

Charlie Sdraulig

alike and apart

for two performers

2016

For Weston Olencki and Matt Barbier

To Matthew Shlomowitz

Note

This piece enacts a process akin to category formation. Listening and responding to one another, the performers propose phrases that are alternately similar to, and different from, a pre-determined, quiet point of departure. As these categories of ‘similar’ and ‘different’ are affirmed, redefined or blurred with each new proposition, the performers create a sort of history of distinctions, contingently made in sound. In other words, the piece provides a framework for the performers to chart their own interdependent, speculative course—a partial, provisional mapping out within a field of sonic possibilities.

Acknowledgements

I would like to particularly thank Matthew Shlomowitz—the form of the piece arose out of our conversations—as well as Weston Olencki and Matt Barbier for their advice, support and encouragement throughout the compositional process.

General performance directions, setup and technical requirements

Open instrumentation: both players must play on the same type of instrument.

Perform this piece from memory.

Mostly play very softly, often near the threshold of audibility.

The players perform in the center of space, facing one another.

Amplification is optional, depending upon whether the performance space demands it, as well as your desire to incorporate this as an active element.

Each performer controls their own amplification with: a **microphone**, a **mixer**, **volume pedal**, and **amp**, sending the same signal to at least **two loudspeakers**. Ensure all audience members can hear both players’ amplified signals.

The audience should be as close as possible to the performers, encircling them. Alternatively, a small group of audience members may sit in between the performers.

The lighting levels should be very low throughout.

Please contact me (email: c-sdraulig@hotmail.com) for a version of the ‘variables to consider’ page specific to your instrument.

Same, similar, different; interpolation

A : the first **A** phrase is notated and given in the section ‘variables to consider’ (see the open score for further information on the treatment of **A** thereafter).
=**A** play exactly the **same** phrase as the **A** you *just* heard (i.e. an aural imitation without reference to the notated material).

≈**A** play a **similar** phrase to the **A** you most recently heard.

Similarity means that the phrase sonically *resembles* the previous **A** in terms of salient variables and how they change. Start the phrase in a similar way to **A**, but then noticeably vary and change it in a way that *perceptibly foreshadows B*.

B play a **different** phrase to the **A** you most recently heard.

Difference means that the phrase must highly *contrast* sonically to the previous **A**. It must sound *fundamentally different* to, and be *clearly recognizable* by, a third party, if recalled later—features, such as large discrete changes in sound (variables), will likely help.

To realize a given ≈**A** or **B**, only change your sound **continuously** (gradually, smoothly) and/or **discretely** (abruptly, block-like), relative to **A**. Any variable or group of variables may be changed in any combination (see the section ‘variables to consider’ for suggestions).

However, after you have chosen a given ≈A or B phrase’s initial sound/variable states, try to make the minimum number of (continuous and/or discrete) changes necessary to achieve a clear sense of similarity or difference for the audience.

Each ≈**A** phrase should be similar to the other ≈**A** phrases you or the other performer play, but not the same.

Each **B** phrase should differ from the other **B** phrases you or the other performer play, though they may share variables in common.

The notations ≈**A1**, ≈**A2**, **B1** or **B2** etc. are intended to imply this differentiation, while also **identifying individual phrases to be recalled later on**.

Note: **B1** in the second pass through the process ≠ **B1** in the first pass through the process etc. (i.e. **it is not a repetition**)—this applies for all other **B** phrases.

You should only recall phrases *within* a given pass through the process when explicitly indicated.

Interpolate means to create multiple phrases which are each a complete, plausible and consequential step upon a linear trajectory between the two indicated phrases, such as between **A** and ≈**A**, for example. (Interpolated steps might be analogous to a few non-successive frames in between the start and end of a slow pan in a film.)

To elaborate further: perhaps **A** features one slow continuous change in embouchure, and ≈**A** has a slightly slower change in embouchure plus one large, fast continuous slide change. An intermediate step on the path between **A** and ≈**A** might include a very subtle slow continuous slide change, which then becomes faster and more salient in the next intermediate step; the embouchure change might in turn become a little slower with each step as well etc.

Highly contrasting and recognizable **B** phrases will help to make the process of interpolation and the return of previously heard phrases as evident as possible *for the audience*.

Always prioritize changes in sound (variables) that will clarify and articulate the form of the work.

Record your rehearsal run-throughs. Then listen back and assess the effectiveness of your decisions together. Is the form clear?

Version for two trombones: variables to consider; filtering/mediation of breath

Trombone preparation throughout: partially removed f-slide (pc: Weston Olencki).



Articulate similarities and differences through the following variables, singly and in combination:

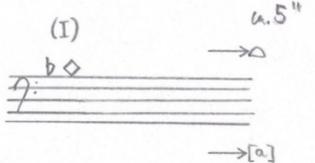
- (1) **duration per phrase:** the minimum phrase length is 1"; the maximum overall phrase length is equivalent to a long, somewhat strained breath out (ca. 20" max). However, *within* a given phrase you may breathe in and out, circular breathe, momentarily break the flow of audible sound etc., but do not exceed the overall maximum duration per phrase.
- (2) **with(in) the mouth:** vary embouchure (mouth shape, vowel coloration etc.), air speed/volume etc.; very subtle palette whistling (tongue almost touching the roof of your mouth); very soft tongue clicks and saliva sounds; mostly altering *dynamics* and *timbre*. However, generally play very softly, often near the threshold of audibility.
- (3) **between the mouth and instrument:** vary their relation in terms of horizontal (x-axis) movement and distance (z-axis); mostly altering *resonance (timbre)*, (bifurcation of a focused wind stream on edge of mouthpiece could result in whistles) etc.
- (4) **with(in) the instrument:** vary slide, mute(s); mostly altering 'pitch'; when in a conventional playing position you may introduce barely activated buzzing on the 4th partial only, or on flutter tongue on extremely low (pedal) tones—there should only ever be a *risk* of these pitched notes sounding.
- (5) **diffusion out of the instrument:** via the bell, (mute(s)), out of removed f-slide (using the trigger—avoid percussive clicks), vary volume via the pedal and mixer to loudspeakers; mostly altering *location*. On your mixer, keep the signal panned to center throughout your performance and do not alter your EQ from a setting that minimizes extraneous noise.

Note: **you can change multiple elements within a variable simultaneously**, if you wish.

For example, you might change mouth shape, vowel coloration and air speed at the same time etc.

Certain elements above (such as some mutes and the volume pedal) may only be suited to discrete rather than continuous change.

Initial A only =



at the threshold of audibility

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× *ad lib.*

player 1	:	A	—	:	A	—	A	—	—
player 2	:	—	=A	:	—	≈A1	—	B1	—

(rest duration = B1 duration)

When playing A, always ask yourself:
Which variable is the other player most saliently changing?
 Very slowly, but noticeably, alter the same variable in the same manner.
 Within a cycle, the core identity of A should generally be maintained despite these changes.
 At the start of each line within a pass, imitate exactly the A you most *recently* heard.

1	—	=A	—	≈A2	—	B2	—
2	A	A	A	A	A	A	—

(rest duration = B2 duration)

1	A	A	⋮	A	⋮	A	⋮	A	—
2	—	=A	⋮	→	⋮	→	⋮	B1	→

interpolate interpolate extrapolate

(rest duration = C duration) *Return to the start of the first line, but player 1 takes the player 2 part, and player 2 takes the player 1 part; C becomes the new A material.*

Play through this process at least three times.

- **First pass:** when both players play together in a given ‘bar’, begin your phrases at the same time. If these phrases are of different lengths, whoever finishes first should wait silently and still for the other player to finish. No pauses or rests on bar lines—each new phrase should follow *attacca* from the previous one.
- **Second pass:** continue as before, but your **B** phrase durations in this pass must be extremely different to your **B** phrase durations in the first pass. In lines 2 and 3, gradually become unsynchronized—avoid coordinating at bar lines and allow one another’s phrases to increasingly overlap.
- **Third pass onwards:** skip lines 1 and 2—play line 3 only, but ignore the rests and freely overlap phrases. After a few passes of this line *ad lib.* (continue to swap roles with each pass), finish the piece with a non-verbally agreed ‘improvisers’ ending’.