to Thierry Miroglio

A Shadow That Falls

for unpitched percussion (amplified) and fixed media (live processing optional)

by

Tom Williams

Percussion instruments:
Minimum set up: 1 snare, 1 lower membrane, 1 metal
Maximum set up: 2 snare drums (one upside down), bass drum (or floor tom tom),
tam tam (or other metal)
In the performance the percussionist should use a range of beaters (including hands/fingers)
to cover a range of imaginative sounds.

Duration: c.9:40

Electronics/PA set up:
Stereo fixed media – percussion in centre – speakers to the side.
Audio Track 3: This is hidden from the audience. It is the ‘score’ (spoken words) and is only
for the percussionist to hear. Use an earpiece – and a headphone extension (like a click track).
Amplification of percussion (mics) is recommended. This is to explore the more hidden
(quieter) sounds and to merge with the fixed media: in live performance as an interactive
discourse with the sound projectionist. The use of live processing of percussion is an option,
but it must not dominate the performance. For rehearsals only, there is a stereo mix of both
the fixed media and the track 3 text. There is a Max patch for performance.

Lighting/performance:
No music stand! (all performance indications are through the hearing of).
When possible use lighting to create shadows, shapes and silhouettes of the player.
Dance may be integrated into the performance.

The text and inspiration:
The title of the piece and much of the text of Track 3 comes from the poem ‘Shadow’ by the
English contemporary poet Alice Oswald. Key words in text include: flicker, shadow, faint,
move, cold, shift, broken, fade, rings, blue earth, patter of rain, snipping, falling. Other
words heard include listen and there is a verbal countdown at significant points. The texts
deconstructed words and phrases can be interpreted by the player both onomatopoeically
and semantically: in their sound and in their meaning.
The percussionist ‘score’:
There is no visual score – the score is the audio of track 3. *A Shadow That Falls* takes the idea of shadow as a creative stimulus. The work is a creative interaction between everything that the percussionist hears – both the fixed media and the spoken text. The player should, in rehearsal and performance, experiment sonically interacting with everything as heard finding their place/their music: in the light, in the shadow. Give the performance a sense of revealing and unfolding: listen, be mindful, and focussed. The percussionist may start 10” to 20” (pp) before the fixed media.

The percussionist must:
- use a variety of beaters and be sonically inventive/imagination.
- at the end of the fixed media part (the *subito tacet* of 9’25”) *either subito* freeze in the moment of maximum energy and remain fixed for c.12”, OR *subito* a very quiet roll (anywhere on a drum) *al niente* for c.12”
- NOT (never) play rhythms/patterns that are familiar/everyday/regular.
- Always be sensitive to the sounds heard – interact, and consider who shadows who, when and how?
- Use the metal instrument (e.g. tam tam) more sparingly than drums – more focus on the sonic capability of the snare drum, particularly earlier in the performance
  - listen

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Alice Oswald poem, Shadow, begins:

*I’m going to flicker for a moment
and tell you the tale of a shadow
that falls at dusk*