



my my mime

choreography for a group of musicians and soloist

devised by

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2015

my my mime (2015)

Premiere The Assembled, Stained Glass Centre (St Michael-cum-Gregory Church), York Spring Festival 2015, 3rd May 2015.

Duration c. 10 minutes

Lighting Natural to the performance space. In a theatre/concert hall, a spotlight may be brought up on the soloist before they begin Part 2.

Costume your normal concert clothing

Programme Note

my my mime is a choreography for musicians devised with The Assembled in 2015. The starting point was observing the physical gestures made when playing our instruments. Using improvisation games, we developed 'preparatory', 'performing' and 'bringing-off' gestures. I shaped the piece using theatre games: mime, musical statues, and flocking. The action of each player gaining an instrument and exploring its physicality forms the first part (hence the title). After that, a solo/ensemble relationship complicates things, and the players are left to explore the space.

A key research question has been how to enable a rehearsal space in which musicians with little or no experience of movement, or physical/musical improvisation, can devise physical and musical material comfortably and thoughtfully. My idea has been that music-theatre works are not composed 'onto' a performer, but with.

We began making *my my mime* by observing the physical gestures each other make when playing. Improvisation games using only these gestures focused our ensemble communication. I drew on dance and theatre influences to add movement games such as mime, musical statues and flocking, to shape and direct the piece.

Staging Notes

my my mime may be performed as an installation/promenade performance, as a flash mob or as theatre within a concert. The piece may be adapted to suit conditions, if performing outdoors or in public.

All instruments begin scattered in a rough cluster on the floor of an otherwise empty space. The instruments may be placed in the space first as part of a performance.

One solo instrument is situated well away from the others.

The group performers begin standing surrounding and facing in to the instruments, spread out and some way away from them. The soloist begins at their instrument (they may be seated as normal).

Rehearsal Notes

The ensemble should develop a movement vocabulary of the following gestures:

- Preparatory gesture (e.g. raising a violin bow, raising clarinet and breathing in).
- Performing gesture (e.g. bowing, striking, expressive ancillary movement).
- Bringing-off gesture (e.g. cuing a phrase's end, nodding, circle arm movement).

Suggested ways of doing this are: watch each other and discuss the movements each other make when playing; play miming games and exercises.

- Copycat: in pairs A and B, B copies A's movements, posture, stance, face.
- Tennis: in pairs A and B, perform a rally of alternating movements.
- Circle game: everyone in a circle, neutral and still. As soon as one performer does a Preparatory gesture, everyone must copy them. The same performer then does a Bringing-off gesture, everyone copies returning back to neutral. To develop the game after a Preparatory gesture happens any performer can then begin Performing gestures for everyone to copy. Any performer can then do a Bringing-off gesture to return the group to neutral.
- Movement improvisation using only these gestures.

Part 1 — ensemble

- From stillness, eyes up: race to get your instrument and pick it up. With all eyes on each other, only move when you see someone else move towards their instrument — only move as far as they move.
- When everyone has their instrument: *tutti* breathe in with a Preparatory gesture, pause, then one Performing gesture.
- Slowly gather into groups with performers nearest to you. Preparatory gestures.
- Once grouped, face the audience nearest the group. Performing gestures.
- Change to Bringing-off gestures and turn away from the audience.
- All move into one pyramid-shaped mass, far away from and facing the solo instrument. At the head of the pyramid, a group leader faces the soloist.

Part 2 — solo

- The soloist mimes a very expressive, flamboyant solo (taking care to distinguish Preparatory/Performing/Bring-off gestures). Their hands control the movement of the group leader, whose movements are copied by the group.
- The pyramid flocks gradually and haphazardly towards the soloist as follows. An individual gets jealous and usurps the group leader by running round to shove them to one side — the group flocks behind the new leader and the previous leader shift round to the back of the pyramid. This sequence builds momentum, speed and energy. The approaching group unsettles the soloist.
- When the pyramid is nearest the soloist two rival leaders usurp, splitting the group in half. The flustered soloist tries to control them both, but gives up with a final crash gesture (no sound!) then is motionless for a long time, head in hands.
- The final crash causes the pyramid to break up and spill across the space.

Part 3 — resonance

- After a pause, the group begins shuffling slowly and silently away from each other. One plays a concert pitch E (*sempre staccato*, any octave) then pauses. This repeats to the end.
- Everyone else, when a pitch is heard, takes a quick step away from the group and faces the direction they hear the pitch coming from (then freeze silently).
- Each performer continues this way until reaching an obstruction (any part of the space, e.g. a wall, an object, or an audience member). Performers move closer to their obstruction, listening to it. (They may change obstruction.)
- As they listen, performers play infrequently one pitch **or** unpitched sound (soft dynamics, *sempre staccato*) then listen to it resound off the obstruction.
- Meanwhile, the soloist has begun watching the group.
- The soloist plays one *fortissimo* crash (with sound!). Everyone jumps/looks round and freezes. *END*.