

This is This is This is

(for David Foster Wallace)

for two alto saxophones in unison and prepared piano

Eric Wubbels

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Composer's Note

Writer David Wallace committed suicide in late 2008. In addition to the love and admiration I feel for his work, a number of other coincidences of biography and personal history had made me feel quite close to him, and his death was not only a shock, but also just an incredibly sad thing. For me and many of my friends, it seemed like confirmation of some of our darkest thoughts about... well, everything.

In his later writings, Wallace outlines the struggle for a type of consciousness, a moment-to-moment vigilance of mind that transforms the repetitious business of daily life into something sacred. He describes this kind of attention as both a path outward from habitual self-focused thought patterns, and a stay against “the constant gnawing sense of having had and lost some infinite thing” that those patterns eventually produce. In addition, his conviction that art should be both moral and practical, that “fiction's about what it is to be a fucking human being,” has become something of a guiding principle for me.

So- This is for David Foster Wallace. This is unison, concentration, and attention. This is extended repetition as a force against habit. (*“This is a Bronx-bound 2 express train.”*) This is the constant gnawing sense of having had and lost some infinite thing.

This is the connection between attention and ecstasy-

ecstasy of physical gesture, ecstasy of sound, ecstasy of repetition.

(E.W.)

General Notes

The piece is playable either as a trio, with the two alto saxophones in unison throughout, or as a duo, for one saxophone and piano.

The alto saxophone line is notated in Eb.

Five notes of the piano (Eb3, F#3, D4, G4, and G#4) are prepared by threading dimes between the triple strings. These prepared notes are distinguished in the score with triangular noteheads, but they are played normally.

The "11/24" bars signify 11 pulses of a 16th-note sextuplet within the prevailing tempo. Figures in these bars move at the speed of 16th-note sextuplets, but occur in patterns that cannot be subdivided into groups of 6.

A detailed explanation of the symbols and techniques for the saxophone is reserved for the saxophone part.

1 or 2
A. Sx.
in Eb

Prepared
Pno.

A. Sx.

Pno.

[39x] $\text{♩} = 144-160$ $\text{♩} = 126-132$ [21x] [C5] [2x] [C5]

sfz *ff* *f* *pp* *mf* *f*

ff *sfz* *p* *sfz f*

poco rit. *poco accel.*

* - on 38x

[30x] [19x] [11x]

air *secco; little pitch*

sfz *p* *sub. f* *mf* *f* *mf*

ff *p* *ff* *sfz* *f*

very airy, blended w/ Pno.

* - on 30x

8vb

8

A. Sx.

Percussive; almost no pitch

[3x] [5x]

M¹ M² M M

-2 +8ve key

f sfz sfz sffz sfz ff sffz sfz ff f sfz sfz

15^{ma} 15^{ma}

Pno.

ff sffz sfz ff sffz on 5x ff mf f

8^{vb} 8^{vb}

(pluck; ossia ord.)

- [M¹] = low B -5
- [M²] = low C -4
- [M³] = low Bb -C

13

A. Sx.

+ scream

(c)

[C1 1 C12 12 C123 12345]

bisb. [C5]

sffz f ff sfz sfz mf sfz mf f sfz sfz

Pno.

sffz f sfz ff, martellato sfz sfz ff sfz f sfz

8^{vb} 8^{vb}

15

A. Sx. *ff, marcato*

Pno. *ff*

22

A. Sx. *sfz sfz f, within Piano's sound*

Pno. *fff*

[5x] [13x] = 72 [49x] [55x] [12x]

15^{ma} (loco)

8vb

A. Sx. 30

(c)

sfz *ff* *sfz* *ff*

Pno.

ffff *martellato sempre*

sfz *sfz*

A. Sx. 40

sfz *ff* *sfz* *ff*

Pno.

sfz *sfz* *sfz*

A. Sax. 50

sfz *ff* *sfz* *ff*

Pno.

sfz *sfz*

A. Sax. 60

sfz *ff* *sfz* *ff*

Pno.

sfz *sfz* (poco rit.)

70

A. Sx.

Pno.

$\text{♩} = 60-66$

[5x]

$\geq \text{bisb.}$

teeth on the reed,
violent harmonic glissando
on C# fundamental

$\text{♩} = 45$

[6x] (3rd and 4th x only)

ff

sfffz

sub. p < > *p* > *mf*

ff

sfffz

rip

* - on 5x

sub. mf > *p*

74

A. Sx.

Pno.

$\text{♩} = 175$

[18x]

$\text{♩} = 50$

[3x]

[2x]

2nd x

$\text{♩} = 90$

[2x]

[48-75x]

p

mf

(sing)

pp

mf

mf

p

mf > *o*

sfp, "bell" attack

mf

sub. p

mf

79

A. Sx.

Pno.

[24-36x] $\text{♩} = 120$ (bar=bar)

[14x] $\text{♩} = 132$

[4x]

f *sub. ff* *sfz* *sfz*

sub. f *sub. ff*

8vb

*- play the complete figure as often as possible, leaving out individual notes ad lib. to prevent excessive fatigue

85

A. Sx.

Pno.

$\text{♩} = 60$

[6x]

[6x]

p *air pp*

sfp *p* *pp*

[3rd-6th x] *cresc. over 6x*

pp *poco*

8vb

89

A. Sx.

Pno.

[48-61x]

slow cresc. over repeat

mf *ffff* *poss.*

ff *sempre*

8vb

[2x]

96

A. Sx.

Pno.

mf *ffff* *poss.*

108

A. Sx.

Pno.

Musical score for measures 108-111. The score is for Alto Saxophone (A. Sx.) and Piano (Pno.). The A. Sx. part is written in treble clef and includes accents, slurs, and a triplet. The Pno. part is written in grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and includes chords, slurs, and dynamic markings like *sfz*.

112

A. Sx.

Pno.

Musical score for measures 112-115. The score is for Alto Saxophone (A. Sx.) and Piano (Pno.). The A. Sx. part is written in treble clef and includes accents, slurs, and a triplet. The Pno. part is written in grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and includes chords, slurs, and accents.

116

A. Sax.

Pno.

ff

ff

sfz

[8x]

119

A. Sax.

Pno.

ff

sfz

sffz

ff

$\text{♩} = 112$

139

A. Sx.

Pno.

f *ff* *sfz*

[4x] [3x]

144

A. Sx.

Pno.

ff *ff* *sfz*

147 $\text{♩} = 112$ [-2 +8ve key] [11x]

A. Sax. *ff* *sfz* *sub.p* *p*

Pno. *ff* *sfz* *mp*

in the middle of each rep. the pianist signals the duration of thr added pause-- either 1,2, or 3 ♩'s. Closed fist= signal to go on.

151 [3x]*- Sax tacet 1st x Coda $\text{♩} = 60-66$ nicht schleppen... [2x] (1st x only)

A. Sax. *pp* *pp*

Pno. *fp*, "bell" attack *fp* (*p*) (*p*) *poco f* -3-

157

A. Sx.

Pno.

(p)

poco f

164

A. Sx.

Pno.

poco f

mf

3

171

A. Sx.

ppp

Pno.

poco f

177

A. Sx.

mf

poco f

Pno.

183

A. Sx.

Pno.

poco

sub. p

Detailed description: This system covers measures 183 to 187. The A. Sx. part consists of five measures with rests. The time signature changes from 15/32 to 4/8, then back to 15/32, and finally to 4/8. The Pno. part has five measures. The right hand plays sixteenth-note runs in measures 183, 184, and 186, and a melodic phrase in measure 187. The left hand has sustained notes with a fermata in measures 183, 184, and 186, and a melodic phrase in measure 187. Dynamics include 'poco' and 'sub. p'.

188

A. Sx.

Pno.

ppp

Detailed description: This system covers measures 188 to 192. The A. Sx. part consists of six measures with rests. The Pno. part has six measures. The right hand has sustained chords with a fermata in measures 188, 190, and 192. The left hand has melodic lines with a fermata in measures 188 and 190, and rests in measures 189, 191, and 192. Dynamics include 'ppp'.