

Variations on a Musical Scene

for five instruments, electronics, motors, and light

deok-Vin lee (2025)

Video (excerpt): <https://youtu.be/czDLzbMP3dA>

Setting and General Instruction

Four pitched instruments

Any four instruments from the strings or wind families can perform the piece.

Each instrument features short solo or duo moments in the indicated variation below.

Instrument1 (P1): 4th. Variation.

Instrument2 (P2): 3rd. Variation.

Instrument3 (P3): 1st. Variation.

Instrument4 (P4): 4th. Variation.

One percussion (Perc)

Percussion is not replaceable.

Organize the instrument set freely, including three main instruments and additional options.

Sticks, brushes, or other tools can be used as desired.

Instrument A: (Mid to high instrument): Snare drum, bongo, or similar.

Instrument B: (Mid to low instrument): Tom-tom, or similar.

Instrument C (low or large instrument): Bass drum, massive wood block, or similar.

Other instruments: Additional instruments can be included and used in the 1st, 3rd, and 4th Variations.

Objects

Each performer has a table (five tables) where many different objects are placed.

Performers can select objects freely. An example list is provided below.

List: Plastic bag, balloon, backpack, linen, tissue paper, bottle, dumbbell, book, mug, pillow, blanket, magazine, candy, ladder, chair, pen, scarf, frying pan, cardboard box, towel, broom, flower pot, tennis racket, sponge, notebook, stapler, umbrella, clock, candle, basket, bucket, napkin, tape, glove, helmet, yoga mat, football, table, hammer, plush toy, hanger, and so forth.

Electronics (Elec) and Light

Stereo + Subwoofers (3 channels)

Strobe light or flat Led * 1 + multiple large light bulbs

Motors

Electromechanical vibration motors (over 60W each) * 5

Each motor is attached to a table assigned to each performer.

Wireless audio system

Each instrument is equipped with a wireless audio system.

Transmitter * 1 or 5 + receiver * 5 + mini speaker * 5

Duration

All written durations are approximate. The duration may vary depending on the performance.

Harmonic Theme (H.T.)

The harmonic theme follows a generic F major progression: Tonic–Subdominant–Dominant–Tonic. Tones or tone combinations can be freely chosen but must be determined beforehand.

For hand werk

For the premiere, the following instruments and tone combinations are suggested.

Instrument 1: Flute

Instrument 2: Violin

Instrument 3: Cello

Instrument 4: Bass Clarinet in Bb

Harmonic Theme (H.T.): T-S-D-T

Flute

Bass Clarinet in Bb

Violin

Violoncello

H.T. (D)

Flute

Bass Clarinet in Bb

Variations on a Musical Scene

for Ensemble hand werk

deok-Vin lee (2025)

Musical Scene

| | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---------------|-------|
| | Slow enough | 30" or longer | short |
| Four Pitched Instruments | <p style="text-align: center;">Harmonic Theme (H.T.)</p> | | still |
| | <p style="text-align: center;">Maintain your entire body position and remain completely still.</p> | | |
| Percussion | <p style="text-align: center;">Instrument A (snare, etc.): Subtle tremolo</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Perform extremely short-distance strokes—still audible but very subtle. 2. After a while, gradually slow down until the strokes become very intermittent. 3. Toward the end, play almost as if only making light touches. 4. Remain for a while with intermittent playing, then gradually go into stillness. | | |



2' or longer

All5

Understated musical actions

All performers repetitively play extremely subtle, minimal actions originally derived from sound production. The goal is for performers to maintain the tension of instrumental playing while shifting focus to the actions themselves. These actions stem from the performer's own bodily habits related to instrumental playing—what can be called professional habits. These habits are fragmented and aestheticized. Ultimately, there will be "almost" no actual sound production, with only the actions remaining.

Example 1: The clarinetist conceives a high note and prepares to play it. The body feels the tension, yet the clarinetist releases the tension at the moment of playing, without actually producing the note.

Example 2: The cellist positions for a certain note. Instead of bowing, the bow slowly moves away from the string and returns.

Example 3: The percussionist fixes a stick on the membrane and slowly draws a tiny circle.

1. All actions are executed in extremely subtle ways so that the performers appear almost still.
2. All actions should be very slow and deliberate.
3. Many actions imply sound production, while some are fragmented from it and mechanically executed with intention.
4. Pitches are determined by the last two harmonies of the harmonic theme (Dominant-Tonic) that have already been played, though they can be transposed to different octaves.
5. The percussionist remains with a single instrument, Instrument A (e.g., snare drum, bongo, etc.).
6. End with a short pause before starting the next passage.

Var. 1

| | | | | | |
|-------|--|------|---|--------------------|--|
| | Slightly faster than the original | 45'' | 15'' | 10-15'' x? | 10'' |
| All 4 | H.T. Play H.T. shaking the entire body | | Maintain your entire body position and remain completely still. | still All 5 | Momentary downwards action 1. Fix your body position with the instrument. 2. Charge your bodily energy: rise slightly with your body. 3. Attack downwards: the shoulders would be most engaged in the action. 4. Remain still after the action (pause for ca. 10-15''). 5. Repeat several times. |
| | Instrument B (tom, etc.): Subtle vibration Shake the entire body holding the instrument (Tensioned yet subtle) | | | | |
| | | Perc | | | |



| | | | | |
|-------|---|--------------|---|--|
| | short | 2' or longer | 2' or longer | |
| All 5 | Excessive effort The performers exert excessive effort in preparing a playing action that is aimed at producing sound. However, the final action is so ineffective that it results in no meaningful sonic output. 1. Determine the action precisely before performing. 2. Engage with all parts of the instrument. Example 1: Tap the hair of the bow very lightly with a finger. Example 2: Lick the body of the flute once. | | Excessive effort with objects Continue from the previous passage, but play using objects. A list of recommended objects is provided below (and in the instruction). Using extremely large or very small objects is also highly encouraged. List: Plastic bag, balloon, backpack, linen, tissue paper, bottle, dumbbell, book, mug, pillow, blanket, magazine, candy, ladder, chair, pen, scarf, frying pan, cardboard box, towel, broom, flower pot, tennis racket, sponge, notebook, stapler, umbrella, clock, candle, basket, bucket, napkin, tape, glove, helmet, yoga mat, football, table, hammer, plush toy, hanger, and so forth. | Walk to the other instrument 1. Leave your current instrument and walk to the position of the next instrument. 2. Each performer moves to an instrument that is not their own. 3. Prepare to play the 'unfamiliar instrument.' 4. The performer in the percussionist's position would be ready to conduct. *This process will repeat four more times in the coming passages until each performer returns to their original instrument. |
| | | | | |

Light

Electronics

Periodic light flash (flat led, strobe light, etc.)

Periodic filtered noise

Var. 2

| | | | | |
|------|---|---------------------------|---------|---------------------------|
| | H.T. | Walk to the next position | H.T. | Walk to the next position |
| All4 | | | | |
| Perc | Conduct | Conduct | Conduct | Conduct |
| | <p>Play H.T. following conducting</p> <p>1. Four performers with the pitched instruments, which are presumably unfamiliar, play the H.T. based on their instrumental knowledge.</p> <p>2. In the percussionist's position, the performer conducts the other four pitched instruments. Dynamics, tempo, and articulations are freely determined by the conductor.</p> | | | |
| | | | | |

≡

| | | | | |
|------|---------|---------------------------|---------|---------------------------|
| | H.T. | Walk to the next position | H.T. | Walk to the next position |
| All4 | | | | |
| Perc | Conduct | Conduct | Conduct | Conduct |
| | | | | |

Var. 3

Slow enough

Incorrect position
Hold the instrument in a faulty way and play the H.T. The performers attempt to use the correct fingerings, but it is not necessary to produce the original tones.

Example 1: The violinist flips the violin and plays the bow with the violin, attempting to finger the correct tones.
Example 2: The flutist holds the flute vertically, with the hand positions reversed, and plays while trying to find the right fingerings.

1'

stomp one foot
*repetitive, as fast as possible
**all four performers

Instrument 2 (Vn)

1. Make a large, slow circular motion with the violin bow or a long instrument such as the flute or recorder.
2. Gradually increase the speed until the motion becomes rapid.
3. After a while, the circular motion becomes smaller.
4. Eventually, the circular motion becomes very small, resembling just a shaking motion.
5. In the next passage, the performer touches (plays) their body with it. The transition should be smooth.
6. Keep stomping until the other performers stop.

*This is not twirling.

1'

Stop

Perc

as strong as possible

Instrument C (bass, etc.): Strike

Strike the instrument repeatedly with the full power of your body. If possible, use both hands. This is not an efficient striking technique but rather an emphasis on the striking motion itself.

Use a large instrument (e.g., bass drum with two bass drum sticks, a massive wood block with a large hammer, etc.).

Stop

1.5'

P2

Play the body (solo)

1. Begin by tapping the body with the shaking bow or instrument.
2. Tap a specific body part several times without shaking.
3. At some point, bow the body.

*This is not a fixed process but a suggestion. The performer has the freedom to decide how to play their body with the object held in their hand.

2' or longer

All5

Play the body (tutti)

1. Play the body using each performer's own instrument-related objects.
2. Use only objects that represent the performer's identity.

Example 1: Violin, bow, rosin, bridge for the violinist.
Example 2: Clarinet body parts, clarinet reed for the clarinetist.

3. Dynamics, articulations, rhythm, and the method of playing the body are left to the performer's discretion.
4. This passage smoothly fades in from the previous solo passage.
5. As the electronic sound starts to emerge, all actions slowly fade out.

Elec

Sinetones

Var. 4

8"

0.122" x13

40"

Very short

| | | | | |
|------|-------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------|--|
| | H.T. (T-S) Sinetones | Pulse | loud High noise impulse | H.T. (D) |
| Elec | T D | | High low Sinetones (periodic) | (Fl) (B.Cl) Play tones from the Dominant |
| | mid-soft | soft | soft | |

| | | | | | | |
|-------|------------------------|-------|---|--|--|-------|
| | 2" | 20" | 1' | 2' | 3' or longer | 5" |
| All5 | still | | Rise 1. Slowly raise the instrument upwards. 2. Stretch the body. 3. When reaching the top, remain still. 4. Percussion: use an instrument with a membrane. | H.T. (T) Float 1. Immediately after the noise cuts off, begin to 'float' around the room. 2. Slowly move your entire body continuously while walking. 3. One may play the instrument when it aligns naturally with the motion. 4. If needed, tones are based on the tonic harmony from the H.T. but may be transposed to different octaves. 5. Instruments held by the performers resonate either with their own body sounds, which are pre-recorded, or with live body sound from one performer (in this case only the other four performers float around). | Touch 1. While floating around, lightly touch the audience's body with the instruments. 2. Allow the person being touched to feel the instrument's vibrations. 3. After each touch, remain still for a moment, then continue floating. 4. Eventually, stop and remain still. | still |
| Light | | Blink | Blink | Radio signal Body sound | | |
| Elec | Tones H.T. (D) loud | Noise | Motors | Roomtone barely audible | | |