

# Hidden Variables

## Program Notes

*Hidden Variables* is an improvisatory sound performance that tests the performers' perception of shape and movement with respect to space and noise. The ensemble has been split up into two sections, one playing with medium-large tiles and the other using small tiles. Made from materials such as clay, porcelain, and concrete the tiles can produce a plethora of sound qualities. It is important to note that this piece can be performed with any combination of found objects, barring that there is a categorical variation between the two groups (i.e., large vs. small size, soft vs. hard texture, high vs. low primary sound frequencies, malleable vs. rigid material, technologically enhanced vs. natural acoustics, etc.). As the creator, I was inspired by the sounds of ceramic tiles, and therefore, designed the score with their specific aural and physical capabilities in mind.

Each of the performing groups will be watching a video of animated digital designs in gray scale and using the ceramic tiles to emulate the shapes before them. How the visuals are reflected in the noise is up to the performers, and the many variables they see could represent any number of parameters, such as body movement, tile material, volume, force of gesture, or tone quality. While these mental preparations may be unknown to the audience, the primary hidden factor for the performers is the group with which they are sharing the stage. Each group will be watching a different video, while the audience will be watching a projected composite of the two. Sometimes, their visuals may line up, but their improvisatory choices may not, and only the audience will know where the parallels in their source material lie. This performance will result in a series of unpredictable collaborations that will develop our communal sound ideas, perhaps even without our knowing.

## Instructions

Divide the ensemble into two sections and arrange the performers onstage so that each performer can view their assigned part on a nearby screen. There should be 3-5 players on each part, 6-10 in total. These parameters, along with stage preparation and ensemble arrangement are at the discretion of the director, considering the volume of the objects and the qualities of the performance space. For the debut of this piece tarps covered the stage, and each performer had a handful of tiles to work with and a larger tile to serve as a playing surface. Each group watched one laptop computer with their respective part on it.

One player from each group must play the video on cue, synchronized with the director, who will play the composite score, projected for the audience.

### **Performers:**

Create sounds that reflect the shapes you see before you. Visual variables may be indicative of any parameter. For example, the size of a shape could reflect volume, the shade of a shape could reflect the choice of surface you strike, the movement of a shape could reflect the way in which you strike a surface, etc.

### **Special Considerations:**

- Although this is an improvisatory piece, you should review your part a few times to acquaint yourself with the transitions. Take note of certain checkpoints or memorable climactic moments.
- Be economic with your sounds. Decide what gestures are most appropriate for each shape and save those gestures.
- Listen and react. **Work as a section.** Feel free to remain still for certain portions or choose certain shapes on the screen that call out to you most. For example, if there is not a lot of activity on the screen, perhaps only one or two players generate sound at that time. If there are many large shapes intermittently appearing, choose only one to react to.
- Create dynamic and textural diversity. **Work as an ensemble.** Listen for the other section and create moments that are both cacophonous and sparse. Try to create sounds you've never created before. Bounce ideas off your section-mates before the performance *and* in the moment.