initial improvisation #1 (2017) for one or more melodic improvisers
derek kwan

your part:

letter mapping: pick a starting octave for a note "a" and map the letters of your entire name to pitches. in this mapping, diacritical marks may be ignored or treated as any pitch modifier (flat/sharp, quarter-tone flat/sharp, etc.). punctuation may be skipped over or treated as a non-pitched sound of your choice. hyphenated names may be treated as one name or as separate names. letters a-g map to a first octave, h-n map to a-g but an octave up, o-u map to a-g but two octaves up, etc. if your instrument doesn't have 3+ octaves and your name goes into the end of the alphabet, double up on octaves (a-g maps to the first octave and h-n map to the same pitches, o-u maps to a-g in the second octave and so does v-z). if there still isn't enough room on your instrument, triple (or quadruple) up. vocalists may choose to sing the unmapped letter or any vowel.

melody building: your constructed melody is repeated at will and needs no demarcation between repeats or names (accent, rest, etc.). begin with the first letter of your first name. tempo, duration, pitch, etc. is up to you and can be chosen on a note-to-note basis (no consistency needed between repetitions). once you have done so and feel comfortable moving on, gradually add the first letters of the rest of your names in sequence. imagine my middle name in this case is "xylem" (it isn't). my melody would be built up as "d", "dx","dxk". once you have introduced all your intials, go ahead and introduce the second letters of all your names in sequence ("dexk", "dexyk", "dexykw"). repeat this process until you have introduced all the letters of your names: "derekxylemkwan". note that some names are shorter than others so these names will fill out faster than the others. don't worry about this.

once you have done this, feel free to stick with this melody for a while (you don't have to stay long if you don't want). once you feel ready and comfortable, begin the opposite process by subtracting letters from your names starting with the last name with the most letters. only start subtracting letters from a name when its length is greater or equal to the longest (un)modified name in a subtraction stage. In my case, I would start subtracting from "xylem", then move on to "derek" ("derekxylemkwan", derekxylekwan", "derexylekwan"). continue this process until you are left with one letter per name. at this point, subtract initials starting from the last initial until you are just left with your first initial. once you have reached this point, feel free to stop at any time.

collaboration:

if exploring this process with other people, let somebody state (and perhaps repeat) their first initial (this could even be you). once everyone has done so, fill out the rest of your initials. once you feel everybody has done so (this can be done through gestures or you can just guess), move on to introducing second letters. once everybody has done so (again, through gestures or guess), move on to the third. once everybody has filled out their name (indicated through gestures or guess), start the reverse process. some people have longer names than others so these people will be waiting longer with their filled-out name for the others to catch up. once everybody has reduced their names to initials (again, deduced from gestures or guess), begin the process of subtraction until everybody is left with their first initial. feel free to be the first person to drop out (or another can, doesn't have to be in the same or reverse sequence as starting) and the piece ends once the last person drops out.