

Birthday Piece (by Knut Aufermann)

The piece is designed to select small groupings from a bigger ensemble or orchestra playing a group improvisation, based on the birth dates of the individual players. The piece was originally developed for the London Improvisers Orchestra.

All musicians are asked to find their individual numbers based on their birth dates: the day (plus the two following numbers), the month, and the year (plus the four following numbers). The extra added numbers in brackets create some kind of weighting that reduces the chance of longer silences in the piece.

For example:

A birthday of 25.10.1958 produces the numbers 25 (+26 +27), 10, 58 (+59 +60 +61 +62)

This musician would now be able to play/improvise when the numbers 10, 25, 26, 27, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62 are shown by the conductor. At all other number he/she is not allowed to play.

The conductor, who is equipped with a stack of large prints with numbers from 1 to 100, shows these to the ensemble in ascending order, and therefore controls the speed of the changes between the individual players and groupings. The piece ends when the youngest players have stopped improvising, i.e. when the numbers have gone up too high.

Variations of the piece could be to use the age instead of the birth year if the group has many younger players. Alternatively some numbers could be removed from the stack or the stack could be shuffled before the performance.

A recording of the piece with the London Improvisers Orchestra can be found on the Emanem CDs #4206 (Freedom of the City 2001 - Large Groups) and #4203 (London Improvisers Orchestra - The Hearing Continues)