

Utterings

for mezzo-soprano and electronics

Michael Lukaszuk

Utterings (2018)
for mezzo-soprano and electronics
by Michael Lukaszuk
duration - 3:45
Written for The Art Song Collaborative Project

necessary files to run the piece:

- Utterings.pdf (this is the score)
- Utterings_mezzo.pdf (this is the score)
- Utterings_stereo.wav (this is the audio file with the tape part)

- Utterings_stereo_click.wav (this is the audio file with the tape part and a click track that has 1 full bar of rests before the piece begins)

- Utterings_stereo_click_MIDI.wav (this is the audio file with the tape part and a click track that has 1 full bar of rests before the piece begins, also with a *crude* computer-generated rendering of the singer's part)

- Utterings_live.scd (this is the live electronic component) <- I'm not sending this as the composer should really be the one to run this file

***** One of the audio files has the electronic part + a click track + a computer-generated version of the vocal part. I strongly recommend using this during the performance (we can play it through headphones), as it will help keep track of time and find pitches. *****

Programme note:

Utterings explores the idea of language barrier. This song conveys an emotional reaction to the feeling of being in a place where you are unable to fully express yourself or understand a significant amount of what's being said around you.

Instead of setting a poem that relies on a very specific/literal narrative, this song uses nine translations of the phrase "I don't understand", mixing and matching words to recreate the feeling of trying to express oneself in a new place. I don't necessary see this as a pessimistic composition. I feel that the performer has the ability for to meaningfully express themselves by going beyond words, relying on sound itself.

Notes for the performer:

The text used for this work comes from nine translations of the phrase "I don't understand". Often times these phrases of text are mixed within a single musical phrase, i.e. a melodic idea can be made up of words from more than one language.

naneun ihaehaji motanda – Korean - nan i hɛ ha ʒi mo tan da

nie rozumiem – Polish - ɲɛ rɔ'zumiɛm

je ne comprends pas – French - ʒə nə kɔ̃pʁɑ̃ pa

no entiendo – Spanish - 'no ɛ̃ŋ̃'tjɛ̃ŋ̃do

I don't understand – English - 'aɪ dɒnt ʌndə'stænd

ya ne ponimayu – Russian - ja ni_pən'i'maju

saya tidak mengerti - Indonesian - 'saja ˌtɪdaʔ məŋəʔ'ti

sielewi – Swahili - * couldn't find IPA (sorry!) , try “see” as in to see, “e” like in lay down, “le” also like in to lay down, “we” as in “we the people”

ek verstaan nie - Afrikaans - ek fər'sta:n ni

NB – these IPA translations were found using numerous online dictionaries. As a secondary resource for proper pronunciation, please use Google translate or get in touch with the composer (michael.paul.lukaszuk@gmail.com)

Extended techniques:

Everything is pretty conventional, there is one gesture where you are asked to whisper on a certain pitch – this is a kind of Sprechstimme, the whisper timbre is more important than hitting the exact pitch.

Also, this gesture is fairly indeterminate. Don't worry about articulating exactly as many times as there are notes on the score when dealing with “x” note heads. The idea is to whisper the words as many times as possible for as long as “x” note heads are present in a measure.

(whispered fast as possible)
erratic rhythms

n
---naneun ihaehaji ---
motanda

Following along with the electronics:

The score has an electronic part, it gives general information about the kind of pitch material you can expect to hear beneath you, descriptions of particularly noticeable sounds, and the location (using minutes and seconds “0:00”) of important events in the audio track.

The image shows a musical score for two parts: voice and electro. The voice part is written on a single staff in 4/4 time, starting with a rest followed by the word "No" on a note. The dynamic marking *mp* is placed above the staff. The electro part is written on a single staff in 4/4 time, starting with a rest. It features a section of repetitive sixteenth-note pulses labeled "repetitive percussive pulse..." and a section of occasional drums and speech fragments labeled "occasional drums and speech fragments". A time signature of 0:00 is located at the beginning of the electro staff.

It's recommended that the performer use the full score and not the part, as it'll likely result in better coordination of the voice and electronic parts. Also recommended is the use of a visible timer/stopwatch while rehearsing and/or performing.

NB – notation of the electronics is an approximation – certain electronic sounds are a bit too complex to notate, and I detailed graphics can be a bit of a distraction. For example, the repetitive pulse, it sometimes doesn't use strict 16th-note durations.

Info about the electronics:

The main part of the electronic component is a stereo .wav file that a tech. should load into a DAW for the performance. There is also a live electronic component written in SuperCollider. The live electronics consist of timed cues, the tech. shouldn't have to do anything other than evaluate the patch (yay!). For more info see the .scd file.

NB – the live electronics are mostly featured during the middle 3rd of the piece, so adjust levels on your mixer for appropriate balance.

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♩ = 120

Contemplative

voice

mp

No - - - ya ne

repetitive percussive pulse...
occasional drums and speech fragments

electro.

0:00

6

p ————— *mf*

nie - - - I

repetitive percussive pulse still active

buzzy synth

"SPEAK"
(with huge ambience)

6

0:17

12

don't - no po - ni - ma - yu nie -

p

12

deep swell

"SPEAK"
(with huge ambience)