

PAULINE OLIVEROS

Sonic Meditation XVI*

INTRODUCTION I

Sonic Meditations are intended for group work over a long period of time with regular meetings. No special skills are necessary. Any persons who are willing to commit themselves can participate. The ♀ Ensemble to whom these meditations are dedicated has found that non-verbal meetings intensify the results of these meditations and help provide an atmosphere, conducive to such activity. With continuous work some of the following becomes possible with Sonic Meditations: Heightened states of awareness or expanded consciousness, changes in physiology and psychology from known and unknown tensions to relaxations which gradually become permanent. These changes may represent a tuning of mind and body. The group may develop positive energy which can influence others who are less experienced. Members of the Group may achieve greater awareness and sensitivity to each other. Music is a welcome by-product of this activity.

INTRODUCTION II

Pauline Oliveros has abandoned composition/performance practice as it is usually established today, for *Sonic Explorations*, which include everyone who wants to participate. She attempts to erase the subject/object or performer/audience relationship by returning to ancient forms which preclude spectators. She is interested in communication among all forms of life, through Sonic Energy. She is especially interested in the healing power of Sonic Energy and its transmission within groups.

All societies admit the power of music or sound. Attempts to control what is heard in the community are universal. For instance, music in the church has always been limited to particular forms and styles in accordance with the decrees of the Church Fathers. Music in the courts has been controlled through the tastes of patrons. Today Muzak is used to increase or stimulate consumption in merchandising establishments. Sonic Meditations are an attempt to return the control of sound to the individual alone, and within groups especially for humanitarian purposes; specifically healing.

Each Sonic Meditation is a special procedure for the following:

1. Actually making sounds
2. Actively imagining sounds
3. Listening to present sounds
4. Remembering sounds

Because of the special procedures involved, most of the meditations are available to anyone who wishes to participate regardless, or in spite of musical training. All that is required is a willing commitment to the given conditions.

Sound making during the meditations is primarily vocal, sometimes hand clapping or other body sounds, sometimes using sound producing objects and instruments. Some of the meditations involve body movement as well. The term meditation is used simply to mean dwelling with or upon an idea, an object, or lack of object without distraction, or divided attention.

OBSERVE BREATH CYCLE Begin simultaneously with the others. Sing any pitch. The maximum length of the pitch is determined by the breath. Listen to the group. Locate the center of the group sound spectrum. Sing your pitch again and make a tiny adjustment upward or downward, but tuning toward the center of the sound spectrum. Continue to tune slowly, in tiny increments toward the center of the spectrum. Each time sing a long tone with a complete breath until the whole group is singing the same pitch. Continue to drone on that control pitch for about the same length of time it took to reach the unison. Then begin adjusting or tuning away from the center pitch as the original beginning pitch was.

Variation: Follow the same instructions but return to the original beginning pitch.

* Originally published by Smith Publications, 1974.
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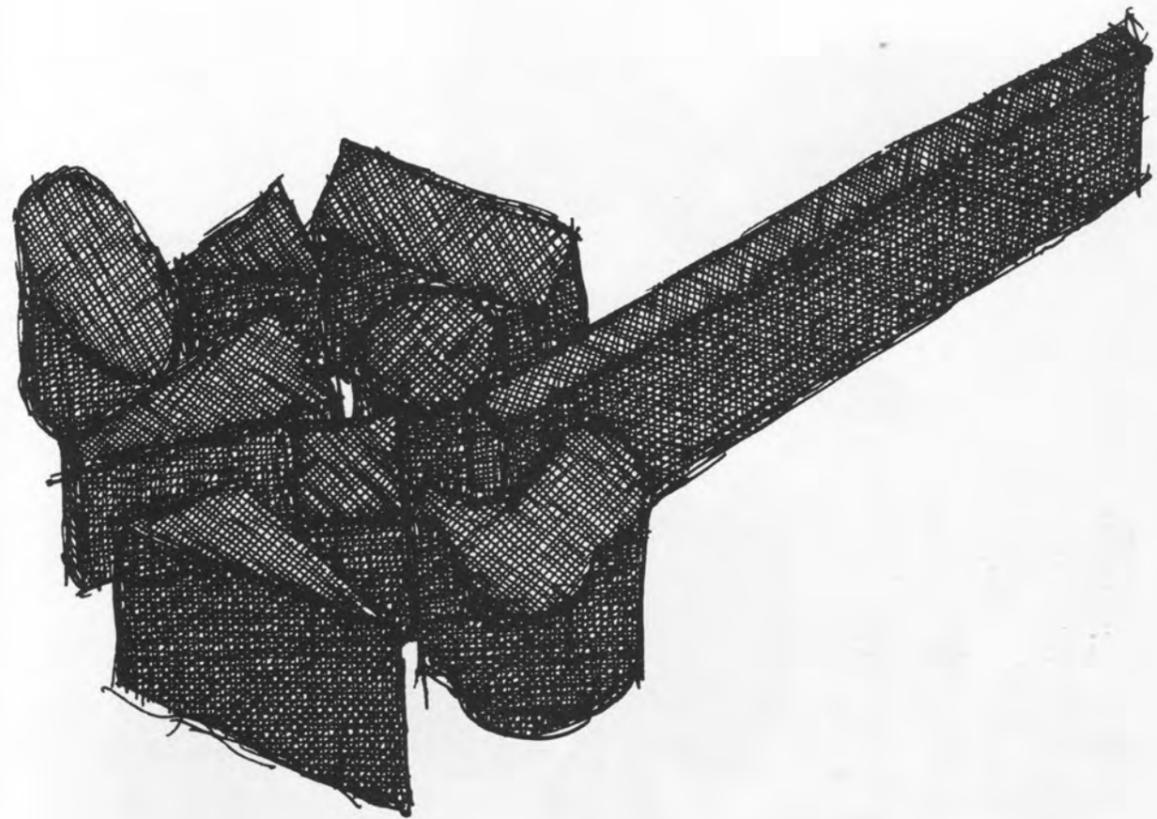
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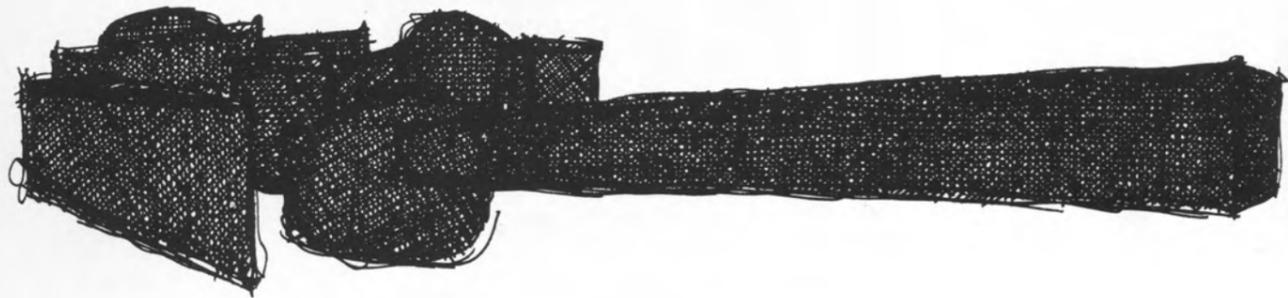
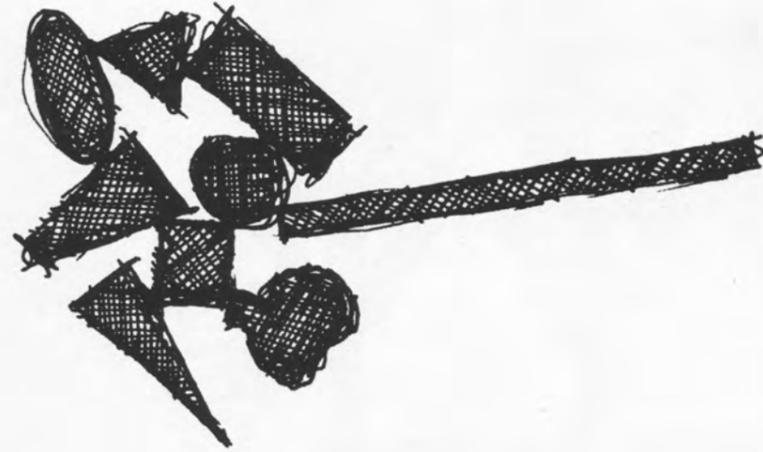
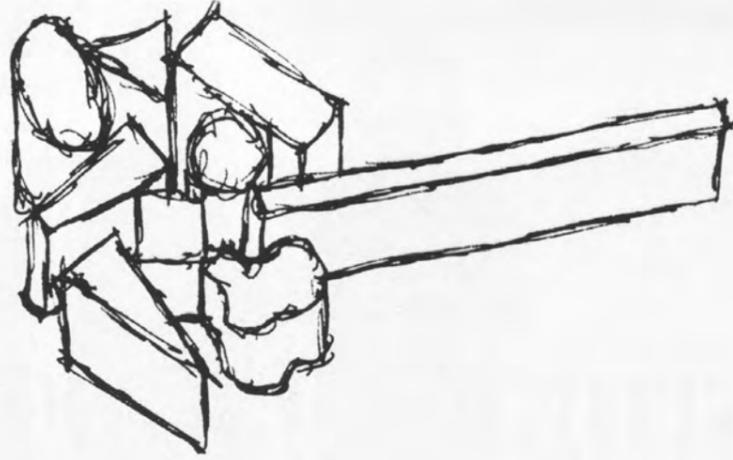
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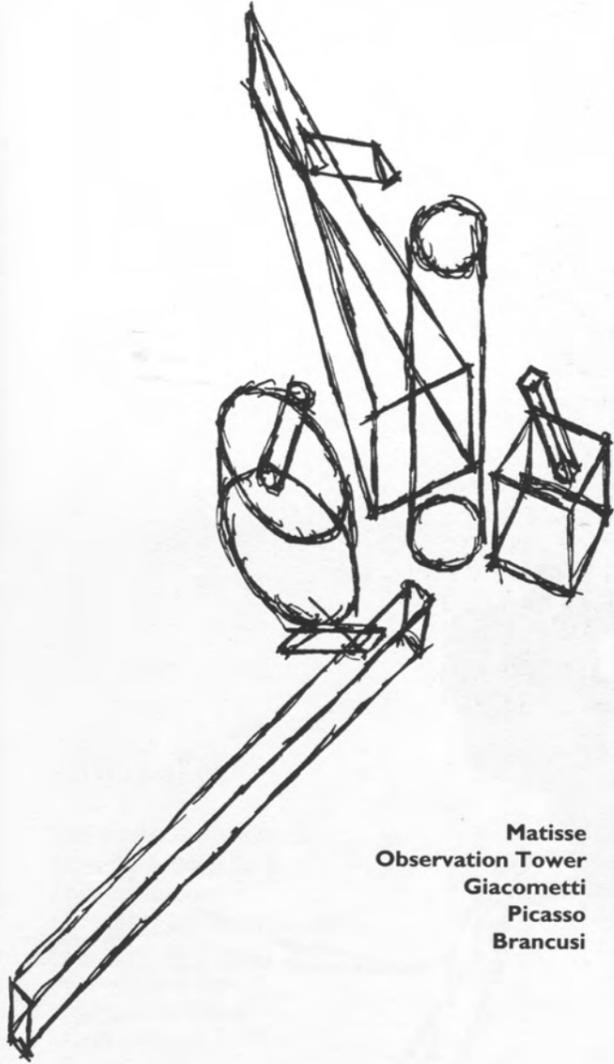
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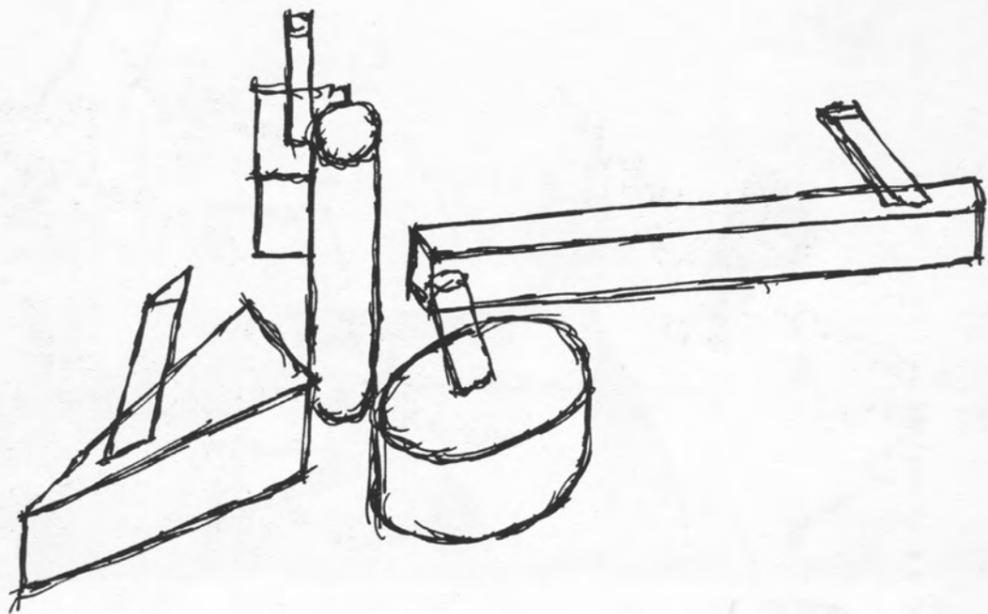
-  Moral Justice · Circular
-  Criminal Justice · Truncated
-  Civil Justice · Elliptical
-  Ethical Justice · Rectangular
-  Human Justice · Biological
-  State Justice · Triangular
-  Common Justice · Four-Sided
-  Swift Justice · Sharp Shortened
-  Slow Justice · Extended

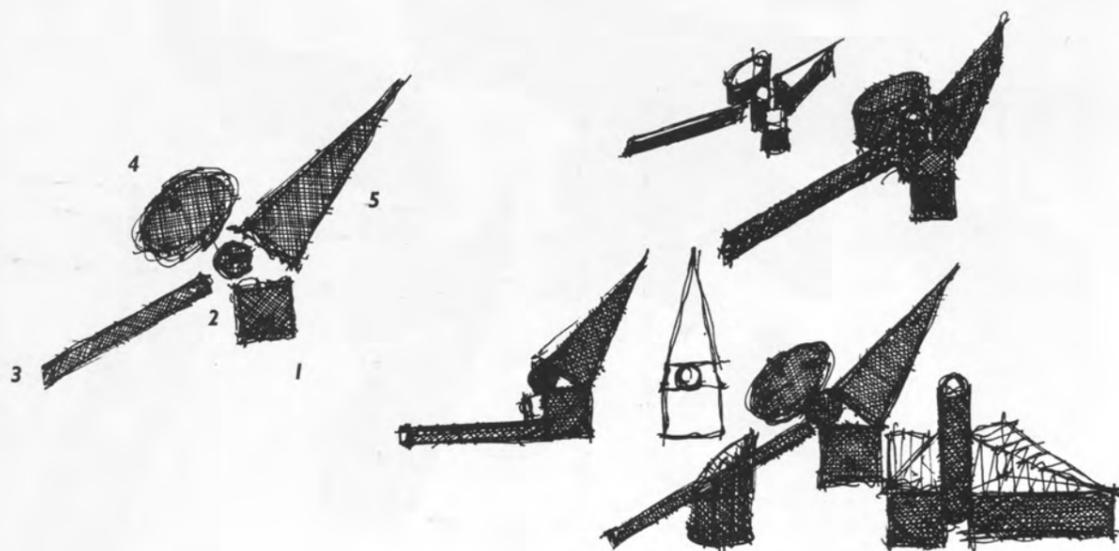
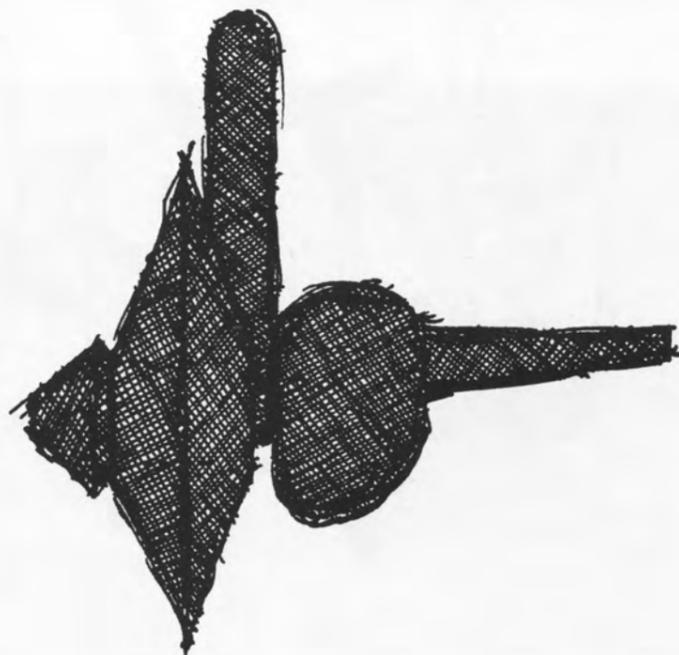
ROOMS OF/FOR JUSTICE





- | | | |
|-------------------|---|----------|
| Matisse | 1 | Stone |
| Observation Tower | 2 | Brick |
| Giacometti | 3 | Steel |
| Picasso | 4 | Concrete |
| Brancusi | 5 | Marble |





NEWSPAPER-READING MACHINE

John White c. 1971

Material: (photo-) copies of a column about a page long from a newspaper article.

Performers: more than 5.

Procedure: after an agreed signal to start, read through the material 8 times continuously, following the stated instructions (at own speed, no co-ordination with other players).

1st x: silently.

2nd x: mumbled "sotto voce".

3rd x: silently except for the word "the", sung staccato, high in the voice.

4th x: text mumbled "sotto voce", the word "and" spoken sostenuto, low in the voice.

5th x: silently, except interpreting [commas] with the quiet, firmly spoken sound "tic".

6th x: text mumbled "sotto voce", except interpreting [full stops] with the quiet, firmly spoken sound "toc".

7th x: silently.

8th x: silently, except interpreting [commas] "tic", [full stops] "toc", the word "the" sung high and staccato, the word "and" spoken low and sostenuto.

At the end of the reading remain silent and immobile until all the performers have completed the material before breaking "performer silence".

Statement on Verbal Notation

John White, July 2010

In 1969 I stopped improvising, because most of the improvising situations in which I found myself consisted of a lot of people playing very loudly for a long time to the edification of no-one in particular. I didn't want to return to tonality-orientated narrative composition at the time, but was interested in a kind of lightly controlled randomness in the way that sounds happened in time. 'Lightly controlled randomness' became, in those days, a desirable condition of music in which the sounds were given a chance to 'speak for themselves' in a relaxed way, rather than in over-tightly bundled compositional packages or uncontrolled improvisational eruptions.

Procedures like traditional church-bell ringing, rows of prime numbers, the musical encoding of winning lottery numbers, numerical anagrams of various sorts, in short: systemic procedures seemed a reasonable escape from what had become the very predictable outcome of 'free' music. Hence 'Machines', in which the performers followed clearly defined rules of behavior but didn't lead to a fixed end-result, became for me the genre of the moment.

Newspaper-Reading Machine was the result of a conversation with Michael Parsons during a train journey in which we discussed the ease with which a 'Machine' could be created: in this case a few easy-to-follow instructions regarding the reading and re-readings of an article from a newspaper. 'Easy-to-follow' instructions were a direct statement of opposition to the exaggerated complexities of the 1960s 'inner-circle-Darmstadt' school of musical thought.

Verbal scores are still economic ways of creating desired effects in certain compositional situations. In my own music, simple traditional notation is usually OK for what I need these days.

#6 Shoes of your choice (1963)

A member of the audience is invited to come forward to a microphone if one is available and describe a pair of shoes, the one he is wearing or another pair. He is encouraged to tell where he got them, the size, color, why he likes them, etc.

Alison Knowles.

Premired Apr 6th, 63 at the Old Gymnasium of Douglass College, New Brunswick, NJ.

in memoriam ... ESTEBAN GOMEZ (quartet)

The graph is read circularly. Each dot represents a constant unit of time that is determined privately by each performer. This unit should be a natural pulse that does not tend to subdivide in the performer's mind.

The individual performer assigns to each quadrant of the score one of the following sound elements: *pitch; intensity; timbre**; *density***. These sound elements may be assigned to the quadrants in any pattern, and that pattern – while it will “revolve” in its relationship to the score – will remain constant (in the relationship of its parts) throughout the performance.

The ensemble should prepare a sonority within which the individual instruments are not distinguishable. This sonority will provide, for the individual performers, a tonal reference for the various sound activities that constitute the performance.

Whenever any performer is playing his contribution to the reference sonority, time (duration) is unmeasured (free) for him.

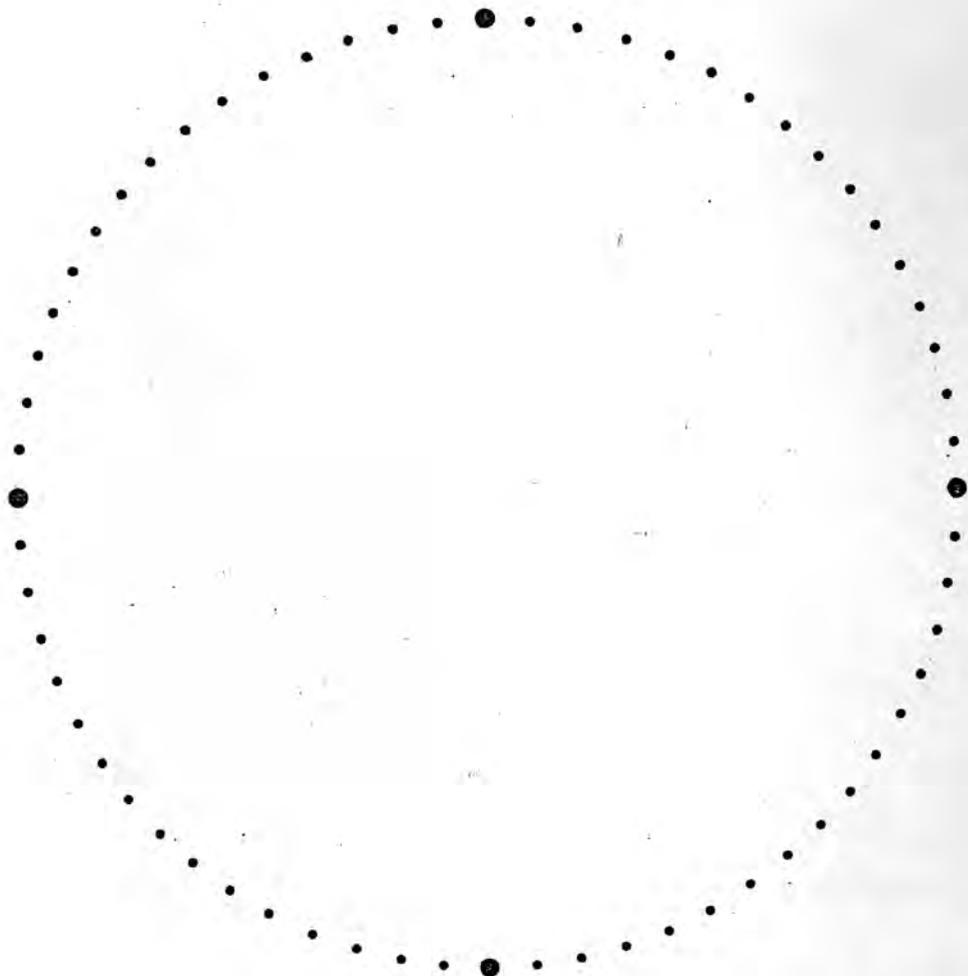
Whenever any performer is playing through the (16) measured pulses of a quadrant, he must deviate continuously, but as gradually as possible, from his contribution to the reference sonority.

The performance begins with the reference sonority. At any time, then, individual performers may play through any (starting) quadrant. Subsequently, they will continue reading circularly, alternating unmeasured periods of their contribution to the reference sonority with measured periods of assigned deviations.

Whenever any performer first becomes aware of a deviant element (other than his own) in the reference sonority, his pattern of assigned sound elements (quadrants) shifts circularly so that the mode of deviation he recognizes is assigned to the quadrant opposite that in which he is playing or will play next. (As the pattern of quadrants remains constant, thus, all quadrants will be redesignated.) The pattern of quadrant designations remains in its changed position until the performer has played through the succeeding (newly designated) quadrant, after which it is subject again to transposition through the appearance of deviant elements in the sonority.

* “timbre” refers to tonal color changes effected through the use of mutes, filters, bow movement, etc.

** “density” refers to the mixing of tonal ingredients, as in flutter-tongue, double-stops, mixed vocal and instrumental sound, etc. See also note on “density,” p. 44.



Metaphor

This article includes a [list of references](#), but **its sources remain unclear** because it has **insufficient [inline citations](#)**. Please help to [improve](#) this article by [introducing](#) more precise citations. *(November 2015)*

A **metaphor** is a figure of speech that identifies something as being the same as some unrelated thing for [rhetorical](#) effect, thus highlighting the similarities between the two. While a [simile](#) compares two items, a metaphor directly equates them, and does not use "like" or "as" as does a simile. One of the most commonly cited examples of a metaphor in English literature is

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances[...]

As You Like It

European music

The traditional musicological or European-influenced aspects of music often listed are 7 basic elements given primacy in European-influenced classical music: [melody](#), [harmony](#), [rhythm](#), [tone](#), [form](#), [tempo](#) and [dynamics](#).

- [Melody](#) is a succession of notes heard as some sort of unit. It is a single line of tones that moves up, down, or stays the same using steps, skips and repeated tones.
- [Harmony](#) is the relationship between two or more simultaneous pitches or pitch simultaneities, chord progression affects the key.
- [Rhythm](#) is the variation of the accentuation of sounds over time.
- [Tone color](#) is timbre, see list below.
- [Form](#) is the structure of a particular piece, how its parts are put together to make the whole.

- Tempo is the speed of communicating an emotion in a particular piece, how fast or slow it's played.
- Dynamics is the volume of all parts as a whole and every layer in the structure.

However, a more comprehensive list is given by stating the aspects of sound: pitch, timbre, intensity, and duration (Owen 2000, 6).

- Pitch is the perception of the frequency of the sound experienced, and is perceived as how "low" or "high" a sound is, and may be further described as definite pitch or indefinite pitch. It includes: melody, harmony, tonality, tessitura, and tuning or temperament.
- Timbre is the quality of a sound, determined by the balance between the fundamental and its spectra (including harmonics and other overtones) and how this balance of overtones and the overall sound intensity envelope changes over time. Timbre

varies between [voices](#) and types and kinds of [musical instruments](#), which are tools used to produce sound. It includes: tone color and articulation.

- [Loudness](#) is the perception of volume or intensity and is defined as "that attribute of auditory sensation in terms of which sounds can be ordered on a scale extending from quiet to loud" ([American National Standards Institute 1973](#), S3.20, 1973). It includes dynamics and aspects of articulation (how stressed a sound is).
- Duration is the temporal aspect of music; [time](#). It includes: [pulse](#), [beat](#), rhythm, rhythmic density, [meter](#), [tempo](#).

The above list relates only to single source, monophonic sounds. When the total sonic environment is considered, other commonly included aspects are: spatial location and [texture](#).

- Spatial location (see [Sound localization](#)) represents the cognitive placement of a sound in an environmental context; including the placement of a sound on both the horizontal and vertical plane, the distance to the sound source and the characteristics of the sonic environment ([reverberation](#)) ([Levitin 1999](#), 105–27; [Cariani and Micheyl 2012](#), 351–90).
- [Texture](#) relates to the number of sound sources heard and the interaction between them ([Cohen and Dubnov 1997](#), 386–405; [Kamien 1980](#)). It includes: [homophony](#), [polyphony](#), [heterophony](#), and simultaneity.

Silence is also often considered an aspect of music, if it is considered to exist. These aspects combine to create secondary aspects including form or structure, and style.

- Structure includes: motive, subphrase, phrase, phrase group, period, section, exposition, repetition, variation, development, and other formal units, textural continuity.
- Style is defined by how the above elements are used. It is what distinguishes an individual composer or group, period, genre, region, or manner of performance.
- Aesthetics is how the music affects you emotionally. For example: an upbeat tune may make you joyful, while a slow violin song may make you feel lonely, cold, and depressed etc.

Timbre is what makes a particular musical sound different from another, even when they have the same pitch and loudness. For instance, it is the difference between a guitar and a piano playing the same note at the same loudness. Experienced musicians are able to distinguish between different instruments of the same type based on their varied timbres, even if those instruments are playing notes at the same pitch and loudness.

* (Ashley) “‘timbre’ refers to tonal color changes effected through the use of mutes, filters, bow movement, etc.”

Pitch is a perceptual property of sounds that allows their ordering on a frequency-related scale, or more commonly, the quality that makes it possible to judge sounds as “higher” and “lower” in the sense associated with musical melodies. Pitch can only be determined in sounds that have a frequency that is clear and stable enough to distinguish from noise. Pitch may be quantified as a frequency, but pitch is not a purely objective physical property; it is a subjective psycho-acoustical attribute of sound.

Density in music refers to the number of simultaneous events that must be absorbed by the listener. If music has many parts, overlaid upon each other, it is considered more “dense” than a composition with only a single line of instrumentation.

** (Ashley) “‘density’ refers to the mixing of tonal ingredients, as in flutter-tongue, double-stops, mixed vocal and instrumental sound, etc.”

Loudness is the perception of volume or intensity and is the characteristic of a sound that is primarily a psychological correlate of physical strength (amplitude). More formally, it is defined as “that attribute of auditory sensation in terms of which sounds can be ordered on a scale extending from quiet to loud”.

Loudness, a subjective measure, is often confused with objective measures of sound strength such as sound pressure, sound pressure level (in decibels), sound intensity or sound power.