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AT EIGHT, PLAY...

At 8, play...

At 8 play... is a musical piece that confronts written score with free improvisation. It was created for students in the percussion class of the Royal Birmingham Conservatory in 2018, and was also played by percussion students at the Haute Ecole de Musique de Genève the same year. The workshops and rehearsals of these two ensembles resulted in two concerts.

Rules
At eight, play... is a musical improvisation game, designed for about 6-10 players and a game leader. Each player will be dealt animated cards on digital tablets by the leader as the performance progresses.
Each player has a digital tablet as a partition. The tablets are independent of each other, which means that several different informations can be sent to the performers at the same time. Everything is synchronized and the rhythm of the piece is the same for everyone.

The leader decides how long each event lasts for before sending players the next card. Each card starts with 'At eight, play...' followed by an 8 beat countdown after which the next action can begin. The musician always continues his/her action until the end of the next countdown.

Each musician only knows her/his own indications and does not know what her/his partners will play at the next countdown. For example, she/he may unknowingly enter into a duet with a partner. Or mimic the rhythm played by her/his neighbour. Or…

The sound actions proposed by the leader can be of the order of imagination, play or listening. They are always in interaction between the physical sound environment and the sound imagination specific to each performer.

The encounter between the performers and the leader is always interactive; each one triggers an event based on impulses and/or proposals from others.

The piece need as many iPad as the number of performers.

Tempo :
Tempo for the piece is crochet = 120
A metronome shows the beat on each score.

Duration :
The piece is 10-15 minutes maximum.

Instruments :
As far as possible, balance melodic and rhythmic instruments.
Each percussionist choose few instruments.
In general, try to be inventive with little material.

People who don't play, always stay connected with other musicians and the audience.

There are several types of game cards :

A. Context cards
To be read as states or game proposals
Example: At 8, I will play in a threatening way; or : At 8, I will echo my sound environment

B. Pauses (silences) cards
Example : At 8, I play in the air, without sound (like air-guitar)

C. Scores
There are 3 types of written material :

1. Graphic scores (drawings by Benoît Jacques)

Exemple :

2. Melody/rhythm cards

Exemple :

Or :

3. Ostinato

One or more musicien(s) play a rhythmic pattern (*ostinato*). He/she/they can play in the air (like air-guitar) if the leader requests it - in which case the pulse will be felt and seen, but not heard. The pattern may change during the piece. The musicien(s) can also change but they are always chosen by the leader.

Exemple :

D. Joker

1 Joker card : 'Play what you want'

At 8, play...

State of the game 012

Pauses 001

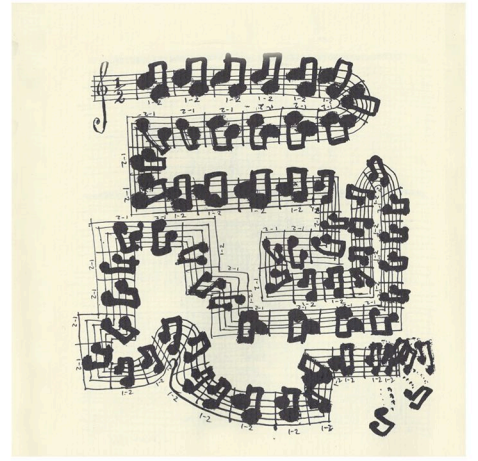Scores 003

State of the game branch:
- I play with sadness
- I play softly
- I am searching in my memory (near or far) for a sound
- I gradually increase the density of a sound
- I am transmitting a sound information to my neighbour
- I echo my sound environment
- I produce rapid changes
- I focus my attention on current sound events
- I quickly vary the intensities
- I hold back
- I produce low-pitched sounds
- I repeat equally
- I dephase
- I gradually play less loudly than my neighbours
- I play little by little louder than my neighbours
- I gradually decrease the density of a sound
- I will re indecisive
- I play threateningly
- I first with my neighbour
- I play cheerfully
- I play with frenzy

Pauses branch:
- I stop playing
- I decrescendo at mente
- I play in the air without sound

Joker 011:
- I play what I want

Ostinato 010

Scores branch:

Melody/rhythm cards 004
- Séquence mélodique 2 — 009
- Séquence Mélodique 1 — 008
- Séquence 3 — 007
- Séquence 6 — 006
- Séquence 2 — 005

Graphic scores 002

001 Pauses

3 pause (silence) cards :
- I play in the air, without sound
- I stop playing
- I decrescendo al niente

002 Scores

There are four types of written material :
- Melody/rhythm
- Ostinato
- Graphic scores
- Jokers

003 Graphic scores

9 graphic scores cards
Drawings by Benoît Jacques

004 Melody/rhythm cards

8 melody/rhythm cards :
- sequence 2 (a,b,c) for 3 players
- sequence 3 (a,b) for 2 players
- melodic sequence 1
- melodic sequence 2 (a,b) for two players

005 Séquence 2

3 cards :
melodic sequence 2 (a,b) for two players

006 Séquence 6

2 mélodie carde for 2 players

007 Séquence 3

2 cards :
sequence 3 (a,b) for 2 players

008 Séquence Mélodique 1

1 card

009 Séquence mélodique 2

2 cards :
melodic sequence 2 (a,b) for two players

010 Ostinato

4 ostinatos; one can go from one to the next, or play several simultaneously

011 Joker

Joker : 1 card = I play anything I like (free)

012 State of the game

21 cards state of the game :

- I am searching in my memory (near or far) for a sound
- I gradually increase the density of a sound
- I gradually decrease the density of a sound
- I am transmitting a sound information to my neighbour
- I echo my sound environment
- I focus my attention on current sound events
- I produce rapid changes
- I quickly vary the intensities
- I hold back
- I produce low-pitched sounds
- I repeat equally
- I dephase
- I gradually play less loudly than my neighbours
- I play little by little louder than his neighbours
- I play threateningly
- I flirt with my neigbour
- I play cheerfully
- I play with frenzy
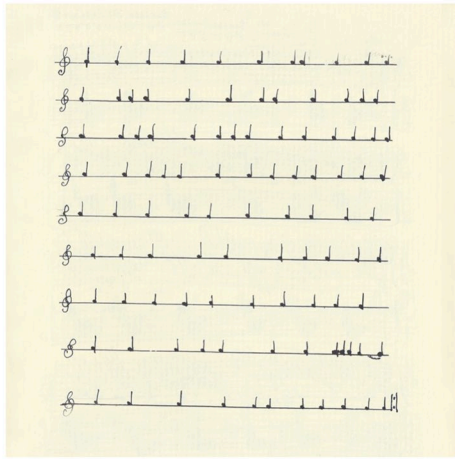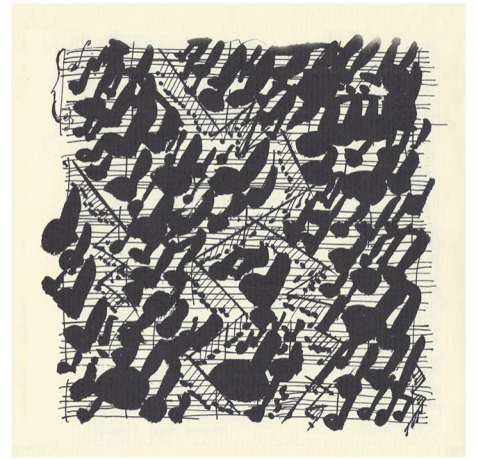- I play with sadness
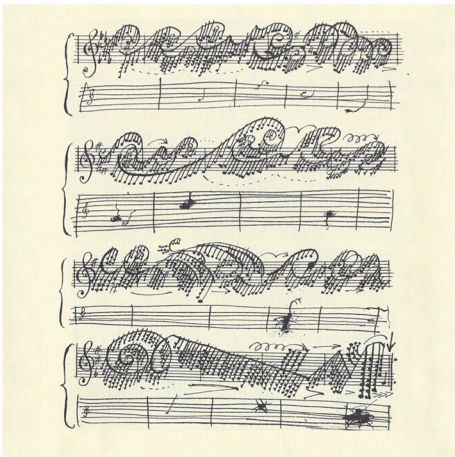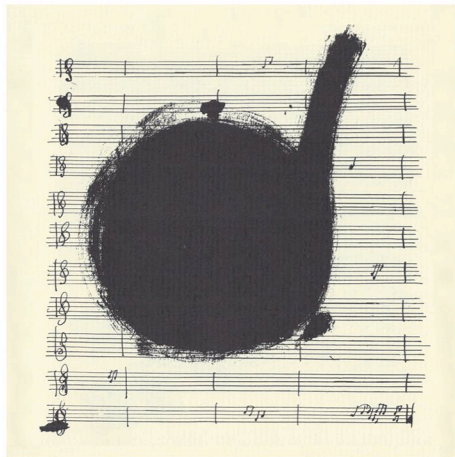- I play softly
- I will be indecisive

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8
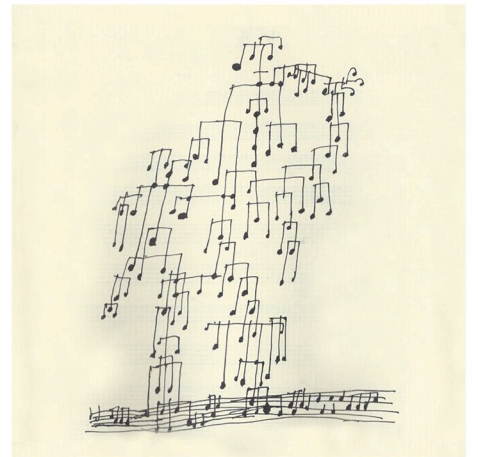
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Séquence mélodique 1

Séquence mélodique 2a

Séquence mélodique 2b

Séquence 6

Séquence 6
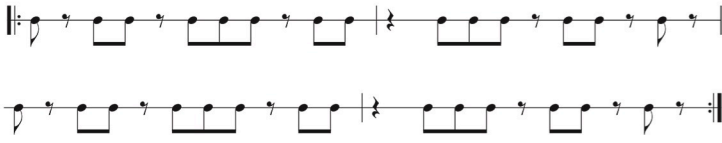
Ostinato 1

Ostinato 2

Ostinato 3

Ostinato 4

Séquence 2a

Séquence 2b

Séquence 2c

Séquence 3a

Séquence 3b

Note: the performer should not systematically play.
Note : l'interprète ne doit pas systématiquement jouer.

I am searching in my memory (near or far) for a sound	*Je recherche dans ma mémoire (proche ou lointaine) un son*
I gradually increase the density of a sound	*J'augmente progressivement la densité du son*
I gradually decrease the density of a sound	*Je vais décroître progressivement la densité du son*
I am transmitting a sound information to my neighbour	*Je transmets une information sonore à mon/ma voisin.e*
I echo my sound environment	*Je me fais l'écho de mon environnement sonore*
I focus my attention on current sound events	*Je polarise mon attention sur les évènements sonores en cours*
I produce rapid changes	*Je produis des changements rapides*
I quickly vary the intensities	*Je varie rapidement les intensités*
I hold back	*Je retiens*
I produce low-pitched sounds	*Je produis des sonorités graves*
I repeat equally	*Je répète à l'identique*
I dephase	*(Se) déphaser*
I gradually play less loudly than my neighbours	*Je joue petit à petit moins fort que mes voisin.e.s*
I play little by little louder than his neighbours	*Je joue petit à petit plus fort que ses voisin.e.s*
I play threateningly	*Je joue avec menace*
I flirt with my neigbour	*Je flirte avec mon/ma voisin.e*
I play cheerfully	*Je joue joyeusement*
I play with frenzy	*Je joue avec frénésie*
I play with sadness	*Je joue avec tristesse*
I play softly	*Je joue doucement*
I will be indecisive	*Je serai indécis*
I play in the air, without sound	*Je joue dans l'air, sans son*
I stop playing	*J'arrête de jouer*
I decrescendo al niente	*Je fais un decrescendo al niente*
I play what I want	*Je joue ce que je veux*