

*A Piano Played by Five Pianists at Once (First Attempt)*'s scenario begins in a motion capture studio at University of California in Irvine. Five pianists enter and sit at a table, while a film crew records the event on three cameras.

With the instruction to play one piano all together simultaneously and as a specific theme to write a soundtrack for collective engagement, the group engages in a talk on collaboration strategies and their respective areas of expertise : one pianist, the only woman, specializes in improvisational composition; two study classical music; the other two are jazz musicians.

Koki Tanaka brings the action into the realm of « chance music » also known as « aleatory music », a method of composition that introduces elements of chance or unpredictability regarding the composition or its performance. The result is a contingent community of interdisciplinary artists and musicians who collaborate in the production of what the French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy calls an « inoperative community » – that unplanned communal state in which the I's are always others. In this piece, all positions are thrown into flux. What's brought the five pianists together is neither a curricular obligation nor a shared interest in a specific musical genre. Rather, they arrive having answered a performative solicitation – circulated by the conceptual artist Koki Tanaka – to compose and play a piece of music, simultaneously, on film.

*A Piano Played by Five Pianists at Once (First Attempt)* not only produces (by chance) a soundtrack for collective engagement – the ostensible task at hand – it also provides an opportunity to envision a different, contingent model of collaboration and, by extension, collectivity.

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