DIDACHE
for at least seven humans
(by Sean Hayward)

“There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great
difference between the two ways.” – The Didache, early Christian treatise

Each performer should choose a number between 2 and x, where x is the number of performers. This is
his or her cycle length (c). One performer should be delegated to keep a steady (no accent!) percussive
pulse at about 200 BPM – quietly but audibly. This individual should also act as “conductor.” Unless
otherwise stated, actions are to be simultaneously performed as a group and cued by the conductor. The
two sections may be performed separately (in either order), or simultaneously (only if the number of
performers is at least 13). The former is preferable, but both are interesting. If simultaneity is desired,
consonance is determined with respect to the performers in group 1. Singers are not required by any
means, and if present should make up less than half of the ensemble. If they are present, they may sing the
syllable “ah” or may repeat the quote at the top of the page one syllable at a time.

I. THE WAY OF LIFE

Pulse begins. One by one, performers slowly enter very quietly singing or playing the same note
(note duration = one pulse) once every c pulses, starting at any time. The note chosen should be
one that the individual performer perceives as consonant with and distinct from the pitches
already being performed. If a performer cannot think of a distinct consonant pitch, he/she may
use one of the notes already being played, preferably in a different register. When all performers
have begun, start a slow crescendo. When all players are very loud, pause suddenly (including
pulse) for about five seconds. All performers suddenly begin playing the same note they previously
played (note duration = c pulses). They should still be very strong and rearticulate the note every c
pulses. After ten seconds, begin a slow decrescendo. When all are as quiet as possible, all stop.

II. THE WAY OF DEATH

Pulse begins. One by one, performers slowly enter very loudly singing or playing the same note
(note duration = c pulses) starting at any time. The note chosen should be one that the individual
performer perceives as dissonant with and distinct from the pitches already being performed. No
pitch should be the same for any two performers. It should be rearticulated every c pulses. When
all performers have begun, start a slow decrescendo. When all players are very quiet, pause
suddenly (including pulse) for about five seconds. All performers suddenly begin playing the same
note they previously played (note duration = 1 pulse) very quietly, once every c pulses. After ten
seconds, begin a slow crescendo. When all are as loud as possible, all stop.

If the ensemble is used to the process in these two sections and performance has become uninteresting,
they may experiment with a large tempo arc to accompany the dynamic arc. It may take only two shapes:
slow-fast-slow or fast-slow-fast and must be directly opposite in the two movements. In this case, they may not
be performed simultaneously.