

James Gardner

Displacement Activities

for speaking pianist and electronics

(2013–14)

Displacement Activities – Performance/Set-up notes

Pedalling

Except where specifically notated, precise pedalling is left to the performer, but it should be employed sparingly and in accordance with the notated articulations and rests. In general, pitches are to be sustained with the fingers rather than with the pedal.

Grace notes

Unless otherwise specified, all grace notes are played legato and as fast as possible and before the main note.

Commas indicate very brief pauses that do not interrupt the musical flow, and should be audibly distinguished from the **Pause** markings.

Accompaniment Figure 1 (pp.22–23, mm.159–181) It is hoped that enough musical material has been provided to play throughout the speaking of Text 2 (see below). As soon as the performer has finished speaking Text 2, they should stop playing at whatever point has been reached, turn on the radio and proceed to Text 3. The barring in this section serves only as a visual aid for the performer – no accents or stresses are implied apart from those set out in the opening measures.

If it is found that insufficient musical material has been provided to cover Text 2, the performer may extrapolate the existing material by continuing the repetitions of the 11-quaver (eighth-note) right hand pattern and the 21-semiquaver (sixteenth-note) left hand pattern (as indicated in mm. 159–60) as necessary.

Piano adornment (optional)

In keeping with the site-specific nature of the piece, the performer is encouraged to adorn the piano and the performance space with characteristic locally-produced artifacts, or artifacts that are commonly associated with the area around the performing space. Ideally these artifacts should include both ‘authentic’ locally-manufactured items as well as ‘inauthentic’ imported ‘tourist’ material and souvenirs – the kitschier the better.

Duration: c.16-17 minutes

Displacement Activities was commissioned by Dzovig Markarian with funds provided by Creative New Zealand. It was first performed by her at the Alfred Newman Recital Hall, the University of Southern California, Los Angeles on May 11 2014

Displacement Activities – Technical Notes

In an ideal performance, the pianist should control the playback of samples and live processing themselves, perhaps using a footswitch and/or small auxiliary keyboard to trigger samples and open/mute/ the piano treatments. This is the composer's preferred option. If this is not practicable for any given performance, a second person may be given the task of dealing with the sample playback and live processing. This assistant should not be easily visible by the audience, whose focus should remain on the pianist.

The precise hardware and software used is left up to the performer(s), but at the time of writing (2014) a small audio interface and a laptop computer may be easily used to process incoming signals from the piano microphone (see below) and to playback the pre-recorded samples (see below).

Loudspeakers

In either event the loudspeakers used for playback must be placed in, or as near as possible, to the piano and pianist. Under no circumstances are 'flying' loudspeakers, or loudspeakers placed widely apart at the side of a stage, to be used. The speakers for playback and processing do not need to be large or of particularly high quality – the use of small "computer" speakers is encouraged, though they should be capable of balancing the live sound of the piano. Careful placement of the speakers may be required to avoid feedback when live processing of the piano sound is called for.

Microphone(s)

At least one microphone is required to pick up the sound of the piano for the real-time processing.

Depending on the acoustics of the performance space, a microphone may also be required for the pianist's voice when speaking the verbal texts. The pianist's amplified voice should also emerge from the same speakers as the piano processing and sample playback. The pianist's voice should never predominate, or be "in your face" but should be just loud enough to be intelligible most – but not necessarily all – of the time.

Real-time processing/treatments

Treatment 1: a delay of about 70ms with a downward frequency shift of about 20Hz and c.65% regeneration/feedback.

Treatment 2: a delay of around 750ms with a downward pitch shift of one semitone and medium regeneration/feedback.

No specific hardware or software implementations of these treatments is suggested, but Treatment 1 should have the effect of a smooth downward glissando, Treatment 2 should result in a reasonably audible 'transposed canon'.

Treatment 1 should be applied to the last two measures of Toccaria I (mm.67 and 68) and its output should be muted immediately before the first gesture of Toccaria II (m.70).

Treatment 2 should capture the piano of Accompaniment figure IIb (mm. 106–109) and the delay should be muted with the first gesture of Toccaria V (m.110)

Radio

The 'radio' used may be a conventional radio receiver (e.g. a portable AM radio) or a receiver of live streaming audio and should have its own loudspeaker. In any event, the station chosen should be a local station broadcasting exclusively or predominantly speech in a local language. It must be a live source and absolutely not recorded by the performer(s) before the performance. The station should ideally be chosen during the rehearsal/soundcheck on the day of performance so the pianist spends as little time as possible 'tuning in', though a brief tuning period is acceptable.

Field Recordings/Samples

Ideally, the six 'performer-supplied' field recordings listed below should be recorded by the performer within an hour's walk of the performance venue during the 24 hours preceding the performance. It is understood that this may not always be practical, in which case a solution that adheres as closely as possible to the spirit of this instruction should be chosen. On no account is the performer to use any of their field recordings in more than one performance of this piece. No restriction is placed on the nature of these field recordings – a preference for 'natural' sounds is not implied – but the human voice should not be their principal feature. Human voices may, however, appear in the field recordings at a low level relative to other sounds in the recording. None of the field recordings are to be 'staged' in any way by the performer. The field recordings will need to be edited to the lengths listed below.

The 'composer-supplied' audio files will be supplied by the composer or will be available from Composers Edition <http://composersedition.com> as 16-bit 44.1 kHz WAVE files. Other formats may be supplied on request.

- Sample 1 Composer-supplied file 1
- Sample 2 Composer-supplied file 2
- Sample 3 **Performer-supplied field recording 1.** Duration: c.30" (should stop by m.44)
- Sample 4 Composer-supplied file 3
- Sample 5 **Performer-supplied field recording 2.** Duration: c.25-30"
- Sample 6 **Performer-supplied field recording 3.** Duration: c.15-20"
- Sample 7 **Performer-supplied field recording 4.** Duration: c.30-35" (should stop during first 3 measures of Accompaniment figure IIa.)
- Sample 8 **Performer-supplied field recording 5.** Duration: 15-20" (should stop by about m.140 in Variations Ia.)
- Sample 9 Composer-supplied file 4
- Sample 10 Composite/mix of **performer-supplied field recording 6** and composer-supplied file 5 Duration: 25"
- Sample 11 Composer-supplied file 6

Performer-supplied field recordings should ideally have a built-in fade-in about 2-5" and a fade-out of 3-5"

These should all be configured to work as 'one shot' samples, i.e. once triggered they will play for their full duration. They should be triggered with as little disruption to the flow of the piano-playing as possible.

Displacement Activities – Spoken Texts for Performer

The four texts to be read aloud by the performer must be read in at least two languages.

The allocation of, and translation of, any given line of text to a particular language is left to the performer. The languages should be:

- i) Whatever the performer considers to be their own native/mother tongue(s)
- ii) At least one of the official – or most commonly spoken – languages of the place of the performance. Sign language may be used for Text 3 if desired.

The texts below should be considered as a templates only – the performer should feel free to embellish the text with idioms and turns of phrase peculiar to languages other than English, as long as the essential subject matter and idea of the English text is retained. It is suggested that the pianist marks up the score in pencil with their own realisation of the text at the appropriate places.

On no account is the delivery of the spoken text to be “hammed up” or exaggerated.

TEXT 1

During Accompaniment figure IIa, and starting inaudibly, the pianist should hum (and sustain) any of the pitches in the chords being played. The audience should only gradually become aware of the humming, and the humming should never be louder than the piano chords. Ideally, the audience should be not be sure whether the pianist knows they are humming or not.

At some point in Accompaniment figure IIb, the pianist starts to read the text, as if emerging from the humming.

(speaking as if to one’s self, unaware of the audience, with no dramatic projection, and while looking at the music)

At last, some time to think; some space to breathe.

Where am I up to?

What am I up to?

What am I doing here?

What am I doing here?

Where am I?

TEXT 2

*(speaking as if to one's self, but now slightly aware of the audience.
Still no dramatic projection, and while looking at the music while playing)*

Now, where was I?
Where are we up to?

Must concentrate on getting these chords right.
They're a bit awkward under the hands, and they're marked *pianississimo*.
He'll be lucky.

Don't get distracted by the reflections of your hands in the piano.

I wonder if they'd notice if I faked some of this. Would the composer notice?

The outside world. Remember that?
There's a whole world out there, but what happens in the frame of this room is deemed to be art.

Sometimes, Western Art Music seems totally irrelevant.
But then, one of the beauties of art is its uselessness.

So here am I, [name] uselessly playing this [piano manufacturer name and model – with optional serial number] made in [place of manufacture – with optional date] in [name of performance venue] on the [date of performance]

It's about [number] [miles or kilometers] from [placename] where I was born, and [number] [miles or kilometers] from [placename], where I currently live.

I am a displaced person.

I wonder what's happening back home?
I wonder what's happening here. What is going on here?

(break off playing and turn on radio, tuned to a local-language speech station)

TEXT 3

[This is to be spoken between Accompaniment figures I and Variations Ib (mm. 181 and 182.)]

After turning on the radio, turn to face audience and survey audience while speaking in a natural voice (or signing), responding to the radio.

Do you understand what they're saying? Do you understand what I'm saying?

[What's/What are] [he/she/they] **on about? Where are they coming from?**

There they are, talking into the void. Just like me. *(pause)*

OK. Back to the music. (use scare quote hand gesture) The “music itself”. And back to work for me. I'm an alienated wage-labourer, after all.

Turn off radio. Turn back to piano and play Variations Ib

TEXT 4

During Accompaniment figure IId...

(Not to audience, but as if privately reading aloud small print from the score while peering at it for the first time. Even if read by a native English speaker, this should be read haltingly, as if translating uneasily from a foreign language)

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Displacement Activities

for Dzovig Markarian

James Gardner 2013-14

Fantasia Ia

♩ = c.63-66

Musical score for Fantasia Ia, measures 1-4. The score is in 2/4 time and features a complex rhythmic structure with frequent changes in meter: 2/4, 3/4, 3/4, 3/8, 4/4, 4/4, 4/4, 4/4. The right hand contains intricate passages with triplets and quintuplets, while the left hand provides a more rhythmic accompaniment. Dynamics range from *mf* to *pp*. A *poco rit.* marking is present at the end of the section. A key signature change to E major is indicated at the top right.

Musical score for Fantasia Ia, measures 5-8. The score continues in 4/4 time. It features similar complex rhythmic patterns and dynamic markings (*mf*, *p*, *mp*, *pp*). A *poco rit.* marking is present at the end of the section.

Fantasia Ib

a tempo

strict time; non rubato

Musical score for Fantasia Ib, measures 8-11. The score is in 4/4 time and features complex rhythmic patterns with sextuplets and quintuplets. Dynamics range from *mp* to *mf* to *pf*. A *leggiero* marking is present at the end of the section.

10

p *pp* *mp* *p*

Ped.

pressing ahead

♩ = c.69-72 *secco*

13

f *mp* *pp* *p*

secco *legato, ma non ped.* *Ped.*

Fantasia Ic

♩ = c.60-63

16

mp *p* *f* *mf* *f* *mf* *p*

ped III if poss *Ped.*

19

4:3 3 4:3

f *ff*

rapidly calming down,
but non rall.

mf *mp*

f *mp* *p*

21

serene

Fantasia Id

p *pp*

pp *mf* *p* *f*

8va

23

(loco)

5:3 3 3

mf *f*

mp *f* *fff*

p *mf* *ff* *fff*

(E) snap!

25

pause just long enough to register Sample 3

mf TRIGGER SAMPLE 1

mf TRIGGER SAMPLE 2

p TRIGGER SAMPLE 3

(hold with fingers)

p *mp* *pp*

Fantasia Ie

28 $\bullet = c.56-60$

mf *mp* *p* *mp* *f* *mf* *p* *mf*

30 $\bullet = c.70-75$

mf *f* *mf* *ff*

sempre legato poss.

p *mf* *f* *ff*

8va

8vb

4

32 *8va* loco

f *mf* *ff* *f* *mf* *mp* *mf* *f* *mf* *ff*

35 *8va* loco

ff *mf* *ff* *mf* *p* *p* *mp* *p* *mf* *f* *ff* *f*

38

8va-----
loco
mf mp ff p mp mf fff

3 3 3 3 3 3 3

(p)

3 3

ff

3

ff

Detailed description: This system contains measures 38, 39, and 40. The right hand starts with a triplet of eighth notes marked *ff* and *8va*. Measure 39 features a *loco* passage with dynamics *mf*, *mp*, and *ff*. Measure 40 continues the *loco* passage with dynamics *p*, *mp*, *mf*, and *fff*. The left hand consists of triplet eighth notes, with a *p* dynamic in measure 39. Measure 40 has a triplet marked *ff*.

41

8va-----
loco liquid
ff f p f ff f mf mp f fff

3 3 3 3 3 3 3

3 3 3

p

3

ff

3

p

ff

Detailed description: This system contains measures 41, 42, and 43. The right hand begins with a triplet marked *ff* and *8va*. Measure 42 has dynamics *f* and *p*. Measure 43 features a *loco* passage with dynamics *f*, *ff*, *f*, *mf*, and *mp*. A *liquid* marking is placed over a slur in measure 43. The left hand has triplet eighth notes, with a *p* dynamic in measure 43. Measure 43 also has a triplet marked *ff*.

poco rall. ----- a tempo

TRIGGER
SAMPLE 4

8^{va}-----11^{loco}

Musical score for measures 44-46. Measure 44 is in 4/4 time with dynamics *pp* and *f*. Measure 45 is in 3/8 time with dynamics *mp* and *p*. Measure 46 is in 3/4 time with dynamics *ppp*, *p*, and *mp*. The score includes triplets and various articulations.

Musical score for measures 47-49. Measure 47 is in 4/4 time with a tempo marking $\bullet = c.56-60$ and dynamics *p*. Measure 48 is in 4/4 time with dynamics *pp* and *pp*. Measure 49 is in 4/4 time with dynamics *pp* and *(pp)*. The score includes triplets and a *ped.* (pedal) marking. The instruction "(The A should slightly predominate)" is placed above measure 48. The piece concludes with the marking *attacca*.

Toccata I

51 $\bullet = c.72$

p *mp* *mf* *mp*

l.h. strict time

53

p *mf* *mp* *p*

56

mp *pp* *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

marginally slower

Musical score for measures 60-64. The score is in 3/4 time with a tempo marking of $\bullet = c.68$. The key signature changes from one flat to two flats between measures 61 and 62. The piece is marked "marginally slower".

Measures 60-61: Treble clef contains a triplet of eighth notes and a quintuplet of eighth notes. Bass clef contains a triplet of eighth notes. Dynamics: *mf* (treble), *p* (bass).

Measures 62-63: Treble clef contains a quintuplet of eighth notes and a triplet of eighth notes. Bass clef contains a triplet of eighth notes. Dynamics: *f* (treble), *mp* (bass).

Measures 64-65: Treble clef contains a long melodic line with a slur. Bass clef contains a long melodic line with a slur. Dynamics: *mp* (treble), *p* (bass).

Accordions: (D \flat) (E \flat) in measure 61, (E \flat) in measure 62.

non rall.

Musical score for measures 65-69. The score is in 3/4 time with a tempo marking of "non rall.". The key signature changes from two flats to one flat between measures 66 and 67. The piece is marked "non rall.". There are two boxed annotations: "START TREATMENT 1" and "TRIGGER SAMPLE 5".

Measures 65-66: Treble clef contains a triplet of eighth notes and a quintuplet of eighth notes. Bass clef contains a triplet of eighth notes. Dynamics: *p* (treble), *mp* (bass).

Measures 67-68: Treble clef contains a quintuplet of eighth notes and a triplet of eighth notes. Bass clef contains a triplet of eighth notes. Dynamics: *p* (treble), *mp* (bass).

Measures 69-70: Treble clef contains a long melodic line with a slur. Bass clef contains a long melodic line with a slur. Dynamics: *p* (treble), *pp* (bass).

Accordions: (D \sharp) in measure 66.

Annotations: "START TREATMENT 1" in measure 67, "TRIGGER SAMPLE 5" in measure 69.

Toccaria II

♩ = c.144-152

69

Allow field recording at least enough time to establish its character

ff (non ped.)

MUTE/STOP TREATMENT 1

mf *f* *mf* *f* *ff*

p *f* *mp* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f*

73

mf *f* *mf* *f*

mp *p* *f* *p* *f* *mf* *f* *p* *f* *mf*

76

STOP SAMPLE 5 ON DOWNBEAT

f *p* *mf* *f* *mp* *f* *ff*

Toccata III

calm ♩ = c.68

80 liquid

TRIGGER SAMPLE 6

slightly faster

♩ = c.72-76

83

poco accel. -----

slower ♩ = c.68

(l.h.)

86

Toccata IV

88 *poco rall.*

STOP SAMPLE 6
HERE IF NECESSARY

mf *p* *fff* (play as one 5-note burst of gunfire)

91 *a tempo*

♩ = c.68

ff *mf* *insouciant* *mp* *p* *pp*

TRIGGER SAMPLE 7

94 *poised*

♩ = c.48 (l.h.)

pp *p* *f* *f*

pp *f*

97

mf *f* *mf* *f*

mf *f* *mp* *f*

8va loco *f*

100

ff

STOP SAMPLE 7

non rall.

102

4:5 *ff*

Accompaniment Figures II

IIa pedal very sparingly relaxed

103 ♩ = c. 40

START HUMMING
(see notes)

x2 or 3

(like a stammer)

IIb obsessive/compulsive non rubato

106 **TREATMENT 2 ON** **SPEAK TEXT I**

repeat as many times as necessary to say all of the verbal text

pp

6:5 7:5 7:5 6:5 7:5 6:5

ped. →
(last time only)