

# Vault

## Structured Improvisation for Alto Saxophone and Computer

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2018

Inspired by singing practices in ecstatic devotional traditions from around the world, this piece can vary in length from five to 30 minutes. The intention is to encourage reverie through the use of repetition over a drone, building into a magical moment where the listener hears a chorus of angelic musicians, despite only seeing one on stage. The performance, if done well, should be transporting.

### Saxophone

### Computer

- I. Play a bold and strong melody in a minor-ish mode, in the style of a Muslim call to prayer. It should be one complete musical phrase to introduce the melodic framework you will use for the rest of the piece.
- II. Breathe audibly in and out through the saxophone in a slow rhythmic manner, using a pedal midi controller to record a loop.
- III. Using the volume pedal, introduce a pre-recorded drone made using granulation of saxophone tones.  
  
Play a bold and lamenting melody that expands on the opening phrase and gradually increases in complexity. When you are ready to begin playing in time, use the pedal midi controller to add delay to the breath loop.
- IV. Modulate into a major-ish mode, stop the breath loop, and start the background arpeggios. Play a melody that is a transformation of your original melodic ideas, with minimal movement, and generous space between phrases to emphasize the strangeness of the arpeggios that open up when you play. Use the full range of the instrument.
- V. Stay in the same mode, but play bigger and grander, creating a spacious world of bright, bubbling sound. This climactic section is the shortest.
- VI. Disable the arpeggios and start the breath loop again. Reprise the opening phrase, or something like it. As you finish your last note, stop the loop.

Sax effects: Big, thick reverb; long delay

Design Notes: The goal is to give the impression that a multitude of voices are following behind the initial voice, such as in lined out singing.

Loop effects: Compression, distortion, equalization

Design Notes: The breath should be very discernible and easy to hear as it will create the rhythmic foundation for this piece, such as in a Sufi *zhikr*.

Drone: Layer slowed-down grains to create a deep drone far below the normal range of a saxophone and double at the fifth and octave

Loop effects: Add delay when ready

Design Notes: The delay is intended to thicken the rhythmic complexity of the breath loop.

Arpeggios: Create an envelope follower to open a gate of pitch-shifted arpeggios created of a sequenced vocoder with the saxophone as an input. They follow the volume and pitch contour of the saxophone. When the saxophone stops playing, the gate closes and the arpeggios are not audible.

Effects: Minimal reverb, clean sound

Arpeggios: Using the same method, a second set of arpeggios with more complexity.

Sax effects: Minimal reverb, clean sound

Sax effects: Same as in the opening.