

PREFACE

Ikribu were the songs sung during nightlong vigils held in the cities of Assyria. During the course of the vigil participants read the events of the future in the organs of animals slit open at the ceremony’s start. The liver — evident font of the body’s blood — constituted a particularly rich site of answers. Models of sheeps’ livers excavated from a palace compound in what is now eastern Syria record the exact locations of the animals’ organs to be consulted by magicians. From such song-filled inspection of the insides of animals emerged an understanding of the future vivid enough to inform the actions of individuals and the decisions of the state.

Scordatura. String II of the violin is tuned down a minor third to F#4; string III of the violin is tuned up a major second to E4. String I of the viola is tuned down a major third to F4; string II of the viola is tuned up a minor second to Eb4. String IV of the cello is tuned down a major ninth to Bb0 (an octave below the lowest note on the bass clarinet):

violin: E5, F#4, E4, G3
viola: F4, Eb4, G3, C3
cello: A3, D3, G2, Bb0

Seating positions. The violinst and violist should sit opposite one another across an upturned bass drum placed on a chair between them. The cellist should sit behind the violinist and violist; if a dais is available, the cellist can be seated atop it to better expose the instrument behind the bass drum. The clarinetist should be seated at a slight remove from the other players.

Auxilliary instruments. The players are asked to use the following auxilliary instruments:

clarinet: small stone, slate, large basket of grain
violin: small stone, slate, eight cups of grain, bass drum (with brushes)
viola: small stone, slate, bass drum (with brushes)
cello: small stone, slate, large basket of grain

Stonescratch. At the end of the piece the cellist is asked to scratch individuated marks into a piece of slate with a smooth stone. This moment is marked “stonescratch” in the score. Follow the timings and loudnesses given in the score.

Stonecircle. At different points in the piece the violinst, violist and clarinetist are asked to move a smooth stone in circlces across the surface of a piece of slate. (Flagstone or another stone with a comparable surface can be used if slate is unavailable.) These moments are marked “stonecircle” in the score. Each of three players should have their own stone and their own piece of slate; the three pieces of slate should differ slightly from each other. Circles drawn during performance should be as large as the surface of the slate will allow and at least as wide in diameter as the width of the players’ palms. Different rates of circling are given as fractions of π .

Grainfall. Eight times during the piece the violinist is requested to pour the contents of a cup of barley to the floor. These moments are marked “grainfall” in the score. The action is a harbinger of investigation and should be performed in full view of the audience with grace and deliberation. The cups should match each other and be big enough to allow grain to be poured for several seconds continuously as requested by the durations given in the score. The recepticle used to catch the grain may be made of wood or clay but not plastic or metal. Another grain may be substituted if barely is unavailable. Whatever the grain selected, the violinist’s choice of grain should differ from that of the cellist and clarinetist, as described below. Fill the cups and set them aside before the performance starts.

Graincircle. At different times in the piece the cellist and the clarinetist are asked to circle their left hands clockwise in a large basket filled with grain. These moments are marked “graincircle” in the score. The cellist’s and the clarinetist’s baskets should be be large enough to hold at least 5 or 10 kilograms of grain and should be made of wood or clay instead of plastic or metal. The exact types of grain to use are left to the performers. But it is important that the cellist and the clarinetist use two different types of grain and that the cellist’s and clarinetist’s grains differ from the violinist’s. (Perhaps barley for the violinst, lentils for the cellist and dried beans for the clarinetist). Different rates of circling are given as fractions of π .

Amplification. The cellist’s and clarinetist’s baskets of grain may be placed on top of slabs of styrofoam to amplify the the sound of the players’ hands as they move. Electronic amplification should not be used.

Accidentals. Accidentals govern only one note. Natural signs are inserted to clarify the spelling of different pitches that follow each other at the same staff position.