In Between

the Game

When we started gathering ideas for our In Between project, we were influenced by the suggestions regarding Game Theory. We decided therefore to design a game of improvisation that we'd play together at a distance, considering the special circumstances of social distancing. It would become an exploration of the interplay between randomness and will.

A key element in our game constitutes the dice. The dice is one of the staple marks of randomness and it has been used before in music history in Ars Combinatorica and Aleatoric music ("Aleatoric" comes literally from the Latin word "aleas" which means dice).

In *the Game,* while randomness is determined by the use of the dice to generate the structure of the matrix, free will defines itself in regards to *the Game* through the actual design of its framework and main content (instructions), as well as the decision-making involved in outlining and arranging a piece out of the two resulting recordings.

The matrix was designed so that it accommodates 6 x 6 lines of instructions, 6 being the maximum number of dots on the dice. For the instructions, each of us had to come up with a number of 3 x 6, pertaining to the following categories:

A Musical language

B Abstract

C Graphic

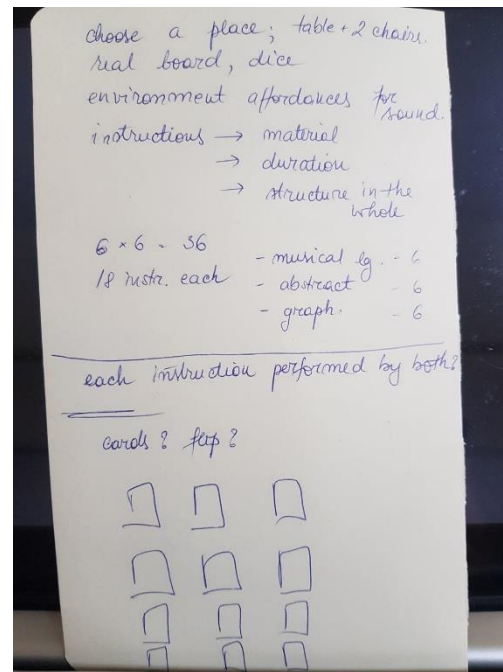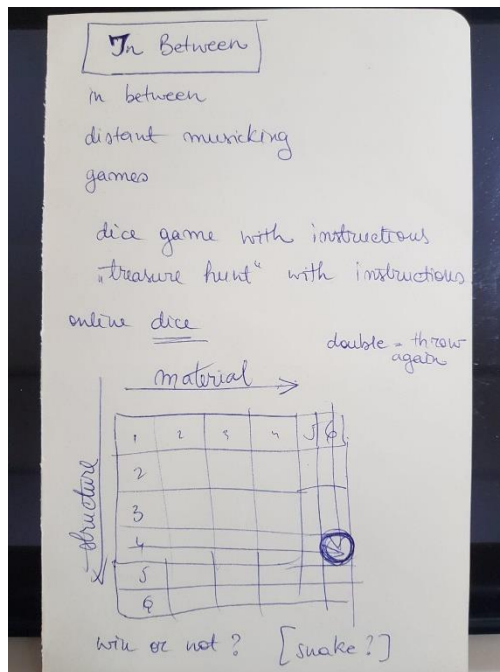*The Game* has both a hybrid - *in between* (1) and a collaborative (2) character.

(1) – we work both together and separately
(2) – to create a common piece

No winners - There is no clear winner, the only winner is the piece made out of the two recordings.

The piece

We decided that the resulting recordings of *the Game* would be finally merged together in a piece by superimposing them, bearing minimal compositional intervention.

The piece was processed in Ableton Live, using cutting, editing and mixing techniques, as far as we had knowledge, with the aim of *making it work.* Structurally, it has been rather easy to do that, as randomness made that the tracks went very well together. The clear superimposing of some words and fragments are marks of the compositional approach. The more difficult part has been the mixing, as we had to deal with issues related to space and different recording quality and required special attention.

In Between

in between

distant musicking

games

dice game with instructions

„treasure hunt" with instructions

online dice

material →

double = throw again

structure

	1	2	3	4	5	6
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						

win or not? [snake?]

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choose a place; table + 2 chairs.

real board, dice

environment affordances for sound.

instructions → material
→ duration
→ structure in the whole

$6 \times 6 = 36$
18 instr. each
— musical lg. - 6
— abstract - 6
— graph. - 6

each instruction performed by both?

cards? flip?

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RANDOM.ORG

Iulia's Matrix

Random Sequence Generator

Here is your sequence:

29	36	19	15	32	23
27	10	21	12	31	8
18	11	30	25	3	16
7	28	34	13	24	4
33	6	17	2	1	5
14	9	20	26	35	22

Jakub's matrix

32	20	3	31	28	2
22	1	15	34	6	23
5	24	4	16	30	12
17	14	15	8	21	18
35	8	17	23	13	36
33	10	27	26	25	1

We would like to end with the observation that our project presented a multifaceted approach to a musician's creative practice, crossing the boundaries between *composition, improvisation, processing and mixing.* We played with *randomness* and *intentionality* while exploring the possibilities given by a *distant music-making.*

Here, our personal feelings about the process and end result:

Iulia-Andreea Smeu

Since a while, one of my main interests regarding the practice of improvisation has been the interplay between controlling and letting go, the balance between mind and no-mind, fully encompassed in an enhanced state of presence.

With the project Jakub and myself did for *In Between – Distant musicking,* these concerns have been partly transcribed into a very concrete artistic process and product, with a very clear structure and features related to randomness and free will / control. As improvisers, sometimes we have ideas, other times we follow someone else's ideas, maybe before playing we structure a general framework or decide upon some limitations but in general we have to keep flexible and open to randomness and, why not, forget altogether about ideas.

The process of designing *the Game* with Jakub has been a very smooth one, where we managed to communicate openly and construct it layer by layer. Most of it has been done online, although we had a face-to-face first meeting about it.

I have to admit that, surprisingly, playing *the Game* has been so much fun, I couldn't really stop playing! Every dice throw was exciting, with every possible combination. We both did quite a couple of recordings, by ourselves, completely unaware of what or how the other would play (which also enhanced the excitement). At the end, I *exercised will* and selected two with the most similar recording time to put together in order to build the piece. Superimposing them has been a rather amusing experience, hearing our voices while playing, noticing how things just really fitted together, even words, with everything having been generated randomly and/or individually.

Although our idea is not *highly* original, it has been a very enjoyable experience and musical experiment which reflects the special circumstances of working in this hybrid *together/alone* context. I would recommend other musicians to play *the Game* as well, while inventing their own instructions and in the end just see what happens ☺

Jakub Miarczynski

Playing the Game was really exciting and addictive for me. Many straight, but working on imaginations instructions, the dynamism, simplicity of the rules and the final effect make me happy and proud because of this project. I think playing the Game is a nice way to develop a personal, unique musical vocabulary for beginners and players more into improvisational music. Also it was a very natural way to involve my spoken voice into my music.

In the end, designing a project such as the Game gave me many inspirations for my own way of perceiving my approach to improvised music.