

Customizable Choral Games

This is a set of customizable choral games, where the conductor alone, or the conductor with their singers, creates an aleatoric piece to be sung through videoconferencing software. Since you are creating the music, the difficulty can be adjusted as appropriate for your singers.

This packet includes three sample pieces, as well as a blank template for you to write your own once you are familiar with the process. Each piece is highly customizable. The aleatory (guided improvisation) is what allows these pieces to be sung together despite issues with latency over the internet. Although each singer will have the same part as all others, since they are not in sync with any other singer, the texture created is imitative and contrapuntal.

Prior to meeting with your choir (or with your choir, if you choose to compose together):

1) Choose one of the following texts:

- a. *When words fail, music speaks (Hans Christian Anderson)*
- b. *You are the universe in ecstatic motion (Rumi)*
- c. *Music fills the infinite between two souls (Tagore)*
- d. (Or use a text of your choice, no more than seven words long)

2) Choose one of the following scales to use with your text. (Or, if you chose your own text, you may also choose/create your own scale.)

Scale 1: D major scale (D-E-F#-G-A-B). Tonic pitch and drone: D.

Scale 2: D minor scale (D-E-F-G-A-Bb). Tonic pitch and drone: D.

Scale 3: D major scale with a flat (D-E-F-G-A-Bb). Tonic pitch and drone: D.

Scale 4: D minor scale with a flat (D-E-Fb-G-A-Bb). Tonic pitch and drone: D.

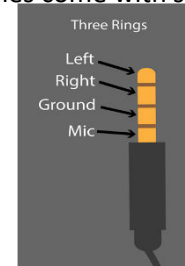
- 3) **Go to the template (on the following pages) for the text you have chosen. Print this out.**
- a. Write out your chosen scale in the staff at the bottom of the page (you may transpose this as suited for your singers). These are the only pitches you can use.
 - b. In the table on each template, you will find one word that has been underlined. That word will be the musical climax of that game.
 - i. Choose a rhythm to set that word.
 - ii. In the given template, notice that the vertical plane represents the vocal register in which the chorus sings. The underlined word will be the high point in terms of vocal register. Choose the highest pitches you intend to use in this game, and set the underlined word on those. On the blank staff in the corresponding box, write out the combination of pitch and rhythm you have chosen for the climax.
 - c. Look again at the template, and notice that each staff from left to right is placed relatively high to low, with the highest point on the underlined word you just set to music. As you set the remaining words to music, follow the vocal registers indicated by the vertical placement of each staff. Choose pitches from your scale and rhythms of your choice for each remaining word, and write these in the corresponding staff. Notice that when sung, each box of music you create will overlap with both the previous box and the subsequent one. Choose pitches that overlap well.
 - d. Once completed, scan and save your completed page as a pdf you can project on your video conferencing software.
- 4) **Send the scan to your singers. Ask them to sing through the scale you chose as well as the music you created on their own to prepare.**

With your singers, on video conferencing software of your choice:

- 5) Decide who will play a drone. This singer (or singers) may use an instrument or an app, but will only hold the tonic pitch on the instrument.
- 6) Share your screen. OUT OF TIME, sing through the music you wrote for each box, left to right, and have each singer try it as well (do not try to cue to sing together, latency over the internet will make that impossible). Indicate a move to a new box by circling it with your mouse. Indicate the final fade out by circling those words with your mouse.
- 7) IN TIME - read your piece with the choir! Start with the drone alone. As the conductor circles each box with the mouse, each singer will AT THEIR OWN PACE (not immediately) move to that box. (There should be some overlap as some of the singers will be on one word while others will still be at the previous. Move to each subsequent box only after each singer has reached the current box. At the final box, only after the conductor circles the words “fade out” one by one each singer should diminuendo and then drop out to leave the drone holding alone.

Tips for best audio quality:

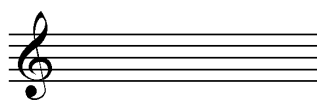
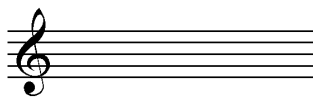
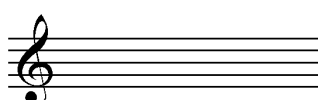
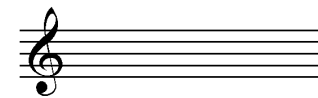
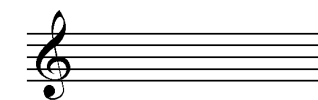
- You may use any software that allows you to videoconference with your singers and share a screen. Some options include Zoom, Skype, Cleanfeed. (I have been told that the best audio comes from Cleanfeed, but the others can also work with small groups of singers, around 6-7 people.)
- If available, headphones and a microphone should be used by each singer (although not necessary, this improves audio quality.) Many singers may find that they already own a setup that includes both - many phones come with such headphones. If the headphone jack has three rings across it (as in the image below), it includes a microphone built in.



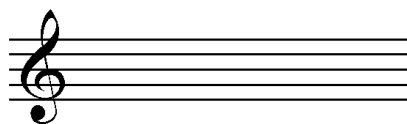
- Preferred audio settings for Zoom (For the best possible audio quality, each singer should adjust their settings within Zoom as indicated below):
 - Go to Audio – Audio settings.
 - Make sure that under microphone – “Automatically adjust volume” is OFF
 - Make sure the microphone input volume is around half. (If the input level is too high, the audio will be prone to clipping.)
 - In the same menu, go to the “Advanced” tab.
 - Make sure “Show in-meeting option to “Enable Original Sound” from microphone is CHECKED on.
 - Make sure “Suppress Persistent background noise” is DISABLED.
 - Make sure “Suppress Intermittent background noise” is DISABLED.
 - Going back to your meeting, make sure that in the top left of the window that you see a blue bar that reads “Turn off original sound.” (I.e. Original sound is ON for the meeting.)

Music fills the infinite between two souls - template

Vocal tessitura low to high

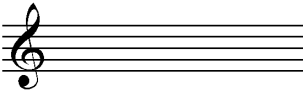


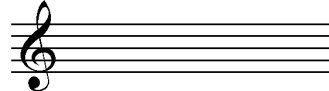
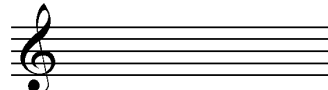
Music  <i>(Start with drone alone)</i>	fills 	the <u>infinite</u> 	between 	two souls  <i>(Fade out)</i>
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Chosen scale:

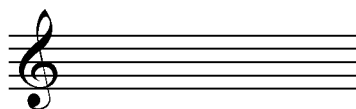


When words fail, music speaks - template

Vocal tessitura low to high

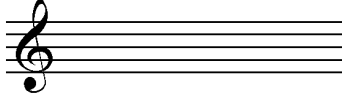
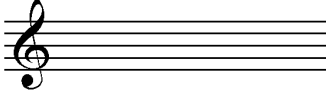
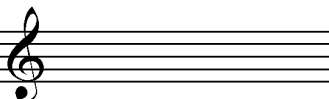
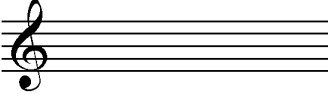
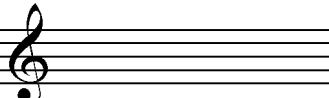
When  <i>(Start with drone alone)</i>	words 	fail 	<u>music</u> 	speaks  <i>(Fade out)</i>
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Chosen scale:

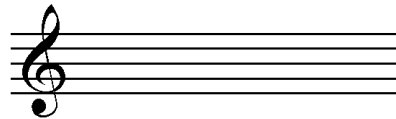


You are the universe in ecstatic motion – template

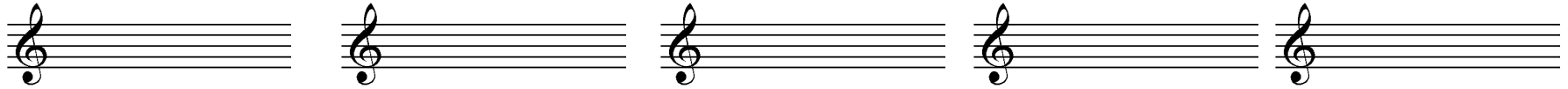
Vocal tessitura low to high

You  <i>(Start with drone alone)</i>	are 	the universe 	the universe <i>(change pitches)</i> 	in <u>ecstatic</u> motion  <i>(Fade out)</i>
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Chosen scale:



Customizable template



1. Choose a short text, no more than seven words long. Split the words into five sections and write them along the top row of the table below.
2. Decide which word (or words) represent the climax of the phrase. Choose how you will create an effect of drama here. (Is it the high point, the low point, the fastest rhythmically, will it have the densest overlap between voices?)
3. Drag the treble clef staves above down to each box (or draw staves by hand), placing them relatively high to low such that we can see where is the high point, where the low, and where the in-between.
4. Choose your scale (either one of the given scales, or one of your own choice. The scale may use between 3 and 9 pitches.) Note that the aleatoric texture will mean that the pitches you choose for each box will overlap with the previous and the subsequent boxes. Choose pitches that complement each other.
5. Print out this sheet. Choose pitches and rhythms from your scale to set each text fragment, and write them onto each staff (making sure to create the climax as you chose in #2 above).
6. Scan the page (or use a phone app like Cam scanner). Upload the pdf and read the game with your choir.

Text					
	<p><i>(Start with drone alone)</i></p>				<p><i>(Fade out)</i></p>

Vocal register high to low

Chosen scale:

