

Transposed Score

all that is solid

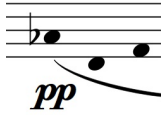
(2018)

a study in entropy

for piano, oboe, horn, violin, viola, and tap dancer

Maya Miro Johnson

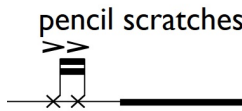
Notation Key



Unless otherwise noted, col legno is to be played in this piece with the wood of the bow, as if normal legato, slurred strokes



Air tones should be executed with the reed removed for oboe and mouthpiece alone for horn. They will be either invariably static or a moving "whoosh" sound.



When indicated, the performers should descend into the percussive world of the tap dancer by drawing continuous pencil shading on their music at a soft but consistent dynamic.



Tongue rams are notated in the horn with a diamond notehead and should sound mostly unpitched, like a soft "thmmp" sound.



The piano clusters starting on the low C# should be contained within an octave.



Slap pizz pushes down on the string percussively, rather than pulling it up and away from the fingerboard.



The silent-depress passages are notated with this symbol. Move along the middle range of the piano, occasionally allowing a note to be fully pressed. Move at a medium but energetic tempo, always *p*.

Program Notes

I have always been fascinated by the interaction of motion and sound. In the art forms of both music and tap dance, music and movement are not in opposition but in coevolution; in *all that is solid*, I seek to explore the ensuing connections through three themes. The first examines the tap dancer as a functional if timbrally-distant member of the acoustic ensemble, weaving in and out of texture and rhythm, ostinato and leadership. The second is the sense of entropy (in thermodynamics, the idea that all things naturally decay from order to chaos) inherent in sound. Thirdly, I incorporated ideas- specifically, ascending major 7ths and minor 9ths and timbral modulations- from a piano trio I wrote earlier this year which addressed the experience of somatization (the somewhat Cartesian disorder that results from a frayed connection between the brain and body).

The piece opens in a place of ambiguity. While the tap dancer (at this point, just an obscured figure, almost a manifestation of movement rather than an instigator of it) follows the displacement of gravity to an inevitable sonic event, the ensemble begins to create a soundscape. This craggly timbral fog takes its inspiration from the sonically-undefined world of the tap dancer. As the piece progresses, each performer becomes slowly more individuated and the pitches coalesce from a chance-based texture into a popcorn-like line that threads through the ensemble. The tap dancer moves into a world of characteristic swing rhythms, but still in a very intimate fashion. Eventually a line is crossed, a polarity reversed, and the tap dancer is pulled into the notated world of the musicians. He or she becomes an integrated, percussive member of the ensemble, exchanging riffs with the piano, oboe, and horn, while the violin and viola play long, singing, but still ethereal lines in counterpoint. After an intensifying duration and a long climb up the fingerboard for the string players, the sound world of the tap dancer is found anew, this time with more sculpting from the ensemble while the tap dancer fades away into near-soundlessness. Eventually the ensemble disintegrates into pure noise, and the tap dancer is pulled farther and farther away in a repetitive pattern of drags and slams, abruptly fading into nothing, the final act of entropy.

The title is of course a reference to the infamous opening of Marx and Engel's Communist Manifesto, though I am just one in a long line of artists to reinterpret the phrase. I have chosen to use it as an incomplete implication of the pervasiveness of entropy.

"The unpredictable and the predetermined unfold together to make everything the way it is."

— **Tom Stoppard, Arcadia**

Maya Miro Johnson

August 2018

Instrumentation:

piano, oboe, horn, violin, viola, and tap dancer

Duration:

ca. 8 minutes

Staging Requirements:

A suitable portable marley or wooden floor (preferably 4 feet by 4 feet at least) is required for the tap dancer. Extra paper and pencils are required for all performers except tap dancer.

Premiere:

First performed on August 5th, 2018 at West Street Theater in Lenox, Massachusetts, by musicians of the Boston University Tanglewood Institute, Class of 2018:

Jonathan Wang Hou, piano
 Gwen Goble, oboe
 Shawn Zheng, horn
 Shereen Lee, violin
 Roger Cawdette, viola
 Maya Miro Johnson, tap dance
 Dr. Justin Casinghino, conductor

N.B.

Box notation indicates not only to continue the figure but also to expand upon it by distorting rhythm, etc.

The tap dancer in the unpitched sections remains mostly removed from the instrumentalists. In a way, the piece is the antithesis of the traditional concept of rhythmic tap dancing and asks the dancer to follow improvisationally the repercussions of a step through the body, much as the musicians follow and control the sound waves as they decay and distort.

Second timings are only loose parameters and do not need to be adhered to precisely.

At Letter B, the pianist should determine the pacing of the pitches which appear startlingly from the silent-depress texture, but should also coordinate shared pitches with the conductor and joining instrumentalist.

Aleatoric entrances should be aided but not necessarily controlled by the conductor. I seek to create a continuous but static soundscape. Arrows (such as those at letter F) suggest a sequence of events and act as cues.

Transposed Score

in memoriam Janet Muse Gray

all that is solid

Maya Miro Johnson (2018)

ca. 30"

initiation/repercussion improv- approx 4-8" for each cycle

Tap Dancer

heels

slam

1

2

ppppp poss. almost inaudible

sf

sf

Oboe

air tone- "whoosh" sound without reed

sfpp

Horn in F

air tone- "whoosh" sound mouthpiece only

sfpp

Violin

Viola

Piano

scraped with fingernail

mf l.v. poss.

Red.

The score is for a piece titled "all that is solid" by Maya Miro Johnson (2018), dedicated to Janet Muse Gray. It is a transposed score for a 30-second piece. The Tap Dancer part begins with a series of "heels" (indicated by a box around four dots) with a dynamic of *ppppp* (possibly almost inaudible). This is followed by two "slam" notes, each with a dynamic of *sf*. The Oboe and Horn in F parts play an "air tone- 'whoosh' sound" (without reed for the oboe, mouthpiece only for the horn) with a dynamic of *sfpp*. The Piano part starts with a note "scraped with fingernail" with a dynamic of *mf* and a *l.v. poss.* (liver) instruction. A "Red." instruction is at the bottom.

ca. 10" ca. 10" ca. 5"

Tap 6 5 *sf* 6 *sf* 7 *sf*

Ob. *pppp* sempre, without inflection, completely static

Hn. *pppp* sempre, without inflection, completely static

Vln. gliss. gliss.
move left hand slightly up and down fingerboard; continue until next command

Vla. gliss. gliss.
move left hand slightly down and up fingerboard; continue until next command

Pno. silent-depress randomly about the keyboard, occasionally accidentally depressing key enough for a note to sound briefly
ppp
slap the lowest strings with the left palm
+
7
x
ppp almost inaudible but still energetic

B Without crescendo or accent; ca. 30"

ca. 6"

12

transition into full steps or sequences; now truly dancing, but still introvertedly

The musical score consists of six staves: Tap, Ob., Hn., Vln., Vla., and Pno. The Tap staff has a double bar line at the beginning. The Ob., Hn., Vln., and Vla. staves have asterisks (*) above them, indicating they continue from previous actions. The Pno. staff has a boxed 'B' and two asterisks (**). The Pno. staff has two systems of notes: the upper system is in treble clef and the lower system is in bass clef. There are two 8va markings above the Pno. staff. Vertical dashed lines mark specific time points. The score ends with a double bar line and a fermata on the Tap staff.

* continue prior actions, with coordinated interruptions

** continue actions of both hands, with silent-depresses generating this pitch scheme

Excerpted Sample Score

scuffle heel shuffle heel toe heel pattern

3 five-count riffs

Tap **18**

paradiddle crumroll

The Tap drum part consists of three measures. The first measure contains a paradiddle pattern (X's and dots) with a 7/8 time signature. The second measure contains a crumroll pattern (X's) with a 3/8 time signature. The third measure contains three five-count riffs (X's) with a 5/8 time signature.

Ob.

sf

The Oboe staff has a single note in the second measure, marked *sf*.

Hn.

sf

The Horn staff has a single note in the second measure, marked *sf*.

Vln.

The Violin staff features melodic lines with slurs and accents across the measures.

Vla.

The Viola staff features sustained notes with slurs across the measures.

Pno.

f brillante *sf*

The Piano staff features a sixteenth-note figure in the first measure, marked *f* brillante, and a single note in the second measure, marked *sf*.

20

Tap

Ob.

Hn.

Vln.

Vla.

Pno.

six count riff or double shuffle

stomp

riff sim.

E

sf

sf

sf

sf

sf

sf

E

Excerpted Sample Score

G

37

Tap

Ob.

Hn.

Vln.

Vla.

Pno.

Excerpted Sample Score



In a very loose, slow pulse; practically senza tempo

(♩ = 54 approx.)

ca. 5"

40

Tap

Ob.

Hn.

Vln.

Vla.

Pno.

pp

p < *mf*

mp

transition to pont.

transition to pont.

roll starts on downbeat

mp

Excerpted Sample Score

ca. 3" ca. 2"

53 Tap *sf* *sf*

Ob. pencil scratches *pp*

Hn. pencil scratches *pp*

Vln. pencil scratches *pp*

Vla. pencil scratches *pp*

Pno. *ppp* pencil scratches *pp*

ppp

The score consists of six staves. The Tap staff (top) has two measures, each starting with a note marked *sf* and a circled 'x' below it. Above the staff, two brackets indicate durations of 'ca. 3"' and 'ca. 2"'. The woodwind and string staves (Ob., Hn., Vln., Vla.) each have two notes marked 'pencil scratches' and *pp*. The piano staff (Pno.) has a *ppp* dynamic in the first measure and 'pencil scratches' with *pp* in the second. The bass staff has a circled 'x' and a *ppp* dynamic below it.