
OVERTHROW THE CONDUCTOR

FOR SIX PLAYERS

JAKE BERRAN
(2021, rev. 2023)



PROGRAM NOTES

The original program note for *Overthrow the Conductor* was about hierarchy, power, empires, and revolutions. Since that first iteration, I have stopped thinking of the piece as any sort of grand statement—whether social, political, or musical—and started appreciating the joy it brought to both the ensemble and the audience in the first performance. The piece was also an exercise in weaving aleatory, harmonic tropes, and dialogue to make a complete musical structure that is simultaneously a narrative. Finally, the whole thing is hypocritical: the players are resisting the authority of the conductor and composer in a highly prescribed manner.

Duration: approx. 10 minutes

PERFORMANCE INSTRUCTIONS

There are lots of acting instructions. The more energy you put into those, even if it's faked, the more fun it will be! There is a "conductor" staff in the score containing instructions for the conductor. Occasionally, text instructions for the players which are unnecessary for the conductor are in very faint text.

At the beginning, everyone begins offstage and the players enter in a specified order with approximate wait times, repeating boxed gestures until the conductor comes on stage (angry at this disorder) and hits the baton on the stand to cut everyone off. After mocking the conductor, the players resume their boxed gestures only to be cut off once again. The players are intimidated and start following the conductor's beats. For a while, "normal" music alternates with dialogue.

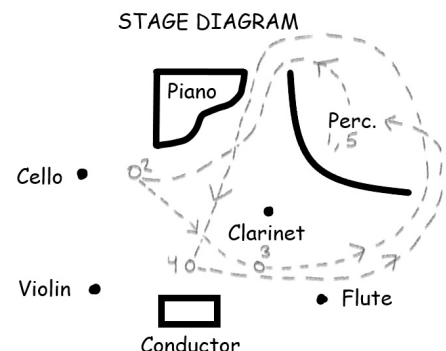
Near the end, every player stands up and gets out of their seat at some point. They will want to memorize their parts here in order to be successful. In terms of roles, the violinist supports the oppressive conductor (initially...), the percussionist is the emotional instigator, the pianist and cellist keep up the motivation, and the wind players are the ones who finally lead the crusade to dethrone the conductor.

All repeat signs are timed or indefinite cells (i.e. not "2x"). After m. 139, parenthetical cues are meant as a courtesy, and repeating cells should be continued naturally (i.e. don't suddenly restart the cell).

A stage diagram is provided below, showing the path the percussionist takes in the final section. The piece ends with everyone leaving the stage, then the pianist taking the score and leaving as well.

Dialogue may be modified to fit the situation. [PIANO] is a stand-in for the pianist's name, and so on.

Percussion instruments: Vibraphone, Crotales, Bass Drum, Temple Blocks, Tam-tam, Suspended Cymbal, Slapstick, Cowbell




OVERTHROW THE CONDUCTOR

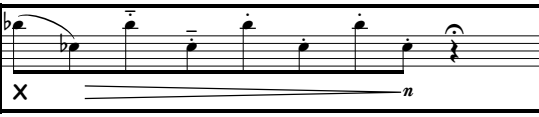
♩ = 132


JAKE BERRAN

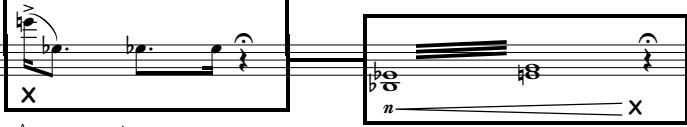
ca. 75"


Enter stage menacingly ca. 25"
after everyone starts playing


Conductor 

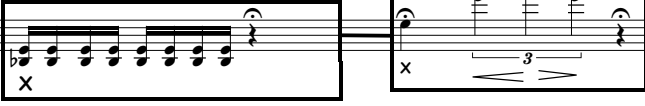
Flute  enter 10" after cello
first box 8va once piano has entered
dynamic of "X" *p* *ff*


Bass Clarinet  enter 10" after percussionist
choose one box each repetition
"jam out"
dynamic of "X" *p* *ff*

Piano  enter 10" after violin
repeat boxes independently
dynamic of "X" *p* *ff*

Percussion  you enter first: *b.d.* (w/ towel) w/ drumsticks
- vary timbre over time (beating spot, etc.)
- move to *crotales* once dello has started
- move back to *b.d.* once all are playing,
with hard yarn mallets + improvise rhythms!
mute quickly after each note
dynamic of "X" *p* *ff*

Percussion  *b.d.*
improvise!
(based on surroundings)
dynamic of "X" *p* *ff*

Violin  enter 10" after flute
switch between ord. and sul pont. as desired
harm. gliss.
dynamic of "X" *p* *ff*

Cello  enter 10" after bass clarinet
switch between ord. and sul pont. as desired
dynamic of "X" *p* *ff*

Slam score on stand and tap baton on stand in this rhythm. Don't conduct yet.

React to the mockery!

ca. 10"

Keep trying to cut them off, to no avail

Look distraught, frustrated by the disobedience

Angrily tap baton!

Cnd.

ff 3 3

All players:

- Violin cues ensemble (w/o conductor)
- obnoxious, mocking

All players:

- Violin cues ensemble
- Measure lasts ca. 10"
- Do not obey cutoffs

Fl.

flz.

ff

f (flz.)

n annoyed

n intimidated (4")

B. Cl.

n annoyed

ff

f "jam out"

n intimidated (4")

Pno

n annoyed

ff

f black key clusters

repeat boxes independently

n intimidated (4")

8va

Perc.

n annoyed

ff

f

n intimidated (4")

Vln

n annoyed

ff 3 3

f ord.

n intimidated (4")

Vc.

n annoyed

ff 3 3

f ord.

n intimidated (4")

2 3 4 5

(♩ = 132)
Begin conducting

Frustrated; try
to get them to
enter

go on once
all are on beat
(big cue)

A

fff

p
gradually, starting 2nd x.

Each player:
- enter 1-8 beats in, slower
than conductor
- gradually speed up to
conductor's tempo
- wait for big cue to exit measure

ord.

ppp

p

mf

ppp

p

mf

ppp

p

mf

ppp

p

mf

get a drumstick
in one hand

on rim
w/ drumstick

ppp

p

mf

ppp

p

mf

ppp

p

mf

6 7 8 9 10

Fl. *p* *f*

B. Cl. *f* 3

Pno *p*

Perc. *p*

Vln *p*

Vc. *p*

11 12 13

Fl. *p* 3 3

B. Cl. *mf* *f* 3

Pno *f* *p* 3 3

Perc. *f* *p* 3 3

Vln *f* *p* 3 3

Vc. *f* *p* 3 3

14 15 16 17 18 19

Fl. *pp* *fff*

B. Cl. *mf* *p*

Pno *pp* *fff*

Perc.

Vln *pp* *fff*

Vc. *pp* *fff*

20 21 22 23 24 25

Fl. *p* *mf* *p*

B. Cl. *p* *p*

Pno *pp* *pp* *p*

Perc. *pp*

Vln

Vc. pizz. *p* *p*

26 27 28 29 30 31 32

B

(As if this is the final note!)

Dialogue

1. (to pno.) [PIANO] That's not in the music.

2. (to cnd.) Sorry, I was just practicing for my music theory test tomorrow!

3. (to pno.) Ha. You don't need to know how the music works. Just play the notes on the page. (go m. 35)

4. (to cnd. during prep beat) Okay...

Cutoff gesture at pianist

$\text{♩} = 132$

Cnd.

Fl.

B. Cl.

Pno

Perc.

Vln

Vc.

33 **34** **35** **36** **37**

Fl.

B. Cl.

Pno

Perc.

Vln

Vc.

38 **39** **40** **41**

C

Fl.

B. Cl.

Pno

Perc.

Vln

Vc.

42

43

44

45

46

47

Fl.

B. Cl.

Pno

Perc.

Vln

Vc.

48

49

50

51

Fl. *mf* *f*

B. Cl. *mf* *f*

Pno *p* *p* *mf* *p* (w/ drumstick) *cowbell*

Perc. *mf* *f* *p* *f*

Vln *f* *p* *pizz.* *col legno battuto* *f*

Vc. *f* *p* *pizz.* *col legno battuto* *mf*

52 53 54 55 56 57 58

Fl. *mf* *p* 3

B. Cl. *mf* *p*

Pno *p* *mf*

Perc. (w/ yarn mallet) *b.d.* *t. blks.* *mf* *pp* *mf*

Vln *ord. arco* *mf* *arco* *mp*

Vc. *f* *f* *pizz.* *p*

59 60 61 62 63

OVERTHROW THE CONDUCTOR - Full Score

9

Abruptly change
conducting style;
e.g. slow waltz

Dialogue

1. [FLUTE] and [CLARINET]
What are you doing?

4. Ha. You don't need money;
we're musicians, and worthy
art is possible only through
suffering! Besides, [SOMETHING
CONSOLING]. Measure 67!

2. We're just practicing
our double tonguing...

3. Yeah, we're getting
ready for our paid gig later
tonight—unlike *this one*.

(This is not good, interrupt them!)

Conductor (Cnd.)

Flute (Fl.)

Bass Clarinet (B. Cl.)

Piano (Pno)

Percussion (Perc.)

Violin (Vln)

Violoncello (Vc.)

(double-tongued)

(interrupted by conductor)

(interrupted by conductor)

f

p

mf

64

65

66

Flute (Fl.)

Bass Clarinet (B. Cl.)

Piano (Pno)

Percussion (Perc.)

Violin (Vln)

Violoncello (Vc.)

E ($\text{♩} = 132$)

ff

mf

mf under fl & b. cl.
arco

f p

f p

f p

f p

f

p

sus. cym.
+ b. d.

†. blks.

67

68

69

70

Fl. *p* *mf* *f*

B. Cl. *f* *p* *f*

Pno *p* *n* *mf* *p* *mf*

Perc. *p* *f*

Vln *mf* *p* *mf*

Vc. *f* *p* *mf* *p* *f* *p* *f* *f* *n* *f*

to vibes

vibes

pizz. arco ped. ad lib

pizz. arco

71 72 73 74 75

Fl. *p*

B. Cl. *p* to clarinet

Pno *p*

Perc. *p*

Vln *p* *f* *n* *f* *p*

Vc. *p* *f* *n* *f* *p* *f* *p* sul tasto

76 77 78 79

F

Fl. *pp*

Pno *p*

Perc. *pp* *sus. cym.* *to vibes* *vibes p*

Vln *sul tasto* *n* *p* *n* *pp* *pizz.* *p*

Vc. *pp* *pizz.* *p*

80 81 82 83 84

Fl. *p* *mf*

Cl. *p* *mf* *clarinet*

Pno *mf* *3* *3* *3*

Perc. *ped. sim.* *to slapstick*

Vln *ord. pizz.* *p* *mf*

Vc. *ord. pizz.* *p* *mf*

85 86 87 88

Fl. *f* *ff* *f*

Cl. *ff* *f*

Pno *ff* *ff* *f*

Perc. *ff* *ff* *f*

Vln *p* *ff* *pizz.* *arco* *p < f*

Vc. *p* *ff* *pizz.* *arco* *p < f*

slapstick

to sus. cym.

89 90 91 92

Fl. *f* *mf* *n*

Cl. *mf* *n* *to B. Cl.*

Pno *f* *p* *f* *p*

Perc. *p* *f* *p*

Vln *pizz.* *arco* *p* *f* *p*

Vc. *fp* *f* *p*

hard yarn mallets

sus. cym.

shaft on dome

(exact pitches unimportant)

n *pp*

93 94 95 96

Picc. *mf* *p* *mf* *p*
 B. Cl. *mp* *mf* *mp* *p*
 Pno
 Perc. *mp*
 Vln *p* *mf*
 Vc. *n* *p*
 sul A pizz.

14

H

Picc.

B. Cl.

Pno

Perc.

Vln

Vc.

pp

pp

pp

arco

p

p

105

106

107

108

Picc.

B. Cl.

Pno

Perc.

Vln

Vc.

to flute

to t. blks.

(halfway to A#)

mf

(halfway to Gb)

mf

gliss.

p

gliss.

p

109

110

111

112

B. Cl. *pp*

Pno *pp sempre*
crossfade with perc. *n*

Perc. *n* *p*
crossfade with pno.

Vln *mp* *p*
 (halfway to A) *pp*

Vc. *mp* *p*
 (halfway to DA) *pp*

113 114 115 116 117

B. Cl.
 Pno
 Perc.
 Vln
 Vc.

118 119 120 121 122

I

Focus on pianist

Cond.

Fl.

B. Cl.

Pno

Perc.

Vln

Vc.

123 124 125 126 127 128 129

quasi rit. in own tempo

crotales

sul G

gliss.

yawn

n p

Continue conducting, frustrated,
until violinist speaks

Cond.

Fl.

B. Cl.

Pno

Perc.

Vln

Vc.

130 131 132 133 134 135

(*)

(*)

(*)

(*)

1. Those crow tails
are making me sleepy!

2. (pretentious, to vc.) It's
pronounced cro-ta-les!

3. (sleepy) What?

4. Cro-tales!

(fall asleep)

gliss.

gliss.

pp

(looking around,
concerned)

- (*)
- yawn and "fall asleep"
 - shift around when you hear bass drum
 - wake up suddenly when percussionist plays slapstick by you (specific directions in parts)

5. —even your supposed freedom
back in the first measure. If anything,
blame the composer, for writing music
that puts people to sleep. But that's
just the way things are, and our only
job right now is to finish this score.
So who's with me?

J (♩ = 132)

3. (exasperated) [VLN.] and [PERC.]
Don't you realize? Every move we make
is commanded by the composer—

8. Very good.
(go on)

Dialogue

Cnd.

Perc.

Vln

1. (interrupt conducting) Wait...why is everybody asleep? (pause, then turn to perc.)
You! It's your fault, for playing the crotales.

2. Don't look at me! (turn to cnd.)
It's all because of you, [CONDUCTOR],
bossing us around and telling us when
we can and can't play!

4. —I miss measure 1, when
we had the freedom to start
and stop as we wished—

6. I'm with you!

7. I'm not. But the score
told me to say that, so I
don't know anymore.

8. Very good.
(go on)

sul A
pizz. obediently

p

136 137 138

Cnd.

Perc.

Vln

Affirm the violinist,
e.g. a thumbs up

(ca 5")

(ca 15")

1. (after second crotale
bow) [VLN.], we can't lose
you too! You're the only
loyal one here.

2. (shortly) [PERC.], you're putting [VLN.]
to sleep. Can you please pick a different
instrument? (ca. 13")

to crotales

crotales - bowed, l.v. -
play cell 1x only (ca. 15")
- look mischievously at conductor
and violin after each note

- when instructed, make way to b.d.
- remove towel
- wait ca. 6" before going
to next measure (no cue)

(crotales start)
- yawn, rit., and dim. a little both times crotales play
- come to senses and accel./cresc. back when conductor talks

(crotales stop, perc.
makes way to bass drum)

mf

139 140 141

Cnd.

Perc.

Vln

(ca. 10")
continue conducting violinist (don't cue measures),
"erratic baton" when bass drum gets loud

2. It's that bass drum. (turn to perc.) [PERC.], you
must play a different instrument. (go on)

accel. poco a poco.....♩ = 160
(ca 11")

ca. 10"
- ad lib. chaotically around
the drum head
- like thunder; rebellious

- pull out the slapstick
dramatically and mischievously
- walk over by piano/cello
(cross in front of piano)

(bass drum starts)
- erratic tempo when
bass drum gets loud

1. (after second "erratic tempo")
Why is everything so shaky?

(conductor starts
to accel.)

p *f*

142 143

OVERTHROW THE CONDUCTOR - Full Score

Cnd.

(ca 10") surprised pno. and vc. woke up; conducting them intensely

(ca 6") watching perc. walk to wind players

(ca 10") frustrated at the wind players, motioning to sit down

(ca 20") look around frantically at everything happening

Picc.

(pianist and cellist start)

(perc. walks to winds)

picc.

on second slapstick hit; do 3x
- wake up surprised, begin playing
- stand up slowly and dramatically (ca. 10") as you repeat this figure

once standing up, do 8x:
- take a loud stomp towards conductor as each cello bowstroke finishes (8 total)
- play figure, keeping contour, go up in pitch

cl.

on second slapstick hit, do 3x:
- wake up surprised, begin playing
- stand up slowly and dramatically (ca. 10") as you repeat this figure

once standing up, do 8x:
- take a loud stomp towards conductor as each cello bowstroke finishes (8 total)
- play figure, keeping contour, go up in pitch

Pno

on first slapstick hit
- wake up surprised, begin playing
- slightly faster than conductor and violin
- stirring up the other players

(perc. walks to winds)

(winds enter)

(winds fully standing)

(turn page at any time)

slapstick

- 1x only
- wake up pianist and cellist!
- wait 10" and go to next bar

walk over to wind players

- 1x only
- wake up wind players!
- wait 5" and go to next bar

- play with piano's quarter notes, NOT with violin/conductor
- walk counterclockwise around your perc. setup then approach the conductor (see performance note)

Perc.

Vln

(pianist and cellist start)

(perc. walks to winds)

(winds start)

(winds fully standing)

on first slapstick hit
- wake up surprised, begin playing
- slightly faster than conductor and violin
- stirring up the other players

(perc. walks to winds)
- don't restart bow on cues, just continue naturally

(winds start)

(winds fully standing)
approx. 8x (until winds stop approaching conductor)

Vc.

(4")

(3")

(2")

(1" --> 0")

144

145

146

147

(ca 12")
- as if hallucinating, conduct angels in the sky

(ca 5")
- come back to senses, act flustered and cower in fear

(ca 20")
- quickly turn around, mortified, take a bow, and exit the stage (leave score on stand)

Cnd.

once very close to conductor:
- ad lib. high notes frantically, breathe as needed
- flz. more often as slapstick speeds up

2" after clarinet starts this rhythm

once conductor bows: anarchy!
- ad lib. any notes, any rhythm, breathe as needed
- form a line at front of stage

Picc.

f

once very close to conductor:
- ad lib. high notes frantically
- growl/flz. more often as slapstick speeds up

2" after cello starts this rhythm

once conductor bows: anarchy!
- ad lib. any notes, any rhythm, breathe as needed
- form a line at front of stage

Cl.

f

ff

once at a steady tempo w/ perc.

once conductor bows: anarchy!
- ad lib. glissandos
- any speeds, any registers

Pno

(w/ perc) accel. gradually to $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 250$

f

gradually with accel.

ff

gliss.

gliss.

once at a steady tempo w/ piano

once conductor bows: anarchy!
- ad lib. any notes, any rhythm, etc.
- walk around if you want!
- form a line at front of stage

Perc.

accel. (w/ piano) gradually to $\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 250$

ff

2" after flute starts this rhythm:
- high, screeching double stop (pitch unimportant)

once winds stop approaching conductor:
- get up and join them! (you defected)
- angry at conductor! chaotic, ad lib.

once conductor bows: anarchy!
- ad lib. any notes, any rhythm, etc.
- if able to stand, join line at front of stage

Vln

f

once winds stop approaching conductor:
- angry at conductor! chaotic, ad lib.

2" after slapstick doubles speed

once conductor bows: anarchy!
- ad lib. any notes, any rhythm, etc.

Vc.

f

148

149

150

♩ = 132

suddenly look sad
 Picc. (9")
once piano starts:
 - exit stage

suddenly look sad
 Cl. (9")
once piano starts:
 - exit stage

once fermata is over
 Pno *mf* *dim. gradually, as people leave (not each repetition)* *p*

tam-tam
 Perc. (9")
once piano starts:
 - exit stage
 - bring whatever you want

suddenly look sad
 Vln (9")
once piano starts:
 - exit stage

suddenly look sad
 Vc. (9")
once piano starts:
 - exit stage

151 152



once all players are out of sight
 - play this bar
 - get up, walk to the podium very happily
 - grab conductor's score, take a bow, exit stage

Pno
 (p)
 3
 3
 153