

A Short History of the Twentieth Century

For High Voice and Percussion

2009 / 2012

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Percussion Ensemble (2 players):

1. Drum kit (two tom-toms and floor tom, snare drum, bass drum, ride cymbal and crash cymbal), three wood blocks, tambourine

2. Marimba, tubular chimes, gong (preferably two, tuned to E3 and F3; otherwise a single gong of indeterminate pitch).

The two setups flank the singer, the drum kit to stage right, the melodic group to stage left.

Fermatas in improvised passages indicate continuation *ad lib*. These improvisations should form genuine expressive interludes, not mere transitions. Performances should last anywhere from 17:15 to 17:45.

First drafted in 2009, *A Short History* was completed in 2012 for a premiere at the conference "Music and Genocide," held in November at the Jagellonian University in Krakow, Poland.

The text of *A Short History* is a list of forty-eight place names, each of which marks a scene of atrocity and mass death. The implication speaks for itself. Most of the history spans the period between World War I and what the composition takes to be the symbolic end of the century on the slightly belated date of September 11, 2001. The close of the composition makes allowance for what was to follow, and what will. Interspersed with the place names are a few brief quotations and a paraphrase from T. S. Eliot's 1922 poem *The Waste Land*--phrases (shown in parenthesis in the text) that in retrospect take on the weight of premonitions: iconic place names, the idea of the city as a utopia gone bad, and the image of falling towers. The sequence of names is roughly chronological; some acts of naming occur out of sequence to mark historical connections or ironies. And of course some names are missing. There are all too many to choose from, and some mass killings--Stalin's famine in Ukraine, the murder sprees during the partition of British India--were diffuse. *A Short History* is not inclusive, only exemplary.

It is important to add that this piece with the iconic acronym ASH is not a lament or a threnody. Those are genres not to be issued from a safe distance. Instead, the music is a memorial. It is a work of remembrance and a ritual of commemoration. Names, however evocative, tend to wear out with time and use. The question addressed here is how to restore and reanimate them.

In part this is a question of the relationship between the body and the voice, here framed by the difference between pitched and unpitched percussion (each percussionist has charge of one type). The unpitched sounds keep us close to the fundamental but often obscured origin of music in bodily force and pulsation. They thus keep us close to the body in a piece about the endless accumulation of bodies. The pitched sounds support the countervailing movement from the body to voice--voice being the indispensable medium of naming. This movement is close to the origin of both melody and meaning. But there is no opposition here, only a necessary copresence. Unpitched sounds have their own form of voice and voice is never other than corporeal. Accordingly there is no rigid pattern in this music. There is only a continual effort to discover how each name may be framed and sung in a way that fits its unique resonance.

A Short History of the Twentieth Century

The Marne

Verdun

Passchendaele

The Somme

Gallipoli

Trebizond

Der Zor

*(Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
Unreal)*

Nanking

Guernica

Warsaw

Coventry

Leningrad

Pearl Harbor

Bataan

Okinawa

Stalingrad

Babi Yar

*(Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
Vienna London
Unreal)*

Dachau

Terezin

Buchenwald

Belzec

Sobibor

Majdanek

Chelmno

Treblinka

Auschwitz

(Unreal City)

Dresden

Nuremberg

Hiroshima

Nagasaki

Pusan

Chosin

Saigon

Hué

Khe Sanh

My Lai

Phnom Penh

Srebrenica

Rwanda

Sarajevo

Darfur

(Towers upside down in air)

*(Jerusalem New York London Madrid
Unreal*

Unreal City)

A Note on Pronunciation

In general, the names here should be pronounced as they are in English, with a few exceptions. The names of the death camps should be sung in German when given in German and in Polish when given in Polish. "Hiroshima" should be pronounced with English intonation but with an equal accent on each syllable, as happens in Japanese. Note also that the final syllable of "Passchendaele" should be pronounced to rhyme with "mail"; the "e" is silent. The word literally means "passion dale," i.e., "valley of suffering," and should sound like it.

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$\text{♩} = 80$

Voice.

Perc.

Marimb.

ppp *p* *p* *f* *sfz*

7 *p*

The Mame _____ Ver - dun _____

7

12

12

12 Chimes Marimb.

mf *p* *f* *sfz*

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6
18 *mf* *p* *f*

Pass-chen - daele. The Som

Snare Drum
snares off

Chimes

p

23

- me. Ga - - - - - li - - po - li.

Butt - , snares on

27 *p* *pp*

Tre-bi-zond. Der

Near rim
pp *ppp* *pp* *p*

On rim Bass drum rim Ride cymbal

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♩ = 60

31

f

Zor. _____ Je - ru - sa - lem A -

31

Normally At bell

mf *pp* *p* *f*

31

34

mf *ff* *pp* ♩ = 80

- thens Al - ex - an - - - dri - a Un - real. _____ Je - ru - sa - lem

34

Floor Tom

sf *f* *p* *f*

34

40

mf *p* *f* *pp* *mp*

A - thens Al - ex - an - dri - a Un - real. _____ Nan - king. _____

40

Near rim

mf *pp* *p* *f*

40

Chimes

A Short History

8

46 *p cresc.*
Guer - ni - ca

46 Tamboürine 5 5 5
Gong *mf*
mp

51 *f* *ff*

51 fist fist 5 5 5 5 fist fist
f *ff*

54 *mp* long *pp*
War - - - - saw. Co -

54 Bass (Kick) Drum
Marimb. *f* *fff*

58 *molto rit.* ♩ = 60 *mf*

ven - try. Le -

58 *pp* Chimes *ff p ff*

64 *accel.* ♩ = 80

nin-grad.

64 *p ff p accel. f ff*

69 *p* 5 *f* *p*

Pearl Har - - - - - bor.

69 Marimb. *mp f p*

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10

72 *mp f* Ba - ta - - - -

72 *f fp f mp p*

75 *p fp* $\text{♩} = 60$ an. _____

75 Toms *p* 3

78 *fp pp* O - ki - na - wa. _____

78 *p* sempre

78 Marimb: *Improvise **

Improvise* (Toms, snares, cymbals; no bass drum)

* See note at head of score.

84 ♩ = 80

Musical score for measures 84-85. The top staff is a treble clef with a whole rest. The middle staff is a drum set part with notation for Toms, snare drum, and ride cymbal. The bottom staff is a treble clef with a whole rest. Dynamics include *mf* and *f*.

86

Musical score for measures 86-89. The top staff is a treble clef with notes and dynamics *fp* and *f*. The middle staff is a drum set part with notation for Crash cymbal and Marimb. The bottom staff is a treble clef with notes and dynamics *ff* and *fp*. The word "Sta" is written below the top staff.

90

Musical score for measures 90-93. The top staff is a treble clef with notes and dynamics *p*, *mf*, and "Head down". The middle staff is a drum set part with notes and dynamics *fff* and *pp*. The bottom staff is a treble clef with notes and dynamics *fff* and *pp*. The words "lin grad", "mm.", "mm.", "mm.", and "ah!" are written below the top staff.

A Short History

12

96

Normally *pp* *ppp* *molto rit.* *pp* *p* $\text{♩} = 60$

ah. ah. ah. Ba - Ba - bi

96

At rim

ff *fff* *pp* Gong

96

p

102

$\text{♩} = 80$ *p* *sf*

Ya - r. Je - ru - sa - lem

102

Marimb.

p *sf* *f*

102

mp *p* *sf* *f*

105

mf *p* *rit.*

A - - - thens Al - ex - an - dri - a

105

mf *f* *p* *f*

105

mf *f* *p* *f*

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107 *a tempo* *mf* *p* long

Lon-don Vi-en-na Un - re - - - al Un-real Un - .

107 *mp* *f*

111 ♩ = 72 (Hold tempo strictly) *pp* sempre

Mau - thau-sen. Da - chau. Te - re-zin

111 *p* *pp*

116 Hard consonants Normally

Bu - chen-wald. Bel - zec. So - bi - bor. Maj-da-nek Chelm -

116 Near rim normally Near rim

p *mp* *p*

A Short History

14

121 non-vibrato - - - - , G.P.

no. Tre - blink - a. Ausch - witz. long longer

normally Rim Shot Rim Shot long snare drum sticks G.P. longer timpani sticks

121 *mp* *mf* *f* *ff* *pp* *p* < >

128 *fp* *fp* *mf* *f* *p* < *p* <

Un - - - - real, Un - real Ci - ty. mm. mm.

Chimes

mp *f* *fff* *pp*

♩ = 80

133 *p* *mf* < *f* *p* *f*

mm. ah! Dres - - - - den.

damped open

fff *fff* *f*

138 *p* *p* *mf*

Nur - em - berg.

138 *mp* Chimes *p* *mf*

143 Turn head* *p* *fff* As long as possible

♩ = 72

Hi - ro - shi

143 Yam mallets *pp* *fff* l.v.

151 *pp* *p*

rit.

♩ = 60

ma. Na-ga - sa - ki.

151 *p* *f* *pp* Marimb. *mp*

* M. 144: turn head sharply to the side. M. 145: slowly turn head back to face audience at m. 146

A Short History

16

156

molto rit.

mp

$\text{♩} = 72$

mf

Pu-san. _____ Cho - sin. _____

156

ff

with knuckles

f *mp*

mp

160

Sai - gon. _____

f

160

f *mf*

162

162

ff

164

Hué

164 *f*

166

Tambourine
thumb trill

f sfz sfz

169

Khe - - - sa - nh.

169 *sfz*

Chimes

p

A Short History

18

♩ = 60

long

p

172

My - - - - - Lai. _____

172

with knuckles

long
f

176

176

Marimb.
p

178

Phnom - - - - - Penh. _____

178

mp
f *p*

181

Musical staff for measure 181, top system. It shows a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a single note on the first line of the staff.

181

Musical staff for measure 181, middle system. It shows a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a whole rest.

181

Musical staff for measure 181, bottom system. It shows a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a series of eighth notes with a dynamic marking of *f* at the end.

182

Musical staff for measure 182, top system. It shows a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a dotted half note with the lyrics "Sre" and "bre" below it.

182

Musical staff for measure 182, middle system. It shows a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a whole rest.

182

Musical staff for measure 182, bottom system. It shows a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a series of eighth notes with a dynamic marking of *subito p* at the beginning.

subito p

183

Musical staff for measure 183, top system. It shows a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a melodic line with the lyrics "ni" and "ca." below it.

183

Musical staff for measure 183, middle system. It shows a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a whole rest.

183

Musical staff for measure 183, bottom system. It shows a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a series of eighth notes.

A Short History

20

185

Rw-an - - - - - da.

Detailed description: A vocal line on a treble clef staff. It begins with a whole rest, followed by a quarter rest, then a series of eighth and sixteenth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. The final note is a half note D4 with a fermata. A dynamic marking *f* is placed below the staff.

185

f

Detailed description: Piano accompaniment for measures 185-190. The right hand plays chords: G4-B4-D4, A4-C5-E4, B4-D5-F4, A4-C5-E4, B4-D5-F4, A4-C5-E4. The left hand plays chords: G3-B2-D3, A3-C4-E3, B3-D4-F3, A3-C4-E3, B3-D4-F3, A3-C4-E3. A dynamic marking *f* is placed below the staff.

190

Sa-ra-je - vo. Dar - fur.

pp

Detailed description: A vocal line on a treble clef staff. It begins with a quarter rest, followed by a triplet of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4. This is followed by a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, and a half note A4 with a fermata. A dynamic marking *pp* is placed above the staff.

190

Wood blocks

p

f *f*

Detailed description: Piano accompaniment for measures 190-195. The right hand plays chords: G4-B4-D4, A4-C5-E4, B4-D5-F4, A4-C5-E4. The left hand plays chords: G3-B2-D3, A3-C4-E3, B3-D4-F3, A3-C4-E3. A dynamic marking *p* is placed above the staff. A dynamic marking *f* is placed below the staff. A wood block part is indicated above the staff.

196 *accel.*

Tow - ers up - side down in

f

$\text{♩} = 72$

Detailed description: A vocal line on a treble clef staff. It begins with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, a quarter note E4, a quarter note D4. A dynamic marking *f* is placed above the staff. A tempo marking $\text{♩} = 72$ is placed above the staff.

196 *accel.*

Gong

mp *f* *p*

snare off

tr

pp *mp* *f*

Detailed description: Piano accompaniment for measures 196-200. The right hand plays chords: G4-B4-D4, A4-C5-E4, B4-D5-F4, A4-C5-E4. The left hand plays chords: G3-B2-D3, A3-C4-E3, B3-D4-F3, A3-C4-E3. A dynamic marking *mp* is placed above the staff. A dynamic marking *f* is placed above the staff. A dynamic marking *p* is placed above the staff. A dynamic marking *pp* is placed below the staff. A dynamic marking *mp* is placed below the staff. A dynamic marking *f* is placed below the staff. A snare drum part is indicated above the staff.

201

air. _____

Tow - ers

Improvise (no cymbals)

Marimb: Improvise

206 **ff** *subito p* $\text{♩} = 72$ **p** Improvise quasi cadenza

up - side down in air. _____ Ah _____

Bow cymbals (vary color and duration)

Marimb.*

8va

(any octave)

ff *subito p* **ff** **p**

212 **p sf** p **f**

Je ru - sa - lem _____ New

normally

mp **mf**

mf

* Let sound of trill emerge.

A Short History

22

219 *fp* *p* *pp* Spoken *rit.* *a tempo*

York. Lon - don. Ma - drid And... Scrape with coin damped

225 *rit.* *a tempo* *pp* *rit.*

Un - - - - - real, _____

225 open damped open damped

230 *a tempo* *p*

Un - - - - - real, _____ Un _____

230 open damped

234

snare on

open

234

234

237

$\text{♩} = 60$

long

long

Cover mouth with both hands; hold pose a moment.

real

Ci - ty.

237

Chimes

fff (hard mallets!)

Stand with mallets in air; hold pose a moment.