

# Man or Mouse

For Viola, Cello and two Readers

The packets before you contain lists of nucleotide bases from the genomes of two animals, human and mouse. Each letter represents one of the constituent parts of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA); 'A' for adenine, 'C' for cytosine, 'G' for guanine and 'T' for thymine. The lists are comprised of the first ten thousand bases in the sequence of the first chromosome of each animal. Each chromosome has tens of millions of bases and each animal has twenty-four chromosomes. This piece represents a small fraction of the genomic information for each animal. Below are listed the performer actions as they read through the lists of letters.

1. Determine a length for the performance.
2. Each performer chooses a part. String players should not have the same genome. The same is true for the readers.
3. All performers should attempt to complete as much of the sequence as possible in the time determined for performance while adhering to the rules below.
4. The string players decide who among them will execute the following actions:

Player A - When you see an 'A', 'C' or 'G' play the corresponding open string. When you reach a 'T' play the D string muted with three fingers so no discernable tone is produced.

Player B - When you see an 'A', 'C' or 'G' play the corresponding stopped pitch in any octave. The octave may be changed freely throughout the piece. When you reach a 'T' rest.

5. Additional directives for string players:  
Tempi for playing should be determined by the performers as the piece progresses always keeping in mind directive #3.  
The players should be completely independent and not try to coordinate their tempi.  
Dynamics should be comfortable throughout so as to facilitate directive #3.  
Take breaks as needed.  
All breaks in playing, including rests, should be followed by an accented pitch, this includes the beginning of the piece.
6. The readers, each reading a different genome, should read as quickly as possible and try to coordinate the speaking with one another. An appropriate tempo would be quarter notes between 120 and 130 bpm. The letters should be spoken at a normal speaking volume so as not to overwhelm the sound of the strings but still be intelligible. Amplification is acceptable if necessary.  
Feel free to take breaks keeping in mind directive #3. These breaks may be coordinated between readers before the performance. Do not accent the letter following a break as the string players do.
7. The readers may be replaced by a recording of the string players reciting the sequences.

Thadeus Frazier-Reed  
October, 2005

For more information on the genome project visit [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov).  
Contact the composer if additional formatted sheets of the genome are needed for longer performances