

Game of Tones I

the one about playing tag in the park

a zoomfriendly piece for instruments

by David Machell

This piece was inspired by watching the grandkids frolic in an open space, playing endless joyful chase games (whilst observing strict social-distancing guidelines, obv's) where the rules seemed as fluid as their movements. There is a "Jeux d'Enfants" vibe to the whole, with a back-story of Bartok's Concerto for Orchestra (the Scherzo, "Gioco delle coppie", where instruments appear in pairs.)

GAME OF TONES addresses one of zoom's greatest limitations (the random muting of participants for no apparent reason) by focussing on solo and duet textures.

Musicians should organise themselves in pairs, and designate one to be the leader, the other to be the chaser. It may happen there are more pairs of players than there are sections in the piece. In such a case each section could feature more than one pair (playing one after the other, not both simultaneously).

The stimulus material is on a separate sheet, and is intended to spark off expressive playing by each player. Confident players may devise their own material within the markings for the section.

The first three sections feature pairs of performers.

The Third Section (**staccato deciso con rigore**) will start with one pair, as in previous sections, but musicians will gradually join until all are contributing to the general crescendo.

The Fourth Section (**agitato senza misura con extrema confusione**) is a mêlée of gleeful chaotic energies, tutti. Distancing guidelines may well be breached in this section.

The Final Section (**sempre più tranquillo**) will start tutti and gradually each instrument will drop out. There is a final event (shown by a double box) where each player uses that material exclusively. Think of it as a great big picnic blanket where you can collapse whilst Mum gets out the jelly.

Events in boxes (with the exception of the final double-box, which is common to all players) are to be taken as stimulus, not finished ideas, merely starting points for creativity. They can be played in any order. Boxes may be repeated or omitted at player's discretion. The middle line represents the middle register of the instrument/voice. Rhythms and pitches are shown proportionately, but interpret freely. (The whole piece is without audible pulse.) Each section will last as long as it needs. A "wedge" denotes staccatissimo, a "hat" denotes molto marcato. A tie after a single note implies that the note should be somewhat sustained - not as long as a pause.

The "Feels like..." marking does not refer to individual notes, but to the internal pulse that we sense when playing.

Game of Tones I

the one about playing tag in the park
a zoom-friendly piece for instruments

David Machell

See separate sheet for instructions.

1: calmo

Feels like crotchet = 60

2: con moto poco accel.

Feels like crotchet = 80, reaching crotchet = 110 by end of section

3: staccato deciso con rigore, sempre cresc.

Feels like crotchet = strict 135

4: agitato senza misura con extrema confusione

Feels like no regular pulse at all: rhythmic and melodic anarchy

A musical staff with a double bar line on the left. It contains four groups of rhythmic notation. The first group consists of a series of vertical stems of varying heights, with the text *ff sempre* below. The second group has a long horizontal line above it, with a curved arrow pointing from left to right. The third group is similar to the first but with a curved arrow above it. The fourth group has a few stems with accents (>) above them.

A musical staff with a double bar line on the left. It contains three boxes. The first box has a slur over a series of notes descending in pitch, with *ff sempre* below. The second box has notes with slurs and accents (>) above them, with *ff sempre* below. The third box is empty and contains the text *none of the above!*

5: poco a poco calmando rit e dim

Feels like crotchet = 50 and slowing

A musical staff with a double bar line on the left. It contains two boxes. The first box has a slur over notes, with a dynamic marking *f* and a wedge-shaped decrescendo hairpin below. The second box has a slur over notes, with a dynamic marking *mf* and a wedge-shaped decrescendo hairpin below.

A musical staff with a double bar line on the left. It contains two boxes. The first box has a slur over notes, with dynamic markings *mp* and *p* and wedge-shaped decrescendo hairpins below. The second box is empty and contains the text *none of the above!*

6: sostenuto, calmando a niente

Feels like crotchet = 40 and slowing.

Notes shown are concert pitch.

A musical staff with double bar lines on both ends. It contains six notes: C, B, A, G, F, and F. The first four notes (C, B, A, G) have a horizontal line above them, indicating a sustained or tenuto quality. The last two notes (F, F) have slurs above them.

Game of Tones II

the one about kayaking down rapids

a zoomfriendly piece for voices by David Machell

The GAME OF TONES series is designed to address the opportunities and (considerable) limitations of zoom music making. This piece, like Game of Tones I, tackles the tendency zoom has to mute voices at random (presumably to avoid overloading the signal) by focussing, in sections 1 to Three at least, on pairs of solo performers. This gives singers ample time to savour the singing of others.

This piece is about a river, and it draws on (terrifying) experiences of steering a kayak down the Ardèche and other rivers, from a still place through fast flow to turbulent rapids and finally to open water again. There is a text, which is intended to be recited as a prelude to each section (by a different speaker for each section of the piece, perhaps).

Singers should organise themselves in pairs, and designate one of each pair to be the leader, the other to be the follower, as it were one kayak trying to pursue another down the river. The follower may seek to imitate the leader, or, more adventurously, find their own passage through!

The musical stimulus material is on a separate sheet, and is intended to spark off expressive singing by each singer.. Confident singers are encouraged to devise their own setting of the given text. within the markings for the section.

Sections 1 (**calmo**) features a pair of singers, and Section 2 (**con moto accelerando**) a different pair.

The Third Section (**staccato deciso con rigore**) will start with another new pair, (the third such) joined after a short while by a fourth pair - making a four-voice texture.

The Fourth Section (**agitato senza misura con extrema confusione**) is a maelstrom of chaotic energies, starting with a (fifth) new pair, quickly adding more new pairs until a tutti is achieved.

The Fifth Section (**sempre più tranquillo**) will start tutti and gradually each singer will drop out.

In the Sixth and final section (**calmo come prima**), all singers use the common material given, the falling five-note scale.

Events in brackets (with the exception of the final double-bracket, which is common to all players) are to be taken as stimulus, not finished ideas, merely starting points for creativity. They can be sung in any order, repeated or omitted at the singer's discretion.

The "Feels like..." marking does not refer to individual notes, but to the internal pulse that we sense when performing..

The host can provide an audible drone if required, but experienced singers can manage quite happily without. Singers should equip themselves with a tuning fork. A good alternative is an electronic keyboard (doesn't need to be an expensive one) with an earpiece.

NOTE: This material will also suit a "Virtual Choir" method, where singers record their individual interpretations, sending as email attachments to a central "editor" who will knit them into a coherent whole.

DM 01-06-2020

Game of Tones II (for voices)

(the one about the river)

Version of 05-06-2020

Text and Music
David Machell

Phrases within brackets can be repeated or admitted at the singer's discretion.

1: calmo

This section uses a four note scale using C as a root with F, G and Bb. Feels like crotchet = 60. Singers are grouped in pairs, one leading and the other in their wake. The follower can choose either to mimic the leader exactly, or to deliberately deviate.

Text to be read out loud before each new section:

Section 1: Water. A weight of water, lying, watching, locked in long, torpid slumber.

Light of morning lingers, leaden. A shimmering, a subtle shining, over the immovable mass, as it lies murmuring drowsily, scarce moving."

p generally

wa - ter a weight of wa - ter ly - ing wat - ching locked in long

tor - pid slum - ber light of mor - ning lin - gers, lea - den a shim - mer - ing

a sub - tle shi - ning o - ver the im - mo - va - ble mass mur - mu - ring

choose any portion of the text, devise and perform your own version using given parameters

2: con moto, poco accel.

This section uses five note scale rooted on C, using D, E G and B natural. Feels like crotchet = 80. It is sung by a different pair of singers

Slow stirrings rouse depths drowsy from slumber, and imperceptible seismic shifts grasp the deep. Vast volumes gradually start unthinkably to displace, initiating their silky, seductive, serpentine sway.

mp rising to mf

slow stir - rings rouse depths drow - sy from slum - ber and im - per - cep - ti - ble seis - mic shifts grasp the

deep vast vo - lumes gra - du - al - ly start un - thin - ka - bly to dis - place i - ni - ti - a - ting

their sil - ky se - duc - tive ser - pen - tine sway

choose any portion of the text, devise and perform your own version using given parameters

3: staccato deciso con rigore

This section uses a five-note scale, rooted on D, using F#, G, A C#. Feels like crotchet = 135.

It starts with a new pair of singers, but another pair join them after a short while, making four audible voices in all.

Rock! rock, sharp as cleaver, to slice! to stab! to chop! Multiple micro-fragments of foam, sharp shards of living light, droplets driven to ecstatic dance, recklessly colliding with rock, to splinter, to shatter.

f *sfzp*

rock! rock! sharp as cleaver! to slice! to stab! to chop!

sfzp

mul-ti-ple mi-cro-frag-ments of foam sharp shards of li-ving light! drop-lets dri-ven

to ec-sta-tic dance reck-less-ly col-li-ding with

choose any portion of the text,
devise and perform your own
version using given parameters

rock to splin-ter! to shat-ter!

4: agitato senza misura con extrema confusione

This section uses the full octave and every microtone in between. It should be sung, but with a strong speech quality, in order to sound as natural as possible. Feels like crotchet = 180. Starting with a new pair, then quickly adding any previously unused pairs, moving to a relentless tutti climax.

A chaos! A crisis! A cascade, fleck'd foam dashed to pieces in drunken delirium, cataclysm of conflicted forces.

ff

a chaos! a crisis! a cascade fleck'd foam dash'd to pieces in drunken

delirium, cataclysm of con-

fic-ted for-ces

choose any portion of the text,
devise and perform your own
version using given parameters

5: sempre piu tranquillo

This section is a gradual decelerando, but each phrase should contain its own decelerando. It uses F# pentatonic. Feels like crotchet = 180 at the start, but nearer crotchet = 50 by the end of the section. Pairs gradually drop out and the texture thins from tutti to a final pair.

One final push, in joy-filled paroxysm, past rock ridges scrubbed smooth with time. Unstoppable surgings dissipate, relief from the buffeting, bask in the broad reach, anger spent, fury assuaged, the glass-cas'd surface a perfect mirror for the sky.

mf subsiding to *p*

one fi - nal push in joy-filled pa-ro-xy-sm past rock rid - ges

scrubb'd smooth with time un - stop-pa-ble sur-gings dis-si- pate re -

lief from the buf-fet-ting bask in the broad reach an-ger spent, fu-ry as-suag'd the

Please use only the material given, no improv. in this section

glass-cas'd sur-face a per - fect mir - ror for the sky

6: calmo come prima

This material is used by all voices, starting quietly, then managing a controlled dim a niente. It uses G Lydian. Feels like crotchet = 50, slowing gradually. How long it lasts is at the conductor's discretion. Indeed this is true of all sections.

All calm.

p subsiding to *pp* then to nothing

All calm

Game of Tones III

The one about the mountain expedition
a zoom-friendly piece for voices and/or instruments

One thing zoom does very well is share-screen. Whatever the host has on their ipad (etc) can be seen by all participants. Experiments with showing videos, either locally stored or on youtube, have proved positive. GAME OF TONES III uses video as the scaffolding for the piece.

<https://youtu.be/pYPbZ7ziO8U> or search david machell channel

(NOTE: in the host's share-screen menu, there are three dots indicating "MORE" options. One of these is "SHARE COMPUTER SOUND". If this is switched on, participants can hear the audio on the video clip.)

The sound quality of videos is generally good on zoom, much better than microphone sound, so the opportunity for interesting and helpful audio backing tracks exists.

There is, however, an enormous time-delay between the moment an event is sent by the host and the moment that event happens at the participants' end. In practice, this delay has been often as much as several seconds. From this it is clear that synchronising events exactly is not something that will work. Slow transitions, on the other hand, work just fine. GAME OF TONES III capitalises on this.

The narrative involves a mountaineering expedition. Four scenes are set up - in the valley, where the wind is rustling the trees, through an icy region, to the mountain peaks, then home to a warm fire. (There are three brief transition sections to allow the change of mood and the change of musical expression).

This piece will suit voices, or instruments, or a combination of the two.

The playing instructions are (inevitably) not very specific. Participants should feel free to interpret them liberally within the spirit of the musical mood of the moment.

Section 1: in the valley, the wind rustles in the trees. 2'0". Eb G Bb mostly. Feels like crotchet = 120. Volume generally piano, rising to mezzo-forte and back. Short rapid scale-passages (ie stepwise motion) contrasted with pointillistic staccatos.

Transition: 0"10". A high G is held.. High instruments or none at all.

Section 2: 2'0" Icy Region, E G B mostly. Feels like crotchet = 135. Generally pianissimo, shivering, shuddering, trills and tremolandos, wide intervals.

Transition: 0"10". A mid-register E is held, Middle-register instruments or none at all. A crescendo.

Section 3: 2'00". Majestic Mountains. A C# E F# mostly. Feels like crotchet = 60. Fanfares, epic statements. Short rhythmically-energetic phrases set against long notes. Generally forte. Upward-striving phrases.

Transition: 0"10". A low A is held. Low instruments or none at all.

Section 4: 2'00". Warm fires back home. Eb G Bb with extra F. Feels like crotchet = 50. Warm, low sounds, falling phrases. Starting mezzo-forte, then subsiding to pianissimo, then silence, focussing on a low Eb.

Game of Tones IV

the one about Spring

A zoom-friendly piece by David Machell
Written for voices but good for instruments too.

Experiencing the miraculous transformation of seemingly lifeless Winter into the glorious new life of Spring is one of the glories of life. GAME OF TONES IV evokes this world in a sound-picture

There are four sections, Winter Mood, Winter Chant, Return of the Sun, Spring Chant.

This piece addresses the central issue of zoom for music-making, the inability to stay in sync with other players. The time-lag - latency - frustrates any attempts to play in rhythm, and the way that video lags behind the audio signal means we cannot even watch each other in order to play together.

GAME OF TONES IV works by having a series of held chords against which fragments of melody may interweave themselves. Phrases may be interpreted freely by the musicians, who may pause frequently to take in the music of others. Built-in silences seem to be an essential part of enjoying music-making on zoom.

The host plays a chord on a digital keyboard, string tone works well. In section one, D minor, musicians enter on a long note, not sync'd with others, choosing a note from the chord, to last one breath or bowstroke. The gesture may be repeated on different notes of the chord.

The host (conductor) decides when a Section has come to a natural end and indicates each new Section.

Section 2 offers a chant which can be liberally interpreted, using pauses and rubato as the musician shall decide.

In Section 3 the chord changes to D major, featuring strong crescendo and diminuendo.

Section 4 is a chant, to be performed in the same way as Section 2.

All other parameters may be decided by the musicians.

DM 05-06-2020

Game of Tones IV

the one about the Spring

Version 05-06-2020

David Machell

Section I: Winter Mood

Tempo: 60 beats per minute approx

*You will hear a chord played by the conductor.
It will last till the end of Section II.*

*Entering at will,
choose a note from the chord.
Make it last for one breath.
Try to make it sound wintry.*

p
Ah

*Choose a different note from the chord.
Make it last for one breath.*

*Choose a different note from the chord.
Make it last for one breath.*

mf
Ah

f
Ah

Section II: Winter Chant

*Sing this chant at approximately 60 bpm, pausing ad lib. making no attempt to synchronise with others.
Sing it as expressively as possible. Sing it several times, pausing to hear the other singers from time to time.*

mp

Cold, cold, the earth is cold tight in old win-ter's grasp all is

still, no-thing seems to live all is dark

Section III: Return of the Sun

The conductor's chord changes to D major. It will last till the end of Section IV.

25

f

Ah

Choose a note from the chord.
Make it last for one breath.
Try to make it sound warm.

Choose a different note from the chord.
Make it last for one breath.

29

mp

f

Ah

Ah

Choose a different note from the chord.
Make it last for one breath.

Section IV: Spring Chant

Sing this chant at approximately 60 bpm, pausing *ad lib.* making no attempt to synchronise with others. Sing it as expressively as possible. Sing it several times, pausing to hear the other singers from time to time.

35

f with joyous optimism

The sun, re - tur- ning _____ lights up the hea- vens _____

40

3

See, the world be-comes green _____ and new life _____ is

45

ev - ery- where _____ ah! ah! ah! _____