

# Sextet—The Tiger's Mind

by Cornelius Cardew

## Daypiece

The tiger fights the mind that loves the circle that traps the tiger. The circle is perfect and outside time. The wind blows dust in tigers' eyes. Amy reflects, relaxes with her mind, which puts out buds (emulates the tree). Amy jumps through the circle and comforts the tiger. The tiger sleeps in the tree. High wind. Amy climbs the tree, which groans in the wind and succumbs. The tiger burns.

## Nightpiece

The tiger burns and sniffs the wind for news. He storms at the circle; if inside to get out, if outside to get in. Amy sleeps while the tiger hunts. She dreams of the wind, which then comes and wakes her. The tree trips Amy in the dark and in her fall she recognizes her mind. The mind, rocked by the wind tittering in the leaves of the tree, and strangled by the circle, goes on the nod. The circle is trying to teach its secrets to the tree. The tree laughs at the mind and at the tiger fighting it.

**Interpretation** of this piece is to be viewed hopefully as a continuous process.

Initially the two texts given above should be regarded as limiting (ie, play the given actions in the given order), the Daypiece and Nightpiece being used for performance on alternate occasions. All musicians should memorize the text to be used. Subsequently new actions and situations may be allowed to arise spontaneously, concurrent or interleaved with the given ones; also the succession of events may be altered, more or less at random (eg, a performance of the Daypiece might open with the tiger asleep in the tree, or the mind loving the circle, or Amy's mind putting out buds, etc). After additional experience it may be desirable to devise new texts involving the same six characters—the new texts should then be memorized as before. Finally it may be possible to play without a text, simply improvising actions and situations involving the six characters.

Initially the six characters may be played by six musicians, each one knowing which roles are allocated to the other players. Later, each musician may select his own role and allocate the other five roles without telling the other players (so that player A may select tree for himself and regard B as tiger, while B has selected tree also and regards A as circle—in this case we already have two aspects of tree present at once). Alternatively, each player may select his own role and allocate the other five in the course of play, as required by the performance of his own role. Logically, after this stage it is no longer so important that there be six players. When there are more than six players the characters may be duplicated or multiplied as often as necessary. However, Amy should never be duplicated (obviously it might happen that two players both regard themselves as Amy, but this is allowable as long as each one regards himself as the only Amy). When there are 12 or more players the roles should be allocated by a performance director and made common knowledge amongst the musicians (eg, performers 1-6 are trees, 7 is Amy, 8 and 9 make up a circle, 10 is the wind and the rest are tigers). When there are less than six players, people or objects or sound sources outside the group may be used as dummies—without necessarily informing them of their role (for instance, if there are four players it might be convenient to take a sleeping onlooker—or an object in a sleeping position or a tape-recording of snoring—and place a tree-object in a position such that he becomes the tiger sleeping in the tree. He may sleep on for the duration of the performance. If he wakes he may still be regarded as the tiger, but the players should be prepared that he act not in accordance with the text. Alternatively a mechanical tiger may be devised—although it might seem more appropriate to devise mechanical minds, winds or circles). If there is only one player he should play the tiger.

The duration of the piece is not limited and it should preferably be performed on its own.

The following notes on the six characters are not limiting or definitive. They are intended primarily to encourage and assist prospective performers in the assumption of their roles. However, they do contain phrases that may be used in performance as additional material (eg, Amy holding the tiger by

the tail, the circle spinning, etc). Individual performers may modify the given details and add new ones if they so desire (eg, a zoologist performer may object to the view that the tiger's growling is instinctual, and might wish to add that the structure of his paws enables him to travel soundlessly over a particular kind of terrain. However, if our zoologist cannot accept tigers sleeping in trees he should choose a different role—at least until such time as the given texts have been discarded).

**Amy** is a person. She worships the tiger. She tags along holding him by the tail. Her mind is occupied with things close by. She comes to no harm in the wind, although it brings her intimations of things far away. However, in high winds she should avoid climbing trees.

**The tiger** is a beast; he likes to hunt. His face when he sights his prey is a silent explosion. In lean seasons he must conserve his strength and be on his guard against manginess. Movement is his language and Amy understands this language. His growling, etc, are merely his instinctual noises. His telecommunications system is based on the wind which brings him scents and sounds from far away. His hearing and sense of smell are very acute.

**The tree** is supposedly insensate. But it does respond to the stimuli of wind and sun, and is also subject to sickness. It can sustain severe damage and still repair itself. It is a haven for all kinds of life (animals, insects, plants) some of which are dependent on it parasitically. It keeps within itself a record of its age (seen as concentric circles). It is hard yet pliant. Dead trees may remain standing for centuries after their death. In life it expresses the circle of seasons in its flowering, its falling leaves, their changing colour, the rising sap, etc. Ironically, its seed is borne away on the wind which is a potentially dangerous enemy. Being unaware of the effect of its being, a tree may be beneficial, inimical or neutral in relation to others of its kind (eg, it may be protecting a neighbouring tree from high winds at the same time as depriving it of vital sunlight). Having no mind of its own, the tree is a constant stimulus to the mind.

**Wind** is insubstantial: visible and audible only through the objects in its path. Wind is a persuasive image of freedom—blowing when and where it wants, now hot now cold, now hard now soft, now sweet now sour, frequently screaming, wailing, whimpering, groaning, but never suffering, always intact—but crack this image and behind it we find that wind is totally

determined throughout its insubstantial being—on the one side by the atmospheric and geographical conditions that generate it and on the other by the form, size and substance of the obstacles in its path. Sometimes wind seems to vanish completely for days on end, but this is an illusion—he is ever-present.

**The circle** is an abstraction; the characteristic of myriads of things, the substance of none. It is a special case in the class of ellipses (the straight line is another), as the square is a special case in the class of rectangles (again the other extreme is the straight line). The faster it spins the less it appears to; when its spin reaches infinite velocity, the circle rests. It is a creation of the mind and at the same time a threat to it. In some inconceivably special situation the wind might cause the circle to acquire direction, enter time, become a wave.

**The mind** itself is never in danger, only its user. When the mind absorbs the threat of the circle, for instance, the owner may experience headache. If the owner relinquishes his mind in order to escape such effects, he is exposing himself to unknown hazards (from which the mind had previously protected him). If the mind is relinquished it lies dormant waiting for a new user. The mind is a nonentity—hard to recognize.

## *Works by Cornelius Cardew*

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