

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/imaginative.
- 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*