

COMPOSING WITH SPEECH

ISTVÁN ANHALT

Phenomena traditionally belonging to the field of inquiry of phoneticians became of interest to musicians also, as can be observed in the activity of certain composers since about the beginning of the century, and particularly since the early 50's. While composers and writers on music in the West have shown interest in the relationship between speech and vocal music for many hundreds of years (Strunk 1950), the turn-of-the-century flowering of the melodrama (still with us in strength in the form of radio soap-operas and TV commercials), and Schönberg's *Sprechstimme*, are the closest antecedents of the development I am to comment on, namely, the vocal and/or choral works, with or without the use of the electro-magnetic medium, displaying the voice in all its possible modes of expression, and specifically through speech, of H. Eimert, K. Stockhausen (Stockhausen 1960), D. Schnebel, L. Berio (Berio 1959), H. Helms, M. Kagel, L. Nono, W. Lutosławski, G. Ligeti, M. Babbitt, L. Hiller, R. Reynolds, S. Martirano, G. Rochberg, J. Beckwith, I. Anhalt, R.M. Schafer and others.

One may trace the causes of this marked extension of the range of expression, and technique, in the following terms: (1) a changing psycho-social climate induced composers to evolve novel modes of vocal delivery which, in their view, gave fitting expression to certain states of mind; (2) a persistent attraction to non-European music, since the early 1900's, created a strong interest in the use of percussion instruments in 'unusual' playing, singing, and improvisation, with a concomitant changing attitude toward the relationship between notation and performance practice, and (3) electro-magnetic sound technology brought about new techniques of composition somewhat analogous to those which the film provided in the visual domain.

Surveying this repertory, one's attention is drawn to the following structure-types and procedures: (1) a subtle, 'live' monody, at times speech, at times song, at times neither, with emphasis on prosodic and para-linguistic features, normally requiring a virtuoso performer, (2) a specific person's voice recorded on tape (the non-exchangeable performer and performance), with very careful selection as to mother tongue, dialect, age, personality, timbre and other characteristics, (3) auto-

Fig. 1. From: Cento, by Istvan Anhalt. Copyright MCMLXVII by BMI Canada Limited, 41 Valleybrook Dr., Don Mills, Ontario. Fig. 1, printed here on two pages, is a reproduction of a SINGLE page of the score.

SECTION V

REPERTORY

1 1" RRRAGE	2 1½" TRRRAY, RRRAY	3 1" RAGE OUTRAGE	4 1" RAGE CANNOT	5 2" RRRAGE DJE DJE	6 2" AND-DES DOUBT DJE DIM	7 1½" DOUBT ABOUT DOUBT
8 2" A DOUBT OF LIFE	9 1½" LIFE OF OUR SIGHT	10 2½" AT THE SIGHT OF OUR LIVES	11 2½" SIGHT OF LIFE CONFUSED	12 1½" CONFUSED OF SIGHT		
13 1" CONFUE	14 1½" FUE DIM	15 1" FUEDIM	16 1½" DIM	17 1" DIM DIM	18 1" PRO DIM	19 1½" DIM CONDIM
				20 1½" WHISEX EX WHISEX		

(Continued next page).

TAPE

POPPING

FADE-OUT
(NO.3)

BROKEN SPEECH
/MIX./FADE-OUT
(NO.4)

BROKEN SPEECH
/MIX./

FADE-OUT
(NO.5)

DEEP VOICES, UNINT.
/MALE/

S.

1 11 SIGHT OF LIFE CONFUSED 13 CONFUE 11 SIGHT OF LIFE CONFUSED 11 SIGHT OF LIFE CONFUSED
2 3 RAGE OUTRAGE 10 AT THE SIGHT OF OUR LIVES 3 RAGE OUTRAGE 9 LIFE OF OUR SIGHT 10 CONFUSED OF SIGHT
3 20 WHISEX EX 2 TRRRAY RRRAY 12 CONFUSED OF SIGHT 2 TRRRAY RRRAY 9 LIFE OF OUR SIGHT

DURATION

5'06" WHISEX 10" 15" 20" 25" 30" 35"

A.

1 2 TRRRAY RRRAY 13 CONFUE 13 CONFUE 2 TRRRAY RRRAY 13 14 TRRRAY RRRAY CONFUE FUEDIM 16 DIM 16 DIM
2 13 CONFUE 14 FUEDIM 9 LIFE OF OUR SIGHT 2 TRRRAY RRRAY 4 RAGE CANNOT 16 DIM 16 DIM
3 3 RAGE OUTRAGE 14 FUEDIM 4 RAGE CANNOT 3 RAGE OUTRAGE 9 LIFE OF OUR SIGHT 14 FUEDIM

TAPE

POPPING

FADE-OUT
(NO.3)

BROKEN SPEECH
/MIX./FADE-OUT
(NO.4)

BROKEN SPEECH
/MIX./

FADE-OUT
(NO.5)

DEEP VOICES, UNINT.
/MALE/

T.

1 5 RRRAGE DJE DJE 5 RRRAGE DJE DJE 6 AND DES DOUBT DJE DIM 5 RRRAGE DJE DJE 1 RRRAGE 6 AND DES DOUBT DJE DIM
2 6 AND DES DOUBT DJE DIM 1 RRRAGE 6 AND DES DOUBT DJE DIM 5 RRRAGE DJE DJE 1 RRRAGE 17 DIM DIM 15 FUE DIM 6 AND DES DOUBT DJE DIM
3 1 RRRAGE RRRAGL 1 RRRAGE 6 AND DES DOUBT DJE DIM 9 LIFE OF OUR SIGHT 7 DOUBT ABOUT DOUBT 5 RRRAGE DJE DJE 17 DIM DIM 19 DIM CONDIM 6 AND DES DOUBT DJE DIM

DURATION

5'06" 10" 15" 20" 25" 30" 35"

B.

1 6 AND DES DOUBT DJE DIM 1 RRRAGE 6 AND DES DOUBT DJE DIM 9 LIFE OF OUR SIGHT 5 RRRAGE DJE DJE 7 DOUBT ABOUT DOUBT 19 DIM CON DIM 19 DIM CONDIM 19 DIM CONDIM
2 9 LIFE OF OUR SIGHT 1 RRRAGE 8 A DOUBT OF LIFE 1 RRRAGE 6 AND DES DOUBT DJE DIM 1 RRRAGE 17 DIM DIM 19 DIM CON DIM 15 FUE DIM 15 FUE DIM 17 DIM DIM
3 6 AND DES DOUBT DJE DIM 5 RRRAGE DJE DJE 8 A DOUBT OF LIFE 1 RRRAGE 6 AND DES DOUBT DJE DIM 6 AND DES DOUBT DJE DIM 17 DIM DIM 19 DIM CON DIM 15 FUE DIM 18 PRODIM

polyphony (several layers of the same person's utterances superimposed through multiple recordings), (4) polyphonies of small groups of voices (two to six persons), with structures saturated as to selected phonemic, prosodic, and/or para-linguistic features for the purpose of achieving musical coherence, (5) events for a middle-sized or a large group, the cocktail-party situation, the co-ordinated mass response, and the random sound of a mob, and (6) complementation of the vocal sounds by percussive, electro-magnetic, and/or other types of sounds.

A common feature of many of the works I am concerned with here is the great structural-aesthetic importance assigned to consonants, a phenomenon without parallel in the known history of Western music. Another feature is the strong reliance on non-periodic rhythms. The significance of these attributes becomes evident if one considers them in relation to the dominant compositional features of Western polyphonic vocal music of many centuries, namely, the quasi-steady-state tone with its vowel complement, and the predictability of simultaneities, made possible by a perceptible common pulse, and simple time-ratios. (This observation does not of course preclude the use of quasi-steady-state pitches, and periodic rhythms in this new repertory. In this context, however, they are only options among several other ones.) Considering analysis, I know of no satisfactory hypothesis which pertains to the structures I have referred to. In thinking about one, one cannot but notice certain recurring properties, such as selective phonemic content, affinities between timbres, registral restrictions, and others, playing important roles in achieving that coherence that many of such structures so noticeably exhibit. As to the perception of time-relationships, such structures often suggest listening in terms of shorter or longer time-spans, rather than in terms of the perception of a point-against-point type of ordering.

The first one of my two works based on the speaking voice (Anhalt 1967, 1969, 1970, 1971) *Cento*, is composed for a live choir of twelve voices, accompanied by vocal and instrumental sounds pre-recorded on tape (see Figure 1). The text is a collage of fragments of a poem. Some words are also split, and their morphemes, or phonemes, recombined into other semantic, or syntactic structures, or pseudo-words. — The fragment which I am to reproduce includes a passage which is based on the word 'time', and its variants. The /t/'s are complemented here with pulse-like electronic sounds, and the diphthongs by sine-tone glides. The notation of the live parts is realized in terms of graphemes, intonation curves, and durations of total events, called in this instance 'intonation-cells'. While this proved to be an economical manner of representation, its lack of precision necessitated a fairly large amount of time spent in rote learning during the rehearsals. The tape parts contain the voices of ten persons, who are, thus, not exchangeable. These parts are indicated in terms of verbal cues along a time line, necessary for synchronization during performance. This of course does not constitute a notation, on the basis of which analysis is possible, since it does not inform in detail of what took place in the preparation of the tape. The question, thus, remains begging, of what would constitute a desirably

precise and in the same time sufficiently economical notation of such a compositional stratum. The second composition I am reporting on is entitled *Foci*, a work for 28 tape-recorded voices, performing in nine languages on six channels of tape, a live voice, and ten live instrumentalists. In Section 3, of this piece, entitled "Icons", the voices perform in French, English, and Greek. The title refers to a seventeenth century Greek icon, to the Genevan Psalter, and to two seventh century Greek-Orthodox hymns.

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DISCUSSION

ADAMS (Haberfield, Australia)

How did you compose the tape parts of *Cento*?

ANHALT

By recording individually the voices of ten persons, as well as other sounds, and making about a thousand tape-loops of these recordings. The loops became the basic material. In combining these with each other I used filtering, spring reverberation, and other procedures. For further detail see Anhalt 1970 in the Bibliography.