

Secure/Insecure

an improvisation framework for any number of musicians

Colin G. Johnson

Programme Note

Secure/Insecure is an improvisation framework for a group of musicians. Two areas are marked in the performance area, one of which is called *secure* and one *insecure*. The piece is a free improvisation, with the following constraint. When musicians are feeling confident about their contribution to the piece and that they can carry on making a positive contribution, they stand in the *secure* area. If they are uncertain about whether they are making a positive contribution and uncertain that they can make an ongoing positive contribution, they stand in the *insecure* area. The musicians can, and should, move between the areas during the performance.

Which area is *secure* and which *insecure* is not revealed to the audience.

Biography

Colin Johnson is active in composition and improvisation. He is particularly interested in pieces that have explored structured frameworks in which human musicians work with a mixture of technology, composed material, random choices, theatrical miniatures, found texts from internet searches, and improvised material. He is particularly interested in ways of structuring musical and theatrical material by drawing on ways in which people have attempted to formalise complicated systems: computer programs, role-playing games, instruction manuals, finite state machines, flow charts, examination rubrics, engineering drawings, assembly instructions for flat-pack furniture, signage, et cetera. Sometimes he writes straightforward music for acoustic instruments. When not doing this he works in teaching and research in computer science and mathematics at the University of Kent. The current piece is one of a number of recent pieces that have provided frameworks for improvisation, including *for/against* (2013) and *hic sunt dracones* (2011).

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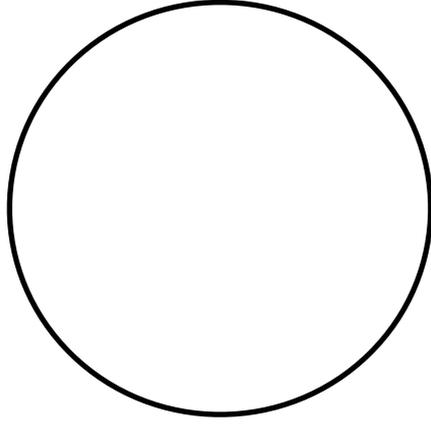
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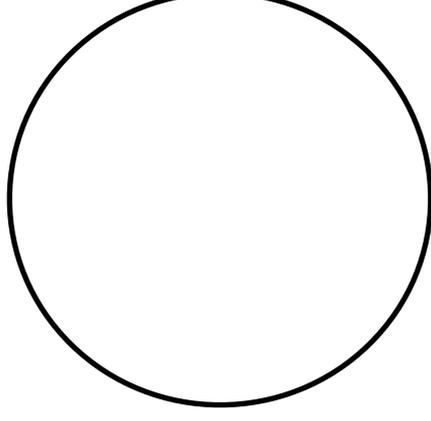
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Stage setup: an area large enough for all the musicians in the group to readily move around in the space. Two areas are marked out, with a decent gap between them. These can either be explicitly marked out (e.g. with chalk circles) or just be agreed by the performers. Ideally, they should just be regions of a flat space e.g. parts of a stage, rather than being physical structures. The arrangement should not suggest a hierarchy between the areas. One is designated as the *secure* region and one as the *insecure* region. These labels should not be indicated to the audience, just known by the performers.



Secure



Insecure

Performance: the duration of the performance is down to the performers; typically, this would be determined implicitly during the performance by tacit agreement between the players. The performance is a free improvisation, with the following constraint: if a performer is feeling confident with their contribution to the group performance, and secure in the feeling that they can continue to make a positive contribution to the ongoing group performance, they should stand in the *secure* region. If they are feeling a lack of confidence with their contribution to the group performance and uncertain that they can make a positive contribution to the ongoing group performance, they should stand in the *insecure* region. Performers should *not* imitate the ideas of “secure” and “insecure”. Performers can and should move between the regions during the performance, and can play whilst in each space and whilst moving between spaces.