

The Cotard Etudes

David Pocknee

The Cotard Etudes are a series of pieces about sexuality, exploitation and the composition of social situations.

Cotard Etude #1: Heart Of Darkness

About

This first *Etude* set the tone for the series that was to follow, dealing with the expansion of material to include the composition of social situations; the exploitation of performers; the inherent amorality of performance; and what I saw as the logical culmination of one the key features of modernism: horror. This last idea I have outlined in more detail in the first issue of *Much Too Much Noise*.

This first *Etude* was performed only once, at Yaniv Schonfeld's house on 26 January 2011. Following the performance I told all the performers that all copies of the score had been destroyed – this was not true.

Set-up

This piece consisted of four groups of people (15 people in total):

A “conductor” - who indicated when the performers should turn over the pages of their scores.

A group of four people who had specific scores (the top four lines in the original score).

A group of eight people, who had more general scores (the bottom four lines in the original score -there were two copies of each).

And the rest of the group who were just told to watch the faces of specific people over the length of the piece.

There was no audience and no recording of the piece was made.

The Performance

All performers were placed in an oval, facing inwards, alternating male/female:

Person (no score)(F) Person(no score) (M)

Person (M)

Person (F)

Person (F)

Person (M)

Person (M)

Person (F)

Person (F)

Person (M)

Person (M)

Person (F)

Person (Female)

Person (Male)

Person (M)

Person (F)

Person (F)

Person (M)

Conductor

...

The scores were then distributed in a way which made it seem entirely random.

Each score was 7 x 7 cm large and was sealed inside an envelope.

Each performer was given instructions that they should not show their score to anybody else in the room.

The Conductor then started a Max/MSP patch (this uses Miller Puckette's fiddle~ external), which created a simple, background feedback sound, designed to prevent talking. This patch also contained a stopwatch, with which the conductor could measure the time.

The conductor then gave the performers instructions to open their scores.

The conductor then alternated instructions to turn the page of their score and performing the actions written there.

The time given to turn the page of the score and read what was written there was 5 seconds.

The time given to perform the page was 30-40 seconds.

The start of the Conductor's score is given below:

Conductor's Score

Press Spacebar in the Max/MSP patch.

Wait 10 seconds

Say: "Open your scores now and turn to page 1"

Wait 5 seconds

Then say: "Start performing page 1, now."

Wait 30-40 seconds

Say: "Stop performing page 1. Turn to page 2"

Wait 5 seconds

Say: "Start performing page 2"

Now press enter in Max/MSP patch to reset the clock.

The pattern below was then repeated for all 15 pages:

Say: "Start performing page x , now."

Press enter in the Max/MSP patch to reset the clock to 0 seconds.

Wait 30-40 seconds

Say: "Stop performing page x . Turn to page $x+1$ "

Wait 5 seconds

Say: "Start performing page $x+1$ "

Press enter in Max/MSP patch to reset the clock to 0 seconds.

etc....

On each page of the scores was an instruction to look at another performer in the group and imagine performing a sexual act to them. The piece was in two sections, one in which the four performers with specific scores were looking at each other in looped configurations, reminiscent of the ordering of my string quartet, *Parameters I*. The second half, in which the four performers with specific scores were arranged in loops of two, forcing them to look into each others' eyes, as the scores became ever more personalized, invasive and explicit...

Cotard Etude #2 (July 2011)

for David Pocknee and 2 or more performers.

Girls kiss. I watch.

Cotard Etude #3: for JR

for untrained or trained singer

Wait in silence the same number of seconds as the age at which you lost your virginity.

Sing one note for each person you have had sex with.

Progress chronologically.

Where relationships overlap, the one with the first sexual encounter should go first.

Where the chronology is difficult to judge (e.g. with threesomes etc.), then logical musical solutions should be found (e.g. a threesome could be represented by a mutliphonic or trill of two notes)

The **length** of each note is determined by the length of the associated relationship where;

Your longest ever relationship = one full breath

A single encounter (e.g. one night stand) = as fast as possible.

Dynamics are equal to the amount of perversion involved. This is left provocatively open to interpretation.

As loud as possible = minimal perversion

As quiet as possible = maximum perversion

Where multiple acts occurred, that with the lowest dynamic should be used.

Pitch is based on how much you regret the relationship.

As high as possible = minimum regret.

As low as possible = maximum regret.

Each note should be followed by a rest equal to its length.

Once you have finished, wait the same number of seconds as months since your last sexual encounter.

Cotard Etude #4: Heart

for untrained or trained choir of 4 or more people

The choir should be stood in a line facing the audience.

(This piece can also be performed whilst walking through the audience).

On a cue from one of the choir, all players turn to look at the left-most audience member and sing a pitch lasting one full breath.

The pitch indicates how much you would like to have sex with that audience member.

As low as possible = minimum desire

As high as possible = maximum desire

Do not stop looking at the audience member as you sing the note.

Wait 10 of your own heartbeats before moving on to the next left-most audience member.

All players are unsynchronized.

All dynamics are *p* in a *ppp* to *fff* scale.

All timbre is as “breathy” as possible.

All durations are one full breath.

The “left-ness” of an audience member is irrespective of depth.

There will be slight discrepancies in the order of singing due to perspective etc.

This should not matter as each singer should be staring at the person they are singing about.

There should be at least one couple/ex-couple in the audience or choir.

After or before the piece is played it must be explained to the audience how the piece works.

Cotard Etude #5: Parameters VI: Codex

for String Quartet

Two men and two women sit in a small circle, close enough that they can all reach each other's genitals.

They sit in the (clockwise) order: man 1 - woman 1 - woman 2 – man 2.

This piece consists of 36 movements and a Coda.

Movements with a line of asterisks between them should be performed with a small break (approximately the length of the exhalation of a lungful of air).

All other movements should be performed *attacca*.

The start of each movement is cued by one of the performers, indicated at the start of each movement. Their indication to start the movement, also cues the end of the previous movement, which can last as long as they decide.

If there is a gap between movements, the performer who cues the following movement should give a cue to both end the previous movement as well as a cue to end the pause between them.

Movement I or the Coda can be performed separately.

I

cue : woman 1

man 1 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching woman 1
woman 1 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching woman 2
woman 2 masturbates man 2 whilst watching man 2
man 2 masturbates man 1 whilst watching man 1

II

cue : man 2

man 1 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching woman 1
woman 1 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching man 2
woman 2 masturbates man 2 whilst watching man 1
man 2 masturbates man 1 whilst watching woman 2

III

cue : man 1

man 1 masturbates man 2 whilst watching woman 1
woman 1 masturbates man 1 whilst watching woman 2
woman 2 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching man 2
man 2 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching man 1

IV

cue : woman 2

man 1 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching woman 1
woman 1 masturbates man 2 whilst watching woman 2
woman 2 masturbates man 1 whilst watching man 2
man 2 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching man 1

V

cue : woman 1

man 1 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching woman 1
woman 1 masturbates man 2 whilst watching man 2
woman 2 masturbates man 1 whilst watching man 1
man 2 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching woman 2

VI

cue : woman 2

man 1 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching woman 1
woman 1 masturbates man 2 whilst watching woman 2
woman 2 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching man 2
man 2 masturbates man 1 whilst watching man 1

VII

cue : man 2

man 1 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching woman 2
woman 1 masturbates man 2 whilst watching man 2
woman 2 masturbates man 1 whilst watching woman 1
man 2 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching man 1

VIII

cue : man 1

man 1 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching woman 2
woman 1 masturbates man 2 whilst watching man 1
woman 2 masturbates man 1 whilst watching man 2
man 2 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching woman 1

IX

cue : woman 1

man 1 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching woman 1
woman 1 masturbates man 1 whilst watching woman 2
woman 2 masturbates man 2 whilst watching man 2
man 2 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching man 1

X

cue : man 2

man 1 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching woman 1
woman 1 masturbates man 1 whilst watching man 2
woman 2 masturbates man 2 whilst watching man 1
man 2 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching woman 2

XI

cue : woman 2

man 1 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching woman 2
woman 1 masturbates man 1 whilst watching man 2
woman 2 masturbates man 2 whilst watching woman 1
man 2 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching man 1

XII

cue : man 1

man 1 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching man 2
woman 1 masturbates man 2 whilst watching woman 2
woman 2 masturbates man 1 whilst watching man 1
man 2 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching woman 1

XIII

cue : woman 1

man 1 masturbates man 2 whilst watching woman 1
woman 1 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching woman 2
woman 2 masturbates man 1 whilst watching man 2
man 2 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching man 1

XIV

cue : woman 1

man 1 masturbates man 2 whilst watching woman 1
woman 1 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching man 2
woman 2 masturbates man 1 whilst watching man 1
man 2 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching woman 2

XV

cue : woman 2

man 1 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching woman 1
woman 1 masturbates man 2 whilst watching man 2
woman 2 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching man 1
man 2 masturbates man 1 whilst watching woman 2

XVI

cue : man 2

man 1 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching woman 2
woman 1 masturbates man 2 whilst watching man 2
woman 2 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching woman 1
man 2 masturbates man 1 whilst watching man 1

XVII

cue : man 1

man 1 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching woman 2
woman 1 masturbates man 2 whilst watching man 1
woman 2 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching man 2
man 2 masturbates man 1 whilst watching woman 1

XVIII

cue : woman 2

man 1 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching woman 2
woman 1 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching man 2
woman 2 masturbates man 2 whilst watching woman 1
man 2 masturbates man 1 whilst watching man 1

XIX

cue : woman 1

man 1 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching woman 2
woman 1 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching man 1
woman 2 masturbates man 2 whilst watching man 2
man 2 masturbates man 1 whilst watching woman 1

XX

cue : man 2

man 1 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching man 2
woman 1 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching woman 2
woman 2 masturbates man 2 whilst watching man 1
man 2 masturbates man 1 whilst watching woman 1

XXI

cue : man 1

man 1 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching man 2
woman 1 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching man 1
woman 2 masturbates man 2 whilst watching woman 1
man 2 masturbates man 1 whilst watching woman 2

XXII

cue : woman 1

man 1 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching man 2
woman 1 masturbates man 2 whilst watching man 1
woman 2 masturbates man 1 whilst watching woman 1
man 2 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching woman 2

XXIII

cue : man 2

man 1 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching man 2
woman 1 masturbates man 2 whilst watching woman 2
woman 2 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching man 1
man 2 masturbates man 1 whilst watching woman 1

XXIV

cue : woman 2

man 1 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching man 2
woman 1 masturbates man 2 whilst watching man 1
woman 2 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching woman 1
man 2 masturbates man 1 whilst watching woman 2

XXV

cue : man 1

man 1 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching woman 2
woman 1 masturbates man 1 whilst watching man 1
woman 2 masturbates man 2 whilst watching man 2
man 2 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching woman 1

XXVI

cue : man 2

man 1 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching man 2
woman 1 masturbates man 1 whilst watching woman 2
woman 2 masturbates man 2 whilst watching man 1
man 2 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching woman 1

XXVII

cue : woman 1

man 1 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching man 2
woman 1 masturbates man 1 whilst watching man 1
woman 2 masturbates man 2 whilst watching woman 1
man 2 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching woman 2

XXVIII

cue : woman 2

man 1 masturbates man 2 whilst watching woman 2
woman 1 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching man 2
woman 2 masturbates man 1 whilst watching woman 1
man 2 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching man 1

XXIX

cue : man 1

man 1 masturbates man 2 whilst watching woman 2
woman 1 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching man 1
woman 2 masturbates man 1 whilst watching man 2
man 2 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching woman 1

XXX

cue : woman 2

man 1 masturbates man 2 whilst watching man 2
woman 1 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching woman 2
woman 2 masturbates man 1 whilst watching man 1
man 2 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching woman 1

XXXI

cue : man 2

man 1 masturbates man 2 whilst watching man 2
woman 1 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching man 1
woman 2 masturbates man 1 whilst watching woman 1
man 2 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching woman 2

XXXII

cue : woman 1

man 1 masturbates man 2 whilst watching woman 1
woman 1 masturbates man 1 whilst watching man 2
woman 2 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching man 1
man 2 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching woman 2

XXXIII

cue : man 1

man 1 masturbates man 2 whilst watching woman 2
woman 1 masturbates man 1 whilst watching man 2
woman 2 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching woman 1
man 2 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching man 1

XXXIV

cue : man 2

man 1 masturbates man 2 whilst watching woman 2
woman 1 masturbates man 1 whilst watching man 1
woman 2 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching man 2
man 2 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching woman 1

XXXV

cue : woman 2

man 1 masturbates man 2 whilst watching man 2
woman 1 masturbates man 1 whilst watching woman 2
woman 2 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching man 1
man 2 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching woman 1

XXXVI

cue : woman 1

man 1 masturbates man 2 whilst watching man 2
woman 1 masturbates man 1 whilst watching man 1
woman 2 masturbates woman 1 whilst watching woman 1
man 2 masturbates woman 2 whilst watching woman 2

Coda

cue : man 1

a man (man 1) masturbates whilst watching
a woman (woman 1) masturbating, who is watching
a woman (woman 2) masturbating, who is watching
a man (man 2) masturbating, who is watching
the first man masturbating.

Cotard Etude #6: Towards A Positive Male Sexuality

for Lös Caballeros

Version 1 (for a small setting):

Three male performers sit in a small triangle, facing outwards.

Each performer should be close enough to be able to touch the arm of another performer, if they stretch out their arms behind them.

Their arms should be held behind the chair, with their right hand holding their left wrist.

Their legs should be spread wide apart.

The audience should surround them.

They should be fully dressed (wearing all-black clothes (underwear included)), but their trousers and underwear should be around their ankles.

Aluminium foil should be wrapped around each of their penises.

They should be blind-folded (with a black blindfold).

They should each be wearing headphones (large, not in-ear).

Into the headphones is played an audio file which they are not allowed to hear beforehand.

The erectile movement of their penises, stimulated by the audio in the headphones, rustles the aluminum foil and creates the sounding aspect of the piece.

Version 2 (for a stage setting):

If performed on a stage, all performers should be completely naked, and sat upon chairs (all the same) arranged in a line and facing away from the audience.

They should be sat in a line, with at least a meter between them, facing into large acoustic baffles, designed to acoustically amplify the sound of the aluminium foil for the audience.

Their arms should be held behind the chair, with their right hand holding their left wrist.

Their legs should be spread wide apart.

Aluminium foil should be wrapped around each of their penises.

They should be blind-folded (with a black blindfold).

They should each be wearing headphones (large, not in-ear).

Into the headphones is played an audio file which they are not allowed to hear beforehand.

The erectile movement of their penises, stimulated by the audio in the headphones, rustles the aluminum foil and creates the sounding aspect of the piece.

Electronic amplification should not be used in any performance of this piece (both versions).

Electronic part in progress

Cotard Etude #7: For Xenia Cage

“When the music gets lousy he loses his erection...

...Mozart is the best”

from *Begin Again*

Cotard Etude #8: To Close A Cycle

Gather the performers of *Cotard Etude #1* together
in a room

where the score of the first *Etude* is displayed.