

SUSPENDERS

Suspenders is a piece for six performers who play a total of twelve different instruments¹ – three² of which are unique to this composition – and sing in seven different languages³. Often there is scant time for a performer to switch from one instrument to another, but that helps to keep the piece interesting, or at least dangerous. The pitches of the lyrics are mostly either relative to the location on the staff or approximate, though actual pitches do appear in a recitative near the end. Most of the instrumental lines are note-specific, however some are played ad lib, while others are notated as approximate pitches.

1. the usual instruments

soprano recorder
alto recorder
alto krummhorn
tenor krummhorn
mandolin
concertina
castanets
guitar
Pakistani auto horn (× 2)

2. the unusual instruments

Niederhorn⁴
kitharrette⁵
p'tang⁶

3. the languages

English
Sicilian
French
Spanish
German
Japanese
Hungarian

4. a coiled shower hose that, under adult supervision, had a brass mouthpiece fitted to one end (not recommended for dolce passages).
5. a tunable three-stringed instrument that resembled but sounded better than a dust pan.
6. from the pen of the designer himself: The p'tang was created from a sheet of Acrylite bent into an elongated C-shape using a hair dryer. Three harpsichord strings were looped into small holes and up across the top edge of the plastic through tuning pegs. The p'tang was p'tayed by p'tucking and gently bending it on the knee.

SUSPENDERS

Here's the text:

Why do firemen wear red suspenders? To hold their pants up. Suspenders are adjustable straps or bands worn over the shoulders with the ends buttoned or clipped to the waistband of the trousers to support them. They are also a hanging cable or chain connecting the deck with the suspension cable or chain in suspension bridges, but that's another story.

(Sicilian) Canterò circa le bretelle. Mio zio non è un cammello. Tu sei uno certriol – la vostra testa è così piena di formaggio! [I will sing about suspenders. My uncle is not a camel. You are an imbecile – your head is so full of cheese!]

(French) Les chameaux ne mangent pas de jarretelles parce qu'il leurs font avoir soif. [Camels don't eat suspenders because it makes them thirsty.]

(Spanish) Mi camello es enfermo, pero cómo es sus ligas? O son buenas. Cupieron mejor que el queso. [My camel is sick, but how are your suspenders? Oh, they're all right. They fit better than the cheese.]

(German) Hosenträger sind grösser als kurze Gamaschen aber nicht so gross wie das Kamel. [Suspenders are bigger than spats but not as big as the camel.]

(Japanese) Moshi watashi ni akai zubonsuri ga arimashi tara watashi wa rakuda hitsu yo arimasen. [If I had some red suspenders, then I would not need the camel.]

O, romantic dialogue, wherefore have you got to? If you have gone off with the camel, I hope, at least, that you'll be happy.

Suspenders don't transmit fleas, they fit better than cheese
You can do as you please, oh my bonnie Louise

Why why why why why do firemen wear suspenders?

(Hungarian) Joban szeretem a nadrak husomat mind a puposhatas tehent. Az en anyyum szereti a turat nem szereti a puposhatas tehent. [I love my suspenders even more than I love the camel. My aunt likes the cheese; she does not like the camel.]

Oh my bonnie Louise.

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