

# Etude: Being and Becoming

(2010)

for xylophone

Lou Bunk

## Performance Notes for "Etude: Being and Becoming"

This is an advanced xylophone etude exploring various methods of improvisation with practice in multiple beater changes, and tremolo in various contexts. You will learn to hear, and perform better, subtle changes in pitch, rhythm and timbre. As the piece can be long, and the pacing of events unhurried, restraint and endurance are practiced and necessary. This helps make possible the appropriate mindset for extensive contemplation of how *subtle change can both lead to and be structural transformation*.

### General Guidelines

1. There is no defined meter. The tempo is often free and in flux.
2. Take the most content liberty in the transitions between sections.
3. Improvise using subtle changes (micro-variations) in timbre rhythm, and pitch.
4. The overall pacing of the composition should be slow and gradual. Though occasionally, the pacing may temporarily increase to provide contrast, or to hurry a deeper change.
5. Alternate (back and forth) musical ideas, but do not be too obvious.
6. Create patterns that are not perfect. Then let them fall apart.
7. Do not make a score ahead of time to bring into performance. The score is the next page titled "Performance Score". Make most of your musical decisions in the performance, but rehearse multiple versions ahead of time.

**Form:** The piece should last between 12-20 minutes. The form is described in four *Sections* at the bottom of the Performance Score. Within these Sections are *Sub-sections*, each marked with a letter, an approximate length, and a note to which improvisational methods is active. Though this form should be carefully followed, take liberties that make the transitions interesting, helping to avoid them sounding stiff and prescribed.

**Primary Sound Object:** (PSO) is a gesture to be played and repeated as a self contained unit. Its *prime form*, before any *Alterations* (Alts), is given in the Performance Score.

**Transformation 1:** (T1) is created by following a list of *Guidelines* (GLs). I have provided a possible realization (of just a segment) to give a sense of how T1 could sound. It should not be used "as is". As this example shows, try to (at times) align shifting tremolo speed, dynamics, and pitch changes with each other.

**Transformation 2:** (T2) is made up of five "Items". In the Performance Score, each Item is in its own box. The five Items can be played in any order at any tempo. Each Item can be repeated any number of times.

**Alterations:** PSO and T2 each have a list of Alts. which describe how each changes from one iterations to the next. They can be added and subtracted at will, in any order, and can be applied to part or all of the gesture to which it applies. Introduce these Alts. gradually, and give each new change time to breath and grow. Feel free to linger for a while, or return to a previous state. Alternate old and new. Be aware of how one idea can segue to the next.

**Transformation 1, GL 5 and 6:** These GLs can change the music in subtle and significant ways as they introduce pitches outside the primary tri-chord (Ab, A, Bb). Use these GLs carefully, strategically, and in the spirit of gradual change. Note that these new pitches can be returned to in T2 through Alt. 4

**Beaters:** Use multiple types of beaters. After Sub-section B, change them at will to provide timbre contrasts. All traditional and non-traditional beaters are acceptable, particularly if they make an interesting sound.

**Section 1, C:** is challenging as it is the longest segment. Work hard to balance the urge for forward motion with the principle of gradual change, all the while creating musical interest by exposing the beauty in the microstructures. See the Addendum for examples of how PSO and T2 can be performed.

**Ending:** In the form, the last section is "Ending". For this section, freely improvise an ending. Do not plan it ahead of time. Let the music of the improvisation lead you there. It could be anything.

**Rehearsal:** First, read very careful all the instructions in the *Performance Notes* and the *Performance Score*. Second, become familiar with PSO, T1 and T2 and all Alts. and GLs. Practice improvising these, adding beater changes. Third, study the form and practice transitioning between the parts.

## Performance Score

### *Etude: Being and Becoming* Lou Bunk (2010)

#### Primary Sound Object (Prime Form)

♩ = 108  
choose any mallet

#### Alterations (for PSO only)

1. Add/omit repeated notes (1-3 new iterations of a pitch at a time).
2. Omit any pitch(es).
3. Change tuplet.
4. Pause on any pitch.
5. Tempo change or fluctuation.
6. Fermata: change length or omit.
7. Change dynamics.
8. Add crescendo or decrescendo.
9. Add new pitch (only B3 - Ab4).

#### Transformation 1 (example realization)

\* number of slashes indicates approx. speed of trem.  
3=fast, 2=medium, 1=slow

**Note:** This realization is particularly active as to demonstrate as many GLs in use as possible. In performance, also allow for GLs to change at a slower pace, or for slower and faster paced GLs to exist side by side.

#### Guidelines (for T1 only)

1. Fluid change of pitch among Ab4, A4, Bb4. (1st 30" all A4).
2. Fluid change of tremolo speed (and therefore perceived tempo).
3. Fluid dynamic shifts.
4. Occasional silence of any length.
5. Occasionally add a 2 pitch tremolo (of any length) where one pitch is Ab4, A4, or Bb4. The other can be any pitch.
6. Play a 2 pitch trem., after a silence, that is 3"-7" and does not use Ab4, A4, or Bb4. (2-3 times)

#### Transformation 2 (Prime Forms)

#### Alterations (for T2 only)

1. Item 1: Change speed or length of trem.
2. Item 3-5: Change # of articulation.
3. Item 1-5: Change or omit rest.
4. Item 3-5: Change pitch using new pitches from T1, (GL. 5 and 6)
5. Items 1-5: Change dynamics/hairpin.
6. Items 4 and 5: Change octave

#### Form

##### Section 1, Primary Sound Object (PSO)

- A. [12-20 times] Repeat PSO as is.
- B. [8-15 times] Add 1 Alt. (not 9) and 1 beater change to PSO.
- C. [4-6 min.] Slowly add more Alts. (1-8 only). From here forward, change beater at will.
- D. [1-2 min.] Add Alt. 9

##### Section 2, Transformation 1 (T1)

- E. [30 sec] Play T1 (only using the pitch A4)
- F. [1-2 minutes] Play T1 (GL. 1-5)
- G. [1-2 minutes] Play PSO (w/ any Alts.)
- H. [2-3 minutes] Play T1 (GL. 1-6)

##### Section 3, Transformation 2 (T2)

- I. [2-3 minutes] Play T2 (w/ any Alts.)

##### Section 4, Ending

- J. [any length] any content. See notes.

## Addendum

This addendum provides examples of how PSO and T2 can be performed. It should be used as a starting point in rehearsal, and as a reference. It is not meant to be played verbatim in performance.

### PSO Example

The musical score for the PSO Example is written on a single staff in treble clef. It consists of three iterations of a rhythmic pattern. The first iteration is marked 'soft yarn mallets' and 'p' (piano), with a fermata of 5 seconds. The second iteration is marked 'a little slower' and 'mf' (mezzo-forte), with a fermata of 5 seconds. The third iteration is marked 'wooden drum sticks' and 'a tempo', with a fermata of 3 seconds. The tempo is indicated as 'accel.' (accelerando) between the second and third iterations, and 'a tempo' (ritornello) after the third iteration. The score includes dynamic markings 'p', 'mf', and 'ppp' (pianissimo) across the iterations.

This example gives three iterations of PSO. In the course of a performance, there could be dozens of iterations depending on the length of each, which is mostly up to you.

### What to notice about this example:

1. Observe the subtle change from one iteration to the next. This should be the norm, though from time to time, more drastic change may be appropriate.
2. Almost every Alt. is used: (*Note: other moments will pace the use of Alts. slower*)
  - a. Added repeated notes.
  - b. The first "Bb" is omitted in the first iteration.
  - c. Tuplet changes.
  - d. There is a pause on "Ab" in the 3rd iteration
  - e. Tempo change. The 2<sup>nd</sup> iteration is slower. The original tempo of 108 returns in the 3<sup>rd</sup> iteration.
  - f. A tempo fluctuation is used in the "accel." back to the "a tempo".
  - g. The fermata length is changed to 3" for the 3<sup>rd</sup> iteration.
  - h. Crescendos and decrescendos are added in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> iteration
3. The principle of imperfect repetition is used:
  - a. The rhythm is slightly changed between the beginnings (first 3 pitches) of iterations 2 and 3
  - b. Notice the silence after each iteration. The length of the silence is the same after the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> iteration, while the 3<sup>rd</sup> iteration's silence is 3".

### T2 Example

The musical score for the T2 Example is written on a single staff in treble clef. It consists of 16 'Items' of music, each enclosed in a box. The first two items are marked '(soft yarn mallets)' and '(♩ = 90)'. The first item is marked 'pp' (pianissimo) and the second 'p' (piano). The next four items are marked 'hard mallets' and 'f' (forte). The next four items are marked 'rit.' (ritardando). The next four items are marked '♩ = 72' and 'ff' (fortissimo). The final item is marked 'rit.' and '5'. The score includes dynamic markings 'pp', 'p', 'f', and 'ff' across the items.

This example shows a segment of T2 music in which 16 "Items" are used. Boxes are drawn around each individual Item, and the Item number is placed in the upper left hand corner of the box.

### What to notice about this example:

1. This is a particularly dynamic implementation of T2. Though T2 is designed to allow for this kind of activity, it would be just as true to the score to create a segment in which change is more subtle. Practice multiple variations in rehearsal, and in performance, let the music tell you what it needs.
2. Almost every Alt. is used. Can you find them?
3. Notice how Items 2 and 3 are repeated multiple times, while Item 1 is only used once. It would be just as true to the score to do the opposite, or to not use Item 3 at all, or to use only Item 1.