

Delicate

for snare drum and reed

Stephen F. Lilly

(2016)

Delicate

for snare drum and reed (clarinet or saxophone)

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Program Notes:

Delicate is about interaction. Using a limited palette of sounds, predominantly soft and non-pitched, the two performers emulate and exaggerate verbal interaction—the performers listen, ignore, and persuade—and like most human conversations, the piece unfolds spontaneously in real time, changing from performance to performance, with even the overall duration arrived at serendipitously.

Performance Instructions:

Each performer navigates the piece through seven performance modes (see below and first column of score)

Modes

- 1) *fast, nervous chatter*
- 2) *relaxed, conversational*

- 3) *slow, deliberate*
- 4) *slow, hesitant*
- 5) *pulsating*

- 6) *sustained*
- 7) *silent*

*performers move freely between the seven modes—
any mode can be revisited or omitted*

*performers do not prearrange or coordinate...
...any points of synchronization
...a progression through the modes
...the duration of any mode*

*performers use any criteria to justify a mode shift:
...to evoke or express a mood
...as a reaction to the other performer*

*performers begin with any mode
...initial modes should be unified—
i.e. both hands in the same mode*

*later modes may (but do not have to be) divided...
...each hand is in a different mode
...the reed player's walking (see score)
is unified with one hand but not the other*

Rhythm by Mode

Modes 1-4 all employ short, erratic rhythms
emulating human conversation
avoiding perceptible pulse and metric conventions

Mode 1) fast, nervous chatter
self-absorbed, internal focus
ignoring external stimuli: other performer, audience, hall, etc.

Mode 2) relaxed, conversational
aware, balanced focus (internal and external)
reacting to external stimuli and asserting self

Mode 3) slow, deliberate
semi-aware, internal focus dominates over external
asserting self more than reacting to external stimuli

Mode 4) slow, hesitant
aware, external focus
solely reacting to external stimuli

Mode 5) pulsating
using short sounds
avoid sudden changes
tempo and dynamic fluctuations should be gradual
external awareness, but maximized independence...
...avoid synchronization with other performer
...playfully move tempo toward or away from other performer
(note: use a loose interpretation of synchronization and tempo
as the other performer may be in a different mode)

Mode 6) sustained
consists entirely of dynamic fluctuations
from inaudible to moderately loud
playfully interacting with other performer, audience, hall, etc.
only gradual changes;
no sudden changes or sharp articulations

Mode 7) silent
no sound or movement

Percussionist

seated (throughout) center stage behind snare drum

Snare Drum

snare on
positioned center stage behind a music stand

Technique

Modes 1-5: sempre staccato & generally soft

fingertips (index through pinkie)

movement should be localized to fingers
minimal use of wrist with no use of elbow

occasional accent: side of thumb-knuckle

like a slapped bass

move from wrist but without use of elbow

Mode 6: sustained

fingernails

raking nails in circular motion on drumhead
like brushwork in a jazz ballad

Reed Player

standing (at beginning) to percussionist's left

Reed

any clarinet or saxophone that can be played while walking

Technique

Modes 1-5: sempre staccato & generally soft

key clicks

occasional accent: tongue stop

like a string pizzicato

as note is articulated, tongue is thrust between lip
and reed suddenly stopping air flow

Mode 6: sustained

breath

reed should never vibrate/initiate pitch

air stream directed into instrument (inhale/exhale)

air escaping embouchure (around mouthpiece)

Score

Mode	Description	Movement (Reed)
<i>fast, nervous chatter</i>	self-absorbed, internal focus	to the percussionist's left or pacing in front of music stand
<i>relaxed, conversational</i>	aware balanced focus (internal and external)	to the percussionist's left; circling percussionist; or moving between two standing positions
<i>slow, deliberate</i>	semi-aware internal focus predominates over external	to the percussionist's left or circling percussionist
<i>slow, hesitant</i>	semi-aware, internal focus predominates over external	to the percussionist's left or pacing in front of percussionist
<i>pulsating</i>	Slower/faster than other performer moving playfully toward or away	to the percussionist's left
<i>sustained</i>	playfully interacting with other performer, audience, hall, etc.	back-to-back with percussionist
<i>silent</i>	listening	to the percussionist's left or back-to-back with percussionist <i>NO MOVEMENT</i>