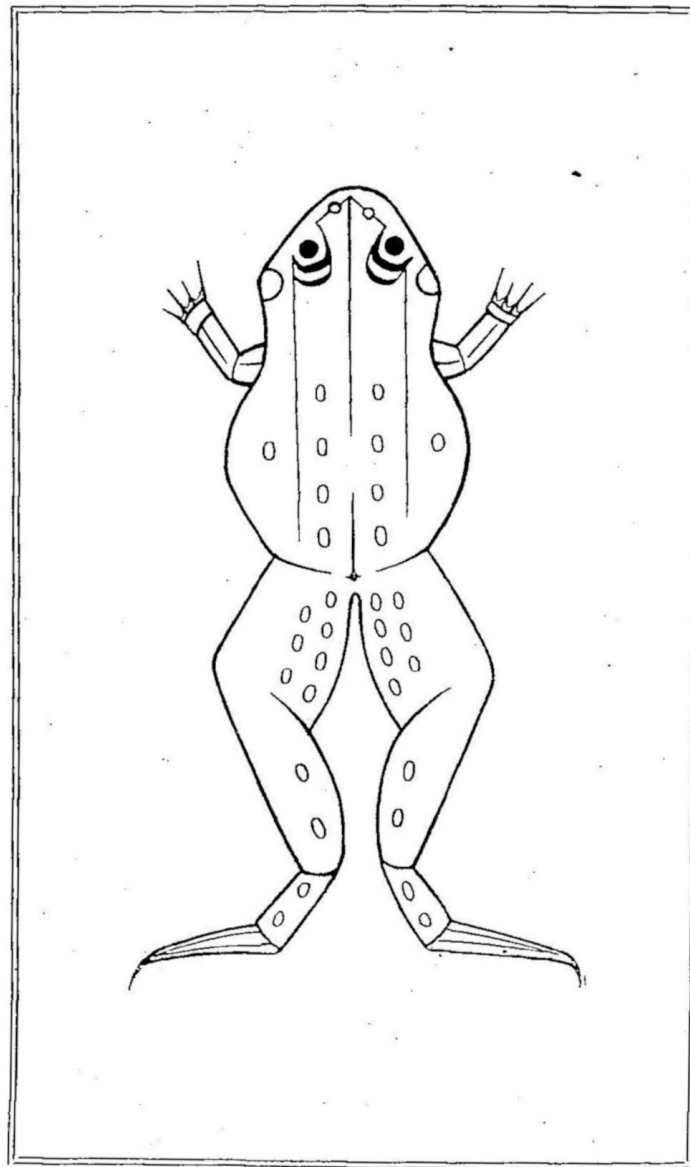


Catalogue de grenouilles (*Catalogue of Frogs*)



Grenouille vue en dessus.

Andrew Hugill

About

Catalogue de grenouilles (Catalogue of Frogs) was composed in 1987 for massed frog recordings and the ensemble 'George W. Welch'. Since then, it has been performed, broadcast and recorded many times around the world. Some of the most memorable performances have taken place in unusual locations such as halfway up a mountain in a winery near Xi'an, China, or in a bandstand in a park in central Lunel, France.

The piece is inspired by the writings of Jean-Pierre Brisset (1837-1919), a philologist and railway official, who theorised that Man is descended from the Frog and proved his ideas through incredible networks of puns in French. The title is a nod to Messiaen's *Catalogue d'oiseaux*, but my piece behaves rather differently, using actual recordings of frogs rather than imitations on instruments (although there are some imitations in there too). The way the piece works is that the many recorded frog calls are scattered throughout the auditorium. The human musicians play material that becomes similar to the frog sounds, in ways that make it difficult sometimes to work out who is making which noise: human or frog. The piano binds it all together.

Catalogue de grenouilles is not an attempt to create an "immersive soundscape" in the manner of an electroacoustic evocation of frogs in and around a lake. Rather it is a herpetological surrealist opera that collages together frogs from around the world, recorded at different times of the year and under varying circumstances. The very roughness of some of the recordings used in early performances was part of the purpose of the piece. Disjunction created by tape players stopping and starting emphasized the collage. As Ian Gardiner put it in an email to me in 2025: "*Catalogue de grenouilles* is a piece before its time. Having stood through two hours of 'installation' pieces at the Science Museum recently that used a huge ensemble and tons of gear, I thought of the Catalogue as a model of the simple collage of layers and pragmatic solutions to sound diffusion".

Over the years, the way the piece is realised has changed with developments in technology. In the earliest performances, all the frogs were on cassette. The background tapes played continuously and were placed in a ring around the auditorium. The middle-ground tapes were loops of varying lengths and with random amounts of silence interspersing the frog calls. These were placed in amongst the audience, for example under people's seats. The foreground or "diva" tape was a collection of solo calls that were operated by a roving performer (often myself) who wandered around the space, switching the cassette player on and off at will. In more recent years, the cassette tapes have been replaced by digital devices. People's phones have been used to create an element of audience participation. Various fixed set-ups have also been used. Creative solutions are encouraged.

The music includes several elements that have Brissetian reasons for being included. The piano part is built on a repeating bass motif that is taken from the opening of "Uranus" from Holst's orchestral suite *The Planets*. This is because Brisset remarks that frogs urinate through their anus (ure anus) which gives rise to the name of the father of the Gods: Uranus. The percussion team plays a rhythmical pattern of frog calls from Samuel Beckett's novel *Watt*, whose title evokes Brisset's assertion that the first word spoken by our frog ancestors was "quoi?" (what?). The string parts include a short quotation from John White's piece *Wut*, which he had composed for George W. Welch in 1987. That title also evokes the "what?" sound.

There were more like this - I can't remember the origin of every single musical element now, but I am sure they all had similar reasons for being included. The piano part is somewhat modelled on Satie and Debussy, although there is no direct quotation, but it does progress towards a simplified statement via chains of ascending chords made up largely of fourths.

I learned a valuable lesson during the composition of *Catalogue de grenouilles*. My first challenge was to gather many recordings of frog calls. This was during the days before the internet, so this was not as easy as you might think, because there were relatively few publicly available frog calls to be found. So, I started writing to herpetologists and one day ended up on the phone to the late great Professor Murray Littlejohn in Australia. He was very helpful and said: "I know someone in the UK who has a great collection you could probably use. His name is Dr Rob Oldham". "Where does he work?" I asked. "Leicester Polytechnic" came the reply. That was where I worked at the time! It turned out that he occupied an office at the end of my corridor on Scrafto Campus. He was extremely generous and provided me with armfuls of his field recordings of frog calls. This experience taught me that often the richest potential for transdisciplinary collaboration is right under your nose. What you need is the openness to embrace it when it appears.

Performance Instructions

A performance of *Catalogue de grenouilles* may last any length of time. Most performances, however, have had a duration of between 13 and 15 minutes.

The most stripped-down version of the piece comprises frog recordings and solo piano. The other ensemble material provided here is therefore all optional. It is scored for the George W. Welch line-up, but other instruments could be used. For example, one performance that used piano and a wandering trombone was very successful. It is up to the performers to redistribute or rescore the materials as they wish. There is no limit to the number of players who could be involved.

Any frog recordings may be used. The frog recordings are categorised into three types:

- Background Frogs are distant recordings of groups of frogs or frog chouses. These provide general ambience and should play throughout the performance, being the first things to heard and fading out slowly at the end. In a live performance, these are best played back through fixed loudspeakers that encircle the audience.
- Middleground Frogs are shorter recordings of pairs or small groups of frogs. Each set of calls should be separated by silences of randomly varying durations. Calls may be repeated, but the idea is to keep an element of surprise. These recordings should be scattered around the auditorium, for example under people's seats or triggered by people who are planted in the audience.
- Foreground or "Diva" Frogs. This is a sequence of loud, prominent solo frogs, generally recorded at close quarters. The diva is operated by a roving musician who triggers short bursts of sound at will, in response to how the music feels. The aim is to show off the range and variety of frog calls, so assembling a fine collection for the Diva is a highly creative part of the preparation for a performance.

The percussion part may be performed by a single player or by a team of three. The pattern may be repeated as many times as desired. It works best if it is performed on groups of similar sounding instruments (for example, three wood blocks, or three guiros, or three cowbells) that have slightly different registers. The percussionist should perform their bursts of material at different locations around the auditorium. They perform at will, but within the timings given by the overall structure of the piece.

The wind/brass players perform the fragments of material in any order and as many times as they wish within the structure. Again, they may move around the auditorium, but it is not essential to do so. The imitations of frogs are particularly useful at key moments in the piece. Players should listen carefully to the sounds the frogs are making.

The string players remain at a single location (usually middle front) throughout the performance and play their fragments in any order and as many times as desired, within the structure of the piece.

The duration of the performance is set by the pianist, who should play through the piano part from beginning to end without stopping, once they have begun. The duration of each chord is a decision for the pianist, so the piece could last a very long time, depending on how the instruction “slow” is interpreted. The piano may be located anywhere in the auditorium. It is not essential that it is seen by the audience.

The general atmosphere of a performance is restrained and reflective, even a little sad. It is often assumed that frogs are comical creatures, but there should be no attempt to make this into a comical piece.

Structure

1. The Background Frogs slowly fade in, creating an atmosphere.
2. After a suitable period of time, during which the ambience should become well established, the Middeground Frogs may begin.
3. Once the effect of the Middlegroud Frogs has been sufficiently felt, the Piano starts to work through its material from beginning to end, at a chosen speed.
4. After the piano has started its journey, the Diva Frogs may begin to sing, treating the piano as a kind of accompaniment.
5. Once the Diva Frogs have begun, the Ensemble may perform their material. The idea is to reach a peak of activity somewhere around the middle of the performance.
6. The Ensemble and Diva will come to an end either shortly before or shortly after the Piano completes its material. There's no need to try to synchronise these endings.
7. Once the Piano has finished, the Middleground Frogs are slowly stopped.
8. Finally, the Background Frogs slowly fade away to nothing.

Catalogue de grenouilles (Catalogue of Frogs)

Andrew Hugill

Slow Piano

ad lib.
p

4/2

4/2

4/2

4

sim.

4/2

4/2

4/2

8

8va

4/2

4/2

4/2

The musical score for 'The Rose Tree' is presented in a three-staff format. The top staff is for the vocal line, the middle staff is for the piano accompaniment (Pno), and the bottom staff is for the bass line. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The score is divided into three measures. The first measure contains the vocal melody and piano accompaniment. The second measure contains the vocal melody and piano accompaniment. The third measure contains the vocal melody and piano accompaniment. The piano accompaniment consists of a simple harmonic progression in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The vocal melody is a simple tune with a range of one octave.

21

Pno

Measures 21-23 of a piano score. Measure 21 features a treble staff with a sequence of chords: C#4-E#4-G#4, C#4-E#4-G#4, Bb4-D#4-F#4, and Bb4-D#4-F#4. The bass staff has a whole rest. Measure 22 has a whole rest in the treble and a whole note chord of C#3-E#3-G#3 in the bass. Measure 23 has a whole rest in the treble and a whole note chord of C#3-E#3-G#3 in the bass. A double bar line follows measure 23.

24

Pno

Measures 24-27 of a piano score. Measure 24 has a treble staff with a sequence of chords: C#4-E#4-G#4, C#4-E#4-G#4, Bb4-D#4-F#4, and Bb4-D#4-F#4. The bass staff has a whole rest. Measure 25 has a whole rest in the treble and a whole note chord of C#3-E#3-G#3 in the bass. Measure 26 has a whole rest in the treble and a whole note chord of C#3-E#3-G#3 in the bass. Measure 27 has a whole rest in the treble and a whole note chord of C#3-E#3-G#3 in the bass. A double bar line follows measure 27.

28

Pno

Measures 28-31 of a piano score. Measure 28 has a treble staff with a sequence of chords: C#4-E#4-G#4, C#4-E#4-G#4, Bb4-D#4-F#4, and Bb4-D#4-F#4. The bass staff has a whole rest. Measure 29 has a whole rest in the treble and a whole note chord of C#3-E#3-G#3 in the bass. Measure 30 has a whole rest in the treble and a whole note chord of C#3-E#3-G#3 in the bass. Measure 31 has a whole rest in the treble and a whole note chord of C#3-E#3-G#3 in the bass. A double bar line follows measure 31.

31

Pno

Measures 31-33 of a piano score in 3/4 time. Measure 31 features a treble staff with a half note G4 (sharp) and a bass staff with a half note G2 (natural). Measure 32 has a treble staff with a half note A4 (sharp) and a bass staff with a half note A2 (sharp). Measure 33 has a treble staff with a half note B4 (sharp) and a bass staff with a half note B2 (sharp). The notation includes a large brace on the left for the piano part and a repeat sign at the end of the system.

34

Pno

Measures 34-36 of a piano score in 3/4 time. Measure 34 has a treble staff with a half note C5 (sharp) and a bass staff with a half note C2 (sharp). Measure 35 has a treble staff with a half note D5 (sharp) and a bass staff with a half note D2 (sharp). Measure 36 has a treble staff with a half note E5 (sharp) and a bass staff with a half note E2 (sharp). The notation includes a large brace on the left for the piano part and a repeat sign at the end of the system.

37

Pno

Measures 37-39 of a piano score in 3/4 time. Measure 37 has a treble staff with a half note F5 (sharp) and a bass staff with a half note F2 (sharp). Measure 38 has a treble staff with a half note G5 (sharp) and a bass staff with a half note G2 (sharp). Measure 39 has a treble staff with a half note A5 (sharp) and a bass staff with a half note A2 (sharp). The notation includes a large brace on the left for the piano part and a repeat sign at the end of the system.

41

Pno

Measures 41-44 of a piano score. The piece is in 2/4 time and D major. Measure 41 features a treble staff with a half note chord (F#4, A#4) and a bass staff with a half note chord (C3, E2). Measure 42 has a treble staff with a half note chord (F#4, A#4) and a bass staff with a half note chord (C3, E2). Measure 43 has a treble staff with a half note chord (F#4, A#4) and a bass staff with a half note chord (C3, E2). Measure 44 has a treble staff with a half note chord (F#4, A#4) and a bass staff with a half note chord (C3, E2).

45

Pno

Measures 45-49 of a piano score. The piece is in 2/4 time and D major. Measure 45 features a treble staff with a half note chord (F#4, A#4) and a bass staff with a half note chord (C3, E2). Measure 46 has a treble staff with a half note chord (F#4, A#4) and a bass staff with a half note chord (C3, E2). Measure 47 has a treble staff with a half note chord (F#4, A#4) and a bass staff with a half note chord (C3, E2). Measure 48 has a treble staff with a half note chord (F#4, A#4) and a bass staff with a half note chord (C3, E2). Measure 49 has a treble staff with a half note chord (F#4, A#4) and a bass staff with a half note chord (C3, E2).

50

Pno

Measures 50-54 of a piano score. The piece is in 2/4 time and D major. Measure 50 features a treble staff with a half note chord (F#4, A#4) and a bass staff with a half note chord (C3, E2). Measure 51 has a treble staff with a half note chord (F#4, A#4) and a bass staff with a half note chord (C3, E2). Measure 52 has a treble staff with a half note chord (F#4, A#4) and a bass staff with a half note chord (C3, E2). Measure 53 has a treble staff with a half note chord (F#4, A#4) and a bass staff with a half note chord (C3, E2). Measure 54 has a treble staff with a half note chord (F#4, A#4) and a bass staff with a half note chord (C3, E2).

56

Pno

Measures 56-59 of a piano score. The piece is in 4/4 time. Measure 56: Treble clef has a half note chord of Bb2 and D3; Bass clef has a half note chord of Bb1 and D2. Measure 57: Treble clef has a half note chord of Bb2 and D3; Bass clef has a half note chord of Bb1 and D2. Measure 58: Treble clef has a half note chord of Bb2 and D3; Bass clef has a half note chord of Bb1 and D2. Measure 59: Treble clef has a half note chord of Bb2 and D3; Bass clef has a half note chord of Bb1 and D2.

60

Pno

Measures 60-63 of a piano score. The piece is in 4/4 time. Measure 60: Treble clef has a half note chord of Bb2 and D3; Bass clef has a half note chord of Bb1 and D2. Measure 61: Treble clef has a half note chord of Bb2 and D3; Bass clef has a half note chord of Bb1 and D2. Measure 62: Treble clef has a half note chord of Bb2 and D3; Bass clef has a half note chord of Bb1 and D2. Measure 63: Treble clef has a half note chord of Bb2 and D3; Bass clef has a half note chord of Bb1 and D2.

64

Pno

Measures 64-66 of a piano score. The piece is in 4/4 time. Measure 64: Treble clef has a half note chord of Bb2 and D3; Bass clef has a half note chord of Bb1 and D2. Measure 65: Treble clef has a half note chord of Bb2 and D3; Bass clef has a half note chord of Bb1 and D2. Measure 66: Treble clef has a half note chord of Bb2 and D3; Bass clef has a half note chord of Bb1 and D2.

67

Pno

Measures 67-70 of a piano score. The notation is in 3/4 time. Measure 67 features a complex chordal texture in the right hand with many accidentals, while the left hand has a simple bass line. Measures 68-70 continue this texture with some changes in the right hand's voicing and the left hand's accompaniment.

70

Pno

Measures 71-73 of a piano score. Measure 71 includes a melodic line in the right hand marked '8va' (octave) and a sustained note. Measures 72-73 show a more active right hand with moving chords, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment.

74

Pno

Measures 75-78 of a piano score. Measures 75-76 feature a melodic line in the right hand with a comma-like breath mark. Measures 77-78 continue the melodic and harmonic development in both hands.

78

Pno

Measures 78-80 of a piano score. Measure 78 features a complex chordal texture in the right hand with a melodic line, while the left hand plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment. Measure 79 continues this texture with some shifts in the right-hand harmony. Measure 80 shows a more active right hand with moving chords. The piece concludes with a final chord in the right hand and a sustained bass note in the left hand.

81

Pno

8va

Measures 81-83 of a piano score. Measure 81 introduces an 8va (octave) marking for the right hand, which plays a series of chords. The left hand provides a consistent eighth-note accompaniment. Measure 82 continues the 8va texture in the right hand. Measure 83 features a more complex right-hand texture with some lower notes. The piece ends with a final chord in the right hand and a sustained bass note in the left hand.

84

Pno

8va

Measures 84-86 of a piano score. Measure 84 continues the 8va texture in the right hand. Measure 85 shows a more complex right-hand texture with some lower notes. Measure 86 features a more complex right-hand texture with some lower notes. The piece ends with a final chord in the right hand and a sustained bass note in the left hand.

87

Pno

Measures 87 and 88 of a piano score. Measure 87 features a treble clef with a whole note chord of F#4, A#4, and C5, and a bass clef with a whole note chord of F#2, A2, and C3. Measure 88 features a treble clef with a whole note chord of F#4, A#4, and C5, and a bass clef with a whole note chord of F#2, A2, and C3. The piece is in 4/4 time.

89

Pno

Measures 89, 90, and 91 of a piano score. Measure 89 features a treble clef with a whole note chord of F#4, A#4, and C5, and a bass clef with a whole note chord of F#2, A2, and C3. Measure 90 features a treble clef with a whole note chord of F#4, A#4, and C5, and a bass clef with a whole note chord of F#2, A2, and C3. Measure 91 features a treble clef with a whole note chord of F#4, A#4, and C5, and a bass clef with a whole note chord of F#2, A2, and C3. The piece is in 4/4 time.

92

Pno

Measures 92, 93, and 94 of a piano score. Measure 92 features a treble clef with a whole note chord of F#4, A#4, and C5, and a bass clef with a whole note chord of F#2, A2, and C3. Measure 93 features a treble clef with a whole note chord of F#4, A#4, and C5, and a bass clef with a whole note chord of F#2, A2, and C3. Measure 94 features a treble clef with a whole note chord of F#4, A#4, and C5, and a bass clef with a whole note chord of F#2, A2, and C3. The piece is in 4/4 time.

Play at any speed and dynamic

Perc 1
Perc 2
Perc 3

10

Perc 1
Perc 2
Perc 3

18

Perc 1
Perc 2
Perc 3

26

Perc 1
Perc 2
Perc 3

34

repeat ad lib.

Perc 1
Perc 2
Perc 3

Play these "cries" as quickly as possible. Repeat freely.
Do not synchronise.

4

B.Cl.

urgently

f

Tba

urgently

f

5 As slowly as possible

B.Cl.

p

Tba

f ♩ = 90

6 repeat several times

B.Cl.

pp *ff* *pp* *ff* *pp* *ff*

Tba

pp *ff* *pp* *ff* *pp* *ff*

7

Imitate frog calls at any time and for as long as wished.
These frog calls should contain an irregular number of repetitions
broken by irregular length silences. All the calls should have a sense of urgency.

B. Cl.

Rapid tonguing with simultaneous slow ascending glissando.
Imitate 'phasing' on two notes a semitone apart.
High notes rapidly repeated in short bursts.
Key clicks in machine gun bursts.

Tuba

Short, punchy, staccato single notes grouped in ones, twos or threes.
Single notes steadily repeated with fairly long silences in between. Each
note should glissando downwards.
Low throbbing, distant but articulated.

Play these fragments in any order and any number of times.

Double bar = lengthy pause

Open notes last more than 15 seconds

"Black" notes last less than 15 seconds

1

Violin
con sord.
p

Viola
con sord.
p

Violoncello
behind bridge
con sord. *p*

2

Violin
senza sord.
p

Viola
senza sord.
p

Violoncello
senza sord.
punta d'arco
quasi gliss.
(norm)
p

3

Violin
slow gliss.
p
repeat ad lib.

Viola
f
repeat ad lib.

Violoncello
p

4

behind bridge

Violin

p

behind bridge

Viola

p

col legno battuto
quasi gliss.

Violoncello

f

6

norm.
gliss.

Violin

p

norm.

Viola

p

norm.

Violoncello

p

7

Violin

mp

mf

Viola

mp

mf

Violoncello

mp

mf

gliss.

8

Violin

sfz mp

Viola

sfz mp

Violoncello

sfz mp

9

Violin

p

mf col legno

Viola

(no)

p pulse gently

p rapidly repeat ad lib. vary no.

Violoncello

p

mf col legno

rapidly repeat ad lib. vary no.

10

Violin

p

slow gliss. trem.

behind bridge

Viola

p

behind bridge

Violoncello

p

behind bridge

11

Violin

p norm.

p regular pulsing

Viola

p norm.

mp slow gliss.

Violoncello

p norm.

p