

# A Short History of the Twentieth Century

For High Voice and Percussion

Alternate Version (Without Tubular Chimes)

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, crash cymbal, splash cymbal), three wood blocks, tambourine.
2. Marimba, crotales (written C4-C5), glockenspiel, 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. Next to the singer, a mounted crotales, any pitch.

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, more if recitation is added (see below).

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.

# A Short History of the Twentieth Century

$\text{♩} = 80$

Voice.

Perc.

Marimb.

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

7 *p*

The Mame \_\_\_\_\_ Ver - dun \_\_\_\_\_

7

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

12

12

12

Crotale

Marimb.

*mf* *p* *f* *sfz*

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6

18 *mf* *p* *f*

Pass-chen - daele. \_\_\_\_\_ The Som - - - - -

Snare Drum  
snare off

18 Crotale

*p*

23

- me. Ga - - - - - li - - po - li. \_\_\_\_\_

23 Butt - , snare on

27 *p* *pp*

\_\_\_\_\_ Tre-bi-zond. \_\_\_\_\_ Der

27 Near rim On rim Bass drum rim Ride cymbal

*p* *pp* *ppp* *pp* *p*

31

*f*

Zor. \_\_\_\_\_ Je - ru - sa - lem A -

31

Normally At bell

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

31

34

*mf* *ff* *pp* *f*

- 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

Crotales

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8

46 *p* *cresc.*  
Guer - ni - ca

46 Tambourine 5 5 5  
Gong Crotales  
*mp* *f*

50 *f*

50 fist fist 5 5 5  
*mf* *f*  
Gong  
*mp*

53 *ff* *mp* long  
War - - - - - saw.

53 fist fist  
*ff*  
Marimb.  
*f* 5 3 3 3

57 *pp* *molto rit.* ♩ = 60 *mf*

Co - - - - - ven - try. \_\_\_\_\_ Le -

57 Bass (Kick) Drum

*fff* *pp* *ff* *p* *ff*

soft beaters *pp* Crotales

64 *accel.* ♩ = 80

- nin-grad. \_\_\_\_\_

64 *pp* *accel.* *pp* *f*

*p* *ff* *p*

68 *p* *f*

Pearl \_\_\_\_\_ Har - - -

68 Glockenspiel *ff* Marimb. *mp* *f*

10

71 *p*

bor.

71

*p* *f* *fp* *f* *mp*

74 *mp* *f* *p* *fp*

Ba - ta - - - - - an.

74

*p*

77  $\text{♩} = 60$  *fp*

O - ki - na -

77 Toms *p* *fp*

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

*p* sempre

\* See note at head of score.

81 *pp* ♩ = 80

wa.

81 Toms, snare drum, ride cymbal

81 Marimb: *Improvise* \*

*mf* *Sva* - -

85

85 Crash cymbal

85 *f* *ff*

87 *fp* < *f*

Sta - - - - lin grad - - - -

87 *mf* *f*

87 Marimb.

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12  
93

Head down *mf* Normally *pp*

mm. mm. mm. ah! ah. ah.

*fff* *pp* *ff* *fff*

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

ah. Ba - Ba - bi Ya - r.

At rim *pp* Gong *mp*

$\text{♩} = 80$  *p sf* *mf* *p*

Je - ru - sa - lem A - - - thens Al - ex -

Marimb. *p sf f mf f p*

106 *rit.* *a tempo* *mf* *p*

an - dri - a Lon-don Vi-en-na Un - re - - - al Un-real

106 *f* *mp* *f*

110 *long* ♩ = 72 (Hold tempo strictly) *pp* sempre

Un - . Mau - thau-sen. Da - chau.

110 *p* *pp*

115 Hard consonants Normally

Te - re-zin Bu - chen-wald. Bel - zec. So - bi-bor. Maj-da-nek

115 Near rim normally

120 non-vibrato- - - - , G.P.

Chelm - no. Tre - blink - a. Aussch - witz. long  
snare drum sticks G.P.

120 Near rim normally Rim Shot Rim Shot

120 *mp* *mf* *f* *ff* *pp*

127 *fp* *fp* *mf* *f*

longer Un - - - - real, Un - - - - real Ci - ty.

127 timpani sticks

127 *p* *mp* *f*

Glockenspiel

131  $\text{♩} = 80$  *p* *p* *p* *mf* *f*

mm. mm. mm. ah! Dres -

Cover mouth (both hands) Normally

131 *fff* *pp* *ff* *fff*

damped open

136 *p* *f* *p* *p*

den. Nur em - splash cymbal

136 *f* *mp* Marimb. *pp*

*p*

141 *mf* Turn head\*  
berg. on rim

141 *p* *mp* *p* damp *f*

*mf* *p*

146 *p* *fff* As long as possible *pp* rit.

Hi - ro - shi - - - - - ma.

146 Yam mallets l.v. *pp* *fff* *p* *f* *pp*

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

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16

154  $\text{♩} = 60$  *p* *molto rit.* *mp*

Na-ga - sa - ki. Pu-san.

Marimb. *mp* *mp*

*p* *f* with knuckles

158  $\text{♩} = 72$  *mf* *f*

Cho - sin. Sai -

*mp* *f*

161 gon.

gon.

*mf* *f*

163

Hué - - - - -

*f*

165

168

*p*

Tambourine thumb trill

*f sfz sffz sfz*

Khe - - - - - sa - nh. \_\_\_\_\_

Glockenspiel

*p*

A Short History

18

$\text{♩} = 60$   
long

171 *p* *long*

My - Lai.

171 *p* with knuckles *long* *f*

176

176 *p* Marimb.

178 *Phnom* - - - - *Penh.*

178 *mp* *f* *p*

181

Musical staff for measure 181, top system. It shows a treble clef with a single note on the first line (F4) followed by a whole rest.

181

Musical staff for measure 181, middle system. It shows a treble clef with a whole rest.

181

Musical staff for measure 181, bottom system. It shows a treble clef with a series of eighth notes: F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4. The notes are grouped in pairs with slurs. The dynamic marking *f* is at the end.

182

Musical staff for measure 182, top system. It shows a treble clef with a dotted half note on the second line (G4) followed by a whole note on the second space (A4). The lyrics "Sre" and "bre" are written below the notes.

182

Musical staff for measure 182, middle system. It shows a treble clef with a whole rest.

182

Musical staff for measure 182, bottom system. It shows a treble clef with a series of eighth notes: F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4. The notes are grouped in pairs with slurs. The dynamic marking *subito p* is at the beginning.

183

Musical staff for measure 183, top system. It shows a treble clef with a series of notes: F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4. The notes are grouped in pairs with slurs. The lyrics "ni" and "ca." are written below the notes.

183

Musical staff for measure 183, middle system. It shows a treble clef with a whole rest.

183

Musical staff for measure 183, bottom system. It shows a treble clef with a series of eighth notes: F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, Bb4, A4, G4, F4. The notes are grouped in pairs with slurs. The dynamic marking *f* is at the end.

A Short History

20

185

Rw-an - - - - - da.

Detailed description: A single staff of music in treble clef. It begins with a whole rest, followed by a quarter rest, then a series of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. This is followed by a dotted quarter note G4 and a half note F4. The lyrics "Rw-an - - - - - da." are written below the notes.

185

*f*

Detailed description: A grand staff with two staves. The upper staff is a treble clef and the lower staff is a bass clef. The music consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The notes in the bass clef are: G3, F3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2. The notes in the treble clef are: B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, B3. A dynamic marking of *f* is placed below the grand staff.

190

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

*pp*

Detailed description: A single staff of music in treble clef. It starts with a quarter rest, followed by a triplet of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4. This is followed by a dotted quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, and a half note E4. The lyrics "Sa-ra-je - vo. Dar - fur." are written below. A dynamic marking of *pp* is placed above the staff.

190

Wood blocks

*f* *f*

Detailed description: A grand staff with two staves. The upper staff is a treble clef and the lower staff is a bass clef. The music consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The notes in the bass clef are: G3, F3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2. The notes in the treble clef are: B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, B3. A dynamic marking of *f* is placed below the grand staff. The word "Wood blocks" is written above the staff.

196 *accel.*

Tow - ers up - side down in

*f*  $\text{♩} = 72$

Detailed description: A single staff of music in treble clef. It starts 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. The lyrics "Tow - ers up - side down in" are written below. A dynamic marking of *f* is placed above the staff, and a tempo marking of  $\text{♩} = 72$  is placed above the staff.

196 *accel.*

Gong

*mp* *f* *p*

*pp* *mp* *f*

snare off

*tr*

Detailed description: A grand staff with two staves. The upper staff is a treble clef and the lower staff is a bass clef. The music consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The notes in the bass clef are: G3, F3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2. The notes in the treble clef are: B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4, B3. A dynamic marking of *mp* is placed below the grand staff. The word "Gong" is written below the staff. The word "snare off" is written above the staff, and a trill marking *tr* is placed 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**  $\text{p}$  **f**

Je ru - sa - lem \_\_\_\_\_ New

normally

**mp** **mf**

**mf**

\* Let sound of trill emerge.

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22

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

York. Lon - don. Ma-drid And....

219 *pp* *pf* Scrape with coin damped

After the silent m. 224, the singer may add any number of additional place names postdating those already invoked. Each name should be preceded by a soft stroke on the crotales, and intoned softly on the same note in the middle register of the voice. Pause after each instance. Conclude by striking the crotales one last time and speaking the following softly on pitch: "And say, besides, that in Aleppo once . . ." Then return to m. 223 and proceed to the end.

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

Un - - - - - real, \_\_\_\_\_

225 open damped open damped

*p* *pp* *p* *pp*

230 *a tempo* *p*

Un - - - - - real, \_\_\_\_\_ Un \_\_\_\_\_

230 open damped

*p*

234

snare on  
open

234

237  $\text{♩} = 60$  long long long

real ———— Ci-ty. ————

Cover mouth with both hands; hold pose to end.

237 coperto

Stand with stick in air; hold pose to end.

*p* *pp*

Crotales

Bowed marimb. long

*fff* (hard mallets!)

*pp* *ff* Stand with bow in air; hold pose to end.