

My Battery Is Low And It Is Getting Dark

Brian Ellis
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For Solo Keyboard Percussion
and Live Electronics

Notes

Required Equipment:

- A keyboard percussion instrument
- A computer running Max/MSP
- An internet connection
- A microphone, audio interface, and necessary cables

The score on the following page should be taken as an example and a guideline. This work is generative, meaning that each time it is performed, a new score (and accompanying q-list) should be utilized for a unique living performance. Nothing should be taken as law.

The electronics in this piece feature live-captured samples of the percussionist looped to create a thick texture that would be impossible to create alone. This is accomplished by triggering the electronics to record via a foot pedal or some other computer-interfacing device.

Equipment-wise, this piece requires a microphone and associated interface and cables to route the audio of the percussionist to the laptop running Max/MSP. This laptop does not need to be manned or on stage, but the performer may find the information on screen a convenient safeguard if they are uncomfortable working with electronics. The output of this laptop should then be passed out to a house speaker system, through which the percussionist should also be mildly amplified.

To perform the piece, begin playing section one. After you have gotten into a stable sonic world, trigger the electronics to record. Continue grooving for at least 10 seconds, after which you may either continue to perform the same section with the new electronic accompaniment that automatically fades in, or you may gradually fade out and move on to the next section and repeat the process. If you stay in the same section, you should consider varying aspects of the musical content, a complete description of which can be found on the following page. After the numbered sections have all been played and appropriately sampled by the electronics, the piece ends with a bombastic upward glissando. The final cue in the q-list will quickly silence the electronics, and this should be triggered at the beginning of the glissando.

X note heads are to be performed with the "wrong" end of the stick. Any hardness of mallet is acceptable for natural playing.

Time is not strict for any portion of the piece. The looping tracks that form the core of the sound world are intentionally aleatoric, and should result in an expressive, unbound, free-flowing piece.

A *fresh* full score, custom q-list, and up-to-date electronics for Max/MSP may be downloaded at: <http://www.brianellisound.com/batterylow>

Notes

On variations:

After you record the sample into the electronics and it begins playing back the sound you have introduced into it, you may begin, if you feel so inclined, a mild form of improvisation. This may include varying the dynamics, texture, timbre, tempo, or rhythm of the prescribed pattern. Ideally this will be towards the goal of creating and releasing musical tension.

Pitch may also be changed, but variations should be much more cautious, and guidelines for variations are as follows:

- Pitch should not be varied in the first third of the piece.
- Newly introduced pitches should be diatonic with respect to the surrounding music.
- Pitch should not deviate more than a 4th from the prescribed pitch in either direction.
- The amount of pitch variation should increase gradually as the piece progresses.
- Newly introduced pitches should be lingered on for a long time. (Think drones, not arpeggiators)

Many of these principles may be generally applied to other parameters of music, such that the piece generally coheirs into a salient musical gesture.

On electronics:

The components in the presentation mode of the Max/MSP patch are as follows:

- Grey Status Bar: displays status messages containing information hopefully useful to you, the performer.
- Single Yellow slider: The master audio-in. This is mapped by default to channel one from whichever input device you select.
- Blue panels: Each of these represent one channel of looping electronics. All controls here are automated and triggered from the QList.
- Single red-ish slider: master audio-out. Is automated.
- Green panel: contains buttons to start and stop recording. NOTE: This will record the audio-in on one track and the combined electronics on a second under a file named 'myRecording#.wav'.
- Big grey button: Advance to the next queue.
- Big red button: reset qlist, triggering an instant mute of everything.

The only remaining challenge for you is to configure your foot pedal. I use a "butterfly" pedal on mode 3. If you want to configure it for something else, give it a shot, and if you can't figure it out, or have any other questions, give me a hollar:

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1 *very uneven* (♩ = 55)
ppp

2 *♩ = 40 heartbeat*
ppp

3 *very uneven* (♩ = 55)
p

4 *pp*
long, even sustain

5 *alternate among patterns freely*
mf

6 *♩ = 70 heartbeat*
ff 3

7 *mp*
long, even sustain

8 *alternate among patterns freely*
mf

9 *f*
long, even sustain

10 *very uneven* (♩ = 90)
fff

End *bombastic*
fff

A fresh score should be generated for every performance at
www.brianellisound.com/batterylow