

2020

# His hand turned the page over.

a monodrama

written for loadbang

2020

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ca. 15"

by Diego Rocha (b. 1996)

with text from *Ulysses* (1918-1920/1922) by James Joyce (1882-1941)

Instrumentation:

Baritone voice C trumpet, with plunger and cup mute Tenor trombone, with plunger and cup mute Bass clarinet in B-flat Fixed media (4-channel or stereo)

#### Program note:

In setting out to write this piece, I wanted to explore ideas of difference in interpretation, in people and in understandings. To this end, I decided to create three sets of musical and expressive materials, each very apart from the others, both in musical and ethical terms. These evolved into the three characters present in *His hand turned the page over*. (all unnamed) who use text pulled from the same source—a small excerpt from James Joyce's *Ulysses*—and who are all played by the same performer, joined by the same ensemble and written by the same person. The purpose is to consider how, even with so many shared elements, such diverging paths may be taken. There is no overarching narrative, but the piece exists rather to create portraits of three very different people at a moment in their existence. These characters and their music do not overlap, but instead are juxtaposed quite directly next to each other, with switches from one character to another becoming more rapid as the piece goes on.

#### Performance notes:

#### Characters:

Throughout the piece, the baritone singer will be performing as one of three characters (simply labelled "One," "Two" and "Three" in boxed text in the score). Likewise, the instrumental performers of the ensemble should change their style, physical posture and stage presence to match (insofar as is reasonably possible).

"One" is skittish and obsessive, with manic tendencies that lead to sudden and dramatic shifts in volume, pitch, tone, etc. Stylistically, the music in this section is pointillistic in texture for the most part, being predominated by short, staccato notes, flutter tonguing and similar effects. The bass clarinet should be more prominent in this section. The vocal part should be performed with somewhat thin tone. The louder moments of the voice part should, to a degree, approach pitched yelling. "One" is consumed within the text, repeating it endlessly to themselves, searching for meanings and understandings in it, as if in religious devotion.

"Two" is confident and bold, with a friendly demeanor, though hints of anger come out at points. The music here is quasi-tonal, with strong emphasis placed on harmony based in thirds. The style should be lyrical, and smooth—songlike, though with some unusual turns. The trumpet should be more prominent in this section. The voice part should be performed in an operatic style, like a heroic lead. They are reciting the text to a friend through song, both being familiar with it, like it was a story they were telling after a night out drinking.

"Three" is morose and lethargic, a sad and lonely character who also holds a strong bitterness to the world. The music here is in 24-tet and is quite legato, although not all that lyrical. Movement should feel effortful, as if every action requires a summoning of willpower to accomplish. The trombone should be more prominent in this section. The voice part should be thicker and stronger in the lower registers, while a bit weaker in the higher registers (possibly with use of falsetto for the higher parts). They are using the text to comfort themselves, as if it was a fond memory from their childhood that they are trying to untwist and recover.

The shift from one character to another should always be sudden. In the earlier parts these changes come less often, with the rate of change increasing until the final section of the piece.

#### Staging:

The baritone should stand a little way apart from the instrumentalists, with some space to move if they wish. During the times in which that instrument is more prominent (see above), if feasible, that performer may take a step forward, so as to show that to the audience.

#### Performance notes cont.:

#### Fixed media sections:

During the piece, there are four fixed media tracks that should be cued at specific points as given in the score. The first three do not need precise synchronization with the ensemble outside of their beginnings. The fourth requires the ensemble to play in strict tempo with it and its music is fully written out in the score for the ensemble to follow with.

The fixed media can be used in 4-channel or stereo configurations (4-channel is preferred). In a 4-channel setup, speakers should be placed in the front corners and back corners of hall, with a subwoofer (if used), placed in the middle. In stereo setup the speakers should be placed in the front corners.

For sound files, contact the composer at: diegoaaslandrocha@gmail.com.

#### General performance notes:

In 24-tet sections, backwards flats are used in indicate quarter flats, forward and backward flats together are used to indicate three-quarters flats, sharps with one vertical stem are used to indicate quarter sharps, and sharps with three vertical stems are used to indicate three-quarters sharps. All quarter tones are to be played 50-cents from their neighboring chromatic tones.

Accidentals apply throughout the measure in which they appear, but not across the octave.

Noteheads with a backwards slash running through them indicate slap tongue.

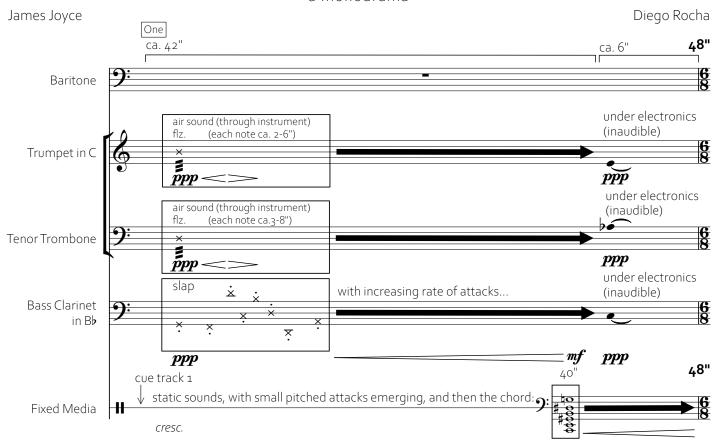
In the baritone's part, x-noteheads are used to indicate notes performed without pitch.

Beginning in m. 16 a special notation is used. In this, the line on the staff is used to indicate relative density or sparseness of notes, with the upper part of the staff indicating a greater density of notes while the lower part indicates a lesser density of notes. Notes should all be played staccatissimo and irregular in rhythm (similarly to preceding section), with freely chosen pitches (though taking care to avoid obvious pitch centers). Performers can freely vary their dynamics, tone, playing technique, etc., but care should be taken that the vocalist is always audible. The transition from the previous fully notated material to this section should be seamless. (These instructions are given in the score at this point as well.)

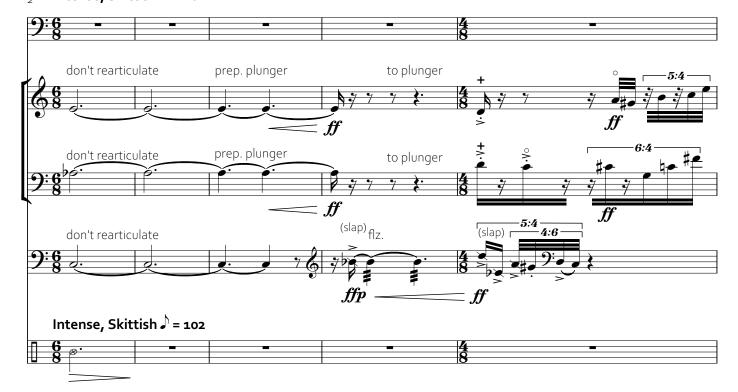
Flutter tonguing is indicated with the text "flz." and tremolo lines where applicable. In cases where tremolo lines are impractical (such as m. 7 of the bass clarinet part), a bracket is used to indicate where flutter tonguing begins and ends.

# His hand turned the page over.

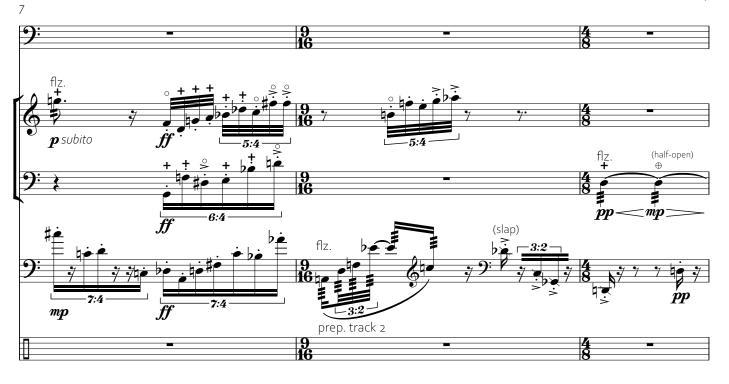
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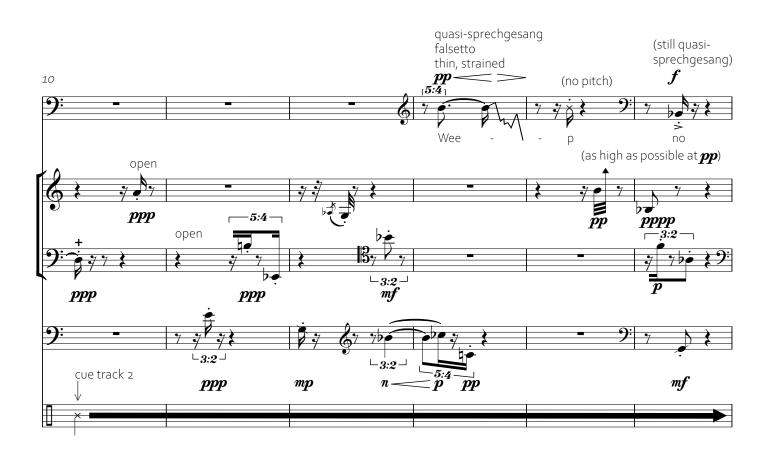


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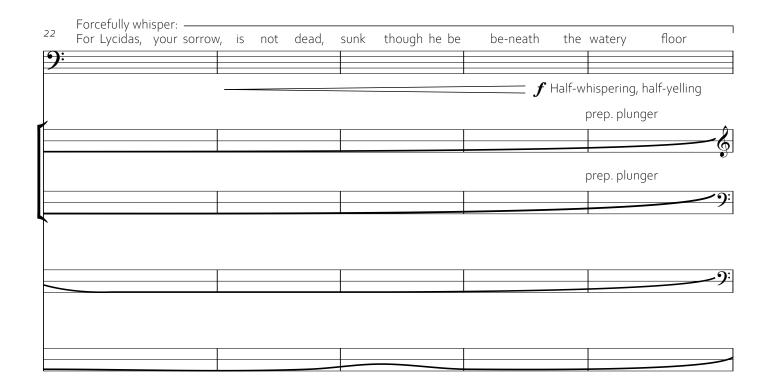






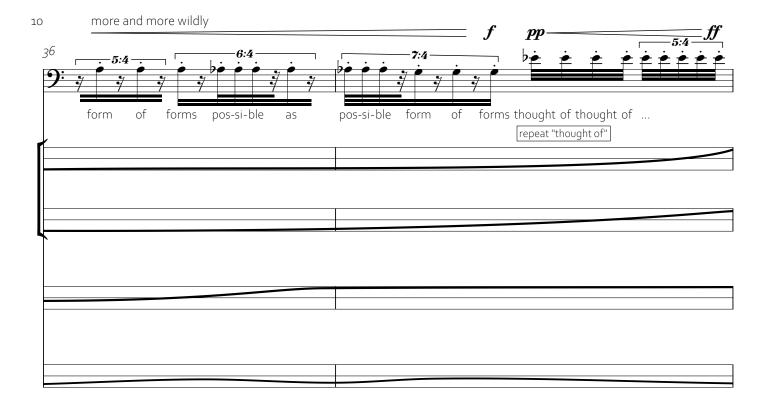
The staff here is used to indicate relative density or sparseness of notes, with the upper part of the staff indicating a greater density of notes while the lower part indicates a lesser density of notes. Notes should all be played *staccatissimo* and irregular in rhythm (similarly to preceding section), with freely chosen pitches (though taking care to avoid obvious pitch centers). Performers can freely vary their dynamics, tone, playing technique, etc., but care should be taken that the vocalist is always audible.

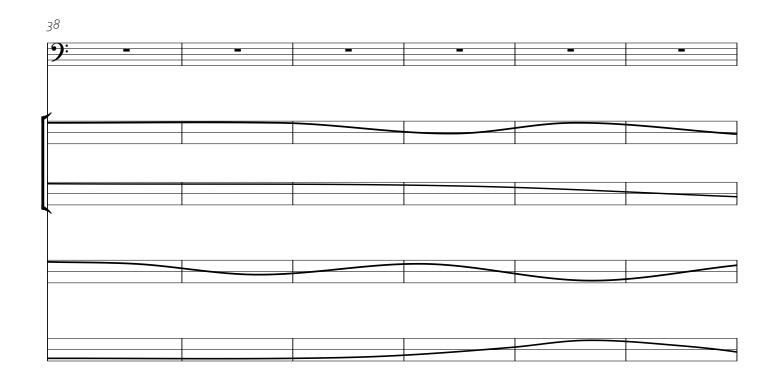
The transition from the previous fully notated material to this section should be seamless.

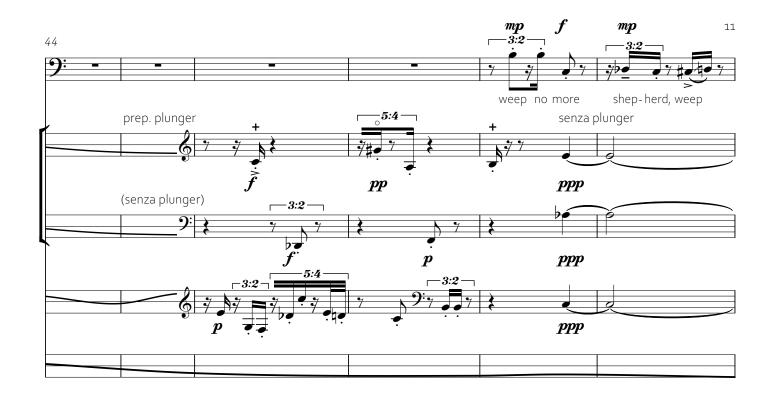


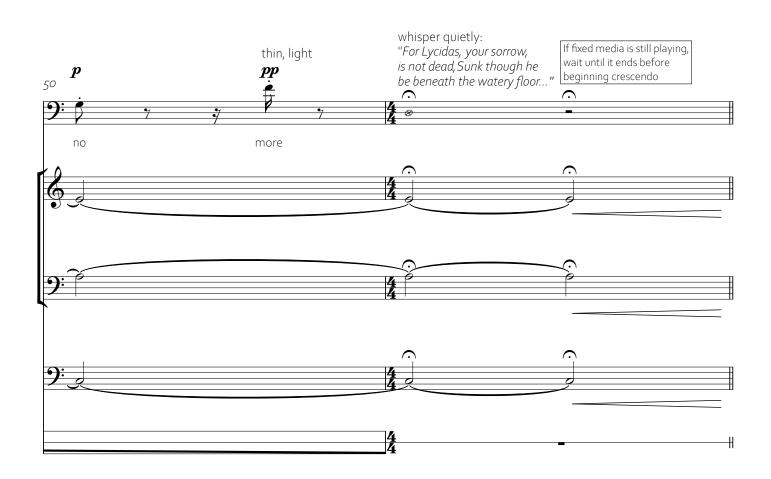












Baritone recites paragraph somewhat quickly, getting more and more frantic and manic throughout.

"|" are used to indicate breathes/pauses (a short, gasping breath).

The reading should generally grow in volume throughout, but the performer should sporadically vary their volume throughout the text.

Read as if fixated upon the text, as if the character had recited this text to themselves many times before.

Very Dramatic.

Begin immediately after cut-off of m. 51 Text reading should take ca. 26-34"

"It must be a movement then, an actuality of the | possible as possible.

Aristotle's phrase formed itself within the gabbled verses | and floated

out into the studious silence of the library of Saint Genevieve

where | he had read, sheltered from the sin of Paris, night by night.

By his elbow a delicate Siamese | conned a handbook of strategy.

Fed and feeding brains about me: | under glowlamps, impaled,

with faintly beating feelers: and in my mind's darkness | a sloth of the

underworld, reluctant, shy of brightness, shifting her | dragon scaly folds.

Thought is the thought of thought. Tranquil brightness.

The soul is in a manner all | that is:

the soul is the form of forms.

Tranquillity sudden, vast, candescent: | form of forms."

Trombone and Trumpet begin playing at m. 52 immediately at the conclusion of the text.











