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((noise))

A mini-opera for vocalist, instrumentalist, audio noise artist, and
video/noise artist.

For Melissa Madden Gray and Timothy O'Dwyer
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((noise)), is based upon text by the Scottish psychiatrist and psychoanalyst R.D. Laing (1927-1989), who attempted to break down the barriers between sanity and madness in his highly influential books and articles of the 1960s. In particular, his quasi-poetic text *Knots* presented abstracted relational situations stemming from internal conflicts of the psyche.

“The voices of known demons rise from these pages: demons of guilt, demons of self-justification; demons of perverse will, demons of self-destruction.” -- Melvin Maddocks, *The Christian Science Monitor* (book review).

These are the noises of the mind.

SYNOPSIS: ((noise)) is an improvised mini-opera based on the abstract, tangled patterns of conflict in the mind, as articulated by R.D. Laing’s book *Knots*¹, from which the text for this piece is taken.

The opera is structured in three scenes, each characterized by a specific set of texts which should be performed in a dramatic, improvised manner. Each scene should last between three and four minutes.

The performance forces of the opera are as follows:

- Vocalist (male or female)
- Instrumentalist (male or female², any instrument)
- Sound Artist (producing a “noise-based” soundscape)
- Video Artist (producing a “noise-based” videoscape)

STAGE: There are two characters on an empty stage. One character is the vocalist, who articulates and performs the text in a dramatic manner. The other is an instrumentalist who improvises within the noise-scape. The characters are aware of each other, but the instrumentalist largely ignores the vocalist, who is often directing thoughts towards the instrumentalist (out loud), but is not necessarily speaking directly to him/her. There should be some detectable “energy” between the performers, but not necessarily direct engagement or acknowledgment.

¹ Laing, R.D. 1970. *Knots*. New York: Pantheon Books.

² If the instrumentalist is female, some pronouns in the text may need to be changed to clarify that this person is being referenced

SCENERY: The scenery of the opera should be mostly spare, concentrating on the two characters.

LIGHTING: Lighting should be minimal, but should carefully illuminate each of the characters faces as brightly as possible, without bleeding onto the video screen. The ambient light should be completely dark, or perhaps a very soft color, unique to each scene. Care should always be taken to ensure that no light leaks onto the video screen.

VIDEO: If possible, the video should be projected onto a large screen above the performance stage, with no shadows from the performers. It should be as large and bright as possible.

STRUCTURE/SCORE NOTES:

This piece should be improvised, but should follow closely the "mood" and character of the text. Each scene should start and end suddenly (lights on / lights off), and should have a distinct character and ambient space. The soundscape should flow along with the mood of the text, and should shift in structural places in the script. The basic structure of the script is as follows:

[1.A - 2.B - 3.C | 2.A - 2.B - 2.C | 3.A - 3.B - 3.C]

The "noise-scape" should be performed live if possible, and should consist of a kind of "noise-tint" that fills the sonic and light spaces without obscuring the intelligibility of the performers on the stage.

The vocalist should perform the text in and out of "character" or "characters." In other words, the vocalist may take on a persona at times, but is often times simply reciting the text. At times the performer is working out the logic of the statements; at other times the character breaks through, dramatically declaring the text. The vocalist should indirectly reference the instrumentalist, as if often the thoughts in the text refer to him/her.

The instrumentalist should improvise within the "noise-scape" of the piece, articulating and adding to this texture. But also the instrumentalist is a character, and should take on many of the same issues as the vocalist. The instrumentalist should also take on a persona, drifting in and out of character. At times the instrumentalist is ignoring the vocalist, at other times interacting with or responding to the vocalist, but always vaguely.

In other words, the relationship between the two characters should remain consistently vague throughout the performance. They could be strangers, lovers, co-workers, relatives, etc.

SCENE 1.

[1.A]

I never got what I wanted.

I always got what I did not want.

What I want

I shall not get.

Therefore, to get it

I must not want it

since I get only what I don't want.

what I want, I can't get

what I get, I don't want

I can't get it

because I want it

I get it

because I don't want it.

I want what I can't get

because

what I can't get *is* what I want

I don't want what I can get

because

what I can get *is* what I don't want

I never get what I want

I never want what I get

I get what I deserve

I deserve what I get.

I have it,

therefore I deserve it

I deserve it

because I have it.

You have not got it

therefore you do not deserve it

You do not deserve it

because you have not got it

You have not got it

because you do not deserve it

You do not deserve it

therefore you have not got it.

[1.B]

I am not entitled to what I have
therefore everything I have is stolen.

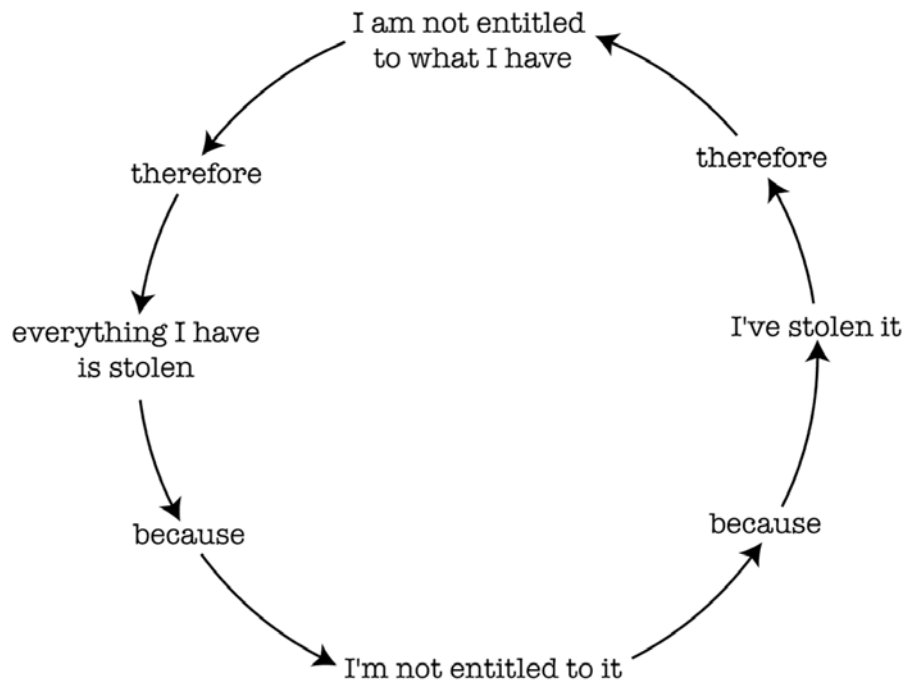
If I've got it,
and I'm not entitled to it,
I *must* have stolen it,
because I am not entitled to it.

I am not entitled to it
because I have stolen it.

I have stolen it
therefore I am not entitled to it.

I am not entitled to it
therefore I must have stolen it.

Or, it has been given to me as a special favour
by someone who is entitled to it
so I am expected to be grateful for all I have
because what I have
has been *given*, not stolen.



[1.C]

I want it
I get it
therefore I am good

I want it
I don't get it
therefore I am bad

I am bad
because I didn't get it

I am bad
because I wanted what I didn't get

I must take care
to get what I want
and want what I get
and not get what I don't want

I can get what I want
I can't get what I want
I can get what I don't want
I can't get what I don't want

I tend to not get what I want
So
to get what I want
I pretend not to want it

I am bad to want what I can't get
I haven't go it
therefore I am bad to want it

If I am bad to want it
I shall be no less bad for getting it

I am bad to feel bad, and
bad to feel good
because the badder one is
the less bad one feels

There is something the matter with me because I do
not feel anything the matter with me

SCENE 2.

[2.A]

I don't feel good
therefore I am bad
therefore no one loves me.

I feel good
therefore I am good
therefore everyone loves me.

I am good
You do not love me
therefore you are bad. So I do not love you.

I am good
You love me
therefore you are good. So I love you.

I am bad
You love me
therefore you are bad.

To be kind is good. To be cruel is bad.

You are cruel
 to make me feel bad to think
 I am cruel to make you feel cruel
 by my feeling bad that you can be so cruel as to think
 I don't love you, when you know I do.

If you don't know I do there must be something the matter
with you.

[2.B]

There must be something the matter with him
because he would not be acting as he does
unless there was
therefore he is acting as he is
because there is something the matter with him

He does not think there is anything the matter with him
because

one of the things that is
the matter with him
is that he does not think that there is anything
the matter with him

therefore

I have to help him realize that,
the fact that he does not think there is anything
the matter with him
is one of the things that is
the matter with him

there is something the matter with him
because he thinks

there must be something the matter with me
for trying to help him see
that there must be something the matter with him
to think that there is something the matter with me
for trying to help him see that

I am helping him

to see that

I am not persecuting him
by helping him
to see I am not persecuting him
by helping him
to see that

he is refusing to see
that there is something the matter with
him

for not seeing there is something the matter
with him

for not being grateful to me
for at least trying to help him
to see that there is something the matter with
him

for not seeing that there must be something the
matter with him

for not seeing that there must be something the
matter with him

for not seeing that there is something that matter
with him

for not seeing that there is something that matter
with him

for not being grateful

that I never tried to make him
feel grateful

[2.C]

It is boring that you are frightened
you are boring me by being interested in me.

In trying to be interesting,
you are *very* boring.

You are frightened of being boring, you
try to be interesting by not being interested,
but are interested only in not being boring.

You are not interested in me.
You are only interested that I be interested in you.

You pretend to be bored
because I am not interested
 that you are frightened
 that I am not frightened
that you are not interested in me.

[3.B]

All I have has been given me and is mine

If I have it, I must have been given it
Therefore it is mine.

I haven't it
but I can get it
therefore,
 because I have been given the capacity to get it
it is mine.

It is not mine
but it has been given me and I have it
therefore I am grateful for what I have, or
 have been given.

But I resent being grateful
because if I have been given it, it has not always been mine.
therefore, if I don't feel grateful
 I won't have been given it
therefore, it is (past, present, future) eternally mine.

[3.B]

If it's mine, it's not mine
if it's not mine it's mine
 if it's mine is not me
 if not me is not mine
 if not mine
 is me
 if me is not mine
 if not mine is not me
then, if not me, it is me
if not me, it is me
if it is me, it is not mine
if it is not mine it is not me
if it is not me, it is me
if it is me
 it is not mine
if it is not mine
 it is me
if it is me, it is mine
 if it is mine
 it is not me
therefore if it is not me
 it is mine
 if it is mine it is mine

if it is mine it is mine
if it is mine it is not mine
if it is not mine it is mine
if it is mine, it is mine
if it is mine, it is not mine
if it is not mine,

it is me

if it is me it is mine
if it is mine it is not me
if it is not me it is me
if it is me

it is not me
if it is not me
it is me

if it's me, if it's not me
if it's not me, if it's me
if it's me if it's me
if it's me if it's not me
if it's not me if it's not me
it's me if it's not me
if it's not me, it's me
if it's me it's not me
if it's not me it's me
if it's me,
if it's not me.
If it's me

if it's not me
if it's me
if it's not me
if it's me
if it's not me, it's me
if it's not me it's not me
it's not me if it's me
if it's me it's me
it's me if it's not me
if it's not me, it's not me
if it's not me, it's me
it's me if it's me
if it's not me it's not me
it's not me if it's not me
if it's me, it's me
if it's me, it's me
I am it
If it is not me
If it is not me, I am it, if I am not it, I
am it, if I am it, I am not it