

Etude: Being and Becoming

(2008)

for snare drum

Lou Bunk

Performance Notes for "Etude: Being and Becoming"

This is an advanced snare drum etude which studies various methods of improvisation with practice in multiple stick changes. It also explores the extended technique of covering the drum head with different materials. The student will learn to hear, and perform better, the many subtle timbres that are possible with the snare drum. The student will also be able to practice restraint and endurance, as the piece can be long, and the pacing of events are unhurried. This allows time for extensive contemplation of subtle timbres.

General Guidelines

1. There is no meter. The tempo is often free and in flux.
2. You have the most content liberty in the transitions between sections.
3. Study and learn to improvise with subtle changes in timbre.
4. The overall pacing of the piece should be slow and gradual. Though occasionally the pacing should increase to provide contrast.
5. Alternate musical ideas often 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.

Rehearsal: First, reading very careful all the instructions in the Performance Notes and the Performance Score. Second, practice with different beaters and covers, and become familiar with PSO, T1 and T2 and all the possible *alterations*. Practice improvising these alteration, and transitions between parts of the form.

Section 1, C: is particularly challenging. It is the longest segment, and you will have to work hard to keep it interesting. See the addendum for examples of how PSO and T2 can be performed.

The Snare: Turn the snare on and off at liberty. Though overall, the snare should be on for most of the piece. At some point, explore the sound made when the snare is turned on and off.

Beaters: Use many different types of beaters. After the sub-section B, change them at will to provide timbre contrasts. All traditional and non-traditional beaters are acceptable.

Covers: Choose several covers to place over the head. After sub-section B, change at will to provide timbre contrast. Some examples: paper, felt, thin metal. Also, at times, feel free to not use a cover.

Primary Sound Object: (PSO) is a gesture to be played and repeated as a self contained unit. Its 'prime' form, before any alterations, is given in the performance score.

Transformation 1: (T1) is created by following a list of guidelines. I have provided a possible realization (of just a segment) to give a sense of the sound. You do not have to use it "as is".

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

Alterations : The Primary Sound Object and Transformation 2 each have a list of "Alterations" which show you how PSO and T2 can be changed. 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 alterations slowly and give each new timbre time to breath and grow. Do not feel the need to always be creating a new sound. Return to old sounds. Alternate old and new. Slowly introduce a new sound. Linger on a sound for a while. Be aware of how sounds can segue from one to the next.

Form: The piece should last between 10-20 minutes. The form is set in four sections at the bottom of the Performance Score. With these sections is a list of sub-sections, each marked with a letter, an approximate length, and a note to which improvisational methods (from the three above) is active. Though this form should be carefully followed, take liberty to make the transitions interesting and not stiff and prescribed.

Ending: In the form, last section is "Ending". For this section, find a way to end. Do not plan it ahead of time. Let the music of the improvisation lead you there. It could be anything.

Performance Score

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Primary Sound Object

♩ = 90
snare on
choose any beater and any cover

ppp

Alterations (for PSO only)

1. Change the tuplet. Can apply to one or more (or all) ↓ groups. Keep ↓ grouping of tuplets.
2. Add (or subtract) any number of ↓ groups. Note that it starts with seven.
3. Change the overall tempo.
4. Tempo fluctuation.
5. Change length of silence, (or omit).
6. Add crescendo and decrescendo.

Transformation 1 (example realization)

diagram shows where to strike drumhead

pp *f*

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

Guidelines (for T1 only)

1. Fluid change of where on the drum head to strike.
2. Fluid change of roll speed.
3. Fluid dynamic shifts.
4. Occasional silence of any length
5. Align shifting roll speed, dynamics, and placement of strikes with each other, as in the example to the left.

Transformation 2

Item 1	Item 2	Item 3
<p><i>p</i> <i>f</i></p>	<p><i>f</i></p>	<p><i>pp</i></p>

Alterations (for T2 only)

1. Item 1: Change dynamics and hairpin
2. Item 1: Change speed of roll.
3. Item 1: Lengthen or shorten roll.
4. Item 2 & 3: Change number of articulation.
5. Item 1, 2 & 3: Change length of silence, or remove.

Form

Section 1, Primary Sound Object (PSO)

- A. [5-8 times] Repeat PSO as is.
- B. [5-10 times] Add 1 Alteration and one beater or cover change to PSO.
- C. [5-8 minutes] Slowly add more Alterations.

Starting with C, change beater and cover at will.

Section 2, Transformation 1 (T1)

- D. [1-2 minutes] Play T1
- E. [1-2 minutes] Play PSO (w/ any Alts.)
- F. [2-3 minutes] Play T1

Section 3, Transformation 2 (T2)

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

Section 4, Ending

- H. [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 notation for the PSO Example consists of three iterations of a rhythmic pattern on a single staff. The first iteration is marked *p* and includes the instruction "paper on head soft yarn mallets". The second iteration is marked *mf* and includes the instruction "remove paper" and "2'' a little slower". The third iteration is marked *ppp* and includes the instruction "wooden drum sticks" and "2'' a tempo". The pattern consists of groups of notes, with the first group being a quintuplet (5), the second a sextuplet (6), and the third a quintuplet (5). The tempo changes from "a little slower" to "a tempo" between the second and third iterations. Crescendos and decrescendos are indicated by wedge-shaped markings under the notes.

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 iteration, which is entirely up to the performer.

What to notice about this example:

1. The subtle change from one iteration to the next. This should be the norm, though does not rule out more drastic changes.
2. Every alteration is used:
 - a. Triplet changes.
 - b. Change in number of ↓ groups. Here we have 5+4+5
 - c. Tempo change. The 2nd group is slower. The original tempo of 90 returns in the 3rd group.
 - d. A tempo fluctuation is used in the accel. back to the "a tempo".
 - e. The length of silence is changed to 2'' for the 1st and 2nd iteration.
 - f. Crescendos and decrescendos are added in the 1st and 3rd iteration
3. The principle of imperfect repetition is used:
 - a. Though the crescendo is associated with the change to a sextuplet, notice how each crescendo is implemented differently.
 - b. Notice the silence after each iteration. The length of the silence is the same after the 1st and the 2nd iteration. The 3rd iteration returns to the original length of 3''.

T2 Example

The musical notation for the T2 Example shows a sequence of 10 items, each enclosed in a box. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 72 (♩ = 72). The first item is marked *f* and includes the instruction "(brushes)". The second item is marked *pp*. The third item is marked *mp* and includes the instruction "thin metal on head". The fourth item is marked *pp*. The fifth item is marked *pp*. The sixth item is marked *pp*. The seventh item is marked *f*. The eighth item is marked *pp*. The ninth item is marked *pp*. The tenth item is marked *f*. The sequence of items is: 2, 3, 1, 3, 3, 3, 2, 3, 2. A "de-accel." instruction with a dashed arrow is shown above the sequence.

This example shows a segment of T2 music in which 10 "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 both in rehearsal, and when it comes time perform, let the music tell you what it needs.
2. Every Alteration is used.
3. Notice how Item 3 is repeated 4 times, and 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.