

# 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

female 1  
female 2  
female 3  
female 4  
male

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

*ppp* *mp*

to

L a

slowly bend pitch up or down a quartertone and return

## 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

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

pitch

f1  
f2  
f3  
f4  
m

1:30 minutes

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

*mp* \_\_\_\_\_ *ad lib.* \_\_\_\_\_ 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:

itches 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

The musical score consists of five staves labeled f1, f2, f3, f4, and m. The first staff (f1) begins with a treble clef, a dynamic marking of *mp* (mezzo-piano) with hairpins, and a whole note on the letter 'a'. A thick black line is drawn under this note. The second staff (f2) has a treble clef and a whole note on 'a' that starts later than f1. The third staff (f3) has a treble clef and a whole note on 'a' that starts even later. The fourth staff (f4) has a treble clef and a whole note on 'a' that starts significantly later. The fifth staff (m) has a bass clef and a whole note on 'a' that starts last. Dotted lines connect the notes on f2, f3, f4, and m to a single note on f1, indicating that they are all meant to be held for the same duration. A bracket labeled 'start individually' spans the beginning of the notes on f2, f3, f4, and m.

## 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**

as before

start individually

f1  
a

f2  
a

f3  
a

f4  
a

m  
a

## 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

The musical score consists of five staves labeled f1, f2, f3, f4, and m. Each staff begins with a treble clef (except for m, which has a bass clef). A vertical bar line is present at the start of each staff. The notes are as follows:

- f1: A note on the first line (G4) with the letter 'a' below it.
- f2: A note on the second line (A4) with the letter 'a' below it, and a note on the second space (B4) with the letter 'b' below it.
- f3: A note on the first space (F4) with the letter 'a' below it.
- f4: A note on the second space (B4) with the letter 'a' below it, and a note on the second line (A4) with the letter 'a' below it.
- m: A note on the first line (G3) with the letter 'a' below it, and a note on the first space (F3) with the letter 'a' below it.

A dotted line connects the note on the second space (B4) in the f2 staff to the note on the second line (A4) in the f4 staff.

## 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

The musical score consists of five staves labeled f1, f2, f3, f4, and m. A vertical bar line is placed at the beginning of the first measure. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The notes are as follows:

- f1: Treble clef, note A (first line, natural).
- f2: Treble clef, note A (second space, flat).
- f3: Treble clef, note A (first line, natural).
- f4: Treble clef, note A (first space, flat).
- m: Bass clef, note A (second space, natural).

Dotted lines indicate the movement of notes for f4 and m:

- f4: A note is placed on the first space (A-flat) at the start of the second measure. A dotted line connects it to a note on the second space (A) in the third measure.
- m: A note is placed on the second space (A) at the start of the second measure. A dotted line connects it to a note on the second space (B-flat) in the fourth measure.

A dotted line also connects the B-flat note in the m staff to the A-sharp note in the f1 staff in the fourth measure.

## 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**

The image shows a musical score for five voices, labeled f1, f2, f3, f4, and m. Each voice part is represented by a five-line staff. The notes are connected by dotted lines, forming a path across the staves. The notes are as follows:

- f1: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Note: A4 (first line).
- f2: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Note: A3 (second line).
- f3: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Note: A3 (second line).
- f4: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Note: A3 (second line).
- m: Bass clef, key signature of one flat. Note: A2 (second space).

The dotted lines connect the notes in the following sequence: m (A2) to f4 (A3), f4 (A3) to f3 (A3), f3 (A3) to f2 (A3), f2 (A3) to f1 (A4), f1 (A4) to f2 (A3), f2 (A3) to f3 (A3), f3 (A3) to f4 (A3), f4 (A3) to m (A2).

Below the first four staves, there is a bracketed section containing the letter 'a' under each staff, indicating the starting point for each voice part.

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

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

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

move faster  
intensify

The image shows a musical score for five voices: f1, f2, f3, f4, and m. Each voice part is on a five-line staff. The notes are as follows:

- f1: Treble clef, note 'a' on the second line (G4).
- f2: Treble clef, note 'a' on the first space (F4).
- f3: Treble clef, note 'a' on the first line (E4).
- f4: Treble clef, note 'a' on the first space (F4).
- m: Bass clef, note 'a' on the second space (G3).

A dotted line connects the note 'a' in the m staff to the note 'a' in the f1 staff, illustrating the staggered entry of the voices. The text 'move faster' and 'intensify' is positioned above the staves.

## 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

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,



## 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

The musical score for the coda section features five staves labeled f1, f2, f3, f4, and m. Each staff begins with a whole note 'a'. Dotted lines connect the notes across staves, showing a melodic progression from 'a' to 'i' in various parts. The final notes are held with fermatas.

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.