

FATES

for two voices and electronics

Mike McCormick

General Notes

FATES is a composition for two vocalists and one individual operating algorithmic audio processing programmed in the open-source software SuperCollider. Both vocalists must therefore sing into microphones that run through an audio interface, which must then be projected into the performance space via a PA. As the audio processing is dependent on the input from the vocal performers and the piece is open to variable interpretation, the electronics part in the score is essentially a sort of tablature for the laptop performer and does not describe the resultant sound of the performance in great detail. The Supercollider code and instructions for performance are available from the composer via email at: mccormick.mike.r@gmail.com.

The vocal parts are thematically based upon the legend of the three greek Fates, as well as Plato's description of their singing in his *Republic*: Clotho sang of "the things that are," Lachesis sang of "the things that were," and Atropo sang of "the things that are to be," Each movement is based on a declaration from each Fate concerning their individual duty, and the text centres around certain vowels, progressing during the piece from a wide (i:) to narrow (u:) aperture.

FATES was commissioned in 2018 by vocalists Thea Soti and Mascha Corman for their improvising duo Monsters for Breakfast. The musical material in the composition was heavily inspired by the collective vocabulary these two have developed over several years of collaborating. The piece, though thoroughly notated, should also be approached from a playful and explorative perspective; interpretations can and should vary dramatically to suit the performance setting, programmatic context, etc.

Performance Notes

i. Clotho

All pitch information notated on the single-line staves are relative so as to suit the ranges and capacities of the interpreters, who are encouraged to explore the extremes of their registers. All pitch information notated on the three-line staves are relative as well, but the performers should choose a unison pitch (the middle line) that comfortably suits both their ranges. If this proves challenging, they may sing the unison pitches in octaves.

ii. Lachesis

Dynamics notated in brackets are "action dynamics," in that the effort to produce a fortissimo sound is demanded, but may only produce a sound at a mezzo-forte dynamic. As Lachesis sang of "the things that were" in Plato's *Republic*, part of the text from the first movement returns; some effort should be made to highlight the recapitulated text.

iii. Atropo

As Atropo sang of "the things that are to be" in Plato's *Republic*, there is space in the penultimate system of this voice 1's parts to insert text from the "future." Ideally, this text would be rich in u: vowel sounds, and should be inserted so that it adheres to the rule of the rest of the text: syllables containing the u: vowel should be sung on long rhythms, all other syllables should be sung short, and the long syllables should match pitch with the glissando of voice 2.

Approximate duration: 15 minutes

i. Clotho

we three see thee, freely decree, and then free thee

we three see each greedy deed, each pleasing feat, each sneaky breach;

she weaves, she deems the reach of each piece, and she cleaves

ii. Lachesis

has passed | is past | shall pass

(she deems the reach of each piece)

iii. Atropos

to you who produce fruits or refuse

to you who conclude your truth is doomed

to you who assume you queue for a new womb soon

only the loom chooses your due

FATES

i. Clotho

Mike McCormick

rubato
♩ = ca. 50

voice 1
we *mf* three *ingressive* see *ord.* thee *sim.* free - - ly

voice 2
we *mf* three *ord.* see *sim.* thee free - - ly

laptop

any sung pitch higher than voice 2

any sung pitch lower than voice 1

4

voice 1
de - - cree and then free *mf* thee

voice 2
de - - cree and then free *mf* thee

laptop

spoken

p

spoken

p

any sung pitch higher than voice 2

any sung pitch lower than voice 1

7 **A** ♩ = 60

voice 1 *ord.* *sim.*
we three see each gree - dy deed each

voice 2 *mf* *sim.*
mf we three see each gree - dy deed each

laptop **fftFreeze** both voices **add filter** voice 1
mp

11

voice 1
plea - sing feat each snea - ky breach

voice 2
plea - sing feat each snea - ky breach

laptop **add filter** voice 2

15 **B** ♩ = 100

voice 1 *p*
she weaves she deems the reach of each piece and she cleaves

voice 2 *p*
she weaves she deems the reach of each piece and she cleaves

laptop **fftFreezer** both voices
p

unison pitch w/ voice 2

ii. Lachesis

freely

voice 1

voice 2

laptop

1

"noise:" force air through closed teeth
freely vary consonants, rhythms, dynamics

ð s z ʃ ʒ

randCombDelay
both voices

A rubato
♩ = ca. 60

voice 1

voice 2

laptop

6

pitch *noise* *pitch* *noise* *sim.*

ha - s pa - ssed is pa - st sh - all pa - ss

p -----> (*mf*) *p* -----> (*mf*) (*mf*) *p* -----> (*mf*) (*mf*) -----> *p* *p* -----> (*mf*)

B

9

voice 1

pitch noise

pitch noise

sim.

ha - s pa - ssed is pa - st sh all pa - ss

mp → *f* *mp* → *f* *f* *mp* → *f* *f* → *mp* *mp* → *f*

voice 2

noise pitch ' pitch noise ' spoken sim. , ,

sh - e deem - s the rea - ch of ea - ch pie - ce

(mf) → *p* *p* → *(mf)* *p* *p* → *(mf)* *p* *p* → *(mf)* *p* → *(mf)*

laptop

fitFreezer voice 2

12

voice 1

crescendo

voice 2

sh - e deem - s the rea - ch of ea - ch pie - ce

f → *mp* *mp* → *f* *p* *mp* → *f* *p* *mp* → *f* *mp* → *f*

laptop

fitFreezer off tesla1 tesla1

iii. Atropos

attacca
♩ = ca. 70

1

voice 1

to you who pro duce fruits or re - fuse

long notes are tuned to the current pitch of voice 2
voice 1 sustains pitch as voice 2's glissando continues
short notes can be sung on any pitch

voice 2

sung on "u:"
breathe as necessary, try to maintain consistent rhythm

laptop

amSynth
voice 2

5

voice 1

to you who con - clude your truth is doomed

voice 2

sung on "u:"
breathe as necessary, try to maintain consistent rhythm

laptop

pitchShift: voice 1
maxDev,0.001

8

voice 1

to you who ass - ume you queue for a new womb soon

voice 2

laptop

pitchShift: voice 1
maxDev, 0.01

sung on "u:"
breathe as necessary, try to maintain consistent rhythm

11

voice 1

insert "u:" - rich text from later in the program
u: syllables become rhythmically long, all other syllables are short

voice 2

laptop

pitchShift: voice 1
maxDev, 0.03

sung on "u:"
breathe as necessary, try to maintain consistent rhythm

13

voice 1

on - ly the loom choos - es your due

voice 2

laptop

pitchShift: voice 1
maxDev, 0.08

sung on "u:"