

**DEEP LISTENING PUBLICATIONS**

By Pauline Oliveros

**The Witness**



## **The Witness**

**A solo duet with an imaginary partner, a duo or an ensemble**

**Pauline Oliveros**

**Commentary:**

*The Witness* may be performed by a soloist as a duet with an imaginary partner or as an ensemble for two to a hundred or more performers. If performed as a sound piece any instruments or voices capable of following the instructions may be used.

The structure of *The Witness* consists of three strategies for listening and responding with guidelines for the use of the strategies. *The Witness* lends itself well to movement and drama as well as music. It may be performed either as music, movement, or drama, or in any combination. If performed as movement or theater then *movement* or *dramatic action* is substituted for *sound*. Performers may use any medium exclusively or sound, movement and/or dramatic action in combination.

The performance could take place in a variety of performance situations including theaters, museums, alternative spaces, outdoor amphitheaters, or other outdoor locations. Performers could be close together or at long or changing distances from one another. They could be inside, surrounding, or moving through an audience. Appropriate spatial relationships are to be developed by the players during the performance through awareness of height, angle and distance and its effect on sound, movement and theatrical action.

## **Strategy I – Attention to oneself**

**Sound:** Each sound should be only one sound with silence before and after. Each silence should be of a different duration. The sound can be longer, shorter, softer, louder, simpler or more complex but always different than any other sound. Each sound should be unique in every respect as if it were sculpted anew out of totally different material each time.

**Movement:** Each movement should be only one gesture whether it is done with the whole body, one joint or any other moveable body part. All the qualities of movement should be different every time. There should be stillness before and after the movement. Each stillness should be different from the duration of any other stillness.

**Theater:** Each dramatic action or statement should be totally different from any other with silence or stillness before and after. Each silence or stillness should be of different duration.

**Attention:** Attention is given exclusively to one's own performance no matter what the imaginary or real partner performs. The goal is for each performer to keep focus on the sound, movement or dramatic action to be performed.

## **Strategy II – Attention to other**

**Sound:** Listen for a sound. React to the sound by anticipating or following pitch, timbre, rhythm and/or dynamics as instantaneously as possible. React spontaneously according to the past or future of a partner's playing. Try to gain leadership of the interaction through anticipating or intuiting what might be performed next.

**Movement:** Watch for a movement. React to the movement qualities by anticipating or following as instantaneously as possible. React spontaneously according to the past or future of a partner's movement. Try to gain leadership of the interaction through anticipating or intuiting a partner's next move.

**Theater:** Watch and listen for a dramatic action or statement. React by anticipating or following the nature of the action or statement. React spontaneously according to the past or future of a partner's movement. Try to gain leadership of the interaction through anticipating or intuiting the next situation.

**Attention:** Give maximum attention to a partner's performance regardless of what you are performing. The goal is to become like a witness to the totality of all the performance interactions as if the whole group and the environment was perceived as only one performer.

### **Strategy III – Attention all over**

**All participants:** Try to perform inside of the time, exactly with the time, or outside the time of a partner's performance sound, movement or dramatic action/statement.

**Attention:** Give equal attention to your own and a partner's performance, as if only one person were making all of the sounds, movements or actions. Expand your field of attention, as far as possible, to include any environmental sound, movement or dramatic action as part of this unity. Try to feel the past, present and future of the performance as unity.

### **The use of the strategies:**

Each performer begins with strategy I independently and continues indefinitely until one performer begins to react to another and another becomes aware of the reactions and reciprocates. When strategy II is fully established by consensus then strategy III may begin. After all three strategies have been established and experienced by all of the performers, any of the three strategies may be used again at any time. Each performer is responsible to discriminate which strategy is in use at all times. The piece continues until all performers are silent or still.