

## ***MUSIC FOR\_\_* BY JOHN CAGE** **OPEN FORM AND SOUND MATERIAL**

This work, or rather this family of pieces, composed in 1984–87, consists of seventeen parts for instruments and voices without a score. This idea of separate independent parts takes up the concept of the *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* (1957), an emblematic work by Cage written according to the principles of indeterminacy.

The configuration of the ensemble of musicians in *Music For\_\_* is variable. We can have a very dense ensemble with several performers or versions with few players, or even an empty ensemble, which would be a nod to other works by Cage, such as *4'33"*. The title of the piece is then completed by the number of performers, for example, in this case, we have *Music For Two*.

The second principle used in the writing of the piece is that of *time brackets*, a basic principle in the *number pieces* (Cage's works from 1987 until his death in 1992): the musical elements that make up each part have upper and lower time limits indicating the beginning and end of each element. It is the musician who independently determines the placement of the sound elements on the time axis (the *time line*) within the boundaries given by Cage. However, he must also respect the proportional writing (the space allocated to the notation of the elements on the paper is proportional to the duration of their execution).

Each instrumental part contains a succession of “Pieces” and “Interludes”, as defined by Cage. These two types of compositional structures contain the musical material that articulates the total duration of thirty minutes. For the *Pieces*, the musical content is found in flexible time brackets. For the *Interludes*, their content is found in fixed *time brackets*, whose beginning and end are determined, i.e. the musician must begin and end exactly at the indicated time.

*Pieces* are notated on two systems (two lines of music), and contain either an isolated note to be repeated a certain number of times, or extensive, virtuosic musical material with extreme pitches and nuances. *Interludes* have a constant duration of 5, 10 or 15 seconds, and invariably contain a group of a few notes or chords, including commas that suggest a basic phrasing. In these *Interludes*, the few notes and their simplicity of execution make a variety of interpretations possible, in contrast to the proportional notation in the *Pieces*.

So we have four types of sound material:

In the *Pieces*:

1. Continuous isolated notes that are to be played softly and can be repeated at will, provided that the time limits are respected; they are preceded and followed by rests. [Noted by the yellow color on the time line of pages 9 to 11].

2. Sequences of notes, of different pitches, which do not have to be repeated. They have very different nuances, timbres and durations. [Noted by the green color on the *time line*].
3. *Interludes*, containing notes of limited pitch, repeated, and low sound level. [Noted by the purple color on the *time line*].
4. The silences, created by the spaces between the sound events; they depend on the density of the execution and also on the interpretation within each *Pieces* and *Interludes*.

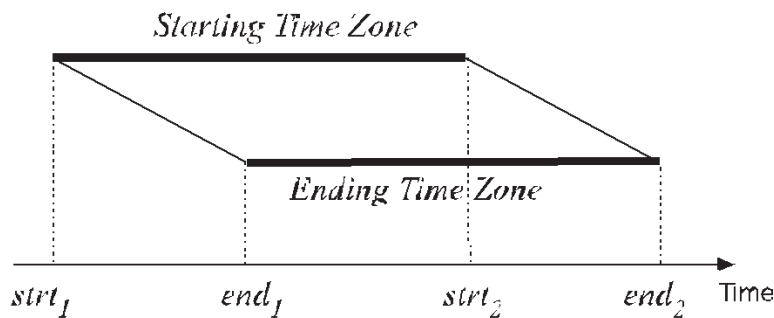
The image shows two staves of musical notation for piano. The first staff is labeled with the time interval "19'45'' ↔ 20'15''". It begins with a single note in the bass clef, followed by a series of chords and single notes in the treble clef. Dynamic markings below the staff include *p*, *f ff*, *fff*, *f ff*, *mf*, *f*, *ppp*, *fff*, *mf*, *ff*, *ppp*, and *pp*. The second staff is labeled with the time interval "20'00'' ↔ 20'30''". It contains a dense sequence of chords and notes. Dynamic markings below the staff include *mf*, *ppp*, *p*, *ppp*, *f ff*, *mp*, *f*, *mf*, *p mp*, *fff*, *ppp*, *p*, *f ff*, *mp*, *pp*, *ppp*, *fff*, *pp*, *fff*, and *ppp*.

**Figure 1:** A *Piece* for the piano



**Figure 2:** An *Interlude* for the trombone

The first step in the study of the form was to model a graphical representation in time of each musical event. For this, the temporal structure of the piece was represented as a set of events placed on the time line of the score. The time line has the following structure:  $\{strt_1, strt_2, end_1, end_2\}$ , where  $strt_1$  and  $strt_2$  are the numbers in the left time-bracket, and  $end_1$  and  $end_2$  are the numbers in the right time-bracket. Thus,  $strt_1$  is the lower limit in the *Starting Time Zone* and  $strt_2$  the upper limit;  $end_1$  is the lower limit in the *Ending Time Zone* and  $end_2$  the upper limit. The graphical event has a trapezoidal shape (figure 3), in which the upper line represents the *Starting Time Zone*, and the lower line



**Figure 3:** Graphic trapezoid representation for every musical event.  
 “A generic musical event”