alternate between attention and ease

/ James Saunders

/ 2017

INSTRUMENTATION

3 flutes
3 oboes
2 clarinets
bass clarinet
2 bassoons
contra-bassoon
4 horns
3 trumpets (with plunger mutes)
2 trombones (with plunger mutes)
bass trombone (with plunger mute)
tuba
2 percussion: vibraphone/5 bowed objects; marimba*/5 bowed objects
harp (with paper coffee cup and five surfaces)
piano (with paper coffee cup and five surfaces)
violins (in 6 parts)**
violas (in 3 parts)**
cellos (in 3 parts)**
double basses (in 3 parts)**

2 speakers with sample playback (amplified)
conductor with sample playback (amplified)

*5-octave marimba preferred. If a smaller instrument is available, the low chords should be transposed up by one octave.

**All string players require an object to bow. See performance instructions for full information.

String parts should be divided evenly amongst the available players

It is not essential that all parts are present, but the orchestra should comprise at least 30 players with a wide mix of instruments.

The samples are available from the composer on request.

duration: variable (c.10-15 minutes)

Commissioned by BBC Radio 3 and first performed on 7 May 2017 at Tectonics Music Festival by BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and Parkinson Saunders, conducted by Ilan Volkov.

SETUP

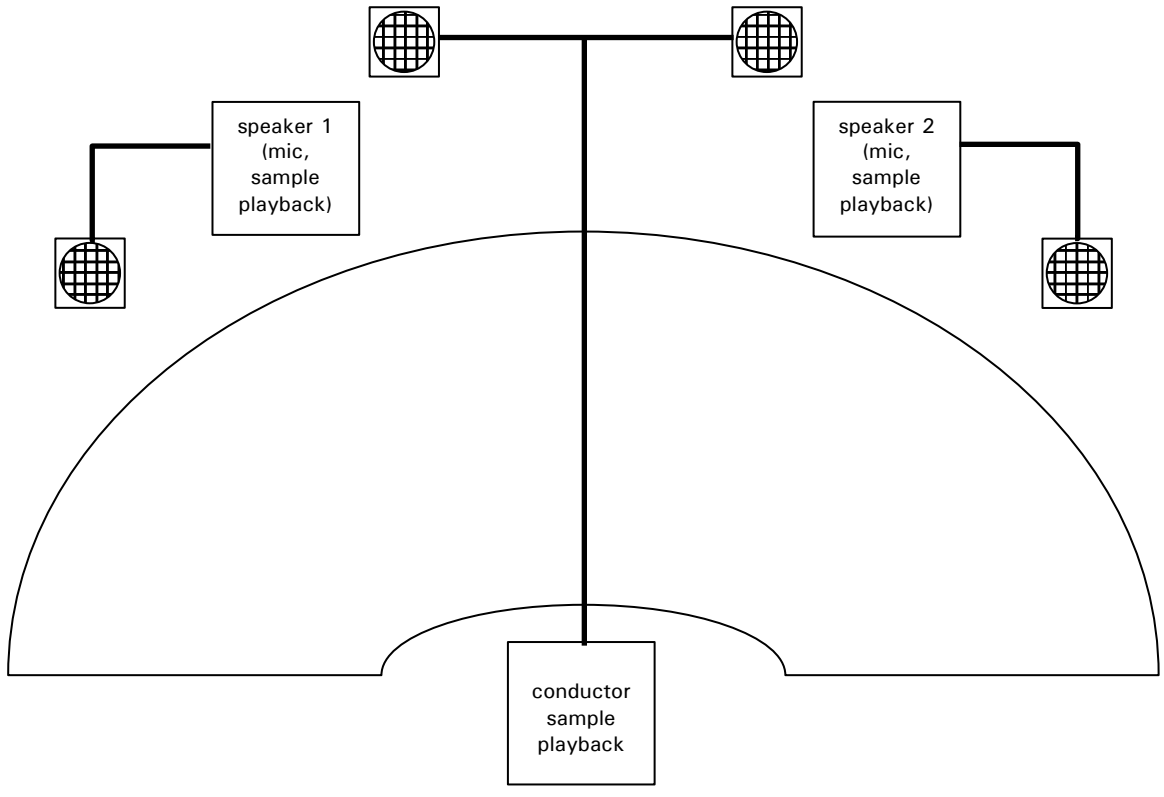
All string players need a small object they can bow, and the percussion players each need five objects. The resulting sound should focus on noise as opposed to clear pitch elements. The objects should be easily accessible to facilitate quick changes.

The harp and piano players each need a small table with five different surfaces laid out, as well as a paper coffee cup to make them sound. The surfaces should all be different in some way and produce noise/friction sounds when the cup is drawn across them.

The two speakers each need a microphone and device capable of playing back the samples (keyboard, tablet, laptop etc.). Each should be routed to a loudspeaker panned to their side of the stage to emphasise the spatial separation

The conductor needs a device capable of playing back the samples. This should be routed to a central pair of loudspeakers, or panned to a central point if only stereo speakers are available.

The placement of the two speakers can change depending on stage space (e.g. they could sit either side of the conductor at the front of the stage). It is essential that the orchestral players can hear all the samples and cue words clearly however.



Each of the sample playback devices should be prepared with the samples listed below.
The samples for speaker 1 and 2 should play through completely each time they are cued, then stop.
The samples for the conductor should play through while the key/button is held, and stop once released.

SPEAKER 1

CLOCK	170383__finalcrystine__cuckoo-clock.wav
BALL	329684__uzbazur345__plastic-bouncing-ball.wav
ALARM	325367__moonlightshadow__fire-house-alarm.wav
CHAIN	162156__mediapaja2009__metal-chain.wav
BELL	267900__chemicatz__bike-bell.wav
TOILET	274448__polytest__toilet-flushing.wav
DOOR	96472__imitatia-dei__pine-door-shut-2-slam.wav
PAPER	181770__keweldog__tearing-paper3.wav
FIRE	263864__ceich93__fire-crackling.wav
FLY	352075__kinoton__house-fly-take-of-fly-by.wav
GUN	217805__gattoangus__9mm-short-reverb.wav
SAW	320734__papercutterjohn__sawing-wood.wav
BIRD	122618__urupin__chaffinch-ziablik.wav
GATE	177194__barkenov__hard-grating-metal-gate.wav
WATER	146008__thedogryan420__babbling-brook.wav
WHISTLE	42197__fauxpress__wolf-whistle.wav
DOG	100032__nfrae__rose-bark.wav
WOLF	256533__dkaufman__coyote-barks-and-howls.wav
SHEEP	210511__yuval__sheep-bleat-outdoors.wav
COW	233130__jarredgibb__cow-moo-1-96khz.wav
HORN	54086__guitarguy1985__horn.wav
HORSE	149024__foxen10__horse-whinny.wav
CAR	186959__readeonly__engine-start.wav
CANNON	187767__qubodup__cannon-shot.wav

SPEAKER 2

CLOCK	164080__martineerok__old-pendulum-clock.wav
BALL	88498__shakaharu__ball-basketball-drop.wav
ALARM	120526__playpauseandrewind__alarm-clock-s-alarm-on.wav
CHAIN	182713__qubodup__keychain-movement.wav
BELL	219047__jarredgibb__church-clock-strikes-1.wav
TOILET	185046__justeluis__flush.wav
DOOR	155523__planet-leader__doorslam2.wav
PAPER	181773__keweldog__tearing-paper4.wav
FIRE	91114__fasolt__fire-crackling-oven.wav
FLY	328398__bajko__insect-bee-fly-buzz.wav
GUN	138679__haydensayshi123__barreta-m9-shot.wav
SAW	9886__pingel__woodsaw1.wav
BIRD	164483__adam-n__birdsong-single-isolated.wav
GATE	263532__viaaico2013__irongate2.wav
WATER	54959__northern-rebel__splash-loop.wav
WHISTLE	218318__splicesound__referee-whistle-blow-gymnasium.wav
DOG	328729__ivolipa__dog-bark.wav
WOLF	215141__felix-blume__a-coyote-is-howling-during-the-night-in-the-tall-grass-prairie-oklahoma-usa.wav
SHEEP	198118__photog123__hungrysheep.wav
COW	233128__jarredgibb__cow-moo-3-96khz.wav
HORN	99630__tec-studios__foghorn.wav
HORSE	347036__kubuzz__horse-s-whinny.wav
CAR	141531__escortmarius__startfail4.wav
CANNON	239135__qubodup__tank-shots.wav

CONDUCTOR

WASHING MACHINE	155523__planet-leader__doorslam2.wav
DEHUMIDIFIER	124171__alienistcog__md10trk4].aif
RADIO STATIC	338150__greenvwbeetle__radio-noise-11.wav
AIR CONDITIONING	237299__augustsandberg__ventilation.wav
FOUNTAIN	235189__magnesium1__mulholland-memorial-fountain-los-angeles.wav
FAN	185875__gurkboll__small-construction-fan-20130424.wav

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CUEING INSTRUCTIONS

The piece involves the two speakers and conductor giving cues to which the orchestral players respond. The speed of the response by the players will vary, resulting in a staggered sequence of sounds following each cue. The piece alternates between the two speakers and the conductor giving cues as follows:

The two speakers give cues to which the orchestra responds.
The cues are either spoken words or samples.
Each time one of the speakers gives a cue, all the orchestral players must play the associated pitch as quickly as possible after they hear the cue. The orchestral players respond independently and should not aim to play in rhythmic unison (although this might occur naturally).
For each cue, the players play the high pitch (on the left of each pair) in response to a spoken cue and a low pitch (on the right) in response to a sample cue.
For example, if one of the speakers says 'wolf', the orchestral players must play either a high C, Eb or G as indicated in their part. If one of the speakers triggers their 'alarm' sample, the orchestra players must play either a low G, B or D as indicated in their part.

The conductor also gives cues to which the orchestra responds.
The cues are a downbeat with a synchronized sample.
When giving a cue, the conductor starts the sample playback at the same time as giving a downbeat. The sample and downbeat are held while the conductor's cue is active. The downbeat and sample are released together when one of the speakers interrupts.
For each cue given by the conductor, the orchestral players independently select and play one of the drone sounds at the bottom of their parts.
The sample begins as quickly as possible after the conductor's downbeat and ends when one of the speakers gives their next cue (spoken or sample). The sample is held whilst the conductor's cue is active.

The piece has two alternating states:
1. The speakers give sequences of spoken and sample cues to which the orchestra responds with single pitches
2. The conductor gives a single cue to which the orchestra responds with sustained noise drones or silence

The balance between these two states is free, but in general the speakers' cues should predominate with the conductor acting as an interruption.

When the speakers are giving cues the conductor may interrupt, at which point the speakers stop giving cues.
When the conductor's held cue is active, the speakers may interrupt, at which point the conductor releases the held cue.

The piece begins and ends with the speakers giving cues.
The end of the piece is determined by the speakers. The piece finishes when the speakers stop giving cues and the orchestra have responded to the final cue. The approximate duration should be decided in advance, but all cues (speakers' words and samples, conductor's samples) should have been given at least once.

The sequence of cues is free, but the following should be considered:
- repetition, patterning, or sequences of either all spoken words or all samples might reduce the cognitive load on the orchestra players (reducing response times)
- each spoken cue has a sample equivalent, allowing mixed modes to be explored
- each cue has an association with at least one other cue (e.g. door – bell, gun – dog, water – gate etc.), and some of these associations have tonal relationships
- speakers can vary the density and complexity of the sequences of cues, managing the difficulty of response for the orchestra.
- the conductor should generally interrupt sequences of cues given by the speakers, but this balance might also be reversed

ORCHESTRA INSTRUCTIONS

Players respond to cues given by the two speakers and the conductor.

When a speaker gives a word cue (e.g. 'bell'), play the associated high pitch for that word.
When a speaker gives a sample cue (e.g. recording of a bell), play the associated low pitch for that sample.
Pitches should be played as quickly as possible after hearing the cue; do not attempt to synchronise with other players, although this may happen naturally.
Try to respond to every cue, but if you miss one, try to catch up, or wait until the next cue.
The pitch sounds made in response to the speakers' cues should be played confidently, ***mf-f***.

When the conductor gives a cue, choose one of the noise sounds at the bottom of the part and hold this for the duration of the cue. In addition, one of the options is to remain silent.
The conductor's cue is a held downbeat with playback of a sustained sample.
Play the selected sound as soon as possible after the cue is given.
The conductor's cue will stop when it is interrupted by one of the speakers.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

o-pppp(-----)	The sound should be on the edge of silence, and stop and start irregularly, or have an inconsistent quality due to any associated playing techniques.
ppp(< >)	The sound should centre on the indicated dynamic, but allow any micro-variations to emerge naturally (do not try to play them though)

WIND AND BRASS

[throat]	A very rapid series of single articulations of the air stream in the throat (not a growl or flutter-tongue). The pace should be as fast as possible, to the point where it is hard to control the regularity of the attack.
[air/noise]	Breath sound with little pitch component. Noise tones should be emphasised.
M	Multiphonic. Players may select any available harmonic, with an emphasis on dense and complex harmonic structures and/or noise.
[whistle tones]	Conventional whistle tones. Aim for a relatively stable pitch, but accept any occasional oscillations.
[minimal air]	Minimal air pressure necessary to produce sound, which should be unstable as a result.

plunger mutes/hand stopping

+	Closed
⌖	Blocked – as closed, but with extra pressure to seal the tube as much as possible.
+ ∿∿∿∿∿∿∿∿∿∿	A mute tremolo involving a small uneven shaking movement of the mute centred on the position(s) indicated.

STRINGS

diamond noteheads	Diamond noteheads indicate a harmonic pressure left hand fingering. The indicated pitch and roman numeral denote the position of the finger and the string to be used. This will produce a range of results from relatively clear harmonics through to (coloured) noise.
[damp]	Damp all strings lightly with the fingers of the left hand. A coloured pitch/noise sound will result. Bow the indicated strings.
[tailpiece]	Bow the tailpiece to produce a resonant pitch/noise sound.
[body/wood]	Bow the body of the instrument, or a separate piece of wood if preferred.

If string players prefer not to bow the tailpiece or body due to a concern about their instruments, those actions should be omitted from the pool of options available to them, or replaced by bowing a small piece of wood.

AUXILIARY INSTRUMENTS

bowed objects	Players should independently select objects that produce a complex noise tone when bowed (with a lesser pitch component). Bow continuously to produce a sustained and uniform sound.
coffee cup on surfaces	A standard card takeaway coffee cup. Any flat surface may be selected to be sampled by the cup (e.g. a metal sheet, polystyrene block, a brick, a wooden tray, felt etc.) using the techniques indicated
∪	Circle the cup on the surface using the base of cup on surface
∩	Circle the cup on the surface using rim of cup on surface (upside down)

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SPEAKER CUES

CLOCK **BALL** **ALARM** **CHAIN** **BELL** **TOILET**

Flute 1
Flute 2
Flute 3
Oboe 1
Oboe 2
Oboe 3
Clarinet 1 in B♭
Clarinet 2 in B♭
Bass Clarinet in B♭
Bassoon 1
Bassoon 2
Contrabassoon

Horn 1 in F
Horn 2 in F
Horn 3 in F
Horn 4 in F
Trumpet 1 in C
Trumpet 2 in C
Trumpet 3 in C
Trombone 1
Trombone 2
Bass Trombone
Tuba

Marimba
Vibraphone
Harp
Piano

Violin 1
Violin 2
Violin 3
Violin 4
Violin 5
Violin 6
Viola 1
Viola 2
Viola 3
Cello 1
Cello 2
Cello 3
Double Bass 1
Double Bass 2
Double Bass 3

DOOR

PAPER

FIRE

FLY

GUN

SAW

Fl.1
Fl.2
Fl.3
Ob.1
Ob.2
Ob.3
Cl.1
Cl.2
B. Cl.
Bsn.1
Bsn.2
Cbsn.
Hn.1
Hn.2
Hn.3
Hn.4
C Tpt.1
C Tpt.2
C Tpt.3
Tbn.1
Tbn.2
B.Tbn.
Tba.
Mar.
Vib.
Hp.
Pno.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vln. 3
Vln. 4
Vln. 5
Vln. 6
Vla.1
Vla.2
Vla.3
Vc.1
Vc.2
Vc.3
Db.1
Db.2
Db.3

BIRD GATE WATER WHISTLE DOG WOLF

Fl.1
Fl.2
Fl.3
Ob.1
Ob.2
Ob.3
Cl.1
Cl.2
B. Cl.
Bsn.1
Bsn.2
Cbsn.
Hn.1
Hn.2
Hn.3
Hn.4
C Tpt.1
C Tpt.2
C Tpt.3
Tbn.1
Tbn.2
B.Tbn.
Tba.
Mar.
Vib.
Hp.
Pno.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vln. 3
Vln. 4
Vln. 5
Vln. 6
Vla.1
Vla.2
Vla.3
Vc.1
Vc.2
Vc.3
Db.1
Db.2
Db.3

SHEEP

COW

HORN

HORSE

CAR

CANNON

Fl.1
Fl.2
Fl.3
Ob.1
Ob.2
Ob.3
Cl.1
Cl.2
B. Cl.
Bsn.1
Bsn.2
Cbsn.
Hn.1
Hn.2
Hn.3
Hn.4
C Tpt.1
C Tpt.2
C Tpt.3
Tbn.1
Tbn.2
B.Tbn.
Tba.
Mar.
Vib.
Hp.
Pno.
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vln. 3
Vln. 4
Vln. 5
Vln. 6
Vla.1
Vla.2
Vla.3
Vc.1
Vc.2
Vc.3
Db.1
Db.2
Db.3

CONDUCTOR CUES