Crying wolf

for amplified vocalist, large ensemble, and electronics

2019
For Ensemble Dal Niente

Note

A lament aria—a musing on performed and elicited affect.

Performance directions

The score is given in time-space notation. One of the conductor’s hands may beat in 4, one beat every ca. 10 seconds, the other may signal the system number. Flexibility (i.e. rubato), or a degree of heterophonic independence is assumed for each player. Between each beat, a given player need not adhere precisely to the timings implied in the score. Total duration is ca. 7 minutes.

The amplified vocalist is the central focus, and this should be reflected in the dynamic balance between them and the remainder of the ensemble. At first, the ensemble largely provides an imitative backdrop, and should oftentimes play at the edge of audibility, like a hovering, haunting presence.

Cue staffs are given in the parts to assist with orientation—typically the vocal staff.

The score should be printed in color in Tabloid or A3.

The score is transposed.

Instrumentation

1 Flute
1 Oboe
1 Clarinet in Bb
1 Horn in F
1 Percussionist (a bundle of chopsticks and a large, thin cymbal > 16” on a stand)
1 Guitar
1 Harp (bowed with a wooden drumstick)
1 Piano
1 Amplified vocalist (of any type)

2 Violins
1 Viola
1 Cello
1 Double Bass

(N.B. The vocalist should be center stage, the conductor off to the side. Group the violins and double bass together.)

Technical Requirements

1 Cardioid large-diaphragm condenser microphone (e.g. AKG C414; high gain, though safely below feedback levels)
Stereo diffusion of vocal signal and electronics (pre-recorded ambient sounds diffused live, often hovering on the edge of audibility—I will perform this part)

Spotlight on vocalist, ensemble less well lit.
**Instrument-specific directions**

**Winds and brass**

Arrow up = breath in; Arrow down = breath out; Comma = end of a phrase (i.e. breathe ad lib.). If a pause between arrows is too long for you to hold your breath, do take some air! However, do so imperceptibly, from the audience’s perspective.

\[\text{\textdegree} = \text{a sharp, audible breath in.}\]

Palate whistle = moving air over your tongue, which is close to, but not touching the roof of your mouth—a very breathy, diffuse, pitched whistle should result. Move your tongue back and forth to alter pitch.

**Guitar**

Clef indicates the position to scrape along the string.

The relative lightness of the line = the pressure with which you scrape.

- Barely visible = hold your fingernail (or pick) between 1 and 2 mm above the string. Allow the natural nervous twitch of your muscles to cause intermittent, accidental contact with the string, with perhaps only just a risk of producing an audible result. When contact does occur it should be at approximately a harmonic pressure. (The quality of physical contact should be similar to holding your thumb and index finger as close together as possible without intentionally touching.)

- Very dark = overpressure.

**Harp**

The initial clef indicates the position to bow along the string. Subsequent pitches indicate the string to bow. Up bow = bow in the direction away from your body; down bow = bow towards your body.

The relative lightness of the line = the pressure with which you scrape.

- Barely visible = hold your bow between 1 and 2 mm above the string. Allow the natural nervous twitch of your muscles to cause intermittent, accidental contact with the string, with perhaps only just a risk of producing an audible result. When contact does occur it should be at approximately a harmonic pressure. (The quality of physical contact should be similar to holding your thumb and index finger as close together as possible without intentionally touching.)

- Very dark = overpressure.

**Piano**

The piano’s keyboard is largely treated as a percussion instrument. Keys are often flicked and scraped with guitar picks. You will need one pick for each hand. Play with big, violent gestures. Top staff = RH; bottom staff = LH.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{\textdegree} & \text{ firmly grip the key with your 2nd finger above the lip and your thumb below the lip. Vigorously wiggle the key up and down a number of times in succession. Perhaps by the end of this quasi-trill, the pitch ‘D’ might sound.} \\
\text{\textdegree} & \text{ in one continuous movement: firmly grip the key on either side with your thumb and 3rd finger, in a pincer-like manner; pull the key up and slide your fingers up off the key (a percussive snap-like sound should result).} \\
\text{\textdegree} & \text{ vigorously flick the left and right sides of the key a number of times in succession (quasi-trill).} \\
\text{\textdegree} & \text{ in one continuous movement: put a pick under the lip of the white key and lift the key up as far as it can go, continue your upward movement and allow the pick to flick the lip of the key (a percussive snap-like sound should result); in the process of performing this action, the key should be released.} \\
\text{\textdegree} & \text{ flick the right-hand side of the key with a pick.} \\
\text{\textdegree} & \text{ furiously tap on the top of the key with a pick (quasi-trill), trying not to depress the key or sound the pitch.}
\end{align*}
\]

**Voice**

The darker the graphic, the louder the dynamic. However, maintain a soft overall level—think ASMR. The topic of the piece is musical affect and intent, specifically lament…as such there’s a bit of theatrical melodrama in your part.

\[
\text{\textdegree} = \text{breath in} \\
\text{\textdegree} = \text{breath out} \\
\text{Comma} = \text{end of a phrase (i.e. breathe ad lib.)} \\
\text{If a pause between arrows is too long for you to hold your breath, do take some air! However, do so imperceptibly, from the audience’s perspective.}
\]

Palate whistle = moving air over your tongue, which is close to, but not touching the roof of your mouth—a very breathy, diffuse, pitched whistle should result. Move your tongue back and forth to alter pitch.
Voiced sounds should almost always be extremely soft; at times only barely engage your vocal cords, hovering at the threshold between the minimum possible vibration and none at all; therefore, your sung/hummed pitches will be broken and inconsistent—there should be a risk that the pitch will not sound (the exception being the end of system 5, start of 6). Pitches ad lib. over your comfortable range, though the relationships between the relative heights of the graphics should be respected.

IPA (excluding vowels):

- [ɹ̠] (e.g. 'r' in whispered 'red'): voiceless postalveolar approximant
- [f] (e.g. 'f' in 'line'): voiceless labiodental fricative
- [ɵ] (e.g. 'th' in 'thistle'): voiceless interdental fricative.
- [ʃ] (e.g. 'sh' in 'shore'): voiceless alveopalatal fricative.
- [x] (e.g. 'ch' in Scottish English 'loch'): voiceless velar fricative i.e. akin to a constricted throat sound, putting your tongue as far back as it will go to produce a wheeze-like whistle
- [~] vocal fry.

Thumb whistle = blow air on (multiple) fingernails (multiple whistles), employ a focused air stream, manipulate your lips with your fingers, interfering with airflow. For example: bring a fingernail to within a few millimetres of your lips. With tight pursed lips, blow directly on to the tip of your fingernail, allow the tip of your nail to split the air and create a whistle sound (i.e. bifurcate the air stream). Make subtly adjustments to the air direction or the x-y-z position of your fingernail relative to the air stream etc. Overall, to produce darker/lower sounds, move your fingernail(s) further away from your face (z position) and allow your air stream to become less focused

Viola and Cello

Clef indicates the position to bow/finger along the string.

The relative lightness of the line = the pressure with which you bow/finger.

- Barely visible = hold your bow or finger between 1 and 2 mm above the string. Allow the natural nervous twitch of your muscles to cause intermittent, accidental contact with the string, with perhaps only just a risk of producing an audible result. When contact does occur it should be at approximately a harmonic pressure. (The quality of physical contact should be similar to holding your thumb and index finger as close together as possible without intentionally touching.)
- Very dark = overpressure. Blend with the overpressure sounds of the harp and guitar.

= scrape along the top of the string with the tip of your fingernail

= scrape as quickly as possible from one side of your fingernail to the other in a jerk-like movement—a choked quasi-pizzicato sound should result.

If you are instructed to play upon multiple strings at once, apply all the indicated pressures and techniques across all the indicated strings at the same time.

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1 All this and the above information on phonology sourced from http://facweb.furman.edu/~wrogers/phonemes/phono/index.htm accessed 3/18/18
**Before the piece starts, give a little nod to the conductor, giving them permission to begin.**

Emotionally detached, distant

Breathy palate whistle, lips barely touching instrument, blowing into mouthpiece on breaths out

Perform standing; hands relaxed, loosely grasp a bundle of chopsticks on the surface of a cymbal (large, thin > 16''), roll them in place; somewhat unpredictable impulses should result from the chopsticks rotating and changing positions; graphic ≈ desired density and volume of texture

Barely audible, slow bow speed, almost breaking up, background

Graphic indicates relative frequency/pitch/brightness; red indicates a voiced sound, all other sounds are voiceless

*Perform standing; hands relaxed, loosely grasp a bundle of chopsticks on the surface of a cymbal (large, thin > 16''); roll them in place; somewhat unpredictable impulses should result from the chopsticks rotating and changing positions; graphic ≈ desired density and volume of texture.*

Vc. (amp.)

Barely audible, slow bow speed, almost breaking up, background

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(as before)

low, breathy palate whistle, lips barely touching reed socket

blow into reed socket

(low, breathy palate whistle, lips barely touching tiprail)

start with the same pitch and timbre as previous breath in

(dampen with forearms and stomach)

scraping along string with fingernail or pick

emotion rising, just below the surface

(i.e. gradually move your tongue along your palate, back toward your throat; transitioning from whistles to breath sounds)

(black = RH (bow); red = LH)

(blend with other the strings)

poco sul pont.
suddenly cover your mouth with your RH

roll sticks a bit faster

slower

focus airstream onto tiprail to create a whistle, then
slide into quasi ord. position for breath tone gliss.

a little stifled

suddenly cover your mouth with your RH
4

**10”**

- Sing softly into instr. mirroring vce.
  (gliss. over a comfortable range, ad lib.)
  - physically shaking

**20”**

- (mouth positions as before)
- Sing softly into instr. mirroring vce.
  (gliss. over a comfortable range, ad lib.)

**30”**

- (breath only)
- Sing softly into instr. mirroring vce.
  (as before but transition to breath sub-tone gliss.)
  (gliss. over a comfortable range, ad lib.)

**40”**

- (breath only)
- Sing softly into instr. mirroring vce.
  (gliss. over a comfortable range, ad lib.)

**cym.**

- (breath only)
- Sing softly into instr. mirroring vce.
  (gliss. over a comfortable range, ad lib.)

**piano.**

- Let your RH fall a little
- Suddenly bring both hands to your face

**Vce. (amp.)**

- Emotion breaking through
- Physically shaking

**Vn I.**

- Poco vib
- Some vib

**Vn II.**

**Va.**

**Vc.**

**Cb.**

- And
5

10”

20”

30”

40”

n.

ob.

cl.

hn.

cym.

\( \text{nd} \)

\( \text{ob.} \)

\( \text{cl.} \)

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\( \text{hp.} \)

\( \text{pn.} \)

\( \text{vce. (amp.)} \)

\( \text{vn I} \)

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ungrasp LH when you hear the start of the cl. gliss., then let your LH gradually fall towards your waist, conducting the cl. gliss. — end your gesture here

end when vce.'s LH reaches their waist

press sticks down against cymbal

(as before)
briefly enjoy the impact you have made,
enjoy the control you have exerted,
enjoy being the center of attention

`sf`: suddenly bring both hands to your face

thumb whistle

(explore)

as before

(as before)

violent snap, as some sticks suddenly change position
\begin{align*}
\text{fl.} & \quad \text{ob.} \\
\text{cl.} & \quad \text{hn.} \\
\text{cym.} & \quad \text{gtr.} \\
\text{hp.} & \quad \text{pn.} \\
\text{vce. (amp.)} & \quad \text{vn I.} \\
\text{vn II.} & \quad \text{va.} \\
\text{vc.} & \quad \text{cb.}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{(release grip on sticks,} & \quad \text{then gather them with force)} \\
\text{hands fall to} & \quad \text{shudders} \\
\text{c.l.t.} & \quad \text{shudders} \\
\text{senza vib} & \quad \text{col legno tratto}
\end{align*}
Gradually tilt head down and to your right, until it rests against your right shoulder.

(nature)

(physically crumpling)

(bored)

(disinct tongue clicks)

1. 11, 13 & IV

L, II, III & IV

(col legno tratto)
head position back to neutral; expressionless, controlled
slowly raise RH to your slightly-open mouth, then 'shh' gesture to strings
(as if nothing happened) (quasi-erotic)

freeze, stare at vce.

end on vocalist's gesture

freeze, stare at vce.

end on vocalist's gesture

freeze, stare at vce.

freeze, stare at vce.