

# Urban Developments

*for any number of instruments and/or voices*

Patrick Harrex

The performance should ideally take place in a town or city centre public place or in a building which is not sound-proofed, or in other locations where non-musical sounds can be heard.

*Instructions for performers:*

Listen to the sounds around you.

Select a sound that you hear, taking as long as you need to make your choice, and imitate it as best you can. Repeat it as often as you like – do not become distracted by other sounds or by other performers. If another performer appears to select the same sound, follow your first instinct and do not try to copy or deliberately be different from the other performer. You may pause briefly between repetitions.

Explore the sound you are making – still ignoring other sounds around you. Transform your sound – only slightly at first and then increasingly more dramatically until eventually you have achieved a complete or significant contrast with the original sound, but keep returning to your original sound between transformations. Transformations may involve changes in dynamic levels, changes of pitch, changes of timbre, etc. Be imaginative.

When you have achieved what you feel to be the most significant (dramatic) transformation, stop coming back to your original sound – let your explorations take you even further away from the original sound, but still ignore the sounds around you.

As you continue to explore your own sound, now listen to other performers around you.

Gradually change your sound to match that of another performer. If the other performer changes his/her sound, follow them if you can, or select another performer. You should try to be aware of any other performer who is trying to match your sound. If you hear them doing this, reciprocate by moving towards their sound, abandoning another matching you may have been trying to make.

When you have achieved a matching – or as near a match as possible – both of you should listen to all the other performers and gradually change your sound(s) to complement, but not necessarily match, those of the whole group of performers so that unity is achieved. 'Unity' may be taken to mean any musically pleasing sound, for example a common texture, a pleasant harmonic structure, a common rhythmic pattern, unison (of pitch), or whatever. It is up to a previously nominated person (see below) to decide when unity of sound is achieved. Maintain that unity of sound for at least one minute.

The performance is brought to an end on a sign from a previously nominated performer who is to decide when unity has been achieved.

All the performers should generally play or sing continuously, although they may stop from time to time to breath, etc, to listen to sounds around them as the performance continues and to rest – particularly if the performance takes along time.

The length of the performance is completely open and will depend on, among other things, the number and variety of 'external' sounds, the performers' skills and imagination and the number of performers.

Ideally the nature of the unity to be achieved should not be decided in advance, but be allowed to emerge from the way each performer transforms the 'external' sounds. However, the performers may also set themselves a target 'unity sound' but, of course, they must achieve this by following the procedures for transforming the original sounds as set out above.

*Urban Developments was inspired by attending a concert in St John-on-the-Green, Bethnal Green, London*

*1<sup>st</sup> May 2006*