

Composition No. 34A is a language and material generator for open improvisation that was composed in Toronto, Canada in 1975. The challenge of this composition involves the use of extended materials as an integrated factor in the actual operating music - as opposed to structures that only function as thematic platforms for open improvisation. An approach of this nature gives new options for the creative instrumentalist and clarifies the dynamic implications of post-AACM functionalism. Too often we have come to view the open improvisational context as a one dimensional forum that gives free rein for dynamic exploration but no individual responsibility. But in fact the significance of post-Coleman continuance lies in its ability to bring forth new and exciting disciplines to guide - and give insight into - positive living and dynamic unification (and focus). Composition No. 34A is designed for the collective creative interaction environment - to be used both as a rallying point for particular participation as well as dynamic creative interaction. The work contains no provisions for individual extended solos, nor does it seek to emphasize the isolated input of any one aspect of its participants (or ensemble). Rather Composition No. 34A is designed to show the composite dynamics of its total sound canvas by providing both common material for its instrumentalist - to be used in the infrastructure reality of the music - and common responsibility

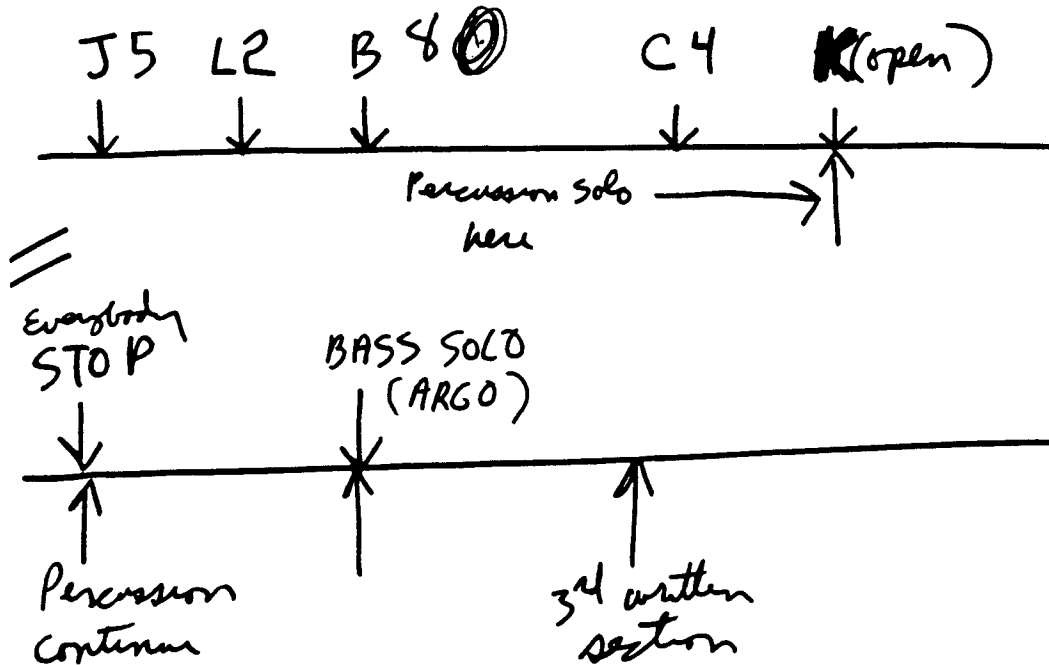
for that material's usage. In this work each instrumentalist is given twelve composed phrase patterns to be used as a springboard for all invention dynamics - and this material is to be utilized throughout the total interpretation of the music. The reality of this material is designed to establish 'fixed operatives' - that are constant in every performance (and indigenous to the focus and character of the composition) - in conjunction with 'open application' and improvisation. The interrelationship between these two operating criteria serves to give Composition No. 34A a unique platform for creative exploration.

Slow to very fast

The image shows a handwritten musical score on five staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and a time signature of 7/8. It contains a short melodic phrase followed by three measures of rests, each marked with a double slash (/). A circled 'Eb' is written to the left of the first staff. The second staff is marked with a circled 'A' and contains a complex melodic line with many beamed notes and rests. The third and fourth staves continue this melodic line with similar rhythmic patterns and beaming. The fifth staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of two flats, and a time signature of 7/8, followed by a short melodic phrase and three measures of rests marked with double slashes.

The actual conceptual focus of Composition No. 34A involves its use of dynamic repetition as a basis for creative interaction and focus. In this context a six-note figure is transposed into twelve permutations as a means to provide each instrumentalist with a spectrum of creative options that can be used in moment decision time - during a performance. Composition No. 34A is designed to operate as a stabilizing factor - (1) to be executed together by the ensemble (both in and out of the planned - or notated structures), (2) or as an intermediary tool that can be used to clarify its special invention dynamics (that being as a center to be used in between invention dynamics), (3) or as a focus in itself (that contains its own challenge - for both the instrumentalists and the listener) (4) as well as a destabilizing factor to be executed in different ways (or times) by each individual in the ensemble or (5) used as a factor to promote dynamic opposition. In every case a given performance of Composition No. 34A must reveal something different about its components. This is so because every participation must give some insight about the primary material nature of its six-note focus. What we have here is a forum that provides a constantly changing repetition-like music - creating a focus that is continually expanding and/or contracting. The reality of this procedure should give another understanding and awareness about repetition - and extended language organization.

The primary visual platform of Composition No. 34A can be viewed as the basis for each instrumentalist's improvisational approach. This is so because the idea for Composition No. 34A was visually conceived as a total entity (or model) in itself - only later were its designants scored for music. Improvisation in this work is



used to accent and expand the fixed operatives of the music. What this means is that the instrumentalist is challenged to contribute invention with respect to what a given postulation poses for the composite ensemble - rather than that individual's own 'so-called' identity. This is so because Composition No. 34A was conceived as an ensemble music - or ensemble creative

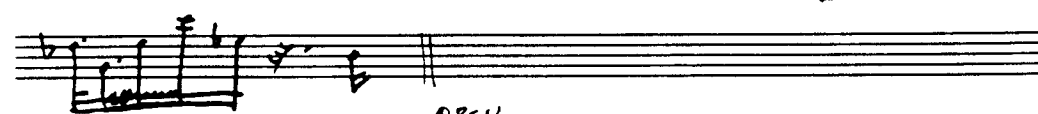
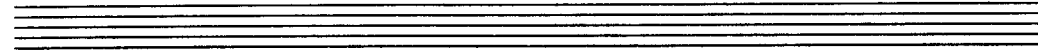
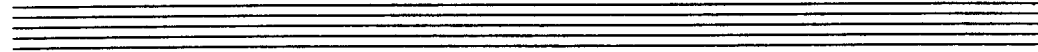
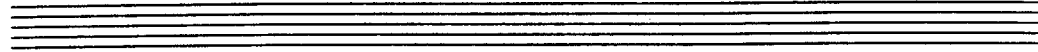
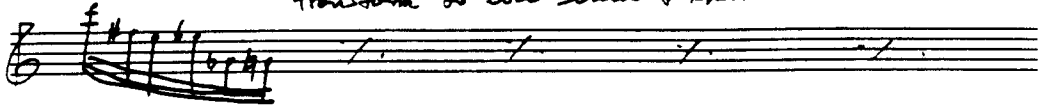
platform. The strength of a given performance of this composition lies in the ensemble's ability to interact and work together. Composition No. 34A is not designed for extended solo postulation. The instrumentalist in this work is instead instructed to utilize the concept of 'improvisational burst' - which is one of the disciplines I have come to utilize as a means to narrow the participation terms of my music. I believe that the challenge of extended creativity in the coming cycle will not only call for dynamic solo postulation but also include the sophistication and implication of collective interaction - on whatever level. Visually improvisation in Composition No. 34A involves the use of quick phrase clusters - that are fitted into the multi-canvas of the greater music. The instrumentalist is instructed to not overly emphasize or sustain any one improvisational passage at the risk of the primary operating criteria of the collective music. What this means is that the instrumentalist is encouraged to view the operating space of the music in terms of what the music needs - as opposed to what that instrumentalist might need. In this way improvisation is used as an effective balance to the pre-fixed materials in Composition No. 34A. Together both disciplines are used to establish what is hopefully regarded as a unique and challenging environment for creative participation.

The written material in Composition No. 34A is structured in three different sections of the music. All of this material has been designed as an opposition criterion to the repetitive six-note figure (played by the rhythm section) - and in doing so helps to establish the nature of its extended treatment. Conceptually the notated material in Composition No. 34A has been

slow → fast

transformation to low sound textures

(A)



OPEN

FIG. E PATTERN VARIATIONS

The image displays 12 numbered musical patterns, each on a five-line bass clef staff. The patterns are arranged in two columns and six rows. Each pattern consists of a sequence of notes and rests, often including accidentals (sharps, flats, and naturals). The patterns are as follows:

- 1:** F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4.
- 2:** Bb4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4.
- 3:** F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4.
- 4:** F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4.
- 5:** Bb4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4.
- 6:** F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4.
- 7:** Bb4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4.
- 8:** F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4.
- 9:** Bb4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4.
- 10:** F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4.
- 11:** F4, Bb4, Bb4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4.
- 12:** Bb4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4.

structured to positively affect the weight of its music space. In this context I have utilized many accented attack-like phrases throughout the whole of the music. The effectiveness of this approach helps to expand both the nature of the composite operating space of the music as well as its conceptual possibilities. For the actual phrase construction specifics I chose to create clear arhythmic-like passages that would sound somewhat jerky in character. This was necessary as a means to balance the smooth flowing nature of Composition No. 34A's repetitive materials - and also broaden the conceptual terms of the composite music. The notated material breaks down into the (1) "opening figures" - which have been positively designed (in the manner referred to earlier), (2) middle material - which extends the operatives in the opening sections (but is constructed to give a more linear continuity) and (3) "end material" - which has been composed in a slower pulse meter and also includes an opposition arco bass section (that is improvised). None of this material was constructed as a thematic generator to be used or amplified in the interpretation treatment of the music. Rather the notated material was constructed to conceptually and vibrationally establish the 'working space' of the music - to accent the primary operatives of the music (and also provide color).

The material nature of Composition No. 34A is constructed to establish both a unified and multiple pulse (sound) continuum that allows for unique interpretation dynamics. As a unified pulse environment the work emphasizes positioned pattern statements that serve as pivot material in the space of the music. The challenge of this context establishes a kind of 'holding pattern to exploratory type' participation operative that is

unique and hopefully fresh. As a multiple continuum the work establishes a layered sound state continuum that emphasizes a spiral-like setting for sound perception (dynamics). In this context are positioned two different pulse presences that broaden the terms of the sound space. To experience this phenomenon is to encounter another relationship with space and time perception. All of the notated material in Composition No. 34A is to be executed inside of the operating pattern of the six-note pattern - with its own pulse (tempo) tendencies (actualized as a separate function from the established pulse of the pattern). This is so because the realness of the composite music seeks to establish a broader context than any one tempo presence. In Composition No. 34A the instrumentalist is expected to move inside of the world of the music - from a metric and non-metric disposition. I have constructed the forum as a revolving material environment that contains its own challenges and secrets.

Composition No. 34A has undergone several changes in its operating specifics since its original premiere in 1976. In the beginning the work was only scored for piano, synthesizer and clarinet, and repetition with this instrumentation could be approached in a continuous manner. I have also performed this work as a platform for extended solo postulation (with the repetitive figures serving as a background generating tool under the solos). The challenge of this pedagogic structure has many different possibilities for creative music.