



ARTIST: Tony Conrad (1940–2016)	TITLE: <i>Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plain</i>
ACCESSION NO.: L04307	YEAR: 1972 – ongoing
MEDIUM: Performance with live music and film	
DURATION: Approximately 90 minutes ¹	

INTRODUCTION²

This document is the fourth part of a dossier of information that must be consulted prior to activation of the work and must be disseminated to the appropriate parties at the appropriate moments in the lead-up to the performance.

The dossier comprises the following documents:

1. Performance Specification
 2. Guidelines for Projectionists
 3. Guidelines for Musicians
 4. Guidelines for Sound Engineers
 5. Associated contextual and audio-visual documentation³
- The present document aims to provide an overview of the role of the sound engineer.
 - It is important to become acquainted with Tony Conrad’s work and the recording of the work prior to the rehearsals. Tate will provide a selection of media files designed to assist with this process.
 - Tate will also provide the sound file that is going to be mixed with the instruments during the live performance.
 - Although they contain some repeated information, the sound engineer should also refer to the Performance Specification and Guidelines for Musicians to learn more about the work.

¹ This is the duration that can be found on Tate’s collection management system. Different contributors, including Andrew Lampert, Regina Greene and Andrea Lissoni, have stated different durations between 90 and 100 minutes, often considering silent moments before and after the performance as part of the performance itself.

² These guidelines have had various contributors that have led to their creation. The contributors were: Andrew Lampert, Barney Rosenthal and Tate’s Time-Based Media Conservation team (Louise Lawson, Hélia Marçal and Ana Ribeiro). Aside from Tate’s internal documents and published literature, two other moments informed this specification: (1) Performance at The Tanks, Tate Modern, 2017: information was gathered and produced by Esther Harris, Ben Webb, Louise Lawson and Patricia Falcão; Paige Sarlin, Vera Alemani, Angharad Davies, Dominic Lash, Andrew Lampert, Rhys Chatham and Andrea Lissoni directly participated in the event and its documentation; and (2) Projection test at N-Space, Tate Store, March 2019: information was gathered and produced by Louise Lawson and Hélia Marçal, with contributions from Lia Kramer, Claire Perrault, Ben Webb and Mark Webber.

³ The materials contained within this section will be varied and may change from display to display depending on the context of display, size of venue, and so on.



DESCRIPTION OF THE PERFORMANCE

Ten Years Alive on the Infinite Plain is an approximately 90-minute film and music performance work involving four⁴ 16 mm film projectors, a projectionist, a pre-recorded audio file of Tony Conrad (hereafter referred to as 'the artist') playing solo violin, and live, amplified accompaniment by three⁵ musicians performing on violin or viola (hereafter referred to as 'violin'), electric bass guitar and a unique instrument called a 'long string instrument' or 'long string drone' (LSD).⁶

The performance features the three musicians playing a durational, minimalist and somewhat improvisational⁷ accompaniment to the recording of the artist. There is, intentionally, no score to guide musicians; the artist has stated that 'My idea was to eliminate the social and cultural function of the score as a site'.⁸ The musicians are positioned to one side of a screen, upon which there is a projection coming from four 16 mm projectors arranged side-by-side in a row, whose projected images are lined up edge-to-edge⁹. The 16 mm film loops each contain the same pattern of alternating light and dark vertical stripes which appear to move across the screen. Every third frame, the image switches between its positive and negative form, intended to create an intense, pulsating effect. Over the course of the performance the focus of each of the projections is subtly altered to create different effects. Roughly halfway through the performance the projectors and projections are incrementally shifted inwards at a very slow rate so that they gradually unite to form one pulsating, overlapping projection. The projectors and projectionist are set up on a raised platform behind the audience, who are located in the middle of the darkened space.

MEDIA

- 1 x .aiff audio file of the artist performing the work on violin:
 - Tate component number: TBC.
 - Duration: 1 hr 30 min 9 sec 250 ms.

⁴ The number of projections has varied: three projectors were used in the performance in Leeds in 2006 (EVOLUTION 2006 festival, Leeds City Art Gallery) due to the fourth projector breaking just before the performance, and six projectors were used in the 2013 performance in Bologna (Live Arts Week Festival II, Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna (MAMbo)). This was agreed with the artist, who was present in both cases.

⁵ The number of musicians has varied across previous performances, from three at The Kitchen, New York in 1972 to seven at the performance at BOZAR, the Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels in 2007.

⁶ The term 'long string instrument' is used by musicians and long string instrument practitioners. The reference to the instrument as a 'long string drone' came from Tony Conrad as a form of word play, since its abbreviation carries the double reference to the psychedelic drug LSD. Rhys Chatham, personal communication with Hélia Marçal, Kit Webb and Ana Ribeiro, 24 April 2019.

⁷ Given that the artist is no longer able to guide and perform the work following his death in 2016, there exists a tension between his improvisational practice and the need for the musicians to respond to the fixed recording of the artist playing.

⁸ Tony Conrad in Hans-Ulrich Obrist, *A Brief History of New Music*, Zurich 2013, p.194.

⁹ Information provided by Andrew Lampert.



- File size: 1.56 GB.

Note: This audio file was put together using recordings from various sources. There will, therefore, be a noticeable difference between certain sections of the file. This recording has nonetheless been used successfully in the past.

EQUIPMENT AND OTHER MATERIALS

- A PA system meeting the following requirements:
 - Monitoring the sound of the instruments by the performers and managing output levels.
 - Playback and equalisation of the artist's audio track.
 - The system must be set up in a stereo configuration, be well adjusted to the space and deliver undistorted sound.
- 1 x computer with output to mixing desk (to play the audio track during rehearsals and performance).
- All necessary cables should be provided.

ROLE OF SOUND ENGINEER

The following requirements of the sound engineer should be fulfilled in collaboration with the exhibiting venue:

Planning:

- Specification of a PA system (matching the above requirements) suited to the technical requirements of the work and the size and qualities of the space.
- Assessment of the acoustic properties of the chosen space in order to establish what acoustic treatment, if any, is required.

Rehearsals:

- Setting up the PA system with the speakers positioned left and right of the projection area in advance of rehearsals.
- Attending all rehearsals.
- Equalising the output from the recorded track and all amplified sounds in line with the directions given in this document and in order to deliver clear and undistorted sound in preparation for the performance.

Performance:

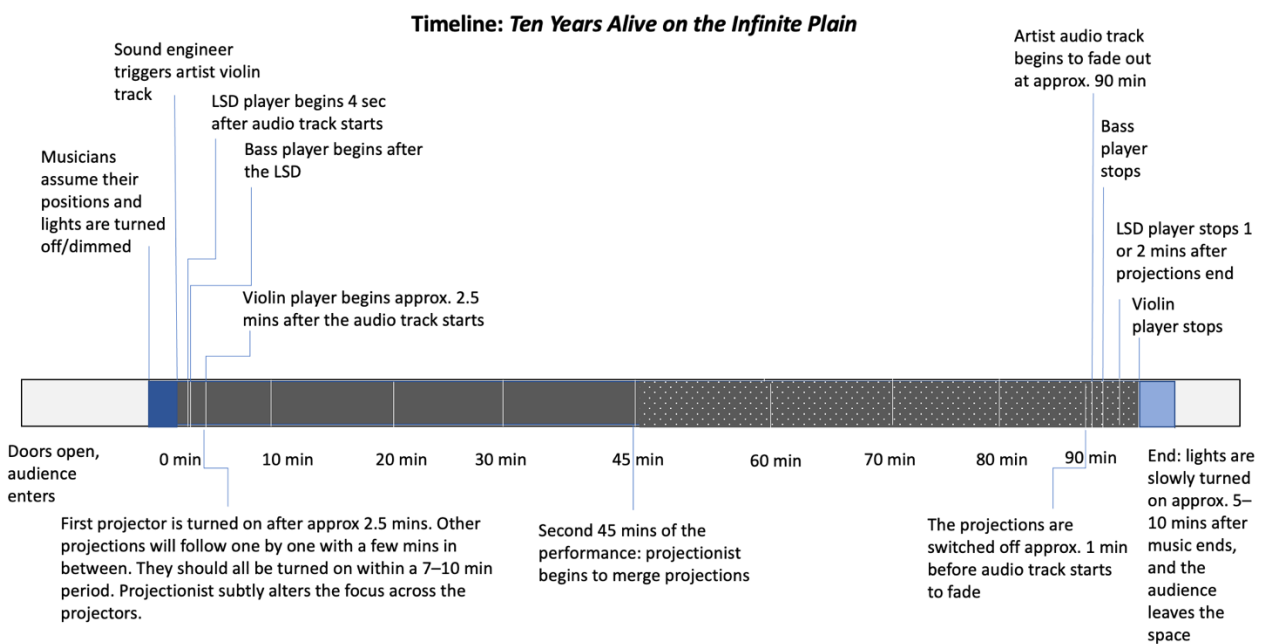
- Triggering playback of the recorded track during the performance.



- Monitoring output from the live musicians in relation to the recorded track and one another throughout the performance.

TIMELINE OF THE PERFORMANCE

The performance is approximately 90–100 minutes in length. The duration of the music and projections has become fixed to the duration of the recording of the artist playing the violin. The additional time is accounted for by the two moments of darkness and silence at the beginning and the end.¹⁰



Beginning:

- The beginning of the event is marked with the doors of the performance space opening and the audience entering the dimly lit space and finding their way to sit, stand or roam as they choose. The audience space is situated between the projection surface and the projection platform, the exact positioning of which is dependent on the chosen space.
- When the performance is ready to start, the musicians assume their positions with their instruments, chairs, instrument stands and amplifiers. The projectionist takes their position behind the projectors.
- When ready, the lights are turned down or off to create a darkened space.¹¹ There is a dim spotlight on the musicians throughout the performance.

¹⁰ Information provided by Andrew Lampert, Andrea Lissoni and Regina Greene.

¹¹ Information provided by Andrew Lampert.



- The performance begins with the playback of the pre-recorded audio track, triggered by the sound engineer. This represents the first violin of the performance; the remaining musicians are considered to be supporting the artist's audio track.¹²
- The LSD player starts after four seconds of playback.
- The bass player starts immediately after the LSD player.
- After around two and a half minutes, the violin player begins.
- Also at around two and a half minutes, the first projector is turned on. After a few minutes the second projector is turned on, followed a few minutes later by the third, and then the fourth a few minutes after that; it should take around 7–10 minutes for all four projectors to be turned on.
- The projectionist is then free to slowly move between projectors, gently and incrementally adjusting their focus, creating different visual patterns within the linear row of projections.¹³

Middle:

- For the first forty-five minutes of the performance the projectors remain stationary. At roughly the halfway point in the performance, the projectors are gently manipulated by the projectionist so that the projections very slowly merge into one single image during the remainder of the performance.

End:

- The end of the performance is determined by the end of the audio track (which fades out with about one minute remaining); in anticipation of this, each performer has a role to play in order to finish the performance:
 - By one minute prior to the end of the audio track the projectionist should have converged all the projections and turned off each projector, one by one.
 - Shortly after the final projector is turned off, the bassist stops playing.
 - After the bassist, the LSD player stops (1–2 minutes after the projections end).
 - Shortly after the LSD player, the violinist stops.
- The exact timing of these final steps is dependent on the musicians' flow; for example, if the musician is in the middle of a bow, they finish their movement.¹⁴
- A moment of darkness should be allowed after the music and projections finish.¹⁵ Only a dim light should be on in order to allow the audience to leave the space. The lights should not be

¹² Information collated by Time-Based Media Conservation based on the feedback session, Tate Liverpool, 16 May 2019.

¹³ Information provided by Andrew Lampert and Regina Greene.

¹⁴ Information provided by Regina Greene and confirmed by Angharad Davies and Rhys Chatham.

¹⁵ Information provided by Andrew Lampert, Andrea Lissoni and Regina Greene.



immediately brought up to full brightness as this detracts from the power and aftereffect of the work on the audience.¹⁶

- House lights can be turned on after around 5 to 10 minutes.

REHEARSALS

Criteria for rehearsals:

- At least three days should be set aside for load-in, installation and rehearsals.
- Rehearsals must take place in the same space as the performance.
- All performers, facilitators, the sound engineer and producer (or key producers) should attend the rehearsals.
- All of the rehearsals need not be of the same duration as the performance itself; rather, shorter rehearsal sessions are advised. At least two shorter rehearsal sessions are required.
- Time must be allocated for at least one full-length rehearsal in advance of the performance, but two full rehearsals are advised. These rehearsals will include the venue's full production team so that technical/backline considerations can be addressed and worked out.¹⁷

Rehearsals provide an opportunity for the sound engineer to determine exactly where and how the PA system will be set up in relation to the musicians, the projectionist, the audience space, and the acoustics and layout of the room in general.

LEVELS

- The artist intends that the work be loud. The purpose of this lies in the physical experience the artist wanted to provide audiences with – to feel the impact of low frequencies resonating in the body.
- While the audio levels should generally be loud, they should be set to a safe and comfortable level for all venue staff, performers and audience members.
- The violin played by the artist was the most prominent instrument in previous performances. As such, the loudest element in this work should be the audio track; the remaining instruments have a supporting role in relation to the artist's violin.
- The LSD should be louder than the live bass and violin.¹⁸

¹⁶ Information provided by Andrew Lampert.

¹⁷ Information provided by Andrew Lampert and by the Time-Based Media Conservation team.

¹⁸ Information provided by Barney Rosenthal.



- There may be issues with feedback caused by the LSD. The sound engineer is free to suggest potential solutions to this, for example moving the instruments further away from the PA system or changing the position of the musicians.¹⁹

REPORT CREATED BY: Louise Lawson, Hélia Marçal and Ana Ribeiro	DATE: Jan 2020
REPORT UPDATED BY: Duncan Harvey	DATE: Aug 2021

¹⁹ Information provided by Barney Rosenthal.