TEN ACRE RIOTS!

for solo piano
by David John Roche
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In *Ten Acre Riots!* I wanted to musically represent some of the narratives and arguments expressed by people in divided and alienated cultures – attitudes that sometimes lead to extreme, violent behaviors. The metaphorical voices that you may hear in this piece were strongly influenced by the discourse surrounding Brexit campaigning in South Wales in general and a series of riots that took place in Tredegar, a small, working class, and deindustrialized town in a valley of South Wales. In Tredegar there was an election riot in 1868, a major riot against Irish immigrants in 1882, and an anti-Jewish riot in 1911. In English Tredegar means ‘ten-acre town’, hence the title of this piece. The voices we hear in this composition reflect tropes found in discussions of each of these riots and discussions of Brexit; light-hearted and delicate figures turn into bickering and attacking gestures depicting the politician, pub-bound citizen – of which I am one (bars 1-9); quiet gestures are washed away by louder voices acting as a metaphor for the local political figureheads capitalizing on these peoples’ feelings and ignoring the weak and desperate (bars 10-12); nostalgic melodies slip through the texture - an emblem of the fading voices of older generations (bars 60-96); and violent gestures seep away only to be repeated again and again – just louder, signifying the casual but intense violence of the local political extreme (bars 111-141). Not all of the voices represented are brash and serious but they all contributed to the sociological and political sphere of each riot and the narratives surrounding the Brexit debate. They must not be ignored if one is to grasp an understanding of why communities such as these continue to commit such seemingly gratuitous acts of self-harm – this is part of what I wanted to draw attention to in *Ten Acre Riots!*

The deep resentment, anger, fear, and abandonment felt by the perpetrators of these riots is something that is still present in parts of South Wales today. A huge proportion of the people living in phenomenally disadvantaged areas do not receive the support they need, they do not receive the support that they are desperately asking for, and they feel discarded by their elected officials. At the time of writing, Merthyr Tydfil, a neighboring town, has one of the lowest life expectancies in the UK, part of the ‘unbearable sadness of the Walsh Valleys’ (BBC News). The current sociological state of being – particularly an anger at what is considered to be The Establishment - is intensified and reinforced by a rich, recent history of industry-oriented abuse and negligence (mine closures and a subsequent lack of re-development) that is seen as an extension of patterns of exploitation from further in to Wales’ past (a famous exploration of earlier industrial misdeeds can be found in the novel *Rape of the Fair Country*). Even the word ‘Welsh’ evidences a level of prejudice as it is derived from an Old English term for ‘foreigner’ – ‘Welsh’ is not a Welsh language word. It is perhaps hardly surprising that parts of these communities have acted in such an appalling, reactionary manner given that they have suffered so heavily for such a long time.

The continuing mistreatment of the UK’s poorest has an impact outside the poverty of the South Wales Valleys. In recent years there has been a resurgence of racism, xenophobia, nationalism, and a lurch to the political right. This is overlooking the self-sabotage of incidents such as the Brexit vote (Welsh communities were among those that benefitted most significantly from European Union funding). It is imperative that we listen to the voices of these communities and do our best to understand and help them rather than ignoring them and marveling at their extreme views and desire for change – this holds true for the enormous number of communities suffering across the UK.

Notes on the score

**Harmonics**

In *Ten Acre Riots!* you will be asked to perform 5 different harmonics; these can be found in bars 125-126, 136-137, 142-144, and 149-150. The sounding pitch of a harmonic is given in the upper stave and the key that you must depress is indicated in the lower stave. I would strongly advise the performer to mark the nodes they must touch on the string using small stickers. 3 harmonics must be performed on the lowest A of the piano and, of all the harmonics you must play, the only one that I have not illustrated in a diagram below is the 5th partial (bars 92-96) on the lowest A string.

**Harmonics: the unusual hand position at bars 137,143, and 149**

The image below provides you with a fingering suggestion regarding the chords built of harmonics.
Harmonics: Harmonic A (bars 93, 126, and 150)
The following diagram indicates where to place your finger to make this harmonic sound. This sound is very high and one can very clearly hear the beat frequencies interacting. In my sketches I labeled this as the ‘laser sound’ due to its unusual qualities. Please contact the composer if you would like a sound file of this for comparison.

String bending (bars 92-96, 125-126, 131-132, 136-137, 142-143, and 149)
In order to achieve the microtonal bends indicated on the score you must first finger the indicated harmonic, then depress the key and push your finger downwards (left or right will dampen the note). Be firm and try to achieve as much of a bend as possible.

String Dampening (bars 131, 138, and 135)
An ‘x’ on the stave is an indication to dampen the string with three fingers. Try to make the sound as pitchless and percussive as possible.

*Ten Acre Riots!* was written for Benjamin Powell as part of the Psappha Composing for Piano scheme. This piece lasts approximately 8 minutes.

Contact the composer at d_roche@hotmail.co.uk
Ten Acre Riots!

for solo piano

dedicated to Benjamin Powell and Psappha

DAVID JOHN ROCHE
JUNE 2016-DECEMBER 2016

s=105 Absolutely metronomic (where possible)

mf manic and playful

(LH loco)
Manic and playful

\( q = 105 \) Tempo 1

Mumbling, becoming mechanical

\( q = 60 \) Slow, looming

5th partial (5P)

Harmonic A (HA) * 

See notes on score

*see notes on score