

referendum

by Sheena Phillips

an open score piece inspired by the UK referendum on Brexit in June 2016

for four instrumental parts (High, High, Medium, Low) and percussion
(two players)

composed for the CoMA summer school, 2016

duration c. 6:00

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referendum

An open score composition for 4 instrumental lines (High, High, Medium, Low) and percussion.

The piece is an attempt to portray the British referendum on membership of the European Union in June, 2016. In the opening sections, the High 1 and Medium parts represent the “remain” camp. Their theme is derived from the notes that “EUROPE” spells out if you imagine extending the alphabet along the white notes of a piano beyond the first A through G. Another motif based around E and C (for European Community) also plays a part. The High 2 and Low parts represent the “leave” camp – punchier and bolder from the outset, and growing more so with time. Their main theme is derived partly from a conjunction of car horn notes that I happened to hear one morning, and the GDBB motif comes from the notes that “UKIP” (UK Independence Party, one of the louder voices in favour of “leave”) spells out on the imaginary alphabet piano described above.

Perhaps what remains with me most strongly about the whole event was the emotional aftershock of the Brexit vote – a sense of teetering at the edge of some yawning void, and/or of being catapulted into unknown and uncharted territory – and a sense also of grief at the sudden departure from the world as we thought we knew it. Yes, I voted “remain” – and this piece is written from that perspective – but I hope some of the drama feels true to onlookers from both sides of the divide.

Sheena Phillips
July, 2016

Suggested instrumentation

High 1: upper strings, flutes, woodwinds

High 2: trumpets, woodwinds

Medium: violas, horns

Low: low strings, low brass, bassoons

Percussion: the piece calls for three main timbres, of which only two play at any one time.

Timbre 1 - any kind of drums

Timbre 2 – castanets / claves / wood

Timbre 3 – tambourine / suspended cymbal / metal

In addition, at bars 97 and 106 it would be ideal if a sports referee’s whistle could be blown. Otherwise, a gong or bell – or a blast from high woodwinds – can be substituted.

Body percussion is another option (thigh slaps for Timbre 1 / finger clicks for Timbre 2, strongly whispered ‘cha cha cha’ for Timbre 3, whistles for whistles).

Notation

Box and line notation: repeat the material in the box for the duration of the extension line.

Rest in brackets – a rest of indeterminate length.

Independence – players on the same part play in their own time.

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Moderato ♩ = c.96 with tension

The nation, in anticipation

Musical score for 'The nation, in anticipation'. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of six staves. The first four staves are for vocal parts: High 1 (treble clef), High 2 (treble clef), Medium (alto clef), and Low (bass clef). All vocal parts are marked *mf*. The fifth staff is for Percussion 1, marked *mp* and labeled 'timbre 1: drums'. The sixth staff is for Percussion 2. The score is divided into two systems of five measures each, with a 3/4 time signature at the end of each system.

Musical score for 'The first salvos'. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of six staves. The first four staves are for vocal parts: H1 (treble clef), H2 (treble clef), M (alto clef), and L (bass clef). The vocal parts are marked *mf* and labeled 'IN - measured, complacent'. The fifth staff is for Percussion 1, marked *mp*. The sixth staff is for Percussion 2. The score is divided into two systems of five measures each, with a 3/4 time signature at the end of each system.

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2

12

H1

H2

M

L

1

Perc.

2

OUT - punchy, confident

mf

17

H1

H2

M

L

1

Perc.

2

22

Musical score for measures 22-26. The score is for five parts: H1, H2, M, L, and Perc. The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4 and back to 4/4. H1 has rests. H2 has a melodic line. M has a bass line. L has rests. Perc. 1 has a rhythmic pattern, and Perc. 2 has rests.

A We watch on

27

Musical score for measures 27-31, starting with a section labeled 'A' and the lyrics 'We watch on'. The score is for five parts: H1, H2, M, L, and Perc. The time signature changes from 3/4 to 4/4 and back to 3/4. H1, H2, M, and L all have a melodic line starting in measure 27, with a dynamic marking of *mf*. Perc. 1 has a rhythmic pattern, and Perc. 2 has rests. A dynamic marking of *mf* is also present for Perc. 1.

B The campaign broadens

Musical score for measures 32-36. The score is for a string quartet (H1, H2, M, L), percussion (1, 2), and timbre 2. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor). The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4 and back to 4/4. Dynamics range from *p* to *mf*. Performance instructions include *mf* determined, rather cold and *mf* punchy. Percussion 2 is marked *timbre 2: claves / castanets / other wood*.

Musical score for measures 37-41. The score is for a string quartet (H1, H2, M, L), percussion (1, 2), and timbre 2. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor). The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4 and back to 4/4. Dynamics range from *p* to *mf*. Performance instructions include *mf* determined, rather cold and *mf* punchy. Percussion 2 is marked *timbre 2: claves / castanets / other wood*.

41

Musical score for measures 41-44. The score is for a string quartet (H1, H2, M, L) and percussion (1, 2). The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4, then back to 4/4, and finally to 3/4. Dynamics include *p* and *mf*. Percussion parts 1 and 2 play rhythmic patterns.

H1

H2

M

L

1

Perc.

2

p *mf*

45

Musical score for measures 45-48. The score is for a string quartet (H1, H2, M, L) and percussion (1, 2). The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4, then back to 4/4, and finally to 3/4. Dynamics include *fp* and *f*. Percussion parts 1 and 2 play rhythmic patterns.

H1

H2

M

L

1

Perc.

2

fp *f* *f*

C

The first signs of uncertainty

49

H1

H2

M

L

1

Perc.

2

f

p

f

p

54

double at 8va if possible

H1

H2

M

L

1

Perc.

2

mf

f

mf

f

mf

f

mf

f

p

f

p

timbre 3 : tambourine / suspended cymbal / metal

D intensifying

H1 *loco*
f strongly phrased *poco staccato*
 play any note(s) from this chord, any rhythm, fill whole 2 bars

H2 *loco*
sempre marcato
 play any note(s) from this chord, any rhythm, fill whole 2 bars

M *f strongly phrased*
 play any note(s) from this chord, any rhythm, fill whole 2 bars

L *sempre marcato*
 play any note(s) from this chord, any rhythm, fill whole 2 bars

Perc. 1 *f p f p f*
 2 *f p*

H1 *poco staccato* *poco staccato*
 play any note(s) from this chord, any rhythm, fill whole 2 bars

H2 *poco staccato*
 play any note(s) from this chord, any rhythm, fill whole 2 bars

M *poco staccato*
 play any note(s) from this chord, any rhythm, fill whole 2 bars

L *poco staccato*
 play any note(s) from this chord, any rhythm, fill whole 2 bars

Perc. 1 *p f p f*
 2 *f p*

71 **double at 8va if possible**

H1 *poco staccato*

H2 **double at 8va if possible**

M *legato*

L

1

Perc. 2

f p f p

E **lurching, dirty**

76 **div. a 2**

H1 *loco* *f*

H2 *loco* *f*

M **div. a 2** *f*

L *f*

1 *p f*

Perc. 2 *f*

f

82

double at 8va if possible

play 6 quavers using any notes from this chord

sim.

ff

double at 8va if possible

play 6 quavers using any notes from this chord

sim.

ff

play 6 quavers using any notes from this chord

sim.

ff

play 6 quavers using any notes from this chord

sim.

ff

1

Perc.

2

mp *ff* *f* *ff*

mf *f* *f*

F A cacophony of voices and arguments

* wait between repetitions, especially if there are many players, so as not to overcrowd the sound

~ 12 seconds

88

repeat freely, independently, any octave*

p *ff*

repeat freely, independently, any octave*

p *ff*

repeat freely, independently, any octave*

p *ff*

(about 3 seconds)

double at 8vb if possible

repeat freely, independently, any octave*

p *ff*

1

Perc.

2

f

G The vote

♩ = 96

~ 12 seconds

♩ = 96

brass tacet at H

H1 *(p)* repeat independently, often, any octave, any dynamic, varying in style (tentative / bold / staccato / marcato / fast / slow etc.)

H2 *(p)* repeat independently, often, any octave, any dynamic, varying in style (tentative / bold / staccato / marcato / fast / slow etc.)

M *(p)* repeat independently, often, any octave, any dynamic, varying in style (tentative / bold / staccato / marcato / fast / slow etc.)

L *(p)* repeat independently, often, any octave, any dynamic, varying in style (tentative / bold / staccato / marcato / fast / slow etc.)

whistles / bells

1 Perc. *f*

2 Perc. *f*

whistles / bells

brass tacet at H

H The count

* taps: fingers on instruments / woodwind keys / bow on wood / fingers on palm / light percussion

~ 8 seconds

~ 4 seconds

div. a 2 *breathy* any octave part 1: play continuously, bow / breathe as necessary

H1 *p* part 2: frequent irregular taps* after signal, move in own time to I

div. a 2 *breathy* any octave part 1: play continuously, bow / breathe as necessary

H2 *p* part 2: frequent irregular taps* after signal, move in own time to I

div. a 2 *breathy* any octave part 1: play continuously, bow / breathe as necessary

M *p* part 2: frequent irregular taps* after signal, move in own time to I

div. a 2 *breathy* any octave part 1: play continuously, bow / breathe as necessary

L *p* part 2: frequent irregular taps* after signal, move in own time to I

1 Perc. *X*

2 Perc. *p* timbre 2 (wood) frequent irregular taps*

signal

I

~ 10 seconds

H1 *either note* *cresc.* **part 1: gradually shorter note values between breaths / bows**
any octave *cresc.* **part 2: gradually longer note values**

H2 *either note* *cresc.* **part 1: gradually shorter note values between breaths / bows**
any octave *cresc.* **part 2: gradually longer note values**

M *either note* *cresc.* **part 1: gradually shorter note values between breaths / bows**
any octave *cresc.* **part 2: gradually longer note values**

L *either note* *cresc.* **part 1: gradually shorter note values between breaths / bows**
any octave *cresc.* **part 2: gradually longer note values**

1 Perc. (-)

2 Perc. (-)

f

J

H1 **all parts independently, own tempo**
loco *f*

H2 **in tempo** ♩ = 96
loco *f*

M **all parts independently, own tempo**
loco *f*

L **all parts independently, own tempo**
loco *f*

K The result

♩ = 96
tutti
ff

tutti, full brass
ff

tutti
ff

tutti, full brass
ff

drums

1 Perc. *p*

2 Perc. (-)

(c. 8 seconds)

124

H1 G.P.

H2 G.P.

M G.P.

L G.P.

1 G.P.

Perc. *mf* < *ff* *mf* < *ff* *ff*

2

L Aftershock

* chromatic glides: free timing (within the tempo)

H1 *mp* some players: add distortion (overpressure / sul pont.)

H2 *mp* independently ♩ = c. 96

M *mp* unmeasured tremolo (strings) or flutter-tonguing (wind)

L *mp* some players: add distortion (overpressure / sul pont.)

1 *mp* sporadic drum rolls use similar patterns but don't repeat exactly or regularly

Perc. 2

136

H1

H2

M

L

1

Perc.

2

each player repeats the boxed material at most once (and stops at the bar before J)

p

p

p

p

p

M Into the future

H1

H2

M

L

1

Perc.

2

mf

mf

mf

mf

mp

timbre 2 (wood) (*l'istesso tempo*)

use similar patterns but don't repeat exactly or regularly

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14

double at 8va if possible

148

Musical score for measures 148-153. The score is for a woodwind ensemble (H1, H2, M, L) and percussion (1, 2). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The dynamics are marked *f* for all parts. The percussion part 1 has a dynamic of *f* for the first measure and *p* for the last measure. The percussion part 2 is marked with a thick line, indicating it is silent. The woodwind parts (H1, H2, M, L) all have the instruction "double at 8va if possible".

loco

154

Musical score for measures 154-159. The score is for a woodwind ensemble (H1, H2, M, L) and percussion (1, 2). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The dynamics are marked *ff* for H1, H2, and M, and *f* for L and Perc. 1. The percussion part 2 is marked with a thick line, indicating it is silent. The woodwind parts (H1, H2, M, L) all have the instruction "double at 8va if possible". The H2 part has a "loco" marking above the first measure and a triplet of eighth notes in the fifth measure. The L part has a "loco" marking above the first measure and a triplet of eighth notes in the fifth measure. The Perc. 1 part has a dynamic of *ff* for the first measure and *f* for the last measure.

160

H1

H2

M

L

1

Perc.

2

mf

mp

~ 15 seconds

N

independently, own tempo

mp

f

pp

independently, own tempo

mp

f

pp

independently, own tempo

loco

mp

f

pp

independently, own tempo

add occasional tremolo / flutter tonguing on the long notes

mp

f

pp

independently, own tempo

use similar patterns but don't repeat exactly or regularly

p

pp

f

pp