

arine  
(touch)

for shakuhachi, koto, sho, and laptop with maxmsp

breathe

one bar lasts a long, comfortable exhalation  
count out bars, each with five slow beats in them

talk with each other person in the group about how they came to play their instrument  
do they recall their first encounter with their instrument  
who have they met along the way  
how does the instrument feel to play  
talk about timbre and technique  
play together

explore tuning on the koto

form 3 microtonal clusters, to include the regions around approximately D-E a ninth  
or tenth above middle C, and F#-A below that

devise these according to your best judgement but aim to find an uneven distribution  
of intervals within each cluster (some strings may be close to unison, whereas others  
could be nearer a semitone apart)

bridges may be placed non-consecutively (a bridge on a 'higher' string may be  
placed lower than the one on the next 'lower' string)

bridges can be moved during the piece but this should be done with sensitivity  
toward the way clusters shift and reform

tune a distinctive low note on string ichi

the shakuhachi should use a low instrument, with a B flat fundamental, if available

play together as a group for a while, and several times

start by crystallising events around the first beat of each bar

the idea of beats and bars is probably only useful to start the piece and to help  
establish the ebb and flow of playing

make decisions, based on your listening, about whether or not to participate in any  
particular group of events

allow events to start to join up in time, extending through the bar to join the next one  
in this way create a web of sounds anchored on points at the beginning of the bar  
intertwine

if performing this for an audience, aim to play for around fifteen minutes, or longer

short term ebb and flow of texture will likely arise from focusing on details of timbral inflection and phrase

avoid generic growth patterns as can sometimes happen when improvising together

cherish intervals such as unisons fifths and octaves but only briefly – avoid drones

koto – bridges can be moved around to create slides  
this can create new clusters or can meet the pitches of the shakuhachi or sho  
play using fingers or plectra on the strings  
don't play on the body of the instrument  
explore harmonics, microtonal clusters and slides

shakuhachi – this too can meet the pitches of the sho or koto  
make use of tones, breath sounds and articulations of traditional convention  
avoid mouth noise on its own, or other techniques such as speaking into the instrument or trumpeting

sho – play in regions comfortable under the fingers, possibly based on but not confined to aitate transitions  
all sounds need not play clearly but all sounds should have some tone  
don't use extended techniques that would result in mouth noise or overt gesturing

explore solo and accompaniment  
tease out the nature of accompaniment by avoiding exploitation of the solo role  
in soloing, take particular account of the stylistic guidelines above  
any rhetorical aspects of solo playing should take account of what came before in the piece and where you want it to go, otherwise do not take a solo role  
accompanists should defer to the soloist even if there is little discernible soloistic playing occurring  
the soloist is a facilitator allowing the accompaniment listening situation to occur  
solos should not last too long

try to stay aware of the overall mix

nf oct 2009