

some other plots for Babel

“The ‘Tower of Babel’ does not figure merely the irreducible multiplicity of tongues; it exhibits an incompleteness, the impossibility of finishing, of totalising, of saturating, of completing something on the order of edification, construction, system and architectonics.” Jacques Derrida

“Babel is the sign that every utterance or every text is riven by faults and fissures...rushing away into the vacuum formed by its own notes” Gary Shapiro

These two quotes were found after I had already started work on this piece, and decided on its title, but their relevance to the actual composition of the work gained exponentially as the first performance approached. The piece as it stands is indeed incomplete as far as my original plans were concerned, but hopefully none the worse for that. In any case as I’m the only one to know what those original plans were, what difference does it make? And isn’t this the case with virtually any work? Perhaps I should have kept quiet instead of fessing up...

But back to the music. In keeping with Breughel’s two paintings of the Tower of Babel, in which builders are shown “hewing architectural rationality from the ancient rock” the piece opens deliberately with what one critic (pejoratively) referred to as a “frantic agglomeration”—a world in a state of becoming. The texture does clear however, and as the piece proceeds these strata are hewn away or eroded to reveal previously hidden layers. But if you really think I’m going to give away the plot...

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