

SIMON EMMERSON

OPHELIA'S DREAM I

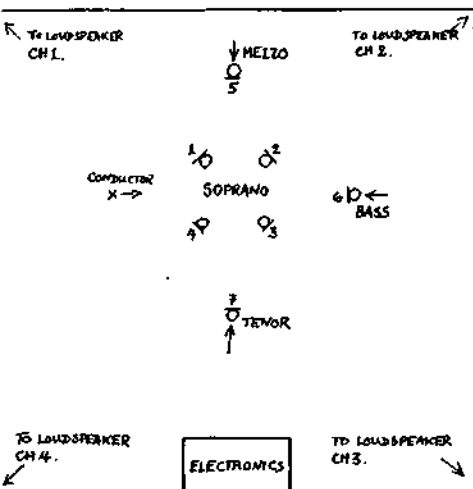
(1978)

for four voices and electronics

for Gregory Rose and Singcircle

PHELIA'S DREAM I

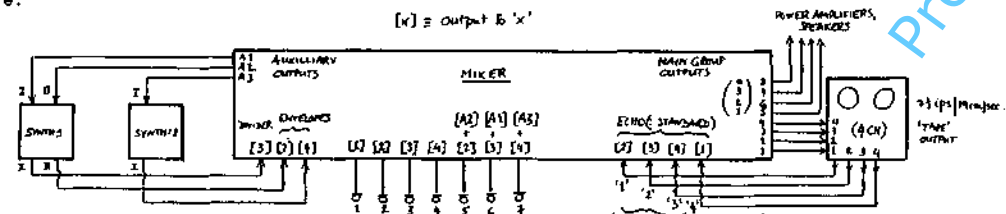
IDEAL LAYOUT



The four microphones for the soprano should surround the singer at head level with just sufficient room to rotate herself keeping the same distance and angle (as near as possible optimum for the voice) from each. The side of the square she enters should be kept entirely free of trailing cables. A music stand should be avoided. If the part is not memorised, the score (possibly a reduced size copy) should be held with the utmost dignity. The four microphones should be clearly labelled for the soprano to see, the other three microphones should be hand held. The four channels of sound projection - if possible over more than four loudspeakers - are labelled as indicated. For stereophonic presentation or recording the channels should be placed 1-4-2-3 across the 'image'. The performing area to be surrounded on all sides if possible by the audience. In a traditional auditorium, that area behind the electronics would be the main seating block. Loudspeakers should surround the audience in square format.

I: MICROPHONE, MIXER, TAPE DECK, SYNTHESISER, AMPLIFIER CONNECTIONS

A large mixer of at least 16 in, 4 (or even 8) out is envisaged, but the composer has worked out versions of the circuit with progressive simplifications for smaller mixers down to 8 in, 4 out. He should be consulted to give these details. Ideal, however, would be:



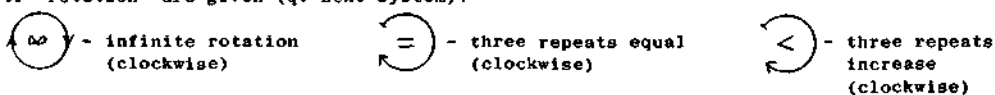
NB: two of the auxiliary outputs must be pre-fade (the ones marked A1, A3 above), this is usually true of 'Foldback' outputs.

1. The mixer must be run to power amplifiers with internal volume controls with which the sound projectionist balances. The main output faders from the mixer must not be used for this as they constitute set level positions to the echo system tape deck.

2. The mixer: channels 5-8 duplicate exactly 1-4. These faders can then be the balance controls for projection and the main amplifier levels fixed.

3. Great care should be taken by the sound projectionist to accommodate the great dynamic range of the voice (especially the soprano voice) without distortion.

4. The score indications in the electronics part are self-explanatory. Six visual indicators for 'rotation' are given (qv Echo System).



plus their anticlockwise versions.

III: THE FOUR CHANNEL ECHO SYSTEM

If a four channel tape deck is not available, two two channel ones will do as well (if not better in terms of noise!). Tape speed $7\frac{1}{2}$ ips/19 cm/sec.

Setting up procedure:

Assuming lined up deck such that internal meter reading 0dB is valid.

Tape deck set to play back from 'tape', with outputs set unaltered at some suitable output level.

- Test oscillator, ca. 1000 Hz, fed through mixer to channel 1 of deck
- Set level of oscillator to read 0dB on mixer meter with mixer output fader at standard 0dB position
- Adjust input level control of deck till test tone gives 0dB on internal meter Ch1
- Repeat for channels 2,3,4 - the mixer meters are now reading the level onto tape. Sometimes one can risk a 2-3 dB boost from mixer to deck depending on the tape and machine used. In any case, mixer meters should give a good indication of "maximum level without distortion".

Now the echo faders must be set. The signal played back from the tape returns to the mixer to input channels marked "Return Channel 1, or 2, or 3, or 4". For this test these are directed out of the mixer on channels 2,3,4,1 respectively. ie Return Ch1 goes out of Ch2 etc. The mixer main output faders are all set unaltered at their 0dB position.

- Set the test tone to record on Ch1 of the deck. The Return Ch1 fader is brought up to its standard zero mark. The channel input master level for this channel is now eased up to give an output (to Ch2) of +2dB. This is now set. The fader is now checked and positions marked which give outputs of 0dB and -2dB.
- Starting with input faders down as before, the process is repeated for Ch2 and Ch3 (going out Ch3 and Ch4 of the mixer respectively). But -
- Set the test tone to record on channel 4. The Return Ch4 fader is brought up to its standard zero mark. The channel input master level for this channel is now eased up to give an output (to Ch1) of -2dB.

Explanation: there are three types of echo (each either clockwise or anticlockwise):

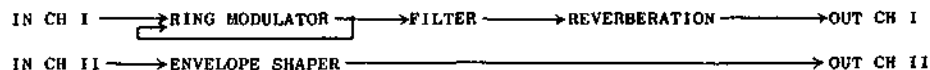
- Return Ch4 fader down, 1,2,3 at 'zero' mark:
An echo may start on Ch1 (clockwise) or Ch3 (anticlockwise) increasing 2dB on each of the three repeats.
- Return Ch4 fader down, 1,2,3 at 0dB mark (just below 'zero' mark):
As (i) but the echo equally loud on each of the three repeats.
- Return Ch4 to 'zero' mark, 1,2,3 to -2dB mark:
An infinite decay each repeat being 2dB down.

See the previous page for visual indication of these. The direction (clockwise or anticlockwise) is determined by the channel sends to output. Various two channel configurations are also obtained.

IV: ELECTRONIC MODULATION

The VCS3 or Synthi A machines indicated may be replaced by other synthesisers or modules of the same function, namely envelope shaper and octave divider. The octave divider is here obtained by feedback ring modulation; being very noisy, this is filtered and a small amount of reverberation added within the synthesiser. In block form:

Synthesiser 1:



Synthesiser 2:



The following approximate values were used on the Synthi A's at the first performance:

Ring Modulator level	10	Envelope level	10
Filter level	8	Attack	1
Filter frequency	5	On	1
Filter response	4	Decay	2
Reverb level	7	Off	Variable (qv)
Reverb mix	2		

The octave divided sound should be filtered such that only a relatively pure fundamental remains. The Bass must use a very close microphone position and sing with a solid continuous sound to trigger this effect. Experiment in rehearsal for the best position and settings. The envelope 'Off' times are variable but:

Synthesiser 1: an 'Off' value that gives a pulse equivalent to MM = 77 must be noted and inserted in the score (p4).

Synthesiser 2: similarly to give a pulse equivalent to MM = 55.

V: VOCAL NOTATION

v a glottal break in an otherwise continuous sound (usually part of an sfzpp)

∩ a short break, breath possible

∩ a short to medium pause

∩ a longer pause

— proportional notation used for 'drone' notes. Singer can breathe ad lib with minimum re-attack

ä short 'a' as in 'cat'

ah long 'a' as in 'cart'

ë short 'e' as in 'bell'

ē long 'e' as in 'bee'

ö short 'o' as in 'toffee' - Ophelia to be pronounced with clear short 'o'

ō long 'o' much nearer the vowel of 'look' than that of 'spook'

n(g) final 'g' unaccented

"Unbreathed" - absolutely no lung exhalation (by definition unvoiced)

"Unvoiced" - can be aspirated slightly

k,t,ch,b] - choose freely between the sounds indicated

VI: PROGRAMME NOTE

Ophelia's Dream I was written in answer to a request from Gregory Rose for a four voice work for Singcircle and was first performed by them in a concert on the 17th December 1978 as part of the MusICA series at the ICA, London.

(An extended and expanded version, for six voices, entitled Ophelia's Dream II was commissioned by Elms Concerts with financial assistance from the Arts Council of Great Britain. Finished in September 1979, this version was first performed by Singcircle at St. John's Smith Square, London on the 9th October 1979.)

Ophelia is 'represented' by the soprano who is 'trapped' in various ways - by the other singers, by the musical material, and by the technology. The character steadily disintegrates until her words break down into an undifferentiated noise - the rush of water perhaps.

No sounds are pre-recorded or electronically produced; all are vocal sounds altered 'live'.

This work is one of a series I have written in recent years which develops the idea of a "natural theatre of technology", that is, any incidental movements or gestures in the performance are not choreographed - and certainly not "music theatre" in the sense many recent composers have used the term - but follow from and are indissolubly part of the necessary function of the technology.

The text is derived from permutations and combinations of fragments of the following sentences and phrases from Shakespeare's Hamlet:

Sing sweet Ophelia

Like sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh

White his shroud as the mountain snow

Farewell Ophelia and remember well what I have said to you

'Tis in my memory locked and you yourself shall keep the key of it

With true love

The work is dedicated to Singcircle and their director Gregory Rose.

OPHELIA'S DREAM I (1978)

SIMON EMMERSON

ROTATE STEADILY [ah' into and between mics.]
MIC 1-2-3-4-1-2-3-4-1 (STOP)

mp MIC 1
mp *m*
 Sop. (m) (slowly open) ah
 har -
 -sh Sing sweet bells har - -sh
 Messo Sing O-pheli-a Sweet O-pheli-a Like sweet bells jangled out of tune and har -
 -sh be- -lls har - -sh
 Ten. Sing O-pheli-a Sweet O-pheli-a Like sweet bells jangled out of tune and har -
 -sh be- -lls
 Bass Sing O-pheli-a Sweet O-pheli-a Like sweet bells jangled out of tune and har -
 -sh be- -lls
 Electronics Tape Return Chl -> Output 4 Echo 1.2,3,4 6 @ 120' FADER EQ

p
 S white snow white his shrou - -d white white white shrou - -d snow snow white snow white his mountain snow shroud sweet snow shroud
 M white snow white his shrou - -d white white white shrou - -d snow snow white snow white his mountain snow shroud sweet snow shroud
 T
 B white snow white his shrou - -d white white white shrou - -d snow snow white snow white his mountain snow shroud sweet snow shroud
 E CHANGE TAP RETURN CH1 -> OUTPUT 4 T.R. End (output to 208'
 CH2 -> OUTPUT 3 CH3 -> OUTPUT 2 CH4 -> OUTPUT 1

pp *pp*
 S Sing Sweet O-pheli-a Snow shroud O-pheli-a Fare-well
 M Sing Sweet O-pheli-a Snow shroud O-pheli-a Fare-well
 T Sing Sweet O-pheli-a Snow shroud O-pheli-a Fare-well
 B Sing Ophelia, sweet Ophelia; sing, sing like sweet bells on the mountain; sing Ophelia, snow white Ophelia, sing sweet hime bells, mountain sweet, sweet out of snow bells. [quietly, between speech and whisper: medium mic. distance]
 E Farewell Ophelia - sing the harsh mountain farewell, the harsh snow bells sing out of cure, Ophelia; sing, shroud white Ophelia, sing... [whisper: close mic.]
 G.P. *pp* Senza Vibrato
 G.P. 4x
 MIC 1 - - - - - MIC 4
 [close to mic but breathe out across the top!]
 [decrease volume, increase distance from microphone]
 T.R. CH1 -> OUTPUT 4 FADER EQ CHANGE TAP RETURN CH1 -> OUTPUT 2 CH2 -> OUTPUT 3 CH3 -> OUTPUT 4 CH4 -> OUTPUT 1

ca 80s

SLOW CONTINUOUS ROTATION

MIC 4: At first whole words, then shuffles, then and phrases, then this always intrude

MIC 3: words break up and become increasingly difficult to pronounce

MIC 2: barely recognisable fragments and gattered phrases in one single phrase

MIC 1: (MUSIC)

ca 40s

STOP AT: FREEZE! (MOVE)

MIC 4: 3x

(1)-----4

SPKEN TEXT: 'LIKE SWEET BELLS'

Re-me-m-be(?) we-ll who-t I ha-ve sai-d to- you

pp [molto dolce, no phrasing, entirely even] 3-4 seconds per note

Li-ke swee- - - - t be- - - ll

pp [molto dolce, no phrasing, entirely even] 2-3 seconds per note

1: Innocent (near whisper)
2: Questioning (more voice)
3: Angry (voiced)
Move away from mic!

Cross between 'ow!' and 'o'-wail's howl, one rise, other fall. 'ow' low, close to mic. No distortion!

ECHO UP
1,2,3 to '+2dB' setting

BEGIN NEXT BAR BEFORE COMPLETE FADE!
BRING UP RETURN CH4 FADERS ALL TO '-2dB'
TO BRING UP RETURN
OCTAVE DIVIDER FADERS UP.

ca 28s

ca 26s

ca 23s

ca 20s

S: begins after fade of tape feedback [d, b, v, zh, g, i] Mix with then transition to [p, t, k, ch] unvoiced

M: [p, t, k, ch] unvoiced (whisper), choose sounds freely, accent! pp but very close mic. [sh] slowly vary lip position through all possible vowel shapes [close mic.]

T: [p, t, k, ch] unvoiced (whisper), choose sounds freely, accent! pp but very close mic. [sh] slowly vary lip position through all possible vowel shapes [close mic.]

B: [p, t, k, ch] 12x [Like the tolling of a deer bell]

E: 'OFF' from ENV 1 channel slowly - - - - - 'OFF' from ENV 2 channel slowly - - - - -

Preview File Only

ca 17s

ca 14

ca 11s

ca 8s

S: (MUSIC) (spoken very precisely, clearly, close mic.) (MUSIC) (TARGET ALPINE)

Tis in my memory locked, (m) and you yourself (m) shall keep the key of it.

M: (simile) (simile) (TARGET ALPINE)

T: (MUSIC) (TARGET ALPINE)

B: (TARGET ALPINE)

E: ENV 1: VARY OFF TIMES, SLOWLY CONTINUOUSLY TENDING MORE AND MORE TO ZERO (no pause) (TARGET ALPINE)

TAPE RETURN CH4 SLOWLY UP - ALL 4 RETURNS TO '-2dB'

BUT NOT TO DISTORTION LEVELS!

(ALLEN) Then Main Amps Down.