McCaleb, J Murphy ORCID:<br>https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9867-9909 (2020) Instruments of Change: A song cycle. [Composition]

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# Instruments of Change 

J Murphy McCaleb (2020)

A song cycle.

Instrumentation<br>soprano, alto, two baritones, one bass, and spoken voices (male and female)<br>Flute<br>Alto saxophone<br>Bass trombone<br>Piano<br>Electric guitar<br>Bass guitar<br>Percussion

The premiere performance included the following doublings:
Flute and soprano (Mvt 11)
Alto saxophone and bass (Mvt 10)
Bass trombone, piano and baritone (Mvt 7)
Electric guitar and baritone(Mvt 9)
Bass guitar and spoken male vocals (Mvt 5)
Percussion and alto (Mvt 6)

## Movements

1. Prologue: So the Peloton Passed
2. Red Rebel (1)
3. Escalation
4. Red Rebel (2)
5. No right
6. Let them be children
7. Our little boy
8. Red Rebel (3)
9. But what about China?
10. Calculated risk
11. Water still finds us
12. Red Rebel (4)
13. Post-normal
14. Red Rebel (5)

## Text Attributions

Mvt 1: Simon Armitage
Mvts 2, 4, 8, 12, and 14: Catherine Heinemeyer
Mvts 5, 6, 9, 10, and 11: compiled and adapted by Murphy McCaleb
Mvt 7: Murphy McCaleb

## Original Performers

Murphy McCaleb - bass trombone, piano, and voice
Hannah Fruin - flute and voice
Max Stephens - alto saxophone and voice
Chris Palmer - electric guitar and voice
Dan Monaghan - electric bass and voice
Katya Fox - percussion and voice

## Performance Guidance

Movement 1 can be performed live or pre-recorded. In the original performance, a recording of the text was overlay with audio of trees blowing in the wind.

Movements $2,4,8,12$, and 14 are easiest with live spoken voice rather than a recording. That speaker is distinct from the rest of the performers. In the original performance, the Red Rebel slowly processed towards the stage throughout the entire performance, only turning around to face the audience for Movement 14. The physicality of any choreography should be influenced by Pauline Oliveros' extreme slow walks.

There may be opportunities for movements to elide. Feel free to do so.

## Programme Notes

Climate change has become a defining feature of life in 2020. Its effects have rippled out in perhaps unexpected ways, impacting how we travel, what we eat, where we live, and more. Perhaps more concerning is how these fundamental shifts in lifestyle can exacerbate social rifts. Although modern technology allows many perspectives to be expressed, it is seemingly rare that these perspectives are thoroughly considered by listeners who do not already feel the same way. As the walls of echo chambers become more rigid, so to the apparent incompatibility of worldviews.

Instruments of Change is an attempt to capture this plurality of voices in an empathetic manner. At the core of the work is a series of six songs (a song cycle? a concept album?), each with a distinct identity and character. The texts are constructed wholly or partially of words from different members of today's global society, drawing on people across generational, economic, and cultural spectrums. Genre and musical style are treated as clothing might be - items borrowed from someone else's wardrobe, worn, then returned. Importantly, none of these songs are intended to be a caricature or over-reduction, and instead work under the assumption that everyone is acting in a way which is ethically consistent with their own values and in a way which presumes positive intent. Movements 3 (Escalation) and 13 (Post-Normal) grow out of the musical content of the songs, blending and recombining material as a proxy for the interpersonal dialogues which may be needed more in society today. Interspersed throughout the work is Red Rebel, a piece which exists on a more geologic timescale as a reminder of humanity's limited ability to conceive of change on a global scale.

## Acknowledgements

This piece would not have been possible without the support of a number of people. First, I would like to recognise Catherine Heinemeyer as spiritual coauthor of this work, whose perspective on storytelling and empathy placed me in a new (and admittedly uncomfortable) creative position. Second, I would like to thank my music colleagues at York St John University for their encouragement and advice. I'm fairly certain that this is not the work that David Lancaster expected when he invited me to contribute to the Late Music concert series, and I'm glad that I can still (pleasantly?) surprise him. Third, the students that premiered this work with me have been absolutely brilliant, and I greatly appreciate their creativity, patience, and willingness to explore the creative process with me. Last, and certainly not least, I would like to thank my wife and son for their support throughout this performance process and encouragement to keep pushing myself as an artist.

JMM 2020
Formatting and guidance revised 2023

## 1. So the peloton passed

Simon Armitage (2019)
so the peloton passed
like a line from a poem
across the eye,
millipede legs
scuttling for Holme Moss |
we trod in its slipstream,
authorised trespass,
the main road
cordoned-off
to petrol and piston,
the tarmac kindly and warm to our bare feet,
an asphalt fairway vaulted by sycamore, rowan, beech, woods to both sides
reinstated as woods |
when a thought approached in the form of a child
tightrope-walking the white lines between cats' eyes | she said: If I breathed the word
that disappeared all people in the world,
leaving the world
to the world, would you say it? Would you
sing it out loud?

## 2. Red Rebel 1



## Rules

Keep searching, but never be certain what you are looking for.
Always be changing, but do not rush the evolution of sound.
Be one with the group, but never lose your identity.
Exist with the text, but do not overshadow it.

## Reminders

Take your time. You are not alone.

## 3. Escalation



















## 5. No right


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You spoilt the planet for children and animals,
now we're going to spoil it for you.




## 6. Let them be children
















## 7. Our little boy















9. But what about China?





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losing motivation


10. Calculated risk

Crisp, precise, and measured $d=104$








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E. Gtr 1












## 11. Water still finds us


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## 13. Post-normal


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