The Nine Circles

for voice(s)

O. Maia

(2018)

to Jarrah (16/2/2019 – 7/3/2019)
engulfed by the darkness

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
mi ritrovai per una selva oscura
ché la diritta via era smaritta

(Suddenly I found myself in a dark place
and the path ahead was no longer clear.)

Dante, La Divina Comedia, Inferno

The Nine Circles

for voice(s)

The scores for these nine pieces use concepts and nomenclature familiar to the Estill Voice Model™. A good understanding and control of the Estill Compulsory Figures and Figure Combinations for Voice Qualities is advised.

Working through the pieces and games in *Games for Musicians and Non-Musicians* will present the players with various possible approaches to physical engagement, gesture and embodied action, in particular awareness of the importance of the gaze in forging complicity with the audience and the other players.

These pieces are included in the gestural version of *On Light and Dark* (2018).

These pieces can be performed by one vocalist or many, in any order and in any combination. They can combined with any other pieces. Do not use scores, music stands, stage lights, or any other object that can hinder your physical engagement or trap your gaze. Though in no way compulsory, you may choose to use microphones to amplify small vocalic and mouth noises but ensure that the microphone does not restrict movement or gaze.

1

[Tongue- tip] overtones

Solo or group

1) Sustain a note, any note, as long as you can, lips mid–position (/a/). Breath as necessary, then resume the same note.
If in a group, no gaps or silences should happen. A silence marks the end of a performance.

2) While singing, and starting from a relaxed tongue position (/Λ/), very slowly move your tongue-tip along your palate to the back (/u/), and from back to front (/i/), exploring a full effort scale (focusing on the tip of the tongue).

3) Alter the pace of movement (change acceleration) and the peaks and troughs of the tongue's cyclic movement.

2

[TVF-Slack] [Tongue- dorsum]

1) At the start: lips are open, tongue flat (/u/), jaw closed.

Long slack TVF notes, full exhalations.
Repeat. Breath as necessary.

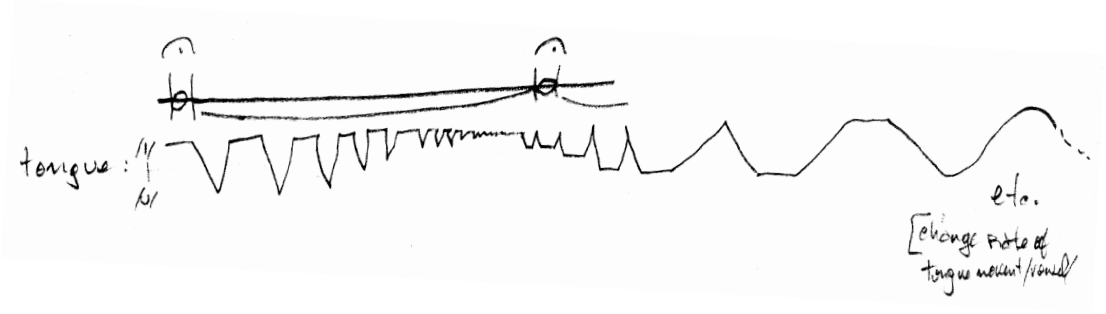
2) Slowly transform the vowel content by moving tongue dorsum forward (/i/) and back again (/u/).

Try to maintain stable spectral bands of sound as you make slow transformations.

3) Very slow movements over many breaths.

4) Alter pace of transformations over many breaths.

5) Slowly, lips open (a smile); jaw opens (a scream) for a possible end.



3

[Tongue- dorsum]

1) Sing a long stable note.
2) Repeat. Breath as necessary.

3) Slowly transform the vowel content by moving tongue dorsum forward (/i/) and back again (/u/).
Try to maintain stable bands of sound as you make transformations.

4) Breath as you need and resume.

5) Alter pace of transformations over many breaths.

4

[FVF]

1) Silently, inhale fully. Phonate, quietly, low effort levels, speech quality, long vowel /a/. Repeat.

2) At each repetition slightly increase FVF effort towards constriction, by very small increments (one increment per exhalation) until complete constriction, and breath stops.

Never close your mouth or swallow. Salivation is probably inevitable.

3) Hold last breath (FVF fully closed) as long as possible.

4) Release and rest.

5

[FVF constriction]

Quick and short sounds throughout, alternating quick inhalations and exhalations.

1) Inhale (unpitched - FVF retracted); exhale (pitched-mainly the same pitch). Very low larynx.

2) Slowly and progressively vary the effort level of FVF constriction to a safe but demanding effort level, slowly reaching in-breath phonation.

3) Slowly alter vowel shape (jaw, lips and tongue) to direct attention to individual overtones.
Maintain your physical engagement while you increase FVF and breathing effort.

4) Sustain the effort until you are noticeably struggling to maintain engagement.

Keep eye contact with your audience throughout.

5) End when you have no choice but to fail.

6

[FVF] [TVF]

1) Slow in-breath, as long as possible (silence: FVF and TVF fully retracted) ⇒ slow outbreath, as long as possible.

2) At each repetition make a very slow and long progression from quiet to very loud by progressive adduction of FVF, and later closure of TVF leading to sustained constricted phonation.

3) Repeat, slowly increasing effort (at the level of FVF and TVF) at each repetition, until sustained maximum effort is reached, and breathing is no longer possible.

4) End when have no choice but to fail.

7

[Larynx Height]

1) Quickly and continuously oscillate larynx height from very low to very high.

2) Slowly and progressively add TFV vibration; long and comfortable sounds.

3) When phonation is established, and while performing fast Larynx height oscillations, alter the following parameters, first in isolation, then in combination with each other. All very slow and all changes very progressive.

Pitch transformations : pitch fluctuates with Larynx movement ---> pitch is the same while larynx moves

Thyroid Cartilage Tilt transformations: no sob ------->extreme sob

Tongue transformation: tongue at rest --> slowly perform a complete vowel cycle /u/ -> /i/ -> /u/

Twang transformations: no twang ----> full effort twang (eventually leading to no phonation).

8

[TVF-BM/slack, VELUM/roll]

Take your time to travel comfortably, and in a controlled way from stage 1 through to stage 7, below.
Repeat each stage several times until you feel you can control it and repeat accurately, before moving on to the following stage.

1) Gentle growl, the kind one growls when waking up, slack TVF, long and comfortable. TVF/slack, LARYNX/low, very slowly gliding to LARYNX/high at each growl, higher each time but always starting with LARYNX/Low.

2) From TVF/slack +LARYNX/high, lead on to *falsetto* (try to keep TVF/slack).

3) When in Larynx height is very high, pitch is high or very high and TVF are very thin: change TONGUE between vowels /u-i/.

4) Add VELUM/quick open-close click, tongue/dorsum high [a quick guttural stop], initially sparse clicks, and increasing occurrences until naturally leads to VELUM/rolled (French /rr/).

5) Recover TVF/Slack into the mix. TVF/slack+ LARYNX/high+ VELUM/rolled

6) Finally add Aryepiglottic fold and cartilage friction (as in Tuvan Xöömei)

7) Increase effort and volume to your maximum safe levels, perhaps trading TVF-BM/slack for TVF-BM/thick.

9

[LARYNX/osc, + TVF-On Off/glottal]

1) High note, sustained as long as possible. ThCart/tilted. Repeat. At each repetition increase tilt and notice subtle vibrato.

2) Continue repeating.

3) Add sudden larynx oscillation after onset. Larynx /high=low=high, violently fast movement, holding ThCart /tilted. Increase effort on LARYNX oscillation until notes start dropping (near Yodelling).

4) Add TVF-onset/glottal in the interruptions – fast short glottal on/offset+ThCart/tilted+Larynx oscillation.

5) Add AES/tight to Larynx/High-Low, TVF-on-off/glottal (a seagull, perhaps?)

Retrograde 5 to 1, back to the start.

Repeat this full cycle four times. Each time let stage 5 be closer and closer to actual crying, increase ThCart tilt effort to maximum). Body and face should inevitable accuse extreme effort.

Recoil to silence to end, quicker, but still clearly paced, progressively and consequentially.