

Tord Kalvenes

(2020/2021)

Fractions

For Currentes

(Baroque Cello, Mezzo Soprano, Organetto and Recorders)

Part of the Borealis Ung Komponist Programme

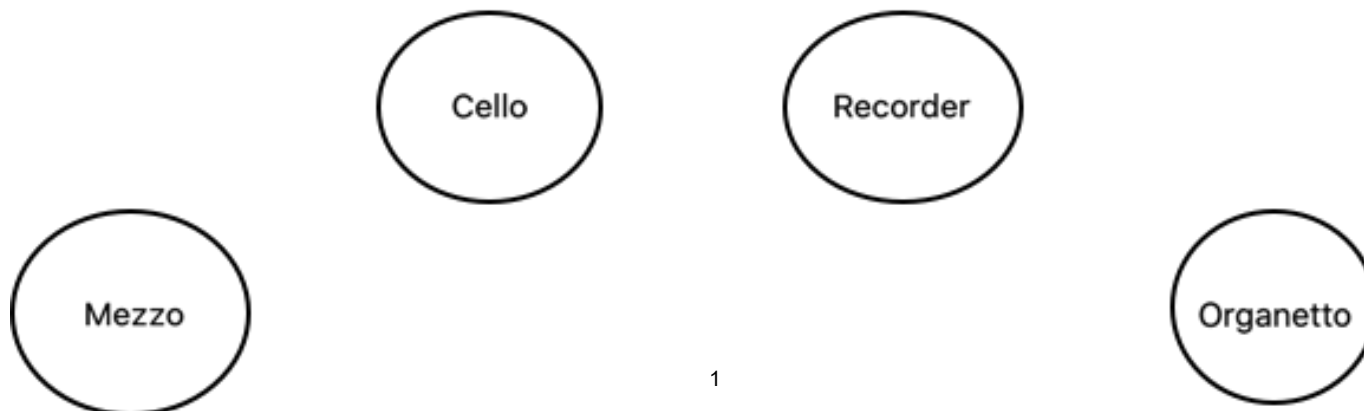
duration: 15 min.

Foreword and instructions:

The work does not have an open form, but consists of a material which can be solved differently each time. It also introduces fragments or short quotations from the Renaissance composer Gesualdo and the pieces *O vos Omnes* and *Gia piansi nel dolore*. The idea is to create an interaction with the past and present through veiled transitions. The piece reflects on quotes given by Martin Luther King Jr., interpreting meaning of presence or existence. I wish to explore what happens by facilitating greater freedom among practitioners leaving the details up to them, but keeping a clear structure with some limitations in the instructions. In addition, I want to see the musicians in an expanded form, seeing them more as musical performing artists. The piece is written for a specific ensemble, but can also be adapted to being performed by other smaller or larger ensembles and how to use the given space it is played in. A solo cellist is required. It is important to remember not to play too much, but save your interaction to when the texture gives room for it.

Performance notes:

- The ensemble uses a stop watch each. The piece should be timed to last around 15 minutes in this version.
- The cellist has the most vital role in the piece. When the soloist passages occur, the cellist can be amplified manually, increasing the amplitude of the loose B string (C in 415 Hz). Otherwise the piece can be performed acoustically, but the singer uses a megaphone to amplify some of the singing.
- Concert pitch: The cellist plays in 415 Hz and with gut strings, making the lowest string cling as a B, also named this way. When the *O vos omnes* passage is played, both the cellist and the organetto converts their pitches in correspondence with the key in the excerpt. In this passage one of the instrumentalists also has to play and sing two voices at once.
- Placement: The players are placed in a half circle in the location.



Score – Text descriptions

A (00.00-02.00 min.)

- 1) Start with a boom (*fff*), both with your voice and/or instrument. Then play in a hectic and agitated way, both with your voice and your instruments. Use scales (modal or synthetic) and play them loud in *different* ways and techniques (upwards, downwards, leaps or motives). Listen and interact with each other's ideas. Search for tonal or polytonal correlations (*recorder* suggests harmonic language). Here the *singer* also uses a megaphone, making announcements using the following quotes by Martin Luther King Jr.: Instrumentalists echoes singer (spoken/whispered) 00.20 min. (*singer* speaks decisively): 1: "*Whatever your life's work is, do it well. A man should do his job so well that the living, the dead, and the unborn could do it no better*". 2: "*Lightning makes no sound until it strikes*".
- 2) 00.45 min. (>mp): Gradually slow down (rallentando), but don't lose the intensity or slow down too fast. Recorder starts using the sub bass instrument. Everyone plays very slow at the end, giving more and more air before stopping. Stop the part with a *clear moment of silence*.

B (02.00-04.30 min.)

- 1) *Cello* starts playing a long note on the low B string (ord > sul p and *pp*<*ff*). The note should ring out completely, followed with silence.
- 2) The long note is played again and being overlapped by key clicks after the bow leaves the string (rhythmic sounds) which goes on for a little while. The rhythmic are inspired by Gesualdos *Gia piansi nel dolore* from bar 45 (see last page). Experiment with other types of clicks (snapping fingers, mouth clicks, fingering body of instrument and so on). The *singer* uses mouth clicks and a PC keyboard. *Recorder* uses sub bass.
- 3) The *cellist* starts playing a B and a G as a double stop or independently. After they are played in different octaves and with great intensity, but with room for breaks. The note D# is presented in the cello, who now can vary between B, G and D#. The *others* use occasional key clicks to complement the cello. The clicks stop and comes back as an effect.

C overlapping from B (04.30-06.45 min.)

- 1) Solo cello (*p-f*): Starts with a B as a harmonic with tremolo and sul ponticello (high register). The three notes (B, G and D#) are now reproduced in many octaves, with vib., fast trem. and overtones or harmonics.
- 2) 04.50 min.: Everyone joins in. The intensity is present, but low-key and carefully listening as one allow solos or tutti. The dynamics increase.
- 3) 05.10 min.: A powerful vibrato is introduced along with the idea of blurred microtonality or very slow glissandos. *Organetto* can alter air pressure and keys as a general technique to accomplish an appropriate intonation on a microtonal level. Take rests.
- 4) 05.20 min. (*f*): The notes F and C are also included as significant tones in the interaction. *Cello* now plays F and D# as double stops to alternate B, G and D# (C minor in 440 Hz). The *organetto* (from 06.00 min) makes a modulating soloistic transition towards letter D, indicating the tonality (soloistic improvisation anticipating the excerpt).

D (06.45-10.00 min.)

- 1) Play/sing the excerpt from Gesualdo's *O vos Omnes twice* (*p*). Not too slow.
- 2) Play it again together with repetition and with the written ornamentation twice, playfully interpreted. The *singer* can have a leading role in moving the music forward, also using more volume. The megaphone can be useful in D2-D4 (*p-f*)
- 3) Improvise using *only* the ornamentation markings in whatever voice. Take rests and vary who has the leading role, varying pitch (*p-mf*)
- 4) Ca. 08.45 min.: Improvise on the whole passage in whatever voice, but with given pitches. Play slightly above or below the pitches. Use a wave dynamic during the passage inspired by the written dynamics. Also use glissandos, fast tonguing/tremolos and accelerated trills. You can also combine *playing and singing*. Be silent and come in together at times to vary the expression.
- 5) Set a Bb drone from 9.15 min and throughout, while the others makes scales dissonant to Bb (such as D, E, G).

Passage from *O vos omnes* (C. Gesualdo)

Lento ♩ = 72-80

Recorder (soprano)

mf

Mezzo-soprano (altus)

mf

Aa -----> Oo -----> Aa

Organetto (Quintus)

mf

Aa -----> Oo -----> Aa

Violoncello (bassus and tenor)

mf

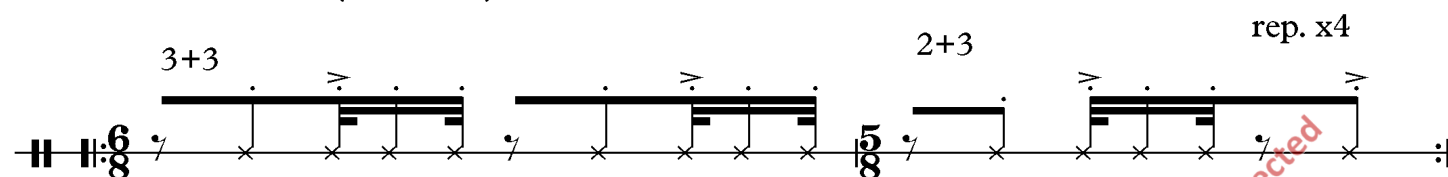
Notes:

- ♩ = Trill playfully above or below, almost like in a cadence
- ∞ = Shorter trill above and below, playfully interpreted
- (tr) = Trill if the interpretation gives room for it
- > = Gradually change the vowel during the dashed arrow

E: (10.00-11.45 min.)

- 1) Create a sudden change in character, playing the given rhythm very fast as a contrast to letter D. Play/sing the rhythm fast as given four times, then individually, drifting apart. *Singer* is tacet in E1. Change sounds (pitches/noise) creating a percussive atmosphere. Experiment with extreme speed, still playing legato. Feel free to produce multiphonics (*f*)

Prestissimo (decisive)



- 2) Instruments use the rhythm only as an inspirational figure while keeping rhythmic activity (as in letter A). During the passage, the *singer* uses the following quotes (spoken at first, then fragmented singing/speaking) by Martin Luther King Jr.: Instrumentalists echoes the singer (spoken, whispered, length variation).

1: "No one really knows why they're alive until they know what they'd die for".

2: "Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that".

3: "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'what are you doing for others?'"

Keywords in this passage: Polyrythmics, activity, determination, breaks, communicational expressions/embodiment. The instrumentalists are also encouraged to use their voice for timbre variation as effect when suitable (*p-ff*).

F: Overlapping from E (11.45-15.00 min.)

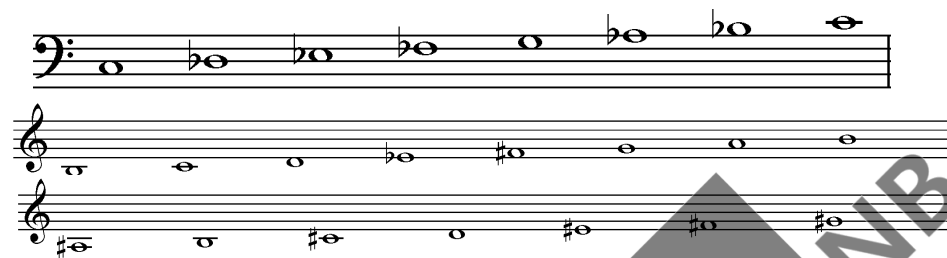
1) (*p-mp*) Return to the atmosphere (clicks, few notes, air) created in letter B, but this time varying who has the leader role. The megaphone can be used throughout the piece, balancing with the others or as solistic approaches.

2) Ca. 12.30 min. al fine. Develop the notes gradually towards the tonality/scales given below. Play and sing with vowels (both for instrumentalists) with a *romantic legato character*, starting from low register and building it together ending in a high register. Stop the piece at it's very climax, agreeing when the right time comes (*p-fff*)

415 Hz (top)

440 Hz (middle)

465 Hz (bottom)



Example of possible melodic approach/interpretation:

Motive example (415 Hz)



Motive example (440 Hz)



Organetto



Musical tone material in the different parts (440 Hz):

A: No tones given, but recorder gives direction for harmoni language.



D: Tones given in the score

E: No tones given

F:

(440 Hz)

(415 Hz)

(465 Hz)

Passage from C. Gesualdo: *Gia piansi nel dolore (Part B)*

This musical score is for a vocal ensemble consisting of Soprano I (S I), Soprano II (S II), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The lyrics are in Italian and are repeated across the staves. The score is divided into three systems. The first system includes a rehearsal mark [50]. The second system includes a rehearsal mark [55]. The music features complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and various melodic lines for each voice part. A large, semi-transparent watermark is overlaid on the center of the page, reading "IMB noter" and "This music is copyright protected".

S I to, e lie- to can- [50]

S II lie- to, e lie- to

A e lie- to, e lie- to can-

T to, e lie- to

B e lie- to

S I to, can-

S II can- to, can- to, can-

A to, can- to, can- to,

T can- to, can-

B can- to,

S I to, can- to, can- to. [55]

S II to, can- to.

A can- to, can- to.

T to, can- to, can- to.

B can- to.