

James Whittle

Cornucopian cloud

for as many celli as possible

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Programme Note

Q. Why would I want to join an inexplicable mob?

A. Tons of other people are doing it.

Bill Wasik, *My Crowd*

‘Behind every cloud is another cloud.’

Judy Garland

‘What is it? It’s complete gibberish. It’s insane. When is this idiocy going to stop?’

Larry Ellison, founder of IT giant Oracle Corp.

Cornu copiae, the ‘horn of plenty’ of Greek mythology and symbol of abundance; Cornucopian, a futurist believer in the endless resources of our natural planet, that there is enough matter and energy on the Earth to provide for the ever-rising population, that ‘the “ultimate resource” is not any particular physical object but the capacity for humans to invent and adapt,’ that ‘humans are infinitely inventive and the more people we have then the more potential there is for human inventiveness. Technology, fuelled by human inventiveness, will surely find a way to feed humanity forever (or at least for the next several million years).’ Cloud, ‘a visible mass of condensed watery vapour floating in the air’, also a seemingly infinite labyrinthine web of online data, the ultimate digital self storage warehouse.

JWW, 28th April 2012

Performance Notes

The duration of this piece is to be decided entirely by the performers. Each player reads off a copy of this score.

As an exploration of timbre and cuing, the cellists must work in pairs. For this reason, only an even number of cellists may play the piece, but as many cellists as possible may perform (and absolutely as many as possible is encouraged by the composer).

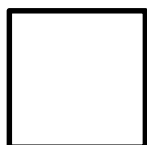
The ensemble is divided into two halves of paired players, '0' and '1', each having a Leader, which are themselves a pair. Each player sits on the opposite sides of a conventional ensemble arc on stage to their partner, so that both can see each other and communicate effectively, simply by looking up from their music. If there are too many cellists to fit on stage in an arc, other dispersals of players around the stage should be experimented with, making sure that both Leaders are always visible to each player. (Positions in this case may be as free as the performers like otherwise, though it is the composer's preference to highlight the duel-like quality of the pairs; for instance, pairs could face each other head-on across any distance, at any angle.) In a normal arc shape, the two Leaders should be sat at the fronts of either side, nearest to the audience.

The piece continues freely as players follow cues from either their partners or from either one of the Leaders, as per the arrows connecting material between staves. Material cued from a partner should be played as soon after the cue: the effect should be of near-simultaneous action/reaction. Often, '1' cellists only play when cued specifically by actions performed by their '0' partners.

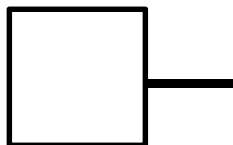
When playing any action or reaction all players should make clear visually what they are cuing so that the theatre of the piece is prominent at all times.

While there are different circumstances for when a Leader may begin playing their CUE (seen at the top of the score), each CUE itself is always the same. The Leader ends their CUE with a staccato accent on the next bar as they signal the ensemble to begin, after which the cuing Leader should rejoin their part's material. When both Leaders are playing their CUES, only one gives the signal to begin the next material.

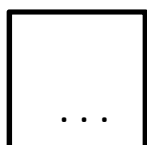
Symbols



Material in a box: to be play once, a repeated gesture given specific cues.



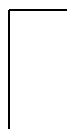
Material in a box with a solid line coming out of it: to be repeated many times consecutively. Any material not in a box or bracket is to be played only once. Any solid line on a stave signals that the material is to be played/improvised on continuously. If the solid line joins two events together, the player may choose when to move from one event to the next.



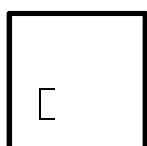
Ellipsis in a box alongside material: signal to improvise on the given material.



Material in brackets: interruptions to improvised or other material: can be played at any time during that improvised or other material. (Used to cue paired partners.)



Material appearing after an open bracket: new material to be played once, given a cue or free choice (if preceded by a solid line).



Bracket/s against notes in a chord: either the two notes indicated may be played as a double stop, or the player must choose one.

Cello Techniques:

(molto) sul pont.: bow (very) near the bridge

(molto) sul tasto (possibile): bow (high) on the fingerboard (as high as possible)


col legno batt.: striking the string(s) with the wood of the bow

jeté: bounce the bow fast (spiccato). For extended passages of this technique, speeds may fluctuate freely between fast and slow, dependent on the individual player's stamina and improvisation.

alla punta: at the point of the bow

nat.: return to a normal position (after sul pont./tasto, or after tremolo)

 wide vibrato

 Bartók (snap) pizzicato

General Notation:

Noteheads without stems: players may play the material given at any tempo.

Solid barlines: co-ordination points cued by either Leader.

Dashed barlines: co-ordination points without either Leaders' CUE, but signalled by them.

Tempi for rhythms are relative and are not fixed, and are open to each player's interpretation and improvisation.

Pauses: the three sorts used are: triangular (short), circular (medium length), rectangular (very long, or as long as possible).

For long, sustained notes, bow changes are permitted *ad lib.*, though when *forte* they can be more prominent and faster (making use of the whole bow), less so when *piano*.

When playing extended passages or repeating material, players may rest for any duration at any time. They may do so for reasons of stamina, or to allow space and variance to enter the texture of the material, especially during improvised passages. However, players should play continuously throughout the two bars marked '**TUTTI UNISON**'.

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As playful as possible, but menacing.

Cue at any point after the majority of 0 are on the lower body [CUE 0] Leader 0

Begin independently, not all at once: allow space.

On shoulder front (alternate LH/RH freely)
+ (4 1 2 3) ...

accel. to shoulder sides and front → to lower body
with thumb on shoulder top

RH string slap

cue: subito niente

shoulders / arco I LH+RH
jeté sul pont.

col legno batt.

sul pont.

cue: dim. a niente

arco alla punta, jeté a sul pont.

cue: dim. a niente

Leader 0

Leader 1

TUTTI CELLI

any pitch on IV molto vib.

slow gliss. to any pitch on IV, molto vib.

change once to any pitch you hear

fast gliss. senza vib. (div.)

III/IV fast gliss. any very high pitch molto vib.

change to arco alla punta jeté (sempre sim.)

(rest briefly at any time)

Pause until tutti trem.

ord.

div.

slow gliss. to any pitch on IV, molto vib.

change once to any pitch you hear

fast gliss. senza vib. (div.)

III/IV fast gliss. any very high pitch molto vib.

Repeat ad lib., poco a poco accel. e cresc., when you reach f move to:

pizz. (tempi ad lib.)
I 4 II 2 II 3 III 2
(pp... cresc. ... f)

at a regular tempo
I 4 II 2 II 3 III 2 IV 1
sub. p

Pause until tutti trem.

arco IV trem. ord.

div.

slow gliss. to any pitch on IV, molto vib.

change once to any pitch you hear

fast gliss. senza vib. (div.)

III/IV fast gliss. any very high pitch molto vib.

Begin cue on hearing the first D. [CUE 0] Leader 0

TUTTI CELLI

Gradually increase muffle to get noise/scratch tones.
trem. → nat.

back to muffle, poco trem. ad lib.

molto sul tasto possibile → bow the shoulder

gradual descent to C or D

Gradually increase muffle to get noise/scratch tones.
trem. → nat.

back to muffle, poco trem. ad lib.

molto sul tasto possibile → bow the shoulder

gradual descent to C or D

Violoncelli 0
I or II, arco sul tasto
f

Violoncelli 1
I arco sul pont.
f

(Always a continuous swell into the next bar: let ring before rejoining your part.)

Vc. 0

Vc. 1