

THE CONDUCTOR

Director/Writer/"Conductor" - Usman Akeju

Camera - AnaLucia Berry

This piece portrays a conductor who seems to be conducting an orchestra of activity -- movement, rhythms, and sound generated by the people that pass him by at his various posts along the Infinite Corridor. What the conductor doesn't seem to notice is that most, if not all of the people he is "conducting" either pay him little mind or ignore him completely. The conductor does not realize -- until the very end -- that he in fact has absolutely no control over the Infinite's "orchestra" of passersby; if anything, it is the orchestra that is conducting the conductor.

The significance of the final segment (in Lobby 7) is twofold: First, it shows the conductor's surrender to the fact that the "orchestra" is not and has never been under his command. The second major intention was to raise a few questions: Was all of the conductor's perceived power up to now just coincidence, or was it just selfish blindness to the blatant reality around him? (Note: Viewers are likely to have differing opinions as to how powerful the conductor actually appears initially -- this is expected.) Is the "orchestra" simply producing a chaotic, overwhelming, meaningless cacophony of activity and noise, or is there a symphony of sorts hidden in the noise? If so, who is conducting? Is there another, actually-powerful Conductor? Is there a Conductor at all? Many of these potential questions are at least tangentially existential: order vs. chaos, human free will vs. fate, inevitability, or powerlessness, and the existence of a supreme, controlling power/being are some of the themes that come up. Though the inherent symbolism of the piece was intended to raise such questions, it was not intended to provide answers for the viewer.

Most of the piece was filmed in one continuous, walking shot down the Infinite. This was done partially to ease video editing process, but primarily to create the effect of an omnipresent conductor. The editing may have made this intention less apparent, but the result achieved was satisfying nonetheless. There were two angled shots (in Lobby 10 and Building 11) inserted for the purposes of aesthetic variety as well as humor, though they were actually the first segments filmed. I originally intended to have more of these shots, especially for the final segment, but lack of time and other factors prevented this from happening -- perhaps for the better?

Whatever time was saved on editing video was filled with audio editing. Sound was a very important element of the piece, and though it may not be immediately apparent, there was a *lot* of audio editing. The original plan was to either not use sound at all, or to capture custom audio separately from the filming, but this strategy turned out to be unnecessary due to several serendipitous finds in the natural audio of the footage. The synchronization of specific sounds with each image was a fun, but painstaking process (for a perfectionist). There was a lot of speeding-up and slowing-down in both the audio and video, especially for the last segment, which I had originally intended to re-shoot at a time when the lobby had no traffic in it at all. In the end, this editing strategy seemed like the most suitable one to create a similar final sense of eeriness and lack of control.