

John Oliver

3 Trains

for cello and piano

commissioned by Ian Hampton

First performed by Ian Hampton, cello, and Leslie Janos, piano
at the Langley Community Music School
on November 19, 2000 during Canadian Music Week.

Note: a version of this work also exists for viola and piano

About the commissioning of *3 Trains*.

3 Trains evokes the experience of listening to trains from a distance, from across the valley, across the lake, over the field, rather than the noisy experience of standing near the engines and cars that squeak and grind. If you have ever sat quietly in a park, in your back yard, or on a porch, listening to distant trains, then you are ready to play and hear this piece.

About a month after Ian Hampton invited me to write a work for cello and piano, he called to let me know that he had been listening to trains a lot lately, usually in the wee hours, and that he'd like to fax a page of chords he had jotted down in the middle of the night. And so he did.

The image shows three staves of handwritten musical notation. The first staff, labeled (A), contains a complex rhythmic pattern with notes and rests, and is annotated with 'Rhythm' and 'x echo'. The second staff, labeled (TS), shows a simple chordal structure. The third staff, labeled (C), shows a chordal structure and is annotated with '3 trains'.

I have lived within earshot of trains at various points of my life, and especially during the seven years before writing this piece. So these train sounds were already familiar to me. However, I was particularly taken by the echo that Ian spoke about.

So a few weeks after I started writing the music, I set out to Ian's

neighbourhood to hear what he had been hearing. When I arrived at Belcarra Park near Ian's house, it was 6:00 on a chilly summer morning, clouds hugging the horizon to the east where the sun was rising. I could hear and identify most sounds in the dead quiet of that hour. After listening for twenty minutes to birds awaking and the lapping of water, I heard a low rumble, very distant at first, then louder, then, finally, the West Coast Express horn ("B" above), short toots, then longer ones. The echo across the water of Burrard Inlet came just over one second after each toot.

It is this very quiet listening experience that I want to capture in the first of these pieces, *Midnight Train*. I use the grand piano's middle pedal extensively in this and the third piece to create the echo effect. The second piece, *Train of Thought* is a melody I sang and wrote down as I played the piano accompaniment (train "C" above) over and over again. It is similar in intention to the 13th century troubadour *alba*, or 'dawn song.' The third piece returns to a representation of the train horns—train "A" above this time—as well as the locomotion sound in the circular phrase that the cello repeats over and over. The last section is a jazzy celebration of trains.

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2000

for cello and piano
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Midnight Train

$\text{♩} = 52 \pm$

sul tasto
sul IV

PERFORMERS PLEASE NOTE: Bars of rest must be at least as long as written, allowing the resonance of the piano to be contemplated by the audience.

ffff Raise RH high with a quick gesture implying a loud sound.
ppp Lower hand slowly during bar 2

depress silently; hold until end.
8va ba (lowest A on piano)
hold with either LH or Sostenuto Pedal to end of movement

free bowing
hit strings with open palm
8va ba l.v.

sul tasto
sul IV
ppp listen to beats
get rubber glockenspiel mallet

5 Play freely, but notice the journey up takes longer than the journey back down to G.

ppp ~ p gliss. gliss. gliss. l.v.

roll rubber mallet on strings randomly
pppp 8va ba l.v.

$\text{♩} = 52 \pm$

listen to resonance! sul pont sul pont

listen to resonance!
fff **mp** **p** **ppp**

pp **pp** **pp** **ppp** l.v. l.v.

→ Sos. Ped. →

♩ = 60

14 sul pont

pp

3 3 3 3

pp *pppp* *l.v.*

p *mp* *fff*

→ Sos. Ped. →

19 sul tasto <—> pont, free bowing

ppp ~ mp

gliss. gliss. gliss.

listen to beats

roll rubber mallet on strings randomly

pppp 8va ba

→ Sos. Ped. →

20

gliss. sempre

(Not a literal repeat: indicates area of improvisation.)
Ignore if not improvising.)

l.v.

→ Sos. Ped. →

Bars 19 and 20 may be used as the basis for improvising with the notated pitch material, freely interpolating it, or, alternatively, they may be played through, following the general durations implied by the proportional notation.

♩ = 60

23 sul pont

pp

ppp

pp

pppp

pp

pppp

l.v.

l.v.

Sos. Ped.

sul pont

norm.

27

f

p

pp

l.v.

l.v.

fff

mf

fff

p

Sos. Ped.

sul pont

norm.

32

ppp

f

ppp

pppp

ff

Sos. Ped.

Red.

35

hand off!

Sos. Ped.

cut 2 of resonance

leaves resonance of sos. ped. only

(Sos. Ped.)

Sos. Ped lifted here

2:15 - 3:00