Title
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Act, for soprano and twelve players

By

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A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Music in the Graduate Division of the University of California, Berkeley

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Abstract

Act, for soprano and twelve players

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Doctor of Philosophy in Music

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Act, for soprano and twelve players is a work approximately fifteen minutes in duration. It is a conducted work, to be performed in a concert hall. The work is primarily concerned with the relationship of musical ideas that are both heard and seen. In this musical context a theatre of relationships emerges whereupon each performer's physical presence and sounds are weighed against poetic, spatial, technological and physiological circumstances.

Initially, the soprano is separate, with an individuality that is inaccessible to the rest of the ensemble, who appear unified as one mass. The ensemble plays while the soprano is silent. This single mass is spatially divided into 4 heterogeneous sub-groups. At other points, the two percussionists cooperate as a duo, the strings as a quintet, and the trombone and woodwinds as a quartet. There is a special trio that consists of the trombone, clarinet and baritone saxophone equipped with laryngophones, thereby isolating vocal utterances originating in the larynx.

The concluding section considers the entire ensemble as a single vocal apparatus, with the bass flute as the breath that originates in the lungs, the ‘laryngophone trio’ as the larynx, and the speech of the rest of the ensemble as the vowels and consonants produced in the mouth.
Act,

for soprano and 12 players

David Cilli
(2008-2010)


Trombone

Strings: 2 violins
viola
 viola
 cello

Contribs: clarinet/bass clarinet
flute

Wind:

Saxophone

Brass:

trumpet

Piano

2 percussion

Stage Layout

If the stage width is too large, reduce only to the point where the percussion setup can still exist in its specified arrangement (see percussion performance notes). The width of the ensemble must always be equal to that of the width of the total percussion setup.

Amplification

The piece consists of material meant to be heard in a purely acoustic manner, a generally amplified manner, as well as more specific arrangements in combination with its most crucial element: the three bongos for the clarinet, sax, and trombone. More information will follow upon the premier. Additionally, there is a contact mic (Piezo) in the percussion 1 setup.
Reference Notes

**Strings:**

- **Abbreviations for vertical bow position or as follows:**
  - mp: mezzo sul pont
  - sp: sul pont
  - ord: ordinaire
  - St: Sul tasto
  - rest: mezzo sul tasto

- The harmonic intervals are, in fact, concerned only that the string must be full, stopped. Depending on the position of the fingerboard and a harmonic may or may not sound. \( \text{[ etouffe (damped w/ entire hand)]} \)

- Lastly, and most importantly, there are brackets that determine how much bow and where each bowing is to occur. This, combined with the dynamics and the vertical bow placement, creates an incredibly diverse and often uncertain world of sound that isn't readily apparent upon first glance. Brackets are as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{[ ]} & = \text{use a full bow per bowing} \\
\text{[ ]} & = \text{use the half only per bowing} \\
\text{[ ]} & = \text{bottom extreme} \\
\text{[ ]} & = \text{bottom extreme only}
\end{align*}
\]

**Flute:** (piccolo & bass flute)

- **The techniques that may be considered beyond normal playing techniques are as follows:**
  
  - \( \text{[ ]} \) = a totally breathing tone, no pitch component
  
  - \( \text{[ ]} \) = tone

(Arrows explore the points between these two)

- **whispers tone:** normal breath, attaining a very soft pitch that may be modified by changing the flue.

- **overblown glass:** shooting up the harmonic series via breath pressure, change of embouchure.

- **jet whistle:** a quick thrust of air through the mouthpiece.

**Clarinet and Saxophone:**

- \( \text{[ ]} \) = highest pitch possible at given dynamic

- **harmonic sweep:** changing embouchure, break upwards from initial pitch toward the middle, high, and highest range of reed, most of given dynamics.

- **tooth on reed:** different embouchure technique. A more small and often, notable sound. Contour line seeks neighboring pitches facilitated with the variation of teeth.
pressure on the reed,
sloptongue: a short burst of air capped by the
Q tongue upon the reed.
O = no tone ◇ (notehead) = no tone
O = tone
(Additionally \(\downarrow\) = no tone. This will be
revised after the premiere so as to
be clearer)

Trombone:
The only truly uncommon technique involves placing a conical reed
into the mouthpiece and playing the reed. The desired effect is explained
in a footnote.
mutes: cup, plunges, harmon
\[L\] = general range of
desired pitch with
given technique
\[l\] = air sound with corresponding
fingering and general
lip shape as if buzzing, but
lacking the last crucial
lip pressure.
O = no tone
O = tone

Piano:‘clicks’; explained in footnote
+ : dampen string near base of piano with finger, play key \&
the other.

Soprano: Nothing out of the ordinary.
Laryngophones: clarinet, saxophone, trombone.

The laryngophone is a microphone, much like a contact microphone, but it fits around your neck and amplifies the larynx.

The ossia single line that appears is a representation of vocal multiphonics spanning the range of your speaking voice - not your singing voice. The contour lines that follow the noteheads indicate the vocal variation that is more related to speech than singing.

Percussion 1+2: The total percussion setup in this piece is large, diverse, and visually engaging. It spans the entire width of the ensemble and is a sort of wall behind the players (the soprano, however, is above and behind you). The piece begins with a shared space in the center, consisting of the rit-trons and hi-hats, then a movement away from each other towards the outside end of each setup.

The notation corresponds to the left to right movement with a corresponding 'scale', involving all instruments as a note [additional pitched instruments as well as ossia staves occur as well]

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percussion 1 (chimes, xylophone, bells)

Additional:
- (rit-trons shared w/ pes2: 8", 12", 18"
  - Whistle (around neck on a string)
  - timpani (30"
  - vibraphone
  - crotales
  - glockenspiel

Additional: 8", 12", and 18" rit-trons
- Whistle (around neck on string)

\( \phi^{-1} = d\text{omponi} \)

Setup on next page