

INSTRUCTIONS

Robert Ashley

SOUND

The Soloist is given a “focus” pitch for each of the fifteen sections of the piece. “Focus” means singing “in tune with” the given pitch but using the inflections of speech. The vocal sound is a kind of inflected chanting.

Section and focus pitch: 1-F / 2-C / 3-Db / 4-Eb / 5-Ab / 6-Gb /
7-F / 8-C / 9-Db / 10-Eb / 11-Ab / 12-Gb / 13-F / 14-E (natural) / 15-F

The Solo vocal style should be as “casual” as possible; that is, it should be as much like speech as possible but focused on a sung pitch. This style is a kind of “crooning.” This means that the sounds of “extended vocal techniques” are not appropriate to the meaning of the text. Also, the Soloist uses the microphone rather than “projecting” the voice. This means that the vocal sound is rather softer than in traditional singing.

The tempo of the Solo line is roughly the tempo of the title spoken slowly and evenly at a natural rate.

WORLD WAR THREE / JUST THE HIGHLIGHTS.

(While the word “the” in the title is usually spoken as an unaccented pick-up to the next word, in the singing of the solo line that syllable is treated as a beat that is equal in stress and duration to the other seven.)

WORLD WAR III JUST THE HIGHLIGHTS

Robert Ashley

[F]

I am not at all surprised /
/ that / the San Fran- cis- co
Op- er- a is plan- ning / to
do / / the Ring. / / /
It's ex- act- ly / the kind of
/ i- de a / / that /
gets / / ex- cit- ing / /
at the first / meet- ing of /
/ the high school / / / e-
vents / / com- mit- tee. / /
Though it's hard / / to / i-
ma- gine that the high / fly- ers
/ in / the Bay A- re- a
/ would / sub- scribe / to /
/ / Rich- ard Wag- ner's / /
i- de- a that suf- fer- ing and
death / lead to hap- pi- ness in
/ / the here- af- ter / /
which / sounds / more like / /
a fa- na- tic i- de a from

[C]

Some re- li- gion / nor am I
/ sur- prised / / that / /
ma- jor pa- trons / of / the
San Fran- cis- co Op- er- a /
went a- long with the deal. / /
They don't know / what they're get- ting

in-	to,	/	/	and	/	they	/
have	no	rea-	son	/	to	care.	/
/	/	Af-	ter	/	the	first	/
for-	ty-	five	min-	utes	the	ve-	ry
rich	/	/	and	pow-	er-	ful	and
bus-	y	old	man	/	can	split	/
/	and	leave	the	wife	/	to	/
clean	up	/	the	so-	cial	/	/
mess.	/	/	/	(Or	/	/	the
oth-	er	way	a-	round	de-	pend-	ing
/	on	/	who's	count-	ing.)	/	/
/	I	am	sur-	prised	/	that	the
San	Fran-	cis-	co	Op-	er-	a	di-
rec-	tor-	ate	did	not	come	up	with
/	a	more	/	/	cre-	a-	rive
/	and	/	more	mu-	si-	cal	/
/	and	/	/	/	more	/	fi-
nan-	cial-	ly	pro-	duc-	tive	/	/

[Db]

plan.	/	/	For	in-	stance,	/	/
clos-	ing	/	the	San	Fran-	cis-	co
Op-	er-	a	in	San	Fran-	cis-	co
/	and	of-	fer-	ing	the	op-	er-
a	lov-	ers	of	/	/	/	the
Bay	A-	re-	a	/	an	op-	er-
a	ex-	per-	i-	ence	/	they	would
/	/	/	re-	mem-	ber	/	with
plea-	sure.	/	For	in-	stance,	/	/
guid-	ed	tours:	/	/	The	Grand	Ole
Op-	ry	/	in	Nash-	ville,	/	the
Met	in	New	York	Ci-	ty,	/	which
/	is	hav-	ing	/	some	/	/
au-	di-	ence	prob-	lems	of	/	its
own	/	/	/	these	/	days,	/
/	and	/	is	pack-	ing	/	the
bal-	lot	box	/	/	with	/	two-
hun-	dred	dol-	lar	seats	/	/	for
twen-	ty	dol-	lars	/	/	if	you
get	there	/	/	at	the	ve-	ry

[Eb]

last	/	min-	ute.	/	/	/	/
Pa-	ris	and	the	sub-	stan-	tial	/
fi-	nan-	cial	/	back-	ing	of	the
per-	fume	and	the	gar-	ment	/	/
in-	dus-	tries.	/	/	Or	/	Vi-
en-	na,	/	/	/	where	you	can
shop	dur-	ing	the	day.	/	/	/
Ver-	y	/	ex-	pen-	sive.	/	Now
this	is	what	/	I	call	/	/
shop-	ping.	/	/	Eat	in	a	fa-
mous	ca-	fé,	/	Freud	/	/	and
such.	/	/	/	Go	to	see	the
weird	hor-	ses	and	then	in	the	ev-
en-	ing	go	to	the	op-	er-	a
know-	ing	/	/	in	ad-	vance	/
/	that	you	will	stay	/	on-	ly
/	for	/	the	first	/	act	/
/	/	/	with	plen-	ty	of	ex-
cu-	ses	for	/	leav-	ing	/	/
based	/	on	/	tra-	vel	stress,	/
al-	ler-	gies,	/	un-	fa-	mi-	li-
ar	food,	/	et	ce	te-	ra.	/
Or	just	take	them	to	Se-	at-	tle
where	they've	/	been	do-	ing	/	the
Wag-	ner	thing	/	since	the	mid-	dle
of	the	twen-	ti-	eth	/	cen-	tur
y	and	so	cre-	at-	ing	/	the
re-	pu-	ta-	tion	/	for	/	Se-
at-	tle	/	/	/	of	be-	ing
not	a	place	/	one	would	go.	/
There	were	all	those	mov-	ies	/	re-
mem-	ber.	/	/	This	and	that	Se-

[Ab]

at-	tle.	/	And	God	/	knows	/
Bey-	reuth,	/	if	they	still	do	that
stuff	there.	/	/	I	mean	peo-	ple
are	pay-	ing	/	thou-	sands	/	of
dol-	lars	/	for	sev-	en	nights	/
in	the	Pa-	ra-	dores	of	north-	ern

S <u>pa</u> in	/	<u>n</u> ot	/	<u>k</u> now-	<u>i</u> ng	<u>t</u> hat	/
<u>o</u> n <u>ce</u>	<u>y</u> ou're	<u>i</u> n	<u>a</u>	<u>P</u> a-	<u>r</u> a-	<u>d</u> ore	/
<u>f</u> or	<u>t</u> he	<u>n</u> ight	/	<u>t</u> here	<u>i</u> s	<u>n</u> o	<u>p</u> lace
/	/	<u>e</u> lse	/	/	<u>t</u> o	<u>g</u> o.	/
/	/	<u>I</u> t's	/	<u>g</u> ood	<u>f</u> or	/	<u>t</u> wo
<u>p</u> eo-	<u>p</u> le	/	<u>i</u> n	<u>l</u> ove	/	<u>w</u> ho	<u>d</u> on't
<u>w</u> ant	<u>t</u> o	<u>g</u> o	/	<u>a</u> n-	<u>y</u>	<u>p</u> lace	/
<u>e</u> lse.	/	/	/	<u>N</u> ot	<u>s</u> o	<u>g</u> ood	<u>i</u> f
<u>y</u> ou	<u>g</u> et	<u>t</u> ired	<u>o</u> f	<u>l</u> ook-	<u>i</u> ng	<u>o</u> t	<u>t</u> he
<u>w</u> in-	<u>d</u> ow.	/	/	/	/	/	/

[Gb]

Looking out the window
 Hoping to see the ghost of
 El Cid, Rodrigo Diaz,
 Who terrorized
 These desperate plains
 In war.
 El Cid,
 The model for those
conquistadores
 That brought Spain
 To America
 And made us
 What we are.

[F]

Rodrigo took himself
 Off into exile once more.
 This time he struck out
 As a freelance — free lance —
 In the literal meaning of the term.
 Renowned as a commander
 And wealthy
 From the spoils of
 Successful warfare,
 He could attract
 Enough troops
 To form his own
 Private army.
 During the remaining
 Ten years of his life

He campaigned
Up and down
The region of
Eastern Spain
Known as the Levant.
Sometimes he fought Christians
Like the count of Barcelona,
Sometimes the rulers of
The taifa states.
He was his own man
And went his own way.
He pillaged the countryside,
He exacted tributes
And he ended up
By besieging
And taking
The town of Valencia —
Somewhat as
Ibn 'Ammar
Had taken
The nearby city
Of Curcia.
Rodrigo ruled there
For the last
Five years of his life,
Prince of a little
Taifa statelet
All his own.
He died there.

[C]

(The Cid in Benicadell)
When the Cid Campeador
Had taken Benicadell,
They are grieved in Jativa
And in Cullera
As for Valencia
Its dismay is boundless.

[Db]

(The conquest of the entire
Region of Valencia)

Seizing and despoiling,
Riding at night,
Sleeping in the day time,
Taking those towns,
My Cid spent three years
In the lands of the Moors.

[Eb]

(The Cid lays siege to Valencia.
He sends heralds announcing the war.)
And he has chastised severely
Those of Valencia.
They do not dare to leave the city
Or meet him in battle;
He has laid waste to their farmlands
And brought havoc among them;
Every year of those three
My Cid deprived them of bread.
They grieve in Valencia,
Not knowing what to do.
They cannot obtain
Bread from anywhere;
The father cannot help his son
Nor the son his father,
Friend and friend
Cannot console each other.
Great hardship it is, sirs,
To be without bread,
To see children and women
Dying of hunger.
And they see their affliction growing,
That there is no remedy,
And they have sent word
To the King of Morocco;
He was so deep in war
With the King of the Atlas,
That he neither sent to advise them
Nor came to their rescue.
My Cid learned of this;
It gladdened his heart.
He went out from Murviedo
One night, and rode all night;

He appeared at daybreak
 In the lands of Monreal.
 He sent forth a herald
 To Aragon and Navarre;
 He sent his messages
 To the lands of Castile:
 “Whoever would leave
 His toil and grow rich,
 Let him come to My Cid,
 Whose taste is for battle.
 He would now lay siege to Valencia
 To give it to the Christians.”

[Ab]

(Repetition of the announcement)
 “Whoever will come with me
 To besiege Valencia —
 Let all come freely
 And no one against his will —
 I shall wait three days for him
 By the Canal of Celfa.”

[Gb]

How different the real man was
 From the legendary one.
 The Cid of reality was a *condottiere*.
 He was neither humane
 Nor loyal nor patriotic.
 On the contrary
 He was a harsh man,
 A breaker of promises,
 A pillager of churches,
 Only interested in pay and plunder.

[F]

/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
/	<u>A</u>	guid	<u>ed</u>	<u>op-</u>	<u>er-</u>	<u>a</u>	<u>four</u>
/	<u>would</u>	<u>be</u>	<u>a</u>	<u>source</u>	/	/	<u>of</u>
<u>in-</u>	<u>come</u>	/	<u>and</u>	/	<u>would</u>	<u>not</u>	<u>ex-</u>
<u>pose</u>	/	/	<u>The</u>	<u>San</u>	<u>Fran-</u>	<u>cis-</u>	<u>co</u>
<u>Op-</u>	<u>er-</u>	<u>a</u>	<u>to</u>	<u>the</u>	<u>wrath</u>	/	<u>of</u>

those	/	/	im-	por-	tant	mem-	bers
of	the	au-	di-	ence	who	did-	n't
re-	al-	ize	that	go-	ing	to	hear
Wag-	ner	/	/	is	/	like	/
hav-	ing	/	a	blood	/	clot	or
check-	ing	in-	to	/	a	Par-	a-
dore.	/	/	But	/	with	drinks	/
/	/	/	at	In-	ter-	mis-	sion
on-	ly.	/	/	/	/	/	/

[E]

But in this place
 with its
 particular
 patch of sky
 In this
 desert
 facing west
 the particular
 patch of sky
 disappearing
 westward
 into the horizon
 In this
 desert
 you can feel
 the Earth
 turning eastward

[F]

Two thousand steps
 between home
 and the grocery store
 (one way)
 at thirty inches per stride
 equals
 sixty thousand inches
 which divided by
 twelve inches per foot
 equals
 five thousand feet
 or almost a mile

to get beer
non-alcoholic
for reasons of health
and tequila
for other reasons.

END

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ROBERT ASHLEY is known for his work in new forms of opera. In the 1960s, Ashley organized Ann Arbor's legendary ONCE Festival and directed the ONCE Group. During the 1970s, he directed the Center for Contemporary Music at Mills College, toured with the Sonic Arts Union, and produced and directed *Music with Roots in the Aether*, a fourteen-hour television opera/documentary about the work and ideas of seven American composers. Ashley wrote and produced *Perfect Lives*, an opera for television widely considered the precursor of "music-television." Staged versions of *Perfect Lives* and *Atalanta (Acts of God)* and the monumental opera tetralogy, *Now Eleanor's Idea*, have toured throughout Europe, Asia, and the United States. He wrote and directed *Balseros* for Florida Grand Opera, *Dust* for premiere at the Kanagawa Arts Foundation in Yokohama, and *Celestial Excursions* for the Berlin Festival and Hebbel Theater Berlin. *Made Out of Concrete* was premiered at La MaMa E.T.C. in New York in 2009. Ashley is working on his latest opera, *Quicksand*. Kyle Gann's biography of Robert Ashley is forthcoming from the University of Illinois Press. www.lovely.com, www.robertashley.org