The Ghosts of Versailles

Synthesizer setup and performance guidelines

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John Corigliano's opera *The Ghosts of Versailles*, commissioned by and premiered at the Metropolitan Opera in 1991, includes a part for a synthesizer player. The synthesizer contributes electronic elements to the traditional orchestra palette and adds to the otherworldly soundscapes that the opera inhabits.

The reduced orchestration of *The Ghosts* includes a part for a keyboard player which is much more elaborate: In addition to performing the electronic elements from the original orchestration, the keyboard player also plays the Harpsichord, which plays a central role throughout the opera, as well as numerous 'acoustic' sounds (such as woodwinds, brass and strings) that double or complete the orchestral scoring.

The complete performance part for the keyboard player has been programmed in the easy-to-use performance software Mainstage 2, which is made by Apple. Basic computer and music technology skills are required of the performer, but prior experience with Mainstage is not needed. Any user with basic Mac skills can learn the ins and outs of the software in an afternoon.

The following equipment is required to successfully perform the keyboard part:

1) Apple computer (tower or laptop) running OS X version **10.6 or later**. The processor and memory requirements are quite minimal; but keep in mind that the faster and more powerful your computer is, the better it will perform. While it needn't be a brand new computer, we recommend it have plenty of free hard disk space (>20GB) and not run any other programs while on duty (internet, email, calendar, word processor apps will all take away from the processing power).
2) We recommend using an external audio interface that connects to the house system. While it's possible to run Mainstage via built-in audio, this too will reduce the processing available to the software itself. A **Firewire interface** is preferred over USB.
3) MIDI keyboard controller. The controller is connected to the computer and triggers the sounds which the software produces. We recommend a weighted action, 88-key model, as the part calls for some expressive playing. The make, model and year are irrelevant; it's best if you have experience with a model that you know and like. The keyboard has to be outfitted with the following:
    1. Sustain pedal
    2. Volume pedal
    3. Pitch bend wheel or slider
    4. Program change buttons (+/-) OR program change pedal.
        (The first three are fairly standard. For item 4 the performer has a range of choices, depending on their experience and preference. Changing programs (patches) on the fly is key to performing this part well. The Mainstage file is preprogrammed to step through each

entrance in succession, but the changes happen fast. [Note: it is not required to play all the entrances: Depending on the acoustics of an auditorium or preference of the conductor, the doublings may be omitted at will. The patch list document included with this set of guidelines shows which sounds are optional, but only the rehearsal process will make things clear for each production.]

4) The **Mainstage** software application. You will need to purchase and install **Mainstage** before you can play the part. Mainstage is available from the App store or via this link: http://www.apple.com/logicpro/mainstage/
After you download the software, be sure to install all the additional content (In Mainstage, go to >Mainstage>Download additional content)

5) The Ghosts of Versailles Mainstage performance file, which is included with the rental materials. Copy the file to your computer and run it on a local (not external) disk.

A few basic notes on Mainstage:
-The program needs to run as a 64 bit application. To do so, select Mainstage from your Applications folder (make sure MS is not running), then go to *File* and select *Get Info;* uncheck the *Open in 32bit mode* option.

-When launching Maintage for the first time, go to *Preferences* and setup the following parameters (modified parameters will stay once the setup is done):

Under GENERAL:
- Use Tuning slider to tune MS to orchestra if applicable
- Startup >> Open most recent in **perform mode**
- On Patch change >> Keep current value
- Respond to Hardware >> Jump
- AutoSave >> Never

Under AUDIO
- Audio Output >> Select your audio hardware (the Firewire interface mentioned earlier)

It is important that you figure out which patches will be played and which ones omitted in your production; practice the run-through of the part and gain confidence with patch changing. It is entirely possible to tweak the Mainstage file to your liking: You can easily change the order of the patches, skip (hide) unused ones or perform a variety of other operations and save your own file.

We feel that this system will enable you to get the most out of the reduced orchestration of *The Ghosts* and hope that you'll have a terrific experience putting it together.

If you experience any problems, technical, acoustic or operational, help and troubleshooting advice is available.

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