

Composition Workshop

Assignment #5: a rhythmic piece based on developing a motive, manipulating density and contrasting dynamics

Write a short piece/exercise that is mainly (or purely) rhythmic. This does NOT have to be for percussion; it could be for any instrument as long as the pitch component is deemphasized and the rhythmic component IS emphasized (recall Ligeti's piano piece for a single note). With this piece you should:

- Introduce a rhythmic motive
- Gradually develop/vary/expand-upon it
- Have the density of activity increase and then decrease (or vice versa)
- Use dynamics in a contrasting, or at least obvious way
- Have the overall form of the piece follow some sort of arc with beginning, middle and ending areas/moments

The purpose of this exercise is, by mostly ignoring pitch, to focus on how to develop the dramatic arc of a piece by manipulating the density and dynamics of a texture that starts with a clear motive. If you do use a pitched instrument (but with minimal notes), see how register also can affect the shape of a piece (like starting low and ending high for example...).

With the provided example piece, notice how:

- The motive is introduced: two low notes (floor tom) and one high note (wood block)
- It is varied a bit as additional notes are carefully introduced
- The volume remains medium to low through measure 12
- Measures 13 – 16 seem to taper off, but then give way to a middle section with increased density, activity and volume
- The section tapers off around measure 20, but not all at once
- Measure 24 begins the ending area with the activity and volume quickly diminishing
- The last few measures recall the original motive and continue to recede