

# Sappho

for any large electronic ensemble + conductor



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duration set by conductor

## General

### 1. Setup

Ensemble in half circle facing conductor  
Conductor in front of ensemble  
1x tv screen in front of conductor

### 2. Tech

Any electronics which output midi  
Nano-kontrol or similar (for conductor)

## Patches

### 1. Sappho – Conductor patch

Please configure the patch with your nano-kontrol or similar  
Link all associated video files held within your patch content package  
With this patch you will be queuing separate elements of the score for the ensemble, see following conductor instructions for use of the materials.

### 2. Sappho – ensemble patch

Please choose midi instruments according to instrument and set input accordingly.  
With this patch you will be playing with Sappho, but also playing with yourself, see following instructions for ensemble.

\*This patch is based on the design made in collaboration between Maria Sappho and Sam Gillies. The patch has been developed to compliment the specific improvisational performance style of Maria. Patch coding by Sam Gillies.

Article for further information about the design of this patch:

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/organised-sound/article/donohue-developing-performerspecific-electronic-improvisatory-accompaniment-for-instrumental-improvisation/FCAEB4198C38076990C164DC32AF7DFC#.YwXzZLFfp5E.mailto>

## Info

When playing this work, the ensemble is 'becoming' Sappho. In so much as they will be engaging processes specific to Maria Sappho. Within this though they will also be 'becoming' themselves. All actions that a player might make will be complimented by their own Sappho companion, expanding their presence and ideas in space. The players will be following a set of video scores which are queued by the conductor. The conductor has complete control over what scores happen, who plays them, and when. The following provides the instructions for reading the video scores, including conduction gestures, notation examples, and ensemble interaction.

## **Instructions for Conductor**

As the conductor you will be determining the entire form, length, and orchestration of the work. You are provided with 6 video scores, which control a different focus of the players response. Please see instructions for players for the specifics of these video scores.

It is your job to respond in real time to the ensemble, determine what shifts should happen in the music, as well as determining who will play. To conduct the ensemble smoothly you must both queue the separate video score films when you deem them appropriate and use further hand gestures which signal orchestration and assist in clean transitions when necessary.

It is important that in rehearsal you make sure all players understand the following purpose of your gestures.

### **Practicalities**

You should have already setup your conduction patch with your midi control device. You have 6 button options, which each correspond to one of the 6 video scores.

There is an on-stage and back-stage queuing system in place. When you have started your first film, you may load your next film at any point (once you have decided what would be good next). This new film will not appear for the ensemble until you transition with your midi control device.

There are 2 options for transitions. Some scores use a fader for a slow crossover between films, affording an overlap in sonic ideas by the ensemble. And a few select scores require an abrupt transition using one of the following hand gestures.

Video 1 - fader  
Video 2 - gesture  
Video 3 - fader  
Video 4 - fader  
Video 5 - fader  
Video 6 – gesture

### **Hand signals**

\*All hand signals should be shown to the ensemble, for as long as it takes to get their attention. Make sure you have made eye contact with all members and know they are ready for the next transition. Once you are sure the ensemble is aware of what the next video score will be, conduct a down beat and switch the video score abruptly.

#### **Two open hands (tutti)**

This gesture will signal to the ensemble that they are about to play video score 6 (Noise). The result of this sharp transition should be to a sudden wall of noise. You should signal the end to this section with the traditional conductor gesture of an 'end' so that the wall is abruptly taken away. Then signal or fade in the next video score.

## **Hand numbers (solos)**

Before performance each player should be given a number. You will hold up a number with your hand to signal a player to solo. For example, holding up 3 fingers will signal that at your downbeat all players besides player 3 will drop out. You may choose any video score to give player 3 and they will then solo on this score for as long as you choose. You might do this in the middle of a video score without changing file as well.

\*You might want to expand on orchestration, and signal two numbers with your hands, if you want specific duos. But this might also become confusing. The decision for this is up to you.

## **Fists (silences)**

Holding up two fists to the ensemble will signal that you are about to que video 2. Video 2 relies heavily on silence (a black screen) and therefore must be queued with an abrupt change so an instantaneous silence might occur:

\*If you choose to begin the entire piece with video 2 though, no hand gesture is necessary, although you might need to let the group know that a video is playing (as the black screen might be confusing).

Finally, please choose your own method for signalling the piece end. The piece duration is up to your own needs; therefore you might choose if you signal an end with a gesture, or if you allow performers to find an end on their own, only signalling to them that they have reached their last video score.

## **Notes**

Some video scores are better suited to certain orchestrations. The following outlines some suggested rules.

### **Video 1 (memory)**

The density of this instruction might become messy with tutti playing. See how it works for your group. This score will work nicely for a soloist though.

### **Video 2 (silence)**

This video score always signals tutti. It therefore cannot be used for signalling solos.

### **Video 3 (form)**

This video score relies on the re-playing of existing events; therefore it cannot come at the start of the piece. But will work well for either

### **Video 4 (timbre)**

This score will work nicely for any configuration of the group. But will produce long spectral morphing sounds, consider the purpose of this contrast with the other scores.

### **Video 5 (collaboration)**

This score can only work with more than one player; no solos are possible for this score.

### **Video 6 (noise)**

The gesture for this video score always signals tutti. It therefore cannot be used for signalling solos.

## **Instructions for Ensemble**

You are no longer playing just as yourself. Due to your Sappho patch, all your actions are complimented by your Sappho companion. She will be playing with you, following, and expanding your gestures. For this matter, please remember that now that you are a multiplicity, you should listen more. No matter what size your ensemble is, this has now doubled, as each of you has a Sappho companion. While elements of your orchestration are controlled by the conductor (you might be asked to solo, and there are specific times when you must play tutti) in all other moments, consider dropping out, leaving space, and allowing different ensembles to emerge from the group.

You should have already chosen your instrument setup and made all necessary inputs within the Sappho patch. Once this is done you need not engage with the patch further unless you would like to pause the Sappho response which you might do by clicking the 'mute' button. Do this only when you think it is necessary (for example you feel the space has gotten too dense) or you wish to sit out and listen and you wish for Sappho to also sit out with you.

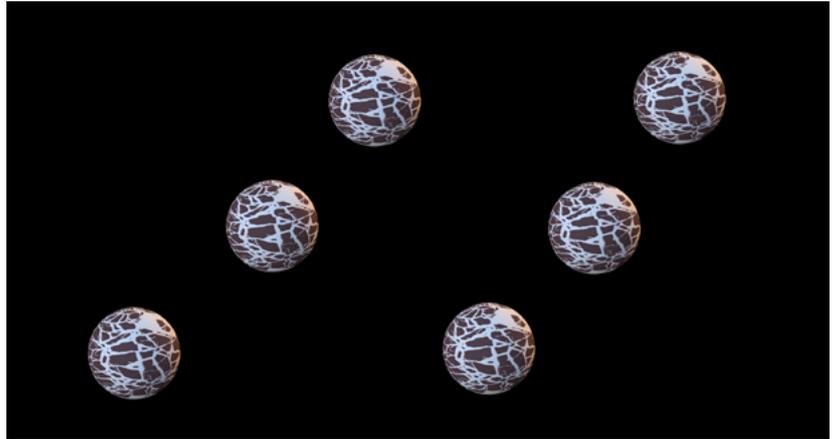
You will be following 6 video scores; each video score focuses on a different element of playing. The following instructions provide the information you will need for each video score, and your conductor will decide when these scores come up in performance.

There are a few scores which require an abrupt change and therefore your conductor has been given specific hand gestures to prepare you for these. Please ensure you have gone over these in rehearsal. This means that you must also remember to look at your conductor (not just at the score screen). Your conductor will ensure that they hold their gesture up until they have made sure you have seen it, before signalling the downbeat for the change.

## Video score instructions

### Video 1 (memory)

The orbs which appear in this video are signals for sounds which will be played in repetition. You are building and de-constructing a pattern in real time. Depending on how many orbs are on the screen, choose sounds which you will repeat in loop. If more orbs appear on the screen add a new sound to your loop. If they disappear, then drop these sounds from your loop. You might choose to drop a sound by inserting a silence, or by entirely deleting this beat from your loop.

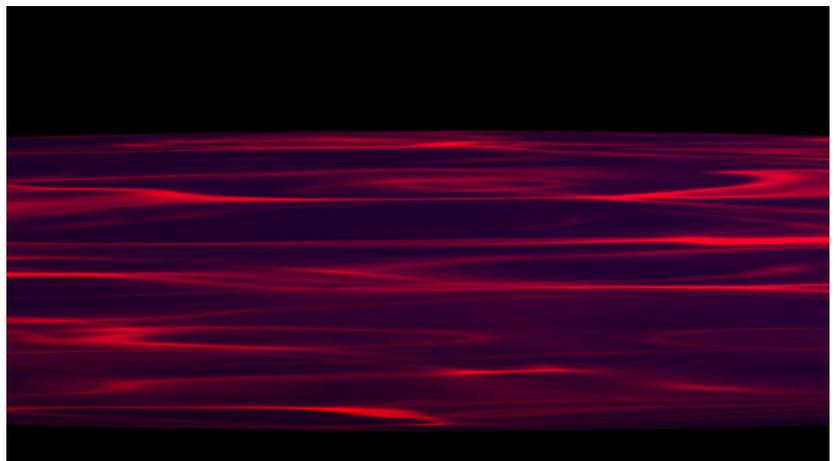


This is up to you. You might decide this as a group, or with the conductor.

The parameter of this score is patterned repetition. All other parameters are free to you: dynamics, timbre, duration, tempo etc. Yet it is important that you still consider your sound within the group.

### Video 2 (silence)

This video score will always be queued with a hand gesture of two fists beforehand. When you see this hand gesture be prepared to cut all sound you are making at the downbeat given by the conductor.

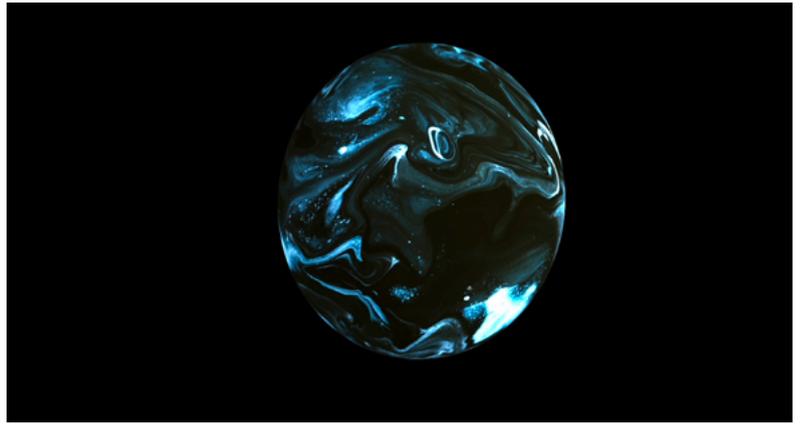


The video score will then start with a black screen. Remain silent as long as you see the black screen. At various points visuals will appear on the screen, you are free to play whatever you would like in response to these visuals, but must instantly move to silence once the screen is black again.

The parameter of this score is silence. Yet all other parameters are free, and you might use any form of graphic notation reading to interpret the images when you are not silent.

### **Video 3 (form)**

This video score will present visuals which grow and shrink in size. The purpose of this will be a focus on the presence of your ideas. The content of this section is to play something that you remember from the concert. You are 're-playing' something that has already happened. Yet you must map the re-playing of this idea based on the size of the visual image.



For example, if you remember a pattern from Video 1 which someone else in the room made, try to repeat this, but if the shape of the image on the screen is small, consider how you will make the presentation of this repeated idea small. This could be dynamics but also consider other ways to make music 'small'.

The parameter of this score is to re-play an existing phrase, yet to map this idea onto a changing sense of presence in the space. You are in charge of what parameter you deem as appropriate for determining the 'size' of your contribution, and all other parameters outside of this are free.

### **Video 4 (timbre)**

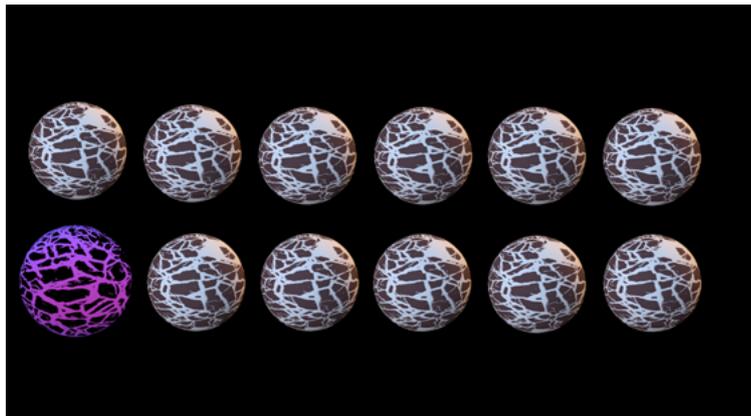
The video score will give you a constant shape which is morphing on screen. The morphing of the visual image should be mapped to a notion of timbre. Consider the changes in making smooth and rough sounds. Always play long un-interrupted sounds for this score.



The parameter of this score is to focus on texture, within a long evolving sound. All other parameters are free to you though, for example consider how you might change your timbre but also keep your dynamic response free. E.g remember not to map all parameters to the changing form, just because a sound is getting 'rougher' does not mean it must always get louder etc.

## Video 5 (collaboration)

In this video score you are given orbs in a line. These orbs will pulse in a tempo. Depending on the number of orbs which appear on the screen, choose 1 or 2 orbs which will be your beat. You now might only play when your beat pulses. Together you will all develop a collective pattern.



There are two colours of pulsing beats: pink and blue. Blue pulses should be considered as an accent pulse. Accent these in any way you would like if this is a beat which you choose to make sound on.

You may choose any sound for your beats, and all other parameters are free. Be consistent with your sound though. Please consider pitch and dynamics, but also consider duration. When your beat pulses this only signals your attack of the sound, you might choose to hold your sound for more beats, as long as when your orb pulses again you generate a new attack.



## Video 6 (Noise)

In this video score you are going to be playing with extremes within the context of a wall of sound. The dynamic therefore for this video score is always 'as loud as possible' yet all other extremes are free for you to choose from.

The visuals on the screen are suggestive but remember to also be very aware of your conductor in this video score as they might signal an end to this wall of noise at any moment. It is important you end the wall of noise as abruptly as you started it.

This video score will always be queued by a hand gesture of two open hands, please be prepared to instantaneously generate your extreme wall of noise when the downbeat is given by the conductor.