

things to do

/ James

Saunders

/ 2014-2019

things to do is a series of pieces which use a set of instructions in different categories (including noises, pitches, devices and processes) spoken by players and other participants during the performance and which govern the actions made by the players. Players respond to instructions they can hear by realizing the defined actions as soon as possible after they are spoken. The differences in each piece, and the relationships between the players and other participants, are determined by constraints which govern who each player responds to and who gives instructions. It creates modes of interaction between individuals, allows group behaviours to emerge, and reveals the personal characteristics of each performer in an immediate way. Players may use any instruments, sound-producing objects, devices or sound processing equipment (digital, analogue, or acoustic), and performances are characterised by the wide range of personal choices brought together as a group.

SPORFESTIVALFO
RCONTEMPORARYMUS
ICANDSOUNDAR
T



you say what to do was commissioned by SPOR Festival and first performed by Mark Knoop & Serge Vuille with audience volunteers at Godsbanen, SPOR Festival, Aarhus, Denmark, 09.05.14.

I tell you what to do was commissioned by Spitalfields Festival with funds provided by PRS Foundation and first performed by Stewart Lee with Magnitude Music at Village Underground, London, Spitalfields Festival, 16.06.14.

/ 2014

everybody do this
you say what to do
lots and lots for us to do

I tell you what to do

I decide what it is I am going to do

choose who tells you what to do

we do what you say and say what to
do

/ 2015

we gradually have more things to
do and fewer things to say

/ 2016

we tell each other what to do but
always listen to you

all the things we make you do

/ 2017

sometimes we do what you say, but
occasionally we don't

/ 2018

we do what we say, then you do
what we say, then we do what you
say, then you do what you say

you can do what you want unless
someone tells you what to do

/ 2019

people do things together

PREPARATION

Each piece within the series *things to do* sets up a different arrangement of people who give cues and people who respond to cues.

In some pieces, the groups are entirely separate (one group gives cues, the other group responds to cues).
In other pieces there is an overlap (some or all of the players both give and respond to cues).

The principal difference between each of the pieces is the social situation that arises from the particular arrangement of cue giving and responding.

SETUP

After deciding which piece to play, agree the performance duration.

As a group, determine which action categories you will use (see below)
As a minimum, all realisations must include the *pitch* and *noise* categories.

Determine how many instruction words are required in each category (e.g. for 'noise', if the group chooses to use 13 noises, then instruction words 'noise 1, noise 2, ... noise 13' are required, and so on). Not all the categories or instruction words need to be used. Determine the maximum number of instruction words needed in each category and prepare a list for each player.
In general, a good starting point is approximately 10 pitches, 10 noises, 4 devices and 4 recordings. This is not essential but provides a good balance between sounds. Some pieces also require other actions from the category list. Exploring varying balances of categories and actions is also encouraged.

Players may use any instruments, sound-producing objects, devices or sound processing equipment (digital, analogue, or acoustic). In general, sounds which can be produced quickly following a cue are easier to use.
If electronic sounds are used, these should be amplified locally so that association with the player making the sound is clear. Avoid using a PA unless absolutely necessary.

All players have their own setup, and there does not need to be any co-ordination between the materials (i.e. 'noise 4' may be a different source for each player).

Each player responding to cues should have a setup that allows quick access to the sounds.
It may be useful to label the sounds with the correct cue if there are multiple objects, or to devise an appropriate form of notation to aid recall.

Players giving cues (regardless of whether they also respond or do not respond to cues) should be positioned so that the responding players and audience can hear them. Cues may be amplified, but this should ideally be locally rather than through a PA.

Unless specified in each score, the players and other participants can be arranged in the performance space as needed. Some of the scores ask for specific positioning. In general players should be seated, with a table and/or instrument setup as needed.

PERFORMANCE

A piece begins with one or more players giving a cue, to which the appropriate players respond.

Players give cues by independently speaking the instruction words at a level audible to the other players and audience, but not so loud as to cover any sounds made by the players.

The instruction words may be spoken in any order, with any spacing in time, and may be repeated as required.

The sequence of instruction words to be used should be chosen during the performance from the previously determined list, rather than prepared in advance.

The piece ends through mutual agreement by cueing players stopping giving cues.

If one or more cueing players do not recognize this situation, responding players may if necessary choose to stop responding until the cueing players agree to end.

Throughout a realisation, there should be no discussion of the piece (e.g. telling other players to give specific cues, or to stop). Behaviours should emerge from the choices players make, but may also reflect the need for non-verbal communication

GENERAL

Exceptions to these general instructions and/or additional information in the individual pieces take precedence where there is any contradiction.

Realisations tend to begin with a lot of cueing and then tail off as players tire. Often this is followed by a period of invention and play..

Do not over rehearse. Ensure everyone knows what they are doing, try the piece out for a short time, and then use the performance to investigate the way the group operates.

noise

any noises may be used
all noises must be as different as possible to each other
duration of each noise is generally short
noises are sounded using any means following each cue

instruction words: noise 1
 noise 2
 noise 3
 etc.

device

any automated devices may be used
devices remain in the current state until changed
all actions involve turning the device on or off
changes to the device state are made following each cue

instruction words: device 1 on
 device 1 off
 device 2 on
 device 2 off
 device 3 on
 device 3 off
 etc.

recording

any recordings may be used
all actions involve turning the recording on or off
changes to the recording state are made following each cue

instruction words: recording 1 on
 recording 1 off
 recording 2 on
 recording 2 off
 recording 3 on
 recording 3 off
 etc.

pitch

any pitches may be used
each pitch must be different
duration of each pitch is generally short
pitches are sounded using any means following each cue

instruction words: pitch 1
 pitch 2
 pitch 3
 etc.

process

any digital, analogue or acoustic processing of sounds may be used
all actions involve turning the process on or off
changes to the process state are made following each cue

instruction words: process 1 on
 process 1 off
 process 2 on
 process 2 off
 process 3 on
 process 3 off
 etc.

position

any position may be adopted
all actions involve adopting the respective position
all positions must allow other instructions to be carried out
positions are adopted following each cue and maintained until otherwise instructed

instruction words: position 1
 position 2
 position 3
 etc.

action

any actions may be used
all actions must be as different as possible in appearance and function
actions are made following each cue

instruction words: action 1
 action 2
 action 3
 etc.

words

words must be selected using chance procedures
they may be taken from any number of sources
words are spoken clearly, in a neutral manner, following each cue

instruction words: word 1
 word 2
 word 3
 etc.

everybody do this

/ 2014

[at least four players]

All players give instructions.

All players respond to instructions.

you say what to do

/ 2014

[at least two players, each with a group of assistants]

Each player should be seated, with their group of assistants standing behind them in an arc.
There should be a distinct space between each of the player-assistant groups.

Assistants only give instructions to their own player.

Players only respond to instructions from their own group of assistants.

lots and lots for us to do

/ 2014

[two players]

The two players should be positioned to face each other.

Both players give instructions.

Both players respond to all instructions.

I tell you what to do

/ 2014

[one speaker and at least four players]

The speaker should be free to walk around.

The speaker may direct the instructions to the whole group, or to sub-groups of any size and constitution, or individual players. If directing instructions to sub-groups or individual players, the speaker may use hand gestures or other means to identify the required players.

Players respond to instructions directed at them, and all instructions directed to the whole group.

I decide what it is I am going to do

/ 2014

[any number of players]

All players give instructions.

All players respond only to their own instructions.

choose who tells you what to do

/ 2014

[4-8 players]

Each player chooses which of the other players' instructions to follow.
Players may choose any number of players to follow, from no players to all players, or any number in between.

Players may not follow their own instructions.

Players may change their choice of player(s) to follow at any point.

Players respond to all instructions given by their chosen player(s)
by realizing the defined actions as soon as possible after they are spoken.

we do what you say and say what to do / 2014

[at least six players, each with a group of assistants]

Each player should be seated, with their group of assistants standing behind them in an arc.
There should be a distinct space between each of the player-assistant groups.

Assistants only give instructions to their own player.
Players only give instructions to other players.

Players respond to instructions from their own group of assistants, and from all other players.

we gradually have more things to do and fewer things to say

/ 2015

[large ensemble]

Players individually select one instruction to follow initially (e.g. 'noise 8').

Each player only responds to that active instruction and ignores all others.

Once a player has followed their first instruction, the player adds a new instruction (e.g. 'pitch 3'), so that two are now active (e.g. noise 8, pitch 3).

Each player only responds to the two active instructions and ignores all other instructions.

Once the second instruction is played (pitch 3), a third is added (e.g. 'device 1 on') and the player responds to all three instructions (noise 8, pitch 3, device 1 on).

This process continues, adding new instructions in the same way until all instructions are active.

When all of a player's instructions are active, the player holds one hand up to signal this.

Players may only speak their currently inactive instruction words (i.e. only those they have not responded to).

Use a list of instructions to remember which are active if necessary, ticking them off as they are added.

The piece finishes as soon as the first player holds up their hand.

If this proves impossible or unlikely, the piece finishes by mutual consent.

we tell each other what to do but
always listen to you

/ 2016

[multiple pairs of players, and one other player]

The players in pairs should be positioned to face each other.
The other player should be free to walk around.

Each player in a pair give instructions to each other.
Each player in a pair responds to their partner's instructions.

The additional player gives instructions to all the paired players.
The paired players all respond to instructions given by the additional player.

all the things we make you do

/ 2016

[at least two players, with audience]

The audience should be provided with a list of the available instructions.

Audience members give instructions to the players.

All players respond to all instructions given by audience members.

sometimes we do what you say, but occasionally we don't

/ 2017

[large ensemble, with volunteers]

The players are seated in front of the audience.
Four microphones connected to a PA should be positioned in front of the ensemble, and facing them.
A list of possible instructions should be visible from each station.

Volunteers should be encouraged to take one of the four stations.
Volunteers may be from the audience or the ensemble, or both.
When at least one volunteer is in place, the piece may start.

Volunteers give instructions when standing at one of the four stations.

All players respond to the instructions spoken by any of the volunteers.

Occasionally, players may stop responding to one or more of the volunteers.
Players should decide when to do this individually, but may be influenced by the choices of other players.
They may recommence responding to any of the volunteers at a later point if they wish.

The volunteers may be in place for any section of the performance, from giving a single instruction to being present for the whole performance.
They may sit down at any point.

If players stop responding to a volunteer completely, the volunteer has the choice to regain their attention or give up and sit down.
New volunteers may fill any available station during the performance. Ideally all four stations should be filled for most of the performance.

we do what we say, then you do
what we say, then we do what you
say, then you do what you say

/ 2018

[two groups of players]

The two groups should be positioned with a distinct space between them.

The piece has four phases;

1. The players in the first group give and respond to instructions as indicated below. The second group are silent.
2. The players in the first group continue to give and respond to their instructions, and additionally the players in the second group respond to the instructions given by the first group.
3. The players in the second group give and respond to their own instructions. The players in the first group stop giving instructions but respond to the instructions given by the first group.
4. Only the players in the second group give and respond to instructions. The first group are now silent.

The duration of each phase is flexible, but should be long enough to register.

A new phase is initiated by players changing their roles as indicated.

It is likely this will happen gradually, but other players should also move on once they recognize a change is occurring.

you can do what you want unless someone tells you what to do

/ 2018

[at least 3 volunteers]

The piece is arranged for performance installation.

An area with a number of setups should be accessible by visitors to the space.

Each setup comprises a table containing the necessary resources to respond to the instructions.

Instruction sheets should be placed on stands to enable other visitors to give instructions.

The balance between the stands and table is flexible.

Amplification may be used if required.

Volunteers may take up one of the roles and stop at any point.

There may be times when the piece is inactive, or where there is minimal involvement.

Volunteers may elect to sit at one of the tables, give instructions from the stands, or observe.

Volunteers positioned at stands give instructions to the volunteers seated at the tables.

Volunteers who sit at tables may make sounds as they wish using the available materials.

Volunteers who sit at tables respond to instructions given by the other volunteers.

This may be exclusive (they only respond to instructions) or in parallel (they respond to instructions while continuing to make their own choice of sounds).

people do things together

/ 2019

[large ensemble]

Players need portable setups so that they can move around the space.

The players move around the performance space, forming and reforming small groups of at least two people, up to a single group with all the players.

A group comprises at least two people standing closely together such that they have a clearly defined space that makes them distinct from other groups.

All players may give instructions.

Players respond to instructions given only by other players in their current group.

Players should not respond to cues from other groups, even if they are in close proximity.

At any point, a player may leave a group and join another one.

Players may also move to a position on their own, and other players may join them to form a new group at a later point.

If a player has an active sustaining sound (devices, recordings, processes) when they leave a group, it should continue until cancelled later by a player in a newly joined group.