All Sounds?

Matthew Geer
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Written for the *Line Upon Line* percussion trio

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All Sounds? is a text-score for three percussionists playing simultaneously. My main focus in composition lies in engagement with combinations, permutations, partitioning, maximal diversity and really anything using a finite set of objects, musical or otherwise.

All Sounds? uses maximal diversity and combinations in a very different way to my previous pieces. Instead of displaying process on a page through a formal structure, the piece allows the repetition of decision trees[1] and the variety in decision making to naturally allow maximal diversity to occur over time. The title of the piece is a play on the piece *All Words* by Michael Oesterle; my piece has the addition of a question mark, invoking the possibility that maximal diversity may not be reached at the end of the performance...

There are six sonic components in total; low register, medium register, high register, *pp*, *mp-mf* [2] and *ff*. The chart on the next page (Table 1) shows how each player's decision tree is structured.

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[1] Decision trees are a diagrammatic model that displays a series of decisions and consequences.

[2] *mp-mf* in this context is used to describe a dynamic that is equidistance between mezzo-piano and mezzo-forte; louder than *mp* but softer than *mf* and not a dynamic that freely moves anywhere between the two.

Table 1: Combinatorial groupings for each player

	pp	*mp-mf*	*ff*
Player 1	If a low sound is played, play a medium sound	If a low sound is played, play a high sound	If a low sound is played, play a low sound
	If a medium sound is played, play a high sound	If a medium sound is played, play a low sound	If a medium sound is played, play a medium sound
	If a high sound is played, play a low sound	If a high sound is played, play a medium sound	If a high sound is played, play a high sound
Player 2	If a low sound is played, play a low sound	If a low sound is played, play a medium sound	If a low sound is played, play a high sound
	If a medium sound is played, play a medium sound	If a medium sound is played, play a high sound	If a medium sound is played, play a low sound
	If a high sound is played, play a high sound	If a high sound is played, play a low sound	If a high sound is played, play a medium sound
Player 3	If a low sound is played, play a high sound	If a low sound is played, play a low sound	If a low sound is played, play a medium sound
	If a medium sound is played, play a low sound	If a medium sound is played, play a medium sound	If a medium sound is played, play a high sound
	If a high sound is played, play a medium sound	If a high sound is played, play a high sound	If a high sound is played, play a low sound

<u>Performance Instructions (ordered)</u>

- Before the piece begins, each player should choose at least one melodic instrument to play on each. Players may share instruments but there must be at least three melodic instruments available. A melodic instrument refers to any instrument with a minimum of three different pitches. These do not have to be standard percussive instrument so may be extended instruments e.g. a tin whistle or a melodica. Each player should decide before the piece begins which instrument they want to start on. After the first decision, the player may stay with or change instruments at their own leisure.
- The trio begin the performance at the same time, cued by *player 1* and start with three seconds of silence.
- Each player performs their first note, cued by *player 1*. After this cue, the performers all play independent of each other until the very end of the piece, cued by *player 1*.
- The first instruction *Play any type of sound...* can be of any duration, pitch or volume and on any instrument. It is expected that from this decision, the players will become unsynchronised.
- When the note of each player has ended, they must leave at least 5 seconds of silence. This will give them time to make their next decision and also change instruments if they choose. Players *must not* rush their decision, rather take time to read their decision tree. It is anticipated that the players will naturally become quicker at reading the score as the piece progresses.
- The subjectivity of the initial sounds dynamic and pitch categorisation is up to the individual performer. For example, what is *pp* to one player might be *mp* to another. This dissimilarity is allowed.
- The second sound on the decision tree has the same freedom as the first, but the approximate register and dynamics are given.
- After each player has sounded their last note, they should return to the beginning of the decision tree and wait three seconds until they repeat the process.
- The piece ends when *player 1* signals the duration of the piece is up. It is recommended that the piece should last for a minimum of 5 minutes, but can last as long as one would like.

Score for PLAYER 1

BEGINNING

Wait three seconds, then make a choice

Play any type of sound on any instrument, using any duration, dynamic or pitch. Then follow the decision tree, leaving 5 seconds silence for decision making.

Wait for 5 seconds

Was the sound…

…between *pp* and *p*?

…between *mp* and *mf*?

…between *f* and *ff*?

Was it…

Was it…

Was it…

…low?   …medium?   …high?

…low?   …medium?   …high?

…low?   …medium?   …high?

Play a medium sound, between pp and p	*Play a high sound, between pp and p*	*Play a low sound, between pp and p*	*Play a low sound, between mp and mf*	*Play a medium sound, between mp and mf*	*Play a high sound, between mp and mf*	*Play a high sound, between f and ff*	*Play a low sound, between f and ff*	*Play a medium sound, between f and ff*
Return to the beginning	*Return to the beginning*	*Return to the beginning*	*Return to the beginning*	*Return to the beginning*	*Return to the beginning*	*Return to the beginning*	*Return to the beginning*	*Return to the beginning*

Return to the beginning

BEGINNING

Wait three seconds, then make a choice

Play any type of sound on any instrument, using any duration, dynamic or pitch. Then follow the decision tree, leaving 5 seconds silence for decision making.

Wait for 5 seconds

Was the sound…

…between *pp* and *p*?

…between *mp* and *mf*?

…between *f* and *ff*?

Was it…

Was it…

Was it…

…low?   …medium?   …high?

…low?   …medium?   …high?

…low?   …medium?   …high?

Play a high sound, between pp and p	*Play a low sound, between pp and p*	*Play a medium sound, between pp and p*	*Play a medium sound, between mp and mf*	*Play a high sound, between mp and mf*	*Play a low sound, between mp and mf*	*Play a low sound, between f and ff*	*Play a medium sound, between f and ff*	*Play a high sound, between f and ff*

Return to the beginning	*Return to the beginning*	*Return to the beginning*	*Return to the beginning*	*Return to the beginning*	*Return to the beginning*	*Return to the beginning*	*Return to the beginning*	*Return to the beginning*

Return to the beginning

BEGINNING

Wait three seconds, then make a choice

Play any type of sound on any instrument, using any duration, dynamic or pitch. Then follow the decision tree, leaving 5 seconds silence for decision making.

Wait for 5 seconds

Was the sound…

…between *pp* and *p*?

…between *mp* and *mf*?

…between *f* and *ff*?

Was it…

Was it…

Was it…

…low?   …medium?   …high?

…low?   …medium?   …high?

…low?   …medium?   …high?

Play a low sound, between pp and p	*Play a medium sound, between pp and p*	*Play a high sound, between pp and p*	*Play a high sound, between mp and mf*	*Play a low sound, between mp and mf*	*Play a medium sound, between mp and mf*	*Play a medium sound, between f and ff*	*Play a high sound, between f and ff*	*Play a low sound, between f and ff*
Return to the beginning	*Return to the beginning*	*Return to the beginning*	*Return to the beginning*	*Return to the beginning*	*Return to the beginning*	*Return to the beginning*	*Return to the beginning*	*Return to the beginning*

Return to the beginning