

STEVEN SNOWDEN

THIS MORTAL FRAME

CELLO AND ELECTRONICS

THIS MORTAL FRAME

WRITTEN FOR SCHUYLER SLACK

THE COMMISSION AND PREMIERE PERFORMANCE OF "THIS MORTAL FRAME" HAVE BEEN MADE POSSIBLE BY A GRANT FROM THE ALLAN AND MARGOT BLANK FOUNDATION

1. SAMUEL A. SMITH RESIDENCE
2. THE CROSSING AT AQUIA CREEK
3. 2ND AND PENNSYLVANIA AVE
4. VIGILANCE COMMITTEE OFFICE

Program Notes

"Vital spark of heavenly flame, Quit, O! quit the mortal frame". Upon singing these words at Affeviar Church in Richmond, VA on Christmas day 1848, Henry Brown made a resolution that set him on a course to become one of America's most famous escaped slaves. "I would be no longer guilty of assisting those bloody dealers in the bodies and souls of men." Steadfast in his faith, Brown sought to break his own bonds and dedicate his life giving witness to the evils of slavery.

However, escaping to the North was notoriously difficult and the consequences of getting caught were dire. While working in the fields, he had an epiphany. He would ship himself from Richmond to Philadelphia in a wooden crate. With help from his friend Samuel Smith (conductor of the underground railway), arrangements were made for him to be shipped by the Adams Express Company. He was fully aware that he would most likely not survive the journey. Nevertheless, he persisted.

Over the course of Brown's 26 hour journey, he was transported by wagon, train, steam ship, and barge. In all, he was transferred from one form of transit to another over ten times, each presenting their own specific dangers of discovery. This piece looks at four of those, painting a sonic landscape based on the sounds that Brown may have heard and musically tempered by his state of mind based on his own account.

My goal for this piece is not to tell Brown's story. I don't think it's my place to do that and I highly recommend that anyone wanting to learn more should read Brown's own memoir as well as William Still's *The Underground Railroad* and Jeffrey Ruggles's extensive biography *The Unboxing of Henry Brown*. Rather, my goal is to raise awareness of Brown's significant, but often overlooked contribution to American history and the anti-slavery movement around the world.

1. Samuel A. Smith Residence - Richmond, VA

"I laid me down in my darkened home of of three feet by two and like one about to be guillotined, resigned myself to my fate." - Henry Box Brown, *Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown*

2. The Crossing at Aquia Creek - Stafford County, VA

"The box was set end down on the steamboat, putting Brown on his head, but here, wrote McKim, 'he was surrounded by a number of passengers; some of whom stood by & often sat on the box. All was quiet & if he had attempted to turn he would have been heard'" - Jeffrey Ruggles, *The Unboxing of Henry Brown*

3. 2nd Street and Pennsylvania Avenue - Washington, DC

"The box was loaded onto the freight car with Brown again placed head downwards, and the train pulled out. After a while Brown found that 'my eyes were swollen almost out of my head, and I was fast becoming insensible.'" - Jeffrey Ruggles, *The Unboxing of Henry Brown*

4. Vigilance Committee Office - Philadelphia, PA

"I had risen as if it were from the dead; I felt much more than I could readily express; but as the kindness of Almighty God had been so conspicuously shown in my deliverance, I burst forth into the following hymn of thanksgiving" - Henry Box Brown, *Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown*

Get technical info about running the electronics for this piece at
<http://www.stevensnowden.com/tech/>

CELLO

THIS MORTAL FRAME

1. SAMUEL A. SMITH RESIDENCE

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Stoic, patient $\text{♩} = 58$

Musical notation for measures 1-9. The staff is in 4/4 time. Measures 1-5 contain a melodic line with a slur and a fermata over the first measure. A box labeled "One bar of click track only" is positioned over measure 1. Dynamics range from *ppp* to *f*. Measure 6 contains a triplet of eighth notes. Measure 7 contains a quarter rest. Measure 8 contains a quarter rest. Measure 9 contains a triplet of eighth notes.

Musical notation for measures 10-14. The staff is in bass clef. Measures 10-14 contain a steady bass line of quarter notes with a "+" above each note. Dynamics are marked *p* always.

Musical notation for measures 15-20. Measure 15 is boxed. Measures 15-20 contain a steady bass line of quarter notes with a "+" above each note. Dynamics are marked *(p)*. The word "arco" is written above the staff. The lower staff contains a melodic line with dynamics *pp* < *p*, *pp* < *p*, *pp*, and *pp*.

Musical notation for measures 21-26. Measures 21-26 contain a steady bass line of quarter notes with a "+" above each note. Dynamics are marked *p*, *pp* < *p*, and *mp*.

1. SAMUEL A. SMITH RESIDENCE

31

28

pp < p

34

p < mp

mp > p < mp

40

p < mp

pp

44

mp

pp < p

pp < p

CELLO

THIS MORTAL FRAME

2. THE CROSSING AT AQUIA CREEK

♩ = 150

12 Tolling, incessant

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2

1

About 15 seconds of audio only Click starts here *ffp* *ffp* *ffp* *ffp*

16

mp *ffp* *ffp* *ffp* *ffp* *ffp* *ff* *pp*

23

ff *ff* *ff* *ff* *ff*

28

ffp *ffp* *ffp* *ffp* *ffp* *ffp*

35

34

ff *ff* *ff*

37

ff *ff* *ff*

40

ff *ff* *ff*

2. The Crossing at Aquia Creek

43

Musical staff 43: Treble clef, 2/4 time signature. Measures 43-45 show eighth-note patterns with slurs and accents. Measure 46 changes to 3/4 time. Measure 47 changes to 4/4 time.

46

Musical staff 46: Treble clef, 4/4 time signature. Measures 46-48 show eighth-note patterns with slurs and accents. Measure 49 changes to 3/4 time. Measure 50 changes to 4/4 time.

49

Musical staff 49: Treble clef, 4/4 time signature. Measures 49-51 show eighth-note patterns with slurs and accents. Measure 52 changes to 3/4 time. Measure 53 changes to 7/8 time.

52

Musical staff 52: Treble clef, 3/4 time signature. Measures 52-54 show eighth-note patterns with slurs and accents. Measure 55 changes to 4/4 time.

54

Musical staff 54: Treble clef, 4/4 time signature. Measures 54-56 show eighth-note patterns with slurs and accents. Measure 57 changes to 3/4 time. Measure 58 changes to 2/4 time. Measure 59 changes to 3/4 time. Measure 60 changes to 3/8 time.

57

Musical staff 57: Treble clef, 3/4 time signature. Measures 57-60 show eighth-note patterns with slurs and accents. Measure 61 changes to 4/4 time. Measure 62 changes to 6/8 time.

60

62

Musical staff 60: Treble clef, 6/8 time signature. Measures 60-62 show eighth-note patterns with slurs and accents. Measure 63 has a whole note with a fermata. Measure 64 has a half note with a fermata. Measure 65 has a quarter note with a fermata. Measure 66 has a quarter note with a fermata. Dynamic markings: *ffp*.

64

Musical staff 64: Treble clef, 4/4 time signature. Measure 64 has a quarter rest, then an eighth note. Measure 65 has a whole rest. Measure 66 has a quarter note. Measure 67 has a quarter note. Measure 68 has a quarter note. Measure 69 has a quarter note. Measure 70 has a quarter note. Dynamic markings: *ffp*.

70 **1**
ffp ff *p* *ffp* *ffp*

75 *ffp* *ffp* *ffp* *ffp* *ffp* *ff*

79 *ff*

87

98 **104** Hushed, anxious
fff *ppp*

105 *pp*

107 *p* *mp*

109 *ppp* **1**

2. The Crossing at Aquia Creek

112 *pizz.* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mp* *arco* *ppp* *pp*

115 *p* *mp*

117 *mf*

119 *ppp* *pp* *mp* *pp*

123 *mf* *p* *pp* *ppp* *arco*

127 *pp* *p*

129 *mp* *ppp*

132 *ppp* *mf* *ff* *f* **134** *Prone to violence*

135

mp *ppp*

138

ppp

141

mf

143

pp

145

ff *mp* *ff*

149

pizz.

p *mp* *pp*

arco

152

mf *ff*

156

mf *mp* *ff*

163 Brutal, relentless

160 **2**

p *ffp* *ffp* *ffp* *ffp*

166 **1**

ffp *ffp* *ffp* *ffp* *ffp*

172

ff *ffp* *ffp* *ff*

177

180

183

186

189

192

195 198

fff

203

fff

213

216

220

fff ...20 seconds of audio only

3. 2ND AND PENNSYLVANIA AVE.

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Cello

Dazed ♩ = 60

mp *seagull effect* *p*

Cello

8

III, IV - Harmonic gliss effect (free bow)

p

Cello

10

III, IV - Harmonic gliss effect (free bow)

p

Cello

14

15

S.T. — II

p *pp*

Cello

16

over pressure bow

S.P. → N

harmonic gliss with circular bow

ff *pp* *mf*

3. 2ND AND PENNSYLVANIA AVE.

Cello

19 *p*

4

Cello

23 *p* *ff*

II
S.T. → S.P. → N S.P. 5

III, IV - Harmonic gliss effect (free bow)

Cello

28 *p*

4

Cello

33 *f* *p*

34 S.P. → N S.T.

harmonic gliss with circular bow

Cello

40 *mf* *p*

→ S.P.

gradually increasing bow pressure

Cello

43 *ff*

4

4. VIGILANCE COMMITTEE OFFICE

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Restless ♩ = 68

Cello

7

14

15 ♩ = 102

Cello

20

23

24

25

4. VIGILANCE COMMITTEE OFFICE

2

Cello 26

Cello 27

Cello 28

mp

Cello 29

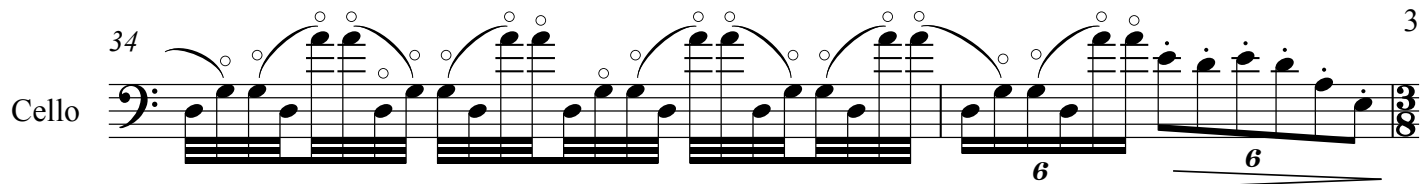
Cello 30

Cello 31

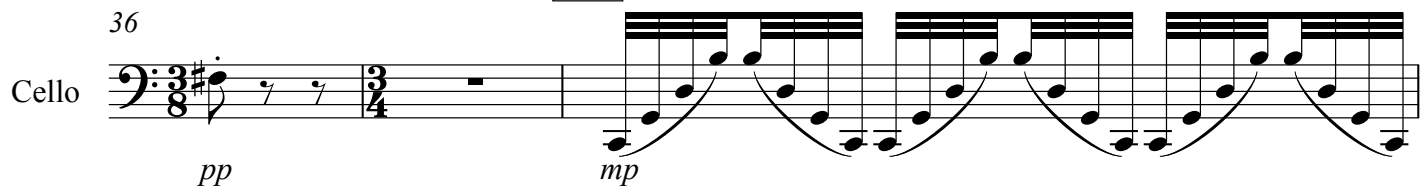
Cello 32

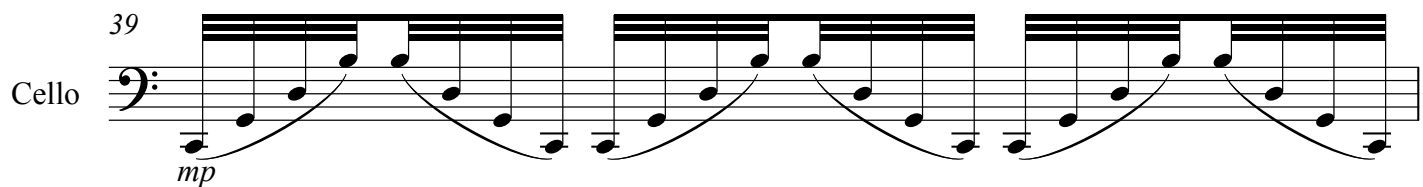
Cello 33

4. VIGILANCE COMMITTEE OFFICE

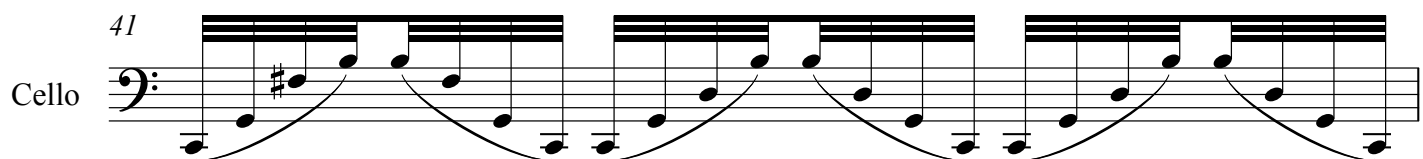
Cello 34 

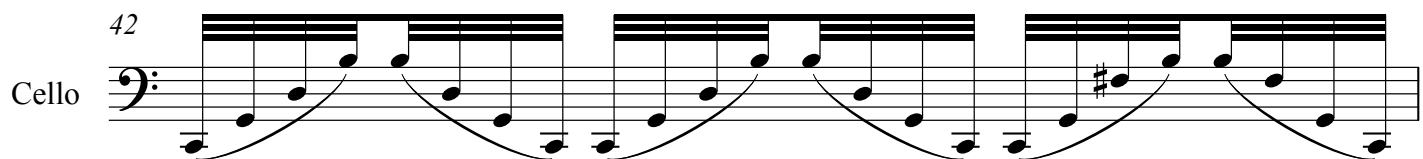
38 Churning

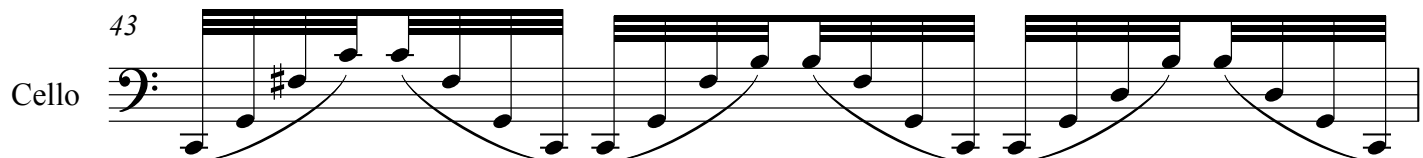
Cello 36 

Cello 39 

Cello 40 

Cello 41 

Cello 42 

Cello 43 

Cello 44 

4. VIGILANCE COMMITTEE OFFICE

4

45 Cello

46 Cello

47 Cello

48 Cello

49 Cello

50 Cello

51 Cello

52 Cello

53 Cello

54 Cello

55 Cello

56 Cello

57 Cello

58 Cello

59 Cello

4. VIGILANCE COMMITTEE OFFICE

6

60 Cello

61 Cello

62 Cello

63 Cello

mf

64 Cello

65 Cello

66 Cello

67

Cello

68

Cello

69

Cello

70

Struggling to rise above the din

Cello

f

4. VIGILANCE COMMITTEE OFFICE

8

71

Cello

72

Cello

73

Cello

ff

74

Cello

fff

$\frac{2}{4}$

75 Like an expressive church choir ♩ = 58

Cello

mp molto rubato, little to no vibrato

Cello

Cello

Cello

Fading into the distance

Cello

pp