Dr Ian Percy
Website Context and Research

Electroacoustic Composition 7

Equidistance – An African Hymn of Praise (2007/13) (Electroacoustic) 7′ 56″
Single Movement of continuous sound for B♭ clarinet, live digital effects and tape

Equidistance is a single movement, single source, electroacoustic composition realised specifically for the opening of The Capstone Theatre at Liverpool Hope University in 2010.

This relatively short movement of continuous sound is based upon an East African Hymn of Praise that the composer transcribed and part recomposed (during 2007). The sound palette for the concrete parts was primarily (but not exclusively) prepared from the studio recordings of the live part.

The concrete parts were composed upon an accumulating ground canvas of percussive bass resonances and varied repetition in the composer's home studio during 2009 using primary audio files recorded during 2007.

The hymn employs equidistant pentatonic scales (the octave split into five equal steps of 2.4 semi-tones). Through the use of live digital effects (harmoniser and delay), this electroacoustic piece takes a few tentative steps into the unstable realm of equidistant and microtonal harmony.

The Golden Ratio (a, is to b, what b, is to c) influences the internal proportions of the movement (loops, repetition and texture). The concrete audio is founded upon a ground-canvas of continual sound that works towards a central crescendo set within a mirror form, whilst a tri-partite form (with proportions shaped with reference to the Golden Ratio) is composed above this, providing three further crescendos.

Diffusion and Amplification:

The concrete parts have been mixed for multiple stereo-pair analogue diffusion (surround sound), with additional summated (central) mono and sub-bass (LFE) files. The clarinet is amplified throughout, but should only be mixed to a dedicated pair of speakers front and centre of the stage, either side of the musician (see score preface for further details). The work was edited, remixed, rescored and part recomposed in 2013.

Acknowledgement:

Thanks go to Nicholas Cox for recording the hymn fragments from which the concrete parts were composed.

Equidistance Acousmatic (2024 Remaster) 7’ 57”
Single movement of continuous sound composed from the sounds of a clarinet for multiple loudspeaker analogue diffusion.

In December 2024, the composer reviewed this project during a general period of artistic self-reflection and portfolio ‘stocktaking’.

The electroacoustic version (with live instrument) sounded a bit too polite and somewhat reserved when viewed in context with the general style of the music from this portfolio. Upon reflection, the composer wished he had developed the live part more and concentrated less upon capturing that sense of authenticity to the African heritage, repetitive nature and minimalist structure of the quoted hymn. The electroacoustic version therefore lacks musical drama, and if it wasn’t for the fact the studio recording was realised by Nicholas Cox, withdrawing the performance version completely may have been considered. Instead, the composer has decided to revisit the score one day and elaborate the clarinet textures, but for now …

During review, it was noticed that the acousmatic textures of this piece (the concrete/tape parts) were very well recorded. The soundworld has a clear, focussed form and patient timbral development to and from the main central crescendo. What the textures lack in dramatic surprise is compensated for by a reassuring singular sense of cohesive sonic and dynamic evolution. For this reason, the composer has prepared an acousmatic version of this piece, remastered in all its 2024 digital glory.

Perhaps (like the composer) some of you will prefer the acousmatic version?

Contact:

For further information and resources contact the composer at: contact@ianpercy.me.uk