

Conrad Cummings

Denouement
for Two Amplified Harpsichords

1988 revised 2013

Performance Notes:

- Denouement is written for two double-manual harpsichords. If there's a choice, the more aggressive, Italian sound would be best. Contrast in color between the two instruments is a plus so long as one doesn't overbalance the other. And the more contrast between the upper and lower 8-foot stops, the better.
- Deployment of manuals, stops, and coupling is marked in the score.
- The best seat in the house for this piece has always seemed to me to be at one of the keyboards. For this reason both instruments should be amplified if the piece is played in any space larger than a living room. The audience should feel the sound totally engulfing them. If the sound design can accentuate the separation of the sounds of the two instruments, that's even better. It doesn't have to be crazy loud, but it should completely embrace the listener.

Program Note:

Imagine walking into the middle of the final act of a classical tragedy you don't know – right off the street, straight into the point of highest agitation. You have no idea how things got to this point. All that is left is for you to watch the action play out to its final, fatal conclusion.

Denouement for Two Harpsichords was commissioned by Karen and Peter Flint for Brandywine Baroque of Wilmington, Delaware and premiered by Karen Flint and Ray Urwin in April 1988. It went on to form the starting point for a piece of the same title for large orchestra, premiered by Robert Spano and the Oberlin Orchestra with later performances under Spano with the New Jersey and Louisville Orchestras. This revised version was created for a residency by the composer at the Oberlin Conservatory in November 2013.

Having written the piece at the keyboard of a grand harpsichord and having performed in it myself on occasion, I've always felt that the best seat in the house is at one of the keyboards, where the sound is totally enveloping. That's why I've asked that in any space larger than a living room, the instruments should be amplified to provide that same sense of total embrace of sound to every listener.

Denouement for Two Preferably Amplified Harpsichords

Version 11/4/13

tune lower manual 8' and 4' top E \flat to F \natural
and top F \natural to G \flat

Conrad Cummings

$\text{♩} = 112$ ($\text{♩} = 224$)

I - 8' + 4'

Harpichord I

tune lower manual 8' and 4' top E \flat to F \natural
and top F \natural to G \flat
II - 8'

Harpichord II

mute the upper manual low F-natural with your finger or with a pink eraser between the bottom two strings

7

I

II

13

I

II

18 I - 8' + 4'

I

II

24

I

II

29

(E \flat key) (F \flat key)

I I X4

II II X4

I - 8' + 4'

I

II

35

I

II

X2

II

I X2

uncouple

41

I

II

(E_♭ key)

poco piu mosso
fast roll
♩ = 252 (♩ = 126)

46

I

II

(F key)

fast roll

couple

4

Musical score for two pianos (I and II) across three systems. The score is written in treble and bass clefs. Measure numbers 51, 54, and 57 are indicated at the start of each system. The first system (measures 51-53) features a melodic line in the right hand of Piano I with 'X4' markings above groups of four notes, and a rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand of Piano I and the right hand of Piano II. The second system (measures 54-56) continues the melodic line in Piano I, with 'X4' markings above groups of four notes in measures 54 and 55, and 'X2' markings above groups of two notes in measure 56. The third system (measures 57-62) continues the melodic line in Piano I, with 'X2' markings above groups of two notes in measures 57 and 60. The left hand of Piano II provides a consistent rhythmic accompaniment throughout. The word *sim.* is written in the first system.

51 *sim.* X4 X4 X4

54 X4 X4 X2

57 X2 X2

59

X2 X4

I

II

X2 X4

I I

12 8 12 8

Detailed description: This is a musical score for two guitar parts, labeled I and II. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of four measures. Measure 59 is the starting point. Part I (top system) has a treble staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with a bass line. Part II (bottom system) has a treble staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with a bass line. Fretting diagrams are indicated by brackets and 'X' marks: 'X2' for the first two notes of the first measure, 'X4' for the first four notes of the second measure, 'I' for the first note of the third measure, and 'II' for the first note of the fourth measure. The piece ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign, with measure numbers 12 and 8 indicated at the end of the staves.

♩. = 192 (♩. = 96)

63

I

II

II *second time only*

II *second time only*

65

I

II

67

I

II

69

I

II

72

I

II

75

second time only

I

II

77

I

II

80

$\text{♪} = \text{♪}, \text{♩} + \text{♩} = 56$

I

II

83

I

X2

X2

X2

II

X2

X2

X2

86

I

(overhold)

II

89

I

II

92

poco a poco rall.

I

X2

X2

X2

II

X2

X2

X2

95

I

II

98 $\text{♩} = 100 (\text{♩} = 200)$

I

4' out, 8' only

II

103

I

II

109

I

II

114

I

II

119

I

II

122

I

II

125

X3

131

$\text{♩} = 168$

X2

134

X2

4' in (8' + 4')

X2

uncouple

136

I

II

(both notes with right hand, thumb on lower manual, third finger on upper manual)

X2

X2

138

I

II

(both notes with left hand, same as right hand in m 136)

(tremolos can be unmeasured by now)

X2

X2

X2

X2

X2

X2

4

5

4/2

1

2

4

141

I

II

uncouple

144

X2

I

II

146

X4

I

II

♩ = 88

148

4 4 4 4

II

4 couple

4

II

4'out, 8'only couple

I

156

4 4

I

4 4

II

164

I

II

173

I

II

183

I

II

191

I

II

200

I

II

4

4

208

I

II

4

4

216

I

II

4

4

223

I

II

4

4

16

232

I

II

I

II

$\text{♩} = 112$

240

I

II

add 4'

second time only

243

I

II

245

I

II

246

First system of music, measures 246-247. It features two staves, I and II. Staff I has a treble clef and a bass clef. Staff II has a treble clef and a bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and one flat (Bb). The time signature is 2/4. Measure 246 shows dense chordal textures in both staves. Measure 247 shows a change in texture with more rhythmic movement in the bass lines.

248

Second system of music, measures 248-249. It features two staves, I and II. Staff I has a treble clef and a bass clef. Staff II has a treble clef and a bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and one flat (Bb). The time signature is 3/4. Measure 248 shows dense chordal textures in both staves. Measure 249 shows a change in texture with more rhythmic movement in the bass lines.

249

Third system of music, measures 249-250. It features two staves, I and II. Staff I has a treble clef and a bass clef. Staff II has a treble clef and a bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and one flat (Bb). The time signature is 4/4. Measure 249 shows dense chordal textures in both staves. Measure 250 shows a change in texture with more rhythmic movement in the bass lines.

251

I

II

253

I

II

255

I

II

256

Measure 256: Grand staff I (treble and bass clefs) features a complex texture of chords and eighth notes. Grand staff II (treble and bass clefs) features a similar texture with some chords marked with a slash (/). Measure 257: Grand staff I continues with complex textures, including a fermata over a chord. Grand staff II continues with similar textures and slash markings.

258

Measure 258: Grand staff I (treble and bass clefs) features a complex texture of chords and eighth notes. Grand staff II (treble and bass clefs) features a similar texture with some chords marked with a slash (/).

259

Measure 259: Grand staff I (treble and bass clefs) features a complex texture of chords and eighth notes. Grand staff II (treble and bass clefs) features a similar texture with some chords marked with a slash (/). Measure 260: Grand staff I (treble clef) features a complex texture of chords and eighth notes. Grand staff II (treble and bass clefs) features a similar texture with some chords marked with a slash (/).

261

Handwritten musical score for measures 261-262. The score is for two pianos, labeled I and II. Measure 261 features a complex chordal texture in the right hand of both pianos, with the left hand playing a steady eighth-note bass line. Measure 262 continues this texture, with some chords in the right hand being held over from the previous measure. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#).

263

Handwritten musical score for measures 263-264. The score is for two pianos, labeled I and II. Measure 263 shows a continuation of the complex chordal texture in the right hand and the eighth-note bass line in the left hand. Measure 264 features a similar texture, with some chords in the right hand being held over. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#).

265

Handwritten musical score for measures 265-266. The score is for two pianos, labeled I and II. Measure 265 continues the complex chordal texture in the right hand and the eighth-note bass line in the left hand. Measure 266 features a similar texture, with some chords in the right hand being held over. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#).

267

Two systems of piano accompaniment. System I (top) and System II (bottom) each consist of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The music is in a key with three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 4/4 time signature. Measures 267-270 show a consistent pattern of chords in the right hand and a rhythmic bass line in the left hand. The chords are primarily triads and dyads, with some complex textures in the final measure.

269

Two systems of piano accompaniment. System I (top) and System II (bottom) each consist of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The music is in a key with three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 4/4 time signature. Measures 269-270 show a consistent pattern of chords in the right hand and a rhythmic bass line in the left hand. The chords are primarily triads and dyads, with some complex textures in the final measure. A double bar line is present at the end of measure 269, with a 4/8 time signature change indicated.

271

Two systems of piano accompaniment. System I (top) and System II (bottom) each consist of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The music is in a key with three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 4/4 time signature. Measures 271-274 show a consistent pattern of chords in the right hand and a rhythmic bass line in the left hand. The chords are primarily triads and dyads, with some complex textures in the final measure.

272

Two systems of piano accompaniment. System I (top) and System II (bottom) each consist of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The music is in a key with three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 4/4 time signature. Measures 272-274 show a consistent pattern of chords in the right hand and a rhythmic bass line in the left hand. The chords are primarily triads and dyads, with some complex textures in the final measure. A double bar line is present at the end of measure 272, with a 3/4 time signature change indicated. The text "uncouple 4' out" is written in the right hand of System I, and "uncouple" is written in the right hand of System II.

274 ♩ = 54

Continue this rhythm, but loosely, playing the same pitches as Harpsichord I. Change harmonies somewhat behind or ahead of Harpsichord I's changes, as much as a full beat later or earlier, creating a halo around each harmony change.

legato II

I
II

I
(this rhythm will sound like eighth notes at quarter = 88)

277

I
II

280

I
II

283

Hand I: Treble and Bass clefs, key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). Measures 283-284 contain dense chordal textures with many notes per measure, some marked with diagonal slashes. Measure 284 ends with a double bar line and a slash.

Hand II: Treble and Bass clefs, key signature of three sharps. Measures 283-284 are empty, with a long horizontal arrow pointing to the right across the staves.

285

Hand I: Treble and Bass clefs, key signature of three sharps. Measure 285 contains dense chordal textures. Measure 286 is mostly empty, with a few notes in the bass clef. The system ends with a double bar line and a 2/4 time signature in both staves.

Hand II: Treble and Bass clefs, key signature of three sharps. Measures 285-286 are empty, with a long horizontal arrow pointing to the right across the staves. The system ends with a double bar line and a 2/4 time signature in both staves.

$\text{♩} = \text{♩} = 88$ **subito poco meno mosso**
 $\text{♩} = 80$

287 X4 X4

I II

(rhythm should sound about the same speed in m 286 and m 287)

subito poco meno mosso
 $\text{♩} = 72$

289 X4

I II

$\text{♩} = \text{♩} = 72$

290 X3

I II

291

I

II

piu mosso

♩ = 100 ♩ = ♩, ♩ = 100

292

I

II

couple

I

♩ = 112 (same as m. 240)

294

I

II

continue quarter notes at half note = 100

296

I

II

(♩ = 100 for both hpsch 1 and hpsch 2)

II

(♩ = 100 for both hpsch 1 and hpsch 2)

298

I

II

300

I

II

302

long dramatic rallent. - - - - -

eighth-notes stay the same speed, with the same snap, independent of the rallent. in Harpsichord IIs

(♩ = 84)

(♩ = 76)

304

(♩ = 66)

(molto rallent.)

♩ = 46

306

Keep it percussive, suddenly end on the lower manual like a little guillotine. Hold the last note for five seconds, then release: the voice of grim destiny.