Combinations

to tom johnson, teacher and friend

2011
Combinations presents all of the combinations of a ten note scale beginning with one note, one note being present (and thus one combination) and completing the ordering with the combination of ten notes with all ten notes present (also one combination), totaling 2036 combinations. They are presented in order, organized by quality.

Typically, the music is played at one piano by two performers, although it is possible to perform the music at two pianos. Because the tempo I have chosen is quite slow (quarter = about 60), the music unfolds over a large expanse of time. For that reason, it may be appropriate for performers, in addition to programming the music as a rather long concert performance, to consider performing the music as a sort of installation, where the audience may enter and exit the auditorium or gallery space at will. They may also perform the music in excerpts, taking each large-form group of combinations (all the combinations of two notes, of five notes, of eight notes, etc.) as movements and selecting their program in this way.

Performers will want to listen to the progressions of harmonies as they continue to get longer and longer and aim for balance and clarity. The music is played non-legato; the attacks and release happen close together. Thus, each harmony in a progression is discrete - generally to be played as long as possible with little silence between each, phrased together. The music is not sentimental and does not express any emotion, for example, and can be considered a kind of found object.

Nonetheless, quite a bit of actual composing went into the making of this piece, from the orchestrating to the selection of the scale to the rhythmic designs used, and the music should not be considered simply thrown together in a rudimentary, incurious way. Sometimes the most interesting music comes from the simplest considerations.

Dean Rosenthal
December 10, 2011
Northampton, MA
Combinations

\( \text{\textcopyright} = \text{about 60} \)

For Piano I and Piano II:

- \( \text{\textcopyright} \)
- \( p \)
- \( \text{\textcopyright} \)
- \( p \)
Northampton, MA
December 2011
circa 3'07"