

battle pieces

for saxophone and drumset
(or any two instruments)

by
Rodrigo Constanzo
& Sam Andreae

yo momma

Yo Momma is a competitive music game. The objective of the game is to steal an 'ending' from the other player. You accomplish this by recontextualizing what the other player is doing as a possible end to the piece.

When you catch the other player in an ending you make a 'thumbs up' gesture to yourself, indicating your claim to the ending. If both players claim the point, no point is scored.

You may 'escape' an ending by skillfully negotiating a context to continue. If the player attempting to create the end feels you egregiously played through an attempted ending, they may make a claim for a point, which the escaping player may concede or refute (using facial gestures).

The game continues until one player scores two points.

When the winner player has scored their second point the losing player begins a solo, which continues until the winner 'ends' them, by creating an ending for their solo.

switches

Both performers begin by playing six unpitched events in unison. They can choose to play a short sound or a long sound, but must begin with each other regardless of the duration of their chosen event. The combination of the first three events determines the interaction modes used later in the piece and the duration of time between the last three events determines the dynamics of those sections (long = loud, short = soft).

The recipes for the first three events and subsequent modes of interaction are:

Player 1	Player 2	mode of interaction
short	short	unison stabs (stabs)
short	long	stabs + alternating stab/sustain (switches)
long	long	trading stab/sustain (trades)

After the opening six events there are three block sections which adhere to the modes of interaction and dynamics determined in the introduction.

glitch beat

Both performers begin by playing a busy/defined material. When one performer's variations are exhausted and/or no longer interesting, they stop playing.

The other performer carries on playing. They cannot stop.

The performer who stopped composes a rhythm/phrase/melody/figure in their head and then begins playing it loudly/confidently. The other performer must immediately join in trying to play it in perfect unison. The moment that both performers have phased into unison immediately start playing a new busy/defined material.

Repeat this cycle (busy/defined -> one performer stops -> unison rhythm) two more times except on the last repeat rather than trying to join in in unison immediately, internalize the rhythm/phrase/melody/figure and only begin playing it once you can do it perfectly.

Play the unison figure 50 times and stop. If the other performer stops first, carry on until you reach what you count as 50.

strains

Strains is broken into two sections. During the first section of the piece the performers play a musical version of “rock, paper, scissors” with predefined low/mid/high sounds. The drummer counts in the first round and then both performers play their chosen low/mid/high sounds at the tempo established by the count in with the 7th note determining who wins the round. The winner counts in the next round which is played at that new tempo and is only 6 notes long. This pattern continues until only one note is heard. The winner of the final round begins the second section.

The second section begins with free improvisation. The loser of the first section can interrupt at any point by playing a repeating rhythmic cycle. The winner then interrupts that cycle with one of his own (at a new tempo) and finally the loser interrupts one more time. This forms a rhythmic phrase consistent of 3 tempos. The rhythmic phrase is then repeated in unison before going back to the free improvisation. At any point during the improvisation a performer may cue to play the previous rhythmic sentence in unison.

The following cycle forms the remainder of the piece with the performers choosing to end after any unison rhythmic sentence.

free improv -> (last rhythmic sentence in unison) -> building a new 3section rhythmic sentence by interrupting each other -> unison rhythmic sentence ->free improv

elbows

The piece begins with both performs playing. The objective of the game is to force/create/steal/engineer a new section of material. This must happen naturally, emergent from where the material currently is.

When a performer creates a new section they make a 'thumbs up' gesture to themselves, indicating claim to the transition. In the case of both performers calling the point the first performer to call the point gets priority.

New sections of material may be blocked or refused, in which case, the previous material is returned to. With that being said, the performers must be very sensitive and sympathetic to shifts in material, while aggressively pushing for new ideas.

The game continues until one player scores 5 points (has to be ahead by 2).

AB(B)A

Both performers begin freely improvising. During this section the performers try to develop and discover a musical “game” using only musical communication. This exploration should not be overt, and should emerge naturally. This is the “A” section of the piece. Once the game is discovered the performers transition to an unrelated “B” section.

After an appropriate amount of time, return to the “A” section, but using a different kind of sonic material, so the only thing that survives is the “game” itself.

pop song

Both performers begin by creating a relatively short phrase that they exactly repeat, while in sync, 8 times. This represents the 'verse' of the song. A 'pre-chorus' is then created, which is repeated 4 times. Following this is 8 repetitions of a 'chorus'.

This whole cycle (verse, pre-chorus, chorus) is repeated twice, using the same material both times.

After this follows an unrelated 'bridge' of unidentified length.

After the bridge, the original chorus is repeated 16 times.

After the final 'double chorus' an outro is performed.

Entire structure:

Verse (x8), Pre-Chorus (x4), Chorus (x8)

Verse (x8), Pre-Chorus (x4), Chorus (x8)

—Bridge—

Chorus (x16)

—Outro—

flurries

Flurries is broken into three sections: A, B, and A₁. During the beginning A section, both performers use a variety of quiet sound sources to navigate the following sound quadrants.

Dark Fast	Bright Fast
Dark Slow	Bright Slow

Each performer picks an area to occupy in quadrants. This area can have a variable size and shape. So it can be a pinpoint, or it can be a large oblong shape, spanning multiple quadrants. Whenever there is a perceived 'flam', each performer (independently) transitions to a new area in the quadrant grid. This change can happen instantly, or gradually.

When a unison happens during the A section, this signals the change to the B section. The B section is made up of sustained/textured sounds AND whatever sound event happened in the unison. Each performer uses metal implements to rub their instruments creating the sustained/textured sound, and cue each other to create unison events. This section ends with either player cuing one final unison together.

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flurries cont...

After the final unison of the B section, the players return to the A section.

The two A sections (A and A₁) are do not happen on either side of the B section. There is an independent transition between them, so that A₁ can happen *before* the B section. Once the change to A₁ takes place, the piece stays in that section until the ending of the piece.

The transition to the A₁ section is the emergence of a 'pregnant pause'. This is relative to the general activity and density level in the piece. After this pause, the quadrant grid turns into a 3 dimensional space, with duration occupying the new axis. Flams continue to signify a transition to a new area.

During A₁ when there is another unison sound, this signifies the change to the ending of the piece. A short metal scrape sound is made by both performers, in unison. Then one performer makes stream of short, evenly spaced events, while the other performer plays an irregular gesture over the top of it. The piece ends with these two streams of events fall on a unison.