

a simple game

for two performers

Stephen F. Lilly

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Materials

Two bowls

- Ceramic, Metallic, or Glass – the bowls do not have to be of the same material
- Resonant – simply or complexly pitched, i.e. either harmonic or bell-like but in either case exhibiting a long sustain
- The bowls must contrast in pitch content

Coins

- Metallic
- Various sizes and/or weights
- At least a dozen

Die

- Only one
- Any material – plastic, ceramic, wood, etc.
- Standard six-sided, i.e. cubed and labeled numerically – “1” through “6”

Performers

Singer

- Male or female, but must be able to match pitch with at least two of the frequencies in the spectra of the bowls, ideally one from each
- In the vernacular of the current location, sing the number that shows on the top-most side of the die after each roll
- Sing softly – no louder than mezzo-piano
- Use short durations – no longer than 1.5s
- Sing single notes, i.e. pitches
 - Performer may only sing pitches audible in the frequency content of the bowls; it does not matter which partials are sung, i.e. the performer should not feel restricted to only the lowest, loudest, or most “fundamental” frequencies produced by the bowls
 - Performer should freely improvise with available pitches, i.e. the performer should not sing just the most recently sounded pitch nor should the performer alternate predictably among the available pitches
 - Performer may bend and or vary pitch a quarter-step sharp or flat

- Performer may sing with or without vibrato and may vary it from note to note or within each note event

Whisperer

- Male or female
- In the vernacular of the current location, whisper the name of the visible side of most recently tossed coin once it comes to rest, i.e. “heads” or “tails”
- Whisper completely unvoiced, i.e. the vocal cords should not vibrate
- Whisper softly – no louder than mezzo-piano and, on average, softer than the singer
- Use standard spoken durations, i.e. do not exaggerate durations beyond what one would use conversationally

Performance

Staging and Actions

- Performers and bowls should be visible to a majority of the audience
- Performers should remain crouched or seated cross-legged on either side of the bowls
- Performers may flip, flick, throw, or toss coins and die in any way but avoid being overtly comic, e.g. throwing the die as high as possible or flicking a coin at the other performer
- Performers should explore all available sounds – coin/die alone, coin/die and the floor, coin/die and the bowls, etc.
- Performers may not strike the bowls directly, only with coin or die
- Performers may not intentionally touch each other’s object, i.e. the singer should not touch any of the coins and the whisperer should not touch the die
- The whisperer may only use one coin at a time but may introduce, change, or reuse coins from event to event

Rhythm

- Both performers should accentuate rhythmic diversity, avoiding predictability
 - Incorporate silence of various durations
 - Avoid meter, tempo, recognizable patterns, etc.

Presentation

- Can be staged as an installation or a set piece on a concert
- Either performer may begin the piece
- The piece may last for an arbitrary duration agreed on beforehand or until the performers happen upon an ending