For two instrumentalists.

Players begin at opposite ends of the score (positions marked A and B), traversing the path indicated by arrows in opposing directions.

Squares depict 219 stages in the life cycle of a hypothetical bicellular organism (LUCA) whose momentary forms may be decoded as instructions for musical moves, sounded sequentially during the corresponding time-slice.

There are many ways in which these bodies might be interpreted, but it is critical that a consistent approach be applied throughout.

Given:

Each square, a "life stage," will contain one or more cells. Over the course of their lives, these cells may move, divide, coalesce, occupy, digest, mutate, swell, shrink, reproduce, die (note that only for player B does LUCA demonstrate spontaneous generation). Players ought to approach the score only once they have settled on a robust interpretation strategy able to make sense of these verbs.

While players need not necessarily deploy identical strategies, the transition from a simple life stage to a complex one should, for any performance, be abundantly clear to the audience.

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One strategy:

Advance through life stages by way of a mutual cue, so as to permit flexible durations. Each cell commands one sound. Stable, unitary cells stand in for a shorter, self-contained sound, while cells undergoing mitosis or mutation call for sounds smeared between two or more pitches or timbres. A cell's shade maps to general regions of an instrument's pitch: dark cells denote a rich, low register and light cells a thin, high one. A cell's size denotes its relative presence in the life cycle, corresponding to a sound's duration or dynamic (though it's probably best to pick one). Finally, the life stage's visual density should relay the sound-to-silence ratio heard in its ekphrasis. Play ends once both players have sounded their 219 life stages. In any case: The piece sounds our farthest-flung common ancestor. Let the music pulse with metastatic life!

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Isaac Otto

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