

Musical Deconstructions by Scott Pfitzinger

1. Bubble "Pop"
2. Chinese Fire Drill
3. Downtown
4. Forced Unison
5. I Wanna Be a Theremin
6. Jinx!
7. Kino
8. Making Water
9. Monkey Music
10. Red Light Green Light
11. Sudoku
12. Wholly Tonitrophobic

Deconstructed Music

Jacques Derrida was a French philosopher who developed the philosophical concept and technique of "deconstruction." In the introduction to Derrida's *Speech and Phenomena*, the translator states that deconstruction

signifies a project of critical thought whose task is to locate and 'take apart' those concepts which serve as the axioms or rules for a period of thought, those concepts which command the unfolding of an entire epoch of metaphysics. 'Deconstruction' is somewhat less negative than the Heideggerian or Nietzschean terms 'destruction' or 'reversal'; it suggests that certain foundational concepts of metaphysics will never be entirely eliminated.

Paul Ricoeur is another prominent supporter and interpreter of Derrida's philosophy. He defines deconstruction as a way of uncovering the questions behind the answers of a text or tradition.

Deconstruction in music questions musical identities, musicological assumptions, and even the borders between music and non-music.

Bubble "Pop"
by Scott Pfitzinger
for 1 pianist and any number of people

Preparation: Every participant (except the pianist) receives two 12-inch-square pieces of bubble wrap and two 4-inch strips of duct tape.

Directions: Everyone takes up random positions around the stage or room, sits down, and tapes a piece of bubble wrap to each of their shoes. The pianist enters and sits down at the piano, holding down the Sustain Pedal for the entire piece. Very slowly everyone begins to stand up and walk around, trying not to pop the bubbles (prolonging the piece as long as possible). Every time the pianist hears a bubble pop, he/she plays a short note of random pitch, one note for every pop. The piece is over when all the bubbles have popped.

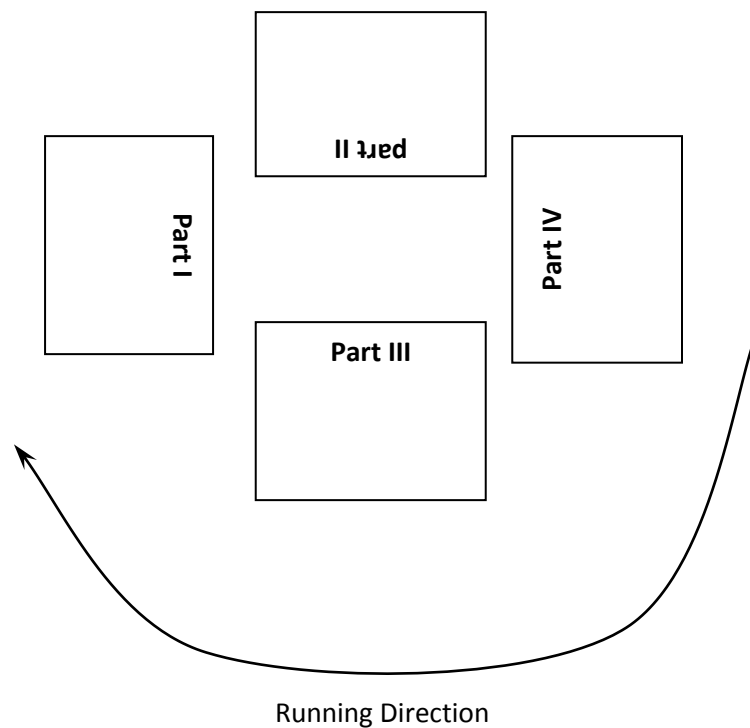
Chinese Fire Drill
by Scott Pfitzinger
(for FOUR musicians, treble clef, any key)

Background: The term "Chinese Fire Drill" has been around since the 1930s and refers to a prank where a car pulls up to a stoplight and all the people get out, run around the car a few times, get back in (usually in different seats), and drive off. It is not meant to be offensive or racist, as the term has lost all association with race over the last 70 years.

Preparation: The four Parts are placed in any order on a table or similar surface facing outward (see diagram). Make sure there is sufficient space around the table for the musicians to run.

Directions: Each of the musicians chooses one of the parts (I, II, III, or IV) and, beginning together, plays it at any tempo they choose without transposing. When the musician on Part I gets to the end and yells, "Chinese Fire Drill!", everyone immediately stops playing and starts running around the music in a clockwise direction. Whoever was on Part I decides when and where to stop, with everyone else filling in the empty places. The new player on Part I (possibly the same as before) becomes the new leader and the process repeats until all four players have played Part I.

Possible Musical Arrangement



Chinese Fire Drill

Part I

Scott Pfitzinger

Musical score for "Chinese Fire Drill" Part I, measures 1-16. The score is written in treble clef and features a variety of time signatures: 4/4, 3/4, and 4/4. The dynamics range from *mf* (mezzo-forte) to *ff* (fortissimo). The piece includes a trill and a section where the performer is instructed to yell "Yell: Chinese Fire Drill!!".

Measures 1-4: *mf* (4/4), *f* (3/4), *mp* (4/4).
Measures 5-10: *mf* (4/4), *mf* (4/4).
Measures 11-15: *f* (3/4), *f* (4/4).
Measure 16: *ff* (4/4), trill, and "Yell: Chinese Fire Drill!!".

Chinese Fire Drill

Part II

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The musical score consists of three staves of music in treble clef. The first staff (measures 1-5) starts in 4/4 time, changes to 5/4, then back to 4/4, and ends in 3/4. It features dynamic markings *mf*, *f*, and *ff*, along with accents and slurs. The second staff (measures 6-9) starts in 3/4 time, changes to 4/4, and ends in 2/4. It includes a *mp* marking, a *cresc. poco a poco* instruction, and triplet markings. The third staff (measures 10-13) starts in 2/4 time, changes to 4/4, and ends in 6/4. It features a *b2* marking, a *mf* marking, and a series of *mp* and *mf* markings with slurs. The piece concludes with a repeat sign.

Chinese Fire Drill

Part III

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The musical score consists of three staves of music in treble clef. The first staff (measures 1-5) starts in 3/4 time, changes to 4/4 at measure 3, and returns to 3/4 at measure 5. It features dynamic markings of *f*, *f*, and *mf*. The second staff (measures 6-9) starts in 5/4 time, changes to 3/4 at measure 7, and returns to 5/4 at measure 9. It includes a triplet of eighth notes in measure 7 and dynamic markings of *mp*. The third staff (measures 10-13) starts in 5/4 time, changes to 3/4 at measure 11, and returns to 5/4 at measure 13. It features dynamic markings of *mf*, *p*, *mp*, *mf*, and *mp*, along with various articulation marks like accents and slurs.

Chinese Fire Drill

Part IV

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The musical score consists of three staves of music in treble clef. The first staff begins in 4/4 time and contains measures 1 through 5. It features a series of notes with 'x' marks below them, followed by a change to 3/4 time. Dynamic markings include *mp*, *mf*, and *mp*. The second staff starts at measure 6 and includes a fermata over a note, a change to 4/4 time, and a long note with a slur. Dynamic markings include *f*, *mf*, and *p*. The third staff starts at measure 10 and ends with a repeat sign. It features a long note with a slur, followed by a series of notes with slurs. Dynamic markings include *ff*, *mf*, and *mp*.

Downtown
by Scott Pfitzinger
for any number of people

Preparation: Give a sheet of paper to every member of the audience. Tell them that they are to tear a strip off every time they hear two of the musicians playing the same pitch.

Directions: Musicians play as softly as possible, improvising on the following theme:

"downtown on a muggy summer morning"

Forced Unison
by Scott Pfitzinger
for any number of people

Preparation: None.

Directions: Musicians take positions as far from each other as possible around the concert hall (even in the audience if possible). At about the same time, everyone plays a random note, holding it as long as one breath allows (different for everyone). They then play another note, either the same pitch or a half-step above or below their first pitch, again as long as one breath allows, trying to get closer in pitch to the other musicians nearby. The goal is for everyone to eventually arrive at a UNISON.

Suggestions:

- Don't go so long on each note that you pass out. The point is to slowly arrive at a unison, not to see who can play the longest notes.
- Percussionists are welcome to participate by rolling sustained notes for as long as it takes them to slowly exhale.

Jinx!
by Scott Pfitzinger
for any number of people

Preparation: Piano should be opened as wide as possible or, even better, have the top removed entirely.

Directions: This is a game-style piece. Everyone gathers around the piano as tightly as necessary. Several may sit at the keyboard itself, one person placing a book on the Sustain Pedal to hold it down throughout. All sounds, whether instrumental or vocal, are to be performed into the piano, as close to the strings as possible for maximum sympathetic resonance.

Each musician may play or sing a random note as short or long as they wish, **but only one at a time**. If any two (or more) play/sing a note at the same time, regardless of pitch, they are both "out" and must leave the stage. The winner is the last person remaining.

Kino
by Scott Pfitzinger
for any number of people

Preparation: Laptop and projector to be set up so musicians and audience can see the video (musicians may have their backs to the audience). YouTube video preselected and loaded on the laptop for quick playback (audio muted).

Directions: Musicians improvise while watching a preselected YouTube video, using the following guidelines:

- The busier (more active) the video, the faster the note changes (busy video = busy music)
- The warmer the predominant color, the louder the dynamics
(whites and blues = quieter, earth tones = medium, reds = louder)
- Notes improvised based on the content of the video

Duration: Approximately 2-5 minutes

Making Water
by Scott Pfitzinger
for 1 pianist and any number of people

Preparation: The piano may be located anywhere in the room. The rest of the participants should divide into two groups and spread themselves out randomly around the room. The pianist need not be able to actually play the piano. One director is required (may be the pianist).

Directions: To begin, the director calls out a body of water. Participants in group #1 randomly read the water idioms in a style and volume that matches their perception of the body of water, while those in group #2 randomly read the onomatopoeias in a similar fashion. At the same time, the pianist improvises on the piano, also in the style of that body of water. As the director chooses, he/she calls out another name of a body of water and the participants change their styles and volumes accordingly. The piece is over when it is finished.

Suggestions:

- The first and last bodies of water, if desired, may involve only the onomatopoeias but not the idioms.
- The included lists are just recommendations. Additional idioms, sounds, and bodies of water are encouraged, especially if they can be personalized to the concert locale.
- If desired, the readings may be chosen based on their similarity to the current body of water.
- Whispers and yells are encouraged when appropriate.

Making Water

Idioms

Water, water, everywhere, and not a drop to drink
(Like a) Fish out of water
Water off a duck's back
Keep your head above water
She's in hot water
He's all wet
Makes my mouth water
Water under the bridge
You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink
Throw out the baby with the bath water
Wet your whistle
That doesn't hold water
There is no life without water
Don't change horses in midstream
I've got my head above water
He's wet behind the ears
Blood is thicker than water
Come hell or high water
Come on in, the water is fine!
Dead in the water
When it rains, it pours
That just muddies the water
Oil and water don't mix
It's raining cats and dogs
Testing the waters
One hand washes the other
A drop in the ocean
Still waters run deep
A storm in a teacup
Water, taken in moderation, cannot hurt anybody
Water sustains all
I'm singing in the rain
Water which is too pure has no fish
Madder than a wet hen
Like a bridge over troubled water

Onomatopoeias

Splash
Gurgle
Slosh
Splish
Trickle
Gush
Drip
Tinkle
Squirt
Whoosh
Burble
Kerplunk
Sploosh
Splutter
Splatter
Ploosh
Slurp

Bodies of Water

Drop
Puddle
Spring
Brook
Fountain
Stream
Pool
Rain shower
Pond
River
Lake
Sea
Ocean

Monkey Music

by Scott Pfitzinger
for any number of people

Preparation: Divide the participants into six groups.

Directions: The director cues each group to come in or drop out as he/she sees fit. Groups chant their lines completely, keeping the downbeat the same for everyone.

Suggestions: Experiment with the combinations of different groups and give them enough time to allow them to set a groove. Keep the feeling of 4/4 time throughout.

GROUP 1

000 - 000 AH - AH 000 - 000 AH - AH

GROUP 2

000 AH 000 - AH 000 - AH 000 - AH

GROUP 3

AH - AH 000 - 000 AH - AH 000 - 000

GROUP 4

000 000 AH - AH - AH 000 000 AH - AH - AH

GROUP 5

EEE - EEE 000 - 000 AH - AH EEE - EEE 000 - 000 AH - AH

GROUP 6

AH - AH 000 - AH - AH 000

Red Light, Green Light
by Scott Pfitzinger
for 1 director and any number of people

Background: In this children's game, all the children form a line 20-30 feet away from the person who is "it," called the "stoplight." The stoplight faces away from the line of kids and says "green light!" At this point the children begin to move towards the stoplight. At any point, the stoplight may say "red light!" and turn around. If any of the kids are caught moving after this has occurred, they are out. Play resumes when the stoplight turns back around and says "green light!" again. The first player to touch the stoplight wins the game and earns the right to be "stoplight" for the next game. The stoplight wins if all the children are out before anyone is able to touch him/her.

Preparation: Two placards should be prepared, one with a Red light and one with a Green light.

Directions: Just like the children's game, this is a race. The director holds up the Green Light placard and says "Green Light!" and the musicians begin to play the piece as fast as they can. At any point, the director may hold up the Red Light placard and say "Red Light!" whereupon all the musicians must immediately stop playing. Anyone who continues playing once "Red Light!" is called is Out and must leave the stage (the director has the final say if there is a question). After they leave, the director holds up the Green Light placard, says "Green Light!" and musicians continue from where they stopped, and so on. The winner is the first musician to reach the end of the piece.

Suggestions:

- Musicians should probably face sideways to the audience, so the director's placards can be seen by the audience as well.
- Don't play TOO fast or you might not be able to stop when "Red Light!" is called.
- The placards may be substituted with anything that gives the musicians a visual cue to reinforce the called-out signals of Red and Green Lights (which may not always be heard by everyone).
- As with any game piece, keep it fun!

Duration: Approximately 2 minutes

Red Light, Green Light

Scott Pfitzinger

Presto Possible

ff

mf

mf

mf

mf

cantabile
f

mf

mf

mp

p

mp

mf

f

mp

fff

Sudoku
by Scott Pfitzinger
for any number of people

Preparation: Musicians should familiarize themselves with the solved Sudoku puzzle below, which will be used as a source of tone rows, with the numbers representing notes in the C Major scale: 1=C, 2=D, 3=E, ... 7=B, 8=C¹, 9=D¹.

Directions: Using the solved Sudoku puzzle below, the musicians will play the tone rows (or "tone columns") on any instrument in that instrument's key of C (do not transpose).

Starting together, the musicians select and play any row or column and then proceed through all nine of the rows or columns (but not both) using any rhythm, tempo, and dynamic they choose.

4	8	1	6	7	5	2	9	3
7	3	6	8	2	9	5	4	1
5	2	9	4	3	1	8	7	6
9	5	3	1	8	7	6	2	4
2	4	7	5	6	3	1	8	9
6	1	8	9	4	2	3	5	7
3	7	5	2	9	6	4	1	8
1	6	4	7	5	8	9	3	2
8	9	2	3	1	4	7	6	5

Wholly Tonicphobic Instructions

Head

Everyone begins the scale, but individually chooses a note to stop on (eg., D-E-F# and hold the F#).

From measure 3, everyone picks any note from each chord, playing them in rhythm as written.

Body

Each player should play all five letter-sections (A-E) in any order they like. When all five sections have been played, jump to the **Foot**.

Feel free to experiment with articulations & dynamics.

Note that the 11th and 12th measures of each section are rhythmically in unison.

Foot

Play this the same way as the head, choosing one note from each chord.

Wholly Tonitrophobic

for any number of C or B \flat instruments

Scott Pfitzinger

Head

Freely

mp *f* *mf* *f*

Body

♩ = 80

(A) *mf-f*

(B) *p-mp*

(C) *mp-mf*

(D) *p-mf*

(E) *mp-f*

Foot

Freely

p *mp* *mf-f* *f* *rit.* *p*