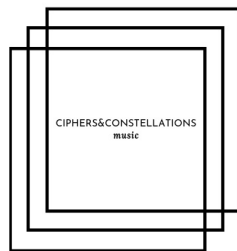


Carrion Triptych

for mezzo-soprano and piano
(2019)

Maya Miro Johnson



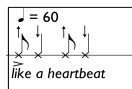
Program Notes

Carrion Triptych is a three-part meditation on mortality and the varying rites surrounding it in the multiplicity of human cultures. It asks whether the universal experience of death can be overshadowed by the living's obsession with masking it in ritual. A triptych as a form of visual art has both a narrative and historically religious implication. I have used the word in the title to evoke reverence, while the contrasting word "carrion" promotes a skepticism towards that sense of blind and agonized faith in a greater beyond.

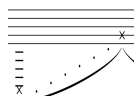
-Maya Miro Johnson
September 9th, 2019

Performance Notes

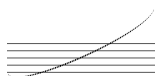
Piano



lifting (↑) and depressing (↓) sustain pedal with intention. This should create a clear and relatively loud but suffused sound, like an uneven gait or heartbeat.



stroking the strings of the piano with the fingernail (or a guitar pick, credit card, or object of similar shape and substance). Follow the contour and approximate rhythm.



releasing pedal extremely slowly, listening to overtones transform until no sound or resonance remains.

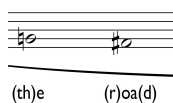


a cluster played with the palm on the keyboard.



a cluster played by slapping the palm on the strings around the register given on the staff.

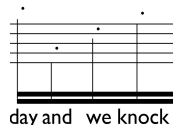
Voice



emphasizing the vowel changes by articulating *only* the vowels, but pronouncing them as they would be in the specific full words given in the libretto (used instead of IPA for maximum specificity to the words in the text).



Starting the phrase with specific pitches and transitioning smoothly into an expanding, linear trill. Each oscillation gets wider apart from its opposite peak or valley. The overall line can remain moving downwards, for ease of execution. Essentially, the gesture is the act of losing control over a moving line.



a less-restrictive version of sprechstimme, simply following the contour of the line with the voice.

day and we knock

Poems used:

I. Excerpt of *Kaddish* by Allen Ginsberg

*Strange now to think of you, gone without corsets & eyes, while I walk on the sunny pavement of
Greenwich Village.
downtown Manhattan, clear winter noon, and I've been up all night, talking, talking, reading the
Kaddish*

II. Excerpt of *Prisoners* by Denise Levertov

*Though the road turn at last
to death's ordinary door,
and we knock there, ready
to enter and it opens
easily for us,
yet
all the long journey
we shall have gone in chains,
fed on knowledge-apples
acid and riddled with grubs.*

III. *Dying Beast* by Langston Hughes

*Sensing death,
The buzzards gather -
Noting the last struggle
Of flesh under weather,
Noting the last glance
Of agonized eye
At passing wind
And boundless sky.*

*Sensing death,
The buzzards overhead
Await that still moment
When life -*

Is dead.

Optional IV: *Pensive and Faltering* by Walt Whitman

*Pensive and faltering,
The words, the dead, I write;
For living are the Dead;
(Haply the only living, only real,
And I the apparition - I the spectre.)*

Carrion Triptych

I. Kaddish (Allen Ginsberg)

Maya Miro Johnson
(2019)

Mezzo-soprano

Piano

Pedal

f l.v. al niente
Ped.

ff
Ped.

Sustain Pedal (rightmost)
↓
p dolce

** x6
♩ = 60
↑ ↓ ↑ ↓
like a heartbeat

Spoken:

5 *mp* as if a jadedly astonished, banal remark to oneself upon realizing something irrevocable

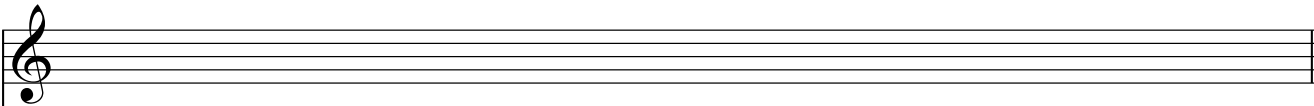
M-S.

Strange now to think of you, gone without corsets & eyes,


Pedal

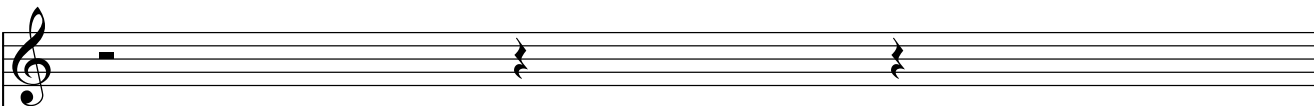
* releasing pedal extremely slowly, listening to overtones transform until no sound or resonance remains

** lifting (↑) and depressing (↓) sustain pedal with intention. This should create a clear and relatively loud but suffused sound, like an uneven gait or heartbeat.

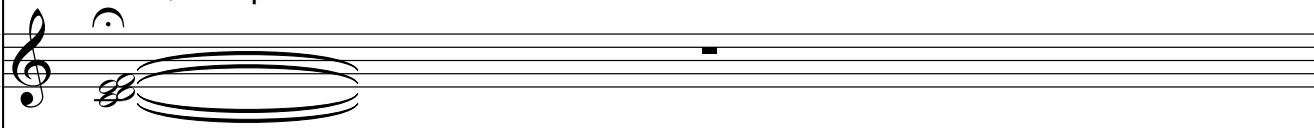
M-S. 

while I walk on the sunny pavement of Greenwich Village.

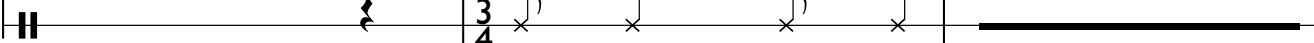
Pedal 

M-S. 


downtown Manhattan, clear winter noon and I've been up all night,

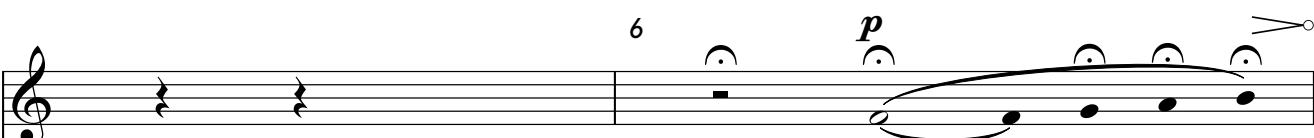
Pno. 

attack, then pedal

Pedal 

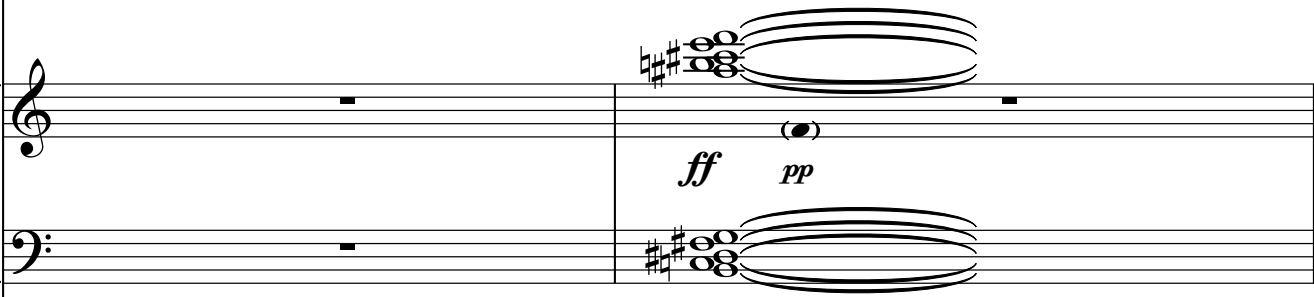
$\text{♩} = 60$

$\frac{3}{4}$  like a heartbeat


M-S. 

talking, talking, reading the Kaddish

mmm ahh mmm

Pno. 

ff *pp*

Pedal 

7 **wait for the sound to stop completely**

M-S.

Pno.

II. Prisoners (Denise Levertov)

Without tempo: ca. 10-20" per bar

M-S.

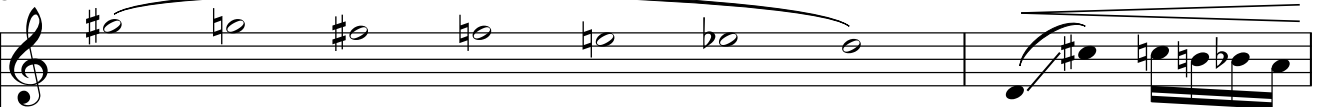
mp *mf*

* (Th)ough(th)e (r)oa(d) (t)u(rn) a(t) (l)a(st) (t)o though the road turn at last to

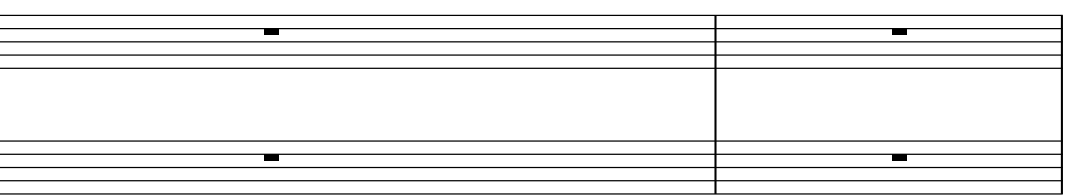
Pno.

* emphasizing the vowel changes by articulating *only* the vowels, but pronouncing them as they would be in these specific full words

3 *p*

M-S. 

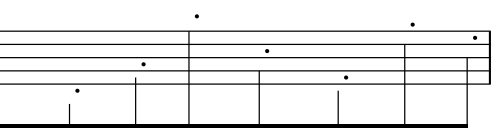
Though the road turn at last to death or-di-na-ry

Pno. 

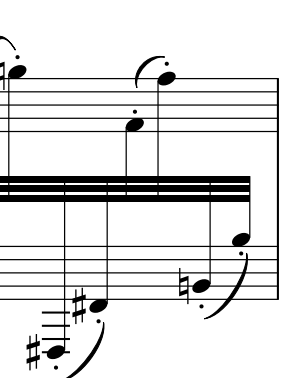
In tempo ♩ = 80

molto rubato; with constant vicissitudes, but mostly quite quickly (pitch approximate)

5

M-S. 

day and we knock there ready to enter and it opens easily for us

Pno. *mp* *leggiero* 

9 *sfp* *f*

M-S. 
→ all the long jour - ney we shall have gone in chains fed on

Pno.

11 *f* (b.)

M-S. ac - rid and rid - dled with gru - bs

Pno.

p light but with a more peasant hue- like chickens

12 **Presto**

M-S. *p* *sf* shh...

Pno. *ppp* doloroso (inside with fingernail) dry, no pedal

Ped.

sf

III. Dying Beast (Langston Hughes)

M.S. *pp* *p*

* Sensing death, the buzzards gather ah_____

Pno. string slap with no pedal *p*

sf cortissimo

M.S. *p* *p*

not - ing the last struggle of flesh under

Pno. *pp* legatissimo secco

*for every vowel, spend twice as long on the consonants

6 *mp* *mf*

M-S. *mp* *mf*

wea - ther - - - not-ing the_ last_ - - - glance of a-gon ized

Pno. *p*

8 *f* *f* *sf*

M-S. *f* *f* *sf*

e - - - ye at pass-ing win - (d) and

Pno. *mp* *p* *sf*

inside with fingernail

mp secco *sf*

M-S. *ff* *mp* *pp*

bound - less sky

* Sensing death, the buzzards

Pno. *mf* rich
Ped.

M-S. *p dolce* *sf*

ov - er - head a - wait that

8va

Pno. *pp* string slap with no pedal *sf*

Ped.

*as in the beginning

15

M.S.

pp

ppp almost whispered

still mo - ment when life is dead.

Pno.

pp

p

The musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff, labeled 'M.S.', is in treble clef and contains the vocal line with lyrics. It begins at measure 15 with a rest, followed by three notes: a half note G#4, a half note A4, and a half note B4, all marked *pp* and connected by a slur. The second measure contains a whole rest. The third measure begins with a half note G#4, marked *ppp* and 'almost whispered', followed by a half note A4, a half note B4, and a half note C5, all marked *ppp* and 'almost whispered'. The lower staff, labeled 'Pno.', is in bass clef. It starts with a piano introduction of five notes (G#3, A3, B3, C4, D4) marked *pp*. The main accompaniment begins in the second measure with a half note G#3, marked *p*, followed by a half note A3, a half note B3, and a half note C4, all marked *p*.