

making a
choice and
then making
another choice

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[at least two players]

making a choice and then making another choice (2021) involves players repeatedly writing down the value of a sonic parameter, such as pitch, rhythmic impulses, or words, and then sounding those parameters. Each decision is made individually, sequentially, and not prepared in advance, with players' choices contingent on their own preferences and the influence of other players choices.

SETUP

Each player needs to have a setup that includes something to write with and something to write on (with any necessary preparation, such as a pre-printed staff for PITCHES), and the means of making sound necessary for the elements being played.

If performed to an audience, the writing could be made visible in some way (e.g. overhead camera or tablet linked to a projector, whiteboard, flip chart, audience proximity etc.), or not. Either way, the audience should be aware that the players are writing something down and then making a sound in response.

INSTRUCTIONS

The piece involves at least two players each playing at least one of the elements listed below. Any combination of these elements is possible, and players may play more than one in sequence, or interlocked in any way. For example, one player might play PITCH (HARMONY) while the other plays PITCH (MELODY), or they may do this for a time and then swap. Alternatively each player in a group might play PITCH (MELODY), RHYTHM and WORDS by jumping between the three elements at will. The basic requirement is for parallel activity. This could be achieved as in the examples above using different elements, with everyone using the same element (e.g. all playing PITCH (MELODY)), or any combination in between.

In advance of playing, agree either the number of units to be completed in each element (e.g. 50 pitches in PITCH (MELODY)) or the total duration.

Players may begin together, or entries may be staggered.
All elements being used should all be heard together at least once in the piece.

Each of the elements available involve notating something and then sounding it. Throughout, the speed and duration is free, but players should generally proceed at a comfortable pace, perhaps with a little variation. Much faster or slower realisations and variations in pacing between elements are also possible.

The choices made within each element should not be determined in advance, but arrived at spontaneously when realising the piece. It is possible to have a principle to govern the realisation (e.g. using words in alphabetical sequence, or using pitches within a scale), but the actual choices should be made during playing.

Repeating previously used choices is possible, and in many cases unavoidable.

ELEMENTS

I. PITCH (MELODY)

On a staff or using pitch notation in any format (e.g. c4, b'', fah etc.), notate a single pitch and then play it on an instrument.

The melody pitches should generally be short, so that there is a break between writing and playing.
Repeat this process until the agreed number of pitches have been played.

II. PITCH (HARMONY)

On a staff or using any type of chord symbol (e.g. Cm7, ii⁷b, ⁶/₄ etc.), notate a chord and then play it on an instrument.

The chords should generally be short, so that there is a break between writing and playing.
Repeat this process until the agreed number of chords have been played.

III. PULSE

Write a number between 1-10, and then evenly tap that number of times using a single percussion sound (e.g. fingers on a table, side drum, cardboard box etc.).

The tempo should be consistent within a single pulse, but may vary a little between each sequence.
Repeat this process until the agreed number of pulses have been played.

IV. RHYTHM

Write a rhythm using any form of appropriate notation (e.g. metric, proportional, numerical, Morse code etc.) and then play it using a single percussion sound (e.g. tabla, cow bell, saucepan etc.).
The rhythm should be a fairly short sequence comprising only a few articulations.
Repeat this process until the agreed number of rhythms have been played.

V. TEXTURE (PITCH)

On a staff (or using chord symbols), notate a single pitch or chord and then play it on an instrument.
In general, choose either single pitches or chords for this element, although occasionally sapping between them is possible.
The pitches/chords should be sustained so that there is no gap between playing them (so it must be possible to write and play at the same time).
Repeat this process until the agreed number of pitches/chords have been played.

VI. TEXTURE (UNPITCHED)

Write the name of the object/instrument making the sound (e.g. rainstick, bellows) and then play the sound.
The sounds should be sustained so that there is almost no gap between playing them (so it must be possible to write and play at the same time).
The sounds should be produced by different objects/instruments, ideally with one sound produced by each. If more than one sound is produced by an instrument/object then a description should be determined (e.g. sandpaper on wood, brushed wood etc.).
Repeat this process until the agreed number of sounds have been played.

VII. SOUNDS (UNPITCHED)

Write the name of the object/instrument making the sound (e.g. plastic cup, bass drum) and then play the sound.
The sounds should generally be short, so that there is a break between writing and playing.
The sounds should be produced by different objects/instruments, ideally with one sound produced by each. If more than one sound is produced by an instrument/object then a description should be determined (e.g. struck cymbal, bowed cymbal etc.).
Repeat this process until the agreed number of sounds have been played.

VIII. SOUNDS (SAMPLES)

Write a noun (e.g. dog), and then play a sample of its sound (e.g. 'woof')
The samples should generally be short, so that there is a break between writing and playing.
The samples could be triggered using a tablet or keyboard.
The set of samples will need to be prepared in advance as a result, but the sequence should be chosen during the realisation.
Repeat this process until the agreed number of samples have been played.

IX. WORDS

Write a noun and then say the word out loud.
Repeat this process until the agreed number of words have been spoken.

X. MOVEMENTS

Draw a movement direction, and then move an object in the indicated way.
The object should be something small (e.g. a stone, glass, or phone).
Imagine the object is placed on a grid. Any of the following directions may be used:
move object one space: ← → ↑ ↓
move object two spaces: ↖ ↗ ↘ ↙
rotate object: ↻

Repeat this process until the agreed number of movements have been completed.