

## **Things In Common**

for two musicians moving in a resonant space

Jonas Kocher, 2023/2024

Written for Eva-Maria Karbacher, tenor saxophone, and Dimos Vryzas, violin, amplifier. Premiered in Biel/Bienne on March 3 2024.

Things In Common is conceived for two musicians playing in a resonant space. For 35 or more minutes, the musicians will produce sounds that will reveal the acoustics of the space and mark the passage of time. They are fully aware that the spectators are an integral part of the performance, that they feed the ongoing process by listening and paying attention.

A sort of coda (part II below) lasting around 5 minutes will act as a densification of the material played during the previous part. It is played frontally, in the centre of the stage and as close as possible to the audience. The sound level is kept as low as possible, reducing the space to that of the two instruments and the musicians' bodies.

For both performers and spectators, Things In Common is a game with the perception of repetitive sound events ; a game of patience in which each parametric modification of one of the elements will feed the development of the performance over time. Silence is essential and plays a central role, it should be on a par with sound.

## **Instructions for performing**

### **Preparation**

The work of setting up consists of exploring the sound elements proposed by the score by applying the given serial parameters to them. Each musician then selects the sounds that sound best on their instrument to build up the widest possible repertoire, including all possible dynamics.

### **Part I**

The sound events will then be freely combined in real time by the two musicians, their repetitions or their variations will be distributed throughout the performance. Repetition is an essential means for structuring the performance: an element, say 'x', may come back three times in a row over 10 seconds, or once a minute, or after 15 minutes, or again after 20 minutes, etc.. These decisions have to be taken at the very moment of the performance.

Depending on the needs of the moment, unexpected variations in the selected sound material, or even completely new additions, can be made during the performance.

The overall pace of the performance is slow.

Silences are frequent and last from a breath to much longer.

Rapid sound movements are necessary (see **Possible interactions between musicians**, point 3) bellow.

The duration is indicated by a watch, visible to the musicians but not to the audience. The transition to part II has to be done organically: one player goes alone to the front, the other follows.

### **Sound material to use**

- Very short sounds (slap, pizz, etc.)
- Continuous sounds at a pitch
- Continuous sounds of undetermined pitch (noise)
- Continuous sounds of partially determined pitch (combination of the preceding continuous sounds)

### **Serial parameters**

- 1) Dynamics: *ppp*, *pp*, *p*, *mp*, *mf*, *f*, *ff*, *fff*
- 2) Pitches: as low as possible, low, medium, medium high, high, as high as possible
- 3) Timbre: sound without harmonics / sound with harmonics
- 4) Duration (in seconds): 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21 or clearly longer (indicative durations)

### **Material to be played without applying serial parameters**

A few rare ascending scales (and later also descending ones) in whole tones of about 11 notes, played *pp* and in diminuendo with a lot of mechanical sounds.

### **Possible pulsations within the sustained sounds**

fastest possible pulse / ... / fast pulse (120 BPM) / ... / slow pulse (60 BPM) / ... / very slow pulse (30 BPM) / static sound (indicative durations)

## **Basic positions in the space for part I (from the spectators' point of view)**

at the back of the stage / in the middle / close / very close / behind the audience

The musicians' moves in space are always sound-driven and must be evenly distributed between the two musicians but while one is moving, the other remains in place. A bit like the pawns you move in a chess game, sometimes with a lot of waiting in between. These moves are performed slowly. A change of position or movement from time to time only. Distances should be adapted to suit the size of the venue.

Moves are made as if on straight lines (perpendicular and horizontal) on an invisible grid, following the particularities of the space, such as lines on the floor, pillars, walls, etc. Curves or zigzag progressions should be avoided.

**Obligatory: one of the musicians must move to the front of the first row at least once, a few centimetres from the audience, as close as possible, and produce sound there. This same player will again position himself very close to the audience to introduce Part II.**

## **Possible interaction between the two musicians**

Sounds can be combined in one of three ways:

- 1) By coexistence, without influencing each other
- 2) By fusion (unison or near unison or intervals)
- 3) By complementarity, in an organic way such as rapid-response accents or events patiently articulated between the two musicians

### **Part II**

The musicians play next to each other, in the centre of the stage and as close as possible to the front rows of the audience. The music is dense, fast, noisy and played as silently as possible. Blocks of 5-second playing alternate with 3-second silences. The musicians will gradually move away from each other in turn, while maintaining extreme proximity to the audience. The playing blocks lengthen by a few seconds with each change of position. The 3-second silences remain, or even become longer. This part lasts about 5 minutes, depending on the musicians and the moment.