

The Toy Box at the End of the Scalpel

for orchestra

(2018)

Maya Miro Johnson

Excerpted Sample Score

Program Notes

The Toy Box at the End of the Scalpel functioned as a kind of exploratory space for me to develop my individual sense of orchestral weight, timbre, and time - a kind of gestural laboratory, complete with the tell-tale stains of multitudinous ideas and grossly exaggerated, tchotchke-type gestures. However, I think of the piece now as a playful inquiry rather than a scientific one. While crafting the piece from a compositional perspective, I began to correlate the excessive amount of distinct, undeveloped ideas with this toy chest that my childhood dentist's office had when I was a kid. If you were a good little patient, you would be allowed to pick a toy out of the chest at the end of the visit. I was never the least bit interested in the shininess of the plastic or plushness of the stuffed animals; instead, I was intrigued by how chaotic and surreal everything looked tossed together in this big, tangled mess of consumerism (though perhaps there is a bit of hindsight bias at play here!).

The whole concept of industrially-manufactured reward for basic decorum always seemed tacky and somewhat corrosive to me, yet the actual appearance of the box was fascinatingly colorful, nonsensical, even joyous. I, with my child's curiosity and disdain, would take one item out, inspect it for a moment, then toss it back into its pile to be overturned, overlooked, or momentarily loved by the next young explorer to rummage through the contents of the chest. I think the process exhibited in the structure and kaleidoscopic pacing of *Toy Box*... mirrors this casual whimsy and explosive amateurishness. I later added the image of the scalpel to the title in order to darken the impression of the piece; by no means is it entirely cheery, for there is a certain falseness and hypocrisy inherent in the toy box. From this perspective, I suppose the piece is also about the interplay of light and dark, not simply in chiaroscuro dichotomy but also in the gradations of muddled sepia they create with their various combinations.

Another objective of the piece is to engage the players with the acoustical oddities and ambiences of the performance venue. I invite the orchestra to make the venue and audience a living part of the performance and to integrate awareness of the space and people occupying it into their playing. The silent participation of the orchestra both in motion and at rest should serve to sharpen the focus of the sounds both in and outside of the piece. Players are encouraged to forget metered time and focus only on listening (though timings should be observed strictly by the conductor).

In conclusion, *Toy Box*... is a contiguous land mass of sonic characters, concepts, outbursts, and orchestrations. Though chaos is a desired element, there is a structure and hierarchy of ideas that emerges over the course of the piece in conjunction with the themes of mess and order, listening, dark and light, and familiar thematic imagery.

-Maya Miro Johnson
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Instrumentation:

2 Flutes (2nd doubling Piccolo)
 2 Oboes
 2 Clarinets in Bb
 2 Bassoons

2 Horns in F (2nd primarily specializing low)
 2 Trumpets in C
 Trombone
 Bass Trombone

Timpani
 2 Percussion:
 1: Suspended Cymbals/Hand Cymbals/Bass Drum/Rain Stick/Whistle 1/Tam-Tam
 2: Guiro/Wood Block/Crotales/Gong (medium or high)/Xylophone/Marimba/Ratchet/ Whistle 2

Strings

Duration: ca. 13'30"

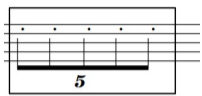
Written for Utah Youth Orchestras and Ensembles

Performance Notes

Throughout the piece, numerous extended techniques are employed. The execution of such techniques is often explicated in text adjacent to the material. However, I have here included a key for reference and further explanation.

Strings ad libitum; winds follow conductor

orchestral cadenza: beginning here, the pulse pauses. The conductor should lead the brass and wind players through the hairpins ad libitum while the solo string players play their glissandi lines without regard to the rest of the orchestra as long as everyone lands on m. 180 together and back in tempo. Tutti string players **may choose** whether to play the swells improvisationally or follow the conductor.



bell taps: tap the bell of the instrument with the fingernail somewhat loudly, creating percussive resonance.



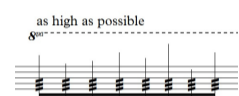
air tones: blowing pure air through the instrument without pitch. Those notes indicated without rhythmic duration should be played with more freedom and thickness.



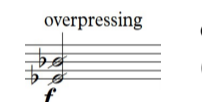
flutter tongue: executed in different registers and with different intensities (indicated in the part).



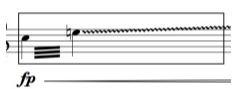
slap tongue (low register): an indistinct pitch more concerned with the weightiness of the sound. Double reed players may want to remove and use only their reed.



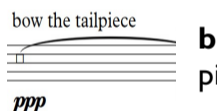
rapid notes above the fingerboard: alternate indistinct pitches above the fingerboard (highest string) with tremolo.



overpressure: crunching down on the string with too much right hand pressure; to be executed at different bow speeds (indicated in the part)



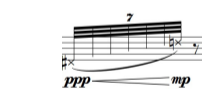
left hand tremolo upwards glissando: begin with the indicated starting pitches and maintain this interval while pulling the left hand up, and eventually beyond, the fingerboard.



bow the tailpiece: execute a long, continuous sound with steady bow speed along the tailpiece of the instrument. A randomized pitch may occur softly.



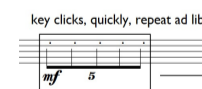
artificial harmonic glissando: begin with the indicated starting pitches using first and fourth finger and slowly pull the left hand up to the uppermost quarter of the fingerboard. Stopping pitch at discretion of player.



bowed col legno: reverse the facing of the bow, with the wood facing downward and the hair upward, and draw across the contact point as normal while moving from starting to stopping pitch with the left hand.



left-hand hammer-ons (bases only): tap the fingerboard with the left hand rather harshly, producing a brief, percussive sound with pitch. Rhythmic precision is not integral.



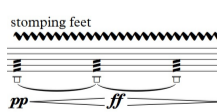
key clicks: to be executed at different rates, often rapidly interspersed with pitches and air tones. Pick keys that sound most clearly and with a metallic sound.



multiphonics: the player's choice, though harmonics which are not overly strong or weak are preferred. Multiphonic trills can also be executed. Singing into the instrument is also possible, especially for trumpet.



improvised, chromatic riffs (brass only): these runs are to be based around the given pitches but improvisatory in nature. A buzzing, rambling, somewhat frantic sound is desired. These may be essentially thought of as alternating glissandi.



stomping feet: the conductor will cue the initiation of the rumbling sound (akin to a body-percussion timpani roll) and direct the hairpin, though players are encouraged to stomp at different rates of speed. The sound should not be overly aggressive and act more like a wave.

Listen ca. 3"

"listen": this instruction, applying to the whole orchestra, is quite literal. I invite the orchestra to make the venue and audience a living part of the performance and to integrate awareness of the space into their playing. Participation of resting instruments is necessitated by this marking. Silent engagement with the audience and acoustics should serve to sharpen the focus of the sounds both in and outside of the piece. Players are encouraged to forget metered time and focus only on listening, though timings should be observed strictly by the conductor.

Excerpted Sample Score

Pazzo ♩ = 132

Flute 1 *ff*

Flute 2 (Piccolo) *ff*

Oboe 1 *f*

Oboe 2 *f*

Clarinet in B \flat 1 *ff*

Clarinet in B \flat 2 *ff*

Bassoon 1 *sfff*

Bassoon 2 *sfff*

Horn in F 1 *ff sempre*

Horn in F 2 *ff*

Trumpet in C 1 *ff* *rip*

Trumpet in C 2 *ff* *rip*

Trombone *ff*

Bass Trombone *sfff*

Timpani *ff* *pedal gliss as high as possible*

Percussion 1 *bowed* *ff*

Percussion 2 *Guiro* *screaching* *ff* *Whistle* *ff*

Violin 1 *IV al segno, free bowing* *fff*

Violin 2 *IV al segno, free bowing* *fff*

Viola *IV al segno* *fff*

Violoncello *IV al segno* *fff*

Contrabass *IV al segno* *fff*

A Strings in tempo

10

Fl. 1

Fl. 2

Ob. 1

Ob. 2

Cl. 1

Cl. 2

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Hn. 1

Hn. 2

C Tpt. 1

C Tpt. 2

Tbn.

B. Tbn.

Timp.

air tones

sfz

mp

sfz

sfz

mp

sfz

sfz

mp

sfz

mp

p

Sus. Cym.

Gro.

with brush

p

3

A

Strings in tempo

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

div. inside/outside

f

div. in 2

f

sul pont.

meno f

sul pont.

f

mp

Excerpted Sample Score

33

Fl. 1 *sf sf sf sf*

Fl. 2 *f sf p sf*

Ob. 1 *pp ff pp*

Ob. 2 *sf pp*

Cl. 1 *mf dolce*

Cl. 2 *mf dolce*

Bsn. 1 *pp pp*

Bsn. 2 *mf*

Hn. 1

Hn. 2

C Tpt. 1

C Tpt. 2

Tbn.

B. Tbn.

Timp. *pp* Solo

Sus. Cym.

Gro.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla. *col legno mp sempre*

Vc. *mp sempre*

Cb. *mp sempre*

EXCERPTED SAMPLE SCORE

43

bending out of the pitch

Fl. 1 *sf* *sf* *mp*

Fl. 2 *sf* *p*

Ob. 1

Ob. 2 *pp* *ff*

Cl. 1 *p*

Cl. 2 *p*

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2 *sf* *sf*

Hn. 1

Hn. 2

C Tpt. 1

C Tpt. 2

Tbn.

B. Tbn.

Timp.

Sus. Cym.

Gro.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

48

Fl. 1 *mf*

Fl. 2

Ob. 1 *sf* *sf* *sf* *sf*

Ob. 2

Cl. 1

Cl. 2

Bsn. 1 *sf* *sf* *sf*

Bsn. 2

Hn. 1

Hn. 2

C Tpt. 1

C Tpt. 2

Tbn.

B. Tbn.

Timp. *cresc. molto*

Sus. Cym. 7 7 6 6 To Gong

Gro.

Vln. 1 3

Vln. 2

Vla. 3 3

Vc. 3

Cb. 3 3

Excerpted Sample Score

Excerpted Sample Score

F Very freely and slowly ♩ = 66 (+/-)

Listen ca 8"

Fl. 1

Fl. 2

Ob. 1

Ob. 2

Cl. 1

Cl. 2

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Hn. 1

Hn. 2

C Tpt. 1

C Tpt. 2

Tbn.

B. Tbn.

Timp.

air tone with key articulations

ppp — *mp*

air tone, manipulated with embouchure

ppp — *mp*

Excerpted Sample Score

Sus. Cym.

Gro.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

F

col legno, bowed

ppp — *mp*

col legno, bowed

ppp — *mp*

col legno, bowed

ppp — *mp*

col legno, bowed

ppp — *mp*

p

pp

This page contains the musical score for measures 107 through 112. The score is for a full orchestra and strings. The key signature is G major and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked 'Frenetic' with a quarter note equal to 112 beats per minute. The score includes parts for Flute I, Piccolo, Oboe I and II, Clarinet I and II, Bassoon I and II, Horn I and II, Trumpet I and II, Trombone, Bass Trombone, Timpani, Bass Drum, and Tam-Tam. The string section includes Violin I and II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass. The score features various dynamics such as *f*, *mp*, *ff*, *pp*, *fff*, *p*, and *mf*. It also includes performance instructions like 'flz.', 'div. in 2', 'legatissimo', 'normal tone', 'overpressing', 'molto sul pont.', and 'Tutti'. The score is marked with a large 'G' in a box at the beginning of each system. A large watermark 'Excerpted Sample Score' is visible across the page.

Excerpted Sample Score

1

2

3

Listen ca. 8"

Frenetic ♩ = 120

128

Fl. I *ppp*

Picc. *ppp*

Ob. 1 *slap tongue* *ff*

Ob. 2 *key clicks* *f*

Cl. 1 *ppp* *ff* *key clicks*

Cl. 2 *ppp* *ff*

Bsn. 1 *p* *f* *p*

Bsn. 2 *f*

Hn. 1 *ppp* *f*

Hn. 2 *ppp* *f*

C Tpt. 1 *ppp* *ff*

C Tpt. 2 *ppp* *ff*

Tbn. *ppp* *p* *f* *p* *ff*

B. Tbn. *ppp*

Timp. *ff* *p*

Cym. *sf* l.v.

Crot. *To Xyl.* *Xylophone* *f* *gliss.*

Vln. 1 *ppp* *f* *sf* *Tutti bow the tailpiece*

Vln. 2 *ppp* *f* *sf* *bow the tailpiece*

Vla. *ppp* *fff* *IV*

Vc. *ppp* *molto sul pont. 6* *6* *6*

Cb. *ppp* *fff* *IV*

Listen ca. 5" $\text{♩} = 120$

Listen ca. 2" $\text{♩} = 120$

133

Fl. I *sf*

Picc. *sf* To Fl.

Ob. 1 *ff*

Ob. 2 *f*

Cl. 1 *ff* Solo *p*

Cl. 2 *ff*

Bsn. 1 *f* key clicks *ff*

Bsn. 2 *f*

Hn. 1 *ff* *f*

Hn. 2 *ff* *ff*

C Tpt. 1 *pp* *f* 5

C Tpt. 2 *f* *fp* *f*

Tbn. *ff* *ff* *ff*

B. Tbn. *ff* *ff* *ff*

Timp. *fff* gliss to indeterminate note

Cym. *sf secco* *sf secco* *sf secco*

Xyl. *f* as high as possible, beyond the fingerboard *f* *f*

Vln. 1 *f* *f*

Vln. 2 *f* *f* overpressing

Vla. (B) *f* *fp*

Vc. *ff* *ff* *ff*

Cb. *ff* *ff* *ff*

Excerpted Sample Score

♩ = 120

Listen ca. 3" ♩ = 120

pause in tempo **L** ♩ = 60

158

Fl. I *f* *p* *mp*

Fl. II *ff* *f* *p*

Ob. I *f* *f*

Ob. II

Cl. I *ff* *f* *mp*

Cl. II *ff* *f*

Bsn. I *ff*

Bsn. II *ff*

Hn. I *ff* *mp*

Hn. II *ff* *ff*

C Tpt. I *ff* *f* *mf*
1/2 valve, improvise chromatic, continuous licks and repeat ad lib

C Tpt. II *ff* *mf*
1/2 valve, improvise chromatic, continuous licks and repeat ad lib

Tbn. *ff* *p*

B. Tbn. *ff* *ff*

Timp. *f* *pp-ff*

Cym. *ff* To Gong *p* Gong scraping with metal To Sus. Cym. *mf* uneven Suspended Cymbals

Xyl. *ff* *f* To Tam-Tam *mp* l.v.

Vln. I *fp* *fff* *pp* *mf* overpressing, with a slow bow

Vln. II *f* *fff* *pp* *mf* overpressing, with a slow bow

Vla. *fp* *fff* *pp* *mf* overpressing, with a slow bow

Vc. *fp* *ff*

Cb. *fp* *ff* *p*

non div.

overpressing, with a slow bow

Strings ad libitum; winds follow conductor

cresc. poco a poco

171 hairpins are ad lib swells, indicated by conductor

Fl. I *mf* *f*

Fl.

Ob. 1

Ob. 2

Cl. 1

Cl. 2

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Hn. 1 *mf* *glissando molto lento*

Hn. 2 *mf* *glissando molto lento*

C Tpt. 1 *mf* *glissando molto lento*

C Tpt. 2 *mf* *glissando molto lento*

Tbn. *mf* *glissando molto lento*

B. Tbn. *mf* *glissando molto lento*

Timp.

Sus. Cym. *f l.v.* To R.S. Rain Stick *pp* gradually increase speed of rotation

Tam-Tam *f l.v.* To Rt. Ratchet *ppp* gradually increase speed of rotation

Vln. 1 *ff* 1st desk outside player, 2nd desk outside player: follow contour of pitches ad lib.
4th desk inside player, 6th desk outside player: follow contour of pitches ad lib.

Vln. 2 *p* *f* 1st desk outside player, 2nd desk outside player: follow contour of pitches ad lib.
3rd desk outside player, 5th desk inside player: follow contour of pitches ad lib.

Vla. *p*

Vc. *p*

Cb. *p*

Excerpted Sample Score

220

Fl. I

Fl.

Ob. 1

Ob. 2

Cl. 1

Cl. 2

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Hn. 1

Hn. 2

C Tpt. 1

C Tpt. 2

Tbn.

B. Tbn.

Timp.

Excerpted Sample Score

Whist. 1

Whist. 2

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

Front half behind the bridge

Front half behind the bridge, pont.

Front half behind the bridge, pont.

Front half behind the bridge, sul pont.

p

p

p

p

225

This page contains a musical score for a full orchestra. The instruments listed on the left are: Fl. I, Fl., Ob. I, Ob. 2, Cl. I, Cl. 2, Bsn. I, Bsn. 2, Hn. I, Hn. 2, C Tpt. I, C Tpt. 2, Tbn., B. Tbn., Timp., Whist. I, Whist. 2, Vln. I, Vln. 2, Vla., Vc., and Cb. The score is divided into five measures. The woodwind and brass sections (Flutes, Oboes, Clarinets, Bassoons, Horns, Trumpets, Trombones, and Timpani) are currently silent, indicated by a horizontal line with a bar across the staff. The string section (Violins I and II, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass) is active, with notes and slurs visible. A large, diagonal watermark reading "Excerpted Sample Score" is overlaid across the center of the page.

R ♩ = 63 like distant wind chimes

230

Fl. I

Fl.

Ob. 1

Ob. 2

Cl. 1
pp

Cl. 2
pp

Bsn. 1

Bsn. 2

Hn. 1
pp

Hn. 2
pp

C Tpt. 1
pp

C Tpt. 2
pp

Tbn.
pp

B. Tbn.
pp

Timp.

Whist. 1

Whist. 2

Vln. I

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Vc.

Vc.

Cb.

mf distant, free, singing, and occasionally out-of-tune

p *dolcissimo*

p *diminuendo sempre*
Solo, 1st desk outside

p *dolcissimo*
Solo, 1st desk inside

p *dolcissimo*
Solo, 3rd desk inside

p *diminuendo sempre*
1st desk

234

Fl. 1
Fl.
Ob. 1
Ob. 2
Cl. 1
Cl. 2
Bsn. 1
Bsn. 2
Hn. 1
Hn. 2
C Tpt. 1
C Tpt. 2
Tbn.
B. Tbn.
Timp.
Whist. 1
Whist. 2
Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vc.
Vc.
Vc.
Cb.

ppp

239

This page contains a musical score for a full orchestra. The instruments listed on the left are: Fl. 1, Fl., Ob. 1, Ob. 2, Cl. 1, Cl. 2, Bsn. 1, Bsn. 2, Hn. 1, Hn. 2, C Tpt. 1, C Tpt. 2, Tbn., B. Tbn., Timp., Whist. 1, Whist. 2, Vln. 1, Vln. 2, Vla., Vc., Vc., and Cb. The score is written in 2/4 time. The first 14 staves (Flutes, Oboes, Clarinets, Bassoons, Horns, Trumpets, Trombones, and Timpani) are mostly empty, indicating rests. The strings (Violins, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass) have some notation, including triplets and accents. A large watermark 'Excerpted Sample Score' is overlaid diagonally across the page.

diminuendo al niente

249

This page contains a musical score for a full orchestra. The instruments listed on the left are: Fl. 1, Fl., Ob. 1, Ob. 2, Cl. 1, Cl. 2, Bsn. 1, Bsn. 2, Hn. 1, Hn. 2, C Tpt. 1, C Tpt. 2, Tbn., B. Tbn., Timp., Whist. 1, Whist. 2, Vln. 1, Vln. 2, Vla., Vc., Vc., and Cb. The score is written in a single system with 8 measures per staff. The first measure of each staff contains a fermata. The second measure contains a dynamic marking of *diminuendo al niente*. The final measure of each staff contains a fermata. A large watermark "Excerpted Sample Score" is overlaid diagonally across the page. The page number "249" is in the top left, and "Listen ca. 10" 51" is in the top right.