

CARNIVORE

promenade performance
for two groups of musicians

devised by

Victoria Bernath
and James Whittle

2014

CARNIVORE (2014)

Commissioned by York Spring Festival of New Music 2014.

Premiere Victoria Bernath, James Whittle and the CARNIVORE Troupe (University of York Department of Music students), York City Centre and Museum Gardens, as part of York Spring Festival of New Music, 11th May 2014.

Duration c. 55 minutes

Movement devised by the cast, directed by Victoria Bernath and James Whittle

Music devised by the cast, directed by James Whittle

Words devised by the cast

Characters

Premiere cast:

Minstrel Ringleader *Victoria Bernath (viola)*

Minstrels* *Rowena Jacobs (flute),
Joe Steele (saxophone),
James Whittle (clarinet)*

Troubadour Bard *Tom McMahon-Hore (speaker)*

Troubadours* *Baroque: Adam Thomas (double bass),
Marianne Lee (violin)*

Romantic: Callam Neville (cello)

*Jazz: Carlo Estolano (mandolin),
Vicente Magalhães (saxophone)*

* There may be any number of Minstrels and Troubadours.

Synopsis / Short Programme Note

In a carnivalesque world, underclass Minstrel musicians roam the backstreets, exiled from concert halls for their advocacy of New Music. When word reaches them that the reigning Troubadours have begun performing their cherished Old Music on the streets themselves, the Minstrels find this tyrannical mockery insufferable.

Enraged by the shameless charade, the Minstrel Ringleader initiates a hunt to capture the Troubadours and do away with Old Music once and for all.

As the hunt intensifies, the Troubadours plan a reprisal...

Extended Programme Note

In *CARNIVORE*, the audience is led on a tour around a historic site by a band of musicians (the Minstrels) to watch their musical encounters with a rival gang of buskers (the Troubadours).

Directed by composer-performers Victoria Bernath and James Whittle, *CARNIVORE* was first devised collaboratively in rehearsal by all 10 performers. The work fuses music, theatre, poetry and choreography. Each performer creates their character by devising their own musical material, spoken text and movement vocabulary.

The concept for this site-specific work derived from the 'carnival' theme of the 2014 York Spring Festival, which commissioned the work. York itself provided inspiration, with its rich culture of festivals and violent history of invasions and conflict. *Commedia dell'arte*, pantomime, and writings on the carnivalesque by Mikhail Bakhtin and Umberto Eco, all informed play on musical stereotypes and the collision of different musical styles.

Audience Notice (to be made available to all audience before the performance)

- *CARNIVORE* is a site-specific, outdoors promenade performance.
- The show lasts approximately 55 minutes.
- The show begins at _____ and tours _____, ending at _____.
- The audience will be led along the route by the performers.
- Stewards will be available en route to offer assistance.
- The show will feature some moments of interaction with the performers.
- Comfortable footwear and appropriate clothing for the weather are recommended

Characters

Characters are devised by each performer, based on the physicality of playing their instrument. The movement vocabulary should accentuate and exaggerate features of the physicality of playing their instrument (see Devising Tasks overleaf).

Minstrel Ringleader

A hard-edged, determined and powerful figure bristling with savage, mischievous intent. Clearly in charge of the Minstrels.

The Minstrels (multiple roles)

A maverick, jester-like band inspired by *Commedia dell'arte* & pantomime. They are carnivalesque caricatures of musicians. Their movement vocabulary and sounds are grotesque, wild, savage, rugged, idiotic, slapdash, loud, brash.

Troubadour Bard

A highly poetic, expressive fellow who has a way with words, somewhat sombre and reclusive but beguilingly mysterious. The avuncular leader of the Troubadours.

The Troubadours (multiple roles)

A collective of diva-like soloists. Each Troubadour character is based on a historical musical period or style (e.g. Baroque, Romanticism, 1920s jazz). The characteristics and movement vocabulary of each are derived from the performer's instrument and chosen musical period/style. The Troubadours improvise eloquently in that style and play any appropriate repertoire written for their instruments.

Costume

Minstrels	Torn/worn-out/ragged/filthy black concert dress, with long-beaked <i>Commedia dell'arte</i> masks. The Ringleader has a special/more ornate mask.
Troubadours	All wearing respectable theatre masks (different to the Minstrels). Each dressed in a manner suiting their period style, for example: <i>Baroque</i> : archaic, similar to the Bard. <i>Romantic</i> : smart attire, a tuxedo with tails/ruff/bowtie. <i>Jazz</i> : contemporary informal/casual wear e.g. jeans, shirt.
Bard	Smart attire, coat and hat, somewhat archaic colours, mystic or fairy-tale in look, plus a more ornate mask than the Troubadours.

Devising Instructions

The script details a fixed structure and materials that may either be replicated or devised anew. Materials from the premiere performance are presented as examples. These materials are:

Music

- Hunt theme*
- Troubadour musical styles**
- 'A Musical Walk through History'

Words

- Minstrel attack calls
- Troubadour laments
- Ringleader speeches***
- Bard speeches***
- Bard whisperings***

*A short, simple, identifiable tune.

** Styles should be various, drawn from across history, but should be appropriate for the Troubadour's instruments.

*** These may be embellished, adapted, or extended in a similar style.

Devising Tasks: Characters and Music

Whether devising new characters or replicating these materials, the following tasks are suggested to help develop the group's performance.

Initial development (questions for group discussion)

- What do you think the stereotypical sound your instrument makes is?
- What are the standard gestures found in your instrument's repertoire?
- What is your instrument's function in an ensemble or orchestra? What does its part tend to sound and look like?
- Consider:
 - What "a Classical musician" is and what "playing" is.
 - Ways of playing with expectations and satirising "the Classical musician".

Developing sonic identities

1. Invent 2 sounds/short phrases/actions that you think best represent what your instrument is made for. [An action does not have to produce sound in a conventional way, if at all.]
2. Share your choices with the group.
3. Invent 2 sounds/short phrases/actions that either your instrument is not normally expected to make, or you are not normally expected to make.
4. Share your choices with the group.
5. Discuss the nature of playing these sounds etc. (e.g. is it graceful, jagged?) and how the movement to produce the sound etc. may be exaggerated.

Developing group improvisation

- Listen to selected repertoire for the Troubadour musical style
- Discuss aspects of each Troubadour musical style in turn before improvising in that style
- For duels: discuss how to perform a power play and how to recognise how/when one is defeating the other. Have all the group practise duels in various combinations.

Devising Tasks: Words

For Minstrels and Troubadours to create their attack calls and laments:

1. Describe your instrument's unique and typical musical qualities (think about timbre, tone, extreme sounds, stereotypical or cliché sounds).
2. Describe your instrument's unique physical qualities.
3. Consider how these could be advantageous, or disadvantageous!
4. Can any of these qualities be likened to imagery of warfare, seduction, power?
5. Combine some of these elements in a 4-line poem of two rhyming couplets, in an archaic tone, in the first person.

Sample texts, devised for the premiere

MINSTREL attack calls

- Flute:** A glint of iridescent light
I am all beauty in your sight.
My wailing song, pure and sweet
To draw you in, you're mine to keep.
- Clarinet:** With gleeful cry from silence speak
My metal sheath, my wooden beak.
With harsh attack I pierce hind –
My growl it grates on all I find.
- Saxophone:** Golden fire that burns so bright
My reedy din rings through the night,
Gnashing keys from the pit of hell
To deafen what you loved so well.
- Viola:** My voice is made of wood and string
I seek no gaiety that you might bring.
I call out in low and plaintive tone
To claim that which you call your own.

TROUBADOUR laments

- Baroque Double bass:** I may not seem a violent creature –
This dagger's my only vicious feature –
Large and lumbering I may be,
My dagger should have protected me!
- Baroque Violin:** And as for violins like this,
They're small enough to not be missed!
- Romantic Cello:** My gut-wrenched strings, once resonant, now still.
My blank scroll holds no narrative, no quill.
Peg-legged, I hobble on a pointed crutch,
This fingerboard felt its last Romantic touch.
- Jazz Saxophone:** I have been flushed away
With my golden toilet.
- Jazz Mandolin:** Strumming along,
Today, it seems, has not been a treat!

1. Minstrels Muster

All performers are in position:

- *MINSTRELS are gathered around the Start point, moping in the gutter. They lounge despondently, leant against walls, scowling at the audience or passers-by.*
- *TROUBADOURS occupy several Stations – one for each musical style – as planted busking musicians. Until the hunt reaches them, the TROUBADOURS inhabit their Station. At least one TROUBADOUR will be encountered at each Station. Those of the same musical style occupy the same Station and may improvise/interact together. They improvise in their musical style, and interact with members of the public including answering any questions the public have about the performance.*
- *BARD hides at the Start point.*

The audience gathers at the Start point.

The RINGLEADER arrives and beckons the MINSTRELS near. Together they chant:

MINSTRELS & We Minstrels have a woeful past,
RINGLEADER: Our newest music was our last:
 The concert hall means nothing now –
 We've found a better place to prowl.
 MINSTRELS, here to entertain!
 We hope you'll join our little game
 To do away with all we find –
 To Troubadours we'll not be kind.

The RINGLEADER tells the Minstrels' tale of being evicted from concert halls by the Troubadours and forced to busk their New Music on the streets. One MINSTREL reports how the Troubadours have begun busking Old Music on these same streets.

The RINGLEADER decides that the only possible response is to lead a hunt to capture the Troubadours and do away with Old Music once and for all.

2. The Hunt

The RINGLEADER leads the MINSTRELS, who process behind her, beckoning the audience to follow. They play and improvise on the Hunt music:

The musical notation shows a single staff in bass clef, 4/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a dynamic marking of *f*. The melody begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, a quarter note B2, and a quarter note C3. This is followed by a quarter note D3, a quarter note E3, a quarter note F3, and a quarter note G3. The next measure contains a quarter note A3, a quarter note B3, a quarter note C4, and a quarter note D4. The final measure contains a quarter note E4, a quarter note F4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter note A4. There are two upward-pointing triangles under the second and third notes of the second measure, and two downward-pointing triangles under the first and second notes of the final measure. Below the first staff are three empty staves for accompaniment.

Occasionally en route, either one or two MINSTRELS break away from the line to interact with members of the audience or public.

The MINSTRELS are unaware that they are being followed by a mysterious figure (the BARD: see overleaf).

When the procession arrives at a Station, the MINSTRELS spot the one or two TROUBADOURS occupying the area. The RINGLEADER halts the procession and considers who should capture which TROUBADOUR (one for each). When a MINSTREL is elected they step forward to deliver their attack call to the audience. Each MINSTREL should duel at least one TROUBADOUR during the hunt.

The MINSTREL then duels the TROUBADOUR.

Once defeated, the MINSTREL presents the TROUBADOUR to the RINGLEADER. The TROUBADOUR delivers a lament explaining their failure to the audience, before reluctantly joining the procession.

The Hunt continues. MINSTRELS play the Marching Music and process in sequence, with any captured TROUBADOURS placed in front of their respective MINSTREL.

The last TROUBADOUR (or pair of TROUBADOURS, if the last two are from the same musical style/period) is duelled by the RINGLEADER herself.

When the Hunt sets off, BARD joins the audience crowd. Until his reveal, BARD stays out of general view, even occasionally hiding (e.g. behind walls or trees). He approaches individual audience members and whispers a text or two to them, secretively. These texts, act as a commentary to the Hunt, are drawn from Troubadour lyric poetry and may be added to or replaced.

I am the Troubadour Bard.

I'll write a verse about nothing at all.

Since plain style is so much in vogue,
it'll grieve me if I don't excel in it

Everything which is received by
someone is after the fashion of the
recipient
and not after its own fashion.

And even if the cold wind blows,
the love which rains into my heart
keeps me warm
when winter is at its worst

My writing, of which I boast,
is sensible and harmless.

I'm rather insane.

I am making a fool of myself, so far.

One would expect
him who writes such words
as never before had been put to music
to be otherwise able, if he wishes, to sing
what people sing and cry every day.

I despise myself
so much because I know
I'm going insane.

Now, may god, if he pleases, as fast as
he turned water into wine,
grant me what I long for.

I have little certitude!
(I court you, as you see,
lady.) I am far away from you!

Never before did Love have me
so much in its grip;

so that I wouldn't believe in a year
that I could love you so
unconditionally
if no good were to come from it.

I send you Astrius and my song.

3. The Ringleader's Sport

Having caught all the Troubadours, the RINGLEADER gleefully leads the procession to stage a tournament at the Grand Duel site.

RINGLEADER: It seems we've caught all the Old Music makers
 Baroque to Jazz, they're now OUR performers –
 And yet their musical will does not seem entirely won.
 What to do in such a conundrum! (*She thinks.*)
 A-HA!
 I shall pit them in duels, as foe against foe
 And when they have a winner, if that can be so,
 I'll bring forth my champion of golden fire
 To conquer and thus rule over all musical desire.
 Will it be enough for New Music's sake?
 I dearly hope so, but if needs must be,
 After the duels are fought
 You, dear audience, shall determine
 All of our fates.

The RINGLEADER selects two TROUBADOURS to duel each other. The other MINSTRELS and TROUBADOURS quake and chatter.

The duel falters: there is no victor as they both tire easily.

The RINGLEADER selects another TROUBADOUR to duel her favourite MINSTREL.

There is no clear victor: both resort to playing higher than each other by jumping. The aggravated RINGLEADER stops the duel and castigates her champion.

4. The Grand Duel

RINGLEADER: It is not clear which side has truly won –

BARD *(revealing himself to everyone's surprise)* Indeed not!

I am the Troubadour Bard, and I propose a greater challenge.

RINGLEADER: Troubadour Bard! What say you, what shall be done?

BARD: A Grand Duel of genre against genre: my fine Troubadours against your witless Minstrels.

A Musical Walk through History!

BARD chooses musical styles for the TROUBADOURS to play: their sound is always pleasantly melodious, harmonious and authentic. The MINSTRELS try to imitate each musical style, but their attempts worsen and become more shambolic, sounding increasingly noisier and less like each style.

BARD: Let us start with: Baroque!

The TROUBADOURS improvise in a Baroque style. The MINSTRELS imitate.

BARD: These fiends who call themselves “musicians” are nothing but a bunch of charlatans!

Now my Troubadours, show me the soul of Beethoven.

The TROUBADOURS improvise in a Beethovenian style. The MINSTRELS imitate.

BARD: Is this the best you can muster, Minstrels?

Let's see how you fare in the Romantic mode!

The TROUBADOURS improvise in a Romantic style. The MINSTRELS imitate.

BARD: I am getting sick of your feeble attempts.

Jazz will finish you!

The TROUBADOURS improvise in a Jazz style. The MINSTRELS imitate.

The RINGLEADER is not impressed at the failure of her MINSTRELS.

5. The Vote

In an attempt to avoid defeat, the RINGLEADER asks the audience to vote for who wins overall – MINSTRELS or TROUBADOURS – by a show of hands.

If MINSTRELS / New Music loses:

RINGLEADER: And so I see the end is near
 For those who hold New Music dear.
 Off we go: away from the concert halls we vanish,
 Our hopes for the future of music have been banished.

If MINSTRELS / New Music wins:

RINGLEADER: I must admit, the Great Old Masters are worthy indeed,
 But Old Music has not been victorious as you all did
 concede,
 Bring forth the future of music, tradition born anew:
 A new score of potential waits for me and for you.

END