

Joseph Klein

Der Leidverweser

(The Woe-administrator)

character study after Elias Canetti

for solo contrabassoon

(1998)

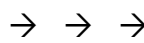
- for James Rodgers -

duration: c. 4'

Performance Notes



senza misura



gradual change from one mode of play to another



metered notation: beat units are fixed, measure units fluctuating



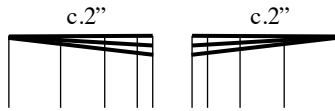
subito change from one mode of play to another



sudden microtonal inflections above/below pitch indicated, utilizing alternate fingerings

mp±

slight fluctuations around dynamic indicated (*ad libitum*)



accelerando/ritardando: number of beams indicates relative speed; approximate duration may be indicated.



durational continuum within *senza misura* section: values arranged from shortest to longest (precise durations *ad libitum*).



continuum of rests/breaks within *senza misura* section: values arranged from shortest to longest (precise durations *ad libitum*).

n.v. *o.v.* *m.v.*

vibrato continuum: *non vibrato*; *vibrato ordinario*; *molto vibrato*.



subtle and continuous timbral modifications (*ad libitum*), utilizing alternate fingerings, embouchure changes, etc.; no more than a quarter-tone fluctuation in either direction.

- Accidentals apply only to the notes they immediately precede, with the exception of repeated pitches.
- Each line of music in spatial notation is approximately 15 seconds in duration.
- The tone throughout the opening section ("Melancholy") should be continuous, with audible breaks only where indicated; circular breathing should be used if at all possible. The sustained tones must be carefully shaped and interpreted as though each is a self-contained phrase in itself.
- The tremolo in m. 34 should be played with very loud key clicks in the thumbs; while the pitches diminuendo to niente, the key clicks should remain loud, only fading out in the following measure. (Note that if the instrument does not have a low A key, the B \flat may be substituted here.)

Program Note

Der Leidverweser (*The Woe-administrator*) is the third in a series of short works for solo instrument based upon characters from *Der Ohrenzeuge: Fünfzig Charaktere* (*Earwitness: Fifty Characters*), written in 1974 by the Bulgarian-born British-Austrian novelist Elias Canetti (1905-1994). Canetti's distinctive studies incorporate poetic imagery, singular insights, and unabashed wordplay to create fifty ironic paradigms of human behavior. This collection of works, begun in 1997, was inspired by the vividly surreal depictions of Canetti's characters, and includes works for contrabass, violin, bass flute, ocarina, contrabassoon, glass harmonica, alto saxophone, trumpet, percussion, bass saxophone, guitar, and piccolo, among others. In Canetti's depiction of this character, *The Woe-administrator* "has lost all he had six times. He has known poverty and hunger; and since he was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth, he has had to make do with iron. He has always worked his way up with iron energy. No sooner did he reach the top than he lost everything again."

Der Leidverweser was composed in June of 1998 for contrabassoonist James Rodgers. The work received the 1998 El Ruiseñor Grave Prize and was first performed by Monica Fucci on 13 August 1999, for the International Double Reed Society Conference at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Der Leidveweser

(The Woe-administrator)

The woe-administrator has seen a thing or two in his life and there are good reasons why he has monopolized all the woe in the world. Wherever any horror has taken place, he was there, he was involved. Others talk about it and feel sorry about it, but he experienced it personally. He does not talk, but he knows better. How poignantly he gazes whenever one of his catastrophes is mentioned.

It began when the *Titanic* struck an iceberg. He leaped overboard, he floated in the water for sixteen hours. He never lost consciousness for an instant, he saw one person after another vanish into the water and he was the very last to be rescued.

The woe-administrator has lost all he had six times. He has known poverty and hunger; and since he was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth, he had to make do with iron. He has always worked his way up again with iron energy. No sooner did he reach the top than he lost everything again.

The woe-administrator has had several happy marriages and ought to have grandchildren and great-grandchildren by now. But all the members of his family, without exception, were snatched away from him by fatal illnesses. He had to accustom himself. His first wife, whom he cared for the most, entered medical history as the last case of the plague in Europe. And he can tell you a thing or two about leprosy, which no one around here would think possible. It happened right before his eyes: two of his daughters and half a son died of leprosy. But that did not turn him into a Weeping Willy, he took it like a man. One can understand, however, that he is not very impressed by other people's woes. He complains about nothing, he takes it upon his shoulders, he holds his tongue and smiles. When others talk a blue streak, he does listen, but let no one expect him to open up to those people who live their lives in one great woe.

The woe-administrator has a gentle way of noticing contradictions in the misery tales of other people. He does not ask a lot of questions, he keeps listening, but suddenly he corrects a date. It is quite presumptuous of someone to dare relate something that the woe-administrator has personally experienced from beginning to end. A light quiver of sarcasm will then play about his lips. Nothing at all can be sensed in his words when he expresses his condolences. It is not really mere politeness, it is stamped by his deeper knowledge, but one can guess what he is thinking. He knows them well, those robbers, who would like to pilfer each of his woeful experiences.

Recently, however, he reached the end of his rope. The name Pompeii was dropped and a thief of extraordinary format tried to tell him about those events: tell him, who was in Pompeii on that single day and was the only one able to escape! He shut that man up snidely. He simply would not stand for it. He rose to his feet and, overcome by the memories of that day, visibly excited, but not without dignity, he left the company. It did him good to perceive the awe-filled silence of the others all the way to the door.

– Elias Canetti, *Der Ohrenzeuge: Fünfzig Charaktere*
(translated by Joachim Neugroschel)

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Melancholy

2 *mp±*

3 *mf mp mf*

4 *mp mf mp*

5 *mf mf mp*

6 *mp±*

7 \uparrow $\rightarrow \rightarrow \rightarrow$ o.v. $\rightarrow \rightarrow \rightarrow$ n.v.

mf *mp* c.2"

8 [o.v. $\rightarrow \rightarrow \rightarrow$ n.v.] \uparrow \downarrow

mf *mp* *mf*

9 (n.v.) $\rightarrow \rightarrow \rightarrow$ m.v.

mf *mp±* *molto* *f*

10 waning... o.v. \uparrow \uparrow ;

f (poco morendo) *mf* *mp* *n*

11 Tentative $\text{♩} = 60$

p secco

14 Poignant (l'istesso tempo)

mp *mf*

16

mp *mf* *mp* *mf sub.* *mf* *mp*

18 *mf* *mf* *mf* *f*

20 *mf* *f* *mp* *p secco* **Tentative**

Poignant 23 *mp* *mf* *mp* *mf* *mf* *poco*

25 *p* *mp* *mf* *f* *becoming urgent...* *(poco stringendo)*

Tentative ♩ = 60 26 *p secco*

Indignant ♩ = c.90 29 *ff* *intense* *f sub.* *m.v.* *fff* *furious*

33 *frenetic* *(ff)* *n* *[FREEZE]* *molto* *(n)*

* If instrument does not have low A key, B♭ may be substituted.