

## Listening Unit Day 5: The Human Voice

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Listen to DISC 5 in the Unit Binder in its entirety and read the following notes which accompany each selection.

The first instrument of music was the human voice. The following listening selections are examples of some of the many different ways the human voice can be used to make music. It is my hope that you will find these selections entirely new and unique. Something you've never heard before! Enjoy!

1. **Soul Bossa Nova:** This is a piece made popular by the Austin Powers movie starring Mike Meyers, performed by the a capella vocal jazz group, *The Swingle Singers*. The word, *a capella*, means 'no instruments'. All instrumental sounds are done by the singers themselves performing vocal percussion.

2. **Sigit "Alash":** The Tuvans are a South Siberian Turkic people numbering some 150,000 whose traditional territory lies north and west of the present-day border between Russia and Outer Mongolia, stretching from the Altai Mountains to the headwaters of the Yenesei in the Sayan Basin. In this example, singer, Mergen Mongush demonstrates the sigit style of Tuvan throat singing where the singer is able to produce two simultaneous pitches using the mouth and throat. The song is a tribute to a great river. The words are translated to mean:

Oh, my Alash,  
Running down from the high mountains  
With 30-40 tributaries,  
Running swiftly, my Alash

3. **Cloudburst:** Cloudburst is one of Eric Whitacre's more experimental pieces. It is written for eight part choir, accompanied by piano and percussion. The text is from Octavio Paz's poem *El Cántaro Roto* (The Broken Water-Jug), adapted by Whitacre.

The first section is a cappella, with strikingly discordant but beautiful tone clusters. After an initial section, there is a baritone solo, followed by the development of a new a cappella theme. This continues until a speaking solo (unusual in choral music) backgrounded by music. The choir continues, a cappella, building up to a striking section where the choir literally builds chords up from the base (similar to glissando on a piano).

A few pages later, handbells (which have been hidden from the audience) ring out, and the choir crescendoes into an aleatoric section. During this time, the choir also claps and snaps, and this combines with the vocal lines to create an effect similar to a thunderstorm (thus Cloudburst). The storm gradually builds then fades, and the ending of the piece mirrors the beginning section.

(continued)

This piece is notable because of its striking aleatoric section and the speaking solo.

## CLOUDBURST

La lluvia...

Ojos de agua de sombra,  
Ojos de agua de pozo  
Ojos de agua de sueño.

Soles azules, verdes remolinos,  
Picos de luz que abren astros  
Como granadas.

Dime, tierra quemada, no hay agua?  
Hay solo sangre, solo hay polvo,  
Sólo pisadas de pies desnudos sobre la espina?

La lluvia despierta...

Hay que dormir con los ojos abiertos,  
Hay que soñar con los manos,  
Soñemos sueños de activos de río,  
Buscando su cauce,  
Sueños de sol soñando sus mundos,

Hay que cantar hasta  
Que el canto eche raíces,  
Tronco, ramas, pájaros, astros,  
Hay que desenterrar la palabra perdida,  
Recordar lo que dicen la sangre y la marea,  
La tierra y el cuerpo,  
Volver al punto de partida.

--Octavio Paz

The rain...

Eyes of shadow-water,  
Eyes of well-water,  
Eyes of dream-water.

Blue suns, green whirlwinds,  
Birdbeaks of light pecking open  
Pomegranate stars.

But tell me, burnt earth, is there no water?  
Only blood, only dust,  
Only naked footsteps on the thorns?

The rain awakens...

We must sleep with open eyes  
We must dream with our hands,  
We must dream the dreams of a river  
seeking its course,  
Of the sun dreaming its worlds,

We must dream aloud,  
We must sing until the song puts forth roots,  
Trunk, branches, birds, stars,  
We must find the lost word  
And remember what the blood,  
The tides, the earth, and the body say,  
And return to the point of departure...

--Translation: Lysander Kemp

### 4. Introduction (Goin' To Chicago)

5. **Goin' To Chicago:** Two great masters of the jazz vocalese (a style of singing in jazz where lyrics are applied to melodies originally meant to be played by instruments, either composed or improvised), Kurt Elling and Jon Hendricks. It's also a wonderful example of just how wonderful the blues can be. This was recorded at the Green Mill, one of the most famous bars in Chicago where Al Capone, Charlie Chaplin, and silent-film actress, Gloria Swanson, used to hang out. It's still one of the liveliest jazz clubs in the world today. When you're old enough, you should visit the Green Mill.

6. **Blue Bossa:** Jazz pianist, Chick Corea teams up with singer, Bobby McFerrin to present their rendition of Kenny Dorham's, *Blue Bossa*. Bobby McFerrin is a master of body and vocal percussion techniques and has a commanding 7-octave vocal range. Halfway through this track, you will hear Bobby take a solo, which demonstrates the mastery he has over his voice. A truly amazing performer to behold. His solo shows are most impressive, in particular. See him when you get the chance!!!

7. **Sequenza III for Woman's Voice:** Written in 1965 by Italian composer, Luciano Berio, this Sequenza is an example of the many sounds the voice is capable of producing. These 'extended' techniques are intended to accentuate the meaning of the texts in a more dramatic fashion. Berio has written thus far, a total of fourteen different Sequenzas. Each Sequenza is written for a different solo instrument. Just as an abstract painting can be difficult on the eyes, so too, can this particular style of music be difficult on the ears. Listen to it in its entirety with an open mind.

Berio writes:

**Sequenza III for Woman's Voice**

*I want your words: and I want to destroy them, in haste, your words:  
and I want to destroy myself, me, finally, truly:*

"The voice always carries with it an excess of connotations. From the most insolent noise to the most exquisite song, the voice always signifies something, always refers to something other than itself and creates a vast range of associations. In Sequenza III, I tried to assimilate into a musical process many aspects of everyday vocal behavior, trivial ones included, though without allowing this to distance me from certain intermediate aspects and indeed real singing. To exercise control over so vast a range of vocal behavior I had to break up and seemingly to lay waste to the text, so as to be able to recover fragments from it on different expressive levels, and to recompose them into units that are no longer discursive but musical. In other words, I had to make the text homogeneous and able to lend itself to a project that essentially consisted of exorcising the excess of connotations by composing them into a musical unity.

Here is Markus Kutter's short, "modular" text for Sequenza III.

Give me	a few words	for a woman
to sing	a truth	allowing us
to build a house	without worrying	before night comes

In Sequenza III the emphasis is placed on the sound symbolism of vocal gestures, on the "shadows of meaning" that accompany them, on the associations and conflicts to which they give rise. Because of this, Sequenza III can also be seen as a study in musical dramaturgy whose prime concern is, in a certain sense, the relationship between the interpreter and her own voice."

**8. Poizunus Freestyle & Turnboxalism:** Are good examples of the art of beatbox, a hip-hop style of vocal percussion. This particular artist's stage-name is Poizunus.

Poizunus is a Vocal Dj/Beatboxer from Toronto, with beat patterns and vocal turntable techniques that make you wonder if everything you hear is really coming from this man's mouth.

In 2004, Poizunus performed at New York City's 2nd Annual Human Beat Box Convention. The next year, he competed in Germany's Hip-Hop World Challenge, in which he placed in the top 4. Internationally renown beatboxer Killa Kela has reportedly stated that he regards Poizunus as his favorite beatboxer from the battle.

Later, Poizunus also toured in the United Kingdom, on his Bridging the Gap Tour with fellow beatboxer Each. He was also offered the opportunity to perform with Killa Kela at the 2006 World of Drum and Bass in Miami.

Poizunus cites his influences as hip-hop groups such as the Wu Tang Clan, Cypress Hill, and Run DMC.