descending pitches. When notated beneath the bass staff, lower register strings are strummed; notations occurring between the staves indicate strumming in the middle register.



Thump/smack several strings with the palm of an open hand. When notated beneath the bass staff, lower register strings are thumped; notations occurring between the staves indicate middle register strings.



Rapid "bongo" trill with two hands directly on two neighboring groups of strings; use fingers 2, 3, & 4 of each hand. When notated beneath the bass staff, lower register strings are trilled; notations occurring between the staves indicate middle register strings.



Mute; the note is fingered on the keyboard while the corresponding string is firmly muted with the other hand at the near end of the string, producing a muted, thud-like articulation but still conveying the associated fundamental pitch.



Play a low note on the keyboard while lightly fingering the corresponding string to produce a complex, colorful harmonic that is ringing (except when notated with a short rhythmic value). Four different sounds—A, B, C, & D—are determined beforehand and articulated at the given notation.



Harmonic glissando; repeatedly articulate a note on the keyboard while moving a finger (on the other hand) along some length of the corresponding string.



Accelerando.



A chromatic cluster in the approximate range depicted.



Pedal noises.

Percussion



Dead stroke.

In measures 7-9 the designations "C" & "T" refer to articulations made with a chopstick and thimble, respectively.

Note: the paper can be torn with one hand by hanging it from a music stand with part of its top edge taped to the stand and various vertical strips slightly "pre-torn" before the performance. In this manner the player need only grab one strip and pull downward.

Note: a supply of styrofoam cups and pieces of paper will be useful for rehearsals as they will be crumpled and torn, respectively (and respectfully).

THEME IN SEARCH OF VARIATIONS III

FOR BETA COLLIDE

M. APPLEBAUM, 2008

4/4 ♩ = 60

Auto Flute

Trumpet

Piano

PERCUSSION

HOERMAN NOTE STEM IN
*AIR TR

*NOISY VALVES

5

3

+

TS

P

mp

TR

pp

POCO

ppp

8ve

pp

POCO

SUB

pp

(OCTAVE IN TRUMPET INDICATES PEDAL TONES)

*TR

ppp

*TR

ppp

15ma

pp

ppp

pp

3

+

THUNDERSHEET

P

L.V.

pp

L.V.

pp

POCO

3

PLASTIC FREEZER BAG

(BÜSENDORFER OSSIA: 8ve →)

FLEXITONE

ppp

*NOTE: FLUTE + TRUMPET TRILL SPEEDS ARE NOT SYNCHRONIZED.

10

BREATHY

VIBRATO

DRD

SUB. PPP

5

4

ALTO FLOTE

TRUMPET

PIANO

PERCUSSION

16

5

4

(AS MEASURE 6)

14

PPP

21

TRUMPET

PIANO

PERCUSSION

PEDAL NOISE

BIRD SQUEAL

5

2

3

15ma

PPP

3

2

SHAKER 1

6

PPP

3

SYNTHFOAM: FINGER SCRATCHING

5

4

WHISTLE

PPP

3

R

R

PPP

21

mp

21

mp

MUSIC BOX (INDIVIDUAL NOTES)

BALL POINT PEN

SCISSORS

mp

26

FLUTE

TRUMPET

PIANO

PERCUSSION

Handwritten musical score for measures 26-31. The Flute and Trumpet parts are active, featuring various dynamics (pp, mp) and articulations. The Piano and Percussion parts are mostly silent, with some light percussion indicated by short vertical lines.

32

FLUTE

TRUMPET

PIANO

PERCUSSION

Handwritten musical score for measures 32-37. The Flute and Trumpet parts continue. The Percussion part is highly detailed, featuring various effects and instruments: WIRE BRUSH STIRRED IN STYROFOAM CUP, CONG SCRAPE: WIRE BRUSH, TRIANGLE: WIRE BRUSH, SHAKER 3, STRING OF BELLS, BALLOON MASSAGE, SCRAPE, CROTALE: TRIANGLE BEATER, and BLOW ON ALUMINUM FOIL. Dynamics range from pp to mp.

