THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

THAT DARK ELECTRIC:
CONCERTO FOR TROMBONE AND CHAMBER ENSEMBLE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

BY

JAMES PIERCE GRADONE

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
JUNE 2018
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSTRUMENTATION</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERFORMANCE NOTES</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABOUT THE CADENZA</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRANSPOSED SCORE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PART I</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PART II</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PART III</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PART IV: CADENZA</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract

*That Dark Electric* is one of a small but growing corpus of concerti for the trombone, many of which have been composed within the last century. The trombone’s relatively recent emergence as a solo instrument is due in large part to a generation of trombonists who have commissioned, performed and championed new works for the instrument that challenge preconceptions of its capabilities and limitations. The title originates from a passage of Cormac McCarthy’s *All The Pretty Horses*, a novel set in the American southwest. In it, two horsemen embark on a journey through the barren landscape in which the majority of the novel’s action occurs. As in many of McCarthy’s writings, the beauty of the scene is tinged by a looming danger lurking in darkness, an aesthetic paradox mirroring that of the concerto: a stunning display of virtuosity in which an uneasy tension at the possibility of failure is immanent.

*That Dark Electric* unleashes the microtonal capabilities of the trombone and the strange, even unsettling sounds produced by unconventional playing techniques to evoke the unpredictable soundscape of the untamed lands inhabited by so many of McCarthy’s narratives. This concerto is one large movement divided into four distinct impressions gleaned from the passage. The first two sections evoke the sense of embarking, of setting out on a journey - beginning at a slow, ambling pace and gradually growing in intensity, volume and tempo. The third section is a quiet but tense conversation between the trombone and strings. The final section is the cadenza, or an extended solo that traditionally signals the end of a concerto. In this cadenza, the soloist traverses their way through a series of possibilities set forth by the composer, from which the performer may choose their own path.
Instrumentation

1 Flute (Bass Flute, Piccolo)*
1 Oboe (Finger Cymbals, Paper)
1 Clarinet in B-flat (Bass Clarinet, E-flat Clarinet)**
1 Tenor Saxophone (Alto)
1 Horn in F

Solo Trombone

1 Percussionist
Marimba (4.3 octaves)
Xylophone
Orchestral Chimes
Crotales (2 octaves)
Medium Triangle
32” Timpano
Bass Drum
Brake Drum
Claves
6 Suspended Metal Objects of Varying Pitch
  (indefinite pitches)
    Drum Set
      3 Toms
      Snare
      Sizzle Ride Cymbal
      Suspended Cymbal
      Brake Drum
      Kick Drum (muffled)
      Small Triangle
      Hi-Hat

Piano

2 Violins
2 Violas
1 Violoncello
1 Contrabass (C-extension)

* Piccolo is tuned 1/4 tone flat
** E-flat Clarinet is tuned 1/4 tone flat
Performance Notes

3/4 tone flat
slightly flat, often used in this score to describe 7th partial (31¢ flat)

1/4 tone flat
slightly flat, often used in this score to describe 7th partial (31¢ flat)

1/4 tone sharp
slightly flat, often used in this score to describe 7th partial (31¢ flat)

3/4 tone sharp
slightly flat, often used in this score to describe 5th partial (14¢ flat)

Strings

c.l.                        col legno
s.t.                        sul tasto
s.p.                        sul ponticello
m.s.p.                    molto sul ponticello (nearly on the bridge)
vib.                        vibrato
m. vib.                    molto vibrato
1/4 tone vib.    wide vibrato encompassing neighboring 1/4 tones

highest note possible

circular bowing

Bartok pizzicato

air sounds, “rauschen”

jéte

Piano

+                        mute string while striking key

hold pedal until sounds fades

strike strings directly with bass drum mallet
**Winds/Brass**

- **flz.** flutter-tongue
- **t! k!** syllables to be spoken into mouthpiece
- **vib.** vibrato
- **m. vib.** molto vibrato

* ◆ ◇ air sounds, corresponding to note length

* 11 multiphonic, number corresponds to those provided in the following books:
  - Mahnkopf-Veale, *Technique of Oboe Playing*
  - Sparnaay, *The Bass Clarinet Book*
  - Weiss, *The Technique of Saxophone Playing*

* 1 2 3 multiple fingerings on a single pitch

* t.c. **t** tone-color trill (timbral trill)

**Trombone**

* ♪ unpitched tongue ram

* ↗ ↘ inhale, exhale

**Improvisatory Notation**

* alternate freely between given pitches

* pitches with an accent mark should be accented

* alternate freely within range of pitches

* smooth, linear alternation between pitches

* jagged, disjunct alternation between pitches
## Percussion
- Marimba (4.3 oct)
- Xylophone
- Tubular Bells
- 32” Timpani
- Bass Drum
- Brake Drum
- Claves
- Crotales (2 octave)
- Triangle
- Snare Drum

## Drum Set
- Snare Drum
- Hi-Hat
- Kick Drum (muffled)
- 3 Toms
- Sizzle Ride Cymbal
- Suspended Cymbal
- Brake Drum
- Triangle
- 6 Metal Objects*

## Required Implements
- 2 Brushes
- 2 Sticks
- 2 Bows
- Soft/Hard Mallets
- Super Ball Mallet
- Timpani mallet
- Bass drum mallet
- 2 Brass beater
- 4 Tubular Bell Mallets

---

### Percussion Diagram

```
\[\text{Bass Drum} \quad \text{Lowest} \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{Highest}\]
```

### Drum Set Diagram

```
\[\text{hi-hat} \quad \text{ride} \quad \text{sus. cymbal} \quad \text{snare} \quad \text{brake drum}\]
\[\text{hi-hat} \quad \text{triangle} \quad \text{3 toms} \quad \text{kick}\]
```
About the Cadenza

The cadenza is not traditionally notated, but is instead a graphic score providing a range of possibilities from which the performer may choose. Though the cadenza should be prepared in advanced, a certain degree of improvisatory leeway during the performance is expected and encouraged. The performer may choose which material to play and develop, how to shape the overall cadenza, and what kinds of playing techniques may be used. Regardless of the path chosen, the cadenza must end with the soloist breathing through the instrument and cuing the conductor to move on. The cadenza should last no longer than 2 minutes in total.

Transposed Score

Duration: ca. 22 minutes
THAT DARK ELECTRIC:
CONCERTO FOR TROMBONE AND CHAMBER ENSEMBLE

JAMES PIERCE GRADONE

Shrouded, ambling \( \frac{d}{N} = 56 \)

Bass Flute

Oboe

Bass Clarinet

Tenor Sax

Horn in F

Percussion
1 Player

Drum Set

Piano

Solo Trombone

Violin I

Violin II

Viola I

Viola II

Cello

Contrabass
Rhythms indicate bow changes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

mostly air, little pitch

\[ \text{non vib.} \]

\[ \text{ord.} \]

\[ \text{ord.} \]

\[ \text{ord.} \]
Fl. 

Ob. 

Bs. Cl. 

T. Sx. 

Hn. 

Perc. 

Pno. 

S. Tbn. 

Vln. I 

Vln. II 

Vla. I 

Vla. II 

Vc. 

Cb.
Delicate and playful

Picc. (1/4)

Ob.

B.Cl.

T. Sn.

Hn.

Mba.

Perc.

Pno.

S. Tbn.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla. I

Vla. II

Vc. 

Cb. 

Release Sos. Pedal
poco rit.  

a tempo
Mechanical, desolate  \( \frac{j}{4} = 112 \)

Picc. (1/4)

Bassoon

Bass clarinet

Alto saxophone

Horn

Bass drum

Percussion

Piano

Tuba

Violin I

Violin II

Viola I

Viola II

Cello
Senza Tempo
10 seconds
Sustained, static $d = 66$

* individual strings should arrive on their final pitch independently
** hold fermata until all strings have reached either C4 or D4

<Music notation and instructions>
poco accel.  \( \frac{A}{A} \)  
Slightly faster \( \frac{f}{f} \) = 72
6 METAL OBJECTS
freely improvise rhythms and pitches
mimic the sound of wind chimes on a calm day
Ominous, creeping \( \frac{q}{4} = 74 \)
just play as quickly as possible
rhythm does not need to be exact

accel.
q = 52

wait to change to Piccolo until after cadenza

play free and irregular accents in this measure
CADENZA

Nos. 1 and 4: freely repel or alter order of notes within learned collections

Nos. 2 and 3: improvise within given scales

Nos. 5 freely order modulation or play in written order

Dynamic Shapes

Choose one of:

No. 6:

Consistent Sample

Diagonal/Complex

Consistent Sample

Lithofacies Reversals

3C

Choose Pitch Path (A, B)

Choose Articulation Path (A, B)

End with breathing
Cool conductor

30° - 45°

15° - 30°

10° - 15°

5° - 10°