

# Variations on a Lonely Theme

for 5-string electric bass + electronics

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northeastern university

# Composer's notes

*Variations on a Lonely Theme* was composed during the winter of 2010 and represents a new-found interest in the use of live and prepared electronics in a performance setting. The work is written for 5-string electric bass and electronics powered by a Max/MSP patch.

The work is divided into two major sections: (A) an introductory main theme, and (B) a longer, developmental section based on several ideas introduced in that theme. After the B section concludes, the player is to return to section A and perform a highly embellished version of the main theme in free time.

Measures during which loops or delays are active can be repeated at the performer's discretion; this may be necessary in order to prepare for a subsequent musical passage.

To further break down the work,

Part A:		cue 1
Part B:	section I	cue 2-15
	section II	cue 16-43
	section III	cue 44-50
	section IV	cue 51-53
	section V	cue 54
Part A':		no cues

## Electronic Requirements


A Max/MSP patch has been created to provide prerecorded sounds and live processing of the bass performance, via various delays and pitch shifts. During the first and third main sections of part B, a tempo of 90BPM is established via recorded loops and held constant during those sections. Prerecorded cues are delivered via separate AIFF audio files, which are also provided with the patch. The performer must trigger both cues and live processing via MIDI foot pedal. Timing is critical due to the exacting nature of the cues and time-based delays.


Instructions for configuring and using the patch are included with the software.


## Legend


> indicates a slap/pop note.

⌋ indicates a note to be played as a harmonic.

 indicates a glissando.

 indicates an upward strum.

 indicates a cue or rehearsal mark.

 indicates a series of notes to be played in any order, ad. lib., for the specified duration. Rhythms and gestures are left to the performer's discretion.

## Tuning

*Variations* utilizes standard 5-string bass tuning.

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2010

**1** (Section A can be performed either with a plectrum or fingered.)

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bass

5

9

13

17

# Variations on a Lonely Theme: B.

2 ♩ = 90 (with a plectrum; use right hand to mute strings)

bass

loop on  
*p*

electronics

5

3

b

5

e

9

4 (fingered)

b

5

e

loop off  
*f*

*f*

*ffz*

13

b

6

*ff*

delay on

13

e

17

b

tap strings lightly without regard to the pulse, increasing in loudness until mm. 20

17

e

21

7

b

loop on  
*f*

8

loop off

21

e

25 9 10

b *ff* *octave on*

e

29

b

e

33 11

b *octave off, loop on* *p*

e

37 12 (scratch string at a sixteenth-note pulse with a plectrum at the notes below)

b *loop off, delay on*

e

41

b

e

46 13

b

e

52 14 *delay off* *ff*

b

e

15 (dolce. lose sense of pulse, transforming notes into a sound cloud)

56

b

56

e

delay on

*p*

16 *molto rit.*

60

b

60

e

delay off

*p*

(Free time; slow and wandering.  
Measures indicate phrasing.)

63

b

63

e

17

18

19

20

ca. 3"

69

b

69

e

21

22

23

24

3.5"

9"

*p*

*f*

*p*

73

b

73

e

25

26

27

28

29

77

b

77

e

30

31

32

33

34

*f*

*p*

ca 1"

81 **35** **36** **37**

b *p*

e

85 **38** **39** **40**

b *sfz* *sfz*

e

89 **41** **42** **43** start slow, gradually grow more intense and reestablish pulse of 90bpm...  
ca. 9"

b *sfz* subito *p*

e

93 **44** ♩ = 90 **45**

b loop on

e *f* *sfz*

95 **46** (with a plectrum)

b *ff*

e

97 **46** (with a plectrum)

b *f* loop off, octave on

e

99 47

b *f*

e

101

b

e

103 48

b

e

105 49 (scratch string at a sixteenth-note pulse with a plectrum at the notes below)

b

octave off, delay on

e

107

b

e

109

b

e



111 (continue scratching strings at notes below)

b

e

113 **50**

b

e

115 **51** (Cue 51 can be repeated if the performer chooses. The player should occasionally play harmonics slightly off the beat, creating an obscured sense of the pulse.)

delay off, loop on

*p*

b

e

118

b

e

121

b

e

124 **52** *vibrato*, delay off

*p*

b

e

127

b

e

127

130

*vibrato*

b

e

130

133

b

e

133

53

136

*mf*

b

e

136

139

(keep playing D flat at increasing frequency until cue 54, to build)

b

e

139

54

Free time

b

e

142

*sfz* *p*

(return to A section)