FREDERIC RZEWSKI

Demons

for violin and piano

(2017)

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This printing: February 27, 2018

Program Note by the Composer

Demons was commissioned by Music Accord, Inc., and written in the spring and summer of 2017 for Benjamin Beilman and Orion Weiss. It is dedicated to Angela Davis.

In Dostoyevsky's novel of the same name (1871), the character Kirillov kills himself in order "to become God." Inspired by the Russian Nihilist movement of the 1860s, and specifically by the charismatic figure Nechayev, Dostoyevsky's book is a study of the self-destructive forces present in the Russian society of his time. It foreshadows Lenin and the Revolution of 1917, as well as the ideas of Nietzsche and Freud, and had a deep influence on writers like Thomas Mann, whose *Doctor Faustus* is a similar study of modern Germany.

While it is futile to try to express musical ideas in words, it is possible to say that my piece is a meditation on similar trends in the world of today.

In early November 2016, I had the honour to assist at a spectacular performance of my composition *Coming Together* of 1972 at the San Francisco Conservatory, with Angela Davis as the speaking soloist, a few days before the presidential elections. There was a public discussion that followed. Davis seemed to know the results already. She said that, if the Left had done its job, the present situation would not have arisen.

These and similar ideas were all going through my head as I was writing *Demons* a few months later. I am not religious, and don't know much about devils and such, but as an artist I cannot help feeling sensitive to whatever it is that awakens these ideas in humans, causing them to go crazy. I am not sure that scientists or doctors understand these things any better than writers or musicians. Perhaps, on the contrary, although we cannot explain them in rational terms, we can nevertheless throw some light on them, in our own way.

My piece is in four movements, and so is a kind of sonata, like the piece that preceded it, *Notasonata*, written for Jennifer Koh. There are periodic references to two songs throughout the piece: *Iroes*, made popular in the 1990s by the singer Maria Dimitriadis, and a song that became known during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s (notably as performed by Barbara Dane), *Freedom Is A Constant Struggle*, which also provided the title for the recent book of Angela Davis.

Thanks to a new generation of classical musicians like Benjamin Beilman, there is a revival of interest among younger players in new music that in some way continues the classical tradition. One can only hope that this trend will continue. Although Marx' analysis of capitalism as a ruthless system following its relentless course independently of human will continues to be valid, there are nonetheless reasons to think that alternatives are possible. As Mark Twain put it, prophecy is really hard, especially when it's about the future.

dedicated to Angela Davis
written for Benjamin Beilman and Orion Weiss

DEMONS

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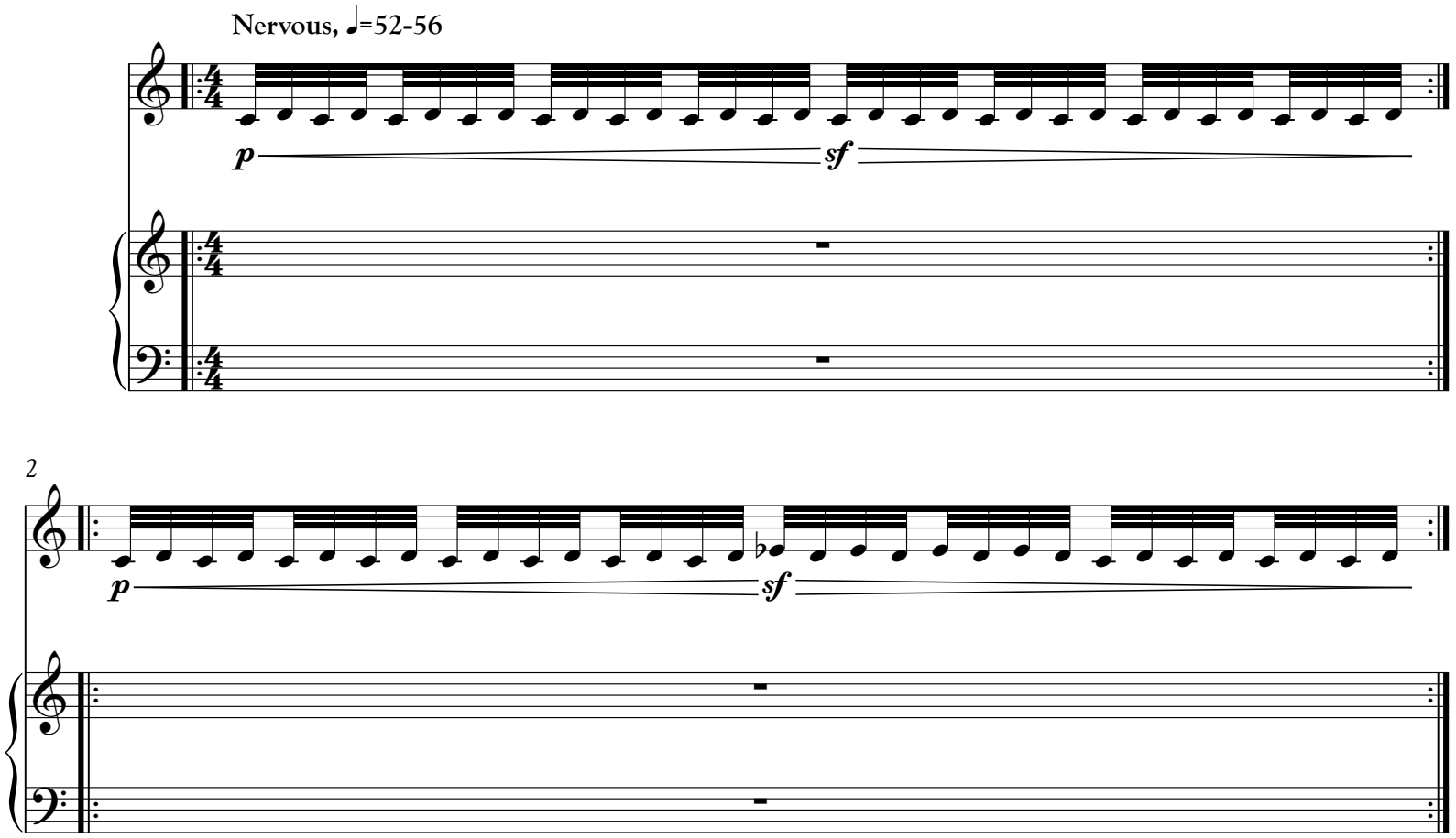
Movement I



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5

6

f

f

7

p

8

f

p

(*f*)

10

f *p*

12

f

13

p *p*

14

f *p* *f* *p* 8vb

16

f

f

(8)

18

19

20

21

p sub.

p sub.

tr tr tr tr

23

tr tr

25

f

p

f

pp

27

(*pp*)

28

(p)

29

30

f

f

32

34

p

p

36

38

40

ff

ff

p sub.

p

pp

43

f

f

tr

tr

tr

45

46

47

pp

ppp

52

50

con sord.

(*pp*)

54

pizz., senza sord.

(*pp*) *ff*

pp

una corda

57

arco

f

p *pp* *ppp*

62

p

p

64

tr

68

70

pp p mp pp

tre corde

71

pizz.

f (f) 6

mf p f (f)

74

76

77

78

arco

p *sub.*

pizz.

f *sub.*

arco, con sord.

pp *sub.*

p *sub.*

f *sub.*

p *sub.*

depress silently

80

(pp)

pp

r.h. inside the piano

(harm.)

(on the keyboard)

86

88

senza sord.

f

r.h. on the keyboard

p

mf

f

89

p sub. *f* *p sub.* *f* *p* *pizz.* *f* *f sub.*

91

arco *pizz.* *pp* *ppp* *arco* *p* *p sub.* *pp* *(pp)* *p*

95

tr *tr*

97

f *tr* *f*

98

tr

(tr)

8vb

99

tr

tr

100

(f)

101

102

tr

f ***p***

f ***p***

103

pizz.

p ***f***

f *sub.* *8va* ***ff***

104 *arco*

p *sub.*

106

con sord.

pp *col legno battuto*

p ***pp***

108

Poco rit. **A tempo**

Ped.

111

(battuto)

mute strings with finger

inside the piano, plucked

114

tratto

(𝅝 indicates to play with the fingernail)

on the keyboard

p *all notes inside the piano, tap strings*

𝅝
with pedal

118

pizz.

p

121

f

f

124

arco (ord.)

pizz.

arco

p

mute strings with finger

plucked

130

pizz.

(top staff unmuted)

all notes on the keyboard

mute strings with finger

135

arco, senza sord.

(p)

all notes inside the piano, tap strings

8vb

137

cresc. poco a poco al fine

cresc. poco a poco al fine

(8)

138

(8)

139

(8)

140

(8)

141

ff

ff

(8)

Movement II

Slow, measured but free

pp *mp* *pp*

pp *mp* *pp*

6

(*pp*) *mf*

(*pp*) *mf*

12

Rit.

8va

16

Free, very slow (senza misura)

(𝄻)

p

gl.

p *all notes inside the piano, tap strings*

Ped. *sempre*

mf

pizz. *arco* *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.* *arco*

pp

pp

8vb 8vb 8vb

17 **Measured, slow**

pizz. *arco* *pizz.*

p

p *on the keyboard*

20

22

arco

6

24

26

dim.

f

f

30

pizz.

arco

p sub.

6

3

6

p

32

33

34

35

37

38

39

40

pp

(pp)

pp

Rit.

pizz.

43 **Faster**

p *cresc.*

44

p *cresc.*

45

47

p ***pp***

p ***pp***

51

54

Rit.

58

♩=112

pizz.

f

f

63

68

8va

72

p sub.

p sub.

77

80

85

(pizz.)

Rit.

(on the keyboard)

mute strings near bridge

Movement III

Timeless (senza misura)

con sord. (arco)

2

pp

pp

una corda, *with pedal*

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

12

Rit.

Movement IV

♩=126

f

8va

ff

f

4

8va

pizz.

8

11

14

arco

mf dim.

dim.

17

8va

8va

20

pizz.

arco

p

p

23

pizz.

ff

♩=80 or slower

arco

pp *espressivo, ad lib. dynamic variations*

ff

pp *sub.*

(***pp***) *espressivo, ad lib. dynamic variations*

29

32

34

36

39

42

44

46

50

8va

57

66 Nervous, ♩=52-56

p *sf*

67

p *sf*

68

sf *sf*

69

sf *sf* *sf*

70

71

f

f

72

p

73

f

p

(*f*)

75

f

p

77

f

78

p

p

79

f

f

p

p

8vb

81

f

f

(8)

83

84

85

86

p sub.

p sub.

tr tr tr tr

88

tr tr

90

f

p

f

pp

92

(*pp*)

93

94

95

f

f

97

♩=126