

Nothingness is Unstable

David Rosenboom
2017

Field Recordings of Sounds from Nature
Computer-Electronic System
3D Sound Diffusion
Optional integration with the composition
Earth Encomium

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Program Note and Instructions

Nothingness usually collapses into something-ness—the phenomenal particularities of experience. Musical particularities—*musics of many nows* containing fine structures with created pasts and futures—also spring from initially undefined singularities of experience into multiple dimensions of mutual interactivity.

To realize this work, the musician assembles two collections of field recordings containing sounds from nature. These are to be used with a computer-electronic instrument built according to the *Instrument Block Diagram* shown on the next page. This instrument is to be played in performance so as to illuminate and honor the natural sounds collected. The instrument parses them into multiple frequency bands, the activity of which rings circuits in a corresponding bank of tuned complex resonators. The resonators are tuned with a set of harmonic orbits using the Prime Form Harmonic Loop from the companion composition *Earth Encomium*. These are programmed into three, free-running, Four-Voice Chord Sequence modules as shown in the following Instrument Block Diagram.

It is intended that the outputs of the resonators be individually placed in an immersive 3D sound space, inside which audience members may listen while moving around quietly or choosing to stay still. An improvisation develops which is to be guided by the forms, structures and unique natural elements heard in the field recordings.

Nothingness is Unstable may be performed as a solo or installed as an installation. Optionally, it may also be combined with the companion composition *Earth Encomium* in an integrated form linked together with the system of harmonic orbits outlined in the *Earth Encomium* score. In this arrangement, a pianist plays *Earth Encomium* and the raw acoustic sound from their piano is fed into the frequency parsing system so that it may also activate the banks of tuned complex resonators along with the field recordings. The performer(s) may merge the pieces in creative ways, sometimes allowing each to sound alone, sometimes mixing them in a subtle collage. Optionally, data from one or more of the Four-Voice Chord sequences shown in the Instrument Block Diagram may be routed at selected points in the performance to an external instrument (such as a Yamaha Disklavier™ piano) to play chords exceeding what can be performed with two human hands. This immersive musical wrapping is dedicated to our stressed planet.

Nothingness is Unstable was commissioned by Harvestworks Digital Media Arts Center to be presented with the unique Geluso 3D sound distribution object on the 2017 New York Electronic Arts Festival at ISSUE Project Room in Brooklyn. The composer programmed the computer-electronic instrument and its 3D distribution algorithms using Reaktor software. In that version, delicate natural sounds recorded by the composer around the GWI Cultural Park outside Denpasar, Bali, along the Mississippi River near Quincy, Illinois, along the Pacific Coast near Cambria, California and in a dry river bed in Valencia, California. These included varieties of individual birds, flocks of birds, groups of coyotes, cows, elephant seals, swarms of insects, frogs, ducks, geese, swarms of Balinese motorbikes representing humans and other natural sounds. Performers making new realizations may use their own approach, always minding the spirit of the original.

Prime Form Harmonic Loop
from
Earth Encomium

1

1

Musical notation for measures 1-8, starting at measure 1. The score is in 4/4 time and features a prime form harmonic loop. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The notation consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. Each staff contains eight measures of music, with notes represented by whole notes. The notes in the treble staff are: B-flat, A, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat. The notes in the bass staff are: B-flat, A, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat.

9

9

Musical notation for measures 9-16, starting at measure 9. The notation consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. Each staff contains eight measures of music, with notes represented by whole notes. The notes in the treble staff are: B-flat, A, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat. The notes in the bass staff are: B-flat, A, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat.

17

17

Musical notation for measures 17-24, starting at measure 17. The notation consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. Each staff contains eight measures of music, with notes represented by whole notes. The notes in the treble staff are: B-flat, A, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat. The notes in the bass staff are: B-flat, A, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat.

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Instrument Block Diagram

