Cristian Morales-Ossio

Different surfaces

for female voice, optional melodic instrument(s) and/or electronics

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Composed between December 2016 and January 2017 for the workshop carried out by singer Juliet Fraser within the CeReNeM's academic activities framework (University of Huddersfield)

Premiered on 18th June 2019 at St Paul's Hall, Huddersfield. DriftEnsemble
(Ilona Krawczyk, voice – Irine Røsnes, violin – Paola Muñoz, recorder)

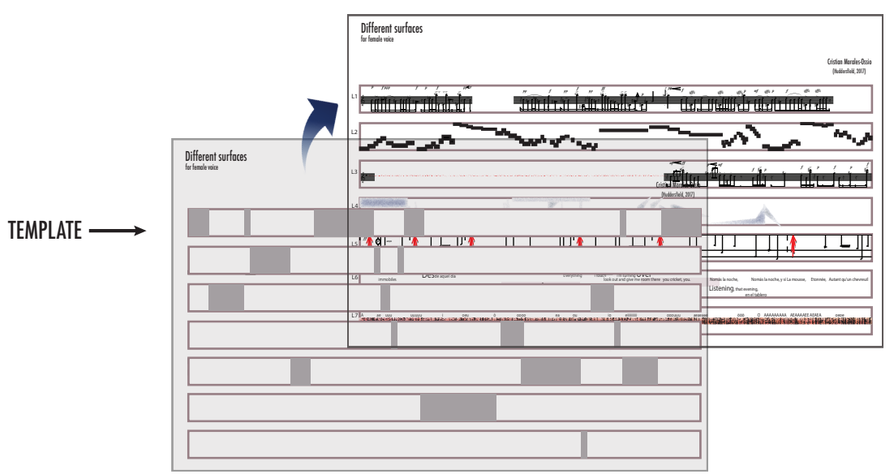
Perfomance notes

The piece is notated in 7 staves. Every single staff represents a “surface” (named S in the score) or “strata”. According to the following instructions performers are invited to create a personal version of the piece by considering both their own vocal/instrumental/physical resources and approach to the material and its processes.

Instructions

1. Make several photocopies of the seven-staves TEMPLATE

2. Make different cuts–square or rectangular shapes–in every staff consecutively (as shown in the figure below) so that they look as open windows. The templates are then superimposed over the page containing the seven surfaces (S1 – S7). Every superposition becomes a new page.



3. The size of the different cuts is free

4. Tempo is left intentionally open and unspecified, allowing sufficient flexibility to respond to the notation that appears through the 'open-windows' alongside changes in vocalizing/instrumental technique.

5. Pages are read from left to right (all staves together) for every system, springing between cuts consecutively. Silences are permitted between fragments.

6. The cuts do not need to include each of the seven strata on each page. The density of cuts may range from a single window per page to as many fragments (on as many staves) as desired.

Notation and Performance

1. The seven staves comprise five different notational approaches.

2. Except in the first and third staves, dynamics and articulations are completely free.

3. The performer(s) should fix the sounding material according to the following instructions for every stave (called S1, S2, ... S7).

Surface 1

a. There are 4 different types of sound production represented by 3 different noteheads (● ◇ >) and the ‘tremolo/flatterzunge’ indication (⫽). Thus, the performer(s) should fix 4 different sounds (including free choices of vowels, consonants and/or combinations of both of them) through 4 different techniques.

b. At least for the first page, pitches should be played as written. However, if the vocal register (or instrumental range) does not allow to reach the lowest and highest pitches, these could be transposed partially, without fundamentally altering melodic trajectories

Surface 2

a. The notation is pneumatic-like. This should be performed within a microtonal space (to be fixed). The ambitus should not be wider than a minor third

b. Durations are proportional to the length of the continuous black lines

Surface 3

a. Same requirements as for the first stratum

b. The extended initial D involves a 'granular' quality of sound

Surface 4

a. The sonic qualities of this surface, as well as its evolution, should be related with different ways to produce noise

b. Durations, pitches, attacks and dynamics must be performed by following the intention of the different shapes

Surfaces 5 to 7 (for voice and instruments)

Even if the option of including instruments is adopted, performers must use their voice by following the following vocal instructions. However, particular sounds (relative pitches in stave S5, for instance) might be played with the instruments.

Surface 5

a. Pitches are absolutely relative to paths suggesting melodic (broken) trajectories. G key, in staves' lines 1 and 5, is included only in order to have a point of reference for the register. These should always be performed around a piano dynamic

b. As for S1, the different noteheads correspond to different types of sound emission or articulation

c. Consonants hung on red lines should be understood as consonant clusters. Every consonant of the cluster is to be performed as fast as possible in any order, and always in ff

d. Durations are short, with few small extensions marked by a line. The on-set or the distance between the sounds is proportional to the graphic resource used for this purpose

Surface 6

a. The texts are written in Spanish, French and English. This stave is to be performed essentially 'parlato'.

b. The overlap and proximity of sentences (almost mounted on each other) can give rise to complex combinations of spoken sound

c. The two coloured rectangles represent special effects to be applied on affected words

Poems:
1. Jorge Luis Borges, Haïku from 'La Cifra', in Spanish
2. Eugène Guillevic, Haïku in French (La mousse, Etonnée...)
3. Louis Calaferte, Haïku in French (Minces silhouettes immobiles...)
4. Kobayaski Issa, Haïku in English (Everything I Touch...)
5. Kobayaski Issa, Haïku in English (Winter seclusion...)

Surface 7

The central band (in red and black) suggests a particular texture. The overall sound should be articulated through the vowels or groups of vowels. These can be pronounced with different phonetics.

Duration

The overall duration of any performance will depend on the number of pages arranged and also on decisions related to tempo, execution of different techniques, the character of the material that appears in each cut, and larger structural transitions in performance techniques. In general, the duration will likely range from approximately 7 to 12 minutes.

PERFORMANCE AND FORM – GUIDELINES

As the title of the piece suggests, the seven staves represent seven surfaces with particular qualities. In this aspect it is very important to set beforehand such qualities as initial matters to be transformed. The transformation itself consists of a constant and gradual corrosion (or erosion) process. Vocal (and eventually instrumental and/or electronic) techniques should simulate such process.

External elements and resonators such as wind instrument pieces, mute pieces, hits on the chest or trachea, piano harp, guitar, drums, among others, may be useful to strength the idea of corrosion; these can modulate some particular aspect of the voice and/or instrument. Other external elements can be used according to how far experimentation and imagination can lead.

Live electronics may be accepted only in order to stress the corrosion processes but not in order to corrode the sound itself. It is very important to understand that the FORM of the piece is a continuous corrosion process for each of the surfaces. In this way, the piece begins by performing the 'intact' surfaces (first page) and then goes progressively into an extreme corrosion of them.

Since the different cuts shall be read consecutively, the 'moment-to-moment' shapes are a combination of fragments of surfaces-in-corrosion, exposing the actual moment of the surface(s)

Melodic instrument(s) and/or electronics

The integration of a melodic instrument playing along with the singer is only an option. If so, all instructions and guidelines described above should be adopted by performers

There are no ways of polyphonic relationships conceived beforehand. Any kind of polyphonic situation must be collectively set up

Sounds notated in S1 and S3 staves are the actual pitches, so the register of the instrument should comprise at least such pitches

The use of an electronic part should be understood as a means of spatialise vocal and instrumental sound fragments. A very simple RECORD-and-PLAY (MAX/msp) patch can be set up to record different moments and then playing it freely. These can be triggered by either the electronic performer or a random mechanism previously programed.

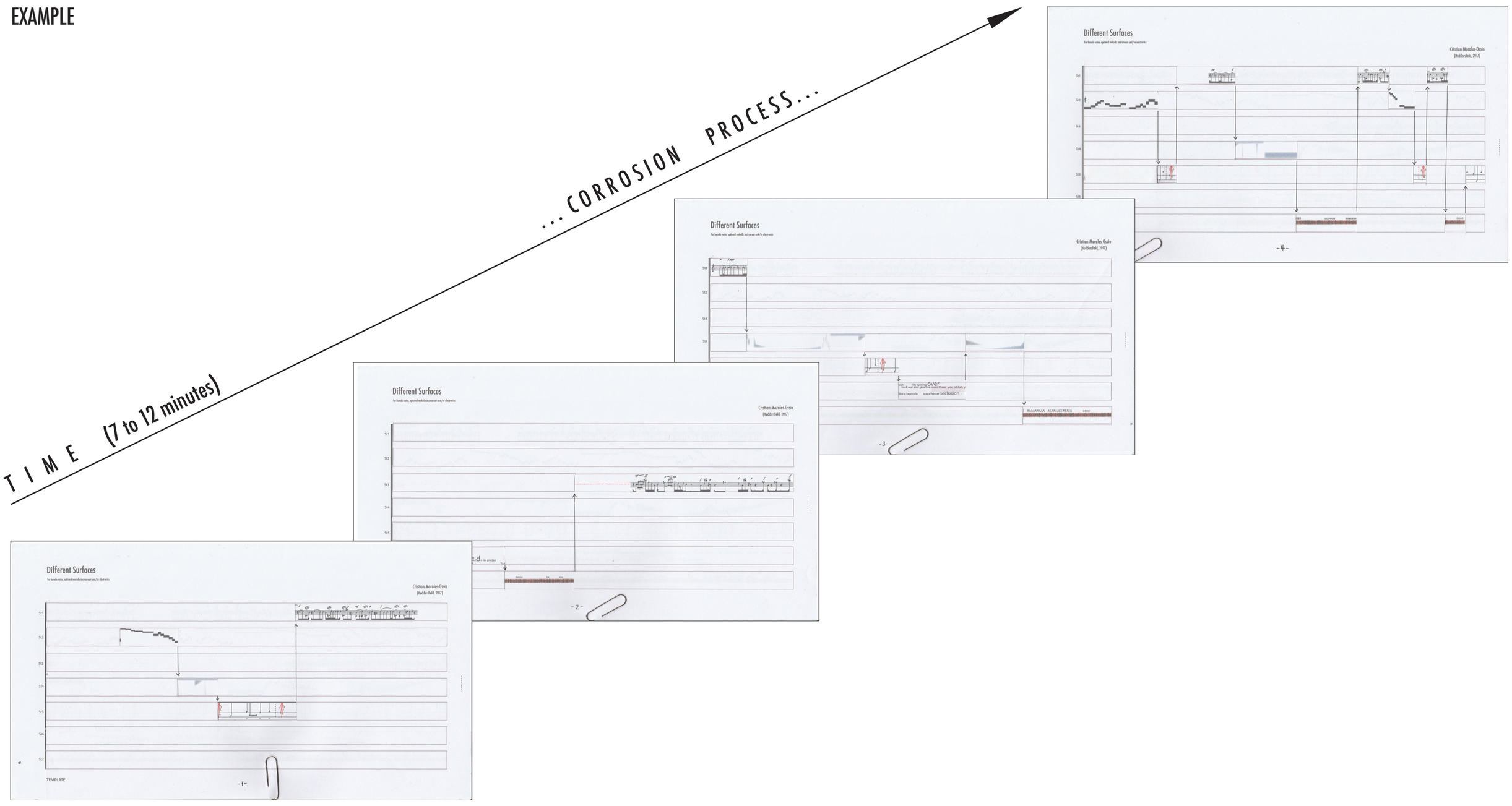
Requirements for electronics:

- At least 4-channels amplification system
- An audio interface allowing 2 inputs and more than 2 outputs, in order to spatialize the recorded sounds. The overall loudness of the electronic sound should not rise over the acoustic sound
- An extremely balanced result is required.

EXAMPLE

T I M E (7 to 12 minutes)

. . . C O R R O S I O N P R O C E S S . . .



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S1

S2

S3

S4

S5

S6

Minces silhouettes
immobiles

Des de aquel día

Deux moineaux aux deux bouts
no he movido las piezas
en el tablero
du toit roux

Everything I touch I'm turning over
look out and give me room there you cricket, you.

with tenderness, a las, pricks like a bramble
To the rain in the mountain

iezas Winter seclusion -

No más la noche, No más la noche, y sí La mousse, Etonnée, Autant qu'un chevreuil

Listening, that evening,
en el tablero

S7

A ae uuu uuuuu i oeu ô oooo ea ou io eiiiiiiiiii ooouuu aeaeaae öööö O AAAAAAAAA AEAAAAEE AEAEA oeoe

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TEMPLATE

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S1

S2

S3

S4

S5

S6

S7