

Frederic Rzewski
LOST AND FOUND
for solo percussionist
(for Jan Williams)

Instructions :

1. The performer should be naked, or nearly so.
2. You need a table large and strong enough to hold you and your weight., and a chair.
3. The throwing of the table and chair should be sudden, unexpected, violent actions.
4. The performance consists of fragments of text alternating with actions. Texts and actions should be separated by 3-5 seconds of nothing.
5. (Pause) = 6-10 seconds of nothing.
6. Texts should be delivered with no particular expression. This does not mean: without expression ; but: clearly and coldly, with a suggestion of ambiguity as to the meaning and how the performer relates to them.
7. Actions are always either: single actions (sometimes repeated) or: a sequence of events perceived as a single gesture; followed by silence leading to the next fragment of text.
8. At the beginning, the performer is seated behind the table, facing the audience.

(Text : Excerpt from letter home from Vietnam by Lieutenant Marion Lee (Sandy) Kempner of Galveston, Texas, August 7, 1966, as reprinted in The New York Times, October 1, 1984.)

(TEXT)	(Action)
I HAVE JUST GIVEN A CLASS ON AMBUSHES.	(Slam table) (Throw something down) (Scratch on table, as though writing) (Silence; stare at audience)
	(Pause)
I WAS CHOSEN BECAUSE OF MY CHARM, INTELLIGENCE,	(Beat on breast) (Pound on table: left fist, then right fist) (Scratch crotch) (Scratch head)
	(Pause)
AND MESSIANIC LIKE PERSONALITY, AND BESIDES,	(Lean back in chair, scratch armpits) (Lean forward, pound head on table) (Strike face with both hands) (Play for a few seconds on right rib cage)
	(Pause)
I AM THE ONLY GRADUATE OF THE BASIC SCHOOL	(Put left, then right foot on table) (Embrace self, with slapping sound) (Blow into left elbow – farting sound) (Scratch on table, as though writing)
	(Pause)
BESIDES THE CAPTAIN IN THE WHOLE COMPANY	(Brush thighs, from crotch to knees) (Play on cheeks, with mouth open) (Stretch arms out, then clap hands) (Slam left, then right foot on table)

(Pause; hoist self on table)

AND THEREFORE
HAVE
ALL
THE BOOKS.

(Fall into sitting position on table, cross legs)
(Pound table with both fists)
(Slap knees with both hands)
(Scratch on table, as though writing)

(Pause)

SO
I GAVE

(Slap chest)
(Roll a piece of paper into ball, throw at audience)

A BRILLIANT
DISSERTATION

(Lean forward, hit head on table)
(Play on cheeks, with mouth open)

(Pause)

ON THE FINE
ART
AND THE FINER

(Slam fists on table, hoist to crouch)
(Scratch slowly on table)
(Scratch knees-crotch-chest-shoulders-
neck-head)

POINTS

(Stand up on table)

(Pause)

OF COMMITTING
MAYHEM
FROM A HIDDEN
POSITION

(Slap face with both hands)
(Silence; stare into space)
(Slap both hands on crotch; bend forward)
(Play back sides of knees)

(Pause)

ON UNSUSPECTING
AND PROBABLY
INNOCENT
PEOPLE

(Bend forward, rub left foot on table)
(Kneel, rub left leg with both hands)
(Drop on stomach)
(Exhale loudly, mouth on table)

(Pause)

TO A SEA
OF YOUNG
AND BLANK
FACES.

(Push-up ; knock knees on table)
(Kneel ; scratch from knees up to breast)
(Slap ass)
(Slap face with both hands, covering it)

(30-50 seconds: Stay kneeling, face covered. Slowly uncover face. Get down from table, stand behind it)

AS I FINISHED
THERE WERE
RESOUNDING
CRIES

(Pound table once with right fist)
(Slap ass)
(Stomp left, then right foot)
(Hit belly with both hands; grunt)

(Pause)

OF «BRAVO!»
«ENCORE!»
ET CETERA,
FLOWERS WERE
THROWN,

(Sob once, briefly)
(Throw chair across stage)
(Silence ; stare at audience)
(Upset table)

(Pause)

AND I

(Jump)

WAS CARRIED OFF
TO MY TENT
BY MY AUDIENCE.

(Jump again, stronger)
(Stagger a few steps, jump, very hard)
Stagger into audience, flop into empty seat
or into arms of people)

(Pause)

AS I THINK
I MIGHT HAVE
STATED,

MY SERGEANT

(Still sitting, rub right leg)
(Get up ; rub left arm)
(Stomp left, then right foot; stand at
attention)
(Slap heart with right hand)

(Pause)

GOT MY PEOPLE
INTO SHAPE
AND THEY ARE NOW
OBEYING ORDERS

(March onto stage, face audience)
(Stomp left, then right foot)
(Rub belly, slowly, with satisfaction)
(Puke)

(Pause)

WITHOUT QUESTION
AS EXAMPLED
BY
THE ABOVE.

(Run into wall; return to center stage)
(Slap face)
(Hit self in stomach)
(Lie down, hit head on floor)

(Duration: 10/15 minutes)

NOTES ON LOST AND FOUND

In the fall of 1984 a monument was erected in New York City in memory of American soldiers killed in the Vietnam war, on the sides of which texts written by some of these soldiers were engraved. One of these is an excerpt from a letter to his parents written by Lieutenant Marion Lee (Sandy) Kempner of Galveston, Texas, on August 7, 1966. The text reads as follows:

"I have just given a class on ambushes. I was chosen because of my charm, intelligence, and messianic-like personality, and besides, I am the only graduate of the Basic School besides the Captain in the whole company, and therefore have all the books. So I gave a brilliant dissertation on the fine art and the finer points of committing mayhem from a hidden position on unsuspecting and probably innocent people to a sea of young and blank faces. As I finished there were resounding cries of 'Bravo!', 'Encore!', etc., flowers were thrown, and I was carried off to my tent by my audience. As I think I might have stated, my Sergeant got my people into shape and they are now obeying orders without question, as exemplified by the above."

The text was printed in the New York Times of October 1, 1984, which is where I found it. It seemed to me strangely moving. I clipped it out and saved it, with the idea that I might be able to do something with it, but without knowing exactly what. I was teaching that semester at the Yale School of Music. With the composition students I started a group, calling it the «Yale Composers' Collective». We put together a performance consisting of varied material contributed by each individual composer, arranged in some kind of order after discussion. Among other things, I submitted this text, which I had arranged as a kind of litany.

A little later, the percussionist Jan Williams asked me for a solo piece to be taken on tour, which would require a minimum of equipment to be transported. One late night in early 1985 the idea came for a piece in which the percussionist played only on his own body, while reciting the letter from Vietnam. I wrote it in a couple of hours. It was not an original idea. Although I was not thinking about it at the time, I realized later that I must have been influenced by a performance of Vinko Globokar's "Laboratorium" which I had witnessed in Toronto, in which a similar technique is used. But perhaps the idea of playing the human body, dead or alive, dates from the beginning of music.

Frederic Rzewski
(December, 1987)