

sacred traces

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PROGRAMME NOTE

sacred traces is a text score for three players, centred around the idea that the players are a collective group, unearthing sounds from history. These sounds may not be literally historic, but the idea surrounds uncovering echoes of the sacred, hidden within the space of sound and silence. The piece encourages performers to both engage with their chosen sounds and are invited to enter into a contemplative dialogue that reflects the subtle presence of a divine, ancient, or unknown.

PERFORMANCE INSTRUCTIONS

The work is for three individual players.

Each player should choose a position in the performance or recording space, creating some sort of triangle. The distance between the players should allow the sound to travel distinctly between them but also as to not overpower them (i.e. too close).

Each player is free to choose a single sound source, be it from an instrument, electronic device, their voice or an unconventional sound producing object.

The instructions for all players sounds are poetic, please take the instructions with a grain of salt and interpret them as you please.

SOUNDS

Player 1:

Focus on sustained tones (e.g. drones) that symbolise to you grounding or a foundation. Over time, introduce subtle variations and dynamic changes that hint at there being something hidden or ancient about the sound.

Player 2:

Create sporadic whispers or breath-like sounds (e.g. airy tones, non-pitched breaths or soft spoken words). Think of these as traces that linger in the air.

Player 3:

Use resonant percussive elements (e.g. bells). These sounds will be used to mark time in the piece sporadically, as if a discovery or uncovering in the past has been made.

INTERACTION BETWEEN PLAYERS

Each player should listen very closely to the other players and respond only when a sound resonates deeply with them. Make sure that your responses are slow, delicate and intentional, as if following a faint trace throughout the piece.

Play with silence as a key element in the musical form; let the pauses and absence of sounds be as significant as the sounds themselves.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOUNDS

The piece should evolve gradually over time, and only when is necessary and not just for the sake of developing, like each player and the collective group are unearthing sacred remains.

Begin sparse, with just one player initiating the first sound. Allow the texture to build slowly. Make sure to never reach a full, cohesive form; remain in a state of flux. If you find as a collective group you are reaching a climax, immediately stop and restart with one player making a single sound. This can be communicated through physical gesture and facial expressions.

Moments of unison should be only introduced fleetingly, as if the traces align briefly before dispersing again.

DURATION OF THE PERFORMANCE

The duration is by no means fixed.

Make sure that the piece unfolds itself, organically and naturally.

Typical performances may last 5-10 minutes, but they may be longer. It is recommended that no performance should last less than 5 minutes. This is to give time for the piece to breath.

HOW TO END THE PERFORMANCE

The work ends with a return to silence.

Once player 1 has given a physical gestural communication (agreed beforehand with the other players, such as a head nod), then each player should fade out in their own time. This may still include making sounds after silences, but they will be more sporadic as has previously happened.

There should be a sense that the sounds are being buried again, receding back into history.