

Joseph Klein

# Canetti-menagerie

(after Elias Canetti)

open-form work for mixed ensemble (5 to 8 instruments)  
based on character studies after Elias Canetti

(2018)

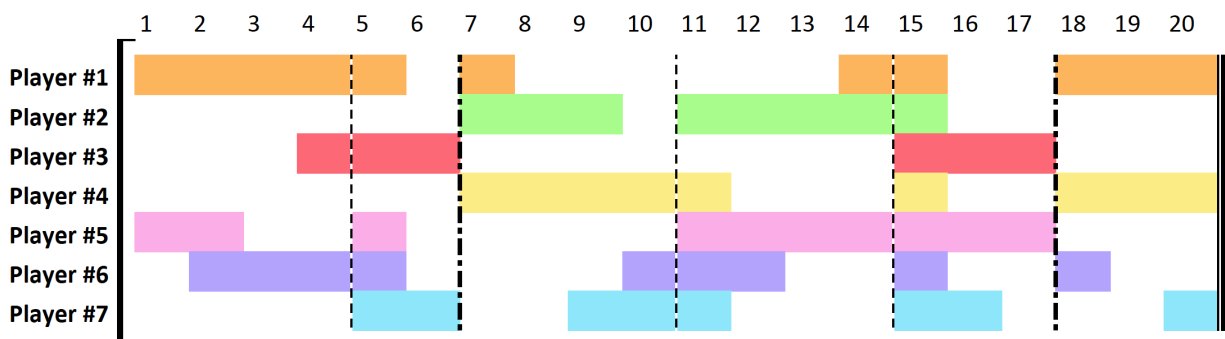
duration: variable (c. 7-12')



## Performance Notes

- *Canetti-menagerie* is a semi-improvisational open-form work based upon materials derived from the composer's series of solo character studies after Elias Canetti, and may be performed by any combination of five to eight instruments included in that collection.
- *Canetti-menagerie* may be performed independently or in conjunction with the aforementioned solo works, as part of a larger composite work.
- Duration is not specified, though a given realization of the work is typically between 7 and 12 minutes – dependent in part on the number of performers involved and the context in which the work is presented (details below).
- There is no score per se, only this set of performance guidelines. Performers should reference their respective Canetti solo studies for musical materials, which are to be used as the basis of their improvisation.
- While each player is to draw upon material from the respective solo work *ad libitum*, this material should be continuously influenced in some way by the other players in the ensemble, while still maintaining the inherent qualities of the original characters.
- The overall effect should be that of several distinct characters interacting with one another, as at a social gathering. These metaphorical conversations may range from calm exchanges to heated arguments. Performers should be mindful of the behavioral traits of their respective characters, which should inform their interactions with the other players. As with actual social interactions, performers may subtly join a conversation, or abruptly interrupt or attempt to derail an ongoing conversation.
- The work is conceived as a series of instrumental subgroupings, parsed into duos, trios, and quintets of varying combinations. These sections should generally flow freely and continuously from one to another, so that there is a constant flux in the ensemble combinations. Trios may be formed by adding a player to a pre-existing duo, while quintets are typically formed by combining duo and trio groupings; conversely, trios may be extracted from pre-existing quintets, and duos from pre-existing quintets or trios. Occasionally, a duo or trio may be sharply juxtaposed with a complementary trio or duo, resulting in more abrupt contrasts. However, these types of sharp contrasts between subgroups should be used sparingly.
- As a general guideline, duo and trio groupings should be more frequently selected than quintet groupings; this allows for an optimum degree of interaction between the parts without an excessive amount of textural saturation. Extended solo playing is to be avoided; players should be interacting with one or more additional players throughout the performance.
- Each of the duo, trio, and quintet groupings should last between 10 and 30 seconds, to be determined spontaneously by the players during the performance. The durations of these sections should be continuously varied, so as to avoid regular or predictable changes within the ensemble groupings. In order to maximize the variety of possibilities, it is important to avoid repeating specific combinations of instruments (particularly duos and trios) during any given realization of the work.
- Players may begin with any duo or trio combination and proceed from one grouping to another *ad libitum*.

- In performances with more than five players, there should be one (and only one) point in the realization where the entire ensemble is playing. This must occur sometime after the mid-point of the realization.
- While there is no score for this work, it is strongly recommended that the various combinations and orderings are worked out ahead of time, and that players create a general outline for each given realization. This will provide additional structure to the improvisations and allow the performers to shape the overall flow of the music accordingly. The following is an example of such an outline, for seven performers:



- Ensembles that include more experienced improvisers and/or have become familiar with this work may prefer to determine an ordering spontaneously during performance.

## Program Notes

*Canetti-menagerie* is a semi-improvisational open form work for five to eight performers, based on the composer's collection of solo works after character studies in Elias Canetti's book *Der Ohrenzeuge* (*The Earwitness*). In this work, the performers improvise in various duo, trio, and quintet combinations, developing musical fragments from these solo studies, which are used as raw material for a variety of musical conversations – not unlike the interaction of distinct personalities at a social gathering. Whereas the solo works in this collection explore the psychological qualities of the characters portrayed in Canetti's *Der Ohrenzeuge*, *Canetti-menagerie* is more of a sociological study of these characters' various relationships – very much in the spirit of another work by Canetti, *Masse und Macht* (*Crowds and Power*), an idiosyncratic yet penetrating study of group dynamics and power structures within various societal contexts.

*Canetti-menagerie* was composed in March 2015 and first performed on 19 September 2016 at the University of North Texas.