

# **Six Bagatelles**

*after prints of Robert Motherwell*

for piano trio

Karim Al-Zand  
(2018)

## PROGRAM NOTE

*Six Bagatelles* is inspired by the work of abstract artist Robert Motherwell (1915–1991). The six short pieces which make up this trio for piano, violin and cello are each named after an image by the American artist. The prints were chosen for their vibrant and contrasting color and their strong iconic character. My bagatelles sometimes depict the artworks musically, but more often spring from my subjective impressions of them—their atmosphere, mood, emotion or “feel”—or occasionally from a particular technical device the artist uses. Motherwell once remarked: “Make no mistake, abstract art is a form of mysticism.” In some ways, modern concert music can be similarly mystical: its “meaning” shrouded, its gestures symbolic, and its narrative highly interpretive. More than most other pieces I have written, it is this elusive (and allusive) aspect of music and art that *Six Bagatelles* centers around.

“Mezzotint in Indigo” is part of Motherwell’s “Open” series, which makes use of vivid colors backdrops to a rectangular shadow-like line. My bagatelle has the strings form a vibrating backdrop, while the piano “carves up” the musical space with a line of stark chords. A tinge of the blues in this bagatelle reflects my association of “indigo” with Ellington’s classic masterpiece *Mood Indigo*.

The central figures of “Orange Lyric” are typical of Motherwell in their thick brush technique, and pliable calligraphic lines. The bagatelle is lyrical as well, in the violin, with the piano offering curved arabesques.

“Gauloises Bleues” is again an iconic Motherwell image. The paper packaging for Gauloises cigarettes, with its pale “French blue” color, were a constant fascination for the artist. The brand, smoked by the likes of Satre, Picasso, Brigid Bardot and John Lennon, symbolized a hip, cosmopolitan Parisian vibe. Musically, the piano is cool and detached here, unmoved by the café groove in the strings.

“Yellow Chord” uses a single harmony and figure in the piano, repeated trance-like, while the strings sing stirring echoes of one another.

“Three Forms in Red” —both the print and the bagatelle—presents three contrasting gestures side-by-side.

The last image reverts to black, part of a series of book prints the artist made for a volume by Octavio Paz. The bagatelle “Black Elegy Returning Black” is designated a *Nocturne*, a title Motherwell also used frequently. The piece makes veiled reference to Chopin’s *Nocturne* Op. 27/1, in the manner of an artistic collage.

*Six Bagatelles* was commissioned for *Musiq̃a* by Carrie Shoemake in memory of Ed Shoemake, a longtime supporter of *Musiq̃a* and former chair of our board of directors. His love of music and art (particularly the work of Motherwell), his dedication to *Musiq̃a* and his immense generosity of spirit were an inspiration to all of us.

1. Mezzotint in Indigo
2. Orange Lyric
3. Gauloises Bleues
4. Yellow Chord
5. Three Forms in Red
6. Black Elegy Returning Black (Nocturne)

## DURATION

ca. 10 minutes

**Robert Motherwell (1915–1991)**

1. Mezzotint in Indigo
2. Orange Lyric
3. Gauloises Bleues
4. Yellow Chord
5. Three Forms in Red
6. Black Elegy Returning Black (Nocturne)



5



2



4



6



3



1

commissioned for Musica by Carrie Shoemake in memory of Ed Shoemake

# Six Bagatelles

after prints of Robert Motherwell

## 1. Mezzotint in Indigo

for piano trio

Karim Al-Zand  
(2018)

Very Quickly; quietly buzzing ♩=176; ♩=352

Violin

sempre sul IV - - - - -  
evenly, in lockstep suddenly frozen

pp cresc. poco a poco to m. 44 - - - - - (sfpp) - - - - - (sfpp) sim. sfpp

Cello

pp cresc. poco a poco to m. 44 - - - - - (sfpp) - - - - - (sfpp) sim. sfpp

Piano

Very Quickly; quietly buzzing ♩=176; ♩=352

9

Vln.

Vc.

Pno.

pp p poco cresc.

above the fray, floating

Sust. to the end

17

Vln.

Vc.

Pno.

(12) (12)

mp decresc. pp

(sim.)

26

Vln. *sfp* *sfp* *sfp*

Vc. *sfp* *sfp* *sfp*

Pno. *pp* *pp*

*sta - -*

35

Vln. *sfp* *sfp* *sfp* *sfp*

Vc. *sfp* *sfp* *sfp* *sfp*

Pno. *poco cresc.*

42

Vln. *sfp* *mf* *sfp* *sfp* *decresc. poco a poco* *sfp*

Vc. *sfp* *mf* *sfp* *sfp* *decresc. poco a poco* *sfp*

Pno. *mf* *poco decresc.*

51

Vln. *sfpp*

Vc. *sfpp*

Pno. *p* *pp* *pp* *8<sup>a</sup>*

59

Vln. *sfpp* *sfpp* *sfpp* *sfpp*

Vc. *sfpp* *sfpp* *sfpp* *sfpp*

Pno. *poco decresc.* *pp*

67

Vln. *pp* *decresc.* *ppp*

Vc. *pp* *decresc.* *ppp*

Pno. *pp* *ppp*



# 3. Gautoises Bleues

Steady; a hip, infectious groove ♩=144

Violin

Cello

Piano

Even; like clockwork ♩=144

15<sup>a</sup>

*pp* no accents  
delicately ping-pong

(2+2+3)

(2+2+3)

(senza sord.) pizz. sempre\* *gliss.*

*f*

\* very vigorous throughout; let all notes ring; "jazz style"; use open strings where possible

stopping abruptly

④

Vln.

Vc.

(2+3+2+3+2+2)

[16]

(2+2+3+2+3+2)

(do not re-pluck)

*subito p*

*subito p*

*f*

⑦

Vln.

Vc.

Pno.

*f*

*ff*

interrupting

15<sup>a</sup>

*pp*

⑧

Vln.

Vc.

*f*

11

Vln. *subito p* *f* *ff* *insistent* (4+3+3+2+2)

Vc. *subito p* *f* *ff* *insistent*

Pno. *pp* *15<sup>a</sup>*

16

Vln. (3+3+2) *pp* *15<sup>a</sup>*

Vc. *pp* *15<sup>a</sup>*

Pno. *pp* *15<sup>a</sup>*

*molto vib.* *fpp* *cresc. molto*

22

Vln. *ff* *pizz.* *in time* *arco* *f* *15<sup>a</sup>*

Vc. *ff* *f* *15<sup>a</sup>*

Pno. *pp* *15<sup>a</sup>*

the piano begins where indicated; though the piano and strings play at the same eighth-note tempo, no attempt should be made to coordinate the two parts exactly

25

Vln. *subito p* *f* *ff*

Vc. *subito p* *f* *ff*

Pno. *15<sup>a</sup>*

28

Vln.

Vc.

Pno.

34

Vln.

Vc.

Pno.

extra notes as needed for the strings to finish;  
 stop suddenly after the violin arrives at m. 34;  
 the violin crescendo begins after the piano stops

# 4. Yellow Chord

Slowly; trance-like, but gradually building in intensity ♩ = 76

[14] (4+3+4+3)

Violin

Cello

Piano

sordino  $\vee$

arco sordino  $\vee$

*ppp* <sup>\*</sup> *crescendo poco a poco*

*pp*

*ppp* *crescendo poco a poco*

*pp*

*gently tolling*

\* *espres.*, pull back dynamically on the longer notes; effect a gradual crescendo to m. 17

⑤

Vln.

Vc.

Pno.

*pp*

⑧

Vln.

Vc.

Pno.

senza sordino  $\vee$

*mp*

*mp*

11

Vln. *mf*

Vc. *mf* senza sordino

Pno.

poco a poco allargando

14

Vln. *f*

Vc. *f*

Pno.

17

Vln. *ff* (trem.) ten. repeat, as fast as possible (not co-ordinated) *ffp* *ppp*

Vc. *ff* (trem.) ten. repeat, as fast as possible (not co-ordinated) *ffp* *ppp*

Pno. *ff*

# 5. Three Forms in Red

## FIRST FORM

Quickly; a lively, quirky dance ♩=112 (♩=224)

Violin *poco f* sul pont. in lockstep

Cello *poco f* sul pont. in lockstep

Piano *poco f* in lockstep

③ Vln.

Vc.

Pno.

## SECOND FORM

Boldly; a triumphant, clarion call (♩=112)

⑤ Vln. *ord.*  $\frac{2+3+3+2}{8}$

Vc. *ord.* *ff*  $\frac{2+3+3+2}{8}$

Pno. *ff* *thundering*  $\frac{2+3+3+2}{8}$

9

Vln.

Vc.

Pno.

(8<sup>b</sup>)

8<sup>b</sup>

8<sup>b</sup>

8<sup>b</sup>

8<sup>b</sup>

THIRD FORM

Still; a quietly ticking clock (♩ = 149)

13

Vln.

Vc.

Pno.

(8<sup>b</sup>)

8<sup>b</sup>

pizz.

f

molto decresc.

frozen

p

pizz.

f

molto decresc.

frozen

p

(as before)

17

Vln.

Vc.

Pno.

frozen

p

arco

sul pont.

poco f

arco

sul pont.

poco f

frozen

p

arco

sul pont.

poco f

8<sup>a</sup>

8<sup>b</sup>

21

Vln.

Vc.

Pno.

(8<sup>a</sup>)

(8<sup>b</sup>)

23

(as before)

pizz.

Vln.

Vc.

Pno.

(8<sup>a</sup>)

(8<sup>b</sup>)

*f* *molto decresc.* *p*

*f* *molto decresc.* *p*

*p*

27

(as before)

arco sul pont.

Vln.

Vc.

Pno.

(8<sup>a</sup>)

(8<sup>b</sup>)

*poco f* *ff*

*poco f* *ff*

*poco f* *ff*

ord.

ord.

31

Vln.

Vc.

Pno.

(8<sub>b</sub>)

8<sub>b</sub>

8<sub>b</sub>

8<sub>b</sub>

34

Vln.

Vc.

Pno.

(8<sub>b</sub>)

8<sub>b</sub>

pizz.

*f* *molto decresc.* *p*

*f* *molto decresc.* *p*

38

Vln.

Vc.

Pno.

arco sul pont.

*poco f*

arco sul pont.

*poco f*

8<sup>a</sup>

*poco f*

*p*

*pizz.*

*pizz.*

*p*

8<sub>b</sub>

in time (7.)

# 6. Black Elegy Returning Black (Nocturne)

Slowly; mournful, though the darkness lifts in the end  $\text{♩} = 63$  repeat 3 times [a tempo]

\*Chopin, Nocturne, Op.27/1

Violin: 1x tacet; 2x, 3x: play

Cello: 1x, 2x tacet; 3x: play

Piano: *pp* hushed molto legato

*molto*  $\text{♩}$  (blurry)  $\rightarrow$   
Una Corda  $\rightarrow$

[12/8] *molto espres.* sempre sul IV  $\rightarrow$

[12/8] *pp* molto espres.

④ Vln. *molto ritenuto* *molto ritard.* 3rd x to  $\emptyset$   
warming

Vc.

Pno.

harmony "clears" here  $\wedge$

$\emptyset$  Coda

①7 a tempo, but a little slower ( $\text{♩} = 58$ ) *molto ritenuto* *ritard.* -----

Vln. *decresc.*

Vc. *decresc.*

Pno. *decresc.*