

On the Stroke of Midnight for solo horn is dedicated to Gene Berger. The music traverses a wide variety of atmospheres, from ranging from gentle, mysterious passages, to intense and powerful exclamations. Throughout there is a sense of mysticism, as if an incantation is taking place around the arrival of midnight. Various extended techniques enhance the traditional horn sound, such as stopped effects, simultaneous singing and playing, flutter tonguing, growling, etc. The composition may be performed 3 different ways:

1. As traditional concert piece – Although there are extra-musical connotations suggested by the title and structure of the composition, the work is designed so that it may be performed as a concert piece in the traditional manner.

2. As theatre piece – At letter B (m. 47) the music becomes dodecaphonic, reflecting that the midnight hour has arrived. Immediately preceding this section in measure 46, off stage chimes (tubular bells) may be used to imitate a tolling tower bell (or a grandfather's clock, etc.) Once the chimes finish, the player resumes playing the music. The performer may exercise his/her creativity in staging this theatrical component with relevant props, special lighting, some acting, etc. In general, a subtle, mysterious, atmosphere should project an aura of mysticism, as in the incantation of a sorcerer in a ritual.

3. As an hour-specific piece (for the fun of it by oneself, or with a group of people) – The performer begins performing the composition at 11:58:25 PM and arrives at measure 46 a few seconds before midnight. When a clock indicates 12 AM, proceed with section B. Please read #2 above for additional ideas. It would be especially effective if one were playing in the audible range of a chiming clock or a bell tower. Note: Depending on how the performer shapes the tempi leading up to measure 46, there may be a pause before the stroke of midnight occurs. That is fine, it will help build suspense as long as the atmosphere of an incantation is maintained. (Refer to the last sentence of #2.)

Regarding the simultaneous singing and playing: When simultaneously singing and playing notes, the performer should strive to blend the two tone colors in a way that enables the listener to hear one homogeneous timbre, rather than two separate tone colors.

Regarding the use of chimes: As noted above, tubular bells may be employed. Another possibility is to use prerecorded bell sounds such as those coming from a bell tower. If the performer opts to use a prerecorded sound, if possible it should come from a local tower such as one at a church or on a college campus. The midnight renditions of bell towers vary greatly, so choosing one from a local tower not only helps narrow the selection process, in the minds of some it will also make the performance a bit more site-specific and "genuine."

Duration: 4'53"

About the Composer

Howard J. Buss (b.1951) is recognized internationally as a composer of contemporary classical music. His compositions have received critical acclaim and have been performed in more than 50 countries. His music is frequently featured at national and international music conventions and festivals. Faculty musicians from major universities as well as current and former members of organizations such as The Boston Symphony Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, Buffalo Philharmonic, Israel Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, Vancouver Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, New York Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, etc have performed them. A copy of his patriotic composition *Fanfares* is included in the Presidential Collection of Ronald Reagan. Buss' more than 190 published works include instrumental solos, chamber music, symphonic, choral, and band compositions.

Buss has received numerous awards and his commissioned works include original compositions as well as arrangements. His works are frequently included and analyzed in doctoral dissertations, lectures, professional music journals, and music literature bibliographies, and his compositions have been recorded on the Albany, Bottega Discantica (Italy), Crystal, Capstone, DUX (Poland), Equilibrium, HoneyRock, IBS Classical (Spain), PL Productions, C. Alan Publications, Ravello (PARMA), and Urania (Italy) labels.

Howard J. Buss received his B.A. in Applied Music from West Chester University, M.M. in Performance and M.M. in Composition from Michigan State University, and D.M.A. in Composition from the University of Illinois. He is the founder and editor of Brixton Publications (ASCAP) and Buss Publications (BMI), which publish contemporary American concert music.

for Gene Berger

On the Stroke of Midnight

for solo horn

Howard J. Buss (ASCAP)

Horn in F

$\text{♩} = 112$

bouché-cuivré -----
stopped

The first staff of music is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It begins with a quarter note on G4, followed by a quarter note on A4, and then a triplet of eighth notes on B4, C5, and D5. A slur covers the triplet and the following quarter note on B4. The dynamics are marked *mp* at the start and *mf* at the end of the slur. The staff concludes with a half note on G4, marked *fp*, and a half note on A4, marked *ff*. Above the half notes are the markings *bouché-cuivré* and *stopped*, with a dashed line and a plus sign above each note.

The second staff begins with a measure rest followed by a quarter note on G4, marked *mp*. Above it are the markings *ord.* and *open*. The staff continues with a quarter note on A4, a quarter note on B4, and a quarter note on C5, all marked *f*. This is followed by a quarter note on B4, marked *pp*, with the marking *lightly* above it. The staff then has a quarter note on A4, marked *p*, and a quarter note on G4, marked *f*. The final measure contains a quarter note on F#4, marked *mp*, and a quarter note on G4, marked *<*.

The third staff begins with a measure rest followed by a sixteenth-note triplet on G4, marked *ff*. Above it are the markings *f.t.* and *rip*. The staff continues with a sixteenth-note triplet on A4, marked *ff*, and a sixteenth-note triplet on B4, marked *ff*. This is followed by a quarter note on A4, marked *p*, and a quarter note on G4, marked *p*. The staff then has a quarter note on F#4, marked *p*, and a quarter note on G4, marked *p*. The final measure contains a quarter note on F#4, marked *p*, and a quarter note on G4, marked *p*.

A

lilting, playful

mf

28

mp *mf* *mp* *mf* *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

35

p *mp* *mf* *p* *mp*

39

f *pp*

B

optional measure
(see below)

♩ = 76

*lontano**ord.*

46

f *ppp* *f*

If performing with the chimes, they sound at this point.
 If playing the time-sensitive version (#3*) pause in this measure
 and perform the first note of the next measure with the stroke
 of midnight. *See the preface to the score.