

Shallow Waves for Three Winds

Owen Russell (*for Myles Noble, Faye Thompson, and Rosa Juritz*)

All performers will follow the six-step breath cycle below. The breathing should not be 'performed' or expressed dramatically.

Within steps 1, 4, and 5, exhalations and tones 1-3 are exchanged through the piece. The piece starts with exhalations rather than tones.

1) Exhale/Tone 1 (long). Exhale away from your instrument/Play a relaxed long tone, continued until the lungs are considerably emptier than at rest – your diaphragm should be under tension at the end.

2) Inhale – 'Reflex' (short). Begin this inhalation by relaxing the diaphragm. Since your lungs will be below the rest/equilibrium point, they will involuntarily 'reflex' and take in air due to the pressure difference. Ride the momentum of the reflex until your lungs are about three quarters full.

3) Hold (long). Hold your breath and wait (if you feel uncomfortable and need to breathe in or out discreetly then this would be the ideal step to do so).

4) Exhale/Tone 2 (short). Exhale away from your instrument/Play a relaxed short tone, continued until you reach a point considerably above rest – with some air still in your lungs.

5) Exhale/Tone 3 (long). Exhale away from your instrument/Play a relaxed tone shorter than tone 1, continued until your lungs are at rest. Then, stop playing and wait.

6) Inhale (short). A smooth wide inhalation until your lungs are comfortably full. Then, begin with step 1 again.

To Perform:

Decide together on a pitch for tone 3 shortly in advance of the performance. Also number each performer 1 to 3. Sit or stand close enough together so that you can read each-other's breathing. All performers then observe three breaths individually before beginning.

After the three breaths, performer 1 begins with steps 1 and 2 alone. Once they begin step 3, performer 2 begins step 1. Once performer 2 begins step 3, performer 3 begins step 1. As the cycle rotates across the three performers thereon, steps 1/3/5 and 2/4/6 must happen simultaneously each time. The group has to work together to co-ordinate and maintain the synchronised pattern.

The structure is denoted by the instructions below, which are followed first by performer 1. The other two performers should listen for when performer 1 carries out the next instruction, and then follow them in sequence.

- Once the group's synchronisation is well-established, replace the exhalation in step 1 with tone 1. Start with a quiet dynamic.

Tone 1 Pitch: An individually and spontaneously chosen pitch that can change freely each cycle. The pre-determined pitch for tone 3 acts as a reference. Use tone 1 as a group to feel out and grow into a harmonic space together.

- After 2-3 cycles, individually choose your pitch for tone 2, and replace the exhalation in step 4 with tone 2. Slowly start to get louder.

Tone 2 Pitch: An individually chosen pitch that does not change. Choose a pitch that you interpret to be significant within the tone 1 harmonic space. This cannot be the same pitch as tone 3. The octave cannot be varied.

- After 2-3 cycles, replace the exhalation in step 5 with tone 3.

Tone 3 Pitch: A pre-determined pitch that does not change, chosen by the group before the beginning of the piece. The octave can be varied.

- After 3-5 cycles, replace tone 2 with an exhalation as before. Slowly start to get quieter.

- After 1-2 cycles, replace tone 1 with an exhalation as before.

- After 1-2 cycles, replace tone 3 with an exhalation as before.

- After 1 cycle, return to natural breathing. Wait until all performers are out of the cycle.