beauty.death

Master’s Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Brandeis University
Department of Music
Yu-Hui Chang, Advisor

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Fine Arts
in
Music Composition and Theory

by
Jeremy Rapaport-Stein

May 2016
ABSTRACT

beauty.death

A thesis presented to the Department of Music

Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Brandeis University
Waltham, Massachusetts

By Jeremy Rapaport-Stein

beauty.death is a song cycle for soprano, clarinet, viola, cello, and percussion. It engages with the work of early-20th century writer Don Marquis, using several poems from the perspective of his most famous character, Archy the cockroach, to construct a narrative commentary on art, mortality, and aesthetics.
Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prefatory Materials</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Movement I</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement II</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement III</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement IV</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement V</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Jeremy Rapaport-Stein
adapted from the poetry of Archy the Cockroach
(as collected by Don Marquis)

soprano
clarinet
viola
cello
percussion

2016
duration: c. 22 minutes
beauty.death

I. Prologue
II. Glorious Footfulness | solo soprano
III. Der SpideyKeurig
IV. Commentary 2b (or not) | clarinet and soprano
V. The Moth

Instruments

soprano
clarinet in B♭/bass clarinet in B♭
viola
cello
percussion:
vibraphone (bow needed)
crotale
glockenspiel
marimba (5 octave)
slide whistle
suspended cymbal
woodblock
bass drum
brake drum, anvil, or large cowbell (in that order of preference)

Program notes

beauty.death is the first version of an in-progress, evening-length, one-woman opera based upon the writings of Archy the Cockroach (as collected and recorded by his friend, boss, and creative partner, author Don Marquis).

“Marquis’s last years were fraught with loss and illness. His first wife, their daughter and son, his second wife — each pre-deceased him. He had twice been a devoted husband and was a famously doting father. Bereft, Marquis began suffering strokes... He spent the last year and a half cared for by his two sisters, whom he had previously supported their entire lives... During his long inarticulate decline, his sisters reported that sometimes they found him laughing quietly to himself — but no longer able to explain the joke.”
## Performance Notes

### General

-最高/最低可能的音
-方形音符表示音符的不确定或近似的音高
-逐渐过渡到一种技术或演奏方式转变到另一种方式
-滑音带颤音
-“弯”滑音—沿指示线的方向滑音
-短延音符/长延音符

偶尔的音符贯穿全曲，但一般在密度较高的乐句中重复以保持清晰。

### Soprano

- 正常说话—括号中的音符表示说话或讲话的时间。
- X音符表示没有特定的节奏，精确的说话或讲话声音。
- “fly voice” (movement III) — 高音的，吱吱声的，卡通的，唱歌的，人物角色的 vocals

音符位置仅显示近似音高范围，音高不具体。

/æ/

- 第一乐章的文本全部为IPA记谱，因此符号在其他乐章中未特别标记，IPA指示符号在括号中与反斜杠。

第四乐章是滑稽的，未唱（除了最后一个音符），指示仅适用于那一个乐章。

### Strings

- s.t. / s.p. sul tasto/sul ponticello
- m.s.t. / m.s.p. molto sul tasto（尽可能高）/molto sul ponticello（几乎在桥上）
- overpressure

3
Percussion

Instruments used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement I</th>
<th>Movement III</th>
<th>Movement V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vibraphone</td>
<td>vibraphone</td>
<td>vibraphone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crotale(s)</td>
<td>marimba</td>
<td>glockenspiel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bass drum (last note)</td>
<td>slide whistle</td>
<td>crotale(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>suspended cymbal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>woodblock</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bass drum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>brake drum, anvil, or large cowbell</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following crotale(s) are used (sounding 15va):\

\[
\text{\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{crotale.png}}
\]

Visuals

In the first movement, two paragraphs of text should be projected behind the musicians at the moments marked 1 and 2 in circles in the score.

1.

We came into our room earlier than usual in the morning, and discovered a gigantic cockroach jumping about on the keys. He did not see us, and we watched him. He would climb painfully upon the framework of the machine and cast himself with all his force upon a key, head downward, and his weight and the impact of the blow were just sufficient to operate the machine, one slow letter after another. He could not work the capital letters, and he had a great deal of difficulty operating the mechanism that shifts the pages so that a fresh line may be started. We never saw a cockroach work so hard or perspire so freely in all our lives before. After an hour of this frightfully difficult literary labor he fell to the floor exhausted, and we saw him creep feebly into a nest of the poems which are always there in profusion.

2.

Congratulating ourself that we had left a sheet of paper in the machine the night before so that all this work had not been in vain, we made an examination, and this is what we found:
Texts

As Archy has stated in several poems, his lack of punctuation stems not from ignorance, but from the physical limitations of his insect state. The texts in this piece are set using (and, indeed, inspired by) his unique punctuation and line breaks.

The poems below were published the New York Evening Sun between 1916 and 1922 and are in the public domain.

I. Prologue

expression is the need of my soul

II. Glorious Footfulness

in many places here and
there
i think that fate
is quite unfair
you centipede upon
the floor
can boast of
tootsies by the score
consider my
distressing fix
my feet are limited
to six
did i a hundred
feet possess
would all that glorious
footfulness
enable me
to stagger less
when i am
overcome by heat
or if i had a hundred feet
would i
careering oer the floor
stagger
proporionately more
well i suppose
the mind serene
will not tell
destiny its mean
the truly
philosophic mind
will use
such feet as it can find
and follow calmly
fast or slow
the feet it has
where e'er they go

III. Der SpideyKeurig (after "The Futility of Literature")

i heard a spider
and a fly arguing
wait said the fly
do not eat me
i serve a greater purpose in the world

you will have to
show me said the spider
i scurry around
 guts and sewers
 and garbage cans
 said the fly and gather
 up the germs of
 typhoid influenza
 and pneumonia on my feet
 and wings
 then i carry the germs
 into the households of men
 and give them diseases
 all the people who
 have lived the right
 sort of life recover
 from the diseases
 and the old soaks who
 have weakened their systems
 with liquor and iniquity
 succumb it is my mission
 to help rid the world
 of these wicked persons
 i am a vessel of righteousness
 scattering seeds of justice
 and serving the noblest uses

it is true said the spider
 that you are more
 useful in a plodding
 material sort of way
 than i am but i do not
 serve the utilitarian deities
 i serve the gods of beauty
 look at the gossamer webs
 i weave they float in the sun
 like filaments of song
 if you get what i mean
 i do not work at anything
 i play all the time
 i am busy with the stuff
 of enchantment and the materials
 of fairyland my works
 transcend utility
 i am the artist
 a creator and a demi god
 it is ridiculous to suppose
 that i should be denied
 the food i need in order
 to continue to create
 beauty i tell you
 plainly mister fly it is all
 damned nonsense for that food
 to rear up on its hind legs
 and say it should not be eaten

you have convinced me
 said the fly say no more
 and shutting all his eyes
 he prepared himself for dinner
 and yet he said i could
 have made out a case
 for myself too if i had
 had a better line of talk

of course you could said the spider
 clutching a sirloin from him
 but the end would have been
 just the same if neither of
 us had spoken at all

boss i am afraid that what
 the spider said is true
 and it gives me to think
 furiously upon the futility
 of literature

IV. Commentary 2b (or not)

no text

V. Talking to a Moth

i was talking to a moth
 the other evening
 he was trying to break into
 an electric lightbulb
 and fry himself on the wires

why do you fellows
 pull this stunt i asked him
 because it is the conventional
 thing for moths or why
 if that had been an uncovered
 candle instead of an electric
 light bulb you would
 now be a small unsightly cinder
 have you no sense

plenty of it he answered
 but at times we get tired
 of using it
 we get bored with the routine
 and crave beauty
 and excitement
 fire is beautiful
 and we know that if we get
 too close it will kill us
 but what does that matter
 it is better to be happy
 for a moment
 and be burned up with beauty
 that to live a long time
 and be bored all the while
 so we wad all our life up
 into one little roll
 and then we shoot the roll
 that is what life is for
 it is better to be a part of beauty
 for one instant and then cease to
 exist than to exist forever
 and never be a part of beauty
 our attitude towards life
 is come easy go easy
 we are like human beings
 used to be before they became
 too civilized to enjoy themselves

and before i could argue him
 out of his philosophy
 he went and immolated himself
 on a patent cigar lighter
 i do not agree with him
 myself i would rather have
 half the happiness and twice
 the longevity

but at the same time i wish
 there was something i wanted
 as badly as he wanted to fry himself
floating, free
(c. 5-7 seconds per bar at players’ discretion)
tempo giusto
(but still with freedom and breath)

(c. \( \frac{3}{4} = 50-56 \))

Cl.

Perc.

Vla.

Vc.

Sop.

Cl.

Vib.

Vla.

Vc.
repeat fast as possible, fade to a whisper
intense, possessed murmuring
find your voice
gradually add in the vowels with each repetition

molto accel.  

only speak the consonants

Sop. expression is the need of my soul

expression is the need of my soul

expression is the need of my soul

(expression is the need of my soul)

Sop. expression is the need of my soul

expression is the need of my soul

expression is the need of my soul

(expression is the need of my soul)

Sop.  

(e. j = 180)

expression is the need of my soul

expression is the need of my soul

finally fully understandable

mp (casual, coy, knowing)

scream (high as possible)

B. Cl. 

scream (high as possible)

Perc. Bass drum

scream (high as possible)

Vla.

scream (high as possible)

Vc.
II. Glorious Footfulness

Moderate
(c. \( \frac{\text{a}}{\text{82}} \))

Sop.

\begin{music}
\begin{align*}
\text{in many places here and there I think that fate is quite un-}
\end{align*}
\end{music}

Fair yon centipede upon the floor can boast of tootsies by the

Faster (c. \( \frac{\text{a}}{\text{96}} \))
(c. \( \frac{\text{a}}{\text{3}} \))

Sop.

\begin{music}
\begin{align*}
\text{score consider my distressing fix my}
\end{align*}
\end{music}

A little slower

Sop.

\begin{music}
\begin{align*}
\text{feet are limited to six did I a hundred feet possess would}
\end{align*}
\end{music}

Can be more of a squeak than a fully sung note;
pitch is more important that diction here

A little slower accel.

Sop.

\begin{music}
\begin{align*}
\text{all that glorious footfulness enable me to stagger less when}
\end{align*}
\end{music}

I am overcome by heat or if I had a hundred feet would I careering o'er the floor
Sop.

**fast**

(stagger proportionately more well i suppose the)

**tempo II**

(c. \(\text{c.} = 96\))

mp

Sop.

**tempo I**

(c. \(\text{c.} = 72\))

mf

p

mp

Sop.

true philosophic mind will not tell destiny its mean the

Sop.

and follow calmly fast or slow the

Sop.

poco rit. . . . a little slower

Sop.

feet it has where eer

Sop.

lean in to the silence, make it uncomfortable

Sop.

they go

attacca
III. Der SpideyKeurig

gleefully horrible
(c. $\frac{2}{4} = 144$

Soprano

Bass Clarinet in B♭

Marimba

Viola

Violoncello

"casually, as if chatting with a friend"

Sop.

B. Cl.

To Cl.

Mar.

Vla.

Vc.

i heard a spider and a fly arguing
"fly voice": high, squeaky, frantic, cartoonish, sing-song

babble crazily and as fast as possible in fly voice

wait said the fly do not eat me

Clarinet in B♭

mimic soprano
wild, fast as possible chirpings

pizz. arco

Vla.

pizz. arco

Vc.

Sop.

i serve a greater purpose in the world

Cl.

Perc.

Vla.

Vc.
meno mosso

(c. $= 72$)

"become" the spider

ingressive speech

you will have to show

Marimba

Sop.

Cl.

Perc.

Vla.

Vc.

a tempo

(c. $= 144$)

poco rit.

$^{(3+3+2)}$ speech ord.

Sop.

Cl.

Mar.

Vla.

Vc.

me said the spider
poco meno mosso
(c. \( \text{\textbullet} 124 \))

Sop.

i scurry around gutters and sewers and garbage cans said the fly and

Cl.

Susp. Cymbal

Perc.

arco (ord.)

Woodblock

Vla.

Vc.

like a cheerleader

gather up the germs of typhoid influenza

21

ff mimic the soprano

ff mimic the voice
as if pneumonia is
a less exciting afterthought

and pneumonia on my feet and wings then i

carry the germs into the households of men and give them di -
Sop. (2+3+3)

cover from the diseases and the old soaks who have weakened their system with

B. Cl.

P

Perc.

ed.

Vla.

mp

Ve.

p

==

Sop.

liquor and iniquity succumb

B. Cl.

p

Perc.

To Marimba

Vla.

mf

Ve.

p
it is my mission to help rid the world of these wicked persons i am a vessel of righteousness
scattering seeds of justice and serving the noblest uses

to Vibraphone

extremely wide, fast, intense vibrato bow freely to maintain volume and intensity

(highest sul A)

slow motion (c. \( \frac{3}{4} \) = 48)
colla parte soprano

become the spider
cover mouth with both hands,
smashing your lips slightly to impede your speech
(but not so much that you're unintelligible)
mouth covered (as described)

it is true

saw the spider

highest motor, soft mallets

molto

molto
that you are more useful in a plodding material sort
of way than i am

but i do not serve the utilitarian deities

sing and play, both as high as possible
(if possible, si a pitch that is close but not the
same as the played pitch to create interference)

gradually uncover mouth

i serve the gods of beauty

try to physicalize someone stepping outside on the first nice day of spring
i do not work at anything

i play all the time

inflect everything sharp (between an eighth and a quarter tone)
sul A (sempre)
non legato
2 (sempre)

i am busy with the stuff of enchantment
and the materials of fairyland my works
transcend utility
i am the artist
a creator and a demi god
gradually re-cover mouth (and re-squish face)

it is ridiculous to suppose that i should be denied the food i need in order to create

mouth covered
(and mouth squished)

ff very angry, shouting

beau - ty

i tell you plainly mister fly it is all damned nonsense for that food
to rear up on its hind legs and say that it should not be
tempo primo (c. \( \frac{3}{4} \) = 144)

Sop.

Cl.

Perc.

Vibraphone

(mouth uncovered)

say no more and shut-ting all his eyes he pre-pared him-self for di-ner and yet

\[ \sum \]

\[ \sum \]

\[ \sum \]

\[ \sum \]

\[ \sum \]
he said I could have made a case for myself too if I had had a better line of talk.

half the tempo (c. \( \frac{3}{8} \))

rubato - colla parte soprano

Sop.  
inpressive speech

Cl.  

Perc.  

Vla.  

Vc.  

(teeth on reed)  
(play the pitch as written if possible, otherwise just play a high, unstable, squeaky noise)

PPP

with harmonic touch, finger randomly, and as fast as possible above the fingerboard sul A

arco (change bows with each note)

s.p.

(fbow as needed)
Sop. clutching a sirloin from him

Cl. 

Mar. mp

Vla. 

Vc. 

==

m. mouth covered (and face squished) uncover and unsquish p a little sad with hands cupping either side of mouth

but the end would have been just the same if neither of us had spoken at all

Cl. 

Mar. 

Vla. 

Vc. 

33
boss i am afraid that what the spider said is true

and it gives me to think furiously upon the futility of literature

slowly; ghudishly savoring the words

tune IV down to B
poco più mosso

(c. \( \text{d} = 100 \))

with each attack, react as if feeling the chords physically, as if they’re bringing about a realization of life that was
darker than the one you previously held

do not cue or “telegraph” the attacks; mistakes are expected and encouraged

brake drum, anvil, or large cowbell

do not cue or “telegraph” the attacks; mistakes are expected and encouraged

bass drum

do not cue or “telegraph” the attacks; mistakes are expected and encouraged

area (ord.)

do not cue or “telegraph” the attacks; mistakes are expected and encouraged

Vla.

do not cue or “telegraph” the attacks; mistakes are expected and encouraged

Vc.

do not cue or “telegraph” the attacks; mistakes are expected and encouraged

36
on last attack, bow head as if being "powered down"
raise head on clarinet’s first note in movement IV

(set up behind soprano for movement IV)
IV. Commentary 2b (or not)

Instructions for Soprano:
Your part in this movement is silent (except for the last note)
Slashed out noteheads represent notes to mime singing, without emitting any sound
X-shaped noteheads represent other dramatic or gestural actions that don’t involve mimed singing
On rests, freeze dramatically in place.
Recommended staging: clarinetist standing directly behind soprano

tempo rubato (c. \( \text{c} = 60-72 \))
(each pause in this section should be approximately the same length)

leave mouth hanging open with neutral expression

(close mouth)
28
leave mouth hanging open with neutral expression

fff

fff

fff

fff

fff

fff

fff

fff

fff

fff

fff

fff
V. The Moth

long-breathed \( j = 56 \)  

p wistful

i was talking to a moth the other evening

long-breathed \( j = 56 \)

he was trying to break into an electric light bulb and fry himself on the wires

sud G till *
why do you fellows pull this stunt I asked him

because it is the conventional thing for moths or why if that had been an uncovered candle instead of an electric

soft mallets, med. motor, pedal with each chord
light-bulb you would now be a small un-sight-ly cin-der
have you no sense have you no sense have you no sense have you no sense

hard mallets, med. motor, pedal with each chord

Glockenspiel
with mallet handle

trailing off...

you no sense you no sense you no sense you no sense you no sense you no sense
più mosso \( \mathbb{F} = 84 \)

Sop.

Glock.

he answered but at times we get tired of using it

Sop.

Glock.

we get bored with the routine and crave beauty and ex-

Cl.

Glock.

Vla.

Vc.

senza sord.

senza sord.
Bring out a feeling of two voices (one on the quarter beat, one on the eighth-note off beats). If feasible, use two different mallets.
it is better to be happy for a moment

and be burned up with beauty than to
live a long time and be bored all the while
so we wad all our life up into

one little roll and then we shoot the roll
that is what life is for
mf quasi-parlando

urgent, but utterly assured

it is better to be a part of

beauty for an instant and then cease to exist than to
(cut off abruptly, with cello) and before I could argue him out of his philosophy

Sop.

Cl.

colla parte soprano

Vib.

(Vib."

Vla.

Vc.

(cut off abruptly, with clarinet)

colla parte soprano (move closer to bridge with each bar, not continuously)

Vc.

99

Sop.

he went and immolated himself on a patent cigar lighter I do not agree with him myself I would rather have

Cl.

Vib.

Vla.

Vc.
Sop.

half the happiness and twice

the longevity

but at the same time

Cl.

Vib.

Vla.

Vc.

ppp

ppp

ppp

186  più mosso c. \( \dot{\text{i}} \) = 72

Sop.

at the same time I wish

I wish there was something

something I wanted

Cl.

Glockenspiel

ppp

pp

Vla.

Vc.

con sord.

con sord.

ppp

ppp

ppp

ppp

ppp

pp
"I wish there was something I wanted as badly as he wanted to try himself"

"love your voice"
with each repetition, articulate the consonants less (e.g., start to move your lips apart, talk as if you have gauze in your cheeks) until eventually you're only making unintelligible vowel sounds in the same rhythm as the given sentence."
Sop.  

Cl.  

Glock.  

Vla.  

Vc.  

\[ n \text{ PPPP} \]  

\[ PPP \]  

\[ n \text{ PPPP} \]  

\[ PPP \]  

\[ n \text{ PPPP} \]  

\[ PPP \]  

\[ = \]  

\[ 122 \]  

\[ 58 \]
Sop.

Cl.

Glock.

Vla.

Vc.

(only move your mouth as if saying the words, don't emit any sound)

with pencils or chopsticks

gradually move mouth less and less so that in the last bar, your face seems to freeze into place