ARTICLES OF SPACE

MEMENTO MORI

JOEY BARGSTEN • MMI

SS + AA + TT + AUDIO FILE • VOCAL SCORE
Program Note
My interest in multiple organizations of time facilitated by portable click tracks—first on cassette tapes, then on CDs, and soon, I suspect, with MP3 players or wearable audio devices—has preoccupied me since 1983 with my flute quartet Energy Levels. It was a guiding structural element in my chamber opera sound chaser/soul chaser (1986), in Cyborg Symphony (1992-6), and in a number of smaller works, primarily for vocal ensembles.

Articles of Space was written for an exhibition of the same name curated by Leon Johnson at Western Oregon University at Monmouth in April 2001. The sextet of performers chant from a number of "holy books"—including works by Kathy Acker and Derrida; books for young readers like Herbie (the Love Bug) Goes Bananas and The Vanilla Ice Story; and more conventional revered texts like the Tao Te Ching and The Upanishads.

Performance Notes
Six vocalists are distributed around the performance area, and are constantly walking around the exhibit space and adjoining hallways, stairways, and rooms during the performance. Performers can elect to constantly move through the space or pause frequently.

As a default, performers should wear black. They may choose to wear matching or coordinating outfits or uniforms, but they should not wear the traditional choral robe or gown.

The vocalists will be chanting from a number of "holy books", following their pitches and tempi on prerecorded CDs through portable players and headphones. Each pitch in the piece is performed at its own tempo.

Performance begins when all vocalists start their CDs simultaneously with the beginning of the audio CD, and it ends 19 minutes 11 seconds later, unless multiple performances are indicated.

Reading the Scores/Singing the Texts
The vocalists chant phrases (i.e., sentences or sections articulated with punctuation) from their texts. They are free to sing as many or as few phrases per section as they desire, with the length of time between phrases also left to their discretion. A variety of textures, from very sparse to very dense, is the desired result. Pacing is extremely important: not everyone needs to be singing all the time.

Each phrase begins with a held tone (the incipit), its length determined by the small number in italics below the pitch. After the incipit is held as long as is specified, the remainder of the phrase is chanted syllabically:

```
also 1 CD
at Cue 7
(incipit: 5)
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```
Mo - ni - en - te le - o - ne ... (etc.)
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Dynamics are generally in the pp-mf range, and performers can lend any dynamic shape to their phrases, including sudden and unexpected changes. Slight accents on the initial syllable of a word are also possible:

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> Mo - ni - en - te le - o - ne ... (etc.)
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> > > > > > >
(With the death of the b - an ... (etc.))
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It is not necessary that the vocalists carry or even refer to the written score, since pitch and tempo information appear on each of the CDs, and the text will be in their hands. They will, however, need to memorize the incipit number for each section, and also note their cues (visible in the display of the CD player and by the change of pitch/tempo).

—JB (21.iii.01)
for Leon Johnson and the artists of the ARTICLES OF SPACE exhibit

ARTICLES OF SPACE
MEMENTO MORI

Joey Bargsten

Audio CD Cue:
Time (Articles):
Time (memento):

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0:00</th>
<th>3:12</th>
<th>6:24</th>
<th>8:00</th>
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<th>10:40</th>
<th>11:44</th>
<th>12:48</th>
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<td>5:37</td>
<td>6:07</td>
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SOPRANO

incipit: 21 13 8 5 3 2

ALTO

8 5 3 2 3 5

TENOR

3 2 3 5 8 13

BASS (ELECTRONIC)

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Postscript: How Articles of Space became memento mori

memento mori is a re-imagining of Articles of Space, whereby it is transformed from a light and speculative high/low culture clash experimental work to a serious, contemplative memorial in sound.

In memento mori the performers chant the names of the victims of the September 11, 2001 terror attacks, instead of drawing from the variety of texts in Articles. Also in memento mori, the length is truncated to a symbolic nine minutes, eleven seconds. At the rate of, perhaps, 20 names chanted by performer per minute, a duplication of performers per part is needed if all of the nearly 3,000 victims are to be acknowledged. Three performers per part (each with a different list of victims) should cover all the names. None of the “incipit” instructions are observed - the names are chanted syllabically, with pauses between them as needed.

memento mori’s premiere performance was a rather somber one held at the Northwest ElectroAcoustic Music Festival in Portland, Oregon, only weeks after the tragic events of 9/11. I remember walking around in a haze for weeks afterwards, wondering if I had done the right thing by putting this piece together so quickly and performing it so soon after the attacks. Maybe I hadn’t had time to work out all the nuances of grappling with this enormous historical and cultural event, or of divining the implications that event had on an artist living in a crazy new era. But now, after a few years of reflection, and after taking some of the images, themes, and ideas from that time, and working them into my opera ANATOMY OF MELANCHOLY™, I don’t regret bringing memento mori into the world the way I did. I would regret it if I hadn’t.

—JB (16.iii.07)

Note: If you would like to perform memento mori, please edit the vocal parts to match the times on the score.
Contact the composer for details (select “CONTACT” from the BAD MIND TIME™ home page - http://www.badmindtime.com)