# Composing *Fake Mosaic*

for soprano sax and percussion

Lawton Hall

**NOVEMBER 2020**

*Music does something other than what the humans gathered around it would like it to do, something other than what they have programmed. That is why they listen to it; it is not their double, nor the mirror of their vanity. "Made" the way it is, it has its own capacity to act. It forges identities and sensibilities; it does not obey them. It does act (*fait oeuvre*) in this sense.*

Antoine Hennion

"From ANT to Pragmatism: A Journey with Bruno Latour at the CSI"

## Composition as Dialog

*– What am I telling the piece to do?*

*– What is the piece telling me it wants to do?*

## Giving the Piece a Voice

*– Generative/algorithmic processes give the music agency, allowing for a two-way dialog between me and the piece.*

*– The piece also exerts agency through its instrumentation.*

# My Compositional Interests

– Groove / Rhythm

– Timbral Fusion / Harmony as Timbre

– "Hyperinstruments"

– Noise-Pitch Continuum

– Melody

# Pre-Compositional Decisions

**INSTRUMENTATION:**
Soprano Sax, Vibes, two Crash Cymbals

*– Vibes and Soprano Sax have similar range, allowing for timbral fusion/blend.*

*– Crash cymbals fill out the noise end of the noise-pitch continuum and contrast clear bell tones in the vibes.*

*– Sax carries melody. Percussion colors individual sax notes (like a mosaic!)*

*– Both players capable of playing rhythmically active music.*

# A

**BEGINNING - I**

Strongly melodic, sax drives rhythmic energy

Hesitance/trepidation gives way to flow and constant motion; unstable groove

Strong sense of rhythmic process; feeling of forward motion

**sparse rhythm** → **maximum density**

**heterogenous distribution of noise + pitch** → **noise overtakes texture**

# B

**I - N**

Suspension of rhythmic processes; freely composed, sense of weightlessness and mystery

Cymbals become a more rhythmically-driving voice, rather than just coloristic

Sax takes on a textural/timbral role

# C

**N - END**

Return of rhythmic processes

Sax re-emerges as melodic voice

Percussion is much more independent than in A section

Longer periods of regular pulse (more stable) than A section

**sparse rhythm** → **maximum density**

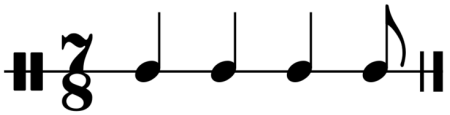
**blended hyper-instrument** → **distinct timbral roles**

# Euclidean Rhythms

**GENERATIVE RHYTHMIC PROCESS**

Algorithm that takes a number of onsets (***k***) and distributes them evenly across a number of beats (***n***)

**Ruchenitsa**
Euclidean Rhythm
$(n = 7, k = 4)$



**Tresillo**
Euclidean Rhythm
$(n = 8, k = 3)$

www.lawtonhall.com/blog/euclidean-rhythms-pt1

# Modulating Euclidean Rhythms

By changing either the ***k*** or ***n*** value of each cycle, it's possible to change the rhythmic density of the generated rhythms.

**MODULATING *k* VALUE**

$k = [2...12], n = 12$

[2, 12] [3, 12] [4, 12] [5, 12] [6, 12] [7, 12] [8, 12] [9, 12] [11, 12] [12, 12]

*becomes increasingly dense*

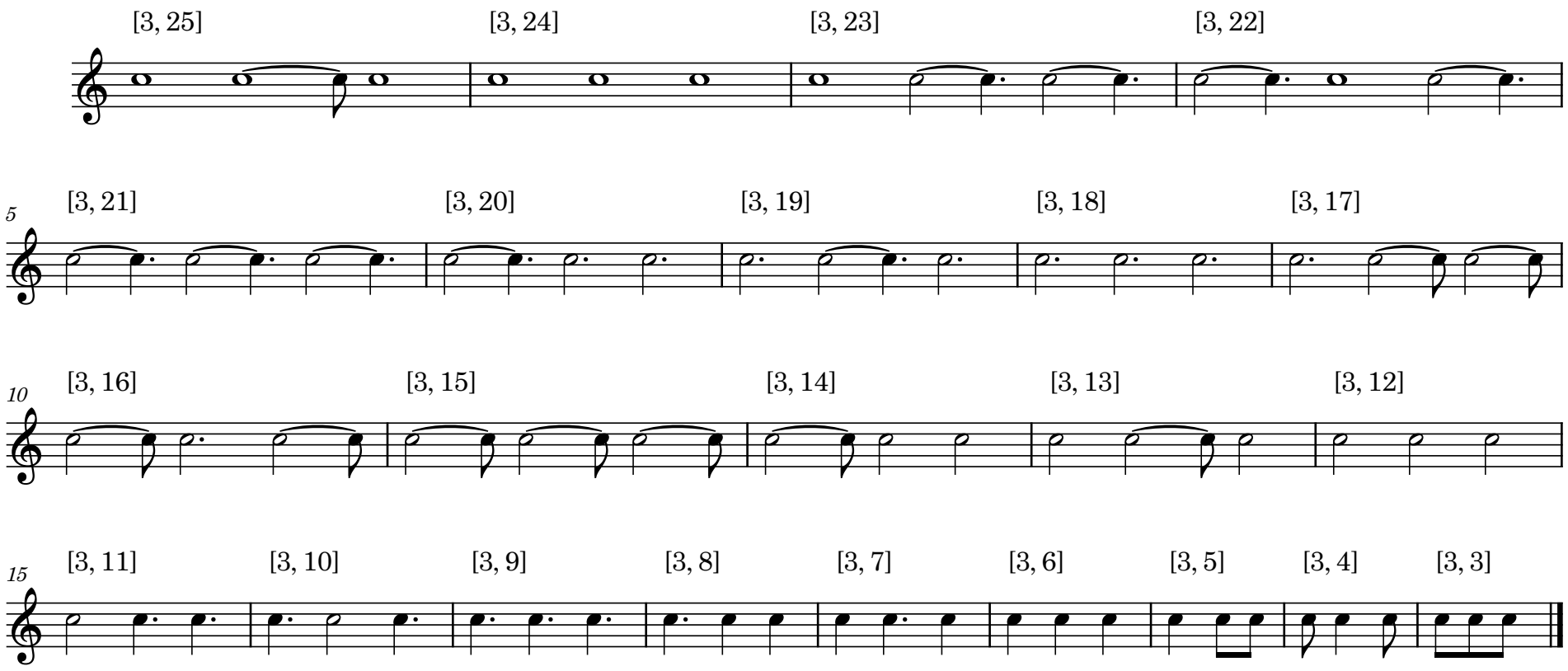
**MODULATING *n* VALUE**

$k = 2, n = [2...12]$

[2, 2] [2, 3] [2, 4] [2, 5] [2, 6] [2, 7] [2, 8] [2, 9] [2, 10] [2, 11] [2, 12]

*becomes increasingly sparse*

# $k = 3, n = 25 \ldots 3$

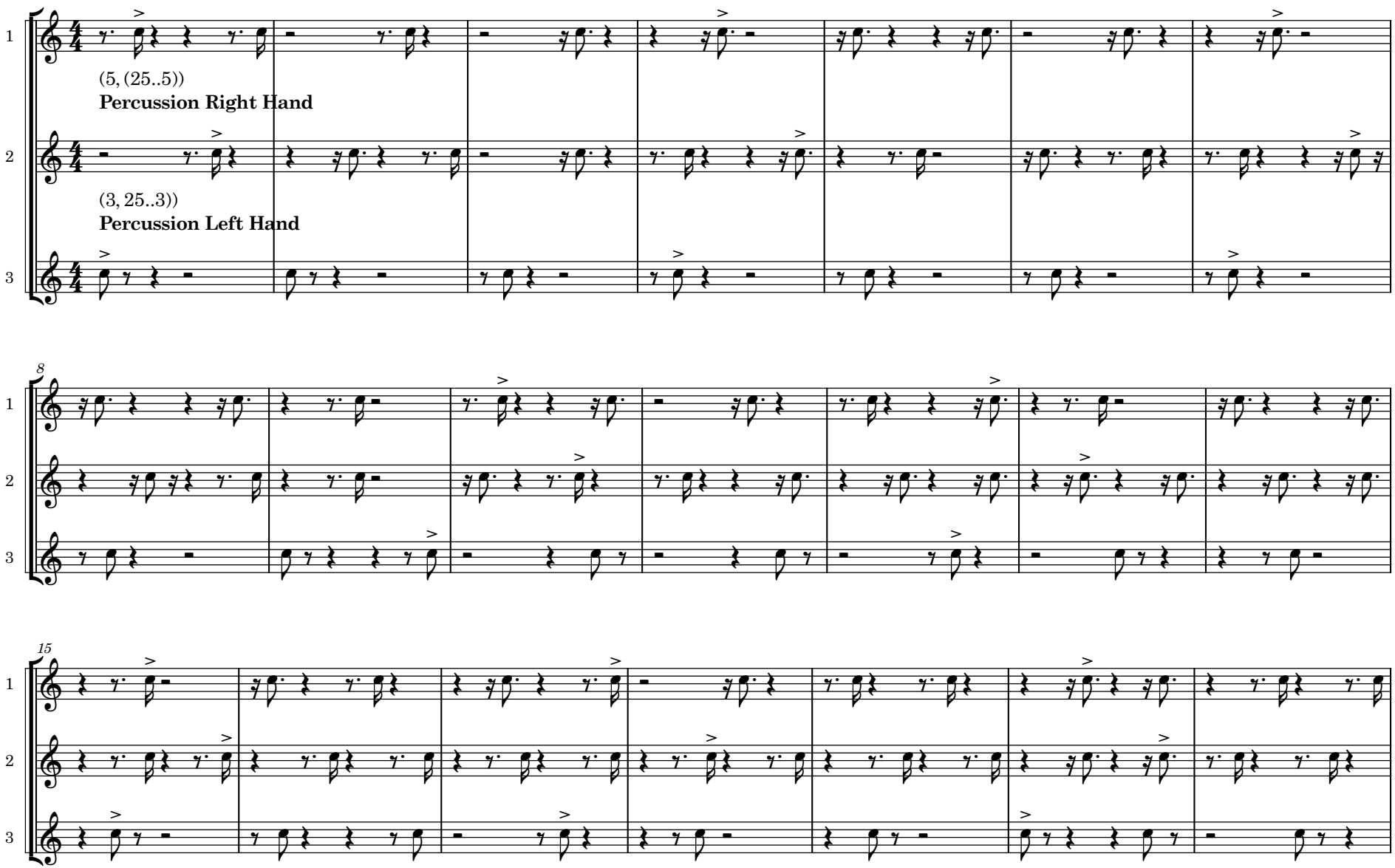


# Superimposed Modulating Euclidean Rhythms

(4, (25..4))
**Sax: Aggregate Rhythm of All Three Streams**

(5, (25..5))
**Percussion Right Hand**

(3, 25..3))
**Percussion Left Hand**



# A Section Pitch Sieves