

Handwritten musical score for the first system of the piece. It features four staves: Flute 1, Flute 2, Piano, and Percussion. The notation is dense and includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'ppp' and 'f'. The score is marked with a circled '17' at the beginning.

degradation | palimpsest

for quartet

Handwritten musical score for the second system of the piece. It continues the four-staff format (Flute 1, Flute 2, Piano, and Percussion). The notation is highly detailed and complex, with many annotations and markings. The score is marked with a circled '18' at the beginning.

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degradation | palimpsest

Variation for *Theme in Search of variations III*, by Mark Applebaum

Composer's Note

This short work explores ideas of data decay and mutation in situations where a work is recursively copied, recontextualized, reperformed, or listened to. As such, this work takes Applebaum's original as its substrate, copying it and miscopying it in various ways: some sections of the original are repeated in a kind of manic echolalia, others are stretched, skewed, or interposed in frenetic decoupage. Others still are new material, unravelled, perhaps, from a short, intimate gestus in the original.

The work also interpolates sections of Applebaum's explanatory text that accompanies the score, as though that information—that normally is kept separate from what is heard by audiences—has transgressed the disintegrating bounds of the work's æsthetic frame.

Finally, an epigram by Duchamp:

I had the idea that a painting cannot, must not be looked at too much.
It becomes desecrated by the very act of being seen too much. It reaches
a point of exhaustion.¹

Cheers.

—MT

¹ Arturo Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1970), 477.

Legend & Explanation of Techniques

General

The score is transposed.

All staccati should be played as short as possible, regardless of the rhythmic value of the notehead to which the staccati are applied.

For the sake of convenience, *degradation* | *palimpsest* uses the same notational conventions that Applebaum uses in his original, available here:

<https://web.stanford.edu/~applemk/scores/ThemeInSearchOfVariationsIII.PDF>

Exceptions and additions to these conventions are either explained *in situ* in the music or explained below. In addition, the percussion part requires no additional instruments than are required in Applebaum's, and can use the exact same setup with one exception, namely that the pianist operates the ratchet.

While this work can be performed using tablets and a digital copy of the score, the flutist and trumpeter will either need paper versions of their parts or loose-leaf paper for fluttering.

For the vocalizations that require a specific sound, the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is used. Phonemes are written between slashes (e.g. /ə/). A reference to IPA can be found on Wikipedia here:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA/English>

Boxed text denotes text that should be spoken or whispered by the performer. Speaking should begin exactly where indicated by an arrow. Speech rhythm is indeterminate but should occur at a normal speed.

Flute

The “Inhale audibly through the flute while rapidly moving the fingers on the keys” notation used by Applebaum has been changed (see measures 6 and 7 as well as examples below). Besides this notational change, the playing technique is identical to that used in the Applebaum.



All boxed spoken text should be spoken off the mouthpiece (i.e., not spoken into the instrument). All unboxed phonemes should be spoken or articulated into the instrument.

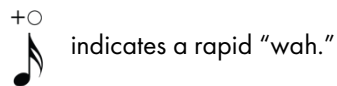
If the flutist is using a digital version of the score, they will need a paper for fluttering at measures 27 and 54.

Trumpet

The /r/ phoneme at measure 3 corresponds to a voiceless “rolled r,” (essentially flutter-tongue without an instrument). Note that at measure 3, /r/ and /f/ are performed simultaneously.

“On mouthpiece” indicates that the prescribed technique should occur with the lips on the mouthpiece (i.e., played into the instrument).

“Off mouthpiece” Indicates that the prescribed technique should be purely vocal, with the lips away from the mouthpiece (i.e., not played into the instrument).



If the trumpeter is using a digital version of the score, they will need a paper for fluttering at measure 54.

Piano

The pianist operates the ratchet throughout the piece. If this piece is played in combination with other variations, then the pianist may surreptitiously take the ratchet from the percussionist at the beginning of the movement.

The screamed /a/ in measure 4 corresponds to a “bright a” sound. For audio examples, see Wikipedia, s.v. “Open front unrounded vowel.” Compare with /æ/ (Near-open front unrounded vowel) and /ɑ/ (Open back unrounded vowel).

The “harmonics” notation used by Applebaum—letters circumscribed by a diamond—has been changed to letters circumscribed by a square (see below). Besides this notational change, the playing technique is identical to that used in the Applebaum.



Original notation



New notation

At measure 22, the phonemes /səɪtʃjk/ are the phonetic retrograde of the word “curious.”

At measure 26, the percussionist is instructed to give the scissors to the pianist. If the pianist is not positioned near the percussionist, the pianist should remain seated while percussionist walks over and gives the scissors to the pianist. The scissors need not be handed directly to the pianist but may be placed on the piano within easy reach of the pianist.

If the pianist is using a digital version of the score, they will need a paper for fluttering at measure 54.

At measure 54 the pianist pops the percussionist’s balloon using the scissors acquired at measure 26. If the piano is positioned away from the percussionist’s station, the pianist may get up, walk over, and pop the balloon.

Percussion

The pianist operates the ratchet throughout the piece. If this piece is played in combination with other variations, then the percussionist may surreptitiously give the ratchet to the pianist at the beginning of the movement.

At measure 22, the phonemes /ʌðɪf/ and /mætɫɔmtɫswopə/ are the phonetic retrograde of the phrases “for the” and “a postmortem” respectively. The downward arrow in the /tɫ/ phoneme indicates that the /t/ sound should be ingressive; i.e, it should be produced with a quick inhale and then stopped abruptly. The idea here is that the normally percussive envelope of the /t/ phoneme has been reversed to have a ramped attack and sudden release (as opposed to the non-reversed sudden attack and ramped release).

At measure 26, the percussionist is instructed to give the scissors to the pianist. If the pianist is not positioned near the percussionist, the percussionist may walk over and give the scissors to the pianist. The scissors need not be handed directly to the pianist but may be placed on the piano within easy reach of the pianist.

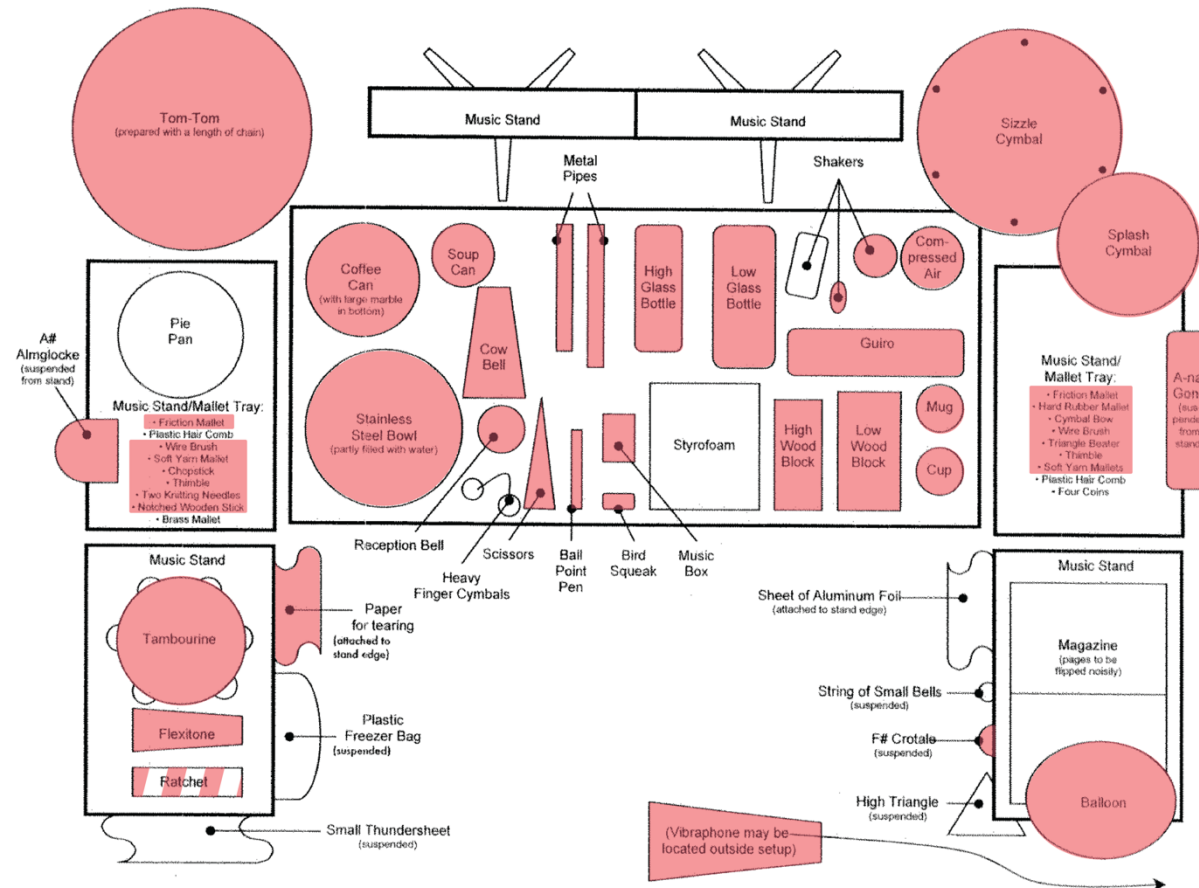
At measure 54 the pianist pops the percussionist’s balloon using the scissors acquired at measure 26. If the piano is positioned away from the percussionist’s station, the pianist may get up, walk over, and pop the balloon.

Percussion Instrumentation

degradation|palimpsest does not use every instrument in Applebaum's original. Below is a list of the instruments that are used, along with a comparative diagram of Applebaum's original suggested setup with instruments used by *degradation|palimpsest* highlighted.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vibraphone • Ratchet • Flexatone • Tambourine • Paper for tearing • A# almglocke (suspended, but without clapper) • Tom-tom (optionally prepared with a length of metal chain) • Metal coffee can (with a large marble at the bottom) • Metal soup can • Stainless steel bowl (partly filled with water) • Cow bell • Reception bell • Scissors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ballpoint pen with thumb click • High and low metal pipes • High and low wood blocks • "Music box" (a hand crank mechanical musical movement) • "Bird squeak" (Audubon bird call—metal key twisted inside red wooden enclosure) • High and low glass bottles • Two shakers, high & low (e.g., maraca, egg shaker, etc.) • Spray can of "aerosol" compressed air • Güiro or Güícharo • Ceramic coffee mug • Styrofoam (ossia: paper) cup • Suspended sizzle cymbal • Suspended splash cymbal • Small or medium A-natural gong | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • F# crotale (high octave) • Balloon to be popped <p>Mallets & Beaters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friction mallets (2) • Hard rubber mallet • Cymbal bow • Wire brushes (2) • Thimble • Soft yarn mallets (2) • Hard yarn vibraphone mallets (4) • Wooden chopstick • Aluminum knitting needles (2) • Notched wooden stick (e.g., ridged "rhythm stick") |
|---|---|---|

Comparative Diagram



Highlighted items from Applebaum's original are used in *degradation* | *palimpsest*.

Note that the ratchet is used but is held and operated by the pianist.

Variation on *Theme in Search of Variations III* by Mark Applebaum

MIGGY TORRES

With manic ennui, ♩ = 90

Alto Flute

With maimé enlaid, 5-90

mf /tʃ/ mp (kiss) p pp low-mid vocalization inexact pitch /ə/

Trumpet in C

Harmon mute (stem in)

f /t/ /tʃ/ off mouthpiece ppp off mouthpiece p on mouthpiece K (kiss) 3 + +

Piano

p ratchet, quickly, jerkily f (silently depress sustain ped.) slide foot off sustain pedal so it releases with a thump

Percussion

Flexatone (begin in high register) ppp

gliss.

mug (w/ back of wire brush) mf

guiro (quickly scraped w/ wire brush)

Pen clicks 3

styrofoam cup (crumpled)

cowbell (with pen, dead stroke)

(with pen) low gl. bottle

sizzle cymbal, l.v. (w/ back of wire brush) molto f

6 (exhale legato with t.r.)

A. Fl.

pp ppp

/tʃ/

3

K

mf

ppp

gliss.

pp ppp

(vocalized pitch sounds down P4)

♩ = 60, slower, still intense

C Tpt.

spill

3

K

mf

ppp

gliss.

doit

ppp

Pno.

scrape

mf

f

/a/

/tʃ/

p

scrape

3

Bang lower stings once

Perc.

mid shaker

soup can (use pen to tremolo on inside)

tom

(w/ hand)

3

(back of yarn mallet) splash cym.

reception bell

3

steel bowl w/ water

swirled after a single articulation with yarn mallet

cowbell, yarn mallet

mp

soup can

C

(C = chopstick T = thimble)

pp

7:8

pipes

T C T

rec. bell

(thimble dead stroke)

10

A. Fl.

Inhale through flute while rapidly moving the fingers on the keys

f *mp* *pp* *sfppp* *n* *n* *poco vib.* *molto vib.*

breathy (bend) 3

C Tpt.

(Timbre trill)

Spill 3 3

Lift, starting pitch is inexact

(ppp) *pp* *n* *pp* *n* *n* *pp*

Pno.

(senza ped) *p* *n* */tʃ/* *mf* */tʃ/* */ʃ/* *(/t/)* *n* *mf*

stop air with tongue against teeth as if about to articulate /t/. Do not actually articulate /t/

Perc.

Guero Glass Bottles Crotale

pp *mf* *pp* *(pp)* *n* *pp*

3 bowed

15

A. Fl. *ord.* *f* *ppp* *sub.* *flz.* *6* *6* *3* *exhale through flute, sans tone* *n*

C Tpt. *n* *ppp* *n* *...colorful...* *...intimate...* *ppp, quiet but not whispered*

Pno. *...autonomous piece that may...* *ppp, quiet but not whispered* *...invites...* *ratchet, quickly, jerkily* *mf* *whispered* *provocation...* *p* *ppp*

Perc. *bird squeak, randomly across this duration* *pp* *music box, very slowly over this duration a handful of notes, but enough to elicit nostalgia* *pp* *...other pieces...* *ppp, quiet but not whispered* *...composed as a (speaking still ppp)* *Pen clicks* *Scissors*

18

A. Fl. *pp*

C Tpt. *ppp* *pp*

Pno. *pp*

Perc. *mp* *pp*

slowly slide finger down
string toward pins/keyboard

3

3

3

3

Detailed description: The image shows a musical score for measures 18 through 21. The score is written for four staves: A. Fl., C Tpt., Pno., and Perc. The time signature is 4/4. The A. Fl. part begins at measure 18 with a piano (pp) dynamic and features a series of eighth notes with accents. The C Tpt. part begins at measure 18 with a pianissimo (ppp) dynamic and features a series of eighth notes with accents. The Pno. part begins at measure 18 with a piano (pp) dynamic and features a series of eighth notes with accents. The Perc. part begins at measure 18 with a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic and features a series of eighth notes with accents. The Pno. part also includes a '3' marking and a 'slowly slide finger down string toward pins/keyboard' instruction.

28

Fl.

whistle tone, finger D
dynamic sound, with harmonics
sporadically changing

mp sub.

pp

n

f whispered into flute
retain D fingering

...curiousss...

piece of paper,
vibrate it in the air,
creating a flapping sound.

n *f* stop suddenly!

ppp

vocal fry into flute,
change vowels slowly,
finger lowest note

C Tpt.

mp

A Postmortem for the...

mf

off mouthpiece

p

mp *n* *ppp*

Pno.

...curious...

mf

p

mf *p* *mp*

Perc.

mp *p*

bird squeak,
rand. across duration

Formal Stucture.

high woodblock
hard rubber

low woodblock
rub w friction mallet

give scissors
to pianist

high shaker

mf *(mp)* *mf*

A^b gong, hard rubber

marble in
coffee can, jiggled

ppp

33

Fl.

f *sf* *ff* *fpp* *ff* *f*

poco vib. → molto vib. ord.

5 5 3 3 5

C Tpt.

mp *mf* *p*

stacc., headless noteheads show approx. contour

(non stac.)

5 13 13 13 5

Pno.

p *mf* *f* *p*

5 5 5

loco

8^{vb}

Perc.

reception bell, hand, l.v.

low wood block hard mallet

paper, torn

tambourine, strike w hand

mf *mf* *ff*

35

Fl.

poco vib. → molto vib. ord.

sfp 5 *ffsfpp* 3 *ff* 3

C Tpt.

(tr) 5

stacc. through m. 37

mf 5 13 13 13

Pno.

l.h., c

5 5 5 5 *f*

Perc.

5

low wood block hard mallet *mf*

37

Fl.

6

6

6

p sub.

7

pp possibile, subito

5

f sub.

6

C Tpt.

6

6

p sub.

7

pp possibile, subito

f sub.

6

Pno.

p

6

mp

6

p sub.

7

pp sub.

f sub.

6

Perc.

8^{vb}-----|

paper, torn

tambourine, strike w hand

splash cymbal, hard mallet
immediately dampen

3

f

reception bell, hand

A³ gong, hard mallet

damp!

39 poco vib. —————> molto vib. ord.

Fl. *sfp* *ff* *sfp* *ff*

C Tpt. 13 13 13 13 13 13

Pno. loco 8^{vb}

Perc. sizzle cymbal, hard mallet, l.v. *mf* low wood block hard mallet *mf* sizz. cym. l. wb *mf*

41

Fl.

breathy, occasionally verging into whistle tones

pp *ff* *f* *n* *ppp* *n* *n* *ppp* *n* *pp*

swell higher partials

C Tpt.

senza sord.

Through fastidious analysis *ppp*, quiet but not whispered

sections corresponding to—

these interruptions share a common

ppp, quiet but not whispered

sporadic valve clatter

5 3

pp

Pno.

scream, mid register

3 *f* *pp*

pluck overstrung strings behind bridge sporadically over these durations

the first section the quartet plays three sequences of unison ensemble articulations.

ppp, quiet but not whispered

15^{ma} 5 *ppp* 3 *pp* *p*

8^{va}

Perc.

Tom, hand *f* *ppp*

cowbell, hard mallet

bird squeak, sporadically

the musicians will discover that the piece is divided into three *ppp*, quiet but not whispered

(*p*) music box, very, very slowly

rec. bell *p*

A# almglocken, bowed, l.v. *n* *mf*

3

47 (tr) ~~~~~ To Picc.

Fl. *mp* *n*

Picc. *mf* *ppp* *mf* *ppp* (kiss)

C Tpt. (non stac.) *ppp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *ppp*

Pno. *ppp* 3

Perc. high shaker *p* 3 pen clicks *mf* high shaker 3 high & low pipes with k. needles high & low glass bottles with k. needles *p* 3 To Vib., Hard Yarn Mallets

[illegible]

53

Picc. *mf* *f* *ff* *mp* To C Fl.

C Tpt. *mp* *sfp* *f* *ff* *mf* *f* *ff* *mp*

Pno. *f* *ff* *p*

Vib. *mf* *f* *p* *f* *p* *sfp* *mp* *f* *ff* To Perc.

The musical score is written for four instruments: Piccolo (Picc.), C Trumpet (C Tpt.), Piano (Pno.), and Vibraphone (Vib.). The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 53 begins with a Piccolo part marked *mf*, followed by a C Trumpet part marked *mp*. The Piano part enters in measure 53 with a *f* dynamic. The Vibraphone part enters in measure 53 with a *mf* dynamic. Measure 54 continues the Piccolo part with a *f* dynamic, followed by a C Trumpet part marked *f*. The Piano part continues with a *ff* dynamic. The Vibraphone part continues with a *f* dynamic. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings. The Piccolo part has a *mp* marking at the end of measure 54. The C Trumpet part has a *mp* marking at the end of measure 54. The Piano part has a *p* marking at the end of measure 54. The Vibraphone part has a *f* marking at the end of measure 54. The score ends with a double bar line in measure 54.

55

C Flute
breathy

Picc.

Menlo Park.
ppp whispered, almost inaudible

Third

ff
Eight.

pp
fpp

take this page of the score and vibrate it in the air, creating a flapping sound.

C Tpt.

Portland.
ppp whispered, almost inaudible

January

O.
ff
pp
mfpp
n

take this page of the score and vibrate it in the air, creating a flapping sound

Pno.

Ratchet!!!

smack low strings
mf

pp
pluck overstrung strings behind bridge, rhythms represent individual notes

ff
balloon at percussion station popped w scissors

Perc.

Tom, wooden stick
f
marble swirled in coffee can

music box
p

very slowly

somewhat slowly

normal speed

off with balloon pop