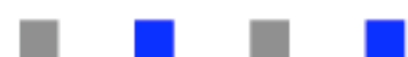




# **impaired contact with reality**

for ten instruments and electroacoustic sound



Ryan Carter

(2010)

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## Instrumentation:

Contrabass Flute (doubling C Flute and Piccolo)

Clarinet in B $\flat$  (doubling Contrabass Clarinet)

Bassoon (doubling glass jar containing one ping pong ball)

Trumpet in B $\flat$  (with plunger mute)

Trombone (with plunger mute)

Piano with preparation (doubling glass jars containing ping pong balls)

Percussion (with stereo amplification):

2 aluminum water bottles (one containing a small amount of water, one containing a thumb tack)

stable hard surface against which to bounce bottles (such as a table, or even a brake drum)

crotales (both octaves)

round glass jar containing one ping pong ball

square glass jar containing one ping pong ball

wine glass on a smooth flat surface (such as the table used for bouncing the bottles)

Violin

Cello (with scordatura tuning)

Double Bass

Fixed Electroacoustic Sound

## Program notes:

I'm dubious of program notes, but here are some thoughts surrounding the genesis of *impaired contact with reality* (in case you are curious).

This was going to be (and maybe still is) a piece about psychosis, about the interweaving of technological mediation into every aspect of our lives, about trying to control uncontrollable forces.

At the time that I began composing *impaired contact with reality*, I was thinking about the quasi-ritualistic, quasi-psychotic relationship I have with technology. It seems that before the Industrial Revolution, the mechanisms of even the most complex technological innovations could be understood visually (even the clock - possibly the most complex pre-Industrial machine - could be opened and its gears examined) and the great mysteries that perplexed humans concerned the natural world. Rituals (i.e., complex practices designed to produce a desired outcome without requiring the practitioner to fully understand how) were developed to solve problems that we now tend to fix scientifically (e.g., medical treatments). But while scientific and technological innovations since the Industrial Revolution have greatly clarified our understanding of the natural world, it seems we've replaced these mysteries with a technological environment whose mechanisms can not possibly be understood visually and we've developed new rituals accordingly. (Just think of the highly personalized ways we debugged the original 8-bit Nintendo - blowing on the cartridge, resetting the console repeatedly, unplugging it for a precise duration before plugging it back in - which generally worked but we never knew why.) The title of this piece comes from the Random House Dictionary definition of psychosis: "a mental disorder characterized by symptoms ... that indicate impaired contact with reality." In a way, my complete dependence on technological systems that I don't remotely understand is kind of psychotic, but this is just part of the anxiety toward/fascination with technology that underlies my work.

This is not a well-researched (or even well-reasoned) argument. But I'd rather provoke than persuade; I'd rather compel people to think than tell people what to think.

## Performance notes:

I prefer for the program not to mention that this piece incorporates electroacoustic sound.

♭ = one quarter-tone flat

♯ = one quarter-tone sharp

♭♭ = three quarter tones flat

♯♯ = three quarter tones sharp

Accidentals apply to the whole measure, but frequent courtesy accidentals appear without parentheses.

<> = by default, crescendo and diminuendo markings change dynamics by one level


*p* <> = *p* < *mp* > *p*

*p* < = *p* < *mp*

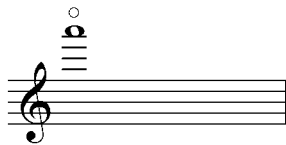
MMMMM = vigorously and erratically shake a small glass jar containing a single ping pong ball (provided by the composer)


Winds:

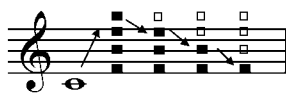
- = play directly into mouthpiece
- = play in normal position
- = normal tone
- = breathy tone


 = overblow harmonics

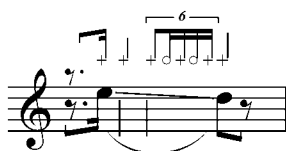
- ◇ = sing (notated with diamond noteheads on second staff at the same transposition level as the instrument, NOT AT CONCERT PITCH)

 = whistle tone

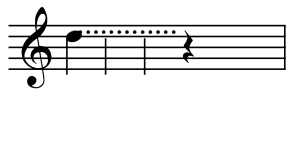
 = "slap ricochet" (imitate sound of balzando strings or bouncing aluminum bottles)

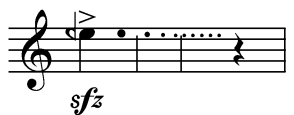
 = Contrabass Clarinet multiphonics (squares refer to ranges, not specific pitches)


 = Bassoon multiphonics (alternate single pitch and multiphonic)

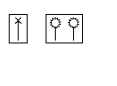
 = plunger muting (keep closed unless indicated)


Percussion:


 = bounce aluminum bottle against hard surface for duration indicated (may consist of several connected bounces)

 = bounce bottle from greater height, allowing repercussions to accelerate

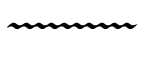
 = press bottle at angle against surface to bend pitch upwards


 = hold one brass mallet in left hand and two very soft mallets in right hand

 = roll crotale with right hand while allowing brass mallet to bounce freely on top

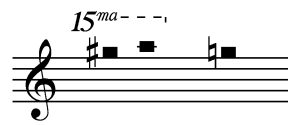
 = continue allowing brass mallet to bounce on crotale for duration indicated

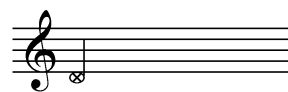
During passages involving glass jars with ping pong balls, the round jar is notated on the top staff and the square jar is on the bottom staff. The distance between each jar and the pair of microphones is notated. The percussionist can vary the stereo (left-right) positioning of the jars freely.

 = rotate round jar in a circular motion, creating a spinning sound


 = shake jar vigorously and erratically


Piano:

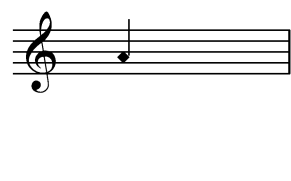
 = Place a piece of scotch tape over all three strings of G# and two strings of A, allowing one A string to vibrate freely. Place a second piece of scotch tape over G strings.


 = mute strings with finger inside piano

Strings:

 = ricochet for duration indicated (this gesture can be appended with several short articulations to fill duration)

 = balzando (drop bow and allow to bounce freely)

 = half-harmonic (use a light finger pressure and fast, light bow while muting string behind finger to achieve a pale, noisy tone, while retaining a faint fundamental)

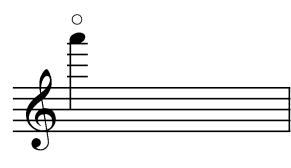
 = increase finger pressure and decrease bow pressure and speed (to ordinario)


- st = sul tasto
- ord = ordinario
- sp = sul ponticello
- mSP = molto sul ponticello

- o r d = ord
- m s p = msp

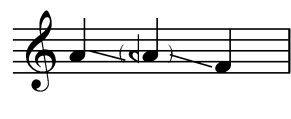
1/2 clt = half col legno tratto (bow with equal portions hair and wood)

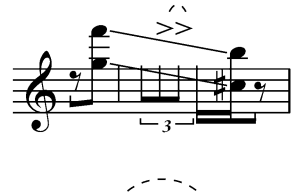
clb = col legno battuto (also indicated with square noteheads)


 = natural harmonics are notated at the sounding pitch

 = Cello A string is tuned down one quarter-tone

⊕ = mute string suddenly, creating a "reverse" envelope

 = notes in parentheses serve to define the slope of a glissando and should not be rearticulated

 = rearticulate while continuing glissando (without changing bow, and preferably keeping the bow on the string)

 = during some faster rearticulations, the bow may bounce uncontrollably, which is fine

# impaired contact with reality

for The Argento Chamber Ensemble

The score is NOT in C.

Ryan Carter

$\text{♩} = 60$  Pulled downward by a weak (but inexorable) gravitational force

0'00"

Contrabass Flute

B $\flat$  Clarinet

Bassoon

B $\flat$  Trumpet

Trombone

Piano

Percussion (amplified)

Violin

Cello

Double Bass

Electronics

TACET

0'30"

5

Cb. Fl. *p* *sfz* *p*

B $\flat$  Cl.

Bsn.

B $\flat$  Tpt.

Tbn.

Pno. *pp* *sempre pp*

Perc. *sempre pp* *f* *f* *pp* *sfz* *f* switch to crotales

Vln. *mp* *pp* *f* *pp* *p* *f* *mf* *p*

ord  $\rightarrow$  msp  $\rightarrow$  ord 1/2 clt arco clb

Vc. *mp* *p* *pp* *f* *pp* *p* *pp*

balzando

D.B. *pp* *mf* *pp* *p* *pp*

El. TACET