

תהו ובהו

(Tohu va Vohu)

for any instruments

Ethan Hayden

2008

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light."
 -Genesis 1:1-3

The first chapter of the book of Genesis states that God created the universe out of chaos. The Hebrew phrase for this state is *tohu va vohu*, which is often translated as "formless and void" or "wild and waste." Each thing God creates is part of a progression away from disorder and chaos toward order and harmony. Many Christian and Jewish scholars claim that God left the universe unfinished, making people to continue the work of creating the world, moving it away from chaos and formlessness toward order and good, and that therefore every human action either moves the world away from the *tohu va vohu*, or contributes to the chaos.

This piece musically explores the continuum between chaos and order. There are moments in the piece when the entire ensemble is playing together, completely unified, and there are moments in which the ensemble is totally at odds with itself, in utter disorder and chaos. The majority of the work, however, occupies the space between these two extremes, moving from one to the other, or in many different directions at once. The instrumentation is left up to the ensemble itself, and a variety of techniques, from improvisation to phase shifting, are used to create a sense of motion from one extreme to the next.

Tohu va Vohu was composed in the Spring of 2008.

Duration: ca. 12'

This piece calls for an ensemble of six different groups of instruments. Each group may contain any instruments and any number of instruments so long as there is a general dynamic balance among the entire ensemble, and so long as each instrument is capable of performing the role assigned to that group.

- Melodic:* Instruments capable of playing a melody (e.g., flute, trumpet, viola, organ).
- Sustaining:* Instruments capable of sustaining a pitch or sonority (e.g., cello, trombone, vibraphone, voice).
- Continuo:* Instruments capable of providing a harmonic/melodic accompaniment (e.g., piano, guitar, marimba, cello).
- Bass:* Instruments capable of playing a bass line (e.g., bass clarinet, tuba, contrabass, piano left hand).
- Percussion:* Any percussive instruments (e.g., drums, cymbals, gongs, marimba).
- Electronic/Voice:* Electronic instruments or human voice. This group exists so as to include those instruments that have difficulty playing exact pitches or reading from standard notation. Members of this group have the option of reading standard notation or freely interpreting the graphic notation printed above their part. This group disappears halfway through the piece, and members of this group are forced to join another group. Instruments suitable for this group include voice, theremin, laptop, electric guitar, synthesizer, etc. Singers should only sing the vowels, "oh," "ooh," and "ah."

Performers are to play from the score. All music is notated so that it mainly occupies the range inside the treble/bass staves. Since individual instruments will have different range considerations, performers should refer to the fully notated sections of the piece (pages 9 and 12), which contain the basic material on which the rest of the piece is based. Each performer should decide in which octave this material best works on their particular instrument (e.g., a flutist playing in the Melodic group might choose to play the material an octave higher than written, so he/she can play the lowest note—a³). Whichever octave transposition they choose for these sections they should maintain for the rest of the piece (e.g., the same flutist, seeing a box with the pitches a³, c⁴, d^{#4}, would improvise with the pitches a⁴, c⁵, d^{#5}).

Various levels of indeterminacy appear in this work.

- a) Boxes contain material with which performers are to use in an improvisatory fashion. They usually contain a particular set of notes, to be played in any order, with the specification that they be played in either the written octave or in any octave transposition (if written octave is specified, it is understood that some instruments will transpose, see above). Often boxes will also contain a rhythm, with the specification that the performers' improvisation will employ this rhythm *frequently* (predominantly using this rhythm) or *occasionally* (predominantly using other rhythms). Tempo indications are marked above each box, stating the general tempo at which performers should play. The general character of the improvisation is noted below the box, ranging from "legato melodies" to "short melodic gestures." Boxes for the percussion group usually contain rhythmic gestures, which players are to play in any order.
- b) Repeat bars contain material that is to be repeated in the order in which it is written, but which may still be the basis for improvisation. Repeat bars may simply contain pitches with which performers should improvise (like the boxes described above) in the given order, or may contain actual metered material that is to be repeated without freedom.

Timing is indicated by seconds in two formats:

- a) The duration of a particular section is notated above that section, either with or without brackets.
- b) Time points are marked in intervals with dotted lines.

The image shows two musical notation examples. Example (a) is titled "Quasi-Moderato" and shows a single treble clef staff with a melodic line. Above the staff, there is a box containing a rhythmic pattern of notes and rests, with the word "Occ." above it. Below the staff, the dynamic marking "mp" is written. Below the box, the text "Quasi-legato melodies" and "Any octave" is written. A wavy arrow points to the right from the end of the staff. Example (b) is titled "Quasi-Largo" and shows two staves (treble and bass clefs) with sustained chords. Above the staves, the dynamic marking "mf" is written. Below the staves, the text "Long sustained tones" and "Written octave" is written. A straight arrow points to the right from the end of the staves.

תהו ובהו

60"

Melodic

ca. 108
solo, one player

p hauntingly

rit. 3 *a tempo* 3 *rit.* 3 *a tempo* 3 *rit.* 3

Quasi-Andante

Occ.

pp

Legato melodies
Written octave
Players enter individually, staggering
entrances over the course of the next 30 seconds.

After a short pause, join other players
in your group, improvising as they are
with the notes given in the box.

Sustaining

Quasi-Largo

pp

Each player moves through this
progression at their own pace.

Electronic/Voice

Quasi-Andante

pp

Legato melodies
Any octave
Players enter individually, staggering
entrances over the course of the next 30 seconds.

Continuo

Quasi-Andante

Freq.

pp

Legato melodies
Written octave
Players enter individually, staggering
entrances over the course of the next 30 seconds.

Bass

Percussion

20" 30" 10"

Mel.

Sustn.

Elec./Vox

Contn.

Bass

Perc.

Quasi-Largo
mp
 Long sustained tones
 Written octave

Quasi-Moderato
mp
 Quasi-legato melodies
 Written octave

Quasi-Moderato
mp
 Quasi-legato melodies
 Written octave

Quasi-Andante
p
 Legato melodies
 Written octave
 Players enter individually, staggering entrances
 over the course of the next 30 seconds.

Quasi-Moderato
mp
 Quasi-legato melodies
 Any octave

p
 Players enter individually, staggering entrances
 over the course of the next 30 seconds.

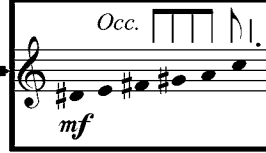
15"

30"

15"

Mel.

Quasi-Moderato

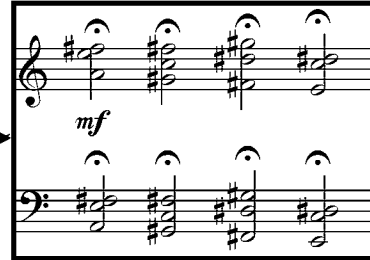
Occ. 

mf

*Melodies
Written octave*

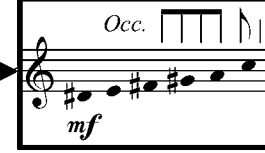
Quasi-Andante

mf



*Long sustained tones
Any octave*

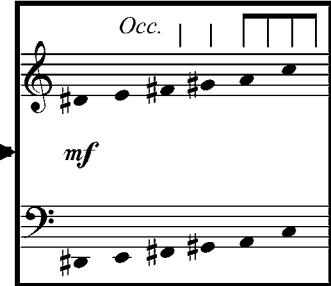
Quasi-Moderato

Occ. 

mf

*Melodies
Any octave*

Quasi-Moderato

Occ. 

mf

*Melodies
Any octave*

Quasi-Moderato

Occ. 

mf

*Melodies
Written octave*

Sustn.

Elec./Vox

Quasi-Moderato

Occ. 

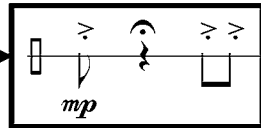
mp

*Quasi-legato melodies
Written octave*

Bass

Perc.


mp



20" 30" 10"

Mel. **Quasi-Andante**
Sustained tones
Any octave
mf

Quasi-Allegro
Melodic gestures
Any octave
mf

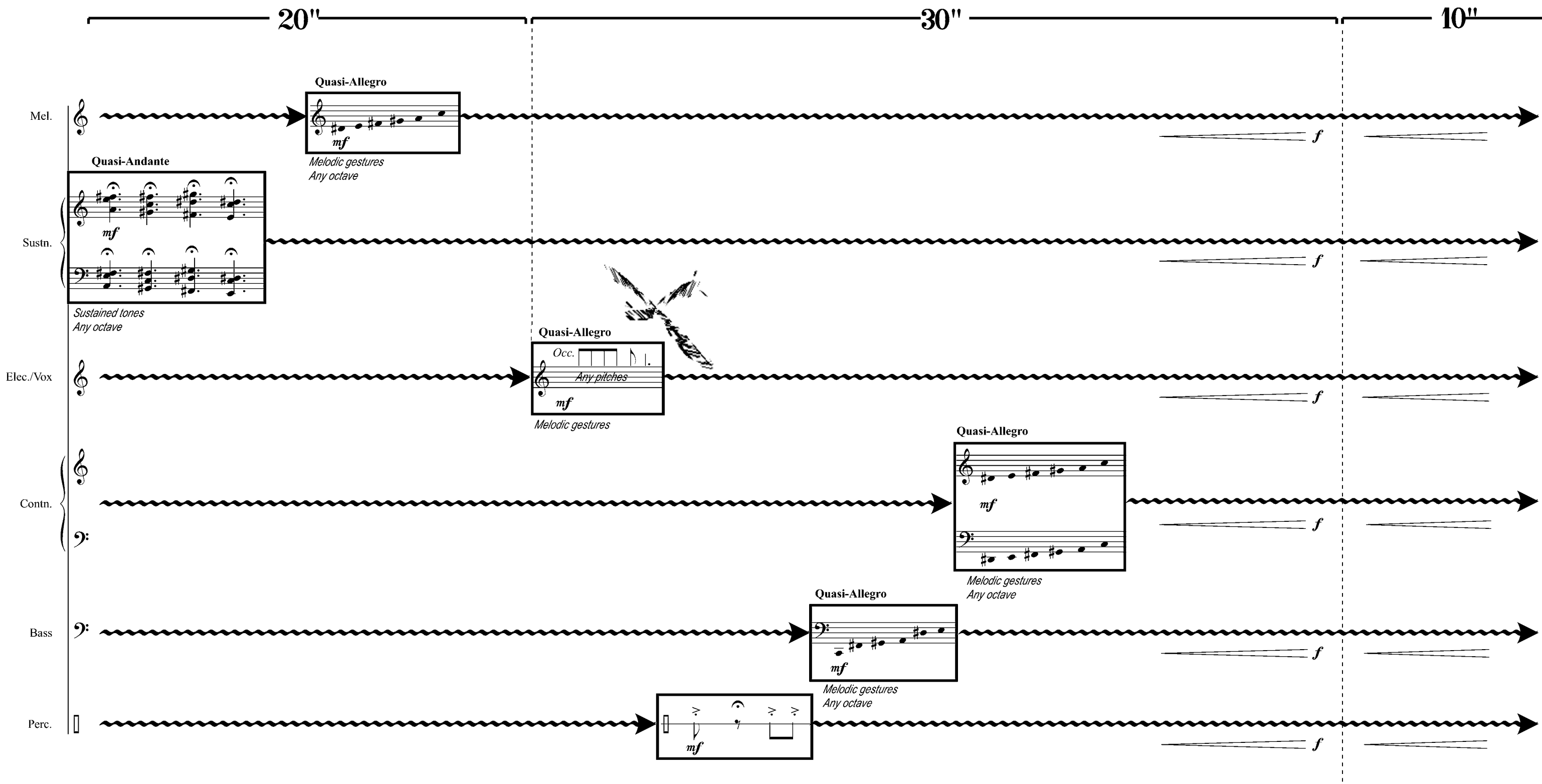
Elec./Vox **Quasi-Allegro**
Occ. 
Any pitches
mf
Melodic gestures

Contn. **Quasi-Allegro**
Melodic gestures
Any octave
mf

Bass **Quasi-Allegro**
Melodic gestures
Any octave
mf

Perc. **Quasi-Allegro**
Melodic gestures
Any octave
mf

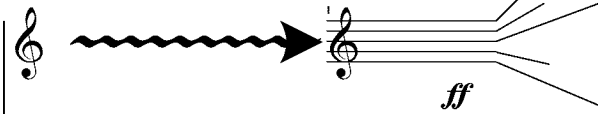
f *f* *f* *f* *f* *f* *f* *f*



5"

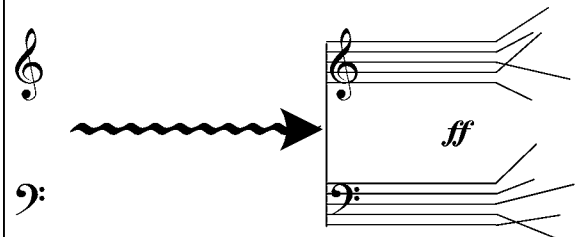
55"

Mel.



Play

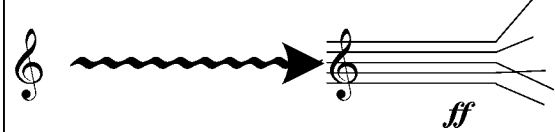
Sustn.



anything,

so long as it is

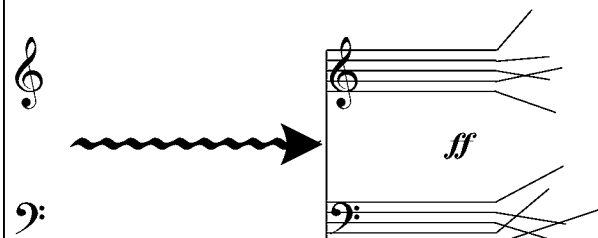
Elec./Vox



fast,



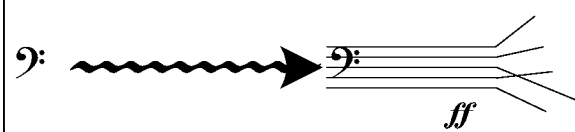
Contn.



loud,

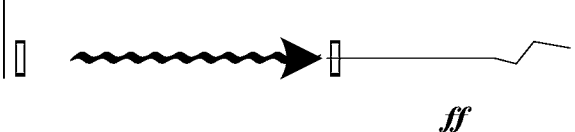
jagged,

Bass

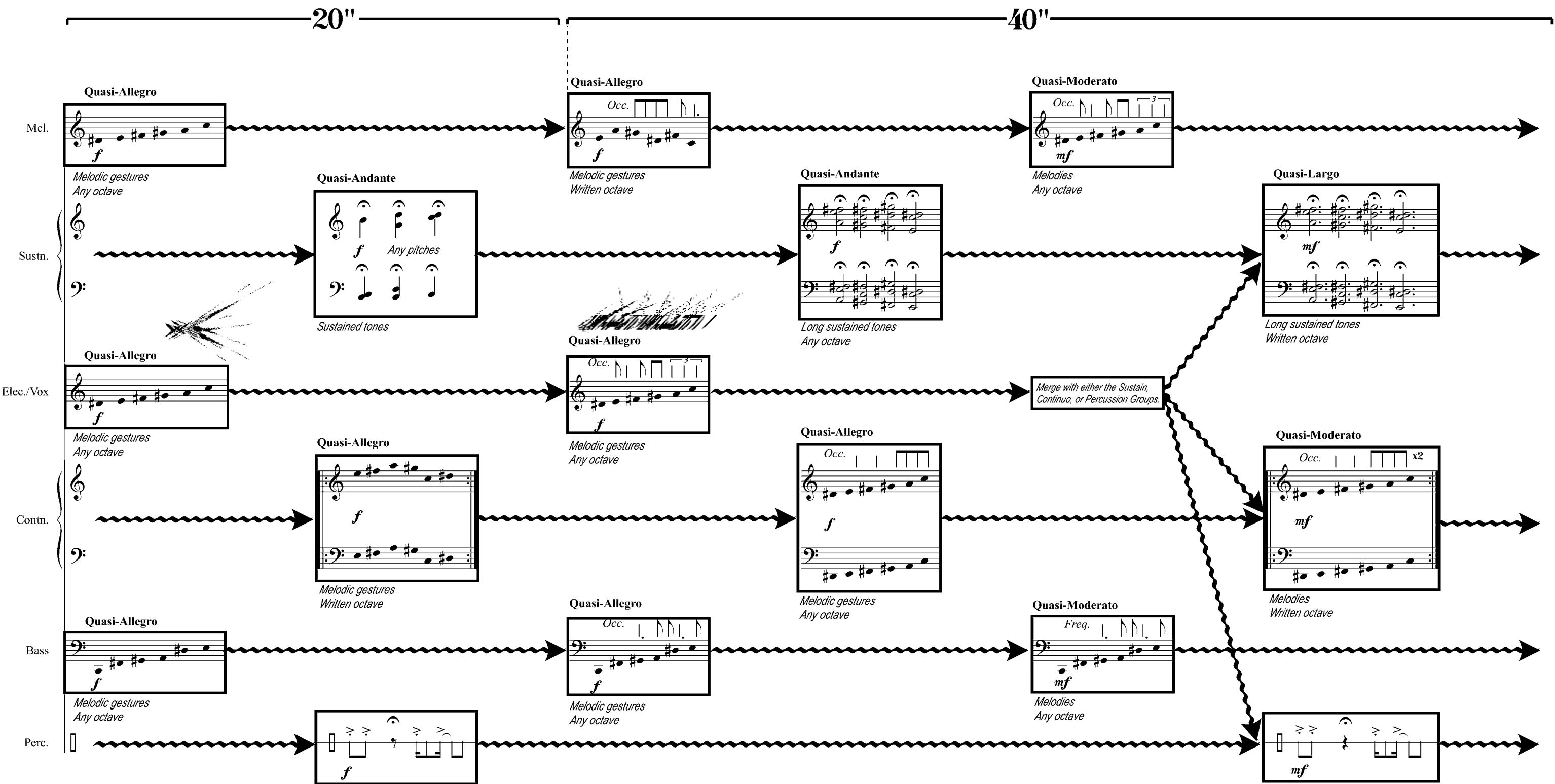


frenzied

Perc.



and chaotic.



The score is divided into two main sections: a 35-inch section and a 25-inch section. The 35-inch section is marked **Quasi-Moderato** and the 25-inch section is marked **ca. 108**.

Mel. (Melodies):

- 35" section: **Quasi-Moderato**, *Freq.*, *mf*, *Melodies Written octave*.
- 35" section: **Quasi-Moderato**, *Freq.*, *mf*, *Quasi-legato melodies Written octave*.
- 25" section: **ca. 108**, *mp*, *3*.

Sustn. (Long sustained tones):

- 35" section: **Quasi-Largo**, *mf*, *Long sustained tones Written octave*.

Contn. (Melodies):

- 35" section: **Quasi-Moderato**, *Freq.*, *mf*, *Melodies Written octave*.
- 35" section: **Quasi-Moderato**, *Freq.*, *mf*, *Quasi-legato melodies Written octave*.
- 25" section: **ca. 108**, *mp*.

Bass (Melodies):

- 35" section: **Quasi-Moderato**, *Occ.*, *mf*, *Melodies Written octave*.
- 35" section: **Quasi-Moderato**, *Freq.*, *mf*, *Quasi-legato melodies Written octave*.
- 25" section: **ca. 108**, *mp*.

Perc.:

- 35" section: *mf*.

50''

10''

Mel. *ca. 108* *mp*

Sustn. *mp*

Contn. *mp*

Bass *mp*

Perc. *rit.*

All Melody players should metrically align with the now-unified Continuo group, so that their parts line up as seen to the right.

All Sustain players should metrically align with the now-unified Continuo, Melody and Bass groups, so that their parts line up as seen to the right.

All Continuo players should line up each other, so that this group is eventually playing in unison.

All Bass players should metrically align with the now-unified Continuo and Melody groups, so that their parts line up as seen to the right.

Continue this loop until every member of the ensemble is playing in sync with each other; then move together to the next page and continue.

n (tacet)

90"

20"

ca. 108

Mel.

Repeat 4x, on the fifth repeat diminuendo to niente.

Sustn.

Repeat 5x, on the sixth repeat diminuendo to niente.

Contn.

Repeat 3x, on the fourth repeat diminuendo to niente.

Bass

Repeat 5x, on the sixth repeat diminuendo and move seamlessly into next box.

Perc.

Begin to fade in around the fourth repeat of the above section. Players enter individually, staggering entrances over the course of the next 30 seconds. Do not play in metric alignment with the rest of the ensemble. Enter almost inaudibly and cresc. gradually from there.

Quasi-Moderato

Elec./Vox

Melodic gestures

Quasi-Moderato

Melodic gestures

Any octave

(mp)

30"

30"

30"

In this section, the Percussion group continues with the fragment they have been playing. Each percussionist individually moves through the three sections of new fragment. They randomly choose fragments to play while still articulating the main motive, which is all the while growing in frequency and dynamic. The entire texture of this section should grow in density, dynamic, and complexity.

Quasi-Andante

Quasi-Moderato

Quasi-Allegro

Musical notation for the Quasi-Andante section, featuring five fragments of varying lengths and dynamics (mp) on a staff.

Musical notation for the Quasi-Moderato section, featuring six fragments of varying lengths and dynamics (mf) on a staff.

Musical notation for the Quasi-Allegro section, featuring seven fragments of varying lengths and dynamics (f) on a staff.

Perc. \rightarrow mp accel. f

Percussion group divides itself into four parts as noted in the score. Each individual begins to play a different part without coordinating with any other player. They continue to play these patterns until a low perc. player signals the start of a unified system with a four-beat cue. This unified section is repeated and then continues on to the next page.

30"

ca. 108

Sustn. Perc. $\frac{4}{4}$ *f*

High Perc. $\frac{4}{4}$ *f*

Mid. Perc. $\frac{4}{4}$ *f*

Low Perc. $\frac{4}{4}$ *f*

ca. 108

Sustn. Perc. $\frac{4}{4}$

High Perc. $\frac{4}{4}$

Mid. Perc. $\frac{4}{4}$

Low Perc. $\frac{4}{4}$

ca. 108

While the Percussion group continues their pattern, as shown below, the other groups enter, one by one, playing the section in the repeat bars. After one group plays twice, the next group will enter. After the second group plays twice, the third group will enter and so on. The large numbers next to the staves indicate the order in which the groups enter. Once all groups have entered, and the entire ensemble plays the section three times, the piece ends suddenly.

Mel. **3**

Sustn. **4**

Contn. **1**

Bass **2**

Sustn. Perc.

High Perc.

Mid. Perc.

Low Perc.

*Omit last time