

Resolution

Notes for Ensemble

Introduction to the piece

Resolution is a series of short movements, where each performer is provided with a sequence of instructions for making sounds, an approximate length, and a pitch set representing the movement's closing sonority, forming the notes of a dominant seventh chord. In a manner chosen by the ensemble, performers must select pitches from each set provided.

Each performer must end each section on their chosen pitch for that section. Each sound-instruction must be carried out in sequence prior to reaching the final pitch, and the performer should improvise sonorities in accordance with the instructions and also bearing in mind the goal of pleasant voice-leading to the final pitch. Keeping in mind the rough duration of the section, the instrumentalist should proceed through instructions at their discretion. Upon arriving at the final pitch, the performer should sustain that pitch with a timbre emphasizing the fundamental frequency of the pitch for approximately ten seconds after all members of the ensemble have reached their final pitches.

The experience of the dominant seventh chord is central to *Resolution*. As the chord in western tonal music theory with the strongest tendency to resolve to the tonic, its inclusion calls up the harmonic memory imprinted on many people by years of exposure to classical and popular western music. By leaving the voice-leading up to the performers, and through the interactivity and indeterminacy specified in the score, to the audience and to chance, and by resolving to the dominant, rather than the tonic, *Resolution* facilitates an exploration on the part of the ensemble collectively, and its members and audience members individually, of the ways in which a harmonic doctrine has transformed our hearing. By placing the dominant seventh in a radical context, stripping it of its usual harmonic function, and by undermining the separation between the roles of composer, performer, and audience member, *Resolution* will provide a mechanism through which to explore our ability to hear things differently, and to engage critically with our harmonic education.

In addition to the central theme of voice-leading to unresolved dominant-seventh chords, *Resolution* deals with questions of specificity and improvisation, explores the different social and spatial relationships contained in a concert performance, and explores the range of pitched and non-pitched sounds accessible to instrumentalists. Through practicing with the instrumental scores, the spectrum of sound-events from highly specified 'mimic' instructions, through free improvisatory events, and from pitched, through non-pitched sounds, will expose some of these patterns and act as guides for

improvisation and voice-leading. Additionally, some sound events direct performers' attention at different aspects of the performance situation—specifying the performance space, the audience, or other members of the ensemble as sources for sounds to mimic or vary. Other sound events focus solely on the individual, evoking and demanding engagement with the range of social and spatial relationships present in a concert performance.

When improvising voice-leading to the final pitches in each section, the challenge for the performer is to communicate these subsidiary themes while striving to simultaneously clarify, announce, or otherwise engage with the progression to a dominant seventh chord.

General Performance Instructions

The following is a set of instructions for how to interpret the notation for sound-events in the scores for instrumentalists.

Each of the five sections of *Resolution* should last approximately two minutes. Each performer will perform ten sound-events in every section, with the tenth event being the final pitch, sustained in as pure a tone as possible. Each performer should proceed through instructions at their discretion, allowing as much or as little time as desired for specific events, but bearing in mind the suggested approximate duration. Once all performers have reached their final pitches, they should sustain for roughly ten seconds on the final pitches before the conductor or ensemble signals the end of the section.

PS—Pitched Sound. The performer may improvise any pitched sound.

NPS—Non-Pitched Sound. The performer may improvise any non-pitched sound.

OVER—Overtone. The improvised sound-event should emphasize the overtones specified in the notation.
high. Emphasize high overtones.
fund. Emphasize the fundamental (strive for the purest tone possible).

DYN—Dynamics. The improvised sound-event should correspond to the specified dynamics level.
quiet. Improvise a quiet sound.
medium. Improvise a sound with medium dynamics.
loud. Improvise a loud sound.

SPK—Speak. Vocalists should speak for the duration of this sound-event. Other instrumentalists should attempt to speak 'through their instrument,' either by talking in a way that activates or resonates the instrument (speaking through a horn instrument, speaking with guitar

strings in the guitarist's mouth), or simply speaking without using their instrument. If the notation is not further specified, the performer may speak with words or gibberish, on an improvised or prepared text supplied by anyone.

key. Read from the section marked key at the bottom of the score for instrumentalist.
improvise. Improvise a text or gibberish.

NEW—New Part of Instrument/Body. For each number (i.e. NEW: 1, NEW: 2), performers should improvise a sound on a part of their instrument or with a part of their body that they have not yet used to produce a sound-event in the performance. Each number specified will thereby correspond to the part of their instrument or body they have used, and for subsequent sound-events calling the same number performers should use the same body/instrument part.

The remaining sound-events used: MIMIC and VARY require the performer to draw on other members of the ensemble, the audience, or the performance space. These sound events also contain a greater range of degree of specificity and use more involved notation. For MIMIC E and VARY events, the two events that create relationships between members of the ensemble, the first line will detail the type of event (i.e. VARY, MIMIC E). The second line, if specified, will detail the aspect of sound to mimicked or varied (i.e. duration, timbre, pitch). The third line, if specified, will detail where in the ensemble to look for a sound to mimic or vary (i.e. nearby, distant), or what type of sound to listen for and vary or mimic (i.e. loud, quiet). The appearance of notation such as 'loud,' or 'quiet,' in the third line *does not* mean to make a loud or quiet sound, but rather instructs the performer to mimic or vary a loud or quiet sound.

MIMIC—Mimic. There are four different types of MIMIC events in *Resolution*, specifying different sources for sounds to mimic. These sources are specified as follows:

S—Space. Mimic a sound from the performance space (a buzzing light, dripping water faucet, creaking floor, etc.).

A—Audience. Mimic a sound from the audience (a cough, a crinkling program, a shifting seat, etc.).

A/S—Audience/Space. Mimic a sound from the audience or performance space.

E—Ensemble. Mimic a sound from another member of the ensemble.

Space, Audience, and Audience/Space notation differs from Ensemble notation and will be dealt with first. If no further instruction appears after the MIMIC, then the performer may mimic any sound from the audience or space as specified.

loud. Mimic a loud sound from the audience, space, audience or space.

quiet. Mimic a quiet sound.

low. Mimic a low sound (with regard to pitch).

high. Mimic a high sound (with regard to pitch).

articulated. Mimic an articulated sound (a sudden sound, a sound with sharp attack, or a rapid or periodic sound).

sustained. Mimic a sustained sound.

Ensemble sound-events often specify a quality to mimic in addition to guidelines for how to choose what sound to mimic. If no such quality is specified, the performer should mimic all qualities of the sound as closely as possible. If a quality is specified, the performer only needs to mimic the specified quality.

Second line:

timbre. Mimic (only) the timbre of the chosen or specified sound.

pitch. Mimic (only) the pitch of the chosen or specified sound.

dynamics. Mimic (only) the dynamics of the chosen or specified sound.

Third line: (third line commands are the same for MIMIC E and VARY sound-events, so the description here will apply to both sets of sound-events).

nearby. Choose a sound to mimic or vary from a member of the ensemble physically nearby.

distant. Choose a sound to mimic or vary from a member of the ensemble physically distant.

loud. Choose a loud sound to mimic or vary.

quiet. Choose a quiet sound to mimic or vary.

VARY—Vary. This sound-event requires the performer to vary one aspect of a sound being played by another member of the ensemble. If the second line of the notation is left blank, the performer may choose what aspect of the sound to vary. If the third line is left blank, the performer may choose the sound to vary. Only the aspect of the sound chosen or specified should be varied—all other aspects of the sound should be mimicked to the best ability of the performer.

Second line:

timbre. Vary (only) the timbre of the chosen or specified sound.

pitch. Vary (only) the pitch of the chosen or specified sound.

int. Vary (only) the pitch of the chosen or specified sound by the interval specified.

octave. By an octave;

P5. By a perfect fifth (7 semitones);

TT. By a tritone (6 semitones);

M3. By a major third (4 semitones);

m2. By a minor second (1 semitone).

dynamics. Vary (only) the dynamics of the chosen or specified sound.

duration. Vary (only) the duration of the chosen or specified sound.