Nocturnes

A TRIPTYCH FOR TWO IMPROVISING ELECTRONICS

SEIYOUNG JANG

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About the Piece

Nocturnes is a work in progress of a triptych written for two improvising electronics. *Nuages* is the first and the only complete movement.

Nocturnes is an experiment in composing a traditionally notated score for multiple performers playing live improvised electronics, with no acoustic instruments. The structure of the piece, in which two performers play through the piece once and repeat after switching parts, highlights the unique characteristics of the performers, their chosen systems, and their improvisatory methods. Unique to electronics is its vast control over timbre; *Nocturnes* allows flexibility in the performers' choice over timbre, yet requires them to pay attention to the density, dynamics, pitch, and noise content of their sonic choices. Constraints posed by having to follow a traditionally notated score, less common in electronic improvisation, require that performers adapt a different way of contextualizing the capabilities of their systems, especially as they play with one another. Moreover, performers are asked to play through a monitor or a localized sound source of their own, preferably placed near or on tables that they have their setup on, which aims for a conceptualization of electronics as instruments in their own right rather than as an add-on to acoustic instruments or as fixed media.

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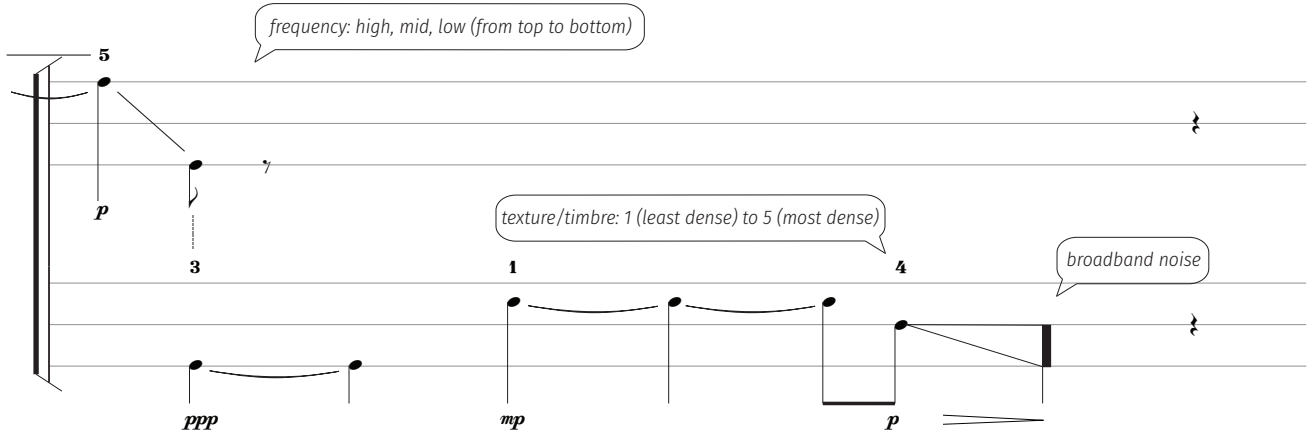
Performance Notes



The piece is written for two improvisers playing electronics. Any combination of equipment, setup and sound synthesis techniques may be used, provided that the setup accommodates the score and its specified notation. Each performer must be assigned a spatial localization. For example, performers may choose to utilize one monitor each placed on a desk of their own. Another example is to hard-pan the performance space between left and right, or front and back, and so on.

The piece consists of two parts: Electronics A (top staff) and Electronics B (bottom staff). It is up to the performers to assign parts. It does not matter which performer is assigned to which part, nor is it required that the part assignment be consistent across performances. The suggested length of each system is between 30 seconds and 1 minute long. There is substantial freedom as to how long the performers progress through the piece, provided that the performers are “in sync” -- dotted lines indicate musical events that must occur concurrently between the performers.

Each non-silence musical event is denoted by a notehead. Rhythms are relative. Each staff divides the frequency spectrum into three staff lines: high, mid, and low. The frequency values are relative to each other and not absolute. Each note is specified with a texture/timbre, notated with a number atop the notehead between 1 and 5. 1 denotes least dense, and 5 denotes most dense. (Example one: 1 is assigned to a single sine tone; 5 to many sine tones. Example two: 1 is assigned to a single object being transduced, and 5 to many different objects. Example three: 1 is assigned to a granular synthesis using few grains, and 5 to a dense assortment of grains.) If the note is not assigned a texture, it maintains the texture from the previous note. Block noteheads denote broadband noise that fall within a certain spectrum; if the block notehead spans the entire range of the staff, then it is a noise that contains that range of the instrument. If it lies on the space between two staff lines, then it is a noise that contains that narrower range of the instrument. The boundary in character between a regular notehead and a block notehead is flexible. Slides between notes are denoted via diagonal lines; transitions between those notes must occur smoothly from one to the other. Caesurae are a longer silence than rest notes. Dynamics are tied to the volume of each note.

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Nocturnes

I. Nuages

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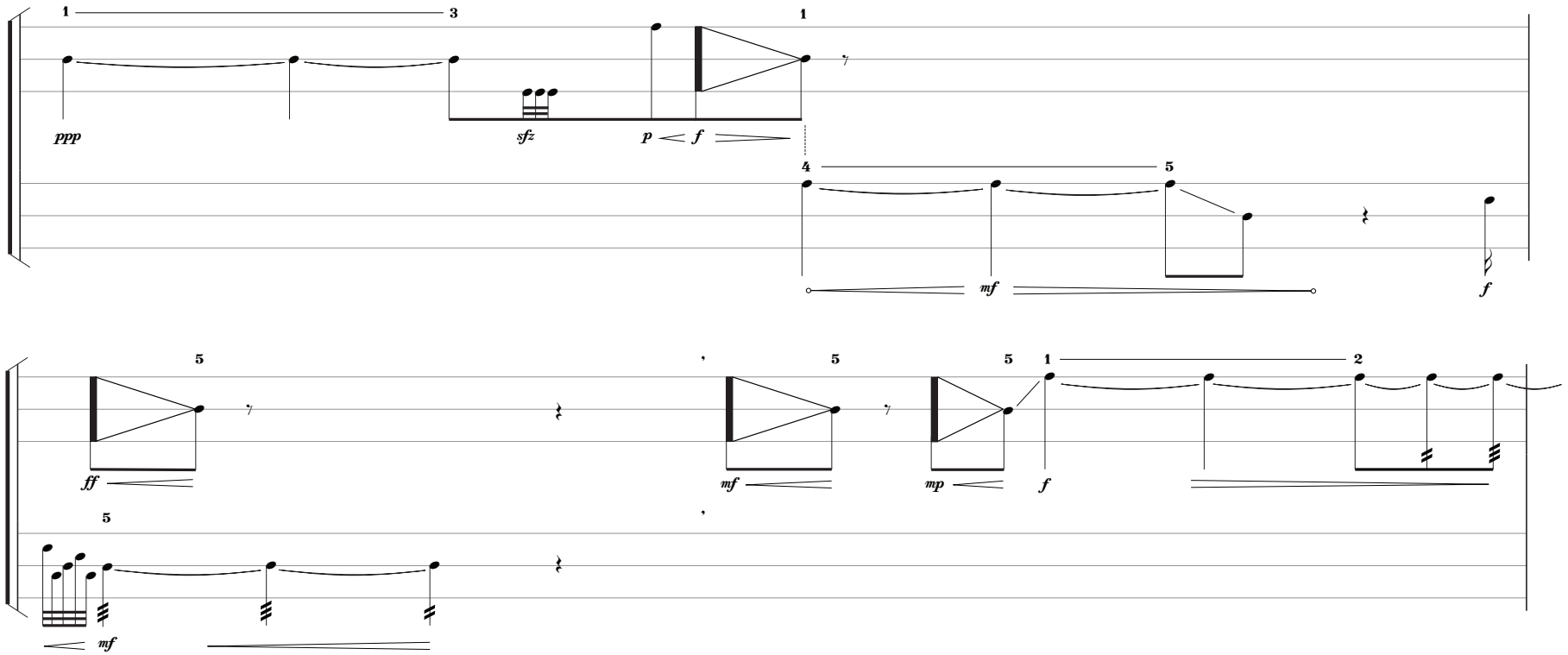

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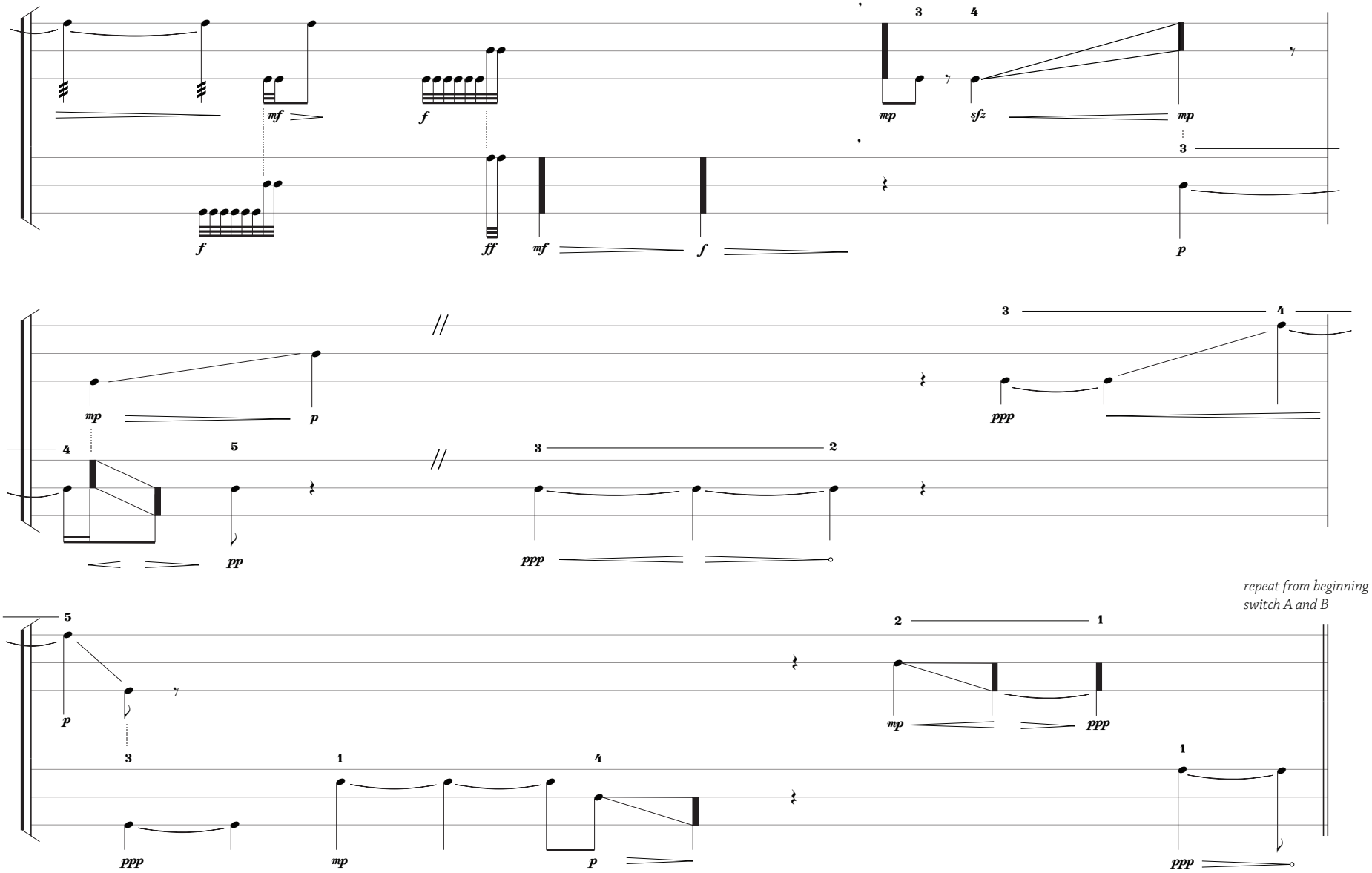

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