

FREDERIC RZEWSKI:

SECOND STRUCTURE (1972) for solo or ensemble ad lib.

For Petr Kotík and Other Friends

A structure in six parts, or cycles, each of which is built in real time (improvised) using a freely articulated sequence of six stages.

The character of each cycle generally, and of each stage within a cycle in particular, is determined by the performer(s) in accordance with the following basic image:

Six dimensions of time:

- I. Present
2. Recent
3. Imminent
4. Past
5. Future
6. (All) Time

The performer moves through this cycle six times, in such a way that in the first cycle characteristics associated with the image "Present" predominate, in the second those associated with "Recent," and so on, so that in each cycle the six stages are interpreted in a different way, and macro- and microstructures are reflected in each other. The whole has the form of a 6×6 grid which is retained as a conceptual framework in the mind of the performer. Above and beyond the minimum necessary determinations for a given performance, such as the approximate duration (optimally twenty to thirty minutes) and the choice of instruments or circuitry to be employed, as little as possible is to be fixed beforehand; the music should ideally arise in real time from the spontaneous application of the grid in the mind to the unstructured raw material of improvisation. The grid thus has both a generative function, providing the performer with a map of his/her psychic terrain and a designated path with a beginning and an end, which may assist, the free exercise of fantasy; and an inhibitive function, acting as a sort of filter and suppressing the tendency to remain in one place or to wander aimlessly.

Stage 1

Qualities associated with "present" time:

Separateness (no apparent relation between one event and the next); *fragmentariness* (partial expression of an idea or mere allusion to it, rather than complete statement of it); *uniqueness* (non-repeatability and non-imitability); *transitoriness* (brevity, speed); *ubiquity* (the ability to be in many places at once: thought travelling faster than light); *superficiality* (wit, dancing on and off the surface of things).

Guiltlessness: Approach the material in a state of innocence. Refrain from judging yourself.

Extend yourself in many different directions at once. Keep moving from one geographical area to another. Concretely: Dance around in space, move from one end of the instrument to another, make some radical change in some parameter with every sound. (This does not mean: play fast.)

Explore space in an infantile, abandoned, random fashion. Play in such a way that each event is a separate entity. Fracture the material; if an idea comes into your head express only part of it. Repeat nothing, and do not linger on anyone event or develop it in any way. Make every sound different from the one preceding; leap from one idea to another, always landing on new places. Some of these you may return to in the future; but don't bother with that here. Don't try to remember anything; but consider that everything you perceive is registered somewhere in your mind and may be recalled.

Generally, between any two events let there be no demonstrable relation.

Act as if this were the case, even if you do not believe it.

Let there be a long space between the end of one sound and the beginning of the next.

Stage 2

Qualities associated with "recent" time:

Recognizability (meaningful relation between an event and the immediately preceding one); *repeatability* (doubling); *introspectiveness* (memory); *freshness* (observation of prominent features); *likeness* (resemblance); *discovery* (location of a thing with respect to another thing).

Repeat something you have just done, without having intended to repeat it. Begin to retrace your steps, at first unintentionally, then deliberately. Do not stop exploring, do not expand on the material at all, but return to it. Thus Stage I continues as you begin to introduce Stage 2: In the spontaneously generated material of Stage I, produced without forethought or intention, seize upon features that appear more striking or interesting, and let these reoccur after a short time as echoes of themselves.

Let there be a short space between the end of one sound and the beginning of the next.

Stage 3

Qualities associated with "imminent" time:

Identity (evidence of will); *reactiveness* (conveying emotions: hope, despair, desire, fear, et cetera); *individuality* (separation in space and time); *potentiality* (for example of conflict, or growth); *invention* (calculation).

Continue Stages I and 2 as you begin to introduce Stage 3.

The mere repetitions of fragments that were characteristic of Stage 2 now become complete thematic statements. Extend each idea for increasingly long durations, and introduce variation. At the same time, build up a reservoir of thematic material, with the idea in mind that you will return to this material and expand it in the immediate future. Let each "theme" have a distinguishing characteristic, which remains constant, while others may change: one or more fixed parameters, such as register, tonal area, timbre, degree of complexity, stylistic reference, et cetera. Let each thematic idea develop, become a personality, separate and distinct from others. Introduce new themes and develop their immanent potentialities, until you have several (five, six, or more) such themes at your disposal.

Let there be contiguity between events: Let one sound begin when another ends.

Stage 4

Qualities associated with "past" time:

Complexity (multiplicity); *conflict* (interpenetration); *counterpoint* (polyphony).

Stages I, 2, and 3 continue as Stage 4 is introduced. Stage 4 begins when the "themes" of Stage 3 are expanded to the extent that they begin to encroach upon each other's territory. Example: Two "themes" in Stage 3 occupy relatively narrow frequency bands that are relatively remote from each other. The bandwidth of each is expanded until they meet. Another example: One theme in Stage 3 is a simple tonal melody, which could be suggestive of the "Internationale." Another "theme" is a texture built out of angular, aperiodic structures and complex spectra. The two are subjected to progressive transformations in such a way that they begin to take on each other's characteristics.

Material from the past reappears, not as simple repetition in its original form, but mixed up together, and transformed by this mixing-up. The process of variation and development is radicalised, carried to extremes. The separate and distinct "themes" of Stage 3 now appear in combination, altering and altered by each other's nature. A process of compression takes place (stretto):

The individual themes are stacked up against one another more and more tightly; it is as though they were all going on together, all the time. At the point of maximum compression, the antinomies latent in the original material achieve their fullest expression, before a transformation takes place in Stage 5, in which the old themes merge and disappear, and new material is created.

Let one sound begin before the end of another sound; let there be a relation of intrusion and overlapping between any two events.

Stage 5

Qualities associated with "future" time:

Departure (cutting loose); *transformation* (passage to a new state); *simplicity* (unity); *simultaneity* (homophony); *suddenness* (instantaneity); *duration* (pause, cesura); *mixture* (synthesis); *consonance* (simple numerical relations in frequency and rhythm).

Stage 5 begins when the process of compression in Stage 4 has reached an extreme point and cannot be continued; for example when the speed, complexity, intensity, et cetera, of the structures being improvised are such that the performer loses control; when the sense of an extreme state has been reached by means of intensive mental or physical activity (ecstasy, fatigue, et cetera); or simply when the performer decides that the moment is right to make a sudden change and introduce entirely new material.

Whatever the nature of the material introduced in Stage 5, it is totally unexpected and appears suddenly; at the same time, it is completely different in some way from all of the preceding material, which is dropped for the duration. The effect of Stage 5 should be similar to that of reaching the top of a hill after an ascent and witnessing the sudden appearance of a broad expanse of space, and possibly a sense of being suspended, or of timelessness.

Characteristics could include: isolated single attacks, with short and long decays; long durations; slow tempo; large distances, in time and space, between events; simultaneous attacks; timbral mixtures (combining two distinct timbres to produce a third).

Let one sound begin together with the beginning of another sound.

Stage 6

Qualities associated with "time in general":

Transitoriness; permanence. Periodicity; randomness. Beginning; ending.
Direction; force. Process; goal. Destruction; creation. Inflexibility; unpredictability. Strife; reconciliation.
Expansion; concentration.

Stage 6 is a cadenza in which the previous material is both dropped and brought back; a concluding summary which will be followed by a new beginning. It is a dropping of formal restraints for a duration, ending with a cadence.

Stage 6 sums up the character of each cycle.

The entire cycle becomes a dash followed by a dot, in which Stages 1 through 4 form the dash, Stage 6 the dot, with Stage 5 as the space between.

Something like sliding down the hill, into the next valley.

A transitional conclusion, preparing for the return to the present, to zero.

Liberating the imagination in order to devise a plan which, when carried out, will liberate the imagination further.

A very condensed recapitulation of all the preceding stages; perhaps selective; surveying what has been done, and what there is to do; perhaps containing some allusion to what is to come. Some randomness; some repetition; some variation; some counterpoint; some space; some plain music, whatever comes into your head, without planning (yet as part of a plan). Possibly tranquil, or breathless, or both.

Sounds occurring with no particular co-ordination with respect to other sounds; echoing other sounds; occurring at the ends of other sounds; occurring in the middle of other sounds, overlapping them; beginning or ending together with other sounds; leading other sounds, breaking a silence, causing other sounds.

Cycle 1: Sense of touch. No judgments. Exploratory. Exploring space. Random sampling, always in a different place. "Abstract." Zero dimensionality:
points.

Cycle 2: Sense of taste. Some things chosen, others rejected. Discovering a structure. Repetitive sequences: a ground bass? Recent = familiar. Begin with material similar to Cycle 1, Stage 5. One dimensionality: lines (repetition of points).

Cycle 3: Sense of smell. Leading to food. Moving in a direction, drawn onward. Inventing variations, alternative models; realizing potentialities. Following a trail. Expansion. Two dimensionality: shapes.

Cycle 4: Sense of sight. Controlled, contrapuntal; overlooking, looking up. Three dimensionality: objects, combinations of shapes. Depth: superimposition of different layers of time.

Cycle 5: Sense of hearing. Perceiving across a distance. Four dimensionality: change.

Cycle 6: Sense of equilibrium. Taking initiative. Summing up. Sliding, skiing, swimming, gliding: using the force of gravity. Imaginary multi-dimensionality.

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