Tone (excerpt)

for singers

(2016)

Performance Note

This piece sustains a vocal tone by sharing it between groups of singers. Three groups are active at a time. A listener positioned equidistant from the three groups should hear a tone with constant volume but shifting timbre and source location. The performance should take place in a space that is richly reverberant for the human voice. Listeners should be encouraged to enter and exit freely, to move through the space, and to listen from any location.

Dynamics drift gradually through a performance from quiet to moderate. Groups coordinate to maintain a relatively constant volume. There are no sudden dynamic changes except when a group exits, as happens just after rehearsals B, D, and F.

The single **pitch** sung by all should be performable without strain. This will limit the range of vocal types that can partake in any given performance. Care should be taken to mix vocal types present so that the sequence of vocal ranges of the singers is approximately balanced. This will ensure variations in timbre and prevent the pitch from drifting far over a long period of time.

Choose a slow **pace** so that each crescendo-diminuendo gesture takes up most of a breath. Adjacent whole notes in a vocal part should be sung as if tied. A strict rhythm need not be used. Rather, groups should respond to one another's sounds, forming a gentle pulse that is articulated, not by volume, but by the timbral and spatial patterns of the tone as it is passed between the groups.

Ensemble Coordination: Each of the three parts is sung by a group of singers; a group consists of at least one singer. Groups may take turns of any length. They exit by slightly extending the crescendo both in duration and volume and then they remain silent. (This corresponds to moving from section A to B, C to D, or E to F in the score.) When a group exits, another group takes their place. The new group need not sing from the same location. Each group may choose to modify the vowel sound very slightly when they enter, but should maintain this same vowel sound until they exit. Sections with repeat should be repeated many times. The **piece ends** when no group enters to replace the group of the bottom staff. This cues the groups of the top two staves that the repeat at H has not been taken. Each group will need to communicate amongst themselves to coordinate their exit silently, or as quietly as possible.

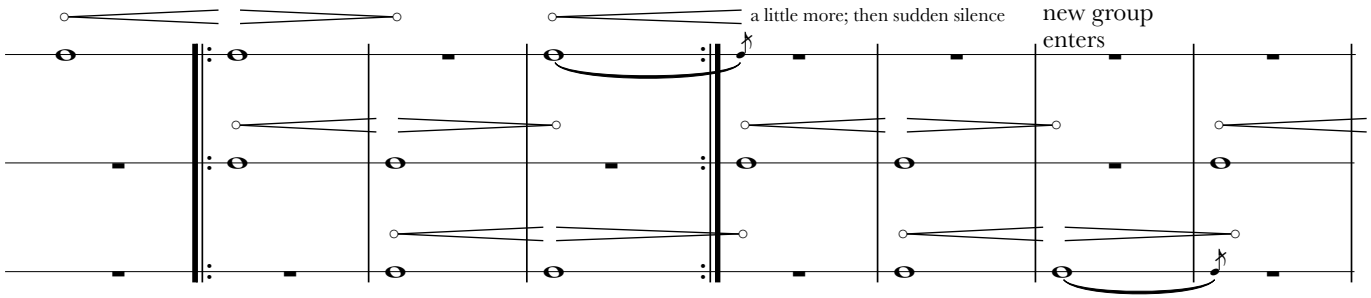
Although a performance of any **duration** may be undertaken, it is desirable that a performance of an *Excerpt* last longer than a performance of music would be expected to last and longer than any single performer would be expected to perform. In the United States in 2016 it would therefore be desirable for a performance to last more than three hours. Each performance is a ritual of cooperation, an excerpt of an ideal eternal performance.

Tone (excerpt)

for singers

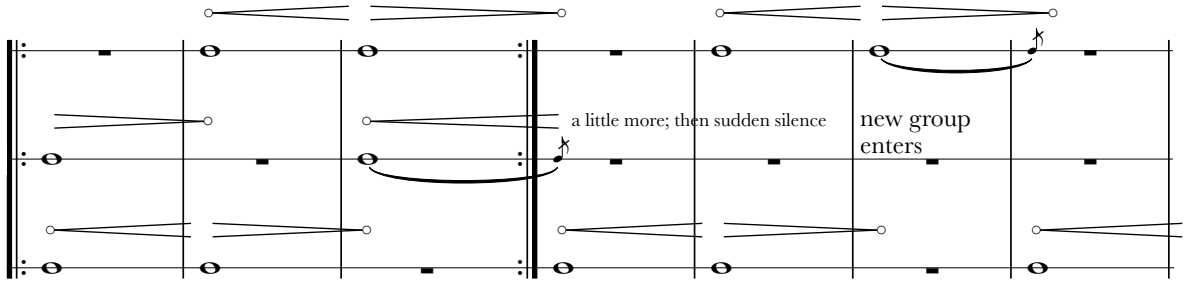
A

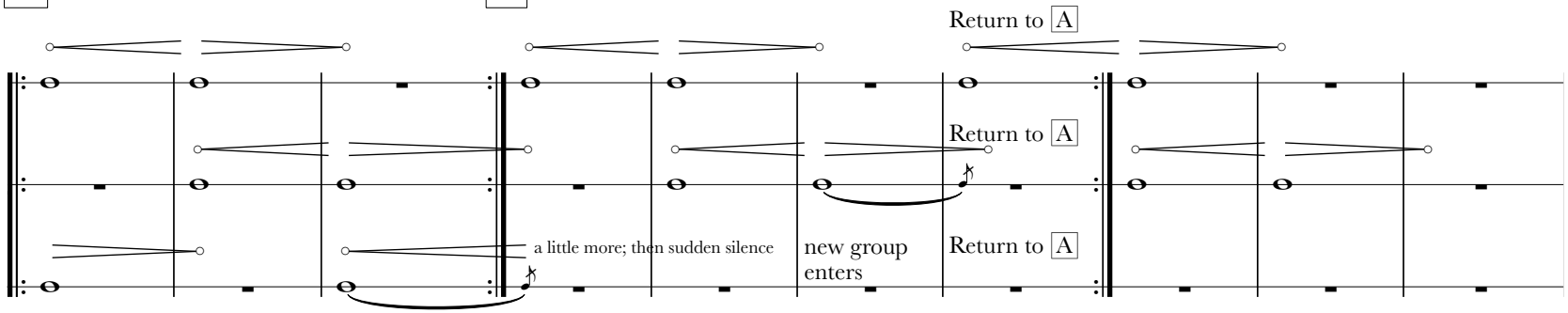
B



C

D



E

F