

contemporary  
music

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330  
STEREO

earle brown

times five (1963) octet I (1953) december 1952 novara (1962)



## MUSIC BY EARLE BROWN

EARLE BROWN (b. Lunenburg, Ma. 1926) is a major force in contemporary music. Much of his pioneering work in scoring and "open-form" composition, and in graphic and flexible notation has become accepted as standard practice among composers in advanced styles, and has won him widespread recognition by the musical establishment. At the same time, his music is immediately attractive to the general public.

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**TIMES FIVE (1963)**

**Govert Jurriaanse, flute; Arthur Moore, trombone; Teresia Tieu, harp; Jaring Walta, violin; Harro Ruijsenaars, cello, and 4 channels of tape sound. Earle Brown, conductor**

Commissioned by the "Service de la Recherche," O.R.T.F., Paris.

Not being over-charmed by purely electronic sounds or by the environmental *concrete* sounds for which the French Radio Studio is best known, I took this commission as an opportunity to multiply and transform more traditional instrumental and vocal sound sources. The title refers to this process of multiplying a given potential through superimposing and accelerating recorded material on tape, as well as to the fact that the work is produced (in concert) from five sound sources in the shape of an "X" at the front of the auditorium — four loudspeakers with a live group at the center point. The taped material is "choreographed" to move between and across this space as a kind of kinetic wall of sound.

I first composed material for an eleven piece orchestra, recorded it and used it as a reservoir from which to combine, transform and *form*, manipulating it in the studio much as a sculptor moulds and forms clay. Much of the material in the first and third sections I improvised myself, on piano, celeste, harp, bass, vibraphone, marimba, etc. One of the virtues of tape pieces is that the composer himself can be in direct and personal contact with the sounds he wants, rather than having to send obscure graphic messages to instrumentalists. I have used many of the small "noisy" sounds that are nearly impossible to get by scoring them but have also drawn them graphically in the "live" score in order to try to provoke a delicate and spontaneous cross-talk between the live and taped elements.

The sound material on the tape is usually modified only slightly in regard to speed (frequency), timbre, etc. There is the intention, which the conductor should keep in mind, to allow an ambiguity as to origin of sound details to exist between the visible group of instruments and the four channels of tape — that is, from the listener's point of view it will always sound orchestral but always rather "impossible" relative to the five instruments which he sees on stage.

There are five basic sections of the work. Within each section the conductor is free to combine and juxtapose the written instrumental materials in spontaneous relation to the tape, varying the textures, densities and tempi. The tape is an unchanging ground upon which the "live" material is superimposed — spontaneously and differently in each performance, yet maintaining the basic shape and character that I have designed.

The first section is primarily a play of microtonal frequencies around F sharp, with some harp and double-bass figurations speeded up to approximately guitar and cello ranges on the tape.

The second section is variations of density and frequency fields throughout the available instrumental range as washes of texture and colour.

The third section is primarily "noisy" (inarticulate sounds) — very delicate, uncharacteristic instrumental sounds.

The "live" material in the fourth section is basically "musical" (articulate) in character and should be performed to the full effect of musical phrasing and sound.

The fifth section is rather energetic and percussive on the tape. The combination of "live" materials from sections 3 and 4 will juxtapose articulate and inarticulate sound material as possible commentary to the tape.

**OCTET I (1953) for 8 loudspeakers**

This work was composed and realized (assembled by splicing and synchronizing exactly to the specifications of the score) within the "Project for Music for Magnetic Tape" in late 1952 and the early part of 1953. The first performance was at the University of Illinois Arts Festival in March, 1953. The work is for eight separate channels of sound to be heard through eight independent sound sources spaced equidistantly (360 degrees) around the audience. A stereo disc recording is obviously not the very best way to hear this work (spatially speaking) but here and now seems a not unreasonable context for its 22nd birthday. I have combined the tracks by twos, and distributed these four sound sources equidistantly from far left to far right in normal stereo reproduction.

The compositional technique used in OCTET I is based on statistical procedures applied almost exclusively to horizontal and vertical attack density; a concept very much influenced by my studies (and teaching) of Schillinger techniques. The library of sounds from which the Project drew its sound materials contained very long tapes categorized as "city sounds," "country sounds," "electronic sounds," "instrumental sounds," etc. in frequently very identifiable form. In preferring to make a work that would be highly abstract and non-referential in character I worked out a "programm" which would allow only very brief fragments of these sources to appear in complex density patterns and sequences that would obscure their natural origins; to have them exist as sheer sound.

As a by-product of the making of previous works in the Project there were many bits and pieces of tapes in a box of out-takes, the sound content of which was unknown. It occurred to me that there could be a way of using them compositionally that did not depend upon their actual content, which already included complex varieties of pitch, timbre and dynamics.

The "programm" was a kind of repertoire of durational and attack densities which were generated and distributed by the use of Random Sampling Tables (tables of random numbers used in statistical research) to which I applied bias potentials in order to achieve varying densities rather than a uniform distribution. The duration and attack density programm controlled the rhythm and clustering of these bits and pieces and resulted in a kind of statistically structured mosaic or kaleidoscopic abstraction of the library of sounds.

**DECEMBER 1952**

**David Tudor, pianos**

This work is the center piece of a group of works published as *Folio* (1952-53). The collection is described as "experiments in notation and performance process." Having enjoyed the esthetic benefits and poetic exhilarations of solo and collective improvisation as a jazz musician for many years, and being very much under the influence of Alexander Calder's mobile (variable-but-always-the-same) works, I had been searching for a way to this world within the environment of the classically trained (Western oriented) musician. From the totally organized and specific *Perspectives* (1952) for piano, into the progressively more vague and collaborative *Folio* works, *October 1952*, *November 1952* and *December 1952*, I was attempting to find a notation and verbal conditioning (processing) that would provoke the performer into a more creative role than is usually the case in serious music; at least more than was characteristic of that kind of music in 1952.

DECEMBER 1952 is the most extreme "provocation" and seems to be the first example of what came to be called "graphic music." It is extreme to the degree that a performance of it can no longer be said to be a composition by the composer.

After DECEMBER 1952 in *Folio*, I had found the notation that allowed a great deal of control but still allowed a flexibility and the open-form (mobile) potential for a work. I called it "time notation" (as distinct from "metric notation"); it was later called "proportional notation." The first large work in this new notation, called *Twenty Five Pages* (Spring, 1953) has specifically indicated content in a truly "open" form potential. Time notation is used in both *TIMES FIVE* and *NOVARA*, and in many other works by myself and others. The extremely high degree of notational ambiguity and improvisational freedom in DECEMBER 1952 seemed to be as far as I could go in that direction and the notational and performance process discoveries were applied to works in a far more normal compositional way, in both closed and open-form works.

This realization of DECEMBER 1952 ("for one or more instruments and/or sound producing media") for two pianos by David Tudor is a version which he "composed" for a Merce Cunningham solo for Carolyn Brown, called *Hands Birds*; a poem by Mary Caroline Richards. David chose not to play spontaneously directly

from the graphic score but to work out a version, as I proposed in the score: "Further defining of the events is not prohibited . . . provided that the imposed determinate system is implicit in the score and in these notes." Tudor's extraordinary performance technique and timbral invention is here used in conjunction with a very close and accurate sonic representation of the graphic score implications: relative frequency, duration, loudness and time-space. As I have said, the *music* which you hear is very much that of David Tudor. I am very pleased that he found my "implications" sufficient for his involvement and collaboration.



Earle Brown

**NOVARA (1962)**

**Ton Hartsuiker, piano and leader; Govert Jurriaanse, flute; John Floore, trumpet; Harry Sparnaay, bass clarinet; Jaring Walta and Roelof van Driesten, violins; Gerrit Oldeman, viola; Harro Ruijsenaars, cello; Earle Brown, conductor**

This work was composed at the request of Lukas Foss for a Fromm Foundation concert at the Tanglewood Festival in the summer of 1962, and was first performed there, conducted by the composer. The work was written just after the composing and Venice Biennale premiere of *Available Forms II* (for 98 instruments and two conductors), and was a kind of relaxing into the intimacy and delicacy of chamber music and soloistic possibilities after the very large resources and massed orchestral sounds of that work.

NOVARA is an open-form work and uses many of the less characteristic sounds of the instruments that are sometimes referred to as "noises" but are, nevertheless, instrumental sounds which can extend the formal and expressive potential of a work. "Open-form" means that all of the sound materials in the work are notated and controlled in the score but that their sequence, juxtaposition, tempi and repetitions are left to the spontaneous decisions of the conductor, during the performance, as the performing process develops and unfolds between himself, the written sound materials and the musicians; an immediate and direct feedback condition of response and forming. The *form* of the work is therefore unique in each performance but it is always NOVARA because only those composed sound events may be used.

Note: I am frequently asked if an open-form work is not "violated" by being recorded. It seems to me that a recording is simply *that*; a record of the work in that particular context at that particular time, as a photograph does not prohibit one from moving on afterwards. The other frequent question is regarding the hearing of *mobility* if only one performance is being heard. The mobile sound elements are constantly in motion and subject to appearing in different contexts within *each* performance, and can be heard that way, I believe. The different final forms must, necessarily, be heard in different performances, however. There is no 1-to-1 comparison possible between a mobile in space and a mobile musical work in time; it is a principle of kinetic transformation and change of an integral construction that is comparable.

Notes by Earle Brown.

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