

Annea Lockwood

Monkey Trips

MONKEY TRIPS: NOTES FOR PLAYERS

Here is a score/framework for Monkey Trips. The instrumentation is to some extent determined by the make-up of the ensemble, the core group below being ideal. It was originally commissioned by the California EAR Unit which happened to have a strong interest in non-western wind and percussion instruments, so we added them to the core group of vln., vc., flutes, clarinets/saxophones/trombone, perc.. The EAR unit also included MIDI sampling percussion, which was very good in the Hell realm (6) as the player was able to 'steal' distinctive riffs from each of the other realms and layer them in a wonderful edgy way. The work was created collaboratively.

1. MT is conceived of as a sextet (although other players can be added in the realms in which ensemble backing is used), with each realm featuring a different player – the choice of player being something I predetermined and based on the character-match of realm and instrument. For instance, flutes seem a natural for the yearning, thirsting quality of the Hungry Ghosts realm, and percussion for the Jealous Gods and a string instrument for the Human Realm.
2. The character of each realm and its meaning is a given. For each realm a different instrument and member of the ensemble is foregrounded. This is essential because each realm is grounded in one particular person's expression of his/her experience of that realm – and we all experience them all, daily, according to Tibetan understanding. Beyond that, how a realm is realized – whether as a solo, a duet, w/wo full ensemble backing, was predetermined by me also. That gave us a basic framework, freeing players to dive into the musical details right away.
3. Given this concept, I ask each player to ponder his/her experience of the realm assigned, and find the most expressive way of bringing forth that experience in sound.

So, having worked out all this, I suggest the nature of the ensemble's material for each relevant realm and sometimes suggest concrete musical gestures for the soloists and the players experiment. Ensembles usually end up memorising the piece, since tiny details were flexible and can be changed in performance.

One segment is notated and always used, the vocal score for Section B in the Animal realm, included with this score, (see recording by Lontano, which will help to pin down how this vocal score is realized). The following pages are the score for the entire piece.

Please ask each player to read the attached excerpt from 'Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism' (*A full description of the six realms is given in the chapter starting pg. 121 in Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism, by Chögyan Trungpa, pub. Shambala Publications Inc. 1973*) closely, as it is the foundation of the whole piece and will assist players to focus in on their experience of these states.

Finally, I would be grateful if the attached program notes could be used (with two changes), since I find it helpful and necessary for audiences to be aware of the nature of the six realms: 1. please insert the featured instrument in parenthesis after the title of each realm if it differs from those listed here. 2. add the ensemble's name after my own, as co-composers.

PROGRAM NOTES *if instrumentation differs from this, please insert correct name of 'solo-ing' instrument beside each realm's title.*

MONKEY TRIPS

Annea Lockwood/name of ensemble

Monkey Trips is based upon the Tibetan Buddhist metaphor of the six states/realms of being which we constantly recreate and assume to be reality, six “different kinds of projections or dream worlds” (Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche). Each realm is associated with a particular instrument and the piece moves through them successively.

The Heaven Realm (violin), realm of serenity and stasis in which the monkey dwells on her achievements, blocking out everything undesirable; the intrusion of another player draws her out of this solipsistic state and into dialogue.

The realm of the Jealous Gods (percussion) in which fear of losing the bliss of the first state evokes a need to defend it, and a need to control and compete, but the competitive “other” is no other, it is oneself.

In the Human Realm (cello), realm of passion and intellect, the monkey becomes discriminating – exploring, comparing, reaching out to possess the pleasurable, but discovering that pleasure slips away and craving creates frustrations. However, the idea of unity emerges.

Those frustrations impel a retreat into the Animal Realm (bass clarinet), away from intensity into the habitual, rooting around in a more limited world, clinging stubbornly to the safely familiar, whether painful or comfortable.

Then a desperate feeling of starvation sets in, the realm of the Hungry Spirits (flutes); visions of open space and of plenty turn into deprivation. A thirsting for what monkey remembers she once had becomes insatiable. Always reaching out but never realizing that in order to drink, you have to first open your throat.

The Hell Realm (percussion): a feeling of being trapped in a small space, of struggling to control this self-created imprisonment. The more she struggles, the more solid grow the walls until rage is exhausted. Then the monkey begins to let go, and suddenly sees that the walls are self-created, the realms are self-created. She breaks through into open space.

MONKEY TRIPS (1995)

ANNEA LOCKWOOD

For 2 bowed strings (e.g. vln. & cello/bass), 2 winds (e.g. flutes & a lower wind/brass such as baritone sax, bass clarinet, trombone), 2 percussion (including MIDI percussion if possible). This is the core ensemble to which any other instruments may be added. The EAR Unit incorporated many non-western instruments in addition.

The work is based upon the Tibetan Buddhist concept of the six realms of being which we constantly recreate in our daily lives, and which we assume to be reality; six “different projections or dream worlds” (*A full description of the six realms is given in the chapter starting pg. 121 in Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism, by Chögyan Trungpa, pub. Shambala Publications Inc. 1973*).

Following is an outline of each of the six Realms, from which each ‘solo’ player and each ensemble develops an interpretation of the Realm’s character. The soloist is asked to reflect on her/his own experiences of this realm, to let her/his interpretation of it grow out of direct experience. (This is the essential ground of the piece, without which you get mere depiction.) This interpretation in turn guides the ensemble’s realization. Between realms 1-2-3-4-5 are bridges, called ‘transforms’ but realm 5 goes straight into realm 6. The realms are performed in order, from 1 to 6. Each has its own scoring: solo + ensemble, duet, solo alone etc., which is central to my interpretation so please retain these.

REALM 1 Deva Loka – Heaven (original scoring: violin solo with bass clarinet and ensemble backing)

Qualities: serene stasis. solipsistic. “Monkey beings to relax and dwell upon her/his achievements, shielding out undesirable things.” A self-hypnotic state which blocks out everything undesirable or irritating.

Soloist is downstage, with second player (originally b. clar) standing behind her/him. Opens with a bed of soft sounds from the ensemble, slightly dissonating with the soloist’s tonality later, shifting and changing gently. Stasis.

Solosist then enters also starting softly and gradually becoming more intense, ecstatic.

A little processing can be used on the solo.

transform

Second player (orig. bass clarinet) joins in, answering the soloist’s phrases canonically, at which point the soloist turns, physically acknowledging this new presence. The ensemble background texture becomes more mobile.

Soloist and second player exchange lead-follow roles, the follower elaborating the phrase increasingly as the duet proceeds.

End with a unison, i.e. the soloist is no longer self-absorbed. During this unison the soloist for Realm 2 enters using his/her voice, not dramatic, but creating the feeling of a real presence emerging, and the ensemble’s ‘bed’ sounds evaporate fast.

REALM 2 Asura – the Realm of the Jealous Gods. Duet (original scoring, percussion duet with voice, ensemble tacet)

Qualities: perfectionism, competitive, control-seeking, obsessed with achievement, unfulfilled ideals, resulting in self-condemnation and fear of failure. Very dualistic so this is a duo first with yourself (as if you were two personalities), then with the other player, both “others” being illusions in fact. The rest of the ensemble is not involved in this realm.

Soloist start with low voice and timbral/gestural perc. sounds, seeking to unify voice and instrument. Voice from the gut – a physical, rather fierce quality.

Second player enters once soloist's mood and sounds are established. The second player starts out by imitating the soloist's phrases, mocking him/her. They duel, first using alternating phrases, then interrupting each other's phrases to upstage each other until they end up playing simultaneously. They compete using speed, who can play softest, the second player modifying the soloist's sounds in ways s/he can't match, but they do not compete in terms of who can play loudest. Suddenly the second player drops out, like a ghost disappearing. He/she has merely been a projection of the soloist's mind.

transform

Two other players enter stage left and stage right, clattering saucepan lids (don't use a substitute, use lids and this way of interrupting the duet), a raucous and fierce entry. Under the clattering the second player starts a long, soft, even and fast rolling sound (originally on timpani), rising and falling in pitch enough for the ensemble to perceive it, but not more than that, like distant thunder. The other players, except the soloist for Realm 3, enter using their voices, blending together to make a light, whispering texture, each person producing a different sound but well-balanced together. Rising and falling dynamically 'inside' the rolling background waves. Groundedness. Equanimity.

REALM 3 Human Realm. (solo with ensemble, originally cello solo)

Qualities: realm of craving, of passion but a discriminating passion. "Here monkey stops to think what she's reaching for. Becomes more discriminating, considers alternatives, thinks more, hopes and fears more. Explores, feels textures, compares things. If she decides she wants something, tries to grasp it, to pull it towards her and possess it" (Trungpa)

Relishes things but discovers cannot hold onto pleasure, cannot obtain everything she desires, so pain is the constant companion of her pleasures.

This realm was characterized by frequent sweeping cello glissandi through a wide range and much timbral variety in the cello line, which created a very clear feeling of reaching out, of longing. An 'off-pitch', unstable line, constantly moving, exploring.

The ensemble surrounded the cello with successive and varied textures. The soloist reaches out towards them but they play mind games with her/him. The following worked really well and was clear to the audience: someone in the ensemble would emphasize a particular pitch, often well above or below the cello's current position. The cello would sweep up to it, but just as she reached it, that pitch would disappear and a new goal would emerge from a different player, also to disappear at the last moment. There were changing background sounds behind this little drama.

transform

the soloist reaches a particular pitch (agreed upon in advance) and another instrument (clarinet originally), with an imperceptible entry, merges into that note (same register), then slightly off it and on again, enough to add resonance and color.

A silent pause.

REALM 4 Animal Realm (originally bass clarinet, with ensemble's voices).

Two vocal microphones are needed for the voices.

Qualities: monkey becomes frustrated and resigned. Retreats into a set of habitual responses to the world, ceasing to explore, and thus limits his/her world. Is unaffected by surrounding events, just plowing ahead on a familiar path, sometimes painful, sometimes pleasurable. One is closed in by one's habits and assumptions, unwilling to break free, clinging to the familiar and comfortable.

This realm is grounded by the background bed – a tight rhythmic group chanting which suggests rigidity, fixed paths and self-enclosure. This is the most pre-composed realm.

Ensemble is grouped in a semi-circle around two microphones. Soloist is separated from them. The realm starts with a series of vocal calls as follows: each player invents an animal-like call, each one different. They need not be abrupt or short and one or two could be funny. Each player does his/her call once, the soloist starting, the others following in quick succession. Then the ensemble moves into an A B A structure, A being invented by the ensemble, B using my score.

A Ensemble: unvoiced, breathy. Start with a rhythmic, hocketing texture – a light sound. When the soloist enters, rooting around low down, these breathier sounds will set the tone of the realm nicely. Soloist starts in low register, like an animal rooting around contentedly.

B Ensemble: see attached score on pg. 7 – a mix of voiced and unvoiced sounds, still quiet but crisp. It is laid out for 6 performers, but can be done by 5, one to a line. Just try the lines out and give each to a player who is comfortable with those sounds.

Soloist: gradually climbs higher but every so often drops down to low register again. Singing while playing, flutter tones, pitch bends, timbral trills, multiphonics are all good in this realm.

A returns coming straight out of B. Soloist: continues developing what s/he was doing in B.

transform – into spaciousness

Soloist arcs up to top of range, then drops down to a low, pre-determined pitch to cue ensemble to fade the chanting out (no rit.) – cross fading into Realm 5.

REALM 5 The Hungry Ghost (originally for flautist playing bass, C flute & piccolo, with string and other wind/brass players). The solo part works best on flutes if your ensemble allows. The percussionists will be tacet here.

Qualities: feelings of impoverishment and a longing for relief, for open spaciousness. An insatiable hunger, more urgent than that of the Human Realm. But the monkey is fascinated with the state of being hungry, rather than with satisfying his/her hunger. Develops visions of plenty but each vision turns into its opposite as s/he reaches for it, and repels: an open space becomes a terrifying desert; a tree heavy with fruit becomes barren. The pain and hunger of this realm give the monkey something exciting to occupy herself with, something solid to relate to, and something which supports the sense of herself as a solid being.

The ensemble starts, setting up soft clusters of pitches, starting with high, sparse pitches and gradually adding more pitches and widening in range. The EAR Unit used all sorts of wind instruments, from ocarinas to Thai khaens, which worked well, plus some string sounds – delicate textures, layered.

Soloist: is searching, probing. Starts with bass flute (if available), occasionally singing into the instruments to modulate the sound, moves up to C flute, then to piccolo towards the end of the realm. The flute lines build on one another but constantly dissolve, into breathiness, into pitch bends and timbral trills, into stillness. They keep vanishing like mirages. Space these phrases out. It's important that they build on one another's material as the player keeps trying to create something solid, and losing it. The last phrases (on piccolo) become really intense, painful.

no transform – straight into the Hell Realm.

REALM 6 Hell Realm (original scoring, MIDI percussion, with ensemble voices to end).

Qualities: a feeling of being trapped in a small space (self-created), with no air and no room to move about. The more she struggles to destroy or control the walls, the more solid and oppressive they become, until the monkey's rage is exhausted. The monkey begins to relax and suddenly sees the possibility of a more open, spacious way to be.

The MIDI percussionist enters right after the last phrase of Realm 5, using samples taken from the other players' primary material from the other realms, as if stealing their 'licks'. Build layers of patterns from these samples. It is important that the player uses an actual MIDI instrument – mallet instrument or drum-set, not just a laptop, because visible physical virtuosity is at the heart of this realm's character.

The layers accumulate into a solid, enclosing wall of sound – walling the other player off from the other players and from the audience – empty virtuosity for its own sake. When this 'wall' is at its most dense, its most ridiculous, the player breaks off suddenly, and everyone laughs – big, belly laughs, and keep it going. This becomes a way to dispel the Hell realm and the entire Monkey Trip. See if you can break up the audience too.

LIGHTING: most effective might be a different color for each realm, if available.

1.

Voice 1 ee oo ee oo ee oo ee oo ee

Voice 2 2 both (grunt) 3 2 both (breathy whistle) ugh ugh

Voice 4 Add occasional off-beat Tongue clicks

Voice 5 a short howl → spans about an 8ve

Voice 6 1st Time Tacet 2nd Time shu shu shu (unvoiced) shu shu shu

1. 2.

3 both both 2 both 3 both

(2nd Time add) a-woo prrp boom ka ka ka ka ka chee boom ka

shu shu shu shi shi

3

Tongue click k k k oo ee oo both ee oo ee oo both

2 prrrr prrrr krrr p (breathy whistle) ugh ugh 2 both ugh ugh

boom boom boom boom boom ba boom ba

Tongue click Hah (unvoiced)

L L k shu shu shu shu shu shu