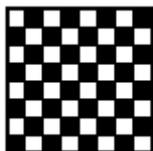


SONIC CHESS (1)

Zachary Seldess



SONIC CHESS (1)

for 32 musicians and two chess players

The Chess Players:

Two people play a game of chess during the performance of this work. This game of chess defines the duration of the performance and acts as an instigator/facilitator to the musicians' sonic interactions. The chess players must not have any formal knowledge of the details of this score and the rules involved, although they may participate in multiple performances as a chess player, possibly resulting in an experiential knowledge of some of the sonic details of the piece. Regardless of any experientially absorbed knowledge of the music's relationship to the game, the players must consider winning the game to be their primary goal, determining their choice of strategy and tactic accordingly.

The chessboard must be large enough to allow for intelligible observation of the position of its pieces from several feet away.

The Musicians:

Each of the 32 musicians is associated with one of the 32 playing pieces on the chessboard. No two musicians may be associated with the same piece.

All instrument types must have at least two octaves and a major third in common registerally.

All like pieces on the board (both black and white) must be associated with musicians of the same instrument type. No two different types of pieces may be associated with the same instrument type, but they may be from within the same family (ex. Knights = soprano clarinets, Queens = bass clarinets, Rooks = double basses, etc.).

So: Pawns → 16 of instrument type #1
Knights → 4 of instrument type #2
Bishops → 4 of instrument type #3
Rooks → 4 of instrument type #4
Queens → 2 of instrument type #5
Kings → 2 of instrument type #6

All instrument types associated with the Queens, Bishops, and Pawns must be capable of bending pitch by at least one half-step in both directions. It is recommended that instrument types associated with the Queens and Bishops be easily capable of large, smooth glissandi (ex. trombones, bowed strings, etc.).

The instrument type associated with the Kings must be capable of bending pitch by a quarter-step in both directions.

Preparing the board for performance: (see graphic chessboard)

All Musicians:

1. As a group, choose two pitches that are two octaves apart, where the range-in-common for the group extends at least one whole-step above and one whole-step below the two-octaves. Write the lower note (with its appropriate clef) on the staff next to the first rank. Write the higher note (with its appropriate clef) on the staff next to the eighth rank.
2. As a group, choose six pitches within the chosen two-octave range, where each pitch is at least one whole-step away from its upper and lower neighbor. Write the lowest of these pitches (with its appropriate clef) on the staff next to the second rank. Write the next higher pitch (with its appropriate clef) on the staff next to the third rank. Etc...

Kings and Rooks:

3. As a group (both colors), choose two yet unchosen pitches to be played when castling (see individual instruction pages). As a team (white King and Rook, black King and Rook), assign a player to each pitch.

Positioning:

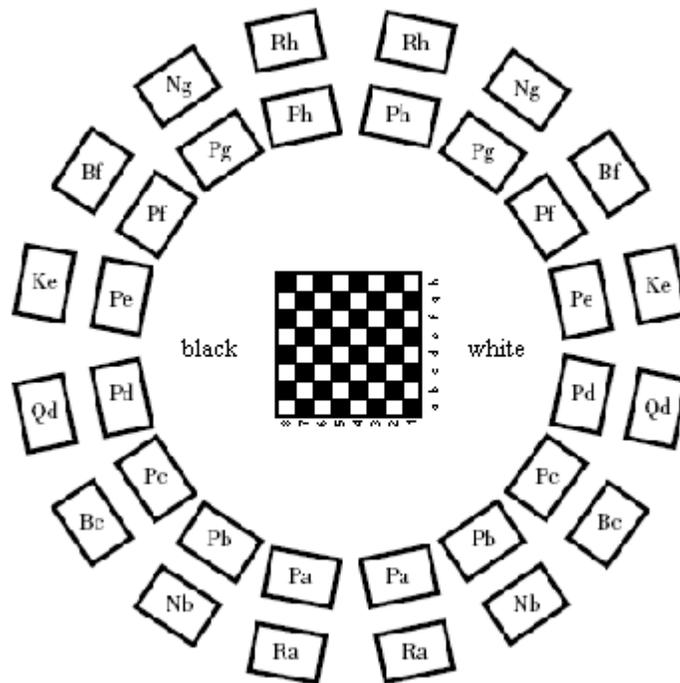
The chess players are positioned horizontally in reference to the audience, white player on the audience's right and black player on the audience's left. The players (and chessboard) are positioned in such a way as to make recognition of the details of the chess game impossible by the audience. The audience should be unable to clearly delineate when a player makes a move and which piece she moves. It should only be clear that a game of chess is occurring during the performance, nothing more.

One possibility:

Position the chess game to take place behind a semi-opaque screen with the players' silhouettes faintly visible to the audience.

The musicians are positioned in a two-row circle around the chess game. Preferably, each row is raised above the level of the chess game, the second row higher than the first (both rows standing – the second row on risers, etc.), allowing the musicians to clearly see the chessboard. Musicians associated with white pieces are positioned in the right half of the circle (audience's right), and musicians associated with black pieces are positioned in the left half of the circle (audience's left). All musicians associated with pawns are positioned in the first row, where the A Pawns are situated at the end of their halves of the circle closest to the audience, followed by the other Pawns (B through H) moving around the circle alphabetically towards the point farthest from the audience. All musicians associated with the other pieces are positioned similarly in the second row, where the A Rooks are situated at the end of their halves of the circle closest to the audience, followed by the other pieces (B through H) moving around the circle alphabetically towards the point farthest from the audience.

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PAWNS

Play only when you (the piece associated to you) are threatening a piece and/or threatened by a piece. Always play softly. When there is no threat created by you or directed towards you, be silent.

Throughout the chess game, refer to your graphic chessboard to see how your position and the other pieces' positions on the board translate into pitch.

When threatening:

Play fast legato notes alternating between a pitch one half-step or whole-step above your target pitch/chess piece (choose one), a pitch one half-step or whole-step below your target pitch (choose one), and your own pitch. Occasionally play your target pitch staccato.

When threatening more than one piece:

Rotate your focus between the different target pitches, treating each pitch according to the above instructions. You may favor any piece or pieces that seem to be more important (to your survival, positioning within your immediate environment, etc).

When threatened: As a group (both colors), choose an articulative or timbral effect to use when threatened.

Play your own pitch while using the chosen threatened effect. Exaggerate the effect as more pieces simultaneously threaten you. Stop only momentarily to take a breath, if necessary. For non-sustaining instruments a very fast, un-metered tremolo may substitute for a single sustained pitch.

When threatening one or more pieces and being threatened by one or more pieces:

If you are being threatened by more pieces than you are threatening, behave as if only threatened (focus on the pieces that threaten you). If you are threatening more pieces than you are being threatened by, behave as if only threatening (focus on the pieces that you threaten). If you are being threatened by the same number of pieces that you are threatening, behave in either fashion (choose one).

When taken:

Play only when your King is in check, adopting his threatened behavior and pitch/position as your own (as if you were the King). When there is no threat directed towards the King, be silent.

King's behavior when threatened (in check):

Quickly oscillate between these two steps. Stop only momentarily to take a breath, if necessary.

1. Play fast repeated notes (tremolo) on one of your escape pitches/squares (unoccupied or occupied squares to which you can move in order to escape threat), or on one pitch between an escape pitch and your own pitch.
2. Play your own pitch once staccato.

When promoted (arrive at the final rank for your color):

Adopt the behavior of whatever piece you become (see the piece's instruction page).

Check Mate:

End as soon as you become aware of the game's conclusion.

BISHOPS

Play only when you (the piece associated to you) are threatening a piece and/or threatened by a piece. Always play softly. When there is no threat created by you or directed towards you, be silent.

Throughout the chess game, refer to your graphic chessboard to see how your position and the other pieces' positions on the board translate into pitch.

When threatening:

Play a slow glissando from your own pitch to within one half-step or less of your target pitch/chess piece, then rest briefly and repeat. For non-sustaining instruments a very fast, un-metered tremolo may substitute for a single sustained pitch.

When threatening more than one piece:

Rotate your focus between the different target pitches, treating each pitch according to the above instructions. You may favor any piece or pieces that seem to be more important (to your survival, positioning within your immediate environment, etc).

When threatened:

Hum your own pitch while playing a slow glissando from your pitch to one or your escape pitches/squares (unoccupied or occupied squares to which you can move in order to escape threat), then rest briefly and repeat. Rotate between the different directions of escape if there are more than one. You may favor any direction or directions of escape that seem to be more intelligent (in relation to your survival, positioning within your immediate environment, etc.). If no escape pitch/square exists, hum and play your own pitch for a short time, then rest briefly and repeat.

When threatening one or more pieces and being threatened by one or more pieces:

If you are being threatened by more pieces than you are threatening, behave as if only threatened (focus on the pieces that threaten you). If you are threatening more pieces than you are being threatened by, behave as if only threatening (focus on the pieces that you threaten). If you are being threatened by the same number of pieces that you are threatening, behave in either fashion (choose one).

When taken:

Play only when your King is in check, adopting his threatened behavior and pitch/position as your own (as if you were the King). When there is no threat directed towards the King, be silent.

King's behavior when threatened (in check):

Quickly rotate between these two steps. Stop only momentarily to take a breath, if necessary.

1. Play fast repeated notes (tremolo) on one of your escape pitches/squares (unoccupied or occupied squares to which you can move in order to escape threat), or on one pitch between an escape pitch and your own pitch.
2. Play your own pitch once staccato.

Check Mate:

End as soon as you become aware of the game's conclusion.

KNIGHTS

Play only when you (the piece associated to you) are threatening a piece and/or threatened by a piece. Always play softly. When there is no threat created by you or directed towards you, be silent.

Throughout the chess game, refer to your graphic chessboard to see how your position and the other pieces' positions on the board translate into pitch.

When threatening:

Slowly rotate between these steps.

1. Play your own pitch, then be silent for a medium to long time. For non-sustaining instruments a very fast, un-metered tremolo may substitute for a single sustained pitch.
2. Play one pitch between your target pitch/chess piece and the next pitch/square further away, then be silent for a medium to long time. This pitch remains the same each time this step is repeated.
- 3.* Occasionally play your target pitch, then be silent for a medium to long time.

When threatening more than one piece:

Rotate your focus between the different target pitches, treating each pitch according to the above instructions. You may favor any piece or pieces that seem to be more important (to your survival, positioning within your immediate environment, etc).

When threatened:

1. Play your own pitch staccato, then be silent for a short time.
2. Play one of your escape pitches/squares (unoccupied or occupied squares to which you can move in order to escape threat) staccato, then be silent for a short time.
3. Continuously repeat steps 1 and 2. You may rotate between steps 1 and 2 or repeat a step multiple times before moving to the next.

If no escape pitch/square exists, play your own pitch for a short time, then rest briefly and repeat.

When threatening one or more pieces and being threatened by one or more pieces:

If you are being threatened by more pieces than you are threatening, behave as if only threatened (focus on the pieces that threaten you). If you are threatening more pieces than you are being threatened by, behave as if only threatening (focus on the pieces that you threaten). If you are being threatened by the same number of pieces that you are threatening, behave in either fashion (choose one).

When taken:

Play only when your King is in check, adopting his threatened behavior and pitch/position as your own (as if you were the King). When there is no threat directed towards the King, be silent.

King's behavior when threatened (in check):

Quickly rotate between these two steps. Stop only momentarily to take a breath, if necessary.

1. Play fast repeated notes (tremolo) on one of your escape pitches/squares (unoccupied or occupied squares to which you can move in order to escape threat), or on one pitch between an escape pitch and your own pitch.
2. Play your own pitch once staccato.

Check Mate:

End as soon as you become aware of the game's conclusion.

ROOKS

Play only when you (the piece associated to you) are threatening a piece and/or threatened by a piece. Always play softly. When there is no threat created by you or directed towards you, be silent.

Throughout the chess game, refer to your graphic chessboard to see how your position and the other pieces' positions on the board translate into pitch.

When threatening:

Along a File:

Play one pitch between your target pitch/chess piece and the next pitch/square closer to you. Stop only momentarily to take a breath, if necessary. For non-sustaining instruments a very fast, un-metered tremolo may substitute for a single sustained pitch.

Along a Rank:

Play your own pitch. Stop only momentarily to take a breath, if necessary.

When threatening more than one piece:

Simultaneously focus on as many target pitches as possible according to the above instructions. You may hum a pitch while playing one or more others. If there are more threatened pieces than you are capable of interacting with, you may favor the pieces that seem to be more important (to your survival, positioning within your immediate environment, etc).

When threatened: As a group (both colors), choose an unpitched, sustainable sound to play when threatened.

Play your chosen threatened sound. Exaggerate the effect as more pieces simultaneously threaten you. Stop only momentarily to take a breath, if necessary.

When threatening one or more pieces and being threatened by one or more pieces:

If you are being threatened by more pieces than you are threatening, behave as if only threatened (focus on the pieces that threaten you). If you are threatening more pieces than you are being threatened by, behave as if only threatening (focus on the pieces that you threaten). If you are being threatened by the same number of pieces that you are threatening, behave in either fashion (choose one).

Castling:

Play your chosen pitch while your piece is moving into castle position (see *preparing the board for performance*).

When taken:

Play only when your King is in check, adopting his threatened behavior and pitch/position as your own (as if you were the King). When there is no threat directed towards the King, be silent.

King's behavior when threatened (in check):

Quickly rotate between these two steps. Stop only momentarily to take a breath, if necessary.

1. Play fast repeated notes (tremolo) on one of your escape pitches/squares (unoccupied or occupied squares to which you can move in order to escape threat), or on one pitch between an escape pitch and your own pitch.
2. Play your own pitch once staccato.

Check Mate:

End as soon as you become aware of the game's conclusion.

QUEENS

Play only when you (the piece associated to you) are threatening a piece and/or threatened by a piece. Always play softly. When there is no threat created by you or directed towards you, be silent.

Throughout the chess game, refer to your graphic chessboard to see how your position and the other pieces' positions on the board translate into pitch.

When threatening:

Adopt the threatening behavior of the type of piece capable of threat in your position, except the King and Rook (see the piece's instruction page). When you are capable of threatening in more than one way (ex. along a diagonal and a file), choose one manner of threat along with its appropriate behavior.

So: When threatening along a rank or file, behave like a Rook.
 When threatening forward to an adjacent diagonal square, behave like a Pawn or Bishop (choose one).
 When threatening along a diagonal (adjacent or non adjacent squares), behave like a Bishop.

When threatening more than one piece:

Rotate your focus between the different target pitches/chess pieces, treating each pitch according to the above instructions. You may favor any piece or pieces that seem to be more important (to your survival, positioning within your immediate environment, etc).

When threatened:

Adopt the threatened behavior of the type of piece capable of escape from your position, except the King and Rook (see the piece's instruction page). When you are capable of escape in more than one way (ex. along a diagonal and a file), choose one manner of escape along with its appropriate behavior.

So: When capable of escaping along a rank or file, behave like a Rook.
 When capable of escape forward one square along a file, behave like a Pawn or Rook (choose one).
 When capable of escape along a diagonal, behave like a Bishop.

When threatening one or more pieces and being threatened by one or more pieces:

If you are being threatened by more pieces than you are threatening, behave as if only threatened (focus on the pieces that threaten you). If you are threatening more pieces than you are being threatened by, behave as if only threatening (focus on the pieces that you threaten). If you are being threatened by the same number of pieces that you are threatening, behave in either fashion (choose one).

When taken:

Play only when your King is in check, adopting his threatened behavior and pitch/position as your own (as if you were the King). When there is no threat directed towards the King, be silent.

King's behavior when threatened (in check):

Quickly rotate between these two steps. Stop only momentarily to take a breath, if necessary.

1. Play fast repeated notes (tremolo) on one of your escape pitches/squares (unoccupied or occupied squares to which you can move in order to escape threat), or on one pitch between an escape pitch and your own pitch.
2. Play your own pitch once staccato.

Check Mate:

End as soon as you become aware of the game's conclusion.

KINGS

Play only when you (the piece associated to you) are threatening a piece and/or threatened by a piece. Always play softly. When there is no threat created by you or directed towards you, be silent.

Throughout the chess game, refer to your graphic chessboard to see how your position and the other pieces' positions on the board translate into pitch.

When threatening:

Play your target pitch/chess piece, continuously bending it within the space of a quarter-step above (including the quarter step) and a quarter-step below (including the quarter-step) the original pitch. Shift between these gradations of sharp and flat at your own pace. Stop only momentarily to take a breath, if necessary. For non-sustaining instruments a very fast, un-metered tremolo may substitute for a single sustained pitch.

When threatening more than one piece:

Rotate your focus between the different target pitches, treating each pitch according to the above instructions. You may favor any piece or pieces that seem to be more important (to your survival, positioning within your immediate environment, etc).

When threatened (in check):

Disregard all offensive situations and react only to the threat.

Quickly rotate between these two steps. Stop only momentarily to take a breath, if necessary.

1. Play fast repeated notes (tremolo) on one of your escape pitches/squares (unoccupied or occupied squares to which you can move in order to escape threat), or on one pitch between an escape pitch and your own pitch.
2. Play your own pitch once staccato.

Castling:

Play your chosen pitch while your piece is moving into castle position (see *preparing the board for performance*).

Check Mate:

End as soon as you become aware of the game's conclusion.