

CROSSINGS

for

dancer, clarinet, double-bass, percussion
and Audubon birdcall chorus

1983

Eleanor Hovda

CROSSINGS (1983)

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CROSSINGS was made in 1983 for dancer Sharon Friedler and clarinetist Louis Friedler for my Perspectives VIII concert at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis in March of that year. The piece also uses double bass, laid flat, like a koto, as well as bowed metal temple bells. Audubon birdcalls are played by the dancer, the musicians and members of the audience.

CROSSINGS takes its structural content from three sources simultaneously: Zeno's Paradox, that says that destinations (or "center") can be approached but never reached; "alternating currents" of energy, concepts - in this case, use of alternating ideas of measuring/passing time in increments ("clock" time) with "the time it takes to do something" ("process" time); and the activity of body crossings used as a physical aid to integrating right/left side of the brain functioning.

Thus, CROSSINGS is a way to approach a center as well as to move away from a center. CROSSINGS explores extents and limits; boundaries. Repetition is used introspectively, to probe gently, to excavate carefully.

Notes for performers:

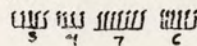
DANCER - all movement forms are derived from ideas of body crossings, shifting balance points, going away from or toward center (Zeno's Paradox - dividing lengths into halves infinitely). Energy is initiated in the pelvic area at all times; full breathing, relaxation, total body integration is essential. There is no use of isolation of body parts.

Audubon birdcalls - the dancer has two birdcalls which are played one in each hand. They are held until dancer picks up Syrian drum (Dumbeg), whereupon the birdcalls are played in the drum for added resonance.

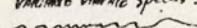
Dumbeg (Syrian drum) - the dancer holds drum filled with legumes/rice (enough to create resonance when shaken) and uses it in three ways: 1) stirring in it with hands; 2) shifting it from hip to hip; 3) shaking it in a circular pattern while walking the diagonal at the end of the piece. The energy of the shaking increases as the steps decrease; the shaking is arrested at its peak, and the stepping continues in silence as long as possible.

CLARINET - The clarinet is asked to play as softly as humanly possible throughout the piece. The airleaks, audible to the performer during this process, do not carry offstage, and are not to be worried about. Except for the low Eb (written) all the material for this piece is based on pitches capable of alternate fingerings. This usage continues the idea of "alternating", and moving around and not quite approaching center. It is important to take time, be relaxed, and allow the "crossovers" to emerge however they do. In the case of the false/real high B alternation, there are echo tones that may or may not sound. It is important to not attempt to "control" this interchange, or it will lose its magic. In the five-cluster of circular false B's and C's, the idea is to establish a repetitive, even, flowing, almost drone-like energy for the length of the breath. The "melody", made up of real/false fingered pitches, should move very slowly, allowing time for the "alternations" to evolve.

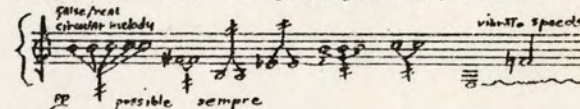
pulsed vibrato, varied by metric accent:



variable vibrato speeds:



Pitch content:



CONTRA-BASS - The bass is laid on the floor and the player is seated crosslegged in front of the instrument. Five pitches, all harmonics, are used. The pitches are G#, A, A#, B, E. They are all located on the I, II, and III strings between the second harmonic and the end of the fingerboard. Since there is no pressure, and all the motion is centralized, there should be no physical problems playing in the position described above. The sound is barely audible at times, and will have degrees of carrying power. It is not important to change this. "Just at the level of perception" sound is appropriate for this particular piece.

PERCUSSION - Four metal temple bells, bowed with a double bass bow. The CONTRA-BASS player arranges the bells at the right, so that they are convenient for bowing. Move the bow slowly across the rim of the bells, and allow to ring.

BIRDCALLS - Use from 10 to 20 birdcalls, purchased from the Audubon Society. These are made of wood with pewter screws which when twisted, produce "birdsongs". The DANCER uses two of them, the CLARINET, one. The remaining BIRDCALLS are given to a chorus of people who scatter themselves amongst the audience and play during two segments of the piece which are clearly cued.

For Phyllis, Louis and Sorelle

Crossings

Eleanor Honda

Diagram 1: Musical score for Piano, Clarinet, and Double Bass/Recorder/Chorus.

Piano: (birdcalls) 30 (Liquids) 30 (2) 30. Includes a drum icon and a figure icon labeled "stands upstage".

Clarinet: Circular melody of false B's & C's. Includes musical notation with notes and rests, and the instruction "Alternate fingering slow changes" leading to "Add vibrato pulsings".

DB/Rec: II x, I x, II x. Includes a figure icon labeled "Sideways Zeno's (2's + 3's)".

Birdcall Chorus: Birdcalls, Short turns, breaths in between → more dense [make repeating patterns, play, listen to others] (spare, more breaths).

Diagram 2: Musical score for Piano, Double Bass/Recorder, and Birdcall Chorus.

Piano: Circular melody false B's & C's. Includes musical notation and the instruction "vib → nonvib".

DB/Rec: II y. Includes a figure icon labeled "Dancer feet together/alternating weight changes" and another labeled "Balance knee up/curled behind".

B.C. Chorus: end birdcalls, perc ① ② ①.

Clarinet: forked fingering Alternating slowly →. Includes musical notation and the instruction "PPP sempre".

Side Zenos → bicath → haunches
relève

Dancer leans forward on haunches, after 1st hand X's

Dancer rocks + rises on haunches X hands

Standing relève

Side Zenos

30 (Birdcalls - one in each hand)

30

10

DB/ Perc

perc ① ③

Birdcall Chorus

each person does 3 sounds only

perc ① ③ ② ④

(long tone before Zenos's)

Start slow melody (below) →

TACET

PPP

Clar

Dance

Handwritten musical score for "The Great Wall" by John Cage. The score is written on three staves: Piano (P), Clarinet (Clar), and Double Bass/Recorder (DB/Rec).

Piano (P): The top staff is labeled "Slow melody". It features a series of notes, some marked with circled numbers 1 through 5. A bracket labeled "30" spans a portion of the melody. A circled "8" is above the staff.

Clarinet (Clar): The middle staff is labeled "Circular melody false B's & C's". It contains a series of notes, some marked with circled numbers 1 through 5. A bracket labeled "30" spans a portion of the melody. A circled "9" is above the staff.

Double Bass/Recorder (DB/Rec): The bottom staff contains a rhythmic pattern of notes, some marked with circled numbers 1 through 5. A bracket labeled "30" spans a portion of the pattern. A circled "10" is above the staff.

Annotations:

- "Repeted Pattern 4, 7, 6, 5" with a diagram showing a box containing "4, 7, 6, 5" and an arrow pointing right.
- "Circular melody false B's & C's" with a diagram showing a box containing a series of notes and a bracket labeled "30".
- "PP sempre" (Pianissimo sempre) written below the Piano staff.
- "PP" (Pianissimo) written below the Clarinet staff.
- "DB/Rec" written below the Double Bass/Recorder staff.

Dance

Arrest

30

11

30

12

Walk Backwards with drum

Clar

Slowly

ppp

false & real High B's slow changes → Add vibrato

ppp possible

TACET

Perc

3 2 1 4 3

1

Perc

II^o

Dance

Shake Drum in Circle

Zeno walks on diagonal

13

30

14

long time

keep feet to 'small as poss.

Settle drum on hip

15

Clar

add vibrato → let change take on a rocking motion

[Cl.] TACET after 2 sets of "false B's" let dancer finish "small feet" in silence

Tacet

Perc

George Lewis, February, 1983