

Narrative Generator (for Living Machine)
For Instruments, Electronics, and Spoken Word

Overview

General Overview

Narrative Generator (for Living Machine), is an improvisation involving a group of performers who work together to create a coherent story and soundtrack.

Performers

The performers are placed within one of three roles:

- 1) Instrumentalists: Performers who musically represent the main characters of the story
- 2) Electronics: Performers who portray the diegetic sounds of the narrative world, reinforce the mood of the narrative, and represent significant characters or events not under the control of the instruments
- 3) Narrator: The performer which brings the story to life through spoken word

The Ruleset

This document consists of *rules*, *guidelines*, and *suggestions*:

- *Rules* are integral to the identity of the work and must be followed at all times. They will be denoted by the words *must* and *will* (e.g. “the instruments must portray a specific character”).
- *Guidelines* are important for fleshing out the identity of the work, but have more specific applications and are not always compulsory. Performers should aim to follow guidelines where possible but not when it believed it will be detrimental to the narrative. Guidelines are denoted by the word *should*. The Associations (pp. 10-14) are an example of some guidelines.
- *Suggestions* provide the performers with potential options and are not compulsory. These are denoted by the words *may* or *can*.

Note: Words that denote one of the above are underlined (e.g. must, should, can).

Technical Suggestions

- 1 Narrator
- 1 Akai APC40 or similar device
- 1 Midi Keyboard
- 1 - 4 Melodic Instruments

Note: Whilst there can only be one narrator, the given specifications for the electronics and instrumentalists are only suggestions. There can be any number of musicians as long as there is at least one instrumentalist and one electronics operator.

Performance Time

The duration of an individual performance depends entirely on performer discretion.

General

Starting the Performance

A performance of *Narrative Generator (for Living Machine)* must begin with the narrator unless the **Framing** cue card is in play. The narrator will begin the story in any way they choose, and the electronics will enter when appropriate according to the instructions outlined in *Electronics* (pp. 7-9). The entry of any instrument must occur either in response to the narrator introducing a new character or when the instrumentalist wishes to introduce a new character.

If the narrator introduces a new character to the story, the instrumentalist who wishes to represent that character must begin playing. If two or more people attempt to represent the same character, whoever plays first will adopt the role, and the other/s must yield. Only the main characters of the narrative need be inhabited by an instrument.

If an instrument begins playing without having been assigned a character, the narrator must introduce a character and valid reason for their entrance. If an instrumentalist chooses to do this, they should ensure they enter at an appropriate time and in a way that makes sense for the story.

Each instrumentalist must inhabit one character for the entire story. It is not necessary for every character to be introduced immediately.

The following practices may make it easier to determine who is which character:

- Allowing time between the introduction of two characters
- Maintaining eye contact
- Using predetermined body language when you are about to inhabit a character (e.g. stepping forward)
- Narrator: giving names to main characters only, and making main characters the subjects of the sentence that introduces them
- Instrumentalists: inhabiting the character as close as is appropriate to when they are introduced by the narrator

Ending the Performance

There is no fixed way to end the performance, but it should occur organically. It may be helpful to maintain eye contact and employ musical/narratorial devices that would typically end a performance (e.g. cadential resolution or a sentence that resolves the narrative conflict). If the **Framing** or **Coda** cue cards are in play, the respective rules will determine how the performance ends.

Narrative and Music Coherence

In *Narrative Generator (for Living Machine)*, both narrator and musicians can directly shape the content of the other. Moments of narrative change must be met with musical material that matches the nature and intensity of this change. Likewise, new musical material must be met with narrative change of matching quality and intensity.

How closely the narrator and musicians react to each other depends on the specific situation, however, it should be clear what the relationship between the sound and narrative is to a listener. In most cases, these reactions should occur as close as possible to each other. In other situations, it may be appropriate to delay the moment where a change is represented (e.g. a high note generated by the electronics to sustain tension might only be clarified by the narrator in the next scene). Instrumentalists must only outline changes that apply to their character, while the electronics are free to portray any changes they deem appropriate, as described in *Electronics* (pp.

7-9). Performers should refer to the Associations section (pp. 10-14) to determine how narrative concepts can be related to sound and vice versa.

Balance

The narrator must always remain clearly audible throughout the performance and all performers will need to adjust their contribution accordingly. The musicians must adjust their playing to ensure that the characters, actions, emotions, moods, or objects that are currently most prominent in the narration are also what is represented most prominently as sound (e.g. if a specific character is talking, the instrument representing them must be more prominent in that moment). For advice on achieving this, see **Underscoring** below. For the electronics, diegetic sound should be audible but must not overpower the music or narration. Take care with the volume of continuous sound effects, ensuring they sit under other sonic components.

Synchrony and Asynchrony

Synchrony describes how closely a sound relates to the narration it is paired with (e.g. frantic music scored for a chase scene). Conversely, asynchrony describes deliberate contrast between sound and narration (e.g. slow, consonant music over a chase scene). While synchronous sound reinforces narrative ideas for an audience, heightening immersion, asynchronous sound can convey deeper meaning beyond the narration itself. All performers should consider both synchrony and asynchrony to enhance the narrative, without undermining coherence between the sound and narration.

Underscoring

Underscoring is a film scoring technique where the music remains unobtrusive and subtle, especially under dialogue. A similar approach should be taken when musicians need be present without drawing attention from other performers. Underscoring can be achieved through the following approaches:

- Sustained chords or notes
- Accompaniment-like textures
- Stepwise melodic contours
- Use of legato
- Avoiding the register of other performers
- Use of ostinato
- Slow harmonic rhythm
- Soft dynamics and volume swells
- Longer note values
- Avoiding new material
- Limiting the number of layers or voices
- Avoiding metre or pulse
- Leaving space between musical phrases

Instrumentalists

Role Overview

You will become a musical manifestation of a specific character from the narrative. You must sonically portray narrative events caused by or involving your character, your character's personality and distinctive characteristics, and your character's inner thoughts and emotions. To do this, you should improvise with reference to your own musical knowledge, recommendations from the Associations section, and consideration of how your musical choices will affect the narrative.

When to Play

You must play whenever your character is present in a scene and must not play if your character is not. Beginning to play when your character is not in the scene will force the narrator to reintroduce your character.

Normal Voice

The normal voice is analogous to the way that people speak in consistent and distinct ways. Replicating this musically allows your character to have a consistent musical character and establishes a norm that can be broken for narrative purpose, as outlined in **Abnormal Voice**. The normal voice should be used when your character is in a normal condition and is created by:

- Using a similar timbre or tone throughout the performance (e.g. playing arco throughout)
- Staying within a consistent register
- Staying within a consistent dynamic range
- Staying within a specific mode, key, or pitch set at one time (what this mode/key/pitch set is can change throughout the performance)
- Playing in a specific metre, tempo, or sense of time in one moment (this metre/tempo/feeling of time can change throughout the performance)

Abnormal Voice

The abnormal voice is analogous to the changes that occur in someone's voice in emotional or unusual situations. You should musically represent these narrative moments when they arise. This should be done by intentionally breaking the rules outlined in **Normal Voice** in a way that expresses the current emotional, physical, or psychological state of your character (e.g. representing distress by playing higher than the register that you have established in your normal voice).

Character Theme

You must improvise a principal theme for your character which operates under the following conditions:

- The theme must be played when you first enter, unless the narrative situation forces you to play material that is particularly unsuitable as a character theme, in which case you must play the theme as soon as it is appropriate.
- The musical or sonic qualities of the theme should represent your character's personality and distinctive characteristics.
- Whenever the theme is played it must portray your characters current emotional, physical, or psychological state.
- The theme should return during defining moments of your character's development.
- The theme may be quoted by the other musicians as a way of referring to your character.

Narrator

Role Overview

Your role is to convey the narrative in spoken word, taking influence from the sounds of the instruments and electronics into the development of the story. Your improvisation must be of a narrative filled with characters experiencing a sequence of events, although the specific nature of the story is determined by your personal preference.

When to Play

Once the performance has started you should be narrating continuously to ensure the flow of the story continues forward. Where the narrative is better told through music alone, you can allow space for the musicians to feature (e.g. moments of extreme emotion).

Style of Narration

The following conditions apply when narrating:

- Must be in first or third person
- The narratorial voice may be external and omniscient or may belong to a character within the narrative world. If the latter, it must not belong to a main character (e.g. it may belong to a witness of the narrative events).
- The story must be an original fiction and not simply a retelling of real world events or a pre-existing narrative. It can be inspired by or make reference to real world events or existing media however.
- Your depictions of the narrative must be clear enough that the other performers understand what is happening in the story.
- You must make it clear whether or not a certain character is in the current scene or not.
- You should not refer to the 'real-life' performers within your story, unless you believe doing so will be particularly effective.

Structuring the Narrative

You are free to structure the story however you choose. Because the cue cards provide specific requirements on the narrative, it may be helpful to use them as guiding points for your improvisation.

Improvising Characters

The personality, characteristics, and current emotional, psychological, or physical state of a given character must match the music of their corresponding instrumentalist. As a result, both you and the instrumentalist controlling a character will work together to maintain coherence in that character's representation. If an instrumentalist is currently playing, their character must be present in the scene, either physically or in a more abstract form (e.g. as a memory). If they are not playing, their character must not be present in the scene. Furthermore, the prevalence of characters in your current depiction must match their instruments prevalence in the soundscape.

Accounting for Diegetic Sound

Any diegetic sounds that the electronics chooses to initiate under their own discretion must have a narrative explanation accounting for it. This narrative depiction should occur as close as possible to when the sound is played.

Electronics

Technical Suggestions

Performer 1

1 Laptop with a digital audio workstation installed
1 Akai APC40 or similar device

Performer 2

1 Laptop with a digital audio workstation installed
1 Midi keyboard

Some suggestions on choosing samples for the Akai APC40:

- Include samples that are ambiguous in their meaning (e.g. impacts or scrapes)
- Include loopable samples for common environments and settings (e.g. rain, city, forest)
- Ensure that all samples output at a similar amplitude to maximise the Akai APC40's ability to control volume

When deciding which digital instruments to play via the midi controller, ensure that there is enough variety that you can evoke various moods and emotions (see Associations [pp. 10-14] for the effects of different instrumental forces).

Role Overview

Your role is to portray the sounds of the narrative world, flesh out its setting, ambience, and mood, and sonically represent any non-player entities in the narrative. This is done through diegetic and non-diegetic sound.

Diegetic Sound

Using any of the resources available, you will actualise the sounds of the narrative world, including the sounds of the characters and the sounds of the environment.

When to Play

Sounds must occur as close as possible to when they are described in the narration. You should focus on portraying sounds that are critical to the events of the story or the setting, communicating vital information without muddying the soundscape. You may also initiate diegetic sounds at your own discretion, in which case the narrator will account for it in their narration.

Choosing Sounds

When portraying diegetic sounds, it is not necessary to use the actual sound you are attempting to portray. You should, however, use sounds that have similar acoustic signifiers to the diegetic sound you are representing. For example, to portray the sound of a bone breaking you can play a sample of another brittle, hard material breaking and it will still be effective.

Organising Diegetic Sound

You should organise your diegetic sounds via the *background*, *mid-ground*, *foreground* framework as follows:

- *Background*: Sounds that are continuous and rarely warrant attention from the listener. They develop the ambience of the scene and inform the listener of the current setting. Examples include rain, wind, or the hum of lights. These should function over long periods of time and change when the story's setting shifts.
- *Mid-ground*: Discrete sound effects that are used to flesh out the setting. Examples include the sound of traffic, bird calls, or thunder. *Mid-ground* sounds should be adjusted as the specifics of the scene develop and should be audible without drawing focus away from the *foreground* layer or the other musicians.
- *Foreground*: Sounds that portray specific narrative events. Examples include gunshots, impacts, or someone opening a door. As these are integral to the story's plot, they should be made more prominent than other layers of the soundscape.

Consider the following example: "A group of people are walking through a forest, when a tree suddenly falls." One way to organise the diegetic sounds of this example might be:

- *Background*: Wind or leaves rustling
- *Mid-ground*: Birds, insects, and other animals
- *Foreground*: The sound of the tree falling

Augmenting Diegetic Sounds

You should manipulate your diegetic sounds to fit the narrative in the following ways:

- *Distance*: Lower the volume of the sound the further its source is from the character perceiving it
- *Movement*: Pan the sound as its source moves through the physical space of the narrative world
- *Size of room*: The larger the room the characters are in the longer the decay time of a sound's reverb tail should be
- *Impaired hearing*: Apply a low-pass filter to your sounds
- *Slow motion*: Slow the playback speed of sounds and apply some reverb

Diegetic Music

Diegetic music is music that exists within the narrative world (e.g. a radio being played in the background of a scene). You should portray diegetic music where appropriate. Note that this form of diegetic sound can affect the mood in a similar way to non-diegetic music.

Non-Diegetic Sound

Non-diegetic sounds evoke the narrative's mood and setting and represent significant non-player characters, objects, or forces. The non-diegetic sound is not limited to the perspective of a specific character, but operates freely.

When to Play

Once the narrator has begun, you are free to play non-diegetic sound according to the rules below. You must ensure that the sonic representation of significant non-player characters, events, objects, or other entities occur as close as possible to their appearance in the narration. You must also ensure that your evocation of the mood of the narrative occurs as soon as that mood is introduced by the narrator. These musical representations may also be initiated by you, in which case the narrator will have to account for them in the story. Furthermore, if you portray a non-player entity, they must continue to be portrayed as long they have a significant presence in the story.

Creating Mood

Where you believe your contribution could enhance the mood of the narrative you should make an effort to do so. This evocation of mood must not be from the perspective of any specific character but should be a way of manipulating the audience's emotional and psychological response to the story. You are also free to enforce your own idea of what the mood should be at any specific moment.

Evoking Setting

In situations where the setting is particularly distinct, you should portray it musically, as described in Associations (pp. 14-15). You should play in this manner as close as possible to when the setting is first introduced, however, you do not have to continue once it has been established.

Representing Non-Player Entities

You should portray non-player characters, objects, events, or forces that are critical to the narrative's development. When representing non-player characters, you should portray their personality, defining characteristics, and current emotional, psychological, or physical state. When representing objects, events, or other aspects of the narrative, you should portray their defining trait or traits (e.g. the power of a tidal wave).

Interaction of Diegetic and Non-Diegetic Sound

It is important to note that the definition of a sound as diegetic or non-diegetic is fluid. Sounds can cross from one boundary to the other. For example, a sound that is initially non-diegetic, such as a repeated tone, can be revealed to be diegetic (turns out that tone was an alarm). Sounds can also straddle the boundary itself (e.g. acousmatic sounds that could either be a part of the narrative world or just there to enhance the mood). You can explore these more complex relationships in your playing for narrative effect.

Associations

There are many codified sonic gestures that will convey narrative information to the listener. Below is a list of emotions, moods, themes, or events that may occur in the narrative, and some corresponding musical qualities that convey these concepts. Musicians are not limited to the techniques described here but should implement them where appropriate. The narrator should take these qualities into consideration when interpreting the sounds of the musicians. It is not necessary for musicians to implement every technique for a given narrative concept at the same time.

Note: The association of specific instruments with a narrative concept (e.g. french horns with evil/ antagonism), will probably be of most use to the electronics. For instrumentalists, attempting to imitate the timbre of these instruments may be useful.

Action

- Strong pulse
- Minor tonality
- Loud dynamics
- Moderately fast tempo >140bpm
- Constant sixteenth note rhythms
- Use of prominent percussion
- Use of accented chords to represent impacts (e.g. punches if it is a fight scene)

Call to arms

- Short repeated phrase (1-2 bars), especially when ending on a long note
- Tempo less than 90bpm
- Use of horn or trumpet
- Playing without accompaniment

Comedy

- Staccato
- Pizzicato
- Use of brass timbres
- Slides and glissandi
- Novel timbres
- Asymmetrical rhythms or phrase lengths

Creation

- Maintaining a single harmony but gradually expanding the texture

Death

- Use of bell-like sounds (evocative of church bells)
- Descending semitone

Dreaming

- Rapid slowing down of sound effects as the character/s enter the dream

Evil/antagonist

- Use of French horns
- Low register
- Minor tonality
- Diminished harmonies
- Distorted timbres

Evil (suddenly)

- Move to a chromatic harmony or chromatic note
- Move to a dissonant sonority such as a diminished chord or chromatic tone cluster

Fantasy

- Harp glissando
- High pitched woodwinds
- Major key
- Moderately fast tempo
- Sus4 chords

Footsteps

- Ascending melodic lines
- Moving in steps or thirds
- The speed of the footsteps should be reflected in the speed of the melodic line, with sixteenth notes appropriate for running, eighth and quarter notes appropriate for walking, and half and whole notes appropriate for crawling or a similarly slow movement

Happiness

- Major key
- Moderate tempo 120-140bpm
- Syncopation

Haunting/unsettling

- Quotation of a pre-existing melody that is associated with innocence (e.g. a nursery rhyme)
- Slow tempo
- Use of reverb

Horror/dread

- Use of acousmatic sounds, especially those that tread the line between diegetic and non-diegetic sound
- Repetition of a single sound with a constant pulse
- Minor, diminished, or highly chromatic sonorities played loudly at C5 (523.25Hz) or higher
- Bending or sliding the pitch up or down, especially when used with tremolo
- Sustained sound below C2 (65.41Hz), may also be acousmatic
- Trills in a medium to high register
- Loud, sudden, and moderately high pitched sound at the moment when the characters are spotted by the source of horror

Loneliness

- Sparse phrasing
- Air like timbre (e.g. woodwinds or brass)
- High register
- Slow to medium tempo
- Use of mild wind sound effects
- Thin texture

Mental instability

- Amplification of usually quiet sounds
- Use of noise
- Extremely thick textures

Military/war

- Use of trumpets, brass, and snare drums
- Played in the style of a march
- Percussive sounds for war itself

Mystery

- Sustained sound between the pitches of C3 (130.81Hz) and C6 (1046.5Hz) played at *mp* or softer
- Minor tonality
- Slow harmonic rhythm
- Pizzicato strings

Nostalgia

- Slow tempo
- Ascending melody
- Rubato
- Major tonality

Otherworldly/mysterious

- Pitch material above C5 (523.25Hz)
- Sustained chords
- Woodwinds
- Minor key and extensive chromaticism
- Slow tempo
- Sustained note above C4 (277.18Hz) with a wide vibrato at a moderate speed
- Chord changes that occur with irregular timing

Revelation

- Crescendo leading up to the reveal
- Thick chord at the moment of the reveal
- Major chords/sounds can be used for awe or happiness
- Minor chords/sounds can be used for sadness or drama
- Diminished chords/sounds or highly chromatic chords/sounds can be used for horror or evil

Romance

- Major tonality
- Ascending melodic lines, especially when harmonised
- Violins
- Mid to high register
- Fast, thin vibrato, especially on the ends of phrases
- Swells in volume, especially leading up to a moment of intimacy
- Soft attack (e.g. fading into notes)
- Use of half notes or longer note values
- Use of a waltz feel

Sadness

- Minor tonality
- High register violins
- Slow tempo <80bpm
- Wide, slow vibrato
- Use of rain sound effects

Sadness (suddenly)

- Modulating from a major mode to its parallel minor
- Borrowing harmony from the parallel minor
- Flattening a major third to a minor third
- Augmenting the length of notes or slowing down the tempo

Safety

- Silence or near silence immediately after sounds portraying danger

Stunned

- Soft, high pitched, continuous tone above C7 (2093Hz)
- Eliminate or lower the volume of diegetic sounds
- Apply a low pass filter to diegetic sounds

Suspense-this refers to the mood immediately preceding a dramatic narrative event

- Sudden silence or sudden reduction of texture
- Sudden slowing down of tempo
- Ascending or descending chromatic lines
- Sustained notes/chords
- Tremolo, especially tremolo that gets gradually faster
- Trills

Tension (High)-this refers to a longer, more consistent feeling of intense tension

- Continuous tone above the pitch C6 (1046.5Hz), either sustained or tremolo
- Thick texture
- Lack of a “tuneful” melody
- Melody rising in pitch, most effective when the pitch rises chromatically or as a continuous slide
- Transposing a motif or ostinato to increasingly higher pitches
- Increasing dynamics
- Use of intense chromaticism or atonality
- Repeated, fast glissandi
- Sustained dissonant chord
- Gradually increasing tempo
- Ostinato below C3 (130.81Hz)
- May or may not have a pulse

Tension (Low)

- Continuous note above C6 (1046.5Hz), either sustained or tremolo
- Minor tonality with sparse chord changes
- Static harmony
- Use of chromaticism
- Ostinato below the pitch C3 (130.81Hz)
- Use of asymmetrical phrase lengths
- Dynamics below *mf*
- Slow to moderate tempo
- Repetition of a single sound with a consistent pulse, especially when pitched below C3 (130.81Hz)

Triumph

- Rising major arpeggio
- Dotted quaver rhythms e.g. 
- Use of trumpet

Urgency/alarm

- The repetition of a single tone C4 (277.18Hz) or higher with a consistent pulse
- Gradually increasing tempo

Locations

There are various ways that musicians can use codified sonic gestures to evoke a specific locale. Some ways to portray specific locations include:

Amusement Park

- High register
- Glockenspiel or celeste, trumpets
- Eighth note phrases
- Major tonality
- Chromatically descending phrases

Church

- Use of a choir
- Use of an organ
- Modal
- Polyphonic
- Church bells

The Beach

- Sound of waves crashing and birds chirping

The Big City

- Moderate to fast paced jazz
- The sound of traffic

Latin America

- Nylon string guitars
- Use of rumba rhythm e.g.



Middle East

- Melismatic vocal melodies
- Use of the augmented second
- Ascending melodic lines

Pastoral

- Rhythmic imitation of horses galloping e.g.
- Use of animal sounds (e.g. chickens, horses)



Space/spaceship

- Electronic timbres
- Mid to high register
- Reverb
- Sparse note placement
- Little harmonic change
- Use of various diegetic, electronic tones

Wasteland

- Wind sound effects
- Sparse phrasing
- Minor key

Motifs and themes

When an object, emotion, location, event, side character, or other aspect of the narrative co-occurs with a piece of sonic material, the two become linked. If the musician brings back the sonic material, the narrator should reincorporate the associated narrative idea. If the narrator returns to the narrative concept, the musician should reincorporate the associated sonic material. To strengthen the relationship between the sonic and narrative idea, the music/sound should draw from the various techniques outlined in *Associations* (pp. 10-14). The treatment of motifs and themes in this way is most effective with aspects of the story that are critical to the plot. Both musical material (e.g. the contributions of the instruments) and non-musical material (e.g. diegetic sounds from the electronics) should be treated in this way.

When sonic material reoccurs, it should be transformed to suit its new narrative context. Below is a list of ways that themes or motifs may be varied, and the possible effects that these changes can have. Multiple approaches can be taken simultaneously, and performers are not limited to the methods listed here:

- Change of register
 - Can increase the emotional intensity
 - Allows material to be repeated without becoming repetitive
 - Can bring greater attention to the theme or motif
- Slower tempo or rhythmic augmentation
 - Can make the theme or motif sadder or allow it to fit better into a sad context
 - May denote a reduced level of intensity in the narrative
- Faster tempo or rhythmic diminution
 - May reflect increased activity in the narrative.
- Thinner texture
 - Removing the harmonic accompaniment of a particular theme can increase its evocation of intimacy.
 - Temporarily cutting back the texture may accentuate the narrative event at that moment
 - Reducing the texture can maintain the narrative information of a motif or theme but allow it to suit lower intensity contexts
- Thicker texture
 - Thickening the texture of a particular motif or theme may increase the general intensity of the music, as well as the intensity of the associated narrative concept
 - Some ways to do this include changing arpeggios into full chords, adding new layers to the music, or doubling layers/voices
- Changes in orchestration (only applies to the electronics)
 - Repeating a motif or theme on various instruments can alleviate repetition
 - Playing a motif or theme with different orchestration can cause the audience to reinterpret the associated narrative concept through that instrument's specific associations
 - The introduction of new instruments/timbres may put more attention on the involved motif or theme
- Transposition
 - Maintaining the scale degree relationships of a motif or theme but adapting the pitches to a different mode can reinterpret the narrative meaning of that material based on its new mode
 - Employing a sequence allows a motif or theme to be repeated without becoming repetitive
- Separating a motif or theme into individual parts
 - Smaller motifs can be derived from the initial motif or theme
 - Each of these individual parts can appear on their own
 - Allows for the same idea to be referred to in various contexts
 - Allows you to allude to the associated narrative concept at a reduced level of intensity
- Combining motifs or themes initially conceived separately
 - Allows you to refer to multiple ideas at once

- Playing a motif or theme but with new material
 - Could involve improvising a counterpoint, adding a new accompaniment pattern, or creating a new harmony
 - Can maintain the unity and narrative meaning of the motif or theme but add variety
 - Allows the motif to be adapted more easily to different narrative situations
- Maintaining the pitch material but using new rhythms
 - Useful for applying the theme or motif to a different rhythmic context than it initially appeared within
 - Adds any narrative meaning associated with that particular rhythm to the motif or theme

Cue Cards

The cue cards are a set of cards containing special instructions for performers that override normal gameplay. They present specific structural moments in the narrative and corresponding requirements from the instruments and electronics. Before a performance, 2-5 cards must be drawn through a procedure in which the performers do not determine the cards (e.g. draw the cards randomly, have the audience choose the cards). Once the cards have been decided, every performer must be made aware of which cards are going to be played before the performance begins. During the performance, when the narrator deems appropriate, they will play a card by holding it up to the rest of the performers, signifying that the card is now in effect. Performers must initiate the special conditions of each card as close as possible to when it is played. Once the story has moved beyond the particular narrative event associated with that card performers are no longer bound by that card's special conditions. All cards that are drawn for a performance must be played at some point during that performance. The cue cards are:

Framing

This card must be played at the start and end of a performance (henceforth referred to as the opening sequence and closing sequence respectively). The opening sequence may be played immediately or some time into the story, but must be played within the first tenth of the total performance time. The closing sequence will be played when the narrator believes the performance has come to its logical conclusion. For the duration of this card's effect, the electronics and instruments are free from their usual roles, and are grouped together as just 'musicians'.

Narrator: Whilst this card is in effect, you will say nothing. The mood of the narrative immediately succeeding the opening sequence should be consistent with the mood conveyed by the opening itself. If the musicians wish to continue straight from the opening sequence into regular gameplay then you must account for anyone who is still playing when you begin narrating.

Musicians: Whilst this card is in effect you do not have to interact with the narrative and may use more traditional musical forms. The following rules apply:

- For the opening sequence, you will play musical material that conveys the overall mood of the narrative that is about to occur. For the closing sequence, you will play material that is consistent with the mood of the narrative at the time of its conclusion.
- You are free from your usual responsibilities whilst this card is in effect, i.e. instruments don't have to portray characters, electronics aren't restricted to mood/setting.
- You must incorporate themes and motifs that will be/were used in the main body of the performance. This means that for the opening you will need to remember some of the material that is used and incorporate it into the main body of the performance and during the closing sequence you will need to recall some of the themes and motifs used throughout the main body of the improvisation.
- At the end of the opening sequence, you must either come to a complete stop or continue directly into regular gameplay. If you wish to do the latter, you should make clear through eye contact and musical choices that the opening has come to an end. Once the performance transitions back into regular gameplay, anything you play will have a specific narrative effect as usual.
- The combined time of both the opening and closing sequence should not exceed one fifth of the entire performance time.

Note: If the 'Coda' card is also drawn, then either this card or 'Coda' must be removed and a different card drawn. This should be decided randomly.

Coda

This card must be played once the story has come to its logical conclusion. The instruments and electronics are divorced from their roles, and are grouped together as simply 'musicians'.

Narrator: Once this card has been played, you will say nothing.

Musicians: When this card is played, you will improvise a coda that continues the mood of the narrative at the time of its conclusion. You are free from your usual responsibilities when this card is in effect. The coda should not last for more than one tenth of the total performance time.

Note: If the 'Framing' card is also drawn, then either this card or 'Framing' must be removed and a different card drawn. This should be decided randomly.

Juxtaposition

Narrator: When playing this card, you will cause all currently present characters to cross some kind of significant threshold. This may be a physical threshold (e.g. they enter into a new world), or it may be symbolic (e.g. they have entered a new phase of their life). This crossing should affect the characters for the rest of the story.

Instruments: There are no special conditions when this card is played. Interact with the narrative as you usually would.

Electronics: When this card is played, it must be accompanied with new non-diegetic material that conveys the nature of the crossing. If you are already playing non-diegetically when this card is played, you must immediately play new, contrasting material that conveys the nature of the crossing.

Bonding

Narrator: You will introduce a moment of bonding between two or more characters. It must be made clear which characters are meant to be involved in this moment. Whilst describing this moment, you should leave some space for the instruments representing the involved characters to feature.

Instruments: Any instrumentalist whose character is not involved in the bonding should minimise their contribution. The instrumentalists whose characters are involved in the moment, must play in the following manner:

- Ensure involved instruments are featured equally
- Imitate the pitch, rhythm, or both of the other involved instrument/s
- Use the same or similar key, mode, or pitch set as the other involved instrument/s

Electronics: For non-diegetic sound, you will either lightly accompany the involved instruments or not play at all. Diegetic sound must be minimised with only *background* sounds remaining. It is also possible that a non-player character be involved in the bonding moment, in which case you must follow the rules outlined in the *Instruments* section above.

Psychosis

Narrator: Cause one of the main characters to have a loss of contact with reality. This can be caused by many things and be of varying intensities, but must involve the character losing their ability to accurately perceive their world (e.g. schizophrenia, a hallucinogenic episode, a traumatic event).

Instruments: The instrument who's character is experiencing the psychotic episode must be given focus. If your character is experiencing the loss of contact with reality, you will need to portray their reaction to what they are perceiving in your playing. Liberal use of **Abnormal Voice** may be appropriate.

Electronics: The diegetic sounds played whilst this card is in effect should be from the perspective of the character in which the psychosis is occurring. These diegetic sounds must be altered in at least some of the following ways:

- Amplification of quiet sounds to an unrealistic level (e.g. the fluttering of a fly's wings being extremely loud)
- Use of acousmatic sounds
- Introducing sound effects that aren't really there
- Applying reverb or distortion to sounds
- Extremely dense and cacophonous texture
- Use of noise

Embrace

The narrator will hold this card in the air leading up to the moment of embrace. As the moment actually occurs, the narrator will bring the card downwards.

Narrator: You will make two or more characters commence a meaningful physical gesture towards each other. The connotations of this gesture do not have to be romantic and can express familial love, friendship, or any other positive emotion between multiple people that can manifest as a physical interaction.

Instruments: If your character is involved, you must incorporate some of the following leading up to the embrace:

- Ascending melodies, especially eighth note runs
- Major tonality
- Use of pitches that create tension (e.g. outlining a dominant harmony)
- Harmonisation in thirds or sixths (either with yourself for homophonic instruments or with the other musicians for monophonic instruments)
- Crescendo leading up to the moment of embrace
- Rall. on the last few notes before the embrace
- Playing in rhythmic unison with the other involved instrument/s
- Playing in the same or similar key, mode, or pitch set as the other involved instrument/s

At the moment the embrace actually occurs, resolve the tension created by your previous playing by sustaining a note or chord. After the moment of embrace has passed, continue playing under regular conditions.

If your character is not involved in the embrace, play minimally until after it has passed.

Electronics: Continue under normal conditions, allowing the instruments involved to take focus. It is also possible that a non-player character be involved in the embrace, in which case you must follow the rules outlined in the *Instruments* section above.

Menace

The narrator will play this card in the direction of one of the musicians who will then begin playing menacingly. If it is an instrumentalist, the character they inhabit will become menacing, and if it is the electronics, some other character, object, or force will be the source of menace.

Narrator: Introduce a source of menace into the story, whether it be a main character, non-player character, or other entity. You can introduce the menace at whatever intensity you see fit. You must adjust your description to match the intensity of menace in the musicians playing, and they must adjust their playing to suit your depiction of the menace.

Musicians: If you are the source of menace, you must employ some of the following techniques in your playing:

- Playing in the lowest register possible
- Minor tonality or atonality
- Liberal use of the minor second
- Chromaticism
- Gradually increasing tempo
- Diminished harmonies

The intensity of menace in your playing must equal the intensity of menace described by the narrator. This means you must adjust your playing to suit the depictions of the narrator and the narrator must adjust their depictions to suit your playing.

If you are not the source of menace, continue playing under the regular rules, reacting to the introduction of menace as you usually would.

Showdown

Narrator: When this card is played, create a conflict between two characters or choose a pre-existing conflict and cause it to reach a point of climax. The specific nature of this conflict and how it manifests is up to you, however there must be an altercation between the two characters. This may be verbal or physical, and does not necessarily have to be excessively aggressive.

Instruments: The instruments representing the two involved characters should take prominence. If you represent one of the two characters involved in the altercation, continue portraying the actions and emotions of your characters as usual using **Abnormal Voice**, appropriate to the intensity of the situation.

Electronics: You must not produce any non-diegetic sound initially. Take a minimal approach to diegetic sound, and focus on portraying sounds that are related to the altercation of the two characters, as well as whatever is necessary to portray the environment. As the scene progresses, you may gradually introduce more non-diegetic sound if you wish.

Tragedy

Narrator: Introduce a tragic event into the story. This event does not have to be over dramatic, but there should be enough suffering or sadness for it to be considered tragic.

Instruments: If your character is experiencing the tragedy, you must express their sadness in your playing. Some ways to do this include:

- Modulating from a major mode to its parallel minor
- Borrowing harmony from the parallel minor mode
- Flattening a major third to a minor third
- Augmenting the length of notes
- Reducing tempo
- Playing rubato

Electronics: You should not play any *foreground* diegetic sounds whilst this card is in effect. This card must be accompanied with non-diegetic sound. Your non-diegetic sound must not portray any individual event occurring in the narrative, but evoke an overall feeling of tragedy by employing the following:

- Minor tonality
- Slow tempo, no more than 80bpm
- Use of long note values in the melody
- May use chromaticism
- Wide and slow vibrato

Key Object

Narrator: The first time this card is played, introduce an object that has some significance to a specific character. The object may physically be in the scene or may exist in a more abstract form, such as a memory. Make clear through your narration which character it has significance to, and play the card in the direction of the instrumentalist that represents them. The instrumentalist in control of that character will improvise a motif or theme that will become tied to the object. The object must return to the narrative at least once before the end of the performance, but may reoccur any number of times. Each time the object returns to the story, play the card again, and the instrumentalist will play the associated musical cue. The musician may also choose to play the musical cue at their own discretion, in which case you must refer to the associated object as close as possible to when the cue is played.

Instruments: If the object introduced by the narrator has significance to your character, improvise a theme or motif associated with that object. When the card is subsequently played, reintroduce the associated theme or motif. If appropriate, this theme/motif should be transformed to fit the narrative context, as outlined in *Motifs and Themes* (pp. 15-16). You may choose to play the associated theme/motif whenever you wish, and doing so will force the narrator to incorporate the associated object into the story in some form.

Electronics: Continue under normal conditions.

Intermission

Narrator: Have the main characters travel across a substantial amount of space and/or time. This may last a few hours or multiple years. Once this card has been played, continue narrating, summarising the events of this space/time traversal where appropriate. The phrases of your narration should occur sparsely, leaving space for the musicians to feature. Any significant changes in the music at this time must still be accounted for in your narration.

Instruments: If your character is involved in the temporal/spacial traversal you will begin improvising music that represents the state of your character during this traversal. If your character's state changes during this traversal, you must represent it musically. You may also alter your musical material to portray a change in your character's state, in which case the narrator will incorporate this into their description.

Electronics: In terms of diegetic sound, only play *background* sounds, and only if it is appropriate. In terms of non-diegetic sound, you may or may not choose to play.

Slow Motion

Narrator: You will introduce an event of significance to the plot, in which the physical actions of the characters are critical to this narrative event (e.g. a fight scene, a kiss). You will describe the

physical movements of the characters in great detail, slowing down the pace of your description so that usually superfluous elements of a character's motion are given focus.

Instruments: You will continue performing as you would under normal conditions, however, the slower rate of change from the narrator should be present in your playing.

Electronics: When this card is played, activate a reversed version of a sound effect (this may need its own sample). Slow down the playback speed of diegetic samples, lightly filtering out higher frequencies, and applying some reverb. You should focus on portraying sounds caused by the actions of the characters. For non-diegetic sound, use either long sustained sounds played quietly or play nothing. These sustained sounds can be chords, a single note, or any other sound.

Glossary

Acousmatic: Sounds where the original source is deliberately unclear. This effect can be accomplished by digitally altering the sound or by divorcing the sound from its original context.

Acoustic Signifiers: The various qualities of a sound, such as its pitch, timbre, rhythm, attack, sustain, decay, dynamic etc. If someone punches a large punching bag for example, that sounds acoustic signifiers would include that it is low pitched, have a sudden and short attack, a moderately short decay time, and be fairly loud.

Contribution: The sounds made by the musicians or the words spoken by the narrator.

Cue Card: A card used to initiate a set of special conditions (see Cue Cards [pp. 19-22]).

Diegetic Sound: Sounds that exist within the narrative world and are perceivable by the characters.

Feature: The quality of being the most prominent aspect of the performance at a specific time.

Main Character: Any character whose perspective informs the story.

Motifs: When referred to in Motifs and Themes (pp. 15-16), this describes a piece of sonic material that has become associated with a particular aspect of the narrative.

Musicians: Refers specifically to the instrumentalists and electronics.

Non-Diegetic Sounds: Sounds external to the narrative world. These cannot be perceived by the characters within the narrative and often exist to create a certain mood or emotional effect.

Performers: Refers to the narrator, instruments, and electronics.

Play: The action of initiating the effect of a cue card by showing it to the performers (see Cue Cards [pp. 17-22]).

Player Character: A character in the story represented by an instrument.

Regular Gameplay: Sections of the performance where no cue card is in effect.

Scene: The scope of the narrator's description during a specific moment or event in the narrative (analogous to a scene in a film).

Shorthand Rules

Note: Below is a short list of particularly important rules. It may be helpful for performers to play with this in front of them when initially rehearsing the piece.

- Each instrumentalist must have only one character. They must sonically represent that character's personality and distinct characteristics, as well as any emotional, mental, or physical occurrences.
- The electronics will portray the diegetic sounds of the world, reinforce the non-diegetic mood or atmosphere of a scene, and portray non-player characters, objects, events, or forces.
- The narrator will bring the narrative to life through spoken word.
- The narrator must start the performance. Instruments will either enter when the character they wish to inhabit is introduced, or the instrumentalist will play something and the narrator will introduce an appropriate character for that instrument.
- Unless a cue card indicates a specific ending, the performers should work together to come to an organic ending to the improvisation.
- The narrator must always be clearly audible throughout the performance, and all performers must adjust their playing to achieve this.
- The narrator should narrate continuously, leaving space for the instruments or electronics to feature if appropriate.
- If a character is present in the scene, the corresponding instrumentalist must be playing. Instrumentalists must adjust their contribution to match the prominence of their character at that specific time.
- Changes in the narrative must be met with musical material that matches the quality and intensity of this change and vice versa.
- Instrumentalists must have a character theme for their character. This theme represents the various characteristics of their character and should reoccur in a transformed state at character defining moments.
- The narrator may use 1st or 3rd person, and the narrating voice may come from a character in the world or be external. It must not belong to a character involved in the events of the story.
- When a particular narrative idea and sonic idea co-occur, they become linked. If this happens, when that narrative idea reoccurs, the associated sonic material should be reintroduced and when the sonic material reoccurs, the associated narrative idea should be reintroduced. This is analogous to the filmic definition of a leitmotif.