



lead the follower

2021

For any group of instruments in any combination

15 minutes or less
or more than 15 minutes, if voted in with a 6/8ths supermajority

Shi-An Costello (世安)

“If I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive.” — Audre Lorde

“the ability to see and describe one's own reality is a significant step in the long process of self-recovery; but it is only a beginning.” — bell hooks

General Description/Program Notes

lead the follower grapples with identity through one's relationship to others. So much of our identity is founded on seeing what others see in us, and similarly, so much of how others see themselves is founded on what we see in them. In practice, classical musicians are confronted with a haunting dissonance between Self and Other: what do we see in ourselves vs. what do others see in us. This tension is the foundation of the sonic exploration in this work.

lead the follower challenges the performer to fill both the roles of follower and leader, simultaneously. At any moment, from the rehearsal process, through to the final performance, the choice is presented: do I assert my identity, or do I support another's? Each performer, as well as their accompanying personalities—ones that take up more space than they deserve, ones that take up less space than they should, and others that fall somewhere in between depending on the circumstances—will confront this choice differently.

The score to *lead the follower* reads like the bylaws of an organization, in order to bring life to a code of conduct that always already dictates the social life of a professional musician. The rehearsal and performance of music is indeed a complex social procedure, replete with promises, contingencies, rights and responsibilities. Through the rules of governance laid out in the score, each member of the ensemble is given the explicit task of simultaneously asserting oneself, uplifting the others, and upholding democratic ideals. –S-A