

ay'tik

(we)

strategies, tactics and an arbitrary metaphor for active screaming

reynaldo young

ay'tik (we) are any large number of female and male singers, plus 2 percussion players

percussion:

(1) *timpani (25''- 28'')*

(2) *large orchestral bass drum, pod rattle, sizzle cymbal*

commissioned by coma with funds from yorkshire arts

first performed on friday 26 july 2002 by coma summer school ensemble at bretton hall, wakefield

in the beginning is the scream: we scream

john holloway

this script contains a set of written instructions, guidelines, suggestions, ideas, allegories, etc. aiming to accomplish a collaborative process between the group of individuals who agree to realise it; when done, the script is a score and the sounds produced during that doing constitute the music intended in the score. this music only exists as a result of the interactions between the performers themselves and between these performers and the score, which is itself the composer's action.

the particular process described on these pages could be summarised thus (roman numbers refer to those in the scores):

1- the scream

- (i) *sound*: non-verbal screaming articulated in 4 different modes (overall texture: soft/still >> loud/busy)
action: individual call/ response >> recognition >>gathering
- (ii)-(iii) *sound*: verbal screaming, same 4 modes (chaotic/loud >> rhythmic/loud >> rhythmic/soft)
action: support, re-grouping, organisation, first articulation of metaphors through the uttering of chosen texts

2- the metaphor for hope

- (iv)-(v) *sound*: choral singing, rhythmic >> still
action: towards stasis
- (vi)-(vii) *sound*: drone, responsorial singing, improvisation
action: the search for a radically different beauty through improvisation of harmony and timbre

the score is rendered (1) as a set of verbal instructions (including diagrams of movements), and (2) as a set of instructions written in western musical notation (including 'alternative solos'), plus some pages of chosen text to be read during the performance; these two frames (verbal and musically-notated) overlap and are linked with each other when necessary by page numbers, rehearsal marks and cues.

john holloway's book 'change the world without taking power' is the theoretical source which the strategic principles of this score came from.

the spoken un-sung texts are taken from the above mentioned work and from declarations, stories, poems by the *clandestine revolutionary indigenous committee* and the *general command of the zapatista army of national liberation*. ('from the mountains of the mexican southeast'; subcomandante marcos, comandante david, et al).

the songs are settings of words in the tojolabal language of southeast mexico, plus excerpts from a mayan story, also in tojolabal.

for **coma**.

modes of screaming

a

sad, anguished, suffering, wretched, desolated, tormented, dolorous, mournful, in agony, grieving, afflicted, in pain, distressed, confused

medium long to very long

ppp or mf

b

angry, enraged, furious, mad, indignant, storming, wild, exasperated

short or very long (repeat short sounds)

f to ffff poss

c

1- frightened, alarmed, horrified, outraged, afraid, shocked, terrified, stunned

2- menacing, intimidating, frightening, alarming, looming, ominous,

short to long

pp or f

d

disgusted, nauseated, repulsed, sickened, repelled, appalled, revolted, with loathing

very short or long (repeat long sounds)

p to fff

*we each choose 3-4 non-verbal expressives to vocalise screams in modes **a-d**; once chosen, we utter always the same sounds.*

*we only change our chosen sounds to imitate as exactly as possible a sound produced by a partner (a sound we like, or relate to, or...)
this indication is valid throughout the piece.*

*mode **c** consists of clear-cut contrasting deliveries; we choose sounds from different sub-groups.*

*mode **d** is the only one which allows comedy, irony, sarcasm: let's use this.*

i
the scream

(page numbers and rehearsal marks of music score)

pages 1-2

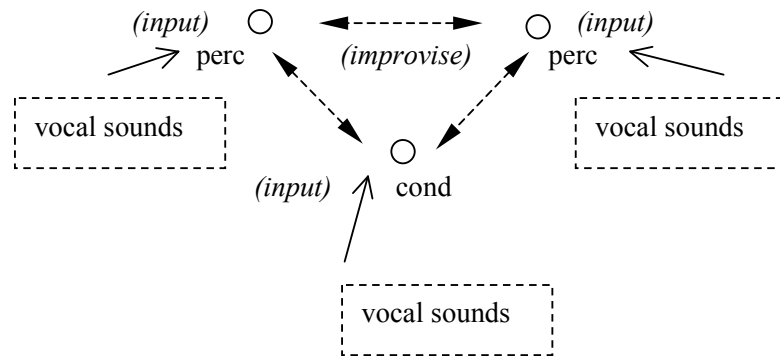
*we start sitting surrounding audience, (see movement diagram 1) head resting on folded arms,
and without knowing where each of the rest of us is;
when space is as silent as possible, 'soloist a' starts in mode a;
'soloist a' is sitting within audience, starts first sound still with her head resting on her arms.
(suggestion)*

*make first sound, pause,
lift head, second sound, slightly longer, shorter pause.
we all answer (in mode a) sparsely after soloist a's third sound, while slowly lifting our heads,
keep calling and answering;
we can't see each other: we meet within the sonic landscape;
build up the texture;
we stand up (except 'soloist a'), keep uttering our sounds,
try making visual contact (cond & perc also;
(after her first sounds 'soloist a' tacet in her starting place until 'farewell').*

page 3, **1**

*when all standing, and clearly after we can see some of the rest of us, 'soloist b' attacks mode b, subito ff+;
(we don't scream angrily at each other at the sight of the rest of us:
we take courage to scream because we can see the rest of us);*

we all join in (perc & cond also) and perform 3-4 sounds;
 perc improvises,
 conductor links perc 1 & 2, and these with the rest of the group,
 it would be nice if conductor uttered some screams before starting gestures,
 (guidelines for perc/cond impro):
 take in ideas from vocal sounds;
 support, develop;
 listen to what fellow perc is doing and play with her;
 cond closes the loop, improvising gestures, monitoring dynamics.



page 4, 2

after 3-4 sounds, we pass on to mode c

mode c asks for contrasting expressions; let's use them;
 while performing mode c gradually move towards stage area (do not stop performing sounds);
 join at the sides of audience and in front of stage area .
 (ideas):
 snarl, growl while walking;
 frightened creatures become most dangerous.

page 5,

3

angry, sarcastic

*once everybody is assembled in front of stage area, we pass on to mode **d**;
a sub-group **d** (pre-arranged during rehearsals or not) will lead this transition through the 'obligato puke';
(suggestion for obligato puke):*

*sub-group **d**, explicitly reorganizes and comes closer to audience;
make visual cue and start performing puke-like sounds, ff looking at audience;
perform the sounds in unison, cueing each other to start & stop together
–but look at audience while performing sound,
violent, but with a hint of comedy;
repeat 2-3 times.*

(strategic principle):

*we refuse to accept.;
we need to go beyond the bounds of polite society.*

*we all join in once sub-group **d** has started;
we perform mode **d** freely, the obligato puking only applies to sub-group **d**, conductor and percussionists –though we may join the obligato if we wish;
we perform 3 – 4 sounds and pass back to modes **a** or **c**.*

pages 6 – 7,

4

*we build a general soft 'cushion' texture in modes **a** and/or **c**.;
from this, ad lib bursts in modes **b** or **d**;
(we rest our voices performing **a/c**;
when a soloists screams **b/d** whoever feels like, joins in with 2-3 sounds,
and back again to **a/c**)*

(tactics):

(reminder) we always repeat our chosen sounds, only to imitate a sound uttered by a partner;

(strategy):

the scream is real; the source of horrors against which we scream is real

(‘alternative solos’ scores may be provided should we need to be reminded of these horrors).

5

at conductor’s up-beat, we gradually impose the vowels ‘o,u’ and/or the consonants ‘m,n’ on our sounds;

wait ready for next downbeat;

cond downbeats when only these sounds are those heard.

ii

no

page 8,

6

no at downbeat;

we then deliver the word ‘no’ in the modes indicated;

*same previous non-verbal expressives are now containing solely that sound: **no**;*

one sub-group organizes for counting;

request tempo from conductor.

(tactics):

make decisions, re-grouping, etc. explicit and visible;

pages 9 - 10, 7 quasi rapping (anarchic, tumultous)

*we choose any line or paragraph from the **texts**, at least 1 from each mode, and memorise them during rehearsals;
(the ensemble is divided into 2 groups: we choose our lines accordingly);
sub-groups within groups 1&2 may decide to memorise same lines and deliver them together;
we deliver them non-stop and with hint of rhythmic pulse (dynamic range: mf-fff);
we all start with the phrases 'that cannot be'(group 1) and 'it cannot be true'(group 2) and then pass on to our chosen paragraphs/phrases/words;
(tactics):*

*let's not leave anyone performing alone, we support each other throughout;
improvise solos, duos, organise in ad hoc sub-groups;
accompany, contrast, agree with each other;
request attention from conductor should we need some quieter space to deliver parts in modes **a** (mf);
request, if needed, accompaniment from percussion;
move freely around the space if needed;
we can always imitate as exactly as possible the type of delivery of any partner;
conductor may bring out soloists, sub-groups,
also monitoring dynamic balance and timing.*

*loudhailers contrast type of delivery,
read their ' paragraph 1 ', short pause, read ' paragraph 2 '.*

page 11, 8

*ldhls start of paragraph 2 is conductor's cue for up-beat;
at up-beat, we complete our paragraph/ phrase/word and start uttering pre-chosen phrases from the page entitled **we texts**;
we don't change the mode of delivery, only the verbal content;
ldh1r 1 ends her paragraph, short pause and counts,
ldh1r 2 repeats her last phrase ('we are here') till next section..*

iii

we

pages 12 - 13, 9 martial, defiant

*groups 1 & 2 start having clearly differentiated material;
(though we are not yet spatially divided into the 'choir layout');
dotted arrows indicate cues;
ldhrs' answers may slightly overlap cue phrase.*

pages 14 - 16, 10

*phrases uttered by 3-4 soloist need not to be carefully synchronised;
when moving towards 'choir layout', let's do it rhythmically, but not tight.
(see movement diagram 4 for 'choir layout').*

iv
dignity

*declamato phrases come slightly before conductor's downbeats;
percussion helps keeping pulse;
timpani cues tempo and pitch of next section;*

v
towards hope

*we deliver each line with the same timbral modulation 'percussive>>nasal>>percussive';
we make this modulation as gradual as possible;
consonants 't' and 'k' (especially 'k') very percussive; 'm' and 'n' quite nasal;
every syllable 'tl' is mainly 'l' with a short 't' attack ('tll-----');
every 's' as stressed as possible;
every diphthong is evenly distributed for the length of the sounds (not 'ua-----', but 'u-----a-----') and very nasal;
we keep trying to emit, listen and respond to the overtones produced by each one of us;
entries from downbeats or cues from percussion.*

vi
hope

pages 40 - 41, 27 still

*sweep: when conductor's hand points at us, we sing 1 sound per breath, with the indicated dynamics;
we don't sync with percussion;
conductor and percussion slightly in sync.*

pages 42 - 45, 28 slightly faster

*indicated sub-groups sync with percussion;
tutti waits for conductor's 'fast sweep';
fast sweep: utter the syllable 'ay' with first hand, 'tk' with second,
make cluster, start searching for a 'different timbre' in the 'ay';
make cloud with the 'tk'.*

vii
farewell

pages 46 - 49, 31 with a different voice

*any soloist (arranged during rehearsals or not) moves forward and attacks first solo line;
soloists may change; every new soloist wishing to sing a line will move forward and let previous soloist know she's taking over;
tutti respond:*

(i) we make a 'thick' unison, singing heterophonically, gracing and phrasing ad lib; and/or

(ii) we improvise the harmonisation,

(anything from that thick unison, or aggregates of thirds or fifths or 'parallel clusters' or all of those at different moments);

we search for a 'radical otherness' through the exploration of timbre,

'otherness', as far as we are concerned, is singing not with the type of emission we learned and is 'supposed' to be ours;

we each search for a voice that we don't think as our own;

once found, we perform it with the most intensity;

we still can always imitate and connect with any partner's sound;

we try to find beauty in difference.

pages 50 - 53, 32

with last line, we slowly go back to our starting places and positions.

we repeat last line, singing each to oneself.

'soloist a' joins from her place within the audience;

un-sung lines should be uttered 'like speaking to our partners', casually and with no intention of making them heard by anyone outside the group.

we get back to our original positions (hands resting on folded arms).

'soloist a' the last, repeats her line al niente.