Beaters

for toy piano(s)
one or two players

Performance Notes

Beaters is a companion piece to *Many Worlds Game – Spoon*. It is based on the melodies and symbols used in that piece. In performance, the piece must not immediately precede or follow *MWG–S*; they must be kept as independent as possible, preferably never performed together in a single program. The same applies to this work's relationship with *Many Worlds*, another satellite piece for *MWG–S*.

The score contains 25 melodic segments arranged into a 5 x 5 square. Let us refer to these segments as <u>nodes</u>. Let us also refer to nodes from the first row, the last row, the first column, and the last column, as <u>edge nodes</u>. To make a score, follow these instructions:

1. Draw one-way arrows to connect each node with two, and only two, adjacent nodes of your choice. Let us call such connections <u>paths</u>. Paths can be horizontal, vertical, or diagonal. Make sure no paths go both ways: if A is connected to B by a horizontal path, B cannot be connected to A by a horizontal path running in the opposite direction. Diagonal paths may intersect, but the same rule applies to them – allow no two-way paths. This may lead to problems, such as nodes with too many incoming paths, preventing you from creating the two necessary outgoing paths, so this step may require planning and/or several attempts.
2. Every node includes two or three types of notes: normal note heads, crossed note heads and square note heads. Normal notes are performed at all times, but when playing a node you must ignore either the crossed notes or the square notes. Thus you must assign note head types to the paths you've drawn: ignoring square notes makes you follow one path, ignoring crossed notes makes you follow the other.
3. (optional) Decide which of the indicated arpeggi should be played as such, and which should be ignored and played simply as chords.

To start, choose an edge node and play it, then move on to another node depending on which note type you have chosen to ignore – crossed notes or square notes. Choose one tempo for the entire piece (quarter note = 60 should be your reference point), but feel free to introduce changes to it for specific nodes you wish to perform faster or slower. A performance ends when you reach an edge node and choose to perform all of its notes – normal, crossed, and square. The duration of pauses between nodes is entirely up to the performer.

In a two-player performance, there are two toy pianos. The performers follow the steps above, collaborating to produce a performance score they find suitable. To start, one player chooses an edge note and plays it according to the rules outlined above – that is, ignoring either the crossed notes or the square notes. The second player makes note of which notes were omitted and follows the corresponding path, playing another node and thus selecting the path for their partner.

Loops are natural in this piece in both one- and two-player versions. When two people play, they may choose to collaborate and perform the piece in a way that lets in long, unchanging loops, or they may choose to compete and break loops at all times. When performing loops, it may be an advantage to keep pause lengths between nodes the same throughout the loop. This also may serve as a game strategy: one performer trying to keep a stable loop, the other subverting their efforts by changing pause lengths while staying in the loop, forcing their opponent to get out of said loop and try another path.

Gameplay Modes

Many different gameplay modes are possible in *Beaters*. Two have been outlined above: the **one-player normal** mode, and **two-player normal** mode. There is also the **small-scale** mode, best suited for one performer: instead of using the entire 5 x 5 square, choose any of the four available 4 x 4 squares inside it and perform according to the normal instructions. The **orbital** mode involves two players: one chooses a loop of any duration, and performs only that loop, as an ostinato. The other performer plays normally, and the piece may only end at the end of the chosen loop. Performers are encouraged to find their own gameplay modes. For public performances and recordings, the title may be changed to indicate the gameplay mode chosen, e.g. *Beaters (one-player normal mode)*.

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