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## triPoe:try

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Mixed choir. Texts by Poe, Cummings and Mallarmé.

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Bruno Ruviaro

# triPoe:try

for mixed choir

(2003)

texts by  
Edgar Allan Poe  
Stéphane Mallarmé  
e. e. cummings

## GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- \* The narrator should preferably be an actor. If the person is to be chosen from among the choir members, the selection should be determined by who is best able to act and narrate passages; also, if possible, choose a bass voice.
- \* Some singers may hold tuning forks to help in finding the notes in the middle of spoken passages.
- \* The conductor (or a director, if available) should decide about the details of the theatrical aspects of the piece. The general scene directions below may be adapted or changed according to each ensemble and each performance.
- \* When needed, a short guide to pronunciation of phonemes is provided at the top of score. This is not strictly the IPA (International Phonetic Association) standards, but rather is an adapted version of it, to meet the necessities of this piece and to make reading more straightforward.
- \* Short, normal and long fermatas, respectively:



**PAGE 1** – Nobody on stage, blackout. The narrator walks in toward the center, holding a lantern, coming from stage left (left from his point of view, right from the audience’s). He starts speaking while still walking. The choir enters the stage irregularly from both sides, each individual — if possible — with a small flashlight pointed at his/her own eyes. According to the score, singers are already whispering upon walking onto the stage.

**PAGE 2** – Eventually all singers reach their standard choral position. The narrator leaves the center of the stage during the second block of text on page 2. He goes to a chair, which should be positioned somewhat diagonally stage right (not facing the audience directly), and a little apart from the choir. The narrator sits. He continues to read the tale with a hardly audible voice, as if reading or thinking to himself. He should always be doing this during the piece, except for his “solo” moments indicated in the score. From page 2 to page 8 theater lights fade in gradually on the choir.

**PAGES 9 to 13** – The female’s French text: as a soloist, she may take a step forward from the choir. During her scene, she may walk from one side to another, either in front of or among the other singers, as the laughs increase in volume and density.

**PAGE 14** – The narrator’s solo. He leaves his seat and walks again to center-front of the stage. During his block of text on page 15, he returns to his seat, finishing the solo when already sat down again.

**PAGE 20** – The choir should study this scene carefully, trying to find its own effective way of building the “silent *crescendo*”. The climax of this part is the sudden return of voices uttering in “unison”.

**PAGE 21** – The narrator speaks facing the audience but without leaving the chair.

**PAGE 25-26** – Theater lights should fade out a little during this scene. The narrator abandons his chair (optionally carrying the lantern) and walks slowly to the other side of the stage, planning to finish the block of text upon arriving there. The shriek “Villains” should start from that side and continue while the narrator moves abruptly towards the choir. At this time, the choir runs away from the stage, leaving the narrator alone (still shrieking). The stage is almost dark at this moment, fading to blackout. The narrator’s lantern can be either with him or left near the chair. If with him, he may extinguish the fire after his last words. The complete blackout should come right after these two words. End of the piece.

# triPoe:try

- mixed choir -

Composer: Bruno Ruviaro

based on "The Tell-Tale Heart", by Edgar A. Poe

[General Rule - S, A, T: each individual should whisper in random order the corresponding boxed texts, including pauses in between some of them]

Soprano 1 [whispering] TRUE! *mf* very, very dreadfully nervous *p* Will you say that I am mad?

Soprano 2 [whispering] TRUE! *mf* I had been and am *p* not destroyed - not dulled them

Alto 1 [whispering] TRUE! *mf* very, very dreadfully nervous *p* the disease had sharpened my senses

Alto 2 [whispering] TRUE! *mf* I am mad? *p* Will you? Will you say that I am mad?

Tenor 1 [whispering] TRUE! *mf* Will you? dreadfully *p* the disease had sharpened my senses

Tenor 2 [whispering] TRUE! *mf* Will you say that I am mad? *p* nervous - very, very dreadfully nervous not destroyed - not dulled them

Bass 1

Bass 2

Narrator [Recitation - intense, clear, precise] TRUE! [short pause] - nervous, very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why *will* you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses - not destroyed - not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad?

♩ = 70-75

2

S1 *fp* True! *p* /u/

S2 *p* /u/ *p* /u/

A1 *p* /u/ *p* /u/

A2 *p* /u/ *p* /u/

T1 [resume whispering] *pp*

T2 [resume whispering] *pp*

B1 [join whispering] *pp*

B2 [join whispering] *pp*

N HEARKEN! and observe how healthily - how calmly I can tell you the whole story.

It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. [... go on reading the tale...]

**Fast, agitated**

- dreadfully
- nervous, nervous
- dreadfully nervous
- not destroyed
- not dulled
- how healthily
- how calmly
- very gradually
- not dulled them
- calmly, healthily
- very, very nervous
- I had been and am
- true!

*pp*

3

*fp* *p*

S1 True! /u/

*p* *p*

S2 /u/ /u/

*p* *p*

A1 /u/ /u/

*p* *p*

A2 /u/ /u/

T1

T2

B1

B2

N [Narrator has moved to one side of the stage, apart from the choral, and goes on reading the tale, barely audible, *ppp*.]

5

S1 *fp* True! *p* /u/

S2 *p* /u/ *fp* True!

A1 *p* /u/ *p* /u/

A2

T1

T2

B1 [speaking] How HEALTHILY! *p*

B2 [speaking] HOW healthily! *p*

N

[2 basses solo. The others keep whispering all the time.]

7 [Mute mouth with one hand]

S1 *fp* [Mute mouth with one hand] [dim.: lower voice only]

S2 [Mute mouth with one hand]

A1 [Mute mouth with one hand] [senza dim.]

A2 *fp* [Mute mouth with one hand] [dim.: upper voice only]

T1

T2

B1 *p* And so, by degrees... [attacca]

B2 ...VERY, very gradually *p*

N

[Mute mouth with one hand]

[Mute mouth with one hand]

[Mute mouth with one hand]

[Mute mouth with one hand]

True!

3

/u/

And so, by degrees...

[attacca]

...VERY, very gradually



9

[without hand]

S1 /a/ slow - - - - ly

S2

[without hand]

A1 /a/ unis. ner - vous

[without hand]

A2 /a/ ve - - - ry

T1 [T1, T2, B1, B2 - keep whispering]

- I moved it slowly
- nervous, nervous, cautiously
- dreadfully nervous
- not destroyed, not dulled them
- how wisely, with what caution
- how healthily, with what foresight
- how calmly, with what dissimulation
- very gradually, very very slowly
- the disease had sharpened my senses

*cresc. poco a poco*

T2 *cresc. poco a poco*

B1 > ...GRADUALLY nervous I had been and am. How wisely! With what caution... *mp*

B2

N

11

The musical score consists of the following parts and lyrics:

- S1:** gen - - - - tly
- S2:** slow - - - - ly ve -
- A1:** gen - tly oh
- A2:** ve - ry slow
- T1:** *cresc.*
- T2:** *cresc.*
- B1:** [emphasis] With what caution! [agreeing] Yes, foresight [interrupting] With what dissimulation!!
- B2:** [complementing] With what foresight! [slowly] Oh! ... so gently
- N:** (No lyrics)

Performance directions include *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *p* (piano) for the vocalists, and *cresc.* (crescendo) for the tenors. A dashed arrow with a hairpin symbol indicates a dynamic change from *p* to *mf* for B2.

14

S1 *p subito*  
[v]e - ry [sl]ow - [l]y

S2 *p subito*  
- ry ner - vous ve - - ry [sl]ow [l]y [stop C# one second after T2's "forever"]

A1 *p subito*  
[v]e - ry [sl]ow - [l]y

A2 *p subito*  
[v]e - ry [sl]ow - [l]y

T1 [always whispering] *cresc. molto*  
[whispering noisily, "unison"]  
I turned the latch of his door and opened it. (...) I think it was his eye!  
*ff*

T2 [always whispering] *cresc. molto*  
[whispering noisily, "unison"]  
I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever!  
*ff*

B1 [slowly] *mf*  
It took me an hour...

B2 [slowly] *mf*  
I moved it slowly, very very slowly...  
[altered, contrasting] *f*  
Will you say that I am mad?

N

[Only breathing sounds. General Rule: higher note BREATH IN, lower note BREATH OUT]

♩ = 60

17 [breath in] [breath out]

S1 + S2  
*p* *mp* *mf*

A1 + A2  
*p* *p* *mp* *mf*

T1 + T2  
*p* *p* *mp* *mf*

B1  
 [solo 1: barely restrained laugh]  
*fp* *niente*

B2  
 [solo 2: barely restrained laugh]  
*fp* *niente*

[All basses: occasional, spaced stifled laughs and chucklings. Up to three "solo" individuals may make sound at the same time. Alternate turns irregularly among all basses]

[Homage to Stéphane Mallarmé]

N  
 [Narrator continues normally reading the tale, always *ppp*]

[Female voice solo. Begin reciting *mezzo forte* with normal intonation.]

**Lento**  
 Tel qu'en Lui même enfin l'éternité le change...

21

S1  
S2

A1  
A2

T1  
T2

B1

B2

N

*f* *ff* *mf*

*f* *ff* *mf*

*mf* *mf* *ff*

*p* *p*

*p*

...Le Poète suscite avec un glaive nu... [She realizes that there are laughs around]



27

S1  
S2

A1  
A2

T1  
T2

B1

*cresc. molto*

B2

[Nervous, more and more intense...]

[Shouting]

Son siècle épouvanté de n'avoir pas connu... ...épouvanté de n'avoir pas connu...

N

S1

S2

A1

A2

T1

T2

B1

B2

N

[S1, S2, A1, A2, T1, T2: each individual may repeat *ad libitum* the last breathing rhythm. Then gradually abandon it introducing new sounds into the global mass, among the following options: coughing, puffing, choking and laughing. Each of these may have at least two different levels like "soft" or "strong". Density of events should increase globally]

[B1, B2 : increasing density of events. Chuckles and giggles with varying dynamics, moving towards exaggerated laugh]

*ff*

*ff*

*ff*

Que la mort ... triomphait dans cette voix étrange! [May be repeated once or twice]



S1

S2

A1

A2

T1

T2

B1

B2

N

[Soprano Solo: puffing, short of breath]  
*f* poco dim. *mf*

[Filtering: global *diminuendo* and decreasing density of sound events. Only two soloists remain prominent, gaining relief over the others: one tenor laughing and one soprano short of breath]

*niente*

[All others: silence]

[Tenor Solo: strong, hysteric laugh; alternate with some silence]  
*f* poco dim. *mf*

*f*

[Narrator solo: start a little before the end of global filtering. This text should sound as foreground, while the laughing and puffing solos should be background]

Upon the eighth night I was more than usually cautious in opening the door. A watch's minute hand moves more quickly than did mine. Never before that night I had *felt* the extent of my own powers - of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph. To think that there I was, opening the door, little by little, and he not even to dream of my secret deeds or thoughts. I fairly ->

S1

[Soprano Solo]

[Stop suddenly at Narrator's "steadily"]

S2

A1

A2

T1

[Tenor Solo]

[Stop suddenly at narrator's "steadily"]

T2

[Solo: crying out]  
Who's there?

[All others stop breathing upon 'Who's there'. Hold breathing until the end of next bar]

B1

B2

N

-> chuckled at the idea; and perhaps he heard me; for he moved on the bed suddenly, as if startled. Now you may think that I drew back - but no. His room was as black as pitch with the thick darkness (for the shutters were close fastened, through fear of robbers), and so I knew that he could not see the opening of the door, and I kept pushing on it steadily, steadily.

33

*f*  $\text{♩} = 60$

S1  
Who

S2  
*f* /u/

A1  
*f* /u/

A2  
*f* /e/

T1  
*f* Who

T2  
*f* /u/

B1  
*f* is

B2  
*f* there

N  
[Narrator resumes reading the tale, now even more *ppp* - sometimes only moving his lips without voice sounds]

37

S1 *f* > *p* < *f* *pp* *f* > *p* < *f* *pp* *p* < *f* > *p* *pp*  
 I kept quite still I [k]e[pt] [q]ui[te] [st]ill and said no - thing

S2 *f* > *p* < *f* *pp* *p* < *f* > *p* *pp* *p* < *f* > *p* *pp*  
 I kept quite still I [k]e[pt] [q]ui[te] [st]ill and said no - thing

A1 *f* > *p* < *f* *pp* *f* > *p* < *f* *pp* *p* < *f* > *p* *pp*  
 I kept quite still I [k]e[pt] [q]ui[te] [st]ill and said no - thing

A2 *f* > *p* < *f* *pp* *p* < *f* > *p* *pp* *p* < *f* > *p* *pp*  
 I kept quite still I [k]e[pt] [q]ui[te] [st]ill and said no - thing

T1 *p* < *f* > *p* *pp* *f* > *p* < *f* *pp* *f* > *p* < *f* *pp*  
 I kept quite still I [k]e[pt] [q]ui[te] [st]ill and said no - thing

T2 *p* < *f* > *p* *pp* *p* < *f* > *p* *pp* *f* > *p* < *f* *pp*  
 I kept quite still I [k]e[pt] [q]ui[te] [st]ill and said no - thing

B1 *p* < *f* > *p* *pp* *f* > *p* < *f* *pp* *f* > *p* < *f* *pp*  
 I kept quite still I [k]e[pt] [q]ui[te] [st]ill and said no - thing

B2 *p* < *f* > *p* *pp* *p* < *f* > *p* *pp* *f* > *p* < *f* *pp*  
 I kept quite still I [k]e[pt] [q]ui[te] [st]ill and said no - thing

N

43

S1 *p* < *f* > *p* *pp* *p* *mf*  
 an[d] [s]ai[d] [n]o [th]ing /i/

S2 *f* > *p* < *f* *pp* *fp* *mf* niente  
 an[d] [s]ai[d] [n]o [th]ing still

A1 *p* < *f* > *p* *pp* *p* *mf* niente  
 an[d] [s]ai[d] [n]o [th]ing /i/

A2 *f* > *p* < *f* *pp* *mf*  
 an[d] [s]ai[d] [n]o [th]ing /i/

T1 *p* < *f* > *p* *pp* *mp* *mf* niente  
 an[d] [s]ai[d] [n]o [th]ing /i/

T2 *f* > *p* < *f* *pp* *mp* *mf*  
 an[d] [s]ai[d] [n]o [th]ing /i/

B1 *p* < *f* > *p* *pp* *mp* *mf*  
 an[d] [s]ai[d] [n]o [th]ing /i/

B2 *f* > *p* < *f* *pp* *quasi f* niente  
 an[d] [s]ai[d] [n]o [th]ing /i/

N

49 *mp* [whispering]

S1 dull low

S2 *mf* *mp* still co - tton /u/ quick

A1 *mf* *mp* still co - tton /u/ heart

A2 *mp* dull /u/ sound

T1 *mf* *mp* still still dull

T2 *mp* [whispering] quick low

B1 *mp* low low

B2 *mf* *mp* still low low

N

S1

S2

A1

A2

T1

T2

B1

B2

N

[All singers: mouth the whole boxed text WITHOUT SOUND. The motion of lips should be very clear. Singers may go through the text with individual speeds, but at the end the lips' motion should attain an "unison" of movement, through the reiteration of the word "louder". The conductor should control the necessary number of these repetitions, as well as the global *crescendo* of this scene. Since there is no real sound here, the sense of an increasing intensity should be built mainly with lips and facial expressions]

When I had waited a long time, very patiently, without hearing him lie down, I resolved to open a little - a very, very little crevice in the lantern. So I opened it - you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily - until, at length, a single dim ray, like the thread of the spider, shot from out the crevice and full upon the vulture eye. It was open - wide, wide open - and I grew furious as I gazed upon it.

But even yet I refrained and kept still. I scarcely breathed. I held the lantern motionless. I tried how steadily I could maintain the ray upon the eye. Meantime the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder every instant. The old man's terror *must* have been extreme! It grew louder, I say, louder every moment! - do you mark me well? Louder! Louder! Louder! Louder! Louder! Louder! Louder! (...)

[All, "unison": speaking very loudly (with sound!), but not shouting]

I HAVE TOLD YOU THAT  
I AM NERVOUS: SO I AM.

*ff*

*fff*

56 *f* *mp subito* *mf*

S1 For what had

S2 For what had

A1 *fp* (d)I

A2 *fp* (d)I

T1

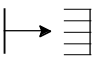
T2

B1

B2

[Narrator: calmly]

[short pause] He was stone dead. His eye would trouble me no more. [short pause]  
 If still you think me mad, you will think so no longer when I describe the wise precautions  
 I took for the concealment of the body. The night waned, and I worked hastily, but in silence.  
 No human eye - not even *his* - could have detected any thing wrong. There was nothing to wash  
 out - no stain of any kind - no blood-spot whatever. [short pause] For *what* had I now to fear?





61

S1 *mp* *p* fear?

S2 *mp* *p* fear?

A1

A2

T1 *mp* > to

T2 *mp* > to

B1 *ppp* No

B2

N [Narrator should finish text block approximately here] [To the conductor] I smiled - for what had I *now* to fear?

66

S1

S2

A1

A2

T1

T2

B1

B2

N

[Homage to Luciano Berio]

[T1 solo: only consonants, speaking slowly]

F[o]R [w]h[a]T  
H[a]D [I] N[ow]  
T[o] F[ea]R?

*mf*

[T2 solo answer: only vowels]

[f]O[r] WHA[t]  
[h]A[d] I [n]OW  
[t]O [f]EA[r]?

*mf*

[T1&T2 solo: "stretch" sounds in time, even the consonants, to obtain a continuous effect of "building up" the sentence. Speak slowly. Keep individual sounds as pronounced in those words.]

*f* F...R ..T H...D .. N.. T.. F.....R?

*f* ..O.. WHA.. ..A.. I ..OW ..O ..EA..?

*p*

*p*

No



68

S1 *f* Mis - te - ry *mf* /i/ /no/ /ri/

S2 *f* Mis - te - ry *mf* /i/ /no/

A1 *f* Mis - te - ry

A2 *f* Mis - te - ry

T1 *f* Mis - te - ry

T2 *f* Mis - te - ry

B1 *f* Mis - te - ry

B2 *f* Mis - te - ry *mf* /i/ /no/

N [Narrator solo] No doubt I now grew very pale; but I talked more fluently, and with a heightened voice. Yet the sound increased - and what could I do? It was a low, dull, quick sound - much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. (...)

[A1, A2, T1, T2, B1: each individual should speak the same text as the narrator with irregular delayed starts. Many speaking "modes" can be mixed. Once a singer chooses one, s/he should stay on it until the end.

- normal speech;
- whispering;
- omitting vowels;
- omitting consonants;
- motion of lips only;
- interrupting text with cough, laugh, choke etc.
- "monotone" speech, like some kind of prayer;

The "normal" mode should be slightly prevalent in the overall result. The narrator is supposed to start alone as a soloist; little by little the increasing crowd of sounds from the other singers should compete with the narrator's solo. Global *crescendo* of everything until the end.]

[S1, S2, B2: follow same directions given to the others.]

S1 *ff*

S2 *ff*

A1 *ff*

A2 *ff*

T1 *ff*

T2 *ff*

B1

B2

N *ff*

(...) I gasped for breath - and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly - more vehemently; but the noise steadily increased. I aroused and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations, but the noise steadily increased. Why *would* they not be gone? I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observation of the men - but the noise steadily increased. Oh God! What *could* I do? I foamed - I raved - I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder - louder - *louder!* And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God! - no, no! They heard! - they suspected! - they *knew!* - they were making a mockery of my horror! - this I thought, and this I think. But anything was better than this agony! Any thing was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die! - and now - again!- hark! louder! louder! louder! *louder!* -

[All S, A, T, B: upon the narrator's shriek "Villains!", all singers run away from stage quickly and irregularly, leaving him alone]

76

S1

S2

A1

A2

T1

T2

B1

B2

**fff** [Shrieking, sustaining first "notes" for a while. Walk towards the center of stage. Bend to the floor, kneel.]

[Suddenly calm, with a soft voice, just a little puffing. Leave the sentence without conclusion. Blackout.]

N

*gliss.* *gliss.* **mf**

"Vi - - llains!" I shrieked,