

*Truthiness*

Ryan Harper

Piano and Max/MSP

2011

**Note:**

*Truthiness*, for piano and electronics (Max/MSP), is a set of variations on political speeches by Sarah Palin, Bill O'Reilly, Keith Olbermann, Glenn Beck, and participants in the 2009 town hall health care debates. It presents language as essentially mutable, capable of endless adaptation, interpretation, and distortion. In an age of social media and digital dissemination, this quality of language can be either a curse or a blessing for political discourse.

The word “truthiness” was coined by Stephen Colbert in 2005 to describe “truth that comes from the gut, not books.” The American Dialect Society in 2006 refined the definition to mean, “the quality of preferring concepts or facts one wishes to be true rather than concepts or facts known to be true.”

The Max/MSP patches require a standard 61-key midi controller.

**Text:**

Sarah Palin:

“Journalists and pundits should not manufacture a blood libel that serves only to incite the very hatred and violence that they purport to condemn.”

Bill O'Reilly:

“Hey, you know, if you want to ban military recruiting fine, but I'm not going to give you another nickel of federal money. You know, if I'm the president of the United States, I walk right in to Union Square, I set up my little presidential podium, and I say, ‘Listen, citizens of San Francisco, if you vote against military recruiting you're not going to get another nickel in federal funds. Fine, you want to be your own country, go right ahead. And if al-Qaeda comes in here and blows you up, we're not going to do anything about it. We're going to say, look, every other place in America is off limits to you except San Francisco. You want to blow up the Coit Tower, go ahead.’”

Keith Olbermann:

“What would you do, sir, if terrorists were killing 45,000 people every year in this country? Well the current health care system, the insurance companies, and those who support them are doing just that. Let's frame this in language even conservatives can understand. Those fighting health care reform, not those debating its shape nor its nuance, people who demand the status quo, they are killing 45,000 Americans a year. If they were killed all at once, or even a hundred at a time, Neal Boortz would be demanding martial law and government by the generals. Instead, because they die individually of disease and not disaster, Neal Boortz and those who ape him, in office and out, approve their deaths. All 45,000 of them. A year. In America. Remind me again, who are the terrorists?”

Glenn Beck:

“This president, I think, has exposed himself as a guy over and over and over again who has a deep-seated hatred for white people or the white culture, I don’t know what it is, but you can’t sit in a pew with Jeremiah Wright for twenty years and not hear some of that stuff and not have it wash over.”

Hysterical woman:

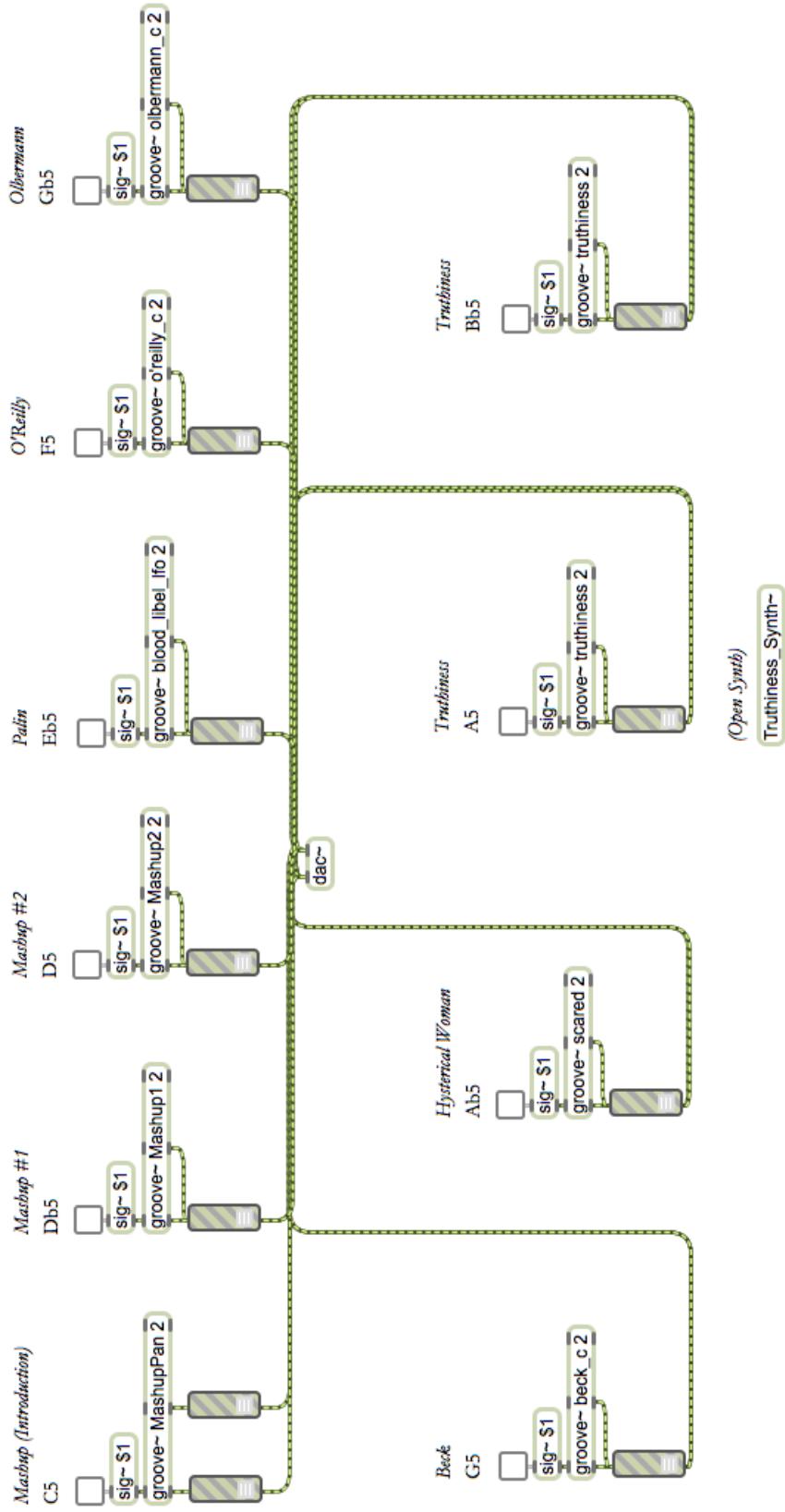
“At this point in my life I have never seen my America turn into what it has turned into. And I don’t think representatives and senators are going to be able to do it. I’m scared.”

Hysterical man:

“And you guys are undermining American exceptionalism.”

# Truthiness

Screenshot of Performance Interface



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"...in America."

Sample1:      Sample2:

46"

11"

"....my America."

$\text{♩} = 120$

**61-Key Midi Controller**

**Piano**

8

14

Sample1:  
46"

Sample2:  
11"

Sample3:  
8"

Sample4:  
1'

"...in America."

Sample2:  
11"

"....my America."

"...American exceptionalism."

"American exceptionalism."

$\text{♩} = 120$

**61-Key Midi Controller**

**Piano**

**8**

**14**

**Sample1:** 46"

**Sample2:** 11"

**Sample3:** 8"

**Sample4:** 1'

"...in America."

"....my America."

"...American exceptionalism."

"American exceptionalism."

$\text{♩} = 120$

\*Trigger Samples 2 and 3 immediately before the phrase they accompany.  
Wait until the sample is finished before moving on.

\*\*Swell from 60-110. Hold until the sample is finished.

PALIN:

20

32

*rit.*  $\text{♩} = 60$

"Blood libel" "Blood libel" "Blood libel" "Blood libel" "Blood libel" "Blood libel"  
 Sample5: Sample5: Sample5: Sample5: Sample5: Sample5:  
 1" 1" 1" 1" 1" 1"

43

Slightly slower,  $\text{♩} = 78$

*Rit.* \_\_\_\_\_

\*Swell from nothing to 100.

51  $\text{♩} = 120$

ff

$\underline{\underline{3}}$

*Lev.*

58

---

61

ppp

---

"Hey, you know..."

Sample6:

47"

O'REILLY:

$\text{♩} = 138$ , dry

"Hey, you know..."

4

Musical score page 4, measures 64-68. The score consists of four staves. The top two staves are blank. The third staff (treble clef) has a bassoon part with sixteenth-note patterns. The fourth staff (bass clef) has a cello part with eighth-note patterns. Measure 64 starts with a bassoon note followed by a rest. Measures 65-68 show the bassoon playing sixteenth-note patterns with grace notes, and the cello providing harmonic support. Measure 68 ends with a bassoon note followed by a rest.

69

Musical score page 4, measures 69-73. The top two staves are blank. The third staff (treble clef) shows the bassoon continuing its sixteenth-note patterns. The fourth staff (bass clef) shows the cello playing eighth-note patterns. Measure 73 ends with a bassoon note followed by a rest.

74

Musical score page 4, measures 74-78. The top two staves are blank. The third staff (treble clef) shows the bassoon playing sixteenth-note patterns. The fourth staff (bass clef) shows the cello playing eighth-note patterns. Measure 78 ends with a bassoon note followed by a rest.

79

Musical score page 4, measures 79-83. The top two staves are blank. The third staff (treble clef) shows the bassoon playing sixteenth-note patterns. The fourth staff (bass clef) shows the cello playing eighth-note patterns. Measure 83 ends with a bassoon note followed by a rest.

84 "Hey, you know..."

Measures 84-85: The top staff consists of two measures of rests in common time. The bottom staff shows a melodic line in 3/4 time, featuring eighth-note patterns and grace notes. Measure 84 ends with a fermata over the first note of measure 85.

Measures 86-87: The top staff consists of two measures of rests in common time. The bottom staff shows a melodic line in 3/4 time, featuring eighth-note patterns and grace notes. Measure 87 ends with a fermata over the first note of measure 88.

89 "Hey, you know..."

Measures 88-89: The top staff consists of two measures of rests in common time. The bottom staff shows a melodic line in 3/4 time, featuring eighth-note patterns and grace notes. Measure 89 ends with a fermata over the first note of measure 90.

Measures 90-91: The top staff consists of two measures of rests in common time. The bottom staff shows a melodic line in 3/4 time, featuring eighth-note patterns and grace notes. Measure 91 ends with a fermata over the first note of measure 92.

94  $\text{♩} = 78$ , broadly

Measures 92-93: The top staff consists of two measures of rests in common time. The bottom staff shows a melodic line in 3/4 time, featuring eighth-note patterns and grace notes. Measures 92-93 show sustained notes with grace notes.

Measure 94: The top staff consists of two measures of rests in common time. The bottom staff shows a melodic line in 3/4 time, featuring eighth-note patterns and grace notes. The dynamic instruction '8va' is present above the staff.

\*Swell from nothing to 100.

Sample7:  
25"

OLBERMANN:

101  $\text{♩} = 60$

"...who are the terrorists?"

109

116

\*Swell from 60 to 110.

BECK:

♩ = 120, *agitato*

125

131

"...over again."

Sample7:

1"

136

"...over again."

Sample7:

1"

142

9  
8

9  
8

149 ♩ = ♪

9  
8

9  
8

ff

9  
8

9  
8

mp

8va -

pp

155

♩ = 104, calmer

9  
8

9  
8

(8)

9  
8

9  
8

"I'm scared."

Sample8:

1"

9

164

164

1"

165

1"

169

169

170

1"

Sample9:

13"

174

174

13"

175

13"

180 *rit.* **A tempo**

*ad libitum*

**fff**

187

sim., but introduce  
accidentals

"...deep wash."  
Sample10:  
13"

197

sim., introduce  
clusters

(s.) (all white keys,  
played with  
forearm)

(s.)

**pp**

*Led.*