For Agnes Martin

Anthony Vine

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Committee:
Huck Hodge
Joël-François Durand

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Music
Abstract

For Agnes Martin

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Chair of Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Huck Hodge

Music

*For Agnes Martin* is a musical work scored for flute/piccolo, alto/soprano saxophone, two percussionists, piano, violin, and cello. The impetus behind this composition was to examine the 10-hole diatonic harmonica in terms of its pitch construction and timbral properties, and use this information to generate most of the work’s content. With this approach, two primary harmonic/timbral reservoirs were employed throughout the piece: [1] a melodic sequence that was constructed from overlaid fragments of the harmonica’s pitch layout, and [2] orchestrated ring modulation, which emulates the prominent combination tones of the harmonica. Varying presentations and interactions between these two entities shape the form of the work.
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Performance Notes

Quarter Tones:

-3/4  -1/4  +1/4  +3/4

Niente:
The niente dynamic markings are of extreme importance in this work. There should be as little initial
articulation as possible.

“Part of my musical thinking is to have the sound sourceless... My pieces fail if one can say: 'Ah, there's a
trombone, there's a horn'. I like the instruments to... become anonymous”

- Morton Feldman, “Morton Feldman talks to Paul Griffiths” (1972)

Harmonicas
The piece requires two sets of diatonic harmonicas in all 12 keys. Label the key of each harmonica with
masking tape for ease of play.

**F Harmonica**

- Key of harmonica
- Upward arrow = blow air out
- Darkened squares mark holes to be blown through.
- Downward arrow = draw air in

Blurring technique:

**F Harmonica**

Move gradually from one mouth position to another. Rhythmic precision is not required, but the general rate of
change should be retained.

Harmonica distribution:

Flute: E, C, F, F-sharp
Sax: E-flat, A-flat, D
Perc. I: B-flat, D-flat, C
Perc II: B, E, A
Cello: E-flat, G, A

Cassette Tape Players

Seven small, portable cassette tape players are required. The tapes will be distributed by the composer. Each
cassette tape player should be at maximum volume to produce as much tape hiss as possible. The tapes will
be recorded at a very low level to compensate for the tape players’ volume.
Ensemble Setup

- Bass Drum
- Tam-Tam
- Perc I
- Perc II
- Vibes
- Crotales
- Glock.
- Pan Lids (medium and large)
- Portable Tape Players
  - C / G / J
  - D / K
  - M
- Portable Tape Player
  - I / N
- Pan Lid (small)
- Piano
- Sax
- Vln.
- Flute
- Vc.
for agnes martin

$\downarrow = 54 - 60$ sempre flessibile

Flute

Soprano Saxophone

Percussion I

Percussion II

Piano

Violin

Cello

\textit{P} gentle, yet serene

\textit{P} pedal, with a heavy object

\textit{P} produce lots of piano resonance

\textit{P} pedal sempre (unless rotated otherwise)

\textit{P} sempre sul ponticello II

\textit{P} sempre sul ponticello III

\textit{P} sempre sul ponticello

\textit{P} sempre sul ponticello

\textit{P} sempre sul ponticello

\textit{P} sempre sul ponticello

\textit{P} sempre sul ponticello

\textit{P} sempre sul ponticello
Lightly depress the stopped note so that both the "touch-four" and the open harmonic sound.
air through the instrument
very sparse and intense
bands of air
air through the instrument

Vibes
bow

B. Harmonica

F Harmonica

Pat. Ltd

15 va

pp
peda

Vc.
bow the body of the instrument
to create breathy white noise