

Numbers Station (Cynthia)

for two or more performers

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General Approach

Numbers Station (Cynthia) translates dates into sonic gestures.

Duration and Timing

Duration of the piece is variable. Typical performances last between 6 and 10 minutes.

Before performance

Choose two different dates of significance to you or those close to you (for example: birth date, anniversary, death date, incarceration date, release date, etc.). Today's date is always significant. Write the dates on the Today's Special page, paying attention to the proper order of the digits. Consult the appropriate Number to Pitch Chart for your instrument to write the corresponding pitch for each digit in the dates. Choose an appropriate clef and register for your instrument in order to preserve the melodic contour of the pitches. See Today's Special Example.

Performance Instructions

The movements are played in the following order:

- Flourish
- Announcement
- Flourish
- Today's Special
- Flourish
- Announcement
- Flourish

The complete sequence of movements must be played at least once but may be played as many times as desired. Except for the Announcement movement—which requires a consistent, shared pulse—performers are not generally synchronized with each other. Each performer proceeds at their own pace, adjusting their pace or lengths of rests to stay near the other ensemble members.

Ending the Piece

When performers are ready to end the piece, they signal each other during the last announcement section. A designated ensemble member will then cue the flourish at the end and provide a final cutoff. It's not necessary to wait for everyone to complete their final announcement section—any suitable ending point will do.

Metaphors

- Performers act as radio stations transmitting coded information into the ether. The listeners' experience is similar to tuning between multiple radio stations. It is not necessary to understand the content of the message to appreciate its quality.
- The musical material reflects the quotidian events recorded in a journal. The performance brings attention to this fleeting everydayness, making it special.

Suggestions for Performances

- To commemorate a person or event, all performers may choose dates related to the person or event.
- All performers may choose the date of the performance for one of their significant dates.
- Performers may get a glimpse of the future by choosing a date that has not occurred yet.
- Performers may choose to use a non-Gregorian calendar system for their dates.

For A Good Performance of This Piece

- Play less and rest more! Respect the duration of rests. Use a variety of rest lengths between movements and phrases. Allow space for other sounds to be heard.
- The Flourish, Announcement and Today's Special movements should be easily distinguished from each other.

Program Notes

Numbers Station (Cynthia) is inspired by mysterious radio broadcasts that consist of repeated lists of numbers or letters. These stations are usually broadcast on shortwave radio frequencies and are thought to be maintained by diplomatic and spy agencies as a way to send messages to agents in the field. Some station's codes have been partially decrypted. A typical message sequence consists of a number that identifies which agent should receive the message, followed by a number that denotes the date of the message and a number that represents the length of the message. After the message is sent, another set of numbers—often reversed—confirms the end of the transmission. Cynthia is the nickname for a station thought to be maintained by the CIA. It featured a female voice with an American accent reading sequences of numbers. It was last heard in 2003.

Today's Special

duration: 3 - 7 minutes

Pitches

_____				Date 1 _____				Date 2 _____							
Y	Y	Y	Y	M	M	D	D	M	M	D	D	Y	Y	Y	Y

M	M	D	D	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	M	M	D	D
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

_____				Date 2 _____				_____				Date 1 _____			
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Number of notes in each gesture

Write the digits of your dates in the blank spaces, paying attention to the order: YYYYMMDD, DDMMYYYY, etc. For the top line, copy the pitch associated with each digit to the staff below, transposing it appropriately for your instrument. To perform the movement, create melodies by starting with the pitch associated with each digit in turn and playing the number of pitches specified by the digit below. Begin the next phrase on the pitch immediately after the previous beginning pitch, NOT the pitch you just ended the phrase on. Pitches should be played in order, left to right, wrapping around to the beginning of the sequence when you reach the end. The duration of pitches is free. Rhythm is free and not synchronized with other performers. Articulations and dynamics are free (see Affect, below). Rest for any length after each gesture. Complete this process three times in order to create 48 small gestures. You may notate these gestures in advance or create them in the moment of the performance.

Affect: You may choose to play in a way that expresses your sentiment about one or both of your chosen dates. This is an opportunity to affirm, honor, lament, respect, confront, assert, regret, celebrate, etc. your chosen dates.

Today's Special

Number to Pitch Charts

C Instruments

Date 1

Date 2

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

B $\flat$ Instruments

Date 1

Date 2

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

A Instruments

Date 1

Date 2

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

F Instruments

Date 1

Date 2

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

E $\flat$ Instruments

Date 1

Date 2

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Today's Special Example

Use this sequence for Announcement

Use this digit to determine which Flourish to play

Pitches

Date 1

Date 2

Number of notes in each gesture

Examples of how to construct gestures. Note that each gesture begins on the pitch immediately following the previous beginning pitch, NOT the ending pitch.

0 = Rest. No gesture will begin with this pitch

First few resulting gestures

One realization of the first few gestures

Rubato ($\text{♩} = 100$)

molto vib.

pp *mp* *f* *mf* *p* *mf* *ff*

Another realization of the first few gestures

$\text{♩} = 120$

mf

Flourish

C Instruments

duration: 3 - 10 seconds

①
f

①
f

②
f

③
f

④
f

⑤
f

⑥
f

⑦
f

⑧
f

⑨
f

Beginning when ready, play the flourish corresponding to the last digit in your chosen Date 1 (marked with a circle on the Today's Special page). Transpose the entire phrase to any octave suitable for your instrument, as necessary.

Flourish

B $\flat$ Instruments

duration: 3 - 10 seconds

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨

f *f* *f* *f* *f* *f* *f* *f* *f*

Beginning when ready, play the flourish corresponding to the last digit in your chosen Date 1 (marked with a circle on the Today's Special page). Transpose the entire phrase to any octave suitable for your instrument, as necessary.

Flourish

A Instruments

duration: 3 - 10 seconds



Beginning when ready, play the flourish corresponding to the last digit in your chosen Date 1 (marked with a circle on the Today's Special page). Transpose the entire phrase to any octave suitable for your instrument, as necessary.

Flourish

F Instruments

duration: 3 - 10 seconds

①

f

①

f

②

f

③

f

④

f

⑤

f

⑥

f

⑦

f

⑧

f

⑨

f

Beginning when ready, play the flourish corresponding to the last digit in your chosen Date 1 (marked with a circle on the Today's Special page). Transpose the entire phrase to any octave suitable for your instrument, as necessary.

Flourish

E^b Instruments

duration: 3 - 10 seconds

①

f

②

f

③

f

④

f

⑤

f

⑥

f

⑦

f

⑧

f

⑨

f

Beginning when ready, play the flourish corresponding to the last digit in your chosen Date 1 (marked with a circle on the Today's Special page). Transpose the entire phrase to any octave suitable for your instrument, as necessary.

Announcement

duration: 30 seconds - 3 minutes

$\bullet = 144$
mechanistic, like Morse Code

① *mp*

② *mp*

③ *mp*

④ *mp*

⑤ *mp*

⑥ *mp*

⑦ *mp*

⑧ *mp*

⑨ *mp*

Beginning when ready, play gestures corresponding to the digits in your dates in the order: Date 1: YYYYMMDD Date 2: DDMMYYYY. Maintain a consistent, shared pulse throughout the movement. Choose any octave suitable for your instrument for the entire movement. Rests at the end of each phrase may be any length such that the beginning of the next phrase always occurs on a downbeat.

*Use the appropriate pitch for your instrument in any suitable octave
for the entire movement*

C Instruments

B $\flat$ Instruments

A Instruments

F Instruments

E $\flat$ Instruments

