

Cartomancy

For Solo Instrument

Composed by Tom Weeks

The score of this piece takes the form of these instructions and any ordinary deck of 54 playing cards. (including 2 Jokers) A sheet of paper containing notes made before performance is optional. (see below)

Preparation:

Before the performance begins, the deck should be shuffled and the performer is to deal 21 cards, face up, in seven rows of three cards each, on a flat surface that allows for the performer to be able to see the cards while playing. The cards should be laid out in this formation:

1	1	2	3
2	1	2	3
3	1	2	3
4	1	2	3
5	1	2	3
6	1	2	3
7	1	2	3

-Due to the great difficulty of sight-reading this piece (and to possible space/time constraints), the performer may, before performance, make note of what instructions the spread they draw carries, and perform from the notes. Example:

Row 1: 2-note melody – monotonous – mp – fast – medium space

Row 2: 4 extended techniques – expressive – slow – lots of space

Row 3: Free improvisation

Etc...

Reading directly from the cards is preferable, but the music does not suffer from this method.

Performance:

The performer is to improvise using parameters set by the order the cards have been laid out in. Each row is to be performed in order, one after the other, with as little pause as possible, starting with row 1 and proceeding downward through rows 2-7. The parameters for improvisation are as follows:

Card 1:

The suit of the card determines what sort of material is to be played.

-Spades indicate that a pointillistic texture should be played. The number of the card determines the number of seconds the texture should last before moving to the next row.

-Hearts indicate that a melodic phrase should be played. The number of the card indicates how many different pitches should be used in the construction of the

melody. The phrase(s) should sound “complete”, but length/duration is not prescribed in this case.

-Clubs indicate that a minimalistic phrase or repeated pattern should be played. The number of the card indicates the number of repetitions of the phrase the performer should play before moving to the next row.

-Diamonds indicate that the performer should use extended techniques, The number of the card indicates how many different techniques should be utilized before moving to the next row.

Card 2:

The suit of the second card determines how the material of the first card should be interpreted. The number of the card determines the volume at which the row should be performed, with 2 being very soft and 10 being very loud.

-Spades indicate that the row is to be performed in an aggressive manner.

-Hearts indicate that the row should be performed expressively, “with feeling”.

-Clubs indicate that the row should be performed monotonously, with little expressivity.

-Diamonds indicate that the row should be performed in a ponderous, mysterious manner.

Card 3:

The suit of the third card indicates the approximate tempo the row should be performed at. The number of the card indicates the amount of space (silence) that should be used in performing the material, with 2 being mostly silence and 10 being as little silence as possible.

-Spades = fast

-Hearts = medium fast

-Clubs = medium slow

-Diamonds = slow

-Face cards (Jack, Queen, King, and Ace) allow the performer to choose whatever value they wish for the parameter determined by the number of a card.

-If a Joker is in a row in any position, all other material prescribed by the other two cards may be discarded and the performer is free to improvise in any manner they choose, and may move to the next row at their discretion.

-Any aspect of performance not explicitly stated in these instructions is at the discretion of the performer.

Note: This piece may be used, if performed properly, as a fortune telling system (through the projections of the performer’s unconscious onto the cards). The performer need only think of a subject they would like divined, and interpret, subjectively, the “feeling” they get from their performance of each row. The seven rows signify: 1. Past, 2. Present, 3. Future, 4. The unexpected, 5. The people around the performer, 6. Obstacles, 7. The outcome.