

Philip Schuessler



Brain Gas

Quartet: 06.04.18

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For open instrumentation  
[four players]

(2018)

Pendula Music  
71120 Lake Placid Drive  
Covington, LA 70433  
wheelitzo@gmail.com  
[www.philipschuessler.com](http://www.philipschuessler.com)

Brain Gas:

## Overview

For any number of players, any instrumentation.

This score is designed to be constructed beforehand by the composer as a unique arrangement of pre-composed graphic, text, and conventional notations. In essence, one chooses from a set of compositional tools to create his or her own score, so that each arrangement is assigned as a new composition (or, as may be interpreted, a version/movement/subset/iteration) within a series. A template ("field") is provided on which to place blocks ("cells") of graphic notation. Colored areas are also provided in which to assign a set of motives ("inserts") for players to play.

The score uses a mixture of graphic notation, text instructions, and conventional music notation. These elements are combined to create a version of the score that may be unique to a specific performance (and designated therein by the number of performers and date of that specific performance) or may be interpreted differently in different performances.

## Fields

A "blank" field contains empty areas in which cells are to be placed. Any number of cells from the provided list can be placed within these empty areas (including repeated cells) as long as they fit within the given area. Not all cells need to be used in a field. Dotted edges at the end of certain empty areas are considered "extensions" to allow cells to extend beyond the normal empty area if needed. The entirety of any given empty area need not be used. Space is allowed (and encouraged) between cells within a single area.

Above these areas is a text placeholder in which text can be chosen from a provided list to describe some (or all) musical parameters to be utilized within the cells of that particular area.

Fields contain some places where graphic cells, texts, or inserts are fixed beforehand (meaning they cannot be removed, moved, altered, or omitted). These elements are indicated with the term “fixed” and will be included with any and all arrangements of a new composition.

### Cells

Cells of graphics of varying sizes are designed to be interpreted freely by the performers. There are no limits or constraints as to how the graphics should be interpreted as sound or silence. Performers may choose to implement a set of guidelines pertaining to how to interpret some, any, or all of the given shapes and designs within a graphic block, or how to read the blocks’ overall duration based on their given sizes. There is no limitation as to how to interpret duration of any given cell; cell length does not *have* to correspond to duration.

### Inserts

The motives come various lengths and sizes. Motives are organized in groups based on related content. The motives can be implemented in any way the composer sees fit. Motives may be transposed up or down one or multiple octaves as is necessary for a given instrument. Parts of a single motive can also be transposed as desired.

Any number of motives or groups may be used. Motives can be altered in various ways; the alterations are coordinated based on the colored areas in the score. In the field, colored areas indicate places in which players utilize motives. These colors can specify not only which motive(s) to use, but also what dynamic, texture, instrument tone, register, articulation, or what other musical parameters to be implemented. Each instance of a color within a field should use the same set of pre-planned elements. As an example, the brown area may specify to use the first two motives within group A, with a *forte* dynamic, with a distorted or scratchy tone; A green area, by contrast, may specify to use all motives from group B, with a *pianissimo* dynamic in the highest register of the instrument.

Small boxes above the colored areas indicate the duration (or duration window) for the insert. Motives should be repeated (and altered if indicated to do so with successive repeats) until the end of the indicated duration.

Large, boxed numbers in the middle of a color area indicates the specific number of repeats for a motive (or motives).

The inserts page provides space to provide specifications for each color. This space includes room for text instructions (comments) as well as blank staves to include the specific motives to be used. To reiterate, any motive may be used or repeated from one color to the next (although, should the latter be the case, there should be some differentiating factor(s) to distinguish one color from the next).

### Other

Commas indicate “breaths”, or very short pauses.

Round fermatas indicate short pauses.

Square fermatas indicate long pauses.

Auxiliary instruments are indicated (and can be indicated elsewhere within text indications or insert comments) to be used. Auxiliary instruments can be any instrument that is something other than the primary instrument of choice to be used by a player. They can be standard orchestral instruments, percussion instruments, noise-making objects, electronic instruments, or invented instruments.

Optional text, color areas, or cells may sometimes occur within a field. The optional elements do not have to be executed in a performance.

### Cues

A conductor can be used for this piece as needed. Cues for system and measures are provided for the conductor to use. A conductor may provided cues for all of the numbered measures or for selected measures as needed. The conductor may cue sections based on their free interpretation of when a section should end or begin. Should a conductor cue a new section, players should move smoothly from one section to the next even if they are not necessarily complete with their previous section’s material.

# Brain Gas - Inserts - [Quartet: 06/4/18]

Key for color inserts (refer to insert groups for motive options)

## Motives:

	<p>Comments:</p> <p>Group B - Motive 1 different instruments at different tempi distorted, muddy, lowest transposition possible</p>	
	<p>Comments:</p> <p>Group B - Motive 1 closer at beginning but instruments should drift further apart with each repeat, still distorted, lowest transposition possible</p>	
	<p>Comments:</p> <p>Group B - Motive 3 exclusively at onset, distorted, muddy, lowest transpositions possible</p>	
	<p>Comments:</p> <p>Group B - Motive 1 and 3 instruments play freely, motives don't have to line up, different tempi with each repetition clean sounds, low and/or high transpositions possible</p>	
	<p>Comments:</p> <p>Group B - Motive 1, 2, and 3 instruments play freely, motives don't have to line up, distorted, muddy, extremely high transpositions possible</p>	

Color inserts may be differentiated by the players in any way(s) they see fit. Colors could indicate different motives, for instance, or they could indicate different timbres (or timbre "sets") for the same motive (these are just two examples). Comment boxes should be used to specify such plans. Motives that cannot be played, in part or in full, by a given instrument should be adapted freely for a specific instrument.

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**I**

① text: in general - distorted, quiet, descending

② 10 - 15"

③ text: slightly contrary to everything that has been played up to now

**II**

① 10 - 15" text: light, placid, clean with occasional outbursts

② 8"

**III**

① text: statement with retrograde inversion

② 15 - 20"

**IV**

① text: pointillistic texture, lots of space

②

③ text: Sometimes - glissando focused, always descending

④

⑤ fixed text:  
( auxiliary instruments;  
sustained sounds )

fixed cell

**V**

① text: light but distorted with occasional outbursts

② 9 - 11"

③ text: with a lot of space and "colored" silence

(optional; freely within field)

for cueing purposes:  
Boxed roman numerals indicate system numbers.  
Circled arabic numerals indicate measure numbers, per system.