

Primitive
for voice and percussion

Michael Boyd
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Performance Instructions

Basic Information

This piece is for one vocalist of any type and one percussionist. A single drum is required for a performance – a snare drum is suggested, though some other type of drum that features multiple parts and possibilities for sound production could be substituted. The total duration of a performance is determined collaboratively by the duo, and may be agreed upon in advance or naturally arise from the performance process. Performances may take place in any performance venue, including non-traditional spaces, and the duo may physically configure itself in any way as long as the two performers can easily interact with each other.

Performance Process

This piece is comprised of three larger sections that are labeled “Parts I, II, and III” in the performance score. The outer sections are similar in format and performance process while the middle section is unique in nature. Parts I and III are respectively associated with the upper left and right portions of the performance parts, while Part II is addressed by the lower portion of each part.

In Part I the vocalist uses his or her voice and the percussionist uses the drum. This configuration is reversed in Part III where the vocalist uses the drum and the percussionist uses his or her voice. The portions of the score associated with Parts I and III contain one pair of words that are encircled by a solid line and three single words that are encircled by dotted lines. The pair of words, oppositional in nature, is used to initiate a new performance gesture, while the individual words are used to respond to the other performer’s sounds or other actions. The exact manner in which a performer interprets one of the pairs of words to create a performance gesture will vary significantly as none have obvious performance connotations and might be interpreted in myriad ways. The performance gestures that result from this interpretation can be sonic, visual, and/or theatrical, though a focus on the voice or drum – whichever a particular performer is using at the time – should be maintained throughout a section.

Parts I and III may be initiated by either performer, decided in advance or (preferably) simply the individual that acts first. The initiating performer begins by performing an interpretation of the oppositional verbs in his or her performance part. Shortly after, the other performer should enter and respond to the initiating performer’s sounds and/or actions using one of the three modifying verbs encircled by a dotted line (imitate, oppose, transform). Once both performers have entered, they should, at a pace of their own choosing and independent of the other individual, move through and interpret the remaining three words and/or word pairs found in that section of their parts. Once an individual has used and moved on from a word or word pair, he or she should not revisit it. As previously mentioned, the pair of oppositional verbs is used to create a new performance gesture, whereas the three single verbs are

employed to create gestures that respond to the sounds and/or actions of the other performer. Once each performer has interpreted all four items in the section, he or she may stop performing. When both performers have stopped performing Part I, the duo should move on to Part II. When both performers have stopped performing Part III, the piece ends.

In Part II both performers use their voice variously in combination with the drum. The portion of each performance part associated with Part II contains ten instructions. Each performer should perform between three and ten of the instructions, in any order. Performers may act simultaneously, in alternation, or some combination of the two. Both individuals must perform “Use your voice to make sound with the drum” at least once. This particular instruction is included three times in Part II; if this instruction is employed two or three times by the same performer, the ways that he or she interacts with the drum should be different in each instance. Once each performer feels as though they are ready to move to Part III, they should stop performing Part II – when both individuals have ceased, either may initiate Part III.



