

Existentialism

for saxophone and three toy pianists

Stephen F. Lilly

(2016)

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for alto saxophone and three toy pianists

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Dedicated to the for Now Chamber Players

Instructions:

Any reed instrument may be substituted for the saxophone—alto saxophone was in the original call. Likewise, the piece does not really need three toy pianists. One of the three should be able to execute the improvisation on a toy piano as described below, but the other two need not have any abilities beyond exiting and holding up a sign.

All performers start onstage.

Part I: "Exit, pursued by a bear"

At a cue from the saxophonist, one of the toy pianists begins to improvise in a constantly shifting meter (i.e. with rhythms that randomly group beats into divisions of twos or threes), carefully playing all available pitches at least once but playing no pitch more than three times.

After twenty seconds (in the midst of the aforementioned improvisation), the saxophonist may optionally execute the most complicated extended technique he knows, after which, she immediately exits. Upon his exit one of the silent toy pianists should raise a sign indicating that the saxophonist has died, off-stage.

Part II: "O, she's warm!"

After sufficient time is given for the audience to read the sign; this toy pianist also exits leaving the sign atop her toy piano.

The remaining silent toy pianist should raise a second sign indicating that the toy pianist who just left is alive and well in spite of the audience's assumptions.

The piece ends abruptly.

Program Notes:

The purpose of this piece is to give the audience a straightforward albeit theatrical (although not as originally intended) interpretation of two Shakespearean lines against a musical backdrop. Enjoy.