

Robert Percy

After Frank Zappa

for between nine and ninety nine voices
of mixed or unmixed ranges

Commissioned and premiered by CoMA Singers
directed by Janet Oates
St. Leonard's Church, Shoreditch, London
10th November 2015

About the piece:

I had the sound of these comically spoken words stuck in my head: “some people like ...” and “I for one care less for them”. They were from a familiar yet elusive, long-since-heard piece of music (Parliament/Funkadelic? Luciano Berio?). I began to construct a voice piece from them.

Using Google, I typed “some people like” into ‘Advanced Search’, specifying the exact word order. From the myriad links this produced, I choose 17 completions of the phrase “some people like” that appealed to me. I took only the words shown in the links without clicking/opening them. I then did the same thing with my own phrase “while others prefer”.

At some point, while putting the piece together, I remembered the origin of the comically spoken words: Frank Zappa’s introduction to his track *Muffin Man*, from the album *Bongo Fury*. I was reminded that Zappa’s track finishes “some people like ...” with “cup cakes better” and “cup cakes exclusively”. I added these phrases to my piece.



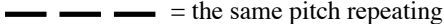
One of the phrase endings that came from the “some people like” search was “the sound of machines”. This gave me an idea for the end of the piece.

After Frank Zappa





for between nine and ninety-nine voices
of mixed or unmixed ranges

Robert Percy
(2015)

Performance Notes:

1. Ideally, the performers should be dispersed antiphonally, around or among the audience, moving or still.
2. The Leader both sings and gives cues.
3. Cue arrows  indicate where the Leader conducts all performers to begin or end a section or event immediately and together, cutting short as necessary.
4. Guide/contour lines are given as an approximate indication of pitch shape and pitch relationships, e.g.:
 = ascending gliss.
 = the same pitch repeating

A

 ca. 6"	G.P. ca. 4"	 ca. 6"	G.P. ca. 4"
			

B

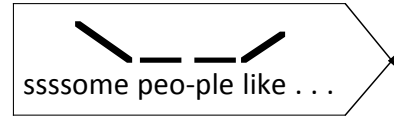
KEEP REPEATING UNTIL CUE (ca. 60")



G.P.
ca. 3"

- . . . the sound of machines.
- . . . vanilla ice cream.
- . . . cup cakes better.
- . . . it to fade in slower.
- . . . being ignorant.
- . . . our work.
- . . . to dress scary.
- . . . the skin.
- . . . doing work by hand.
- . . . to have a meaning.
- . . . precision.
- . . . it to fade in faster.
- . . . shiny things.
- . . . the art style.
- . . . peppers or sadomasochism.
- . . . cup cakes exclusively.
- . . . to give help to the local community.
- . . . to show how powerful, or knowledgeable, or intelligent they are.
- . . . to be together.

*sing**:



p

whisper :

*Leader begins, others stagger their entries: sing 'ssssome people like' with pitches of your choice, but following guide/contour lines, then whisper one of the phrases (on the right) without pausing. Always use the natural rhythm of speech. Aim to vary the pitch/register for each repeat of 'ssssome people like'. Choose a different right-hand phrase each time, not in order (top to bottom). Do not sync with other singers.

C

KEEP REPEATING UNTIL CUE (ca. 60")



G.P.
ca. 2"

... concise and to the point presentations.

... a highly successful life.

... deep water.

... the big cities.

... to live on the west coast.

... rectangular.

... a slower reading speed.

... to entertain.

... to dress down.

... lighter pressure.

... company.

... salty or sour tastes.

... thicker, higher tension.

... a vintage, retro style.

... a more adaptive approach.

... a quiet night alone.

... to remain in places they know.

... a more confrontational approach.

... the flavour of artificial vanilla in relatively high doses.

*sing**:
•

wavering glisses (wholetone interval)

whi - - - - - le o - th - ers pre - fer . . .

p

speak :
•

*Leader begins, others stagger their entries: sing 'while others prefer' with pitch of your choice, then speak one of the right-hand phrases without pausing. The pitch for 'while others prefer' can create dissonance or consonance; it's your choice. Aim for a different pitch on each repeat. Aim for a blended sound. Choose a different right-hand phrase each time, not in order (top to bottom). Do not sync with other singers.

D KEEP REPEATING UNTIL CUE (ca. 30")

G.P.
ca. 4"

*sing**:

(long glisses.)

I _____ for one _____ care less _____ for them.

mf ————— *p* ————— *mf p* *mf* ————— *p*

*Leader begins, others enter without waiting.
 Choose your own pitch/es according to guide/contour lines; aim to vary them on each repeat.
 Do not sync with other singers; avoid doubling other singers' pitches.
 Do not pause between repeats.



E

Together (leader conducts, ♩ = ca. 96)

*sing*** :

staccato - - - - - , *hold* ↓

some peo - ple like the sound of ma - chi - - - nes

p

**Sing each syllable together with periodic rhythm.
 Choose your own pitch, changing pitch (or not) as desired.
 Aim for complex (dissonant or consonant) harmony.

G.P.
ca. 2"

F

KEEP REPEATING UNTIL CUE (ca. 30")

*whisper****

Prrrrrrrrr t-k-t-k aaaaaaah, ch ch ch ch ka ka ka ka;

pp

***Begin and end together.
 Aim for a very soft, blended sound.
 Do not sync with the other singers.
 Do not pause between repeats.