

## **Circum (2022)**

Commissioned by Between Feathers

Composed by Sebastian Adams

**FORMAT:** A video score in 5 sections  
for any musical forces; duration c. 9 minutes plus indeterminate preamble section

This piece was designed to be performed in the following context:

By the ensemble Between Feathers, in a programme along with Rebecca Saunders *O Yes & I*,  
Antonis Rouvelas *Sweets of sin*, and Sergi Puig's *Hades*

All text used in the piece is taken directly from James Joyce's *Ulysses*. The text used in most cases was from the free online source Online Literature ([https://www.online-literature.com/james\\_joyce/ulysses/1/](https://www.online-literature.com/james_joyce/ulysses/1/)), and in other cases from the Penguin edition (2000 reprint).

### **Performance Context:**

The initial performance was designed as such:

- 1) preamble: played on loop before the concert begins
- 2) then the piece by Rebecca Saunders (focusing on Episode 18 of *Ulysses*)
- 3) then Transition 1, for solo accordion
- 4) then the piece by Antonis Rouvelas (focusing on Episode 11)
- 5) then Transition 2, for solo flute
- 6) then the piece by Sergi Puig (focusing on Episode 6)
- 7) then Transition 3 begins (solo voice)
- 8) Then the voice continues their score while the ensemble plays the Ensemble Section
- 9) The piece ends when both voice and ensemble (who are not synchronised) are finished their parts.

The performance follows a backwards journey through the whole text of *Ulysses*, starting and ending with Molly Bloom's soliloquy. The piece could be freely adapted to other circumstances (including playing different instruments), but it is a vital part of the concept that any presentation of *Circum* should respect this linear but backwards timeline.

### **Definition of Video Score:**

As video score is an emerging medium, I believe it is helpful to define what I mean by this. My use of the phrase "video score" indicates a fixed video file or live-generated moving image which is both displayed to the audience and used as the performers' text. Therefore, the score becomes both a source of information for the performance and part of the art object for the audience. Performers' interpretation of the video will inevitably be affected by the sounds they have already produced, leading to a feedback loop between the sonic and visual elements.

This video score is silent. All sound in the performance will be produced by the ensemble.

### **Further instructions:**

The video files should be treated freely ((almost?) as an improvisation). There is no need to slavishly follow it, and I do not advise or dictate that musical parameters be mapped onto visual parameters in the piece. Obviously, the videos draw heavily on standard Western music notation, although much if it is displayed too quickly and oddly to read properly: it is a matter for the performers as individuals to decide how much attention to pay to this content.

## **THE PIECE**

### **PREAMBLE: Slot Machine**

*Max patch (with video output)*

This section is **not** fixed media, although a fixed media version can be provided by the composer if requested. It is designed to be played using a Max patch.

Link to Max Patch: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/ix1e7t3uwithjce/AABxKL9680kYYqE1pik4q7yla?dl=0>

[this link is still currently to the cut-down version. Download the whole folder. Instructions inside]

A mockup video is also available here: <https://youtu.be/kFuEH5i0ZYI>

This section scrolls through the entire text of Ulysses very fast, stopping randomly (always displaying both text and a music notation translation of the text).

The composer made the suggestion for the first performance that the percussionist play gentle thrums with pads of fingers on a snare drum while the text scrolls, and attempts to literally play the notation on a kalimba when the scrolling stops.

### **TRANSITION 1: Episodes 18 – 11**

*Fixed media video*

YouTube link: <https://youtu.be/P4s0oOpvzeM>

*Downloadable version available from the composer*

Performed on solo accordion in the first performances

### **TRANSITION 2: Episodes 11 – 6**

*Fixed media video*

YouTube link: [https://youtu.be/yf9s\\_vt5JBI](https://youtu.be/yf9s_vt5JBI)

*Downloadable version available from the composer*

Performed on solo flute in the first performances

### **TRANSITION 3: Episode 18**

*PDF document*

Dropbox link: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/dr4s3k4oip4nfb6/soliloquy%20score.pdf?dl=0>

This transition must be performed by a voice. It should be performed mostly either whispered or spoken very softly. The speaker/singer is expected to distort or transform their speech according to the distortions in the text. As in the video part, the parameters are left to the performer and can be improvised or pre-decided.

**MAIN SECTION:** Episodes 6 – 1

*Fixed media video*

YouTube link: <https://youtu.be/ndDEEV2yqXY>

*Downloadable version available from the composer*

This part should be performed by the full ensemble (excluding the person reading TRANSITION 3). It should start approximately 1 minute after TRANSITION 3 begins, at the discretion of the performers.