

QUAERERE SENTENTIAS I

A DISSERTATION IN
Music Composition

Presented to the Faculty of the University
of Missouri-Kansas City in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

by
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QUAERERE SENTENTIAS I

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ABSTRACT

Quaerere Sententias (“search for meaning”) is a collection of pieces composed for soloists, digital audio, and video. The first set, *Quaerere Sententias I*, is comprised of three pieces: *Introit*, for trumpet; *Hiram*, for clarinet; and *Musashi*, for flute.

Each piece in *Quaerere Sententias* is concerned with an historic example of an individual or culture’s pursuit of purpose and related ontological ideas. Through presenting these concepts literally and abstractly in the medium of electroacoustic music and video, the meaning of associated cultural symbols is also explored.

Introit serves as a prologue to *Quaerere Sententias I*. Musical material is drawn from the melody of *L’homme armé*, just as composers of Renaissance masses employed the same to derive their material. The music evokes a sacred soundscape, as the video presents a sketched space based on Saint Gatien’s Cathedral in Tours. Tours served as the home to Burgundian composer Antoine Busnois, whose *Missa L’homme armé* was highly inspirational in the creation of *Introit*.

Hiram takes its title from Hiram Bingham III, whose writings and photographs are featured in the video. Bingham’s search for Machu Picchu is the narrative focus

behind the piece, as is the sense of purpose derived from the uncovering of an ancient civilization. Simultaneously, *Hiram* is concerned with the mysteries of Incan ontology, lost to time even as Quechua people populate the Andes today.

The musical material of *Hiram* is influenced by Andean traditions such as the *huanyo*. Samples of Peruvian instruments, including *zampoña*, *qena*, and *cajón*, are featured in the fixed part.

Musashi is inspired by *Go Rin No Sho*, a treatise on strategy by the legendary *ronin* swordsman Miyamoto Musashi. The musical material is inspired by *Honshirabe*, a staple of *shakuhachi* repertoire. Throughout the piece, the fixed part is derived from samples of *taiko* and *shakuhachi*, the metallic clash and scrape of swords, and a reading of the Fudō-myōō sutra, creating a soundscape to parallel Musashi's blend of Zen spirituality with merciless violence. Elements of *taiko* performance are also influential—particularly *oroshi*, a gesture in which the interval between events is reduced over time.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the Conservatory of Music and Dance , have examined a dissertation titled “Quaerere Sententias I” presented by Richard W. Johnson, Jr., candidate for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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TECHNICAL AND PERFORMANCE NOTES

Each piece in *Quaerere Sententias I* is performed with an accompanying video. The video (available at www.composerjohnson.com or by contacting the composer) includes audio encoded in 5.1 format. Tracks 1 and 2 are stereo left and right. These must be outputted to at least a stereo speaker set-up, with a subwoofer when available. Track 5 contains a click and audio cues for the performer and should be sent to headphones or an earpiece.

Each piece is ideally presented without amplifying the performer. In a dry space, however, reverb should be added.

The pieces that comprise *Quaerere Sententias I* may be performed individually or as a set. When performed individually, they are to be treated as an individual work, not as an excerpt of a larger whole. When performed as a set, the order is as follows: *Introit*, *Hiram*, and *Musashi*.

Performance Notes for *Musashi*

In order to give a sense of temporal freedom to the performer, a large portion of *Musashi* is notated spatially, without a rhythmic pulse. In these sections, durations are held to the next breath mark. Articulation and spacing between adjacent notes is at the performer's discretion, though slurs should be acknowledged. The performer's timing with the fixed media part does not need to be precise.

Entire systems of spatially notated music represent approximately twenty seconds. Barlines on these systems are placed approximately every five seconds, with corresponding clicks on the click track. Again, timing does not need to be precise.

PROGRAM NOTES

Program Notes for *Introit*

An Introit calls the congregation to the sacred ritual of Eucharist. The Introit has been part of the Mass Proper and its numerous musical settings since the middle of the first millennium CE. During that time, innumerable people have stood, sat, and knelt in places of worship, silently witnessing a performance with intermittent moments of acceptable interaction. There was a time when the holiness of this ritual was threatened by the Armed Man (*L'homme arme*), who dared to bring the popular sound of the masses into the sacred space of the Church. Some believed that the use of so catchy a tune, drunkenly sung in medieval taverns across the land, damaged the sanctity of both the ritual and the hallowed grounds on which it took place.

Introit for solo trumpet is part of a set of pieces featuring a soloist with digital audio and video entitled *Quaerere Sententias*, “search for meaning.” *Introit* was commissioned by—and is dedicated to—Samuel Wells.

Program Notes for *Hiram*

Hiram Bingham III is frequently credited as the “discoverer” of Machu Picchu. At the dawn of the twentieth century, he was guided by local Quechua *campesinos* to the awe-inspiring ruins that overlook the Urubamba River Valley. He dedicated many years of his life to the exploration of the Peruvian Andes and the remnants of Incan civilization, still inhabited by Quechua and the mysteries of an ancient people.

Hiram is part of a set of pieces for soloist and electronics entitled *Quaerere Sententias*, “search for meaning,” intended to explore examples of humanity’s quest for meaning. Musical material is influenced by Andean traditions such as the *huanyo*, and samples of a *zampoña*, a *qena*, and a *cajón* are featured, both guiding and sought by the clarinet.

Hiram was commissioned by—and is dedicated to—Cheryl Melfi.

Program Notes for *Musashi*

Miyamoto Musashi, a seventeenth century *ronin* of legendary renown, is the founder of the *Niten-ryu* school of swordsmanship. He devoted his life to honing his skills in the Way of the sword, winning dozens of duels. So great was the perfection of his skill that his late duels were fought only with a *boken*, or wooden sword, regardless of his opponent’s weapon. In 1645, lying ill and near death in a cave where he taken to a hermitic existence, he dictated the key concepts of his Way to a disciple. This document, *Go Rin No Sho* (“*Book of Five Rings*”), is still read today as a guide to strategy in any discipline.

Musashi for solo flute, digital audio, and video is guided by excerpts from this work. Musical material is inspired by *Honshirabe*, a prominent work in *shakuhachi* repertoire. Throughout the piece, the fixed part is derived from samples of *taiko* and *shakuhachi*, the metallic clash and scrape of swords, and a reading of the Fudō-myōō sutra. Elements of *taiko* performance are also featured in both parts, particularly the

concept of *oroshi*, a gesture in which the interval (or *ma*) between sonic events is reduced over time.

In its earliest form, *Musashi* was commissioned by Dark Matter Kansas City. Rebecca Ashe performed the Dark Matter version under the title *Orbs of Galileo*.

Text from A BOOK OF FIVE RINGS by Miyamoto Musashi, translated by Victor Harris. Copyright © 1974 by Victor Harris. Used by permission of The Overlook Press, New York, NY. All rights reserved.

commissioned by and dedicated to Samuel Wells

Introit

for trumpet, digital audio, and video

richard johnson

~ 15" $\text{♩} = 66$
freely, given rhythms are a guide

C Trumpet

Electronics

sfp *pp* *fz*

bell reverberation bell

5

pp *mf* *mp*

11

p *mfp* *fp*

A

17

pp *f*

bell

Introit

23 (rising out of recorded trumpet)

Musical score for measures 23-28. The top staff is a single melodic line starting with a *pp* dynamic and rising to *mf*. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment with a *tpt.* label and a *choir* label. The piano part features a steady bass line and chords in the right hand.

29 **B**

Musical score for measures 29-34. The top staff features a melodic line with dynamics *mf*, *mf*, *mf*, *pp*, and *f*. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment with a *choir* label. The piano part includes a *trm* (trill) marking and a *low rumble* marking.

35

Musical score for measures 35-40. The top staff features a melodic line with a *trm* (trill) marking and a *mp* dynamic. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment with a *low rumble* marking. The piano part includes a *trm* (trill) marking and a *low rumble* marking.

C

41

Musical score for measures 41-46. The top staff features a melodic line with dynamics *p*, *f*, *sfp*, *f*, and *sfp*. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment with a *cathedral cacophony* label. The piano part includes a *trm* (trill) marking and a *low rumble* marking.

Introit

47

ff *sfp*

56

fp *mf* *pp* *mp*

the cathedral cacophony diminishes.

One Minute

10-15"

66 *freely, chant-like*

a bassy resonance, out of which a bell's sustain slowly reveals itself... as light permeating darkness...

Introit

67 $\text{♩} = 76$ improvise chant-like rhythm ~10"

pp *mf* *mp*

$\sim 10''$

80 $\text{♩} = 76$

pp *pp*

choir

92 l'homme armé

f *p* *f*

bell-resonant snares

98

fp *sfp* *f* *fp* *ff*

Introit

106

Musical score for measures 106-111. The top staff is in treble clef, starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The bottom staff is in bass clef, featuring a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

112

Musical score for measures 112-117. The top staff is in treble clef, featuring a melodic line with accents and dynamic markings: *mf* < *sfp* > *sfp* > *pp* < *mf*. The bottom staff is in bass clef, featuring a rhythmic accompaniment with dynamic markings and the instruction "bell reverberation".

comissioned by Cheryl Melfi

Hiram

richard johnson

for clarinet, fixed audio, and video

The Journal

Clarinet in B \flat

Musical score for measures 1-7. The top staff is for Clarinet in B \flat in 4/4 time with a tempo of $\text{♩} = 56$. The bottom staff is for fixed audio/video. Dynamics include *pp*, *mp*, *pp*, *mf*, and *p*. Performance instructions include triplets and "rainstick clarinet" and "reson rainstick".

Musical score for measures 8-13. Measure 8 is marked with a box 'A'. The tempo changes to $\text{♩} = 66$. The top staff has dynamics *mp*, *f*, *sfp*, *pp*, and *ppp*. The bottom staff includes "rainsticks", "cajón", "rainstick clarinet", and "long sweeping reson rainstick...". A low resonance line is indicated at the bottom.

Musical score for measures 14-19. The top staff has dynamics *pp*, *mp*, *f*, *sfp*, and *mf*. The bottom staff includes "cajón" and "rainstick clarinet". A low resonance line is indicated at the bottom.

Musical score for measures 20-24. The top staff has dynamics *ppp* and *ff*. The bottom staff includes "zampoña" and "cajón". A low resonance line is indicated at the bottom.

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Hiram

B $\text{♩} = 60$ ♯

sfz *n < pp*

Andean harp

reson rainstick

harmonics drawn out of bass gena (notation approximate)

35 **C**

n *p* *mp* *n*

(reson rainstick) → cl. reverb.

Andean harp

41

mp *p* *mf* *p*

Andean harp

cl. reverb.

45

mf *p* *mf* *mf*

cl. reverb.

Andean harp (independently)

Hiram

The Journey

D ♩ = 72

f

(resonant harmony)

rhythmic pulse, rain-shaker

rainsticks

54

mp

mf

(rain-shakers...)

cajón

low resonant cajón ostinato

59

mf

rain-shaker groove continues...
(not notated)

64

f

p

Hiram

E

pp mp f pp

Andean harp

ff mf n

rain-violins -> horn

rain-shaker & cajón groove (not notated)

Andean harp and cajón

low resonant cajón ostinato

F

mf

mf

Hiram

G

90

reson rainstick
and rain-violins

increasing textural tension...
break down of ostinati...
exposed cajóns, reverberant transients

95

H

99

f 3 6 3 *mp*

cajón

Reverberance

102

f 3 3

zampoña & qena

Full Resonance,
Horns -> Rain-Horns

cajón

Hiram

106

mp *p*

cajón

rainstick
clarinet

Reverberance

I Meaning

$\text{♩} = 60$

mf *fp*

harmonics drawn
out of bass gena
(notation approximate)

120

p *mf* *n*

reson rainstick

ghost of a
gena trill

J

p *mf* *n* *f* *n*

reson rainstick

Hiram

138 K

mf *mp*

reson rainstick Andean harp, distant and otherworldly

145

n *p* *n* *pp*

qena qena harmonics qena harmonics

153 L

pp *mp*

qena harmonics qena harmonics

160

p *pp*

qena harmonics qena harmonics

Musashi

for flute, digital audio, and video

richard johnson

Flute

♩ = 112 (tongue pizz) (diamond notehead denotes airy/breathy)

ord. → air

fp < *ff* *p* < *f* *fp* *mp*

Audio

METALLIC - Swords

imprecise pitch...

TAIKO

out of time...

... becoming a dull rumble

5

~ 6" **A** ♩ = 60 8" 6.5" 12.5"

p

TAIKO HARMONIC

FLUTE

TAIKO HARMONIC

11

7.5" **B** (in spatially-notated passages, durations are held until breath marks)

♩ = 60 accel. ----- ♩ = 120

RESONANCE

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Musashi

16

cresc. ----- *ff mf*

$\text{♩} = 60$ *accel.* ----- $\text{♩} = 120$

5"

20"

mp

WITH METAL

RESONANCE

20"

26

Whistle Tone ----- ♩ ----- Whistle Tone

pp *fp* *mf* *pp*

air ----- ord. ----- air

Musashi

20"

D W.T. (8va) (chromatic scale) air → ord.

ff *p* *f* *p* *p*

20"

Whistle Tone (8va)

34

pp *mp* *mf* *ppp*

SHAKUHACHI TAIKO RIM AND CHANT

20"

E *Improvise percussive rhythms within a quarter step of the given note*

ff *p* *p-mf*

RESONANCE

Musashi
20"

Repeat four-note patterns with increasing speed

42

p *f*

FLUTE

20"

F

mp *mp*

ICY METALLIC
RESONANCE

20"

50

mp *mp*

SHAKUHACHI

20"

G

mp *p*

SHAKUHACHI

Musashi

20"

58

f *mp* *fp* *mf*

SHAKUHACHI

20"

H

pp *mp*

SHAKUHACHI

METALLIC BIWA

TAIKO, distant

ICY METALLIC RESONANCE

20"

Repeat three-note patterns with increasing speed and intensity

66

f *pp* *ff*

RESONANCE

Musashi

I ♩ = 60 *accel.*

f *pp* *mp* *mp*

METALLIC - Swords
METALLIC - Gong
TAIKO

imprecise pitch...

76 *(accel.)* ♩ = 140

f *p* *mf* *pp*

82 ♩ = 47 *accel.*

ff *p* *f* *pp* *mp* *mf*³

air → *ord.*

Musashi

(*accel.*) -----

88 *ff* *Improvise brief gestures of furious activity using this scale...*

"TEMPLE BELL" 4

(*accel.*) ----- *♩. = 80*

93 (*cont. improv*) -----

Increase intensity, becoming more aggressive, slicing -----

SWORDS

"TEMPLE BELL"

20"

J *8va* -----

ff

RESONANCE

"TEMPLE BELL"

Musashi
20"

L

mp

20"

118

mf

20"

M

p

Musashi

20"

126

pp *p*

20"

N

mp *f* *p* *pp* air

134

f

VITA

Richard W. Johnson, Jr. was born on September 14, 1978, in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Drawn to music composition through his love of film scores, Richard enrolled in the music department at West Chester University of Pennsylvania in the fall of 1996. At West Chester, he pursued his interests in history and anthropology during a brief hiatus from music before returning to the composition program. He received his B.M. in Composition in 2004 after studying with Robert Maggio, Larry Nelson, and Mark Rimple. It was through Larry Nelson that Richard first discovered the music of Toru Takemitsu, via the composer's film scores. The music of Takemitsu and Japan in general became highly influential in Richard's composition.

In 2006, Richard earned his M.M. in Composition from the University of Hartford's Hartt School of Music and Dance, where he received the Diamente Award for outstanding graduate composer. While studying at Hartt with Robert Carl and David Macbride, Richard's appreciation of John Cage developed significantly. Cage's influence played a significant role in Richard's interest in electro-acoustic music, where chance procedures can be applied in real time. Richard's setting of *Etenraku*, entitled *water meditation on Etenraku*, exemplifies the effects of this fascination, and has been performed at Electronic Music Midwest (2009), Festival of Contemporary Music at University of Iowa (2010), Dark Matter's *Orbit*, and multiple concerts presented by the Kansas City Electronic Music and Arts Alliance.

After a year away from academics, Richard entered the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) composition program, where he is currently a doctoral candidate. He has studied with Chen Yi, James Mobberley, Mukai Kohei, Paul Rudy, and Zhou Long. At UMKC, Richard's interest in electro-acoustic music flourished. *Introit*, for trumpet, digital audio, and video, which also represents Richard's first solo foray into video, has been performed at conferences such as Society for Electro-Acoustic Music in the United States (2012), Electronic Music Midwest (2011), and XVIII *Festival Internacional Punto de Encuentro* in Spain (2011).

Richard first experienced college-level teaching at Hartt, where he taught Music History Overview for Non-Majors and Musicianship for Dancers. At UMKC, he was a graduate teaching assistant and either assisted or served as teacher of record for numerous courses in composition, electronics, and pedagogy. Currently, Richard is an adjunct faculty member at two schools in the Kansas City area. He has taught courses in music theory at MidAmerica Nazarene University (MNU) and music and audio technology at both MNU and Kansas City Kansas Community College.