

WILLIAM SUSMAN

WAVES (1983)

For computer-generated sound and any number of musicians

PERFORMANCE INSTRUCTIONS

1. For any number of musicians
2. Play sounds for a duration of 5 seconds or more
3. Avoid playing *normal*; play sounds with acoustical components of noise i.e. extended techniques (see "sound suggestions for the instrumentalists")
4. Sounds should flow in and out of each other like the ebb and flow of waves.
5. If pauses are taken between sounds, they should not last more than 15 seconds.
6. Create sounds that complement and mix with the sounds on the tape: Via frequency modulation, the computer-generated sound interpolates between noise and an approximation of bells exploding. At approximately 7:00 high-pitched voices, "the sirens", enter.
7. At least one instrumentalist starts when the tape part starts and fades away as the tape part fades away.
8. Overlap sounds between the instrumentalists.
9. Balance your dynamics, as the tape part gets louder or softer.
10. Play the tape part loud!
11. Amplification and reverb of instruments is desirable
12. The use of FX boxes i.e. electronic processing is desirable e.g., distortion, flange, chorus, delay, etc. THE ORIGINAL SOUND MUST NOT BE A NORMAL TIMBRE OF THE INSTRUMENT (e.g., don't produce a chorus or distorted effect from a *cantabile* sound.)
13. Always be aware of sounds of the tape part and the overall arc / shape of the tape part.
14. The work lasts 10:55.

SOUND SUGGESTIONS FOR THE INSTRUMENTALISTS

PERCUSSION:

Bow vibes, tam-tams, cymbals, thunder sheet, etc. Scrape cymbals in circular motion. Play timpani but only playing long rolls (at least 5 seconds) while glissing with the pedal and, or place a sizzle cymbal on the timpani head, etc. Brushes on snare in circular motion, wind machine, lion's roar. Cymbal, gong and tam-tam rolls or rub. Whistles, sirens, thunder sheet. Avoid sounds that are typical such as just striking a percussion instrument. Choose performance techniques that produce a continuous wave of noise. Amplify.

WINDS/BRASS:

Winds can play multi-phonics, jet-whistles, flutter-tongue FLZ., growl, gliss or other sound FX, as long as each gesture lasts at least 5 seconds. Brass can growl, gliss, shake, sing into the instrument, use mutes, trills etc. Play mouthpiece only or don't use mouthpiece. Try playing both sax and clarinet at same time.

STRINGS:

Strings can play behind the bridge, harmonics, double-stops, glissandi, sul ponticello, trills, tremelo, pizz., snaps, battuto, highest note possible (for example with "sirens") i.e., combinations of these, or other FX as long as each gesture lasts 5 seconds.

PIANO:

Only play on the inside of the piano. Secure the sustain pedal down with a wedge. Rub the strings with metal brushes, strum the strings with finger, roll on strings with soft mallets creating gestures that last 5 seconds or more, tap, slap or pound the strings with your hand, scratch the copper-wrapped strings.

HARP:

Strike the strings with the hands. Scratch the lower copper-wrapped strings with a metal stick, or other FX as listed above with the piano.

VOICE:

Multiphonics, ululation, throat singing in the style of Tibetan Monks or Tuvans, glissandi, process the voice with any FX processor, etc. Do not sing *cantabile* or in the Western tradition.

ELECTRIC GUITAR:

Process all sounds with various foot pedals, whammy bar, harmonics, glissandi, brush strings, etc.

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Program Notes

The first performance of *Waves* was presented by the San Francisco Contemporary Chamber Players at the San Francisco Museum of Art in 1983, Susman at the piano.

The tape part is vintage computer-generated sound created on CCRMA's legendary Samson Box, a modified PDP-11 optimized for John Chowning's FM synthesis algorithm.

Any number of improvisers may interact with these electronic sounds that allude to exploding bells and the mythical Sirens of the Odyssey. Written when Susman was 22 and originally for 4-channel tape, the "tape part" now exists on CD.

Recently *Waves* has experienced a revival of sorts starting in 2007-2008 with multi-wind virtuoso Demetrius Spaneas performing it in Athens, Riga, and Moscow and Quintet Tabor performing it at S.U.N.Y. Stony Brook and at The Stone NYC.