Cybeline

(A music theater work for soprano/performance-artist and quadraphonic electronics)

Text: Abbie Conant

The video begins with Cybeline in the dark. Her head is down, as if asleep.

The music gradually becomes louder...
At the sound of the alarm, a bright spot appears on Cyeline. She comes abruptly to life, suddenly raising her head and looking at her public.

A loud buzzer warns that she is about to go on the air.

She acknowledges her public showbiz style, then at the zap sound abruptly cuts off the applause with a sweeping gesture.

Drums

With grand showbiz enthusiasm, very extroverted

night, ladies and gentlemen we have a whole bevvy of special guests...

somewhat operatic:

but we'll be back in a moment, after a word from our sponsor.

Drums

She gestures a cut-off in unison with the clunk, and is taken off-line.

Irritated, she turns to the screen:

Turn me up, Bill, I can hardly hear myself! And can you make that applause a little more real. As turns back front, a little calmer: Where'd you get this bunch, at an eye operation.

Well, we're back!

To the public:

She is put back on-line. With grand showbiz enthusiasm, she addresses the public:

Let's give a nice welcome.

At the zap, she jerks back reactively as Hildy's face suddenly appears.

Drums

Opening guest tonight is the fabulous Hildegarde von Bing-en.
Thank you for being on the show, Hil-dy!

What with all the praying, doc-tor-ing, com-pos-ing and herbs.

Looking at the screen, she raises her arms and leans back as if having a vision herself.

When do you ever get time to have visions?

Did you have any idea you’d have such a

She watches the angel float away.

grand comeback in the nineteen-ties.

Uh, that’s the nineteen nineties, Hil-dy.

Short pause, then a slightly ironic aside to the public:

And

She continues to look at the screen, sees the phallic shape, coyly puts her hand over her mouth in shock, and turns to the public:

come on now, tell us the truth about you and the Pope.

We’ll be back in a flash with more!
She gestures a cut-off in unison with the clunk and is taken offline.

She is cut off by the buzzer and put back on-line.

After the scraped cymbal cue, she addresses her public, quieter, more sincere:

Sometimes I turn everything off, and imagine what it would be like if I had to go it alone.

Short musical gesture with glove controller.

Blades of Doom

No sound fort-ress... tcha, or may-be it's a closet.

Another gesture:

Screech

Oh I used to go without, without all these gizmos, then something happened.

Another gesture:

Flutter Down

All chips and no old blocks, that's my house.

Another gesture:

Lyrical Hope

As long as the air wiggles a world around me, as long as I have my sound, I feel safe.

A longer, more elaborate passage.

Blades of Doom

As the commercial on the video runs, she takes a long wooden pointer attached to the side of her chair.

And so here they are, my beloved viewers: Cyborg's Top Ten Pet Peeves

emphatically

Num-ber ten.
When your wires short circuit on your fillings.

Some one spills coffee in your body fluid chamber.

People talk about you as if you were a mere computer.

Some jerk propositions you.

Her annoyance builds.

From Nep-tune.

Software crushes. Stinky silicon cone.

Sim sex.

Renegade spawning applications.
foaming in the eye-balls.

When your appropriate behavior software mal-functions at a party and you end up

wearing a monitor on your head.

Announcer's voice on the tape: And for the number one Pet Peeve of cyborgs all over the universe:

Long pause, silent and motionlessness.

At the clunk her head falls and she becomes lifeless, as if shut off. Long pause.

Her head jerks up as she is brought back to life and on-line mode by the buzzer.

She returns to showbiz mode...

...and returns the pointer to its holder.

So, Ladies and gentlemen,

Drums our

She divides her focus between the screen and public as before. Use tenuto to stress words and swing the phrases.

next guest is the amazing Hypatia, the gorgeous mathematician of Alexandria, a stroner extraordinary, philosopher and teacher.

Hypatia, you look great!
She looks at the screen.  Aside to audience, hand to side of mouth.

Doesn't she look great?  Not bad, for the fourth century.  No sign of that little incident with those monks in the streets of dear old Alexandria.

Watch out though, those religious folk are still mean bugs!  What crossed through your mind when they came at you with their sharpened shells?

We've come a long way baby!

She partially lowers her arms as she becomes more doubtful.

She looks at her cyborgian hand.  She snaps out of it and goes back into showbiz.

A tempo

Par don me Hypatia, it's time for a commercial break.

Raise hand and drum kneel with fist on the last note.
At the clink she makes a gesture as if cueing the cut-off.

After the sound of the scraped cymbal, she speaks over the cloud music. Gesture to the screen at the underlined words. She celebrates herself. Sometimes behind the buzzes and whines of the wires I hear strange voices. The bird-breast soft callings of the old she-rods. Their presence is like...humming bird breath.

She creates a passage with the glove controller.

After the scraped cymbal she speaks. (Via an effects machine, her voice optionally alters to electronic beauty.) Moon glowing opalescent lips of fatal fawns light on my bare skin like hundreds of butterfly butterflies in the thick night.

Cloud Music

Bowed Cymbal

Bowed Cymbal

Dream Sequence

Dove Cry

Whine Cymbal

Low Body Sound

The cloud and hand music is cut-off as she is buzzed back on line.

An advertisement bursts upon the silence. Cybeline quietly takes an old, humorously heat-up, red cowboy hat and some sheet music, both attached to the side of her chair, and places them in her lap.

Cybeline returns to her routine: And now what you’ve all been waiting for: Song of the Week! Today’s song was sent in by Hannah DiTorchio of Gallup, New Mexico.

Humorously sensual, in a country-western style, she occasionally reacts amorously to the cowboy on the screen.

Just the other day I was surfin’ on E-Bay. When a big horse came a gallop into my way, I could hear he was callin out my number.

She gestures to the Mac.

She gestures to the horse.

More music with the glove.

Bird-Whale

Weeping

Flutter Down

She puts on the cowboy hat (at the word “number”).

It’s en-titled num’ber crunchin’ cow-boy.
He's a number crunchin' cowboy and if I calculate just right he'll be working at my keyboard, his arms around me.

She looks at the screen.

tight. He's a number crunchin' cowboy, he's the man up on my screen, he's the best of all stars.

She gestures to the screen at laptop.

tistics, he's the e-mail of my dreams. He's no Microsoft when we head up to the loft. He's the best programmer out of changing gigabytes on his laptop late at night, he's got my heart online and I've

greater Albuquerque. Ex. He's a number crunchin' cowboy, and if I calculate just right.
She is taken off-line at the clunk. Somewhat more resigned, she speaks to her public over the Cyborg Body Music. Her voice is optionally electronically shifted down an octave. She looks at the screen at the underlined words: As you can see, my producers aren't too happy with me. Pause. Ha! What producers? What me? Whispered aside: I'm only pretending to be a talk show host. Back to normal: In an hour they'll arrive for my evaluation. They'll decide if I'm a human. And how can I show them, you will ask? Her tone becomes more energetic and analytical. She points to the screen for each example: Well, based on my observations humans are: one third sensation, one third memory. She turns to the public and takes a showbiz pose...and one third show biz. So what better way to show the scientists I'm human than by being a singing and dancing talk show host. Makes sense to me...but then maybe I'm not human. She remains motionless, face blank and neutral.

She enthusiastically and energetically returns her attention to her public.

At the zap, she gestures to the screen with a fully extended arm.

So folks, did I ever tell you about the geek who thought that computers could become opera singers?

He was found still sitting in his chair.

At the the last word of the phrase, she gestures to the screen with a fully extended arm.

in front of his computer.

Flat as a pancake!

Apparently a sopranino broke through security and flat-tuned him with one sit-ting!
She gestures to the screen at the zap, arm fully extended.

That's how I'll show them I'm hu-man.

I'll be a sing-er, a voice of hu-man-i-ty,
even if they think I'm on-ly part-ly hu-man.

She raises her arms similar to those in the image on the screen and sings operatically.

She slowly lowers her arms.

We all want to be-come raw song, don't we?

If I had a thou-sand arms, I could

Drum

Bells

turn the wheel e-ven fast-er I could buf-fet the wind and weather I could heave up both stones to-geth-er,

That the fair-est mas-ter might see,

How faith-ful I can be. That the fair-est Mas-ter might see how faith-ful I can be.

She divides her attention between the cartoons and public.
She falts as she realizes she has been taken off-line:

\underline{\text{Ach but I am frail of... frame...}}

\underline{\text{Clank}}

\underline{\text{Her monolog continues...}}

Delivered like a hardboiled detective, leaning forward, eyebrows down, macho, serious. She uses the stick as a pointer.

\underline{\text{Her protestations are cut-off by the buzzer and she is put back on-line.}}

As the advertisement is announced she takes the wood pointer from the side of her chair and assumes a hyper-masculine demeanor:

\underline{\text{The test of the ad on the recording: And now it's time for Turbothane Crimes, brought to you by Police Dog!!}}

\underline{\text{Police Dog goes where you go. Police Dog is loyal. Police Dog can recognize and impugn your enemies. Police Dog, without all the mess and fuss of a real Fido.}}

\underline{\text{Here is Phil-a-delphi-a's rape and mu-ti-la-tion vic-tim num-ber nine thrir-ty three.}}
Her name: Maxine O’Donnell. She was studying social work at Penn.

She had coffee with him. He was inter-est-ed in her. She was intrigued with him. Then...

Quietly, sober

Even if I could go back in time, what would I change?

Cloud music: After the scraped cymbal cue, she speaks over the cloud music: Maybe again to feel the child’s fearlessness among the wild horses? To smell their damp auras slight with bruised grass notes expanding in transparent shimmering clouds around their shoeless hooves. Short pause. I never knew that death could smell like grazing horses. (To globe solo.)

Cloud Music

Whispers on tape, evolved randomly: wet earth, burning fields, box turtles...tornado warnings...amid wild horses...Edgar and the mensa hud...on the porch...the yellow stoic house...June bugs on the screen door...spring peas...bubble bath...I fell asleep praying...the Three Marys...Campbell’s Chicken and Noodle...Mennonites...Wii Rogers Tampique...Claremore...Mrs. Ricky...the blue cat mask...Mr. Nickels...the washing machine dream...Brown Duncan...
A more elaborate buzzer puts her back on line. Her reaction is partly confused and partly sexual.

Britskly addressing her technician on the screen, somewhat dismayed. Why Bill, I'm surprised at your beeping, but let's not ever do it. You know how dangerous it can be turning her focus back to the public—to turn someone on too strongly. Anyway, after my accident I recorded my technicians whispering—not too hard when you're constantly wired.

Moved from pro-teins to na-no-ma-chines, a bi-o-lo-gi-cal-ly up-grad-ed post-hu-man life.

With a humorously alien voice (like a Cone-Head) Her voice can be optionally altered electronically to symbolize the recording; She's some sort of experiment or mistake, a process of healing transformed into a project of bio-molecular design.

At the top of the gliss, she speaks in a brusk, exagger-ated cartoon voice (such as Sylvester the Cat):

Ah, the syn-the-tic trans-scen-dent-al, the con-sen-su-al hal-lu-ci-na-tions of net-worked flesh, the mu-ti-ple self of in-du-stri-al-ly me-di-a-ted re-al-i-ties.

She sings in a normal voice, dividing her focus between the cartoons and public.

That the fair-est mas-ter might see, How faith-ful I can be. That the fair-est Mas-ter might see how faith-ful I can be.

Ach, but
I am frail of frame, What I raise up, what I sever, What I carry, what I hammer Any-one can do the same, Any-one can do the same.

She listens to the cloud music.

After the scraped cymbal cue, she speaks over the cloud music to the public: Sometimes when all is quiet I hear the cells talking to one another. It’s like a flock of birds that have turned into waves on the beach. Or bells...

Cloud music begins

Scraped Cymbal

The cloud music continues until the next button

She returns to the solo with the glove.

Cosmic Laugh

Blades of Doom

Scraped Cymbal

After the scraped cymbal cue. (Her voice is optionally altered to electronic beauty): Music is a cyborg’s dream, flowers and birds of spring painted on window glass.

Bird-Whale

Weeping

Dual Whine

Cloud Music

Bowled Cymbal

Dream Sequence

Low Budy Sound

Talking Cymbal

Chimes

Steam Flute

Goblin

The thoughts of the earth are my thoughts...
The voice of the earth is my voice...
The feather of the earth is my feather...
All that belongs to the earth belongs to me...
All that surrounds the earth surrounds me...
I, I am the sacred words of the earth...
It is lovely indeed, it is lovely indeed.

The talking clouds... the coffee colored Tarantula scurrying along the side of the road... the full-hued double rainbow spanning the red curved earth... the flash flood moving the amber waters like terrified cattle tearing the bottom of a desiccated sea...

"Let me see if this be real, This life I am living! Ye who possess the skies, Let me see if this be real, This life I am living!"
She is put back on-line, but pauses a moment, fluttered, touching her forehead as if something were confusing or disorienting her.

I'm sorry folks, but I am getting some static on my lines. I have to do that "True Crimes" segment again. My program says that last version was too loud and aggressive. It says I have to tell both sides of the story. It's all part of my self-corrective software.

She sings and acts the story in two voices, one feminine and the other masculine. When she uses the feminine voice she generally looks toward the screen, and when she uses the masculine she looks toward the public. If the written tessitura is not possible, sing all in the upper octave.

Here's Phil-a-del-phi-a rape and

masculine, in public

mu-ti-la-tion vic-tim num-ber nine thirty three.

Her name was Max-ine O'-

Don-nel.

She was study-ing soc-i-al work at Penn.

Masculine, in public

Her at-tack-er was out of jail pend-ing psy-chi-a-tric e-val-ua-tion.
He seemed so normal.

He worked at the Cyberfiber plant as a special projects manager.

She had coffee with him.

He was interested in her.
She was intrigued with him.

Quadruphonic voices crescendo to the end of the passage.

She is taken off line. She speaks to her public: Humans do not know the torment of endless knowledge, the world as a network of a billion hard-disks. No secrets to spare me pain, no sanctuaries in the temple of silence. A binary world, an endless on and off, light that gives and takes away. My soul vanishes through steel a thousand times stronger than bone, through wired dreams a million times faster than nerves. In this sanctuary, the money changers are wired straight into the temple.

She creates a long a capella improvised solo with the glove controller.

Again she sings the story in two voices, one feminine and the other masculine, dividing her focus and acting as before.

They said right in front of her that she
During the interludes she watches the screen.

Feminine, in screen:

She couldn't remember anything about her former life.

A violent interlude of machine music.

Muscule, in public:

They were concerned her nerves wouldn't hold out.

Feminine, in screen:

At first they would turn off her cerebral cortex and have their way with her. Then they'd just...
leave it on,

put her on cybernetic hold

so she couldn't move or react.

A violent interlude
of machine music.

And then they erased her memory, or so they thought.

But memory is every where.
Cloud Music

Bells

Harp

Dove Sigh

Dream Sequence

Talking Cymbal

Chimes

Goblin

Lyrical Harp

Bells

Harp

Random Whispers

Mirror I am... simbels by the Red Sea...
Wings of the morning...
Deep calleth unto deep...

The way everlasting...

The talking clouds... the coffee colored
towanda skittering along the side of the road... the full-fledged double rainbow
spanning the red curved earth... the flash flood moving the amber waters like terrified cattle tearing the bottom of a desiccated sea...

Whine Cymbal

Steam Flute

Low Body Sound

Tibetan Bowl

"Let me see if this be real,
This life I am living?
Ye who possess the skies,
Let me see if this be real,
This life I am living?
"

"The thoughts of the earth are my thoughts...
The voice of the earth is my voice...
The feather of the earth is my feather...
All that belongs to the earth belongs to me...
All that surrounds the earth surrounds me...
I am the sacred words of the earth...
It is lovely indeed, it is lovely indeed.
"

Wet earth... the buming fields... hex turtles... tornado warnings...
usual wild horses... Edgar and the mouseblood... on the porch... the yellow stucco house... June bugs on the screen door... spring peppers... bubble bath... I fell asleep praying... for three Marys... Campbell's Chicken and Noodle... Mennonites... Will Rogers Turnpike... Claremore... Mrs. Ricky... the blue cat mask... Mr. Nickels... the washing machine
dream... Brown Duncan...
Her voice is optionally altered electronically.

I was made in secret and curious-ly wrought in the low-est parts of the earth.

Cybeline plays an optional instrumental solo over the fixed cloud music below. Set the tempo so that the solo lasts until the indicated cue. Slow and expressive. (Enter on the first lower note of ossilando after the bird’s weeping ends)

(sultones, pitch only approximate)  (These two mea. optional.)

To weeping birds.
meadows and thrushes and robins that sing
And thrushes and robins that sing. And as the cock was crowing, I rise and look without; The day is cold and dreary.
The ravens are screaming about, The day is cold and dreary, The ravens are screaming about.

Light dims to almost black, only face lit. She bows her head for about two minutes, as if asleep and dreaming, while the music and images continue.

The light rises slightly. She raises her head and listens to the music.

After the first whisper in the cloud music, she sings softly, freely, almost in a folk or ethnic style, her voice slightly amplified. The pauses between the phrases are only approximate. Set the tempo so that the song ends approximately near the indicated cue in the cloud music.

Feather mother father float weigh less than weightless my heart on the balance find my feather aloft
in oceans of air the blood made ether
the wrenching wrought to aught
no pain in muscle or mind

in any world of suffering

the feathers to your apocalyptic pitch
and then weigh my heart

the featherweight dream boxer
feather mother faith their float

weigh less than weight less
my heart on the balance
no pain in muscle or mind

weigh my heart weigh my heart

The light on Cybeline dims slightly. Long pause as she listens to the cloud music. She quietly speaks in unison with the final words of the cloud music. (See cue on next page.)
Cloud Music (cont.)

Bells

Steam Flute

Bells

The vocal solo ends approximately here

Low Body

Dove

Bells

Lyrical Hope

Dove

Steam Flute

Bells

Random Whispers

Mirror I am.
Tenhurst by the Red Sea...
Wings of the morning...
Deep calls unto deep...
They yearn everlast... 
Flash upon... singing in our cells...
Door of Heaven...

Cybeline softly speaks in unison with the following words from the cloud music:
All that belongs to the earth belongs to me...
All that surrounds the earth surrounds me...
I am the sacred words of the earth...
It is lovely indeed, it is lovely indeed.

The light on Cybeline's face slowly fades to black.

Wind Chimes

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