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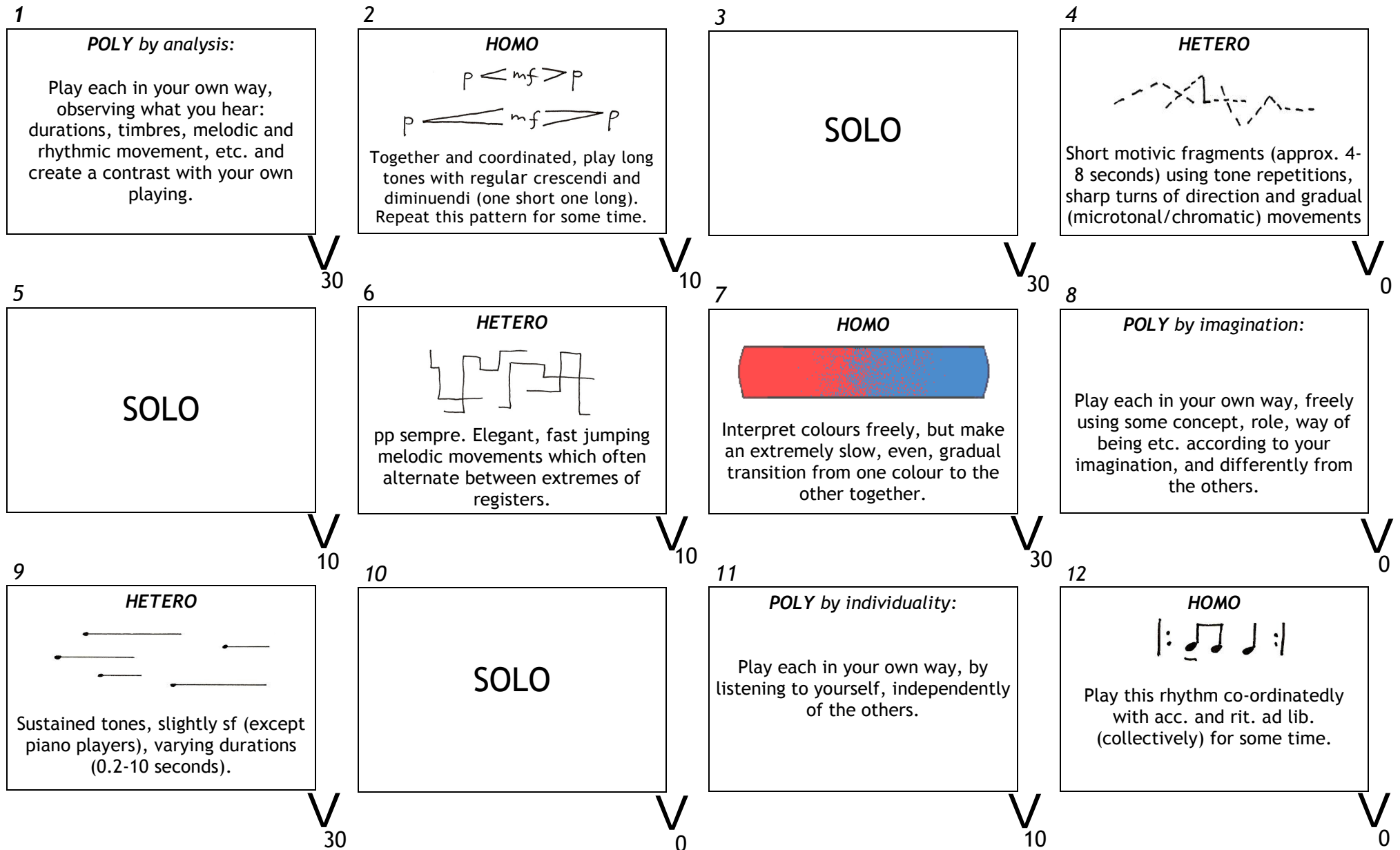
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PHHS • for ensemble of melody instruments ad lib. • Carl Bergstrøm-Nielsen 2011



PHHS (Polyphonic - Heterophonic - Homophonic - Solo)

for ensemble of melody instruments ad lib.

Standard version: Start at 1, 5 or 9, and play one row. If, after some training, you feel confident to play a virtuoso version, take more elements. For a short version, pick the two or more elements you would like to. ad lib. Having reached 12, you may continue with 1. Even if there are many possibilities, do not feel obliged to play many elements - quality matters more than quantity!

Different advanced versions:

Pick any number of boxes in any sequence (elements may be repeated). The piece may also be performed as a game: during playing, the first musician who indicates a number with fingers or otherwise decides which element is to be the next one. A special sign may be agreed upon for ending the piece.

Duration of boxes: maybe 30 seconds up to several or even many minutes. I suggest to make some of them long enough to secure an amount of development, in the interest of making the totality musically interesting.

Content of boxes: POLY=polyphonic: parts are independent.

HETERO=heterophonic: parts are alike, but also move on their own.

HOMO=homophonic: individual parts must melt into a common mass of sound. The common demonimator for this system is the idea of variation within vertical (poly) - oblique (hetero) - horisontal (homo and solo).

Solo is a free solo, lasting all the duration of the box in question. No one else is to play during such a solo, apart from during crossfadings before and after. Different ensemble members should take the solo each time. This needs not be determined in advance.

Rules of the game: A box lasts until anyone raises a hand and makes sure everybody has noticed it. Then the cross-fading process begins. This rule also applies when a solo is sounding, contrary to the traditional way - one of the others may determine when it ends, unless the soloist happens to be the first to make the signal. After solos, you may omit the hand-raising, since it could be clear enough that anything else than solo marks out the beginning of a crossfading.

After each box, there is an indication of how long time cross-fading to the next one may take. Try to make good use of the musical possibilities of the transition. Be aware that 10 seconds is a strict time-frame, so look well out in advance. Even 30 seconds is a limited time.

0 seconds for cross-fading, however, means none at all - therefore you will need to bring the element to a complete stop and create a general pause as long as necessary (but not longer). In this case, do not start to play the next one until this moment of readiness has arrived.

Various remarks:

Practise individual elements as necessary. Some of them may require you have some familiarity with them and the way you do it together.

Elements 2 and probably 12 may require some previous practising in all cases, since they presuppose a common feeling of tempo (for both) and proportions (for no. 2). In element 2 you may shift to a different tone every time the pattern with two crescendo-diminuendos has been played. In element 12 for every tone, but start with repetitions.

Element 12 could start with one player taking initiative, the others taking cue from his or her tempo. For one possibility, it could end by a ritardando ad infinitum. Or for another, by a more or less sudden stop. Do not plan too much here.

The reason why piano is not to make sforzandi in element 9 is that they automatically result from its way of operation.

Pianos and other percussive instruments not directly capable of playing sustained long tones should employ regular tone repetitions or a tremolo in elements 2 and 12. This may also hold good for element 2, although you might find it more suitable for producing differentiated timbres to work at least partly inside the piano and maybe employ for instance a fast tremolo or a sustained evenly scraping sound.

Carl Bergstrøm-Nielsen 2011