

## **Dr Ian Percy**

Website Context and Research

### **Electroacoustic Composition 2**

#### **An Individual Voice** (Acousmatic) (2005) 9'50"

Single Movement in tripartite form for multiple paired-stereo speaker analogue diffusion

*An Individual Voice* is a single source, single movement acousmatic composition realised in Liverpool Hope Recording Studios during 2005, presented within a clear tri-partite form (though in actuality it is a continuous sound piece) and composed from the spoken words and vocalisations of the composer's son, recorded when he was just two years old.

The form (and narrative) of the work can be subdivided into the following sections:

1. A Whispered Promise – An Anticipated Event ...
2. Life – Silence – Joy – An Individual Voice
3. A Whispered Promise – Ahead Unknown ...

The title served as a personal reminder to the composer in his role as 'the parent': Avoid trying to shape a 'mini-me' and never force your own ideals and beliefs onto what is essentially a Tabula Rasa – a blank 'human page' (this comes with the obvious exception of brainwashing his son into becoming a lifelong member of the red side of Liverpool of course): Allow him to develop his own character, his own *Individual Voice* ...

With the composer finding work on his acoustic scores to be research intensive during this period, this acousmatic composition is largely based upon varied repetition, dynamic contour and spatial displacement explored in a fairly instinctive and structuralist manner (placing sounds alongside sounds guided by the emerging relationships between them) governed by aural aesthetic, contrast and compliment. Emphasis is placed upon fluid sonic transition and the focussed momentum of dynamic and textural pacing.

#### **Elements of Analysis and Synopsis:**

The first section (A Whispered Promise – An Anticipated Event) has three primary vertical textures: a linear single high pitch (which reveals itself to be an anguished cry), a sonic bed of subliminal breath sounds and granulated voice loops, and a mid-range selection of treated vocalisations. The combined sonic material is wrapped within fluid volume envelopes (dynamic crescendo and release) to present a general atmosphere of accumulative tension and eventual release: A Whispered Promise – An Anticipated Event.

*An Individual Voice* is actually a continuous sound piece, but the first section dissipates to near silence as the second section (Life – Silence – Joy – An Individual Voice) overlaps (again in near silence) to continue the clearly defined tripartite form.

This middle section acts as the fast energetic 'movement' in between the slower and more pensive outer 'movements' (reminiscent of common Baroque and pre-classical suite and sonata forms). The sonic character and overall soundworld is far more positive and defined than the two outer sections, with a more tangible sense of structure and rhythmic momentum using manipulated vocalisations that are (a little) more recognisable in relation to their real world sources. Again the textures (and form) of this material are wrapped within fluid volume envelopes (dynamic crescendo and release) culminating in a primal scream: *An Individual Voice*. The soundworld drifts out of and concludes in near silence ...

The third section (A Whispered Promise – Ahead Unknown) has a fairly blatant 'melancholic finale' feel to its dynamic, textural and timbral contours and contains this composers first venture (unconsciously at the time) exploring subliminal elements of indeterminate and flexible concrete forms.

This sonic material is composed over a single and continuous pulsing drone that provides the skeletal framework for the pacing and texture, predetermining a fixed formal proportion and an inherent dynamic contour. Above this (as perhaps the only recognisable front-line material) is a continuous high-pitched tone initially recorded in real-time manipulation of granulated pitch strands, loops and oscillating vibrations. Alternate 'live' realisations were recorded using interactive granulating software and the best takes were used to realise the front-line material and inner counter strata (sound in counterpoint). Even now, when the movement has been fixed in its current concrete form for almost fifteen years, the composer can still hear the initial sense of improvised performance within the upper strands and layers of the material and can still feel the anticipation and 'freshness' of indeterminate live realisation set against the fixed concrete drone.

Upon reflection, the finale (apart from being a very relaxing sound wash of complimentary timbres) can be described as a block of individual linear strands, proportional sub-forms and contrapuntal sound strata performed (or realised) in real time over a fixed drone and predetermined proportion. The soundworld has vertical strata that is comparative to the textural description for the first section, and in this way seems to enclose the piece with reminiscent materials (even though the sonic palette used is unique to this section).

*An Individual Voice* is an internalised triptych of triptychs (recognised only in retrospect), threes within threes: sub-forms within sub-forms and linear strands within vertical blocks. Each of the three sections is approximately 3'30" in length, with each overlapping the next in transitions or links of near silence that clearly define the tripartite form for the whole movement.

Sometimes, when it comes to form, texture and structure, it seems that less is indeed more, and, at times, simplest is quite simply the best ...

**Diffusion:**

The acousmatic studio master was conceived for multiple stereo-pair analogue diffusion (surround sound), with additional summated (central) mono and sub-bass (LFE) files.

**Contact:**

For further information and resources contact the composer at: [contact@ianpercy.me.uk](mailto:contact@ianpercy.me.uk)