

# GRAVITATIONS

BEN JOHANSEN

## Gravitations Notes:

Frederic Rzewski stated that “For music not to just be noise it has to gravitate between rational and irrational escape from limitations of both.” *Gravitations* was written with the idea to experiment with pushing these limitations.

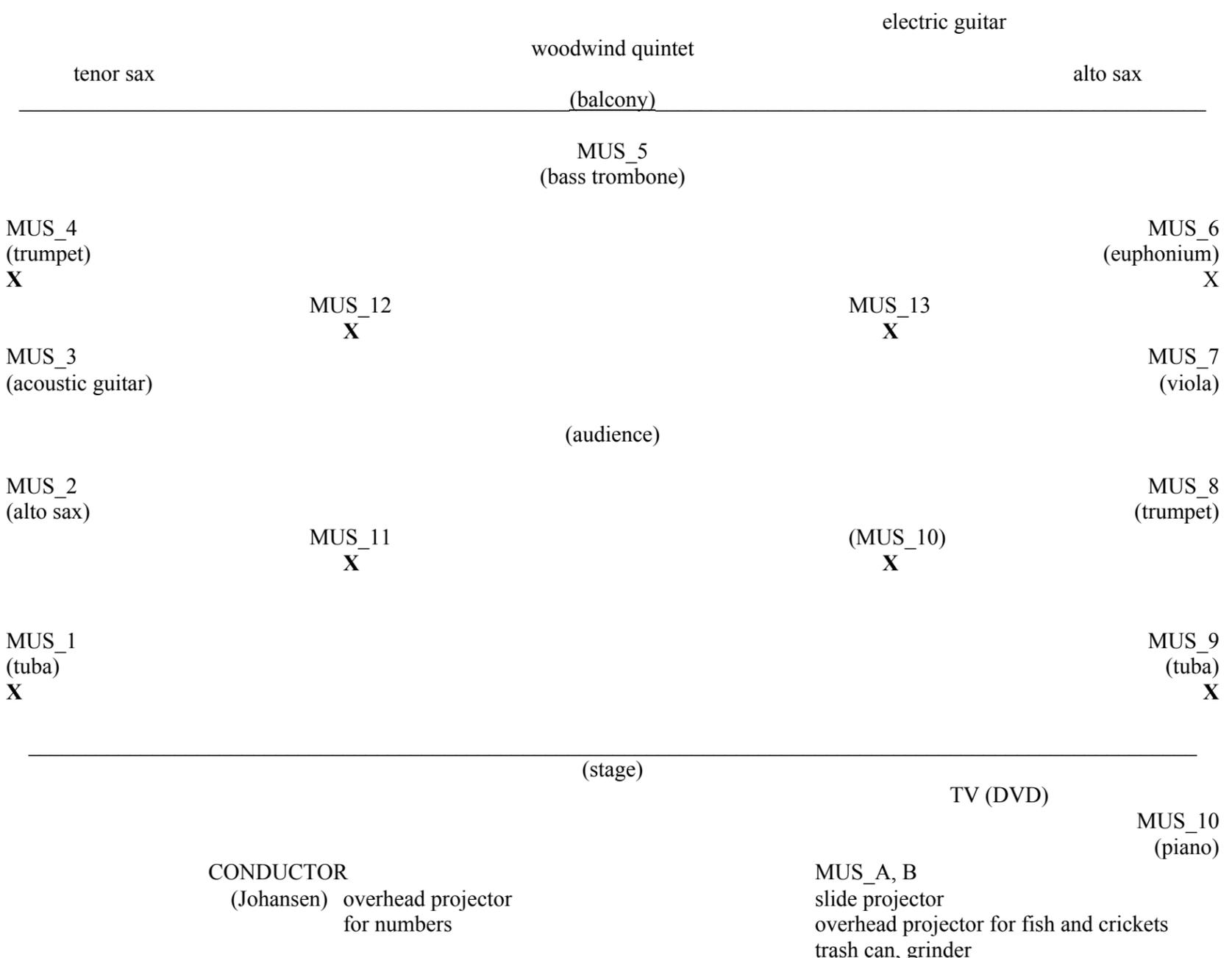
Part of the essence of the piece is in that experimental nature. *Gravitations* is completely controlled by the CONDUCTOR. No rehearsal is allowed; rather people create music together for the first time during the performance. The CONDUCTOR is to use real-time electronic instruments both to improvise transitions between sections and to speak philosophical ideas (speaking into filters), thus directing the flow of the piece.

The CONDUCTOR uses a screen and an overhead projector to display numbers at his own discretion (in consecutive order – 1, 2, 3, 4, 4A, 4B, 4C, etc.). When a number is shown, performers execute the instructions next to the corresponding number in their respective parts.

All pitches can be played in any order and at any duration with temporal independence (with exception to the woodwind quintet). With no rehearsal, the success of *Gravitations* rests in the ability of the performers to improvise freely with confidence. Performers use the score as a guide but must completely rely on their musicianship skills to create music as a group.

Any combination of instruments can be used for musicians 1-10 (MUS\_1-10); the instruments used for the first performance are indicated in parenthesis. The diagram below is a suggested setup for the piece. The X's indicate where an iPod with speakers is located. Musicians 1-9 (MUS\_1-9) are positioned around the audience while musicians 10-13 (MUS\_10-13) are positioned within the audience.

## SET-UP DIAGRAM



## LIST OF INSTRUMENTS/MATERIALS

10 – various instruments	computers	slide projector
woodwind quintet	loop based recording software	2 – overhead projectors and screens
tenor and alto saxophones	effects filters (especially a vocoder)	fish and crickets
tenor voice	midi controller	vacuum cleaner
electric guitar (amp, effects pedals)	PA system (microphones/mixer)	trash can (metal mallets)
8 – iPods with speakers	TV and DVD player	grinder (safety gear)

**Johansen's collected or personal philosophical ideas of music (the latter portion of ten contains Rzewski's words):**

1. The central concern of the current concert situation should be with the wall that exists between the stage and the audience, the performers and the listeners. The audience should come to experience music rather than just hear it. They should feel as though they are participants rather than merely seat fillers or ticket buyers.
- 2 (memorized – spoken from “heart”) - That is why I speak directly to you. The easiest and most efficient and effective way performers can break down the barrier is to come out and tell the audience why they like the piece and why they are playing it. I like this piece because it enables me to share many of my thoughts about music through instruments I have been experimenting with [spatial issues?].
- 3 A performance as an object embodies the superiority of a photograph over a recording in that photographs have more potential to become art while recordings traditionally fill the archival role.
- 4 All sound can be regarded as music when organized. The organization of that which is heard is, at times, left up to the listener.
- 5 Does a listener's lack of knowledge equal less understanding, producing less enjoyment in the more complex? Do those that know much enjoy the simple less?
- 6 If the point of music is communication, a person must have the knowledge to understand it in order to gain from it; otherwise it is analogous to listening to a foreign language.
- 7 If the point of music is to evoke emotion, understanding is only key to whether the emotion the composer intends is conveyed or not, some emotion will be evoked.
- 8 Can music make someone experience an emotion they have never before experienced?
- 9 God does not want us to live dull lives full of conformity. All too often, society fails to recognize diversity as a strength, leading most people to surrender their dreams in exchange for a more predictably safe life. Faith and predictability cannot coexist.
- 10 New music dwells on that which the world said it cannot do. It should not be predictable or comfortable. Why read books, turn on the TV, or go to the theatre but to be moved, thrilled, stimulated, even exhausted?! >>>But, for music not to just be noise it has to gravitate between rational and irrational escape from limitations of both.<<<

# 1

(no number projected)

- > this page reads from top to bottom
- > begin with the DVD player pause and the volume all the way down on CONDUCTOR's mixer
- > first 16 bars of the tenor line are recorded into Ableton Live and played back as the tenor sings bars 17-32 (which are recorded as well) - creating a 16 bar loop made up of two layers

↓ CONDUCTOR directions

cue DVD

MUS\_A

push "play" on the DVD player

record first 16 bars into looped based software (Ableton Live)

## TENOR VOICE

(sings through once - then leaves the stage)

♩ = 120

playback first 16 bars while recording 17-32

bring in the DVD player's sound while lowering the volume of the looped recorded tenor layers (let tenor layers loop until 3)

## DVD PLAYER

(looped video recording showing just the lips of a very strong voice reading this statement)

*The central concern of the current concert situation should be with the wall that exists between the stage and the audience, the performers and the listeners. The audience should come to experience music rather than just hear it. They should feel as though they are participants rather than merely seat fillers or ticket buyers.*

mute DVD volume

# 2

(wait until at least after the first sentence to project the number)

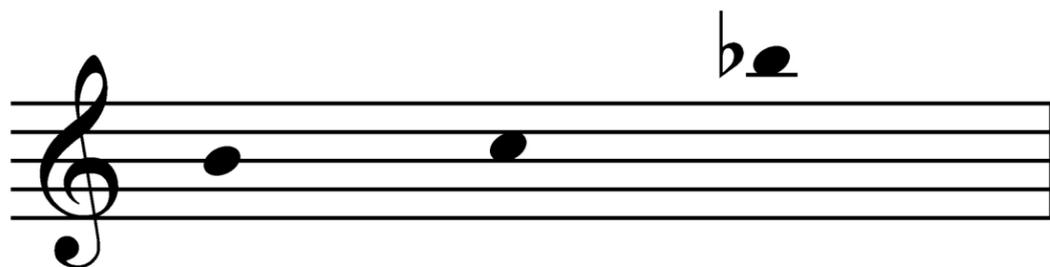
- > the CONDUCTOR addresses the audience (walk to the front of the stage)
- > this is improvised speech - use the statement below as a reference

CONDUCTOR (continue to quietly loop tenor layers)

*That is why I speak directly to you. 2 The easiest and most efficient and effective way performers can break down the barrier is to come out and tell the audience why they like the piece and why they are playing it. I like this piece because it enables me to share many of my thoughts about music through instruments I have been experimenting with [spatial issues?].*

MUS\_1-9 2 MOOD = eerie, ghostly, creepy

play notes in any order  
at any octave  
for any length with any articulation  
as quietly and "spookily" as you can  
(be sure to stay under the CONDUCTOR's speaking)  
you may insert rests/pauses as you feel moved to do so



*as soft as possible*

do not stop playing until 3 is projected

BALCONY MUSICIANS

MUS\_A

MUS\_B

MUS\_10 (pianist, in audience with iPod for 3)

# TACET

# 3

(3 - 3B)

- > like numbers on this page occur simultaneously
- > each of the eight musician's of the iPod ensemble has their own iPod and their own set of stereo speaker (8 iPods, 8 stereo speakers)
- > the iPod ensemble is dispersed evenly among the audience

CONDUCTOR

Fade out looped tenor layers

# 3

*A performance as an object embodies the superiority of a PHOTOGRAPH over a recording in that photographs have more potential to become art while recordings traditionally fill the archival role.*

MUS\_A

# 3

# [3A]

Flip to the first slide on the slide projector when the CONDUCTOR speaks the word *PHOTOGRAPH* continue flipping through slides at about one slide per second through 3 and 3A (unless you are moved by the moment to improvise with the iPod ensemble somehow - but there are only 80 slides and they should not be repeated) when you reach the last slide, stop flipping (leaving the last slide up)

# 3B

Turn on the overhead projector with fish on it THEN turn off the slide projector

“iPod Ensemble”

(MUS\_1, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11-13)

# 3

Play ANY song you want start with volume off and slowly fade in (keep under CONDUCTOR's speaking)

# 3A

turn volume louder (improvise with volume levels) or change songs - do whatever you want! (make music - listen to others - be part of the iPod ensemble)

# 3B

Slowly fade out and turn off the iPod

BALCONY MUSICIANS

MUS\_B

MUS\_2, 3, 5, 7, 8

# TACET

# 4

(4-4B)

- > like numbers on this page occur simultaneously
- > the CONDUCTOR speaks before 4 is projected on the screen
- > the vacuum used for the first performance sounded a concert F if a different vacuum is used, all pitches of section-4 must be transposed accordingly

CONDUCTOR

*All sound can be regarded as music when organized.  
The organization of that which is heard is, at times,  
left up to the listener.*

# 4

MUS\_B

# 4

Turn on vacuum  
(turn off at 4D)

MUS\_3, 10  
(acoustic guitar and piano)

# 4A

Improvise with vacuum's concert F  
listen to others and forshadow the  
g-minor chord that comes in at 4E

# 4B

Improvise with vacuum's concert F  
listen to others and forshadow the  
g-minor chord that comes in at 4E

MUS\_1, 2, 4-9

# 4A

# 4B

MUS\_7: 4 sec. (4 notes)

MUS\_6: 3 sec. (3 notes)

MUS\_5: 3 sec. (3 notes)

MUS\_4, 8: 2 sec. (2 notes)

MUS\_2: 2 sec. (2 notes)

MUS\_1, 9: 4 sec. (4 notes)

improvise a 1/2 step above and below the given pitch

BALCONY MUSICIANS

MUS\_A

MUS\_11-13

# TACET

# 4

(4C-4D)

- > like numbers on this page occur simultaneously
- > the point of the trombone solo is to aid with the turning off of the vacuum

MUS\_3, 10  
(acoustic guitar and piano)

## 4C

Improvise with vacuum's concert F  
listen to others and forshadow the  
g-minor chord that comes in at 4E

## 4D

Improvise with vacuum's concert F  
listen to others and forshadow the  
g-minor chord that comes in at 4E

MUS\_1, 2, 4-9

## 4C

## 4D

MUS\_7

MUS\_6

MUS\_5

MUS\_4

MUS\_2, 8

MUS\_1, 9

**SOLO!!! (improvise - begin with a HUGE 4 Sec. cresc. on a concert F)**  
 go crazy bending pitches (ad. lib.)  
 but stay in ambient kind of mood  
 (to aid in turning vacuum off)

MUS\_B

## 4D

Turn OFF the vacuum at the peak  
of the trombone's 4 sec. cresc.

BALCONY MUSICIANS

MUS\_A

MUS\_11-13

# TACET

# 4E

> transition chord (g-minor) into 5A

MUS\_1-10

# 4E

Play and hold a note in the g-minor chord  
(bass instruments take the fundamental -  
piano and acoustic guitar improvise in g-minor)

# 5

> all players lower their volume so the CONDUCTOR's speaking can be heard

MUS\_1-10

# 5

continue notes from 4E but decrescendo to  
as soft as possible so the CONDUCTOR's  
speaking can be heard

CONDUCTOR

# 5

*Does a listener's lack of knowledge equal less  
understanding, producing less enjoyment in the  
more complex? Do those that know much enjoy  
the simple less?*

BALCONY MUSICIANS (get ready for 5A)

MUS\_A, B

MUS\_11-13

# TACET

# 5A

> BALCONY MUSICIANS play for the first time

MUS\_1-10

# 5A

Fade to nothing (wait for 6)

## BALCONY MUSICIANS (WW5tet, Alto & Tenor Sax)

The woodwind 5-tet begins playing together at 5A - the second time through, alto and tenor saxes begin improvising (trading 4's) all 7 players keep repeating the 24 bars - 5B indicates last time through decrescendo to nothing form 1 to the end of the last time through

# 5A

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system, labeled '5A', contains measures 1 through 8. It features six staves: Alto Sax/Tenor Sax (Eb), Flute, Oboe, Clarinet in Bb, Bassoon, and Horn in F. The Alto and Tenor Sax parts are marked with 'gm/D' and have a 'solo!!!' annotation. The second system, labeled '5B', contains measures 9 through 16. It features the same six staves. The Alto and Tenor Sax parts are marked with '(Eb)' and have a 'solo!!!' annotation. The Bassoon part has a 'solo!!!' annotation and a 'stop note on rest with tongue' instruction. The Horn part has a 'BbMaj7' annotation. The score concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

# [5B]

(last time through - fade to nothing)

MUS\_A, B  
MUS\_11-13

# TACET

# 6

> CONDUCTOR should improvise with real-time electronics to transition from 5B to the speaking in 6

CONDUCTOR 6

*If the point of music is communication, a person must have the knowledge to understand it in order to gain from it; otherwise*

6A

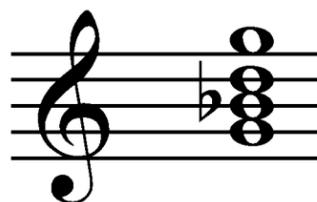
*it is analogous to listening to a foreign language.*

ALL PERFORMERS

6

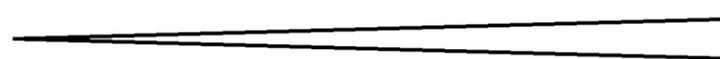
(get ready for 6A)

6A



pick a note in any register  
bass instruments play the root  
in the lowest possible octave

*n.*



*p*

# 6B

> each performer sounds their given notes (the order is just a suggestion), repeating and/or improvising with the given material until the next section

MUS\_7

Musical notation for MUS\_7, featuring a treble clef, a dynamic marking of *f*, and a sixteenth-note run. A bracket indicates a section to be played at least once, with a '6' above it.

MUS\_6

Musical notation for MUS\_6, featuring a bass clef, a dynamic marking of *f*, and a sixteenth-note run. Brackets indicate sections to be played at least once and play only once, with a '6' below the first run.

MUS\_4

Musical notation for MUS\_4, featuring a treble clef, a dynamic marking of *f*, and a sequence of notes with rests.

MUS\_3, 10  
BALCONY 5-tet

Musical notation for MUS\_3, 10, featuring a treble clef, a dynamic marking of *f*, and a sequence of notes with a 'gm+9' marking above.

MUS\_2, 8  
BALCONY SAXES

Musical notation for MUS\_2, 8, featuring a treble clef, a dynamic marking of *f*, and three staves of notation. The first staff has a 'play only once' bracket and a trill. The second staff has fingerings 5, 5, 3. The third staff has a '6' above and a 'play at least one time' bracket.

MUS\_1, 5, 9  
Horn (from WW5-tet)

Musical notation for MUS\_1, 5, 9, featuring a bass clef, a dynamic marking of *f*, and a single note.

MUS\_A, B  
MUS\_11-13

# TACET

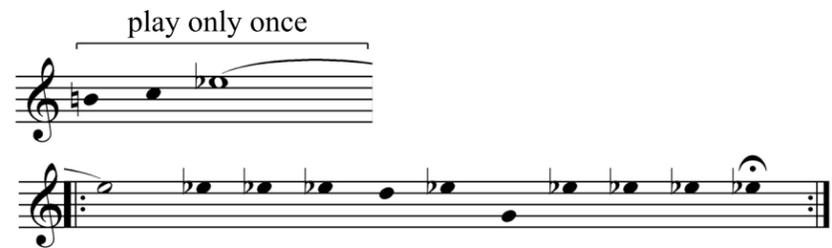
# 6C

# 6D

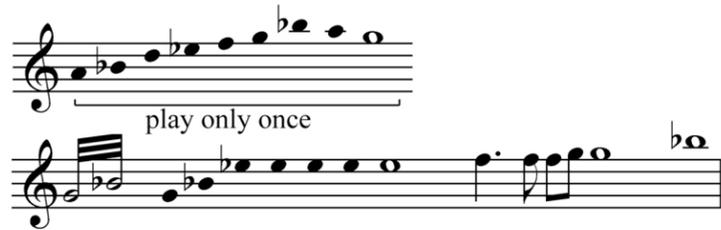
MUS\_7



MUS\_6



MUS\_4



MUS\_3, 10  
BALCONY  
WW 5-tet



MUS\_2, 8  
BALCONY  
SAXES



MUS\_1, 5, 9  
Horn  
(from WW5-tet)



MUS\_A, B  
MUS\_11-13

# TACET

# 7

> this is the peak of the piece emotionally - the tenor loop from the beginning comes back with added synthesized drums and a beautiful chord progression (plus real-time electronic improvisation by the CONDUCTOR)

CONDUCTOR

# 7

Wait until the performers have faded away before speaking the following statement through the vocoder (vocode using the tenor voice loop accompaniment chords - change chords on the underlined words)

*If the point of music is to evoke emotion,  
understanding is only key to whether the emotion  
the composer intends is conveyed or not,  
some emotion will be evoked \_\_\_\_\_*

Play voice loops recorded earlier in the concert along with accompaniment already prepared (plus other real-time improvisation)

MUS\_1-10

BALCONY PERFORMERS

# 7

Slowly fade out from 6D material

MUS\_A, B  
MUS\_11-13

# TACET

8 (and 8A)

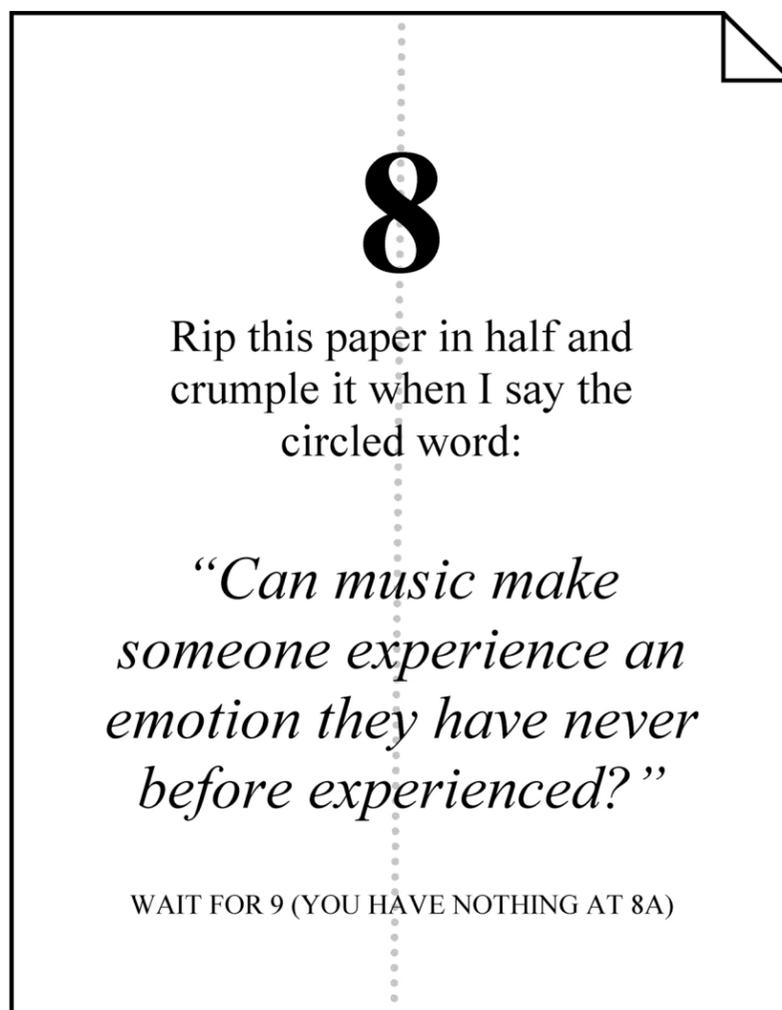
- > each performer has a piece of paper with a different word circled so paper is ripped at different times all around and in the audience
- > this is the first time the electric guitar is heard (hidden in the balcony the entire time)

CONDUCTOR 8 *Can music make someone experience an emotion they have never before experienced?*  
[repeat statement through delay and pitch-effecting filters]

8A *God does not want us to live dull lives full of conformity. All too often, society fails to recognize diversity as a strength, leading most people to surrender their dreams in exchange for a more predictably safe life. Faith and predictability cannot coexist.*

ALL PERFORMERS  
(except electronic guitar  
and MUS\_A)

8 →



[8A] (TACET)

MUS\_A 8 Take fish off overhead projector, replace w/ crickets

ELECTRIC GUITAR 8 RIGHT after the CONDUCTOR says the last word of the statement (“*experienced*”) - begin improvising with the following notes - it is all you, so take the stage! in an ambient, creepy, not-to-loud kind of way



(use any effects pedals you choose  
delay and reverb are recommended)

8A KEEP PLAYING!!! - But when 8A shows be sure to die down enough for the CONDUCTOR to be heard

# 9

> calm before the storm

CONDUCTOR

## 9

*New music dwells on that which the world said it cannot do. It should not be predictable or comfortable. Why read books, turn on the TV, or go to the theatre but to be moved, thrilled, stimulated, even exhausted?!*

MUS\_1-10

BALCONY MUSICIANS

## 9

**MOOD = eerie, ghostly, creepy**

play notes in any order

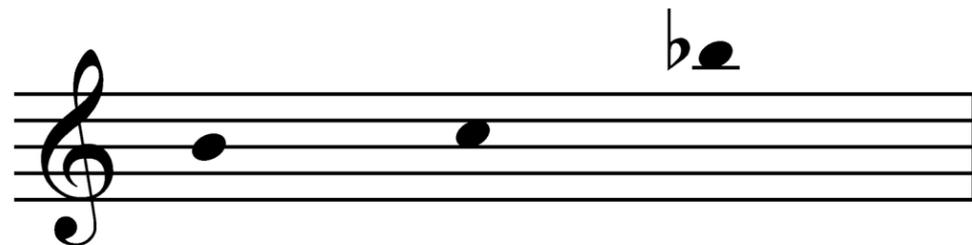
at any octave

for any length with any articulation

as quietly and "spookily" as you can

(be sure to stay under the CONDUCTOR's speaking)

you may insert rests/pauses as you feel moved to do so



do not stop  
playing until  
10 is projected

*as soft as possible*

ELECTRIC  
GUITAR

## 9

**KEEP PLAYING!!!** Now you are joined by others playing the same notes but you can improvise anything you want (in an eerie, ghostly, creepy mood)

MUS\_11-13

## 9

Run up to the balcony and stand at the edge

MUS\_A & B

# TACET

# 10

# > CHAOS

CONDUCTOR

*But, for music not to just be noise it has to gravitate between rational and irrational escape from limitations of both.*

MUS\_1-10  
BALCONY MUSICIANS

Begin softly playing the most irrational/crazy/ridiculous noise you can imagine and steadily crescendo

MUS\_11-13

Repeat the words the CONDUCTOR is reading over and over again, getting louder and louder as the instruments grow louder then begin to yell and scream as loud as you can

# 10A

> growing toward the final cut-off

ALL PERFORMERS  
(except for MUS\_A & B)

If you are not already as loud and mad as you can be get louder than you can and keep blowing/playing your brains out until the CONDUCTOR gives a cut-off (watch!!!)

MUS\_A

Start playing the metal trash can with metal mallets - play your heart out! - use discretion in order to keep from damaging your ears or the ears of the audience

MUS\_B

Turn on and improvise with the grinder (put on ear protection, safety goggles and gloves)

CONDUCTOR

- CUT OFF - *Finc.*