

Full Notes on Composition: enthalpy I

This work is the first work in my enthalpy series. I was inspired to create the enthalpy series in a creative response to a fellow composer and dear friend who wrote an entropy series. In Chemistry, enthalpy is a measurement of the amount of energy in the work. Rather than doing a superficial representation of the chemical concept in this series, I decided to think about the concept of high and low energy music. The enthalpy series is a matter of direct contrast - a collection of very intensive and violent pieces, juxtaposed with a collection of static and quieter pieces. You can see the enthalpy series as either rigid technical exercises, or uncontrolled outbursts of musical expression. One of the main objectives of the enthalpy series would be to tread this fine line between paradoxes - in this case between the rigid technicalities of musical academicism, and that of personal expression.

enthalpy I takes on the form of a drumset etude, using a similar concept of development as seen in my earlier work *ma* (間). The work opens with four seemingly benign crotchet beats, with one crotchet beat of rest. This is the main building block to which I gradually inserted new notes as interruptions of the regular rhythm. This process continues till about Section 14, to which I explored a deeper layer of rhythmic structuring using the same processes. Timbre is significant in the aural perception of these structures, alongside the repetition of certain phrases which, through the careful consideration of the number of repeats and the duration of each repeated phrase, creates a false sense of regularity amid the constant evolution of the work.

This constant process of insertions and incisions continue until Section 29, which is marked by an immediate reduction in texture. Here, I took the different rhythmic layers and juxtaposed them adjacently. These layers form the basis of different cells, to which I concatenated them in the remaining portion of the work. At Section 37, I began to smudge the sounds together, particularly exploiting the resonant lingers of the cymbals. This smudging effect becomes more prevalent with the loss of rhythmic integrity in Section 41 through the use of accelerandos. Section 42 onwards can be regarded as a zooming in of the rapidly compressed material, which is then broken down back to the original crotchet idea. The use of fermatas of various durations put the listener at the edge of their seats, as again the expectations of finality are subverted. The snare trill at the start of the work is heard again to conclude the work.

This work was written for my friend Xu Jia Wen, who is a rock and pop drummer and is one of the members of my ensemble what the FORTE (WTF)

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