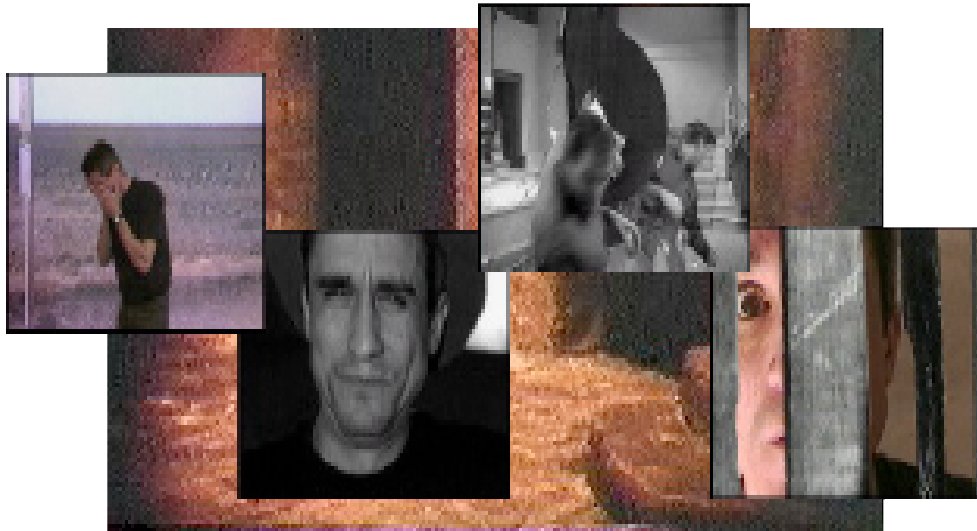


The Eternal Return



A MATT MARELLO Film

Music by C. P. First

PREVIEW

Music for 11 Instruments and Audio

C. P. First

*Commissioned by CrossSound Singing Pictures 2002
Winner in the American Composers Forum Sonic Circuits 2002
Official Selection Museum of Modern Art America in Berlin 2004*

About *The Eternal Return*

The Eternal Return is a multimedia work for five films and five ensembles. The film is available in two formats: (1) Using a single DVD player all five films are projected onto a single screen in a kind of “four-square” format. (2) Using synchronized DVD players the five films are projected onto five separate screens.

The music is conceived as five discrete compositions that are performed simultaneously to form a single work. The antiphonal placement of the ensembles described below (see Staging) should be employed. Each film is associated with a single composition performed by one of the ensembles.

The five films--*Metropolis*, *North by Northwest*, *Where is Everybody?*, *Psycho*, and *The Trial*-- appear in the order shown below and associate with the ensembles indicated:

Film 1: *Metropolis*; Ensemble 1: 2 violins

Film 2: *North by Northwest*; Ensemble 2: violin, cello, piano

Film 3: *Where is Everybody?*; Ensemble 3: oboe, (amplified) nylon-string guitar, percussion

Film 4: *Psycho*; Ensemble 4: audio track

Film 5: *The Trial*; Ensemble 5: Bb trumpet, french horn, and euphonium

A monophonic click track is fed from the DVD player via headphones to a single conductor who coordinates the four ensembles and audio track. The click track enables the precise alignment of the films and compositions as required in the score.

The Eternal Return was commissioned by the CrossSound New Music Festival, 2002.

Instrumentation

Ensemble 1
2 Violins

Ensemble 2
Violin, Cello, Piano

Ensemble 3
Oboe, Amplified Nylon String Guitar*, Percussion⁺ -- 1 Player (3 tom toms, snare, hi-hat, 10" splash cymbal, 16" thin crash cymbal, 22" heavy ride cymbal, small button gong, vibra slap, maracas, tambourine)

* The guitar requires minimal amplification using a pickup condenser microphone. A small amplifier will provide adequate amplification.

* When possible, the percussionist should use electronic drums and "acoustic" cymbals.

Ensemble 4
Audio Track

Ensemble 5
Bb Trumpet, French Horn in F, Euphonium

Notation

The score is transposed.

Accidentals apply through the measure unless canceled; accidentals do not transfer at the octave.

Hauptstimme (H^f) and *Nebenstimme* (N^f) conventionally denote principal and secondary parts.

Where multiple hauptstimme appear simultaneously, the parts should be balanced.

Performance Notes for the Ensembles

Audio Track

A single speakers for the playback of the audio track must be positioned adjacent to Ensemble 2. The music on the DVD is mixed to conform to the dynamic shape of the ensembles' dynamics. The volume should be set to sound equal to the ensembles.

Cello

Near the end of *North by Northwest*, the cello is required to quietly tune the C string to B.

Guitar

The part requires a nylon-string guitar. When possible the instrument should employ a small amount of amplification using a very small amplifier and a pickup condenser microphone.

Percussion

Instrument list:

snare drum, 4 toms*, 10-inch splash cymbal, 22-inch, heavy ride cymbal, 16-inch thin crash cymbal, hi-hat, vibra slap, maracas, tambourine, gong+

*If four toms are not available, a bass drum with foot pedal may be used in place of the lowest tom.

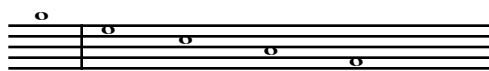
+If a gong is not available, the 22-inch cymbal can be used with felt mallets.

When possible, the percussionist should employ electronic drums and “acoustic” cymbals. It is recommended that the drums be set up as a kit. All cymbals are suspended.

The upper, single-line staff is used to notate the cymbals, tambourine, vibra slap, and maracas.

The lower percussion staff is used to notate the drums as follows:

Snare 4 Toms from high to low



Abbreviations used:

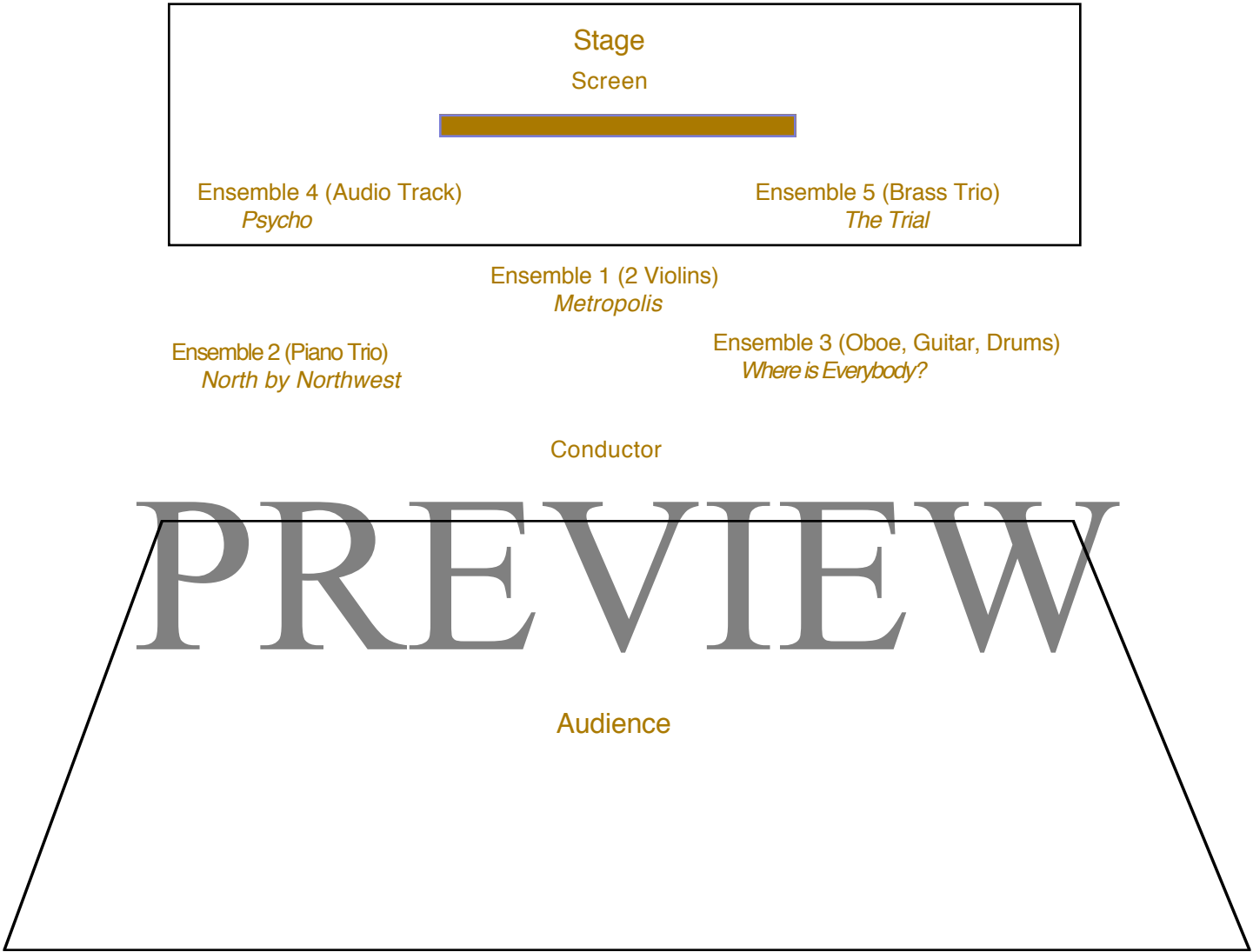
VS	Vibra Slap
10", 16", etc.	10-inch splash cymbal, 16-inch crash cymbal, and the like
R.S.	Rim shot
HH	Hi-hat
HH open	Leave the hi hat loosely closed; not fully open (and strike with stick)
HH/w stick	Strike or roll hi-hat with stick(s)
HH close	Close hi-hat with foot pedal

Oboe

At specified points in the music, the oboe is required to perform timbre trills. The trills should be articulated as fast as possible unless a specific rhythm is indicated.

Staging

The antiphonal placement of the ensembles is diagramed below
(The suggested arrangement can be adjusted to suit different halls as needed.)



In performances employing multiple projectors and screens, the screens should be placed behind and above the appropriate ensemble.

The lighting for the performance should leave the entire hall in darkness. A tight spotlight should illuminate each ensemble as it begins to play. As a film begins to fade, the spotlight on the associated ensemble similarly should fade.

About the Performance DVD

The DVD audio includes two audio channels:

Left channel: This channel contains the click track and should be fed through headphones only to the conductor. A spoken count of four beats precedes the click track. The score begins on the first click, not the spoken count.

Right channel: This channel should be fed to a single speaker placed on stage as indicated in the “Staging” diagram. The volume should be adjusted so that the audio track balances with the live ensembles. If necessary, a technician can mix the volume of the audio track throughout the performance to ensure a proper balance with the ensembles. The audio track has been premixed, however, to follow the dynamic shape of the live music and should not require additional mixing in most performances.

PREVIEW

Program Note for Performance

The Eternal Return (2002)

A Multimedia Collage by Matt Mareello and C.P. First (Flim by Matt Mareello; Music by C. P. First)

Commissioned by CrossSound Singing Pictures Summer Music Festival 2002

Friedrich Nietzsche elaborated his theory of eternal return, or eternal recurrence, in several texts. The Will to Power argued that a limited and calculable number of combinations exist in infinite time. Those combinations repeat an infinite number of times, and between iterations of individual events all other combinations must take place. "The world," Nietzsche concluded, "[is] a circular movement that has already repeated itself infinitely often and plays its dice game ad infinitum."

Human existence also falls subject to this principle of eternal return, as reasoned in Thus Spake Zarathustra. The itinerant philosopher Zarathustra receives a mountaintop vision of the eternal return. "I shall return, with this sun, with this earth, with this eagle, with this serpent-not to a new life or a better life or a similar life: I shall return eternally to this identical and self-same life, in the greatest things and in the smallest." Mankind remains trapped in this circular existence. Thus condemned to repeat perpetually his errors, man never achieves the elevated status of "Übermensch," or superman.

This pessimistic, dissonant, and hopeless understanding of the human condition has provided the subject for the multimedia collage The Eternal Return, while Nietzsche's theory of reiteration has inspired its cyclical structure. This integrally conceived project joins five film clips selected and manipulated by filmmaker Matt Mareello with five musical compositions by C.P. First. Film extracts are looped and projected onto four separate screens while the instrumental ensembles perform live. Mareello has digitally replaced the original actors in each film with his own image. As sole protagonist, the filmmaker himself provides the unifying onscreen element in this ten-minute collage.

Two visual planes interact contrapuntally in The Eternal Return. A short segment from the silent sci-fi classic Metropolis (1926) repeats, like a pictorial ostinato, as a representation of infinite time. The four remaining film loops entrap the protagonist in an eternal fugue of menacing, inescapable predicaments. Our protagonist waits endlessly for someone to arrive in the first excerpt from Alfred Hitchcock's romantic comedy-thriller, North by Northwest (1959). The inaugural episode of Rod Serling's The Twilight Zone ("Where Is Everybody?" 1959) contributes material for the frightening isolation and futility portrayed in the second clip. Hitchcock-style foreboding enters in the third film loop from Psycho (1960), as the protagonist drives through an eternal night, unable to reach his destination. The wretched character endures accusing glances in a scene from Orson Welles's little-known film The Trial (1963), an adaptation of Franz Kafka's Der Prozess.

C.P. First has provided an original score for four independent instrumental ensembles and prerecorded audio track. In a manner comparable to the video, the score combines newly composed music, sound clips derived from the original movie soundtracks and autobiographical sound images, i.e. quotations from his own compositions. Two violins accompany the invariable "spinning room" video in a perpetual ostinato. A piano trio, borrowing from First's composition Intimate Voices, provides a counterpoint to North by Northwest. An ensemble of oboe, amplified nylon string guitar, and electronic drums contributes a backdrop to the Twilight Zone excerpt. An extensive quotation occurs during the Psycho clip. Bernard Herrmann's music for North by Northwest and Psycho and First's Time's Dedication, and its relentless cantillation of the French word "horloge" (clock), offered raw material for the prerecorded audio track. The borrowed music, however, is fragmented, rearranged, and reconstructed to produce a new work. Music for brass trio (trumpet, horn, and euphonium) and percussion underscores The Trial.

The Eternal Return depicts the absurdity and anxiety of contemporary existence via a unified visual, aural, and philosophical construction. Of all the characters in the five source movies, it is, ironically, the deranged Norman Bates in Psycho who seems to grasp the futility of human existence that Nietzsche articulated less

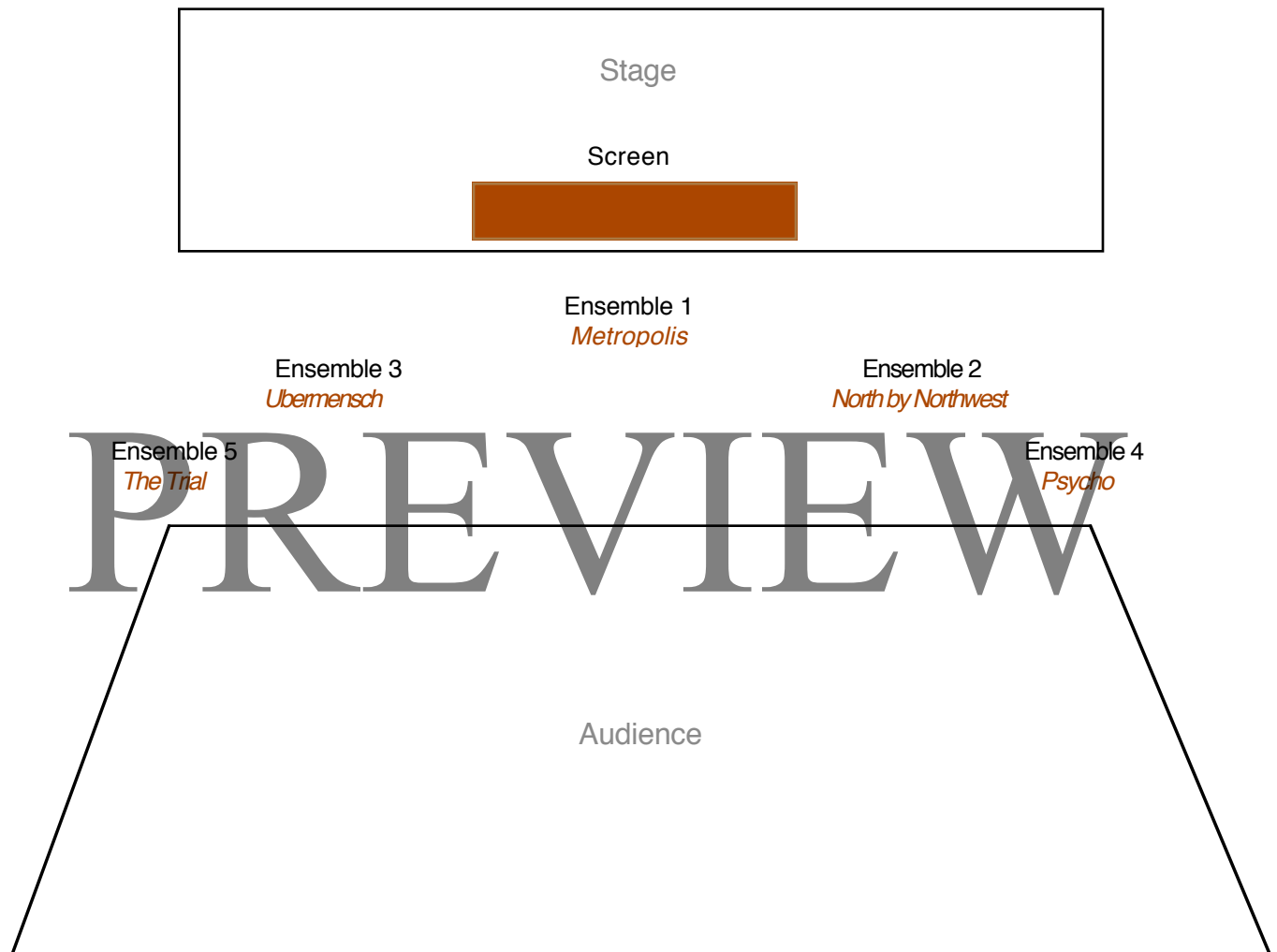
than a century before. "You know what I think?" asks Norman. "I think that we're all in our private traps, clamped in them, and none of us can ever get out. We scratch and we claw, but only at the air, only at each other, and for all of it, we never budge and inch."

Program notes (c) Todd E. Sullivan 2003

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The antiphonal placement of the ensembles is diagrammed below.



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The Eternal Return (2002)

A Multimedia Collage by Matt Marelo

Music by C.P. First

Commissioned by CrossSound Singing Pictures Summer Music Festival 2002

First performed in Juneau, Alaska on August 16, 2002

Subsequent Performances:

Berlin, Germany, Berlin Academy of Art (The Ensemble United Berlin)

Seoul, Korea (Sori Ensemble)

Chicago, Illinois Second Saturday Series (Chicago 21st Century Music Ensemble)

Sacramento, California, The Festival of New American Music

Terre Haute, Indiana, Festival of Contemporary Music

Katchikan, Alaska (CrossSound Singing Pictures Festival)

Sitka, Alaska (CrossSound Singing Pictures Festival)

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