

Sonnet 40
for trumpet
Nicolas Collins

Sonnet 40 is a direct reading of a Shakespeare sonnet. The trumpet is treated as a speech synthesizer, with each phoneme of the poem mapped to a specific instrumental technique. The poem was chosen for its vigorous, quasi-palindromic rhythmic structure, which struck my ear as being quite overtly "musical." The piece was commissioned by the Feedback Studio (Köln) for Axel Dörner, and was premiered at Alte Feuerwache Köln in June 1998.

Performance Instructions

Familiarize yourself with the phonetics of the poem -- an alphabetical list of syllables is attached, in case it is helpful to practice articulating the sounds out of sequence. Imitate the sounds of the text as accurately as possible using any technique except actually speaking through the instrument (although individual phonemes can be "voiced" by buzzing or singing). Mutes may be employed, and objects (such as rings) may be struck against the instrument to assist in the production of hard stops (such as "k" and "t"). Note the numerous permutations of "th" and "s" sounds, which call for various resonated breath sounds. Transcribe the pitch inflection of the verse into a comfortable range for your playing technique, and observe the quasi-palindromic quality of the word rhythm.

The performance is in three sections of approximately equal duration, which should be separated by pauses of not more than three seconds:

- 1) At tempo. Play through the entire poem as accurately as possible at a normal reading speed. Strive for maximum intelligibility.
- 2) As slowly as possible. Play through a minimum of any one quatrain and the final couplet, extremely slowly, emphasizing the melismas and breaks between phonemes. Remember to preserve the inflectional contour.
- 3) As fast as possible. Play through the entire poem at least once very quickly. Phonetic detail can be simplified in favor of emphasizing the rhythmic character of the verse. You may "loop" sections of the text, repeating them several times to highlight particular rhythmic phrases. Ideally this section should evoke something of the rhythmic character of early be-bop.

The total duration should be between five and seven minutes.

The text of the poem may be included in any program notes.

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Sonnet 40

Take all my loves, my love, yea, take them all;

What hast thou then more than thou hadst before?

No love, my love, that thou mayst true love call;

All mine was thine before thou hadst this more.

Then if for my love thou my love receivest,

I cannot blame thee for my love thou usest;

But yet be blamed, if thou thyself deceivest

By wilful taste of what thyself refuseth.

I do forgive thy robbery, gentle thief,

Although thou steal thee all my poverty;

And yet, love knows it is a greater grief

To bear love's wrong than hate's known injury.

Lascivious grace, in whom all ill well shows,

Kill me with spites; yet we must not be foes.

Sonnet 40 syllables

a
al(l) call
and
be
bear
blame(d)
bbrey ("brie")
ry
but
by
can
cei ("sea")
de re
do
foes shows
for(e) more
fu ("few")
you
u
ful(l)
gen ("jen")
give
grea grace
grief thief
hadst hast
hate's
I
if
ill
in
ious
is
it
ju
kill
la
love(s)
mayst
me

we
more
must
my mine
no known
knows
not
of
po
ro
sciv ("sieve")
self
sest ("zest")
vest
spites
steal
take
taste
ter
than
that
thee
them then
this
thou
though
thy thine
tle
to true
ty
ver
vest
was
well
what
whom
wil
with
wrong
yea
yet
you
u