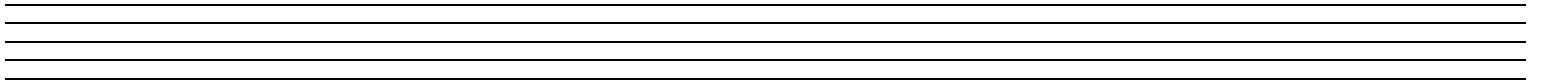


The Library of Babel

open score for spatialized chamber ensemble

Jordan Nobles



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ABOUT THE PIECE

The Library of Babel is composed for a large spatialized ensemble of variable instrumentation. It was commissioned and premiered by the **Vancouver Symphony Orchestra**, with **William Rowson**, conductor on Feb. 23, 2019.

PROGRAMME NOTE

The Library of Babel is inspired by the short story by Argentine author (and librarian) Jorge Luis Borges. In the story the characters live in a universe in the form of an infinite library. Each room of this library contains shelves of books with a seemingly random series of letters. It is theorized that the endless collection of books would contain every possible combination of letters, therefore every work ever written, and everything that ever could be written, including, somewhere, the index to the library itself. While my work is somewhat more finite it does have a series of melodic cells to be performed at the musician's discretion which are taken from an actual melody that never reveals itself.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

The Library of Babel has no full score but is an open form work comprised of a plethora of small melodic phrases with a timing number above each of them. There is no collective tempo, or pulse; the piece is coordinated by timers (stopwatch, phone, or clock, etc.) and musicians perform the phrases at their own discretion.

DURATION

This performance will be twelve minutes long. At 12:00 on the stopwatch the timpani will play one last note. Quietly finish whatever phrase you are playing and then stop.

INSTRUCTIONS

- Please do not play all of the phrases! They are only options to choose from. Play any that you like, that fits well on your instrument. Play somewhat sparsely, only a few phrases each minute.
- All phrases can be performed in any octave desired as long as a soft dynamic can be observed.
- The numbers above the phrases indicate the timing of when they could be performed. It corresponds to the SECOND on the timer that the note should be played, no matter what minute it is on. For instance, a note with a **37** above it could be played at approximately **0:37** and/or **1:37** and/or **7:37**, etc.
- There is no order to the phrases at all. You can jump around to play any phrase on any page as long as the phrase starts at the indicated second. But accuracy is not paramount. If you miss the entry by a second or so it is fine.
- Players can pause at any time to breathe, to reflex, and to listen before proceeding.
- Accidentals apply only to the note they directly precede.
- The rhythm of each phrase can be quite rubato, in your own time.
- All phrases should last less than 6 seconds in total.

NOTE DURATIONS

- = short (approx. 1 second or less)
- = medium (approx. 1-3 seconds)
- ◐ = long (approx. 5 seconds)

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INSTRUMENTATION

Flute 1 & 2
Oboe
English Horn
Clarinet in B \flat
Bassoon
Horn 1 & 2
Harp

Percussion 1: vibraphone
Percussion 2: glockenspiel
Timpani
Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello
Contrabass

MAP OF THE PIECE

All players coordinated by Stopwatch

Time Action

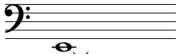
00:00 - 00:59 Start stopwatches quietly, distribute them amongst players

01:00 - 02:59 Players begin playing phrases sparsely and quietly (except Timpani)

03:00 - 05:59 Players begin playing choosing more and more phrases, making a slightly denser texture

06:00 - 11:59 First timpani note at precisely 6:00 **ppp**, everyone else continues playing. Timpani plays a low E on the :00 of every minute, like a tolling bell, with a B \flat on every :30 of the minute.

For example:

06:00	06:30
	
ppp <i>let ring...</i>	

Gradually growing louder and louder from **ppp** to **mf** from 00:00 to 12:00

12:00 Last timpani low E note at precisely 12:00 **mf**, everyone finishes whatever phrases they are on (if they were playing one) and the piece is over.

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Slowly and very freely. Accidentals apply only to the note they directly precede.

00 *p* *sempre* 11 22 33 44 55

06 17 28 39 50

01 12 23 34 45 56

07 18 29 40 51

02 13 24 35 46 57

08 19 30 41 52

03 14 25 36 47 58

09 20 31 42 53

04 15 26 37 48 59

10 21 32 43 54

05 16 27 38 49

Score in C - Treble Clef

00 12 24 36 48

11 23 35 47 59

01 13 25 37 49

10 22 34 46 58

02 14 26 38 50

09 21 33 45 57

03 15 27 39 51

08 20 32 44 56

04 16 28 40 52

07 19 31 43 55

05 17 29 41 53

06 18 30 42 54

Score in C - Treble Clef

The image displays a musical score in C major, Treble Clef, consisting of 60 numbered measures arranged in 12 rows of five measures each. The notation includes treble clefs, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and various note values (quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes) and rests. The measures are numbered sequentially from 00 to 59. The score features a variety of melodic patterns, including ascending and descending lines, and some measures with multiple beamed notes. The final measure (59) ends with a whole note G4.