

JOHNKOSCH



PER ASPERA

Voice and Piano

2019

John Kosch

Per Aspera

Voice and Piano
Medium Voice Edition

2019

Text by
Lisa Favicchia
Megan Kaminski
Wyatt Townley

- I. Spare Moments
- II. Bisection
- III. How We Disappear
- IV. Mother Shell
- V. The Key

Program Notes

The state motto of Kansas is “Ad astra per aspera,” which roughly translates, “To the stars through hardship.” *Per Aspera* combines settings of texts by Kansas-based poets that address the challenges of emotional turmoil and mental illness.

<u>Total Duration</u>		13’45”
I.	Spare Moments	2’30”
II.	Bisection	2’00”
III.	How We Disappear	2’15”
IV.	Mother Shell	2’30”
V.	The Key	4’30”

Instrumentation

Medium Voice and Piano

“Dear Sister”

Spare moments evade me, too. My memory
drips details and I prefer to watch ants scurry
across bare feet, continuing routes through
dirt onto tree trunk, carrying crumbs to some

unknown destination. The yard is abuzz today:
traffic hums through late morning and girls
chatter denim-shortened ponytails aloft. And I
wonder why I tell you all this – if you are even

there to receive these missives. My dress tore,
caught on bramble. The scrap traipsed in dirt
out behind the garden out away from the people.
Sun doesn’t dapple in those fields and clover spikes

purple the expanse. The lawn burnt from winter
salt and shadow recedes until further notice. I let
my thoughts carry me back inside, bringing me
honeyed biscuits and trinkets to drape from wrist.

MEGAN KAMINSKI

“Bisection” (excerpt)

At Night I’m kept awake by the sounds of my own body
and can’t escape the oceanic static
of my ear against the pillow, small pockets of air

traveling through me, getting caught
in my anxious stomach. Even when I finally enter
sleep, my body dreams then wakes me

to show that I exist outside of myself
and it’s only my eyes that see
the boy at the foot of my bed,

his whistling not really there
as he walks closer, exposing the gash
in his forehead—What part of me

reaches for the light?

LISA FAVICCHIA

“SELMA”

This is how we disappear
walking without hesitation into darkness —
sacks filled with glass bottle and feather
boots lifting from gravel
forward to song and snow drift
stars pave paths through tree brush
trestle the cold in soft gambrels
country roads hold tight and tidy to
fields moon-streaked and cloud-begotten
a daughter who never returns never
disappoints
notebooks fill with sentences books barricade
doors silent in sleep each night

MEGAN KAMINSKI

“MOTHER SHELL”

Hollow and hard, you grew
in her polished belly.

You were born from the womb
you built with your own saliva,
enameled from her birth to bear you
as you were born and would grow
and calcify, child of mollusk.
When you left her, waves howled
through her hollow husk
until she souged up on sand,
a braid of sea silk trailing
empty nacre, the same emptiness
that now scrapes itself out
from inside of you

LISA FAVICCHIA

“THE KEY”

Here, inside the chest
a tiny fear is folded
neatly like a sweater

in the top drawer.
Take it out. Shake it.
Have a look. Open

the middle drawer.
The cries of a child
Stab through you

until her sobs are yours.
In the bottom drawer
under a stack of gowns

is a clenched fist.
It is holding *clink!* a key
that falls at your feet.

WYATT TOWNLEY

I. Spare Moments

Megan Kaminski

John Kosch

Dissociated; oddly calm ($\text{♩} = 132$)

Voice

Piano

Frantic, off-kilter

mf

3

4

mf legato

Spare mo - ments e - vade me, too...

3

7

My mem - o - ry drips de - tails and

3

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Per Aspera - I. Spare Moments

2

11

I pre - fer to watch ants scur - ry a - cross bare feet,

14

con - tin - u - ing paths through dirt on - to tree trunk,

poco accel.

17

car - ry - ing crum - bles to some un - known des - ti - nat - ion.

20

mf
The

23 Bluesy, behind the beat ($\text{♩} = 144$)

yard is a - buzz to - day:___

Aggressive

traf - fic hums through late morn-ing and girls chat - ter___

den - im short-ed po - ny tails a - loft.

And

Per Aspera - I. Spare Moments

4

35 **Tentative** (♩ = 120)

I won-der why I tell you all this if you are e - ven

not too short

39 $\text{♩} = 132$

there to re - ceive these mis-sives.

mp

43 **Emerging** *mf*

My dress tore, _

mf

46

caught on bram - ble. The

49 *f*

scrap traipsed in dirt out be-hind the gar-den out a-way

52

from the peo-ple.

55

Sun does-\'nt dap-ple in those fields and clo-ver spikes pur-ple the ex-

58

panse The lawn burnt from win-ter salt and shad-ow re-

Per Aspera - I. Spare Moments

6

rit.

61 *mp*

cedes un - til fur - ther no - tice.

With gentle strength (♩ = 120)

64 (*mp*)

I _____ let my thoughts car - ry me back _____ in - side,

67 poco rit.

bring - ing me hon - eyed bis - cuits and trin - kets to drape from

70 ♩ = 132

wrist.

II. Bisection

Lisa Favicchia

John Kosch

Surreal (♩ = 72)

mp

At

p sub pp

p sub pp

5

night I'm kept a - wake by the sounds of my own bod-

sim.

8

y and can't es - cape the o - ce - an - ic stat - ic of my

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Per Aspera - II. Bisection

8

11

ear a - gainst the pil - low, small pock-ets of air trav'-ling

8^{va}-----
Red.-----

14

through me, get-ting caught in my anx ious stom-ach.

8^{va}-----
Red.-----

Momentarily Comfortable

17

E - ven when I fi - nal - ly en - ter

8^{va}-----
Red.-----

20

sleep my bod - y dreams then wakes me to show that I ex -

8va

6 6

8vb

22

ist out - side of my self

f

f

3

8vb

24

Terrified

and it's on-ly my eyes that see the boy at the foot of my bed, his whis-tling not real-ly

mf articulate

3 3 3 3

mp

sim.

8vb

8va

Per Aspera - II. Bisection

27 *mp* *mf*

there as he walks clos - er, ex - pos - ing the gash in his fore -

8 *mf*

8va
Red.

30 *mp*

head What

8va
Red.

33

part of me reach-es for the light?

8va
mp

III. How We Disappear

Megan Kaminski

John Kosch

Ambivalent (♩ = 112)

The first system of the musical score is in 3/4 time. The vocal line consists of four measures of whole rests. The piano accompaniment, marked *mp*, features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The key signature changes from one sharp (F#) to one flat (Bb) across the system.

The second system begins at measure 5, marked *mp*. The vocal line has the lyrics "This is_ how_ we dis - ap - pear" under a melodic line. The piano accompaniment continues with a similar melodic and bass structure. The system concludes with a double bar line and a 3/4 time signature.

The third system begins at measure 9, marked *mf*. The vocal line has the lyrics "walk-ing with-out hes - i - ta - tion_ in - to dark - ness" under a melodic line. The piano accompaniment continues with a similar melodic and bass structure. The system concludes with a double bar line and a 3/4 time signature.

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Per Aspera - III. How We Disappear

12

13

sacks filled with glass bot - tle and feath - er boots lift - ing from grav - el

17

for - ward to song and snow drift

21 *mp detached*

stars pave paths through tree brush tres - tle the

25

cold in soft gam - brels

29 *mf*

musical score for measures 29-31. The vocal line is in 7/8 time, with lyrics "coun - try roads hold tight and tid - y to fields". The piano accompaniment is in 7/8 time, with a *mf* dynamic. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature changes to 3/4 at the end of measure 31. The vocal line ends with a long note marked *8va* and a dashed line.

32

musical score for measures 32-34. The vocal line is in 3/4 time, with lyrics "moon streaked and cloud". The piano accompaniment is in 3/4 time, with a *mf* dynamic. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The piano accompaniment features a long note in the bass line and a melodic line in the treble.

35

musical score for measures 35-37. The vocal line is in 3/4 time, with lyrics "be - - got - ten". The piano accompaniment is in 3/4 time, with a *f* dynamic. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The piano accompaniment features a long note in the bass line and a melodic line in the treble. The vocal line ends with a long note marked *8va* and a dashed line.

38

musical score for measures 38-40. The vocal line is in 3/4 time, with no lyrics. The piano accompaniment is in 3/4 time, with a *mp* dynamic. The key signature changes to two sharps (F# and C#). The piano accompaniment features a long note in the bass line and a melodic line in the treble.

Per Aspera - III. How We Disappear

14

41

poco rit.

44

p

$\text{♩} = 100$

legato

a daugh - ter who nev - er re -

47

turns nev - er dis - ap - points

50

54

note - books fill with sen-tenc-es books bar-ri-cade doors

This system contains measures 54 through 57. The vocal line (treble clef) begins with a half note 'note', followed by eighth notes 'books', 'fill', 'with', 'sen-tenc-es', a half note 'books', eighth notes 'bar-ri-cade', and a half note 'doors'. The piano accompaniment (grand staff) features a flowing eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a more static bass line in the left hand. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4.

58

si - lent in sleep each night

This system contains measures 58 through 62. The vocal line (treble clef) has a half note 'si - lent', a half note 'in', a half note 'sleep', and a half note 'each' followed by a long note for 'night'. The piano accompaniment (grand staff) includes a mezzo-piano (*mp*) marking and features a more active bass line with eighth notes. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4.

63

This system contains measures 63 through 67. The vocal line (treble clef) consists of whole rests for all five measures. The piano accompaniment (grand staff) features a complex texture with arpeggiated chords in the right hand and a moving bass line in the left hand. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4.

IV. Mother Shell

Lisa Favicchia

John Kosch

Matter-of-Fact (♩ = 120)

Non-Rubato

p

8vb.....|

Red.....|

5

Freely
mp

Hol-low and hard, you grew_____ in her pol-ished bel - ly____

8vb.....|

Red.....|

9

You were born from the womb you built with your own_____ sa - li - va,____ e -

8vb.....|

Red.....|

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13 *mf* *mp*

nam-eled from her birth to bear_ you as you were born___ and would grow___

mp *p*

8vb.....
Red.

16 *mf* *mp*

— and cal - ci - fy,_____ child of

mp *mf* *mp*

19 *mf*

mol - lusk. When you

p

8vb.....
Red.

23 *mp* 2

left her, waves howled_____ through her hol - low husk

mf *p*

8vb.....
Red.

Per Aspera - IV. Mother Shell

18

26 *mf*

un - til she soughed up on sand, a braid of sea silk trai- ling—

30

emp - ty na - cre, the same

33

emp - ti - ness that now scrapes it self out from in - side of

37

you.

pp

8vb

Ped.

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It consists of four systems of music. The first system (measures 26-29) features a vocal line with lyrics 'un - til she soughed up on sand, a braid of sea silk trai- ling—' and a piano accompaniment. The second system (measures 30-32) continues the vocal line with 'emp - ty na - cre, the same'. The third system (measures 33-36) continues with 'emp - ti - ness that now scrapes it self out from in - side of'. The fourth system (measures 37-40) concludes with 'you.' and a piano accompaniment. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf* and *pp*, and performance instructions like *8vb* and *Ped.*. The piano part features various chords and melodic lines, including some with doublets (marked with '2').

V. The Key

Wyatt Townley

John Kosch

Dreamlike (♩ = 80)

First system of musical notation. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is marked *Molto Rubato* and includes a *Ser* (Soprano) line. The piano accompaniment is marked *mp* and *f*.

Second system of musical notation, starting with a measure rest of 3. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is marked *Ser* (Soprano). The piano accompaniment is marked *mp* and *f*.

Third system of musical notation, starting with a measure rest of 5. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is marked *Ser* (Soprano). The piano accompaniment is marked *mp* and *f*. Below the piano part, there are markings: *8va*, *sim.*, and *Red.*

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Per Aspera - V. The Key

20

7 poco rit.

mp *ppp*

Red.

9 A tempo

mf

Here, in - side__the chest a ti - ny__ fear

pp *mp*

11

is fold - ed neat - ly like a

pp *mp*

13

sweat - - - - - er in the

p *mf*

15

top drawer.

p *mf*

17

Foreboding (♩ = 96)

pp *f* *pp* *f* *pp*

5

5

8^{vb}

19

Musical score for measure 19. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in 7/4 time and contains a whole rest. The piano accompaniment is in 7/4 time and features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The dynamic markings are *mf* and *f*. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The measure ends with a double bar line and a 4/4 time signature change.

20

Musical score for measure 20. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in 4/4 time and contains a whole rest. The piano accompaniment is in 4/4 time and features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The dynamic marking is *mp*. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The measure ends with a double bar line and a 3/4 time signature change.

22

Cathartic

marcato

Musical score for measure 22. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in 3/4 time and contains the lyrics "Take it out." and "Shake it. Have a look." The piano accompaniment is in 3/4 time and features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The dynamic markings are *f* and *ff*. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The measure ends with a double bar line and a 4/4 time signature change.

25

Measure 25: Vocal line begins with a whole note G4, followed by a half rest. Piano accompaniment features a series of chords in the right hand and eighth notes in the left hand, marked *ff*.
Measure 26: Vocal line continues with a half note A4, a quarter note B4, a quarter note C5, and a quarter note B4. Piano accompaniment continues with similar textures, marked *f*.
Lyrics: O - pen the mid - dle drawer

27

Measure 27: Vocal line has a whole rest. Piano accompaniment features a descending scale in the right hand and eighth notes in the left hand, marked with a 9.
Measure 28: Vocal line begins with a quarter note G4, followed by a half rest. Piano accompaniment continues with a descending scale in the right hand and eighth notes in the left hand, marked with a 7.
Lyrics: The

Wailing

28

Measure 28: Vocal line begins with a quarter note G4, followed by a half note A4, a quarter note B4, and a quarter note A4. Piano accompaniment features a series of chords in the right hand and eighth notes in the left hand.
Measure 29: Vocal line continues with a half note G4, a quarter note F4, and a quarter note E4. Piano accompaniment continues with similar textures.
Measure 30: Vocal line begins with a quarter note G4, followed by a half rest. Piano accompaniment continues with similar textures.
Lyrics: cries of a child stab through

31

you

mf

33

ff *sub pp*

35

mf
marcato

stab

ff *sub pp*

37 *legato*

through you un - til her

40 ♩ = 80

sobs are

42

yours

8^{vb}

Healing

44 *mf*

In the bot - tom drawer un - der a stack

pp

46

of gowns is a

48

clenched fist. It is

mf *f* *mp*

Per Aspera - V. The Key

61 $\text{♩} = 52$

thrown away

methodically