

Ouroboros

For Percussion Trio and Voice

Ethan Isaac
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Ouroboros (2023)

Ethan Isaac (b.1996)

Written for the Sō Percussion Summer Institute 15th Anniversary Composer's Concert

Instrumentation:

Voice/Orator:

Text Reading/Chant

Piano/Mallet Instrument

Percussion 1:

Drumkit -

Kick

Floor Tom*

Tom (Medium)*

Tom (Medium-high)*

Snare Drum*

Hi-Hat

Crash Cymbal

Ride Cymbal

Blown Bottle - C - Fill with water for appropriate tuning if needed

Text Reading/Chant

* - Have method for Dampening ready depending on room sound

Percussion 2:

Junk Cymbal

5 Vaguely Tonal Glass/Ceramic Objects

Blown Bottle - Ab - Fill with water for appropriate tuning if needed

Text Reading/Chant

Percussion 3:

Junk Cymbal

5 Vaguely Tonal Glass/Ceramic Objects

Blown Bottle - Eb - Fill with water for appropriate tuning if needed

Text Reading/Chant

Performance Guide

If the ensemble is looking for more information on how exactly to realize some of the improvisatory sections there is a video of the first performance of this work on So Percussion's youtube channel.

In general, improvisation is welcome in this work. Much would be lost if the notation was taken as dogma, so feel free to create new transitions or rhythms if they fit well with the ensemble. The orator has plenty of freedom in how they realize the text and will affect the rest of the work.

Piano may be substituted for a mallet instrument if the orator is more comfortable with percussion.

X Noteheads denote speaking portions while normal noteheads are for singing. The non-orators are always speaking parts.

This score snippet is from *General Booth Enters Into Heaven* by Charles Ives. It is what the section "I" is based off of. Feel free to improvise something based off of this rather than adhere to the notated part. As well as consider transposing to your particular voice type.

Round and round _____ round and round and round and round and round and round _____ Yet!

poco e poco rit. e decresc.

pp

Percussion Key

[illegible]

Full Text

As I feel this heart beating out of my chest
There is no moment of rest
I must go
By the beat of this drum

Blood collecting at the base of my mind
Circulation of dopaminergic urges
However temporary, nonetheless intensely

Reaching for Buddha nature while dog chasing tail is
unreasonable for an ordinary
Man
But we are not so
So we are not so
Ordinary
we are not so
So we are not, so

With laser precision I complete the vision
That's the intention
But the internal mention of
Another important task causes a dropping of the mask
With the sinking realization that I am trapped in the

Circulation of dopaminergic urges
However temporary, nonetheless intensely
Its time to purge
this
Mind

But there's this tiny mention of
Yet another mask

With the sinking realization that I'm sinking in the sinking realization that
I'm sinking in our...self-unfulfilling promises, our minor deaths and rebirths,
our little "I'll do it tomorrows",
in the constant rejection of others.
In our little round and round, and round and round,
and round and round, and round and round, and round
and round, and round and round, and round and round,
and...yet.

As the masters of these tiny universes, we have consumed all meaning that can nourish us.
For We are like Ouroboros, dragons that have consumed the father, the son,
and what little spirit there is left in this world.

We have eaten ourselves alive.

Ouroboros

Ethan Isaac (1996)

Freely, Improvisatory ♩ = c. 60–92

Drum Set

Percussion 1

Percussion 2

Orator

ppp *p* *mp* *mp* *pp*

As I As I As I As I

Begin Sitting

As I

A Lock in Rhythm ♩ = 80

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

mp *pp sub.*

As I feel As I

As I feel

As I As I As I As I As I As I As I

Free Time, Recitation

7

Ds. *feel* *p*

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot. *p* *mf*

As I As I As I As I As I feel this heart beat - ing out of my chest there

9

Ds. **B** Hard, Driving ♩ = 92

Perc. 1 *f*

Perc. 2 *f*

Ot. *f*

is no mo - ment of rest I must go by the beat of this drum

12

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

ff *mf*

ff *mf*

14

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

pp *f sub.*

3 *sempre. f*

sub. ff *f* *3*

sub. ff *f* *3*

16

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

ff 3

18

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

f sub.

f

20

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

Improvise on this for "30

○ | ○ | ○ | ○ ○ ○
 Blood collecting at the base of my mind. Or ○
 ○ ○ ○ ○ > | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | x | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ >

Circulation of dopaminergic urges

Explore/improvise/play!

However temporary, nonetheless intensely ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ >

Steady Kick + hit percussion on certain words. Feel Free to add/subtract. ○ Represents a hit (play ~50% of time)

C Freely, Improvisatory ♩ = c. 72–112

D

Ds. *mp*
Blood! *fff sub.*

Perc. 1 *mp*
Blood! *fff sub.*

Perc. 2 *fff sub.*
yell

Ot. *fff sub.*
Blood! co - lect - ing at the base of my mind

26

Ds. *mf cresc.*

Perc. 1 *mf cresc.*

Perc. 2 *mp cresc.*

Ot. How - ev - er tem - po - rar - y none - the - less in - tense - ly How - ev - er tem - po -

28

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

- rar - y none - the - less in - tense - ly How - ev - er tem - po - rar - y none - the - less in - tense - ly

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for measures 28 and 29. The Ds. part has a single note in measure 28 and a whole rest in measure 29. Perc. 1 and Perc. 2 play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in measure 28, followed by a series of eighth notes with asterisks in measure 29. The Ot. part plays a melodic line with eighth notes and quarter notes. The lyrics are written below the Ot. part.

30

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

f

f

How - ev - er tem - po - rar - y none - the - less in - tense - ly How - ev - er tem - po - rar - y none

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for measures 30 and 31. The Ds. part has a whole rest in measure 30 and a whole note in measure 31. Perc. 1 and Perc. 2 play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with asterisks in measure 30, followed by a series of eighth notes with asterisks in measure 31. The Ot. part plays a melodic line with eighth notes and quarter notes. The lyrics are written below the Ot. part. The dynamic marking *f* is present at the start of measures 30 and 31 for Perc. 1 and Perc. 2.

32

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

- the - less in - tense - ly How - ev - er tem - po - rar - y none - the - less in - tense - ly

ff

ff

E Lock in Rhythm ♩ = 88

34

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

Reach - ing for Bud - - dha Na - ture while dog chas - ing tail

F Freely, Improvisatory ♩ = c. 60–72

35

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

Man!

man!

man!

man!

ff

ff

ff

ff

Orate: But, we are not so,
so we are not so

is un - rea - son - a - ble for an or - din - air - y man! But, we are not so

Orator speaks with ensemble whilst improv takes place, with percussionists playing fragments of this rhythm as well as speaking the text.

When Orator stops speaking begin to coalesce into a single unison rhythm chanting the text.

♩ = 88

Voice

3

But we are not so, so we are not so Ord - in - ar - y we are not so so we are not so

***Gradually getting louder and faster until Orator stands up,
Signaling one last repetition of the rhythm***

After last repetition all instruments cut out,

Orator recites:

With laser precision I complete the vision,
thats the intention.

But the internal mention of another important task
causes a dropping of the mask.

With the sinking realization I am trapped in the, (→ next page)

**Aggressive** ♩ = c. 112

Play a driving fairly traditional drum beat

38

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

Remain Standing

f

Cir - cu - la - tion of do - pa - min - er - gic urg - es How - ev - er

39

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

tem - po - rar - y none - the - less in - tense - ly

40

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

Cir - cu - la - tion of do - pa - min - er - gic urg - es How - ev - er

41

Ds.

(4)

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

tem - po - rar - y none - the - less in - tense - ly

42

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

Cir - cu - la - tion of do - pa - min - er - gic urg - es It's time to purge this mind!

mind!

mind!

mind!

H Hypnotic ♩ = c. 66

Begin sparsely speaking "Toxic in, Toxic out"

All Percussionists, blow on bottles and produce ambient percussion.

Open

End cue

44

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

Orate: But there's this tiny mention of yet another mask

The sink - ing re'al - i - za - tion that I'm sink - ing in the in these

49 Slightly More Energy ♩ = c. 76

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

self - "un" - ful - fil - ling prom - is - es In these mi - nor cy - cles of deaths and

51

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

re - births. In these ti - ny "I'll do it to - mor - rows"

53

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

Move to Instrument

In our con - stant re - jec - tion of the oth - er_ In our lit - tle

I

Continue Bottle Blowing and Perc.

J

56

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

Play General Booth Enters Into Heaven Accompaniment

Face Audience

mp ord.

p sub. *mf*

Round and round and round and round and yet. as the

Whisper yell, with cupped hands
at one another

Whisper yell, with cupped hands
at one another

Whisper yell, with cupped hands
at one another

Whisper yell, with cupped hands
at one another

63

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

the son
mp

the fa - ther
mp

there left this world
mf $\longrightarrow$ *f*

and what lit - tle spir - it is in world
mf $\longrightarrow$ *f*

drag - ons that have con - sumed world
mf

Hard, Driving ♩ = 100

65

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

eat - en
mf

have
mf

our - selves
mf

We a - live
mf

67

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

ff

ff

69

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

pp

f sub.

ff

fff Extremely intense improvisation on instrument. Noise.

Round and round and round and round and

71

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

Round and round and round and round and

73

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

Round and round and round and round and

Loop and develop as needed

fff

75

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

decresc. poco a poco

Round and round and round and round and

81

Ds.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Ot.

Begin playing single notes

ppp

Round and round and round and round and Round and round and round and round and