

*The Oxford Concise Dictionary of Music* is an ongoing compositional project in which the definitions found on a given page from the *actual* Oxford Dictionary of Music, fourth edition, published in 1996, are used as the basis for musical thought. The forms, techniques, people, and instruments found therein define the palette of musical material from which I am then “allowed” to use. The challenge is to create a coherent musical work from an essentially arbitrary catalogue of words, to find meaning from an absurd premise while embracing the various kinds source materials, stylistic differences, and general diversity found on a given page.

The inspiration for this piece came as I was reading the works of Jorge Luis Borges, a gifted Argentinian writer well known for his quirky, creative, genre defying short stories in which fact and fiction become impossible to distinguish from each other. He once remarked that what fascinated him most about literature was its ability to inspire the imagination of the reader. It got me to thinking, "how could I something like that with music?"

And so began my project with the Oxford Concise dictionary of music. I read the entire volume and looked for interesting ideas that converged on a given page. Most pages were hopeless, but there were many pages that contained concepts I would have never dreamed of putting together and that offered a unique and stimulating compositional challenges. Suddenly, whole new world of musical possibilities began to unfold.

The ultimate goal is to someday write a piece for each page, by either doing so myself over the course of many, many years, and/or by recruiting other composers to start adding their own contributions to the catalogue. Pages can be written for any kind of instrumentation and be programmed as a single piece or as a modular collection of movements.