

Henrik Hellstenius

INSTRUMENT OF SPEECH (2016-17)

for ensemble and electronics

What is language? *Instrument of Speech* is about spoken language, speech sounds, real life sounds and instrumental sound objects. The piece plays out different relationships between the language of music and the semantic language. Even if music and semantic language both appear as sound, the manner in which language and music create “meaning” is profoundly different (to some perhaps even contradictory). To understand the meaning of spoken language is a complex task, and perceived from more than just its semantics. All sorts of vocal sounds and subtle nuances of timbre in the voice is part of the stream of information. The different parts of *Instrument of Speech* is composed with the whole range of vocal expressions, from spoken language with a clear semantic meaning, to more abstract vocal sounds and the sounds produced from reading and writing.

I. Bennett Talks - This is cut-up of a speech held by British writer and philosopher John G. Bennett. The speech concerns itself with the fact that there are many languages, but when using the word “language”, we think of spoken or written language as the primary means of communication between people. We tend to forget that there are several dynamic systems of audio, or visual symbols and signs that communicate meaning, and music is one of those systems.

II. Books - A rhythmical composition of short sound files, taken from the activity of reading and writing, composed together with instrumental sound objects.

III. Chomsky Lectures - Plays with fragments of a lecture held by American linguist Noam Chomsky. In the lecture Chomsky discusses that learning of language is based on a universal basic condition that we all are born with, that there are a functions in the brain that particularly are concerned with learning and understanding language.

IV. Babel - Samples of spoken language, utterances and cries which are treated as musical material with a focus on its dynamical, rhythmical, timbre content, rather than the semantic. Here there are no coherent semantic meaning, rather a musical flow of sounding objects; instrumental and vocal.