

Patterns to punctuate song, with darkness

for mezzo soprano with throat microphone, electronics and visual

Pia Palme 2015

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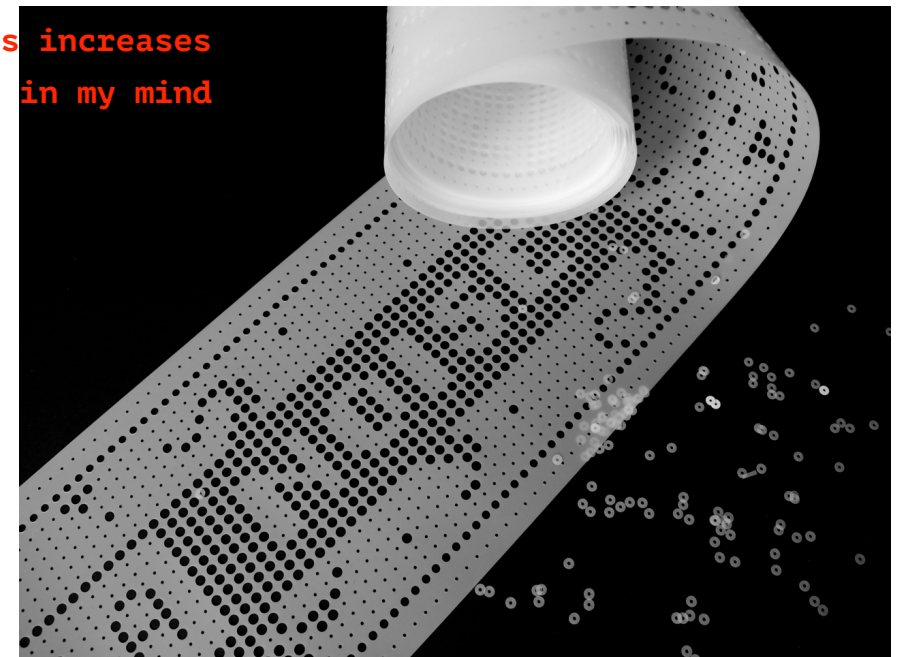
for Ute Wassermann

for mezzo soprano, with a switchable throat microphone,
electronic playback, and a visual

text by Pia Palme, remix after Ute Wassermann 'Meine Stimme'

komponiert im Auftrag der Salzburg Biennale 2015
unterstützt durch das bundeskanzleramt:kunst

as the number of holes/punctuations increases
patterns appear in my mind



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The performance package contains

- performance instructions and the text
- a written score
- an electronic track (playback)
- a video (playback) OR a visual projection OR a graphic punchcard score (on demand only)

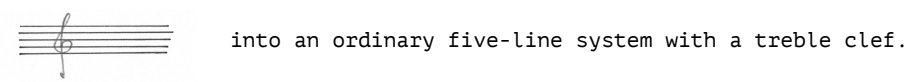
Performance instructions

Notation

The score divides and notates the female voice onto two staves representing two clearly defined and different voice personalities. The interpreter is asked to switch between those two personalities in her performance vocally, mentally, and physically; changing from one to the other must happen precisely and completely, similar to the process of cutting in a film. Except for a few cross-fades, the two voices are kept separate. For a better visibility, the lower system has a grey underlay.

‘The female voice’

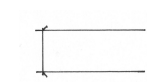
This voice personality defines a singing voice, mezzo soprano, overall characterised as gentle, calm, and song-like. She is never loud; only towards the end, she breaks into single, piercingly high peak sounds. She is notated



into an ordinary five-line system with a treble clef.

‘The wrathful voice of darkness’

is an overall wrathful and enraged voice personality. I want her to be enflamed and irate, not merely angry. However, she is contained and smart. In the beginning, she holds back (sometimes instructed to perform with lips pressed together), later her sounds and noises erupt more openly. Her dark personality is composed from a rich array of noises and text recitations. In her part, the emotion of rage is coupled with mental clarity and precision.



This voice personality is notated into a two line stave defining a relative range between ‘highest’ and ‘lowest’ possible frequencies. Vocal productions include voiced or unvoiced noises such as whispering, croaking, murmuring, speaking, or audible breathing.

For this stave, proportional space-notation is used, with durations given in seconds. Verbal instructions such as ‘quickly’, ‘slowly’ etc. are given for spoken passages or recitations.

At certain moments, the score asks for a male timbral colouring of the (singing or speaking) wrathful voice, defined as ‘man’s voice’. If such a passage contains sung notes, the upper system is used, with a tenor clef and a signal indicating timbral change.


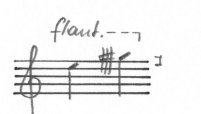
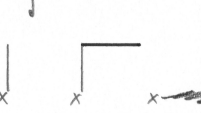
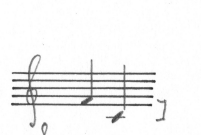

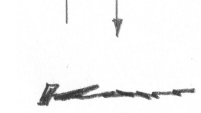
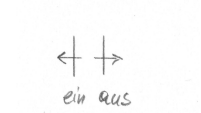










Breaks

There are no breaks or rests indicated in the score. The performer can choose for herself when to pause for a shorter or longer break. Some places are indicated, as below, other places can be added ad libitum.

;	short break, breath
”	longer break

Signs and notations

	singing voice, sung
	‘flautando’, with a fluty voice in the falsetto range e5 - g5
	speaking voice in various timbral shades ‘whispered’, ‘murmured’, ‘spoken’
	‘mans’s voice’, very low register with male timbral colour in the range c3 - f3 including extreme lower sounds
	peak sounds, extremely high or low
	noisy or distorted vocal production, notation within the stave indicates the frequency range (lower - higher)
	arrow on stem: in-breath, out-breath
	voiced
	voiced using the ‘man’s voice’
	unvoiced
	mixing in air, breathy

	gradual and continuous transition
	one-note tremolo, using movement of lips or tongue
	trill with the upper neighbouring note; if necessary, the note is detailed in brackets, or accidentals notated above
	mordent, Baroque ornamentation using the lower neighbouring note with accidentals notated above

Text performance

The text is notated onto two lines. The main text is in the first line and contains German words or phonetic characters according to the IPA-chart. Formants in brackets are notated in the second text line.

Zuspielung / electronic or audiovisual playback track

A stereo track (or an audiovisual playback) is provided as a 'Zuspielung'.

The electronic (or, if applicable, the audiovisual) playback starts the piece. The vocalist chooses her own moment to begin, between 5 - 12 seconds later. Throughout the piece, the vocal part is performed independently from the electronic playback. The general idea of the playback is to provide an ambient, a lively but mostly soft background of noises. At some moments the playback becomes louder and penetrating, punctuating the singer's performance and intentionally covering up her voice. In part E the volume of the playback track should be gradually lowered, to allow the voice to be foregrounded.

The playback track is longer than the vocal part. It should continue for at least some seconds after the singing voice has stopped. If there is time, this part can be extended - there is ample material provided in the track. Playback is ended manually during performance, with a quick fadeout. In case of an audiovisual playback, the video and soundtrack should stop simultaneously.

Instructions for actions with the throat microphone

The performer has to wear a throat microphone, with a possibility to turn it on/off with a foot pedal (a volume pedal or an on/off switch is possible). Throughout the piece, the throat microphone is used to highlight specific vocal productions by means of amplification and distortion. These sonic moments are meant to aurally punctuate the performance. Five sections A, B, C, D and E are defined in the score. In every section the throat microphone is used in a different way:

Part A: 'Focus on Noise'

The microphone is

- ON for non-verbal noise productions
- OFF for singing and text

Part B: 'Focus on Words'

The microphone is

- ON for words and text
- OFF for singing and non-verbal noise

Part C: 'Rosinen'

This keyword points to the German phrase 'Die Rosinen im Kuchen herauspicken'. Highlight particular and unique occurrences with the microphone. Amplify dramatic moments of choice, not too many of them, but single vocal events which can include any type of sound production.

Part D: 'Wetterleuchten'

Switch on the microphone quickly ON/OFF at irregular intervals, without any synchronisation whatsoever to vocal productions. Here, the use of the mic compares to unpredictable bolts of lightning, highlighting short sonic fragments. Occasionally densify the occurrence of these fragments, creating a quick sequence of mic-fragments as percussive elements. Focus on the resulting rhythm.

Part E: 'Das grosse und kleine'

Switch on only for exactly those four words of the text.

The visual element: the punchcard score, video, or projections

Although it is possible to perform the audio parts only, the visual element is an essential part of the piece. The audiovisual playback contains a video which I filmed from projections of the score, using analogue means only.

The original punchcard score can be provided for a performance. It is a graphic representation and comment of the key instructions for using the throat microphone in the five parts of the piece. The punchcard score can be moved by the vocalist during the performance, or it can be displayed on stage as an installative element, with appropriate stage lighting to play with the shadow of the score. There is also an analogue visual projection by Michael Vorfeld available.

Punchcards inspired the concept of the piece. Punctuation as a compositional plan is linked to the creation of patterns on punch cards for knitting machines. As the number of holes/punctuations increases above a certain level, patterns can form and arise. The playback composition starts with samples of sounds made with a punch tool, recorded during the making of the punchcard score.

Text

Wirf zurück
den Pferderücken
den Schweinskopf
in die Bäume
zurück
ins Eiswasser

sternförmig
dicke schwarze Vögel
im dichten Wald
singen
verlaufend

kurz scharf seltsam
sie sich
verfremdet Regenwetter
mit derselben Gestik
verstärken
mitten in Kopf

schläfriger Seufzer
hallend
Stimmen versterben
klirrend
schwarzverbrannt
der Kuchen kreischt.

Weich ein
die Form
das Gefäß
ins Wasser
auf die Rückbank
wild
knurrt
der riesige Hund

immer auf dem Rückweg
ein Lied und beiße
wie von selbst
kräftig
die Ohren zu

kehlige Laute
sprachähnlich
unter der Kuppel
auf Grund
Irrtum und Angst
umringt
die Saite entlang.

Ruf zurück
das Gerücht
den Jungen
die ganze Welt
aus allen Richtungen
leicht gläubig
Gezänk

starker Abstand
in den Wind
nur noch
Klappen klappten
Wirbel
Säule

Winzeln und Stöhnen
bahnen sich ihren Weg
durch das Reiben
Laute sitzen schwarzgekleidet
verflochten.

Sing zurück
die Ohnmacht
die Haltung
gegen mein Brustbein
trillert hinten

flimmert grau
im Hochgebirge
vervielfältigt

das große und kleine Rauschen.

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for Ute Wassermann

A

start 5-10" after
electronic track

1

5

the female voice

4/4 $\text{♩} = 60$ sung tenderly ppp

mp

slow vib. accel.

s.v. subito ppppp

ppp mp

faster $\text{♩} = 72$

slow vib.

φ → oe → e i → y t → tt φ → oe → i

electronic track continues independently until end

6

senza misura

7"

10

the female voice

6/4 ppppp (o)

t → y u

mp mf

distort

wrathfully

low, unvoiced noise ppp

Sub. ffff

whispered ffff

3

the wrathful voice of darkness

j-u

formant: (u → o → e)

Wurf rei-rück

4/4 $\text{♩} = 60$ ppp flaut. tr *

tenderly mp

p

o o o e

*) lip tremble and trill

throat microphone on/off:
follow instructions for
part A 'Noise' → continue until part B

12

the female voice

3/4

mf

slow vib.

the wrathful voice of darkness

vocal fry rit. accel. molto rit.

pppp

sinister, threatening with a man's voice

slowly spoken, as low as possible and distorted

ff

press lips together tautly, lips may start to vibrate

f

ppp

(u -> o -> a -> o -> u) den Hufschrecken den Schaeinskopf

f

(p)

0

s

(u -> i ->)

16

Handwritten musical score for two voices. The top staff is for 'the female voice' and the bottom staff is for 'the wrathful voice of darkness'. The score includes tempo markings (4/4, 1=60, 1=72, 1=144), dynamics (ppppp, mp, mf, pp, mf, distorted mp, vocal fry, whispered), and performance instructions (v. rit., subito, S.v., sinister, spoken, as above, distorted, vocal fry, whispered). The lyrics are: 'the female voice: -æ- E -æ- η- ja E' and 'the wrathful voice of darkness: -uo he-ha- in die Bäume-e -æ- a - (a) - ts - zu-rück (e → y)'. The score is divided into measures by vertical lines, with some measures containing multiple notes or rests. There are also some markings like '4"', '8"', and '5"' above the staff.

the female voice

the wrathful voice of darkness

mp *slow vib.*

senza mis.
♩ = ♩

dark and dangerous

vocal fry, inbreath quickly whispered
pppp *mp*

murmured very low
pp

ha ——— im dichten Wald sin-gen

♩ = 72

with tenderness
ppp mf

subito
ppppp *s.v.*

(♩.)

pppp *flaut.* *tr. mm* *pp*

ja o ——— → e ——— e ——— → i ——— o ——— ae ———

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

the female
voicethe wrathful
voice of
darknessSenza mis.
♩ = ♩

secretly

3"

slower

2 ♩ = 60
4 tenderly
ppppp

flaut. 7

sim.

3 ♩ = ♩
8 harshly, fastplayfully
ppppp
flaut. --- 7

mp

quickly whispered airy
ppverlaufend → δ
(i)

ffff whispered

kurz scharf sett-sam

32

33

34

35

36

37

38

39

the female
voicethe wrathful
voice of
darkness4 ♩ = 72
4even and solemn
like a chorale
pp

mp

mf

S.m.
♩ = ♩sub.
pp

4"

2 ♩ = 72
4

ppp

S.m.

4"

3 ♩ = 144
8

ppp

quickly
whispered

mp

fff

→ \textcircled{u} → \int
(i → u)u → \int schläfriger Seufzer

49

50

51

52

53

54

the female
voicethe wrathful
voice of
darkness

4/4 $\text{♩} = 72$
raging, spoken
with a man's voice
distorted

sighing
mf pppp

senza misura
 $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$
as before

4/4 $\text{♩} = 72$
echoing
pp mf pppp

sighing

text
senza mis.
quickly murmured, occasional
distortions
sempre pp and with disgust

4/4 $\text{♩} = 72$
ppp mp

5/4
pppp mp

evenly, like a chorale

mf

und bei-se wie von selbst

kräftig u.

Verfrachtet Regenwetter
mit derselben Gestik
verstärken mitten im Kopf
klirrend schwarzverbrannt
der kuchen kreischt

o u —

o u o u —

o — a — — — a — e —

55

56

57

58

59

the female
voicethe wrathful
voice of
darkness

senza misura

9"

trying to control the raging outbreak,
a field of noise, the
lip pressure varies,
tensely holding back

as low as poss.
gradual
transition to

sung in a
man's voice

sung, tenderly

sung, man's voice

distort

gliss.

gliss.

ce

t → tt → y → β

β — y

y — e ja

y → u

mf

mp

ppp ppppp

ppp

pp

mp

mf

pp

mp

mf

distort

4/4 $\text{♩} = 60$

4/4

4"

60

61

62

63

64

65

66

the female
voicethe wrathful
voice of
darkness

4/4

gently < mp

mf

2"

ppp vocal fry

4/4 J=72

sung pp

y → u

seura mis.

quickly and precisely

mp

ffff

4/4 J=72

sung, gently

pppp

mp

fast vibrato

rit. 4/4 J=60

pppp

s.v.

ε → ae

i

u

u

i

67

68

69

70

71

72

the female
voicethe wrathful
voice of
darkness

S.M. J=J

mf

vib.

sub. pppp s.v.

4"

f

distort

3/8 J=J

sung, birdlike

pppp

flaut.

a

o

S.M.

quickly

wrathfully

4/4 J=60

birdlike

pppp

sim.

a

o

o

o

ppp

very slow trem.

accel. → very fast

mp

spoken, distorted

3

gliss.

ae → e

accel. →

sung mf

p

Ir-r-tum

und Angst

C

73 74 75 76 77 78 79

pushing
4/4 J=72
spoken distorted mp sharply fff sung ppppp
the female voice
e a
the wrathful voice of darkness
um-ringt' (a)
whispered S.m. 5" fff 3
die Sai-te ent/a-ä-ang
Sung 2/4 J=72 ppppp mf 7:8 J
breathing in/out p 7:8 J
||:e:||
sung, calmly 4/4 ppppp a
rit. come prima, tenderly ppp
mp slow vib. acc. →
ø → æ ei → y
throat microphone on/off: follow instructions for part C 'Rosinen' → continue until part D

80 81 82 83

5/8 J=72
fast vib. ppp
-y → i
gratefully, but not too loud mf
5:4
S.m. 4" mp
mid-frequency noise
as before 3
irr. trem./double tongue
ppp
moving faster 4/4 J=72
sung, with passion pppp mp mf
tommm
i t a
S.m. gratefully spoken in a man's voice
distort wps
den Jungen
die ganze Welt
aus allen Richtungen
leichtgläubig
Gedräng
raf zu-rück' 5 das Ge-rücht ||:t'k':||
(a — i)

92

93

94

95

96

97

98

S.M.
as before

the female voice

the wrathful voice of darkness

3 $\text{♩} = 144$
16

flaut. *ppppp* *mp* *dim.* *acc.*

hem, via formants
raise pitch

4 $\text{♩} = 72$
4 joyfully

flaut. *ppppp* *mp*

x) tremolo and
fall a semi-
tone upwards

S.M. 3"
insistently quickly
whispered

4 $\text{♩} = 60$
4 calming

can vib. *s.v.* *pppp* *mp*

whispered *sung*
mp *very slow* *acc.*
to

Lau-te sit-zen

Schwarzgekleidet
(i ———)

ver-floch-ten

D

99 100 101 102 103

acc. 4 $\text{♩} = 72$

ppp *mp* *sub. ppppp* *mf* *pppp* *trém (tongue)* *seura teem.* *mix in air* *mp* *flaut.*

slow vib. *moving ahead*
with passion, rubato

a → oe *→ u → i* *y* *y* *y* *y → i* *→ tt* *||: lee: ||* *ω* *ja o*

x) small accents at
irr. intervals

slow down 5 $\text{♩} = 60$
4

molto rit.
becoming totally
enraged and
loosing one's
voice with rage

ce tempo
sung, sim.
mp

pp 3 *o ja o*

s — sing zu-rück

throat microphone on/off:
follow instructions for
part D 'Wetterleuchten'

continue until part E

S.M.
♩ = ♩

as before, very irate
very slow

the female voice

the wrathful voice of darkness

die Ohnmacht die χ

a tempo
delicately sung
mp

very slow

sim.
pppp

very slow

sim.
mp >

as before, very irate

sung, with much air, evenly

one breath, hold as long as possible

molto rubato
♩ = 60
4 resting, calm

mf → mp

can vib.

ja o o

ha Hal-tung

ja

gegen mein χ

o ja

Brust-bein

oe

u u → u

E

moving forward
4/4 ♩ = 72

softly whispered
mp

solemn like a chorale
mp

come prima
tendely
ppp

gentle outbreath

Sung as before

whispered
pp < mf > pp

the female voice

the wrathful voice of darkness

tril-let hin-ten

y y a φ → ce → e i → y

a a

f flim-met grau im

throat microphone on/off:
follow instructions for part
E 'Das grosse und kleine
Rauschen'

continue until end

113 114 115 116 117 118 119

the female voice

the wrathful voice of darkness

4/4

pppp

a a

quietly murmured

3/4 J=60

p pppp

voiced

unvoiced

soothing murmured

2"

4/4 J=60

p pppp

gently very low whispered

3/4 J=J

mp

calmly

5"

ppppp

Hochgebirge

mp pppp

f ————— vervielfältigt

pppp

pp < mp > pp

5

dz ————— das gros-se

ppp < mp > pppp

s

(e → y → i —)

120 121 122 123 124 125

the female voice

the wrathful voice of darkness

3/4 J=60

mp < ff

oe

5

s — s — und klei-ne

(i → u) (u → l)

S.M.

a delicate noise like a cat purring

very slowly precisely mouthing NO SOUND

4/4 J=52

sung, with ample space

ppppp ppppp →

oe a a → e e

with one breath; hold as long as possible, fadeout

ω

hrr —

(w)

RAUSCHEN

electronic track

Turn down the volume manually for a gradual diminuendo from bar 120. The track should continue after the voice has completely stopped, and end with a quick final fadeout.