FROM A DREAM (2019) for pitched percussion - 1, 2 or 4 players

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GENERAL

The basic idea for this composition arose in a dream (several other musical projects have originated in similar fashion). The work is best described as a framework (a 4-bar pitch/rhythm "pattern") for continuous solo or group improvisation. Only portions of the first five repetitions are specifically determined, as can be seen in musical Examples 2-6 that follow. (The "stems-only notes" indicate "player's choice" of pitch, or rest.) Each performer is given a limited number of pitches from which to select (or choose to be silent) during his or her assigned bars (see Example 1 below).

Optionally, this framework could be fashioned into a totally- or semi-composed piece (should anyone be so inclined). The only requirement is to follow the instructions included here. (This same "arranger" could also function as performer or conductor.)

MEDIUM

Instruments are struck or plucked, with a sharp attack and a short-to-moderate ring time. They must also be mid-range, and precisely-pitched members of the same general family. (Mallet percussion are a likely choice. Handbells or chimes are another, likely limited to the 4-player version.) The designated pitches may be transposed to accommodate instrumental range.

Other realizations of this work are also possible - under the general rubric of "simulated percussion." Again the principal requirement is a sharp attack and short-to-medium length decay. For example, observing the principle of "same family," multiple woodwinds, clarinets, trumpets, bassoons or strings could each perform this work. Individual instruments would be assigned either two bars or a complete pattern, and observe the other requirements listed here; if two bars, the instruments must be identical, and alternate as a single 4-bar unit.

Also possible are electronic realizations (or "simulations"). One such electronic rendition is offered on this website by way of illustration. (It was randomly generated by a Csound program [Dream.csd, a simple text file] that accompanies this archive. Each running of this file will produce a different realization of the framework (see the Note below).

For multiple-player renditions, separate instruments, as well as a singular physical placement, are required for each player. With two performers, stage-left and stage-right positioning is suggested. With four parts, a semi-circular or surround-sound placement relative to the audience may be appropriate.

TEMPO and COORDINATION

As to tempo, there are two choices: 1) a fixed tempo, anywhere from a half-note beat of 50 to 120, depending on instrumentation; 2) a variable tempo starting at a half-note beat of 60 and moving slowly and freely between 60 and 120. Tempo will not begin to vary until after the fifth repetition of the pattern. A rhythm of two quarter notes (or rests) per half-note beat continues

throughout. Rhythm and ensemble timing must be precise. (A conductor or click-track is recommended, especially with the variable tempo option, and in general for 2- and 4-player renditions.) The click-track may either be inaudible (through headphones), or audible.

For pre-composed renditions, especially for solo performers, tempo may range up to 240 or higher. If rhythmic precision and continuity can be maintained, 2- and 4-player ensembles may also be capable of faster tempi, especially if trading off per pattern rather than by 2-bar segments. (Indeed, speed is limited only by the solist's or group's virtuosity.)

An audible click-track should observe the following: 1) it clicks in preparation either once or twice through the pattern; 2) it stops precisely when the performance ends (at the end of a pattern, as described in the following paragraph). An audible click-track is a level softer than the instrument(s). (Note: at tempi greater than 180 or so, the metronome should probably beat once per bar [i.e., the whole note gets the beat] rather than twice.)

THE ENDING

There are two ways in which the performance can end: 1) when the conductor, or designated performer indicates that it should cease at the end of the current pattern; 2) at the end of the current pattern, when a completely empty bar has occurred. Under this option, *any* performer may opt to bring an end to the performance; he/she should indicate this intent by signaling his associate(s) in some manner - preferably well in advance.) Either of these options may be exercised after a minimum of 16 repetitions of the pattern. (Performers should insure that #2 above does not occur prematurely - by not opting for an empty bar until later!)

When the final pattern is signalled, or agreed upon in advance, several enhanced endings are available: 1) the initial sequence can be restated; 2) the first notes (only) of each bar of the initial sequence can be restated with the other notes(/rests) freely selected (according to normal rules); 3) the first note of each bar, and any other notes of the initial sequence can be restated, with the remaining notes changed to rests. (Note that these are only suggested *alternatives* to a "normal" ending. The accompanying simulated demo indeed incorporates the *second* alternative above.)

Other than the minimum of 16 repetitions, there is no suggested duration for performance.

THE PERFORMANCE

Performance consists of a single pattern repeated over and over without break. Each pattern consists of 4 bars, each with a set of pitches from which the performer is to choose (for the first three bars, 3 pitches each; for the fourth bar, 6) . These are listed in Example 1 below.

A solo performer must, of course, have all these pitches available. 2 and 4 players need only those specified in the bars they play.

A two-player version may either consist of the players alternating complete patterns, or two bars each (also alternating). In either case, the same arrangement is followed throughout the performance.

For four-player renditions, a conductor/director is highly recommended. The two-player options described above can be adapted for four players in several ways: 1) complete

patterns may be played by each player either in preestablished rotation or at random (the latter perhaps [spontaneously?] determined by conductor); 2) two-bar segments of complete patterns can be exchanged in the same way, except that here the segments must be shared among the 4 players. The only requirements are that a given performer cannot take two "turns" in succession, and that the performance must stop at the end of a complete pattern. As always, the selected protocol holds for an entire rendition.

Within each bar, the performer plays four quarter notes selected from the assigned pitches, any of which may be substituted by a rest. Only one of the pitches may be played twice - and not in immediate repetition (except after a rest). One requirement applies only to bar 4: adjacent notes may not span more than an octave, *even when separated by a rest*. IMPORTANT NOTE: The pitches with hollow noteheads (see below, Example 1) are the primary members of each group, and should generally be selected somewhat more frequently than the others.

The performance begins with the first five patterns below (in order) - Examples 2 through 6. Ensuing pitch/rest patterns are totally random/spontaneous, or predetermined (to one degree or another) by the performers or arranger, while continuing to conform to the criteria described here.

Dynamics are moderately loud throughout. Optionally, following the first five repetitions, dynamic level may gradually change pattern-by-pattern - either on a predetermined or spontaneous basis (perhaps with a conductor's assistance). In any case, the prevailing level is moderately loud.

Finally, creative minds may wish to expand upon this notion of improvisational/compositional framework in many diverse ways. You are encouraged to "go for it" and to follow *your* dream.

A NOTE ABOUT THE CSOUND SIMULATIONS - Dream.csd, DreamAndroid.csd and DreamAndroidOlder.csd

Dream.csd is a Csound file that produces a simulated performance of FROM A DREAM - one that accurately follows all the above "rules." It should run on any Windows, Mac or Linux OS with a Canonical version of Csound5/6 installed, following instructions listed at the top of the file. DreamAndroid.csd runs on recent Csound for Android apps, Csound6.13/4 and later (and requires at least Android OS 6.0). DreamAndroidOlder.csd does the same for earlier versions of Android Csound, including the "alternative" apps available at http://www.arthunkins.com/Android_Csound_Apps.htm . All three .csd's can be modified by any text editor; a number of important variables, including choice of INSTRUMENT and DURATION, may be determined by the user. Pitches and rests are randomly generated, so that each "performance" is unique. The accompanying Dream(simulation).wav is a stereo, "two player" rendering of Dream.csd that reflects default settings. For further details, see the .csd's.

Example 1

Pitches to be selected per bar; hollowed heads are somewhat favored

Entire pattern may be transposed
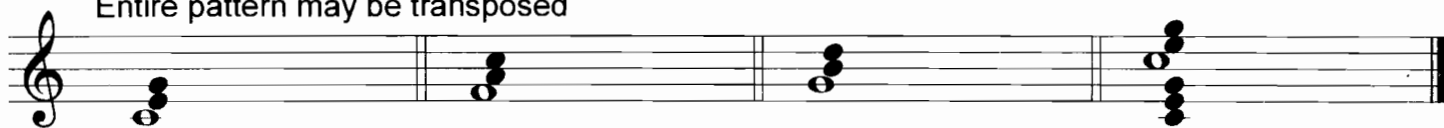
Example 2

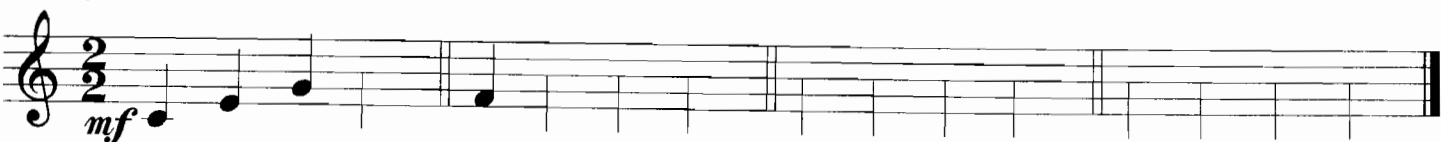Fixed tempo: ♩ = 50 to 120   Variable tempo: ♩ = 60 to 120, starting at 60

Example 3

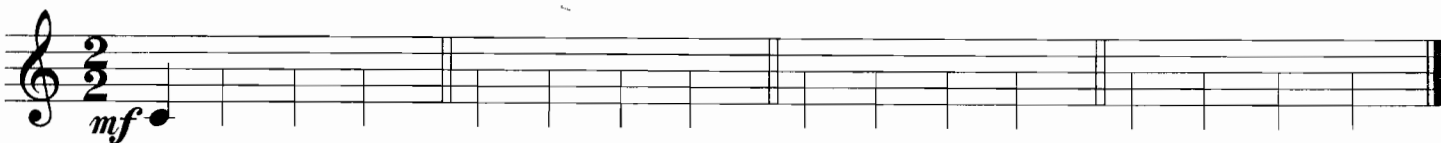stems without noteheads = performer-selected pitches or rests

Example 4

Example 5

Example 6

all remaining repetitions, free pitch/rest selection