

On Hold

from the series *In Between Times*

Text score for in-situ solo performance

Suggested Duration: 2–10 minutes (environment-determined)

Shauna DeGruchy

2026

About This Work

On Hold is a site-responsive text score that treats waiting on a phone line as a compositional condition. The work unfolds through attentive listening, restraint, and minimal action, shaped by the rhythms and contingencies of the system rather than by predetermined material. Operating at the threshold of noticeability, *On Hold* engages temporal and procedural structures without interrupting them.

The work's primary conditions are delay, repetition, interruption, and uncertainty. Hold music, automated messages, silence, disconnection, and return collectively determine pacing and form. Deferred resolution is treated not as failure, but as the condition that shapes attention and action.

On Hold functions as both a discrete action and as one instance within *In Between Times*, a broader body of work concerned with how musical structure can arise through attentive engagement with everyday systems.

.

About This Series

In Between Times is a series of instruction-based sound works that unfold within ordinary systems of delay, transition, and regulated time. Across the series, attention and duration function as primary compositional materials, structured through constraints, cues, and environmental conditions rather than fixed sonic content. The works are intended to exist within lived contexts, often briefly and without trace, emphasizing responsiveness and restraint as forms of musical practice within shared systems.

On Hold

from the series *In Between Times*

Text score for in-situ solo performance

Suggested Duration: 2–10 minutes (environment-determined)

Performance Context

Place or receive a phone call and remain on hold within a live system (e.g., customer service line, automated support system, institutional phone tree). The work unfolds entirely within the duration of the hold.

Attentional Frame

Attend closely to the unfolding auditory and temporal conditions, with particular focus on:

- repetition and looping
- delay without progression
- changes that do not resolve
- the difference between waiting with attention and waiting to escape

Acknowledge that the call could be ended at any moment.

.

Instructions

Remain on the call; do not multitask. Internally mark cycles. A cycle may be defined by:

- the return of the same music or automated message
- a familiar silence
- the sense that “this has already happened”

At the completion of each cycle, perform one internal or barely perceptible action. Actions are chosen freely and are not intentionally repeated. They may accumulate or subtly alter one another. No action is released outward for the purpose of being noticed.

Ending Conditions

The performer does not attempt to predict when the call will resolve.

The performance ends immediately and without emphasis when:

- a human voice answers, or
- the call disconnects, or
- the performer chooses to hang up

The performer is responsible for maintaining the social integrity of the space at all times.

On Hold

from the series *In Between Times*

Gesture & Sound Orientation

Performers may find it useful to identify a small, situation-appropriate palette of gestures or sounds prior to or during the performance. These function as orientation rather than instruction, and may change from one realization to the next.

Examples may include:

- a subtle breath adjustment
- lightly tapping a finger against the phone or a nearby surface
- a brief internal count
- a small shift in posture while listening

The environment remains the primary source of timing, variation, and form.

Documentation & Reflection

The work may be documented, reflected upon, or allowed to pass without record. When documentation occurs, it is understood as a secondary practice rather than a goal.

Possible forms include:

- short ambient audio captures of hold conditions
- written notes on timing, repetition, or interruption
- diagrams mapping changes in system state
- abstract traces representing actions or pauses

Documentation may inform future realizations or related works, but is not required.

Traces and Translations

This work may generate traces beyond the moment of its in-situ performance. These traces are optional and are not the work itself, but may take the form of reflection, memory, or documentation. The work may also be translated into other formats—such as an ensemble work, an installation, or a digital record—through abstraction rather than reenactment of its source environment. Translations prioritize responsiveness, constraint, and emergence over representation, and draw from ideas accumulated through in-situ practice. Neither trace nor translation is required for the work to occur.