

Music 5

Instructor: Larry Polansky
Spring, 2008

Assigned: Friday, May 2

First draft due to instructor: Monday, May 12

Performances in class: Week of May 19th (and during final period)

Final draft of piece to me: Due when piece is performed

Composition Assignment

Compose a short piece for performance in class.

The piece must be fully notated, and must be written to be performed by someone other than yourself. Available instruments are those played by members of the class. However, we can arrange for other instruments if given enough advance notice (talk to me).

These pieces must be playable by the people for whom they are written. Simple but interesting is a good goal.

You may compose in any musical style. For example, it might be: a 16 measure song; a short piano piece; something for guitar and clarinet; a piece for clapping hands and piano; spoons and three voices; or, whatever you like.

Pieces may be in any key (or non-key), major, minor, or some mode. They may not be in a key, or even reference the notion of key. You may mix several tonalities and modalities; you may invent modes or scales of your own; you may eschew these concepts entirely (for example, a percussion piece). They just have to be for live players, reading from notation.

The performers must have their final scores well in advance of when they play the piece, so that they can practice. No sightreading allowed.

Notation

The must be notated in conventional music notation, and written by hand, *not using a computer*. The notation must be clear, readable, neat, and friendly towards your musicians. I will go thru each first draft (which should be as complete as you can make them) carefully and make notational suggestions. We will also try to meet individually about the pieces near the end of the first draft stage.

Use a straightedge for the measure lines, stems. Space your measures properly (1/8th notes get less space than 1/4 notes!). Plan your lines and page *before* you start copying your second draft. Make sure note heads are not too big and blobby or too small and indistinct. Use decent paper (don't just rip out a page from the back of Zinn). Make these *look* nice, readable, elegant, well-designed.

Grade

Your grade for this assignment will be based on your creativity, feeling, sincerity and invention, as well as how much work you put in, and how responsible you are about meeting deadlines. The more last-minute and panicked you are, the lower your grade will tend to be. If performers don't know what you mean, or can't read what you've written, or see the material too late, your grade will be affected.

Your notation must be thorough, accurate, neat, readable, and correct. In other words, I am looking for imagination combined with hard and careful work. Please use me as a resource for notational as well as artistic questions: we can work on these pieces together. Also, work informally with the performer-members of the class, who can give you good advice about writing for their instruments.

Performers who play the pieces in class will get extra credit (as well as our appreciation) for doing so.

Do not hand in your original or only copy. Make several photocopies of your piece, one for me, one for yourself, and one extra for the performer (or performers). We will put all the scores on the web, and view them as the pieces are played. In some cases, *parts* will be required (ask me if you're unsure).

Basic Requirements for the Piece

Although I'm willing to accept any style of music, you must be able to articulate to me, if asked, what it is you are trying to do in terms of style, ideas, harmony, melody, form, and so on. If you're unsure of a direction to go in, use what you know from what we've studied so far, or come see me.

The following criteria must be satisfied in the composition of this piece:

- it must have a name, and the name must be on the score
- you are the composer, and your name must be on the score
- there must be NO "cross-outs" in the final copy you give to the musicians and me. I will be very picky (in grading) about how it looks! Do a rough sketch, then a first draft (which I get to see and work on), *and then* make a final copy when you've convinced yourself everything is how you want it to be. Consider this to be a finished piece — in this particular case, I do not want to see your progress manifested on the page.

I would very much suggest playing through your work on the piano, or meeting informally with the in-class musicians to read thru small bits of it to get a sense of what it sounds like. You must (!!!) be able to hear your own work in some way, as you write it, and doing it at the keyboard can be a big help. If it doesn't make sense to your ear, it won't to ours!