

SONGS FOR ANTONIN for ensemble and electronics

General comments

Songs for Antonin was commissioned by Switch~ensemble in 2017. The commission was for an ensemble work which in some way or another used multi-media or somehow electronically extended the ensemble.

I received the commission quite simultaneously with another one for a quite similar setting. The initial reaction was to compose two pieces which as much as possible related to one another. At this moment (early 2017) the beginning of what was to become my PhD- project had begun to be formalized. Significantly with the article *Magisk realism* which recently had been published in the journal *Örat no 2*. Two of its main figures were Simone Weil and Antonin Artaud.

For me, two opposites, in a shared aim for ecstasy. Artaud with his confrontational, ritualistic and both mentally and physically *cruel* aesthetic, Weil, with an equally cruel approach, but with the techniques of the ascetic, and with a radically new way of interpreting the *mystical way*.

During the summer of 2017 I decided to create like a twin work; “Songs for Antonin and Songs for Simone”. Both of these compositions (the Songs for Simone is forthcoming) will be described in detail in my dissertation.

About the piece

Songs for Antonin is scored for an ensemble of flute, clarinet(s), saxophone(s), piano, percussion, violin and cello. Additionally, it uses five loudspeakers, through which a number of soundfiles are distributed by a max/msp-patch¹.

The soundfiles are pre-recorded and contain:

- Excerpts of *Pour en finir avec le jugement de dieu*, a radio-play by Antonin Artaud from 1947, famously banned from being broadcasted.
- Nightly field-recordings of different environments; most notably different locations at the railway-yard at Sävenäs, close to the Gothenburg central station.
- A wide array of my own recording on violin, cello, flute and different percussion instruments as well as extensive vocal recordings.
- Sine waves. Especially ones around 110, 220, 440 and 1700 Hz.

The ensemble part contains transcriptions of the pre-recorded material (which in itself is transcriptions of the sounds of Artaud’s radio-play and the different environmental sounds, such as sounds of train and distant ruminations) as well as elaborations of said material. Additionally, words from the original manuscript of Artaud (which was not used in the radio-play) is used as vocal material for the ensemble. Words which are essentially only phonemes and gibberish, typical (to some extent) to the obsessional character of Artaud’s use of glossolalia.

A prominent place in the ensemble writing is the percussion part which uses only three different instruments: a small handheld gong, two Japanese dobaci and a large frame drum. The percussion part is also extended by the use of a megaphone, which is used to filter the voice of the performer.

¹ A software which enables one to, most importantly, work with sound files in a live-environment. Typically used by recording sound in real-time and either manipulating in real-time or using the live-recorded files at a later time during the same piece. In *Songs for Antonin* the software was used to distribute the soundfiles to specific speakers. It was controlled by the piano performer through the use of a midi-keyboard.

The final form reassembles the form of radio-phonetic art, with sounds coming from different placements on stage thereby extending and in sound developing the original radio-play of Artaud.

In the following pages, excerpt from the score can be found.

SONGS FOR ANTONIN

for ensemble and electronics
 commissioned by Switch~ ensemble

"Durch alle Töne tönnet
 Im bunten Erdenraum
 Ein leiser Ton gezogen
 für den, der heimlich lauschet" *

A

la rite de soleil noir ♩ = 60

Esaiias Järnegard 2017 rev. 2018

The musical score is written for a 7-piece ensemble and electronics. The tempo is 60 beats per minute. The time signature is 4/4. The score includes the following parts:

- Flute:** Rests throughout the piece.
- Bass Clarinet:** Features a glissando starting at measure 2, with dynamics *pppp*, *ppp*, *p*, and *pppp*.
- Saxophone:** Features a glissando starting at measure 2, with dynamics *pppp*, *pp*, *p*, and *pppp*.
- Percussion:** Rests throughout the piece.
- Piano:** Rests throughout the piece.
- Midi keyboard (tape and speakers):** Plays a single note (F#) for a duration of approximately 10 seconds, starting at measure 2. A box labeled "Start Artaud introduction" points to the beginning of this note.
- Violin:** Rests throughout the piece.
- Cello:** Rests throughout the piece.

A diagram at the bottom right illustrates the cello tail piece technique, showing the "Upper part of the tail piece" and "lower part of the tail piece" with labels for "slow bow (S)", "high bow pressure (pitch)", and "arco".

*Resounding through all the notes/ In the earth's colourful dream/

There resounds a faint long-drawn note/ For the one who listens in secret." - F. Schlegel (R. Schumann)

Songs for Antonin/ Score in C/ E. Järnegard

7
Fl.

8

B. Cl.

pp pppp

Sx.

ppp

Perc.

7

Pno.

7

Midi-k

7

Vln.

O.T.B → X.P → O.T.B

pppp ppp

Vc.

pitch

pppp pp

Songs for Antonin/ Score in C/ E. Järnegard

Bass flute **■**
Inbaling, sustained, snoring voice ∇

au *pp*

B. Cl. *pp* *pppp*

Sax. *pppp* *pp*

Perc. 23

Pno. 23

Midi-k 23

Vln. 23 *pppp* *pppp* *pp* \rightarrow X.P \rightarrow O.T.B

Vc. *pitch* *p* *pppp* *pitch* *pppp*

4
4
4
4
4
4
4
4

