

CARTRIDGE MUSIC (also DUET FOR CYMBAL and PIANO DUET, TRIO, etc.)

Each performer makes his own part from the material supplied, which is:

1. 20 numbered sheets having shapes inscribed.
2. A transparent sheet with points.
3. A transparent sheet with circles.
4. A transparent sheet with a circle marked like a stop-watch.
5. A transparent sheet with a dotted curving line having at one end a circle.

Taking the numbered sheet corresponding to the number of available cartridges* (each with its own amplifier and loudspeaker), place over it all the transparent sheets, arranging the 5th so that the circle at the end of the dotted line contains a point outside a shape and so that the dotted line intersects at least one point within one of the shapes. (If no such point exists, no action is indicated.) Then, following the dotted line from either end to the other, read the actions to be made (see below).

Time bracket(s) for action(s) to be made given by entrance(s) and exit(s) of dotted line with respect to the stop-watch circle. If no such entrance and exit occurs, no specific time is given. The action should then fall outside any time bracket(s) established. The seconds given refer to any one of the minutes of the total time programmed which may be any agreed-upon length.

Intersection of the dotted line with a point within a shape indicates a sound produced in any manner on the object inserted† in the cartridge corresponding to that shape. (The shapes may be numbered in any way to bring about this correspondence.)

Intersection of the dotted line with a point outside a shape indicates a sound produced by any other means than by use of the objects inserted in the cartridges (auxiliary sounds). It is convenient for the production of "auxiliary sounds" to place contact microphones on the objects (microphone stand, table, etc.) to which the cartridges are attached. If this is done, many "auxiliary sounds" having an electronic character are easily produced.

Intersection of the dotted line with a circle within a shape indicates alteration of the amplitude control of the amplifier. Take a reference point or line in order to get two readings (in the case of a real intersection) or one (in the case of a tangent). Notate these, using one or both in performance.

Similarly, intersection of the dotted line with a circle outside a shape indicates any alteration of the tone control on the amplifier which is connected to the cartridge corresponding to the closest shape. Readings may be obtained as above for amplitude.

Repetitive patterns (like tape loops) are indicated when points or circles are intersected by the dotted line within the sections where the dotted line crosses itself. Any amount of repetition including a fraction of the indicated action may be performed.

When the position of the points or circles makes the reading ambiguous, take either reading, neither, or both.

When a circle is intersected by both the boundary of a shape and the dotted line, change of object in the cartridge is indicated. This change will be audible, if the volume on the amplifier is up.

Make any number of readings, shifting the position of transparencies 2, 3, and 4 with respect to the sheet with shapes only after all points within shapes have been used for readings from the same or changing point outside the shapes.

Let the number of performers be at least that of the cartridges and not greater than twice the number of cartridges.

All events, ordinarily thought to be undesirable, such as feed-back, humming, howling, etc., are to be accepted in this situation.

If convenient, the loudspeakers are to be distributed around the audience. The cartridges and amplifiers, however, must be fairly close together and accessible to all the performers.

For DUET FOR CYMBAL, employ a contact microphone on the instrument. Use sheet number 1. Make readings as above. Where change of object is indicated, lower cymbal into water or onto piano strings or onto a mat or other material or make some such action that changes the sound radically.

For PIANO DUET, employ a contact microphone on the soundboard of the instrument. If using sheet 2, let one shape correspond to the keyboard, one to the strings. If using sheet 4, let the shapes correspond to keyboard, strings, interior construction noises, exterior construction noises. Other sheets may be used where further distinctions are made (of range, or mode of action). Where change of object is indicated, employ principle of piano preparation, but in some radical way (e.g., blankets, pillows, large sheets of plastic, newspapers, etc.).

JOHN CAGE, Stony Point, July 1960

* A cartridge is an ordinary phonograph pick-up in which customarily a playing needle is inserted.

† Instead of a playing needle, any object that will fit into a cartridge may be inserted (e.g., a coil of wire, a toothpick, a pipe-cleaner, a twig, etc.).