'Choices' – Commentary
Paul Sundt

This piece requires 4 players and is playable by any four pitched instruments. Throughout this piece, each player has designated moments where they have the choice to change between the four parameters of pitch, dynamics, register and rhythm. Player 1 may change their parameters every bar, player 2 may change their parameters every two bars, player 3 may change their parameters every three bars and player 4 may change their parameters every four bars. There are, however, two exceptions to these rules. The available pitches assigned to player 4 are restricted to just (C) and the available rhythms throughout the piece also have certain restrictions.

PITCH

I wanted to use as many of the 12 chromatic pitches as possible but in a way that was more 'tonal' than 'a-tonal'. To do this, I decided on a root note for the piece, (C), and assigned that to player 4. I then separated the remaining pitches into types of thirds, fifths and sevenths so that at any given moment in the piece, a four note chord would occur. The table below shows the potential pitches and how they are assigned to each voice in the score. It also shows that there is a 6th in the 7ths group and a 4th in the 3rds group and that the notes of (Db) and (D) are not used in this piece.

Player 1	7ths	A	Bb	B
Player 2	5ths	F#/Gb	G	G#/Ab
Player 3	3rds	D#/Eb	E	F
Player 4	Roots	C		

The result of this is that mostly familiar or standard types of chords occur which helps to achieve a more 'tonal' feel to the piece. Potentially, there are 27 possible chords which are listed below.

Cdim7	Cmin7b5	CmMaj7b5
Cmin6	Cmin7	CmMaj7
C6	C7	CMaj7
FMaj(add9)	C7sus4	CMaj7sus4
Amin6	C7b5	CMaj7b5
Ab(addb9)	AbMaj(add9)	AbMaj(add#9)
AminMaj7	C7#5	CMaj7#5
FMaj(addb9)	C7sus4b5	CMaj7sus4b5
FMaj(add#9)	Fmin(add11)	Fmin(addb13)

At the start of the piece, all players choose from their available pitches. Players 1, 2 and 3 can then changes these pitches every 1, 2 or 3 bars accordingly.

DYNAMICS

In order to allow for different notes of each chord to become more prominent at different times, I made two possible dynamics available, (p) and (f). At the start of the piece, all players choose from these dynamics which can then be changed every 1, 2, 3 or 4 bars accordingly.

REGISTER

In order to allow for the chords to occur in a variety of inversions, I made two possible registers or octaves available. At the start of the piece, all players choose a particular octave of their chosen pitches and ,after this, may change between this and one other octave every 1, 2, 3 or 4 bars accordingly.

RHYTHM

When composing the rhythms for this piece, I became interested in the idea of having continuous notes that are achieved as a result of each player playing at different times. So, I started with two voices and a bar for each, one bar of continuous 16th notes and one of continuous 8th note triplets and then distributed them amongst four voices. These became the four rhythms of the piece.

Rhythm A
Rhythm B
Rhythm C
Rhythm D

I chose the time signature of 7/4 because it gave a little more space for composing interesting rhythms than say 4/4 and more time for each rhythm to become absorbed by the listener. My reason for using triplets as well as 16th notes is that, when in combination with each other, they divide the bar into 30 potential points where a note can occur, giving more scope for syncopation throughout the piece.

FORM

The piece is structured in a way that ensures that all rhythms are played by each player, and also, that the piece ends differently to how it began. For the first four bars, each player plays rhythm (A). After this, the rhythms become increasingly available every four bars, and in the order A, B, C and D until bar 13 where all four rhythms are available. After this, the rhythms become increasingly unavailable every four bars but now in the opposite order meaning that all players end the piece by playing rhythm D. Throughout this, the players have the choice to change rhythm every one, two, three or four bars in the way mentioned at the beginning, but depending on whether the rhythms are available. The diagram below shows the availability of the rhythms throughout the piece.

A	Bar 1																				
B																					
C																					
D																					

I then compiled all of these guide lines into the following Performance Directions.

	Rhythms available	Pitches available	Dynamics available	Registers available
Player 1 – to change available parameters every 1 bar	A for 4 bars A or B for 4 bars A, B or C for 4 bars A, B, C or D for 4 bars B, C or D for 4 bars C or D for 4 bars D for 4 bars	(A), (Bb) or (B) for 1 bar minimum	(p) or (f) for 1 bar minimum	Octave change for 1 bar minimum
Player 2 – to change available parameters every 2 bars	A for 4 bars A or B for 4 bars A, B or C for 4 bars A, B, C or D for 4 bars B, C or D for 4 bars C or D for 4 bars D for 4 bars	(Gb), (G) or (G#) for 2 bars minimum	(p) or (f) for 2 bars minimum	Octave change for 2 bars minimum
Player 3 – to change available parameters every 3 bars	A for 4 bars A or B for 4 bars A, B or C for 4 bars A, B, C or D for 4 bars B, C or D for 4 bars C or D for 4 bars D for 4 bars	(Eb), (E) or (f) for 3 bars minimum	(p) or (f) for 3 bars minimum	Octave change for 3 bars minimum
Player 4 – to change available parameters every 4 bars	A for 4 bars A or B for 4 bars A, B or C for 4 bars A, B, C or D for 4 bars B, C or D for 4 bars C or D for 4 bars D for 4 bars	(C)	(p) or (f) for 4 bars minimum	Octave change for 4 bars minimum