

Earle Brown formulated general instructions for "open form" for earlier compositions, such as NOVARA (1962; published by Editions Peters), excerpted below:

Novara (1962), Directions for Performance

PRELIMINARY NOTES

Spontaneous decisions in the performance of a work and the possibility of the composed elements being "mobile" have been of primary interest to me for some time; the former to an extreme degree in FOLIO (1952), and the latter, most explicitly, in TWENTY FIVE PAGES (1953). For me, the concept of the elements being mobile was inspired by the mobiles of Alexander Calder, in which, similar to this work, there are basic units subject to innumerable different relationships or forms. The concept of the work being conducted and formed spontaneously in performance was originally inspired by the "action-painting" techniques and works of Jackson Pollock in the late 1940s, in which the immediacy and directness of "contact" with the material is of great importance and produces such an intensity in the working and in the result. The performance conditions of these works are similar to a painter working spontaneously with a given palette.

The conductor may conduct the events in any sequence or juxtaposition, in changing tempi, loudness, and in general mold and form the piece. The inherent *flexibility* of the materials allows the work to constantly transform itself and re-express its potential, while the sound materials and characteristics which I have composed contain the essential "identity" which makes this work different from any other.

I have felt that the conditions of spontaneity and mobility of elements which I have been working with create a more urgent and intense "communication" throughout the entire process, from composing to the final realization of a work. I prefer that each "final form," which each performance necessarily produces, be a collaborative adventure, and that

the work and its conditions of human involvement remain a "living" potential of engagement.

SCORE AND STRUCTURE

The conductor may begin a performance with any event on any page and may proceed from any page to any other page at any time, with or without repetitions or omissions of pages or events, remaining on any page or event as long as he wishes.

TIME NOTATION

There is a built-in factor of flexibility in the notation and scoring of this piece because the availability of forms is based on letting go of the idea of metric accuracy. This is achieved through the notational system used in this work. This system, which I have called a "time-notation," is a development of the work in FOLIO (1952 and 1953) and most clearly represents sound-relationships in the score as I wish them to exist in performance, independent of a strict pulse or metric system.

CONDUCTING

The conducting technique is basically one of *cueing*; the notation precludes the necessity and function of "beat" in the usual sense (although the conductor does indicate the relative tempo). The number of the event to be performed is indicated by the left hand of the conductor – one to five fingers. A conventional (right-hand) down-beat initiates the activity. The *relative* speed and dynamic intensity with which an event is to be performed is implied by the *speed* and largeness of the down-beat as given with the right hand. Nearly all of the events in the score have been assigned dynamic values. These are acoustically accurate in terms of instrumental and ensemble sonority and balance and must be respected as written, although the conductor may "override" the indicated dynamic values and raise or lower the over-all loudness.

The conception of the work is that the score presents specific material having different characteristics, and that

this material is subject to many *inherent* modifications, such as modifications of combinations (event plus event), sequences, dynamics, and tempos, *spontaneously* created during the performance. All events are always *prepared* by a left-hand signal and *initiated* by a down-beat from the conductor; the size and rapidity of the down-beat implies the loudness and speed with which the event is to be performed. The conductor must, as with any notation, insist on accurately articulated relationships from the rhythmic “shape” of phrase and pitch sequences in this work.

GENERAL MODIFICATIONS OF EVENTS

CONDUCTED FERMATA: the conductor may introduce a fermata *at any time* during the performance, in any single event or combination of events. Both hands cupped towards the orchestra and held stationary indicates that *all* musicians in that group should *hold* the sound or silence which they are at that moment performing, until the next sign from the conductor tells them either to cut off or to continue from the point of interruption. A *cut-off* is signaled with both hands and must be followed by another event-signal from the left hand and a down-beat. To *continue*, the conductor moves both hands from the “hold” position back to the body and then outward towards the orchestra, palms up (as if giving the initiative back to the orchestra).

CONDUCTED STOP: the conductor may stop any event or combination of events *at any time* during the performance. The normal, two-hand cut-off signal will silence his entire group. Leaving the hands up will *hold* that silence until the signal to continue from the point of interruption is given. If the hands do *not* remain up in “hold” position, the musicians are to expect another event-signal from the left hand, and a down-beat.

MODIFICATION OF SINGLE EVENT: any two-hand cut-off signal affects the *entire* group. The conductor may wish, however, to modify only one event among two or more events being performed simultaneously. To do this he signals the number

of the event to be modified with his left hand; then indicates the modification — a hold or cut-off — with *only* his right hand. (Events not indicated by the fingers of the conductor’s left hand continue to proceed normally.) It is absolutely essential that the orchestra members clearly understand this difference in signaling: a hold or cut-off by *both* hands affects an entire group; a hold or cut-off by *only* the right hand affects *only* the event indicated by the fingers of the left hand. Players whose parts do not contain events signaled by the conductor’s left hand must remain unaffected by his subsequent right-hand indications.

As soon as the conductor initiates (by left-hand event-signal and right-hand down-beat) a new event that appears on the player’s part, the preceding event is automatically cancelled. No specific stop-signal is required. The player simply discontinues the event he is playing and, without break between events, begins to play the new one.

With these procedures clearly understood by the conductor and the musicians it is possible to achieve smooth transitions and long lines of connected material of extreme complexity and frequent modification. The first impression derived from the score will be one of many sporadic fragments. This wealth of fragments shows the numerous formal possibilities inherent in the work, and it is this realization, not the fragmentations, that must become the dominant characteristic of performance.