BIRDSONG CRANNIES

for five voices

Pia Palme 2015

Score, text & moving instructions
for four female voices & a male voice

Text compilation and German text by Pia Palme,
contemplating a passage from 'Romeo and Juliet' by William Shakespeare,
English excerpts from 'The Waves' by Virginia Woolf.

Composed for the V:NM festival Graz 2015

A

Form a small circle in the middle facing inward before starting.

f3 starts reciting text in box from beginning to end in given time,

> whispering gently & softly ***ppp***

> whisper the words quickly
> with longer rests between groups/lines

> highlight few single words
> with higher intensity whisper ***mf***

all others begin a few seconds later individually,

> **shadowing** the material of f3
> if possible by ear

Höre ich
noch mehr
oder singe ich

jetzt

> The light struck upon the trees
> in the garden,
> making one leaf transparent
> and then another.
> One bird chirped high up;
> there was a pause;
> another chirped lower down.

weder Hand
weder Fuss
noch Rose

> The sun sharpened the walls
> of the house,
> and rested like the tip of a fan
> upon a white blind
> and made a finger-print of shadow
> under the leaf
> by the bedroom window.
> The blind stirred slightly,
> but all within was dim
> and unsubstantial.
> The birds sang their blank melody outside.

without break f3 starts singing,
all others follow individually a few moments later
not synchronised, time approximately as given

all end individually after f4 starts reciting text **B**
and move on without pause

app. 1:30 minutes

pitch

long notes sung on one breath,
start with 'l' and after a minute do notes opening up from 'l' to 'a'
no vibrato
overall cresecendo
take time for slow and calm inbreaths

female 1

female 2

slowly bend pitch up or down
a quartertone and return

female 3

ppp   *mp*

to

L   L   →   a

female 4

male

2

B

f4 starts reciting text in box from beginning to end in given time,

    murmuring gently & softly **ppp**

    murmur the words quickly
    with medium rests between groups/lines

    highlight few single words **mp**

all others begin a few seconds later individually,

    shadowing the material of f4,
    if possible by ear

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aus dem Spalt
dringt Rauschen
ich höre mehr

    Sharp stripes of shadow
    lay on the grass,
    and the dew dancing on the tips of the flowers
    and leaves
    made the garden like a mosaic of single sparks
    not yet formed
    into a whole.

ich höre
Wind
weder Stimme

    The birds,
    whose breasts were specked canary and rose,
    now sang
    a strain or two together,
    wildly,
    and were suddenly silent,
    breaking asunder.

wer hört
weder Rauschen
noch Lied

von dir oder nicht mir

    In the garden where the trees stood thick
    over flower-beds,
    ponds and greenhouses
    the birds sang in the hot sunshine,
    each alone.

without break from before f4 starts singing,
all others follow individually a few moments later

1:30 minutes

sing long or shorter notes ad lib.
occasionally bend pitch up or down a quartertone
breathe as before

pitch

f1

f2

f3

f4

m

mp

ad lib.

L ———→ a

or

mp

ad lib.

L ———→ a

C

m starts reciting text in box from beginning to end,

all others begin to recite a few moments later individually,
but choose paragraphs ad lib.

    murmuring **p**

    do the words quickly
    with medium rests between groups/lines

    highlight few single words **mp**

after a while all turn around, facing outward

---

ein Riss
mittendurch
    One sang under the bedroom window;
    another on the topmost twig
    of the lilac bush;
    another on the edge of the wall.

kühle Luft strömt
aufwärts
ohne Namen
    Each sang stridently,
    with passion,
    with vehemence,
    as if to let the song burst out of it,

an meine Haut
bricht
reisst
    no matter if it shattered the song
    of another bird
    with harsh discord.

Fugen und Spalten
öffnen Raum
hinter der Festwelt
keine Festwelt
    Their round eyes bulged
    with brightness;
    their claws gripped the twig or rail.
    They sang,
    exposed without shelter,
    to the air and the sun,

und weder Stille
bricht
weder Schönheit
noch keine Schönheit

without break from before m starts singing,
all others follow individually a few moments later

for 1:30 minutes:

pitches as before
dynamics and pitch bends as before

play with long and short/very short notes

use any combination of m, n, l followed by vowels a and/or o
in gradual transitions

after a while, start to slowly walk randomly,
take a few steps & stop,
continue walk & stop

D

continue to walk & stop

f1 starts reciting text in box from beginning to end,

all others begin to recite a few moments later individually,
but choose paragraphs ad lib.

> murmuring slightly faster **p**

> with rests occasionally between groups/lines

> highlight few single words murmuring wrathfully, distorted & **ppp**

> beautiful in their new plumage,
> shell-veined or brightly mailed,
> here barred with soft blues,
> here splashed with gold,
> or striped with on bright feather.

einer Rose
einer Hand
splittert
in den Fugen
süss
aus den Fugen
> They sang as if the song were urged
> out of them
> by the pressure of the morning.
> They sang as if the edge of being
> were sharpened
> and must cut,

kehrt Rauschen
immer wieder
und bricht
ohne Stimme und Namen
> must split the softness
> of the blue-green light,
> the dampness of the wet earth;
> the fumes and steams of greasy kitchen vapour;
> the hot breath of mutton and beef;

kühler Windhauch
öffnet
Türflügel weit
> the richness of pastry and fruit;
> the damp shreds and peelings
> thrown from the kitchen bucket,
> from which a slow steam
> oozed on the rubbish heap.

stand still when singing

without break from before f1 starts singing
all others follow individually a few seconds later

find your timing together

long and even notes throughout, relaxed and natural
individually and not synchronized
no vibrato
stable pitch

mp

f1

a

start individually

f2

a

f3

a

f4

a

m

a

E

continue walk & stop

f2 starts reciting text in box from beginning to end,

all others begin to recite a few moments later individually,
but choose paragraphs ad lib.

> murmuring faster **mp**

> if necessary short rests between groups/lines

> highlight more words murmuring wrathfully distorted, noisy & **p**

---

tief unten
nenne es Rose

> On all the sodden,
> the damp-spotted,
> the curled with wetness, they descended,
> dry-beaked, ruthless, abrupt.
> They swooped suddenly
> from the lilac bough or fence.
> They spied a snail
> and tapped the shell against a stone.

dunkelfeucht
erdschwarz
felskalt
süss

> They tapped furiously,
> methodically,
> until the shell broke
> and something slimy oozed from the crack.
> They swept and soared sharply
> in flights high into the air,
> twittering short,
> sharp notes,

without break from before f2 starts singing
all others follow individually a few seconds later, end sim.

with singing stop movement, stand still where you are

F

start slow walk

f3 starts reciting text in box as written,

all others begin a few moments later individually,
but choose paragraphs ad lib.

      murmuring **mf** quickly

      rests if necessary

      extend & distort noisy sounds but **p**

      stretch selected passages (a word, or more) &
      murmur distorted & noisy & with intense wrathfulness but **p**

---

und kein Fels
bricht
splittert
keine Erde
deine Dunkelheit
keine Schönheit
einer Rose Namen

      and perched in the upper branches of some tree,
      and looked down upon leaves
      and spires beneath,
      and the country white with blossom,
      flowing with grass,

dein Name
ist weder Name
noch Staub und Erde
noch Gesicht
oder Rose
die einen anderen Namen trägt

      and the sea which beat like a drum
      that raises a regiment
      of plumed and turbaned soldiers.
      Now and again their songs ran together
      in swift scales like interlacings
      of a mountain stream whose waters,
      meeting,

bist du selbst
nicht Name

without break from before f3 starts singing,
all others follow individually a few seconds later, end sim.

with singing stop movement, stand still where you are

as before

G

start slow walk

f4 starts reciting text in box

all others begin a few moments later individually,
but choose paragraphs ad lib.

      murmuring **mf** quickly

      rests if necessary

      as before, much extend some sounds & passages
      wrathfully & noisy **p**
      shape noisy sounds* with detail but **p**

        * such as fricatives,
        both voiced and unvoiced,
        choose frequencies which feel comfortable

Was ist in einem Gesicht, fragst du
Was ist in einer Stimme
oder keiner Stimme

      foam and then mix,
      and haste quicker and quicker
      down the same channel,
      brushing the same
      broad leaves.

keine Hand
kein Fuss
kein Gesicht
keine Rose

without break from before f4 starts singing,
all others follow individually a few seconds later

with singing stop movement, stand still where you are

as before

H

start slow walk, moving towards each other, stop after while

m starts reciting text in box,

all others begin a few moments later individually,
but choose paragraphs ad lib.

      murmuring **mf** quickly

      rests if necessary

      as before, extend sounds & passages wrathfully & noisy **p**
      increase noise & distortion

               The birds sang passionate songs
               addressed to one ear only
               and then stopped.
               Bubbling and chuckling
               they carried little bits of straw and twig
               to the dark knots
               in the higher branches of the trees.

weder Stimme
sei eine andere Stimme
du

               Birds swooped and circled high up in the air.
               Some raced in the furrows of the wind
               and turned and sliced through them
               as if they were one body
               cut into a thousand shreds.
               Birds fell like a net descending on tree-tops.

weder irgendein Teil
eines Menschen
einer Rose

without break from before m starts singing,
all others follow individually a few seconds later

stand still where you are

I

start slowly moving together,
form a loose group in the middle,
facing ad lib. where you want
keep position until end

f2 starts reciting text in box,

all others begin a few moments later individually,
but choose paragraphs ad lib.

    speaking gently & naturally **p**

    rests if necessary

    as before, extend sounds & passages wrathfully & noisy **p**
    increase noise & distortion

<div style="border:1px solid">

hat noch Namen
und duftet dennoch

    In the garden the birds that had sung
    erratically and spasmodically
    in the dawn on that tree,
    on that bush,
    now sang together in chorus,

berührt Haut
Süsse
Gesicht
Blattfarbe
im Spalt

</div>

without break from before f2 starts singing,
all others follow individually a few seconds later

move faster
intensify

J

f3 starts reciting text in box,

all others begin a few moments later individually,
but choose paragraphs ad lib.

      speaking gently, naturally & quickly **p**

      rests if necessary

      as before, extend sounds & passages wrathfully & noisy **p**
      increase noise

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:1em;">

      shrill and sharp;
      now together
      as if conscious of companionship,
      now alone as if to the pale blue sky.
      Fear was in their song,
      and apprehension of pain.

der Zeit
duftet
weder Rose
weder du noch ich
oder irgendein Teil

      and joy to be snatched
      quickly now at this instant.
      And then tiring of pursuit and flight,
      lovelily they came descending,
      delicately declining,

</div>

without break from before f3 starts singing,
all others follow individually and quickly

end individually
f3 rapidly moves on
to start CODA

sing with a warm and full sound

20

CODA

f3 continues attacca without break, all others follow quickly,
sing with a warm and full voice, with passion,
find your timing as a group to end together.

extend last chord
end together
breathe in together

Begin with repeating the last chord together, very softly with 'm' and hold.
From here, expand. Use all material from the piece to improvise:
choose pitches at first gradually moving away, then freely.
Long & short sounds pushing extremes with m, n, l, and a, o as before,
or using any words that appear in the text.

From time to time,
punctuate singing with wrathful sounds,
noise, fricatives, but always piano.
Cut cracks full of noise into beauty.
Shape the noisy frequencies lovingly and with detail.

Enjoy. End together.