Critical Apathy

for wind quintet, piano, and narrator(s)

by David John Roche
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Political organisations and businesses manufacture false or misleading narratives to nefarious, illegal ends. How can one attempt to process the ubiquitous, intimidatingly vast, and often contradictory streams of dangerous information that pervade our current culture, negatively influence our politics, and pollute our ability to understand our world? In Critical Apathy, Tom Clucas’s Poem – written for this piece - is combined with ensemble music, presenting a dialogue critical of the apathy, hypocrisy, and violence of our world.

In this composition I explore the idea of non-linear warfare: a method of purposely creating political apathy in populations by disseminating seemingly conflicting streams of information. In tandem with this I was also strongly influenced by the staggering appropriation of meme culture by governments and also, later on, the alternative right. I find the flippant and childish statements broadcast by organizations – some state run - in some of the most powerful countries in the world frightening and absolutely bizarre. My goal was to musically represent the deeply insidious role that politically-minded people in high-power positions have in bullying and controlling journalists and media outlets, I also wanted to represent the result of the strategic implementation of this informational static has on the populace.

Throughout Critical Apathy I alter and transform musical ideas in a manner that causes the original source to become twisted and obscured. This process becomes more extreme and eventually leads to a final, violent, but unrelated musical statement that represents the resultant - desired - apathy of living under the communicational control of states that disseminate their information in such a manner. It is of particular importance that the main thematic material is quite light-hearted, with strange, sometimes a little jarring, gradual changes underneath. This reflects the idea that although the manner in which the media disperses information to us may seem inconsequential there are actions beneath the surface that reflect an appalling abuse of information.

**Ensemble**

1 flute
1 oboe
1 clarinet in Bb
1 horn in F
1 bassoon
1 piano
1-2 narrator(s)

**Note to narrator(s)**

At the points indicated on the score (bars 79 and 91) the narrator(s) must read out the appropriate texts. These should be read out freely but must end on, or slightly before, the points indicated on the score. The texts are printed on page ii.

This score is in C with all instruments sounding as written

Duration: approximately 7 minutes
Texts

Both poems are extracted from *Escalate*, written by Tom Clucas

**Poem 1:**
Words escalate wars doomed to be repeated,
With viral views mutating as retweeted:
They keep the peace with drones and think-tanks,
The civil lies parading, closing ranks.
Our deep-sea prejudices prove unmappable
And yet our lofty leaders seem unflappable;
I dread to think what space-time still keeps furled.

**Poem 2:**
Bullets, like light, find home sooner or later
Why cling to conscious atolls in big data?
Did trenches make more order out of death?
Give up platonic forms, all truth is breath,
Inchoate, murky: such the human heart,
It’s necro-economics, play your part.
Who knows, indifference might just save the world.

*Escalate* by Tom Clucas

**Words escalate wars doomed to be repeated,**
Bullets, like light, find home sooner or later
**With viral views mutating as retweeted:**
Why cling to conscious atolls in big data?
**They keep the peace with drones and think-tanks,**
Did trenches make more order out of death?
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Give up platonic forms, all truth is breath,
**Our deep-sea prejudices prove unmappable**
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**And yet our lofty leaders seem unflappable;**
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Who knows, indifference might just save the world.
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DAVID JOHN ROCHE
JULY 2016
Silly, clunky

Pno.

Silly, clunky

mp cheeky

mp cheeky