# The Path to *Society*: A Musical Composition for the Year 2020

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# What is *Society*?

Let's Listen! This is a version of the piece that I recorded digitally on October 28, 2020.

- **IMPORTANT**: This is *one* version, not *the* version

Performed by Ableton Live 10

- Computer-generated performance
- Live performance precluded by pandemic



Society: Development                11

# Musical Form

AN OVERVIEW OF THE MUSICAL STRUCTURE OF *SOCIETY*

# Musical Form: Basics

Ten motifs (pictured to right)
- These are chosen by a player, and then looped
- No repetition of motifs within an ensemble
  - Reason for maximum of ten musicians

No specified instrumentation
- Just as societies do not prescribe who its members are

Four to ten players
- This is purely for musical effect
  - Fewer than four would become boring; greater than ten would become repetitive

Two broad sections:
- Exposition & Development

# Musical Form: Exposition

Each musician takes turns looping their motif

This is done in numerical order
◦ If motifs 3, 7, 2, and 4 are chosen, they will be heard in the order: 2, 3, 4, 7

Musicians may loop their motif as many or as few times as they wish
◦ An arbitrary number was selected for the recording

The exposition ends after the last musician has finished looping

Thereafter, the piece enters the Development

Graphic to right shows entire exposition, transcribed from the recording we just heard

# Musical Form: Development

Musicians are free to start and stop looping their chosen motif, with two conditions:

◦ The player who chooses the lowest-numbered motif starts looping first

◦ Musicians use the same motif they used in the Exposition

After this, Society can be of indefinite length; no prescribed ending

◦ The recording used a fade out technique

◦ Alternative: the ensemble just stops playing on cue

# Dissecting the Recording

Ensemble:
- Flute, Clarinet, Violin, Viola, Double Bass
  - Chosen arbitrarily; any pitched instrument could be used

Motif distribution:
- Flute: Motif 1
- Clarinet: Motif 5
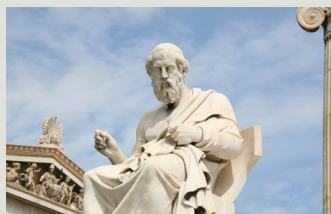- Violin: Motif 4
- Viola: Motif 2
- Double Bass: Motif 10

# Discussion

THE CONTEXT BEHIND *SOCIETY*

# Origins and Inspirations

*Society* was my direct response to events of last year
- ◦ Injustices regarding police brutality, killing of innocents
- ◦ Refusal of citizens to wear masks and protect others
- ◦ Individualism vs. collectivism

Sought ideas for oneness and unity despite our differences

Influences:
- ◦ Hinduism
  - ◦ Upaniṣads—oneness of the universe
- ◦ Western Political Philosophy
  - ◦ Plato's *Republic*, Cicero's *De Officiis* (*On Duties*)
    - ◦ Both concerned with one's place in social orders/cities
- ◦ Other political music
  - ◦ Steve Reich's *Come Out* (1966)

# Composition Process

Started the sketches in May 2020
- Initially planned as a baroque-style fugue
  - A fugue is like a puzzle, and every part is important to its comprehensibility
- The idea was to write the fugue, and then isolate the voices one by one before playing the entire fugue at the end

Also tried an additive canon (pictured at right)

Abandoned this idea in Autumn 2020, around September.
- Decided on the aleatoric model instead
- Easier to work with, provides more options, more open-ended
  - A better musical metaphor for societies themselves

# Conclusion

*Society* is a piece for 2020, written in the shadow of and about some of the events of last year

I hope this presentation has helped you make sense of the work that went into the creation of the piece.

We shall hear the piece one more time, and I hope that now you will hear it again, this time with fresh ears

# Thank you for listening!

ANY QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS? FEEL FREE TO ASK!