

hic sunt dracones

for five or more musicians

Colin G. Johnson

Programme Note

hic sunt dracones ("here be dragons"; an inscription said to be found on early maps to indicate unknown regions) is a graphic score for five performers, or five groups of performers. Within a fixed length of time, the performers should make five gestures of varying lengths, with the expression taking inspiration from photographs of faces throughout the score. These faces are screencaptures from the TV programme *Dragons's Den*, hence the title.

Length

Variable, around 3-5 minutes. The performers should agree on a length of performance.

Biography

Colin Johnson studied mathematics at the University of York, and currently teaches in the School of Computing at the University of Kent, from where he obtained his PhD in 2003. The present work represents the latest in a number of pieces that have explored structured frameworks in which human musicians work with a mixture of technology, composed material, random choices, theatrical miniatures, found texts from internet searches, and improvised material. He is particularly interested in ways of structuring musical and theatrical material by drawing on ways in which people have attempted to formalise complicated systems: computer programs, role-playing games, instruction manuals, finite state machines, flow charts, examination rubrics, engineering drawings, assembly instructions for flat-pack furniture, signage, et cetera. Sometimes he writes straightforward music for acoustic instruments.

Performance Note

This piece is an improvisation framework for five musicians (in the broadest sense; voice, instruments or a mixture) or five groups of roughly equal size. All have a copy of the single-page score (ideally this should be printed in A3 size, or perhaps projected). The performers should agree on an approximate length for the performance; around 3-5 minutes is sensible. Approximate time runs from left to right along the score. The five vertical regions on the score each indicate one of the groups of performers. The performers are given some indications of dynamics and length for each of five musical gestures, and should take some inspiration from the expressions on the faces associated with each gesture. Hairpins indicate the usual *crescendo* and *decresecendo*, if no end dynamics are given then a full range from nothing to *fortissimo* should be used. A straight line indicates an extended period of sound making with little change in dynamics.

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hic sunt dracones





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sfz    *sfz*

pp   *pp*  *mp*  *pp*  *mf*  *mf*  *sfz*

pp  _____  *f*  *p*  *sfz*

  *p* _____  *mf*  *sfz*  *ff*

 *ff* _____  *p* _____  *sfz*  *ff*