

FREDRIC RZEWSKI: SOUND POOL (1969) for large ensemble ad lib.

The SOUND POOL is a free improvisation session whose limits are undefined. It is left open at both ends and in the middle. Any sound might be part of the music, depending on how you hear it.

Bring your own sound, and add it to the pool when you feel the moment is right. Don't take anybody else's instrument away from him. Make both sounds and silences. The more people are playing, the less there is for each individual to do. If everybody plays all the time, the result will be boring, or unpleasant. On the contrary, a general silence can be interesting.

Loud instruments (drums, electric guitars) should be set up in a place where they don't dominate utterly. The space belongs to everybody. Loud instruments should accompany softer ones (flutes, harmonicas): that is, they should be played soft enough so that the softer sounds can be heard occasionally. There are three kinds of activity:

Silence: listening to, and reflecting on, the sounds around you; thinking about what you are going to do.

Accompaniment: providing a background, or support, for a sound made by someone else; any sound over which someone could play a solo.

Solo: a prominent or leading sound, a thematic statement.

Let every player at some time play a solo, or have the possibility of doing so. Let each soloist play a theme, or variation on a theme. The stage is the appropriate area for the playing of solos meant to be heard by many people.

Form groups: move around, find someone with whom you can play together, and play a duet. Let there be a group on the stage, several others around the hall, and any number of individuals, listening or playing, either standing apart, or occasionally joining with one or another group, or coordinating the action of two or more groups.

If somebody is playing something you don't like, stop what you are doing and listen to him for awhile, then try playing with him. If somebody seems to be playing too loudly, try to find another location in the room where you can hear better. If somebody plays very loudly for a long time, to the general irritation of many people-Tubby the Tuba-indicate to him in some way that he is taking up too much space. Avoid, however, telling other people to stop.

If you are a strong musician, mostly accompanying work, that is, help weaker players to sound better. Seek out areas where the music is flagging, and organize groups. Be a timekeeper: provide a basic pulse, without drowning out the others. Let the stronger players circulate among the various groups, rather

than congregating in one place. Let them stop from time to time and check out the general ensemble, and consider how to establish unifying links among the single groups.

Play long sounds and short ones, soft as well as loud; discover new ways of playing, other than those you are used to, and influence other people to play in different ways. Sometimes imitate what another person is doing, and sometimes play in sharp contrast (for example: against a long sustained sound, make short, spaced, percussive attacks-and vice versa). Sing. Use the hands and feet. Play the room. Make sounds by striking on floors, walls and furniture (taking care not to damage anything).

Find your own theme and improvise on it. Improvise on somebody else's theme. Combine the two.

Most of the time accompany somebody else, in such a way that will make him want to accompany you. Occasionally play for yourself alone, without regard for whatever else is happening.

In this agglomeration of individuals it is not important to be together all the time, to do the same things at the same time- just as there is no reason why everybody should have to work from nine to five; we may be able to achieve our purpose (good music) more efficiently by avoiding such uniformity- by "letting a hundred flowers bloom."

If appointments have been made, though, it is sometimes important to keep them; and there are occasions when it is important for people to draw together, to organize. Here is a simple procedure for influencing the music in the direction of unity or variety, to be applied especially when nothing else you do seems to make any difference.

Listen for the strongest, most prominent sounds in the total mass. If you wish to influence the music towards *order* (unity), play together with (simultaneously with) these sounds. If you wish to create *disorder* (variety) play in the *spaces in between* these sounds.

This music is not necessarily pleasant or unpleasant - although certainly it is our responsibility that it not be boring or painful- but it should be truthful. It may tell us something about how we relate to one another.

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