

Dinner Trio from the Tomato Quintet Installation

Chris Chafe (2007) duration approximately 45 minutes

for 3 musicians, playing any combination of instruments or voices and one week's worth of tomato ripening data, in 15 data channels (300:1 speedup of data)

Time series data will scroll through on a screen during the performance. Temperature, light and CO₂ concentration recordings are displayed from 5 sets of tomato sensors during the previous week-long ripening process. The scrolling display resembles a polygraph.

The performance starts when the polygraph starts scrolling. About 45 minutes later the music should end on a cue from the chef / conductor, even if the scrolling is continuing or if the scrolling has stopped. Keep playing until the tomato chef has signaled it's the end. Finish together and then take a bow as an ensemble.

The piece begins with each player picking a trace to follow in the polygraph. Choose any of the 15 channels that are being traced. It's ok if two or more players pick the same one. Imagine the sounds you will make as the trace starts moving and enter accordingly. Your sound could be no sound, or sporadic, or continuous.

How to turn the data graph into music:

Ad lib a texture that's from the following possibilities: (regardless of your instrument)

- ornamented flute lines and overblowing from very slow to very fast
- voices talking at different speeds in looping rhythms like rhyme with rhyming timbre
- pulsing crickets
- scattered fragments of lead guitar riffs with scratchy attacks
- free ideas of your own

The trace should be applied to two aspects of a musical texture. Only rarely should it be interpreted as a glissando and only rarely should it indicate a steady, sustained tone. Apply the trace's curves to at least two aspects of the texture. For example, to the speed of the crickets and their loudness.

The traces will have boring or interesting shapes over time. You may alternate between following literally (in real time) or re-scanning certain portions that are visible. When you re-scan or loop an interesting part, you can speed up or slow down the rate at which you scan as compared to real time. When the trace is boringly stable, stay with it but fade in and out very slowly after the boringness is evident, with about half the time being silence.

Textural changes:

Occasionally, your trace will join or cross another. When this happens, switch to either the trace you've crossed or pick an entirely new one. Don't stay with the previous trace or music. At this moment, change to another texture or completely change the parameter assignments in the current texture. For example, cease cricketing and switch to lead guitar riffs, or continue cricketing and apply now to pitch height and to chirping speed. If one of the traces does a vertical sweep up or down crossing many traces, all players will change when it crosses their trace.

If you want, try to follow more than one trace with each trace affecting two different parameters of your texture.