

Supermarket Music

This is a collection of scores for people in a supermarket, that began with a meditation on the idea of the 24-hour supermarket as a contemporary form of nature. I had started learning guqin, the ancient Chinese 7-string zither associated with Taoist mythology, in lore played on a mountaintop at midnight as a form of meditation. As a car-less Southern California transplant, I had less easy access to mountains, but Ralphs-La Jolla, with its perpetual fluorescent glow and gently flowing Muzak seemed the closest possible alternative for private reflection.

These pieces are a series of undercover actions coexisting with regular supermarket activity, first performed with over 20 participants at Ralphs-La Jolla in February 2010, without explicit permission. When prodded about the activity, a clerk responded, "I don't know, but as long as they're shopping, we're not going to do anything."

The collection is open and ongoing – new pieces are very much invited.

- Carolyn Chen, 2014

Traveling music for freezers, CC

As a group, tune to a freezer. Sustaining the chord, walk away, meet another freezer. Interfere. Slowly, retune to the new environment. Repeat.

Possible:

- Many groups, many freezers.
- A duel.
- Negotiation.
- Heads inside and out.

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proceeds beyond vocal capabilities, return to beginning pitch.

- *Crescendo* for accelerated pushing; *decrescendo* for a *ritardando*.
- If view of product is partially obstructed by a shopper, *sfz* on visible syllables. Silence if view is completely obstructed.
- If speed of cart makes reading infeasible, sitters may rest, or turn to face the pusher and sing the pusher's name in protest. (Pitch to vary with height of pusher.)

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Aisle music, CC

Players:

- one pusher (may be larger) of cart
- a few sitters (may be smaller) in cart

Play:

- Pusher chooses an aisle to traverse.
- Sitters choose different viewpoints from within the cart.
- Pusher pushes, sitters sing the name of objects passing – pitch beginning in unison, changing according to the height of the objects in view.
- Play ends when aisle has been cleared.

On pushing:

- Pusher should begin slowly, listening to sitters' cues. Conflicting cues are resolved at pusher's discretion.
- Indefinite pauses are possible.
- Backwards pulling is possible.

On sitting:

- Sitters begin *pp* on unison, changing pitch with the contour of package shapes – if this

Other easy pieces:

Arrange in cart:

- 3 of everything
- Monochromes (all yellow, etc)
- Shakables – sort by shake

Check-out:

- set all items upside down
- arrange all left, all right, triangles, smiles, civil war battle formations
- order in descending levels of healthiness
- while belt is moving, walk in place/running man
- buy all the same items again, exactly
- multiple people with the same items, same order

* * *

Transcription of guqin tuning for a supermarket, CC

There must be some way in which the qualities of different places can be adjusted to align. This transcription may be carried out by individuals or groups, independently or with communication.

A guqin is a Chinese zither with seven strings. The following map shows an order in which the strings

are tuned, starting from the fourth harmonic of the first string. Black dots are fixed; white dots, adjusted.

Plot the physical location of harmonic nodes on the qin onto the aisles, shelves, or some other system of rows in a supermarket. Follow the map, starting from the first black dot.

Sound a line.

Sound another line. Compare with the first. Adjust. Repeat until they align.

Sound a tuned line in another way.

Find a new line and repeat tuning process.

An ending comes when all desired lines are aligned.

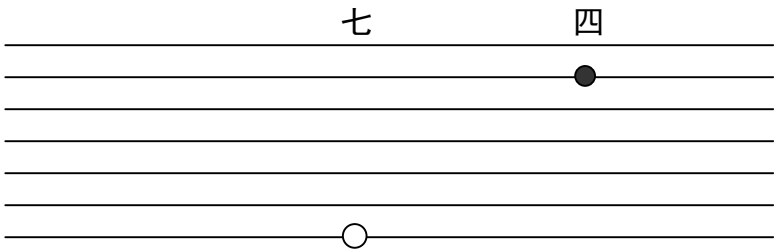
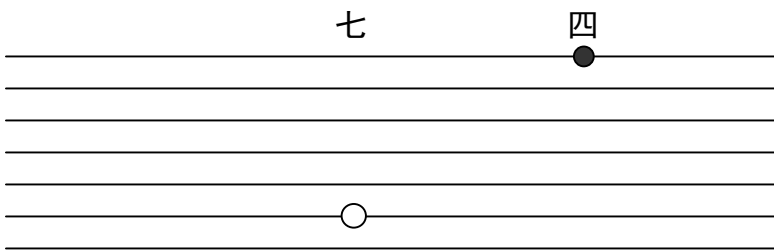
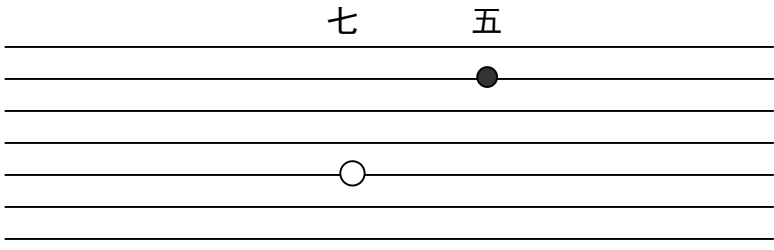
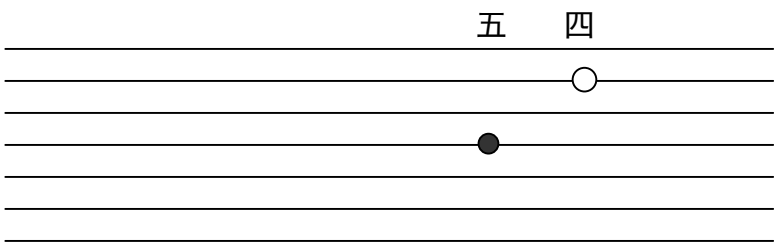
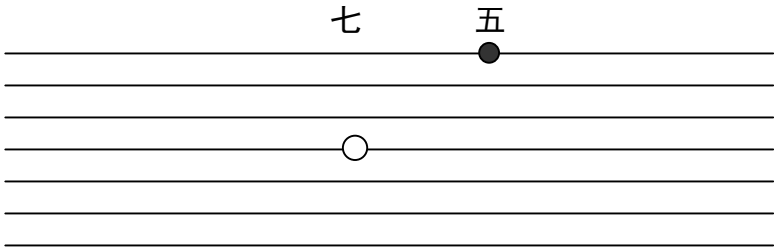
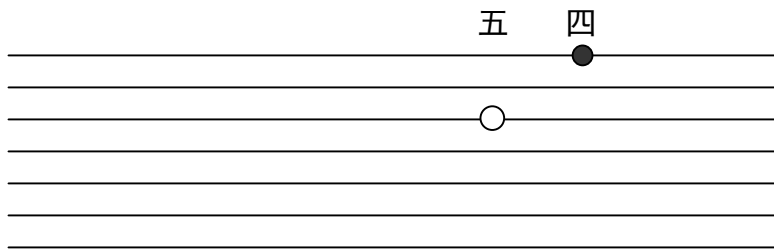
Sounding a line must involve some kind of contact with it, although this need not result in a concrete sound. Somehow, a quality of the line is expressed and responded to. This may involve choosing an object in an aisle and a quality of the object.

Some qualities in which objects might be aligned: packaging, contents, color, shape, density, viscosity, nutrition, shininess of material, hardness, temperature, sound produced by touch, responsiveness to touch, place of origin, distance from place of origin, position in relation to aisle, utility, desirability, shelf-life, diversity of contents, aura, quality of imperfection, closeness to corn syrup, lifestyle evoked by advertising, duration or speed of consumption, life-preserving capability, transparency, opaqueness, smell, nostalgic value.

Adjusting may involve shifting the object, choice of quality attended to, way of sounding, or state of mind. Tuning includes external and internal alignment. It is not only the adjustment of objects or sounds, but the listening and responding of a person to the external world.

Actions are non-theatrical and purposive. There is an order to the process. The guqin is a quiet instrument, often played in nature.

Guqin tuning chart:



All Space is Occupied by The Enemy, Ian Carroll
Essentially a slowly growing shopping-snake. One person enters the market to shop, grabs a shopping cart and begins shopping. A few minutes later, another person enters also grabbing a shopping cart and trails the first person shopping at a 2 1/2 foot distance. This continues on until the right number of people can fill a supermarket aisle; no more, no less.

The group will have a series of events (determined by the number of aisles in the supermarket) that will occur in each aisle, such as everyone (shopping-snake) halting and grabbing an item to purchase at the same time. The piece ends with everyone returning the shopping carts and leaves the store after all the events have occurred.

* * *

the misters, Cara Baldwin

i will stand near the misters until they go off.
i will run my hands through them and over things until they go off.
i will stand in the door way until the alarm goes off.
i will run out of everything.

* * *

clean happy valentines in the supermarket, Zeynep Bulut

clean happy valentines in the supermarket, for two performers:

two performers will wear mouth masks and latex gloves. they will walk through the fruits and frozen food/ice cream/ice lane, and end up at the cleaning supplies/pharmacy lane. walking hand in hand, they will talk to each other. the dialogue is as follows:

girl: do you like apple?
boy: yes i like pepper
girl: lets buy some then
boy: for what?
girl: yes for tart.
boy: tart? i didn't know that they sell tart in here
girl: fish with beer?
boy: this year?
girl: belgium beer
boy: didn't get you dear

when they arrive at the pharmacy lane (mouth wash and toothpaste section), they will kiss.

throughout the whole performance, they will keep their masks and gloves. i am inspired by rene magritte's painting, "the lovers" (especially for the kissing part).

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Program order for Ralphs-La Jolla

Transcription of guqin tuning for supermarket - CC
Traveling music for freezers - CC
Aisle Music - CC
Listening music - Joachim Gossman
the misters - Cara Baldwin
clean happy valentines in the supermarket - Zeynep Bulut
Untitled - Micki Davis, Ash Smith
All Space is Occupied by The Enemy - Ian Carroll

Start times (actions can continue after):

10:00 transcription, easy pieces
10:10 freezers
10:15 misters - CB
10:20 aisles
10:25 valentines - ZB
10:35 MD, AS
10:45 all space - IC

Start locations are dispersed.