

‘Ali vs Foreman’ – commentary
Paul Sundt

For this assignment I chose to base my composition on a boxing match between Muhammad Ali and George Foreman. Due to both Muhammad Ali’s unusual boxing strategies and the fact that he defeats George Foreman against all the odds, the match is one of the most famous in boxing history and something that I felt would make for an interesting musical representation.

To begin with, I decided to use only the final round of the match as it is around three minutes in length, an appropriate length for the composition. I then came up with the following rules to govern the various parameters of the score. As I have three instruments to work with, I paired these with the three most important participants, Muhammad Ali, George Foreman and The Referee.

Muhammed Ali	Flute
George Foreman	Clarinet
The Referee	Bassoon

The pitches of the score are dictated by the actions of the participants. I identified what I felt to be the 7 most significant actions of the match.

1. A left punch to the face
2. A right punch to the face
3. A left punch to the body
4. A right punch to the body
5. A left miss
6. A right miss
7. Being knocked out

I then paired the first 6 chromatic pitches (starting from “A”) to the first 6 actions assigning them to the Flute, and then paired the second 6 chromatic pitches to the first 6 actions (starting from Eb/D#) assigning those to the Clarinet. The 7th action, being knocked out, is the end of the piece and so all instruments simply hold either the note they are currently playing or the note they have last played until the video stops.

Actions	Flute	Clarinet
Left face	A	D#/Eb
Right face	A#/Bb	E
Left body	B	F
Right body	C	F#/Gb
Left miss	C#/Db	G
Right miss	D	G#/Ab
Knock out	n/a	n/a

I then also paired three types of articulation to either face, body or miss.

Face	Glissando
Body	Trill
Miss	Grace note

These were put into the score providing there was the space of a 16th note before the note they are affecting. For the Referee, or Bassoon, I identified three potential actions.

1. Time keeping
2. Monitoring the fight
3. Breaking up the fight

Because the referee keeps track of time in seconds, I allowed this to dictate the tempo of the composition, that of 60bpm. I then gave the bassoon part a simple quarter note rhythm to represent the keeping of time. This also made it easier to synchronise the audio with the video. I also wanted the bassoon part to ascend in pitch throughout the piece to give it a sense of ever-increasing tension so, because the piece is 180 beats long, I divided this by 12 giving me 15 beats and allowed this to dictate the time signature of the piece, that of 5/4. This then allowed the bassoon to stay on each of the 12 chromatic pitches for three bars before moving up to the next.

For both the actions of supervising and breaking up the fight, I decided that the bassoon would play a melody consisting of continuous 16th notes and within the octave of “A3” to “A4” inclusive when monitoring and within the octave of “A4” to “A5” inclusive when breaking up the fight.

The durations of the Flute and Clarinet parts are dictated by both when the actions occur in the video and the dynamics of each action. The video is filmed in 24 frames per second so I decided to work to within a quarter of a second when deciding on the occurrence of the actions, so for example, an action can either occur,

- At the start of a second – “1”
- On a second and a quarter – “1:06”
- On a second and a half – “1:12”
- On a second and three quarters – “1:18”

This meant that the piece had to begin with an anacrusis of one beat so that beat one of bar one coincides with the first second of the video. I then paired six possible durations with six possible dynamics, the idea here being that the harder the punch, the more lasting the effects! These durations are followed until interrupted by another action.



For the Bassoon part, I used each of the six dynamic markings in order of soft to loud and indicated a change to each one every six bars adding to the effect of increasing tension.

SYSTEM CHART

I then compiled all of the above information into the following chart which I then used to notate the score.

Time in seconds of action (note occurrence)	Dynamic duration	Ali's actions	Foreman's actions	Referee's actions
0:00				time keeping
3:00	pp			monitoring
3:18	mf	left miss		
4:12	pp			time keeping
4:12	mf		left face	
6:06	pp			monitoring
7:06	mf		left miss	
8:06	mf		left body	
8:18	mf	right face		
9:06	f	right face		
11:12	f	left miss		
12:00				time keeping
12:18	pp			monitoring
13:18	f	left face		
14:06				time keeping
16:12	mp		left miss	
16:12	mp	right face		
18:12	pp			break up fight
20:12				time keeping
21:18	mf	left face		
22:06	mf	right miss		
22:06	f		left miss	
24:12	ff		left miss	
26:00	pp			break up fight
31:06				time keeping
33:06	mf	left face		
35:18	p			monitoring
38:12				time keeping
41:18	p	right face		
43:00	p			monitoring
44:00	f		right face	
44:12	p			break up fight
46:18				time keeping
48:12	p		left face	
49:18	p		left face	
50:18	mf			monitoring
52:00	mf		left face	
52:12	f		left face	
52:18	mf		right face	
53:06				time keeping
55:00	mp		left body	
55:18	p		left body	

56:06	pp		left face	
56:18	p			monitoring
57:18				time keeping
57:18	pp		left miss	
58:12	p			break up fight
60:00	f		right body	
62:18				time keeping
63:06	p		left miss	
63:06	p	right miss		
63:12	f	left face		
64:06	mf		left face	
64:18	ff		right face	
65:06	mf		left face	
66:00	mp			break up fight
66:06	f		left miss	
68:00	f		right miss	
73:06				time keeping
74:00	mf		left face	
75:00	p		left face	
77:18	mp			break up fight
81:18				time keeping
81:18	p	left face		
83:00	p	right face		
83:12	mp	right face		
84:18	mf		right face	
85:06	f		left miss	
86:18	mp			break up fight
91:06				time keeping
92:18	mf		left miss	
95:12	mf		left face	
97:18	mp		left face	
99:18	mf			monitoring
100:18				time keeping
101:00	mf		left miss	
101:12	p		left miss	
102:00	mf		right miss	
103:12	mf		left body	
104:00	mp		right body	
104:12	mf			monitoring
107:18	p		left miss	
108:06	p		right miss	
109:00	p		left miss	
109:18	pp		left miss	
110:06	p		right miss	
110:18	pp		left body	
113:00	mp		left face	
114:12	p		right miss	
114:12				time keeping

115:06	pp		left miss	
117:06	f		right miss	
120:00	f			monitoring
125:00	mp		left miss	
129:00	mf		left miss	
131:06				time keeping
131:18	mf	left miss		
132:12	p		left miss	
133:00	f		right face	
134:06	f			monitoring
135:12	f		right miss	
137:06	p		left body	
137:18	p		right body	
138:00	p		left body	
138:06	mp		right body	
139:00	p		left body	
139:12	p		right body	
140:00	p		left body	
140:06	mf		right body	
140:18	mf		left body	
142:06	f		left miss	
142:18	f		right miss	
142:18				time keeping
145:12	f			break up fight
148:00				time keeping
149:18	mf		left face	
151:00	ff			monitoring
152:12	f		left face	
153:18	f		right face	
154:18	ff			break up fight
157:12	ff			monitoring
159:18	f	left miss		
160:00	f	right face		
161:12	f	left face		
162:00	ff			time keeping
163:00	f	right face		
163:06	mf		right body	
164:18	f	right face		
165:18	f	right face		
166:12	mf	left miss		
166:18	f	right face		
167:06	f	left face		
167:12	ff	right face		
167:12		Knock out	knock out	knock out
180:00		end	end	end