

IX: Révélations et Diversités

The idea of this piece is a kind of Tower of Babel, in which the basic phonemes of the French language combine by chance to produce random words, and the musical phrases similarly combine to create melodies and harmonies.

INSTRUCTIONS

The score comprises 4 double-pages of 9 x 9 bars. Each bar is worth 4 beats at crotchet = 60. Singers may begin on any bar. Having performed the first bar of choice, the singer immediately moves on (keeping in time) to a neighbouring bar either to the right, left, above or below (in a straight line, not diagonally). This process continues to the end of the piece. Singers move independently of one another. At the end of any given bar, there are four possible choices, except on those bars around the edge of the page, where there are four. Sopranos, Altos, Tenors and Basses all perform the music simultaneously.

A tie over the end of a bar indicates a note to be sustained until the first note in the new bar is reached. If the next chosen bar is an empty bar, then the tied note should be sustained through that bar and on until the next active bar is reached.

The pulse is a steady crotchet = 60 throughout. The conductor beats out 81 bars of 4/4, thus making it theoretically possible for all singers to sing all squares (although it is unlikely that this would actually happen in practice). At the end of the 81st bar, the conductor gives a signal to finish the piece. All singers should move as rapidly as possible to a silent bar, but should sing their way there, so an extra bar of music is almost inevitable. Having reached a silent bar, singers remain silent to end. The whole piece will last 82 or 83 bars, therefore, a duration of 5' 30".

Singers work through the score individually, but it is acceptable to plan a route beforehand, or even for an entire section of the choir to plan together. It is possible under the rules simply to alternate a chosen bar and its neighbouring silent bar for the duration of the piece. This is perfectly acceptable, if perhaps a little unambitious. It is also possible to perform *all* the bars, or to construct a route which avoids silent bars altogether. It is not possible, however, to remain silent, since the singer *must* move on at the end of each bar. Singers could restrict themselves to a small group of bars, or move along a particular rank or file, or just move freely.

Pitching will probably be difficult, given the general babble, and tuning-forks may be used if necessary. However, absolute accuracy of pitch is not the primary aim of the piece. Instead, diction and rhythm should get priority.

Text and Pronunciation

The text comprises the basic sounds in the French language, as defined by Brisset. There are 18 consonants and 12 vowels, each of which comes in two versions: long or short. Although these phonemes are French, part of Brisset's thesis is that the sounds which result when these combine have the same meaning *in any language*. If therefore "words" arise which do not sound particularly French, this is to be welcomed.

Consonants

be as in "globe"
ce as in "grâce" (N.B. c is always soft in this piece. Where confusion might arise, I have given a cedilla, thus ç)
che as in "bouche"
de as in "dents"
fe as in "bouffe"
gne as in "Boulogne"
gue as in "drogue"
he as in "heureux" (N.B. Brisset declared that it does not matter whether the "h" is silent or not, so don't worry about this!)
je as in "jeu"
le as in "le"
me as in "me"
pe as in "peu"
que as in "que"
re as in "re"
te as in "te"
ve as in "aveu"
ze as in "cause"

Vowels

Short
ò as in "bloc"
où as in "coup"
e-eu as in "le" (i.e. both the same pronunciation)
é as in "né"
è as in "dès que"
û as in "tu"
à as in "plaque"
on as in "non"
en as in "vente"
in as in "vin"
un as in "un"

Long
aux as in "animaux"
oue as in "ouvre"
eux as in "jeux"
ée as in "fée"
aie as in "monnaie"
ie as in "vie"
as as in "pas"
ons as in "voyons"
ens as in "ensemble"
ins as in "instruire"
uns as in "lundi"