

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. Next to the singer, a mounted crotale, 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.

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*

A Short History

6

18 *mf* *p* *f*

Pass-chen - daele. _____ The Som - - - - -

18 Snare Drum
snare off

18 Chimes *p*

23

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

23 Butt - , snare on

27 *p* *pp*

_____ Tre-bi-zond. _____ Der

27 Near rim *pp* On rim *ppp* Bass drum rim *pp* Ride cymbal *p*

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♩ = 60

31

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

Normally At bell

mf *pp* *p* *f*

34

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

Floor Tom

mf *ff* *pp*

40

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

Near rim Chimes

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

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 Marimb. Bass (Kick) Drum *fff*
f 5 3 3 3

58 *molto rit.* ♩ = 60 *mf*

ven - try. Le -

58 *pp* Chimes *ff p ff*

soft beaters *pp* Chimes *ff p ff*

64 *accel.* ♩ = 80

nin-grad.

64 *p ff p accel. f ff*

p ff p accel. f ff

69 *p* 5 *f* *p*

Pearl Har - - - - bor.

69 Marimb. *mp f p*

Marimb. *mp f p*

A Short History

10

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

72 *f fp f mp p*

75 *p fp* ♩ = 60
an. _____

75 Toms *p* 3

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

78 *p* sempre
Improvise* (Toms, snares, cymbals; no bass drum)
Marimb: Improvise *

* 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 lyrics: "lin grad", "mm.", "mm.", "mm.", "ah!". Dynamics include *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*.

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

mp

105

mf p rit.

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

105

mf f p f

105

mf f p f

mf f p f

A Short History

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

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

mp *f*

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

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

p *pp*

116 Hard consonants Normally

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

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

121 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* $\text{♩} = 80$

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

128 Chimes

128 *mp* *f* *fff* *pp*

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

mm. ah! Dres - - - - den.

133 *ff* *fff* *f*

133 damped open

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

p

f

mp

156

mp

160

Sai - gon. _____

160

f

mf

162

162

162

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

172

p **long**

My - - - - - Lai. _____

172 with knuckles

f **long**

176

176

176 Marimb. *p*

178

Phnom - - - - - Penh. _____

178

mp *f* *p*

181

Musical staff for measure 181, top system. It contains a single note on the first line of the staff, followed by a whole rest.

181

Musical staff for measure 181, middle system. It contains a whole rest.

181

Musical staff for measure 181, bottom system. It contains a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes with various accidentals. A dynamic marking *f* is present at the end of the staff.

182

Musical staff for measure 182, top system. It contains a single note on the first line of the staff, followed by a whole rest.

Sre - - - - - bre - - - - -

182

Musical staff for measure 182, middle system. It contains a whole rest.

182

Musical staff for measure 182, bottom system. It contains a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes with various accidentals. A dynamic marking *subito p* is present at the beginning of the staff.

subito p

183

Musical staff for measure 183, top system. It contains a melodic line with a rising eighth-note scale and a dotted quarter note. A dynamic marking *ca.* is present at the end of the staff.

ni - - - - - ca. - - - - -

183

Musical staff for measure 183, middle system. It contains a whole rest.

183

Musical staff for measure 183, bottom system. It contains a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes with various accidentals.

A Short History

20

185

Rw-an - - - - - da.

Detailed description: This block contains the vocal line for measures 185 through 189. The melody starts with a quarter rest, followed by a series of eighth and quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. The final note is a half note D4. The lyrics are "Rw-an - - - - - da." with a long dash under "an" and a period under "da".

185

f

Detailed description: This block contains the piano accompaniment for measures 185 through 189. The left hand plays a steady eighth-note bass line: G3, F3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2, F2, E2, D2. The right hand plays chords: G2-A2-B2, A2-B2-C3, B2-C3-D3, A2-B2-C3, G2-A2-B2, F2-G2-A2, E2-F2-G2, D2-E2-F2, C2-D2-E2, B1-C2-D2. A dynamic marking of *f* is placed below the piano part.

190

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

pp

Detailed description: This block contains the vocal line for measures 190 through 194. The melody starts with a quarter rest, followed by a triplet of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4. This is followed by quarter notes: C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. The lyrics are "Sa-ra-je - vo. Dar - fur." with a long dash under "je" and a period under "fur.". A dynamic marking of *pp* is placed above the piano part.

190

Wood blocks

f *f*

Detailed description: This block contains the piano accompaniment for measures 190 through 194. The left hand plays chords: G2-A2-B2, A2-B2-C3, B2-C3-D3, A2-B2-C3, G2-A2-B2, F2-G2-A2, E2-F2-G2, D2-E2-F2, C2-D2-E2, B1-C2-D2. The right hand plays chords: G2-A2-B2, A2-B2-C3, B2-C3-D3, A2-B2-C3, G2-A2-B2, F2-G2-A2, E2-F2-G2, D2-E2-F2, C2-D2-E2, B1-C2-D2. A dynamic marking of *f* is placed below the piano part. A wood block part is introduced in measure 194, marked *p*.

196 *accel.*

Tow - ers up - side down in

f $\text{♩} = 72$

Detailed description: This block contains the vocal line for measures 196 through 200. The melody starts with a quarter rest, followed by quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. The lyrics are "Tow - ers up - side down in" with a long dash under "ers" and a period under "in". A dynamic marking of *f* is placed above the piano part. A tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 72$ is placed above the piano part.

196 *accel.*

Gong

mp *f* *p*

pp *mp* *f*

snare off

tr

Detailed description: This block contains the piano accompaniment for measures 196 through 200. The left hand plays chords: G2-A2-B2, A2-B2-C3, B2-C3-D3, A2-B2-C3, G2-A2-B2, F2-G2-A2, E2-F2-G2, D2-E2-F2, C2-D2-E2, B1-C2-D2. The right hand plays chords: G2-A2-B2, A2-B2-C3, B2-C3-D3, A2-B2-C3, G2-A2-B2, F2-G2-A2, E2-F2-G2, D2-E2-F2, C2-D2-E2, B1-C2-D2. A dynamic marking of *mp* is placed below the piano part. A gong part is introduced in measure 196, marked *pp*. A snare drum part is introduced in measure 196, marked *tr* and *snare off*. A dynamic marking of *f* is placed below the piano part. A dynamic marking of *p* is placed below the piano part.

A Short History

$\text{♩} = 60$ 21

201

air. _____

Tow - ers

Improvise (no cymbals)

201

Marimb: Improvise

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

up - side down in air. _____ Ah _____

Bow cymbals (vary color and duration)

206

ff *subito p* *ff* *p*

Marimb.*

8va

206

(any octave) *p*

212 *p sf* *f*

Je ru - sa - lem _____ New

normally

212

mp *mf*

212

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

pp *pf* *p* *pp*

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 crotale, and intoned softly on the same note in the middle register of the voice. Pause after each instance. When finished, proceed to the end from m. 223.

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

Un - - - - real, ____

open damped open damped

p *pp* *p* *pp*

230 *a tempo* *p*

Un - - - - real, ____ Un ____

open damped

p

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.