

Christopher D. Walker

# **The Tragedy of a Young Soldier**

suite for solo timpani



**The Tragedy of a Young Soldier** by Christopher D. Walker  
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# Program Notes

*The Tragedy of a Young Soldier* is my first solo piece for timpani. I often think of the music I write as being character/story driven, and this is no exception.

The story is about a young, colonial period man who is called to war and dies on the battlefield.

The first movement (*Soldier's Theme*) is a theme and variations that incorporates extremes in dynamics as well as technically challenging pedal work on the top drum. I like to think of his theme as if he were whistling. There is also some foreshadowing by the use of excerpts from *Taps* and *Amazing Grace*.

The second movement (*Called to War*) is his call to action. It starts off slow and almost inaudible. Then the frontline begins to charge! Multiple waves of battle occur until he is hit by some great explosion on the field.

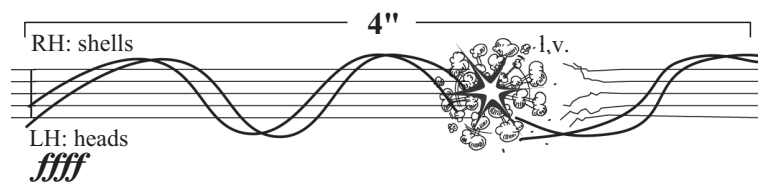
The transition to the final movement (*The Aftermath*) occurs through the eerie sound of the gong. Every drum is set with the pedals to their lowest setting allowing the drums to be somewhat indeterminate in pitch. Our hero is left to die alone, face down in the mud while the faint sounds of explosions are still felt all around. His spirit begins its final, lonesome march to the other side. The movement ends with the soldier's last heartbeats.

I wrote *The Tragedy of a Young Soldier* while attending Texas State University - San Marcos for my junior recital. My instructor, Genaro Gonzalez saw every draft along the way and helped me to finally realize the piece. I thank him for being such an influential and supportive mentor.

— Christopher D. Walker

# Performance Notes

1. This piece requires 5 timpani and a gong.
2. The graphic notation of wavy lines represents the horizontal motion of hitting the drum heads (with the left hand) and shells (with the right hand) from the low drum to the high drum and vice versa.
3. The explosions (pictured below) should be performed by hitting both the gong and lowest drum at the same time, with optional embellishment of improvised chaotic sound.



4. In both the second and third movement, the effect of having the drum tuned as low as possible is used. In such cases, the designated drums are set with the pedals at their lowest settings, allowing the drums to be indeterminate in pitch. In the second movement, the low C does not need to sound as written. In the third movement, all the pitches given do not need to sound as written until the final statement at bar 63.
5. Triangular noteheads (pictured below) indicate that the drum is to be played in the center of the head.



6. Any aspects of the performance that are not explained are left up to the performer.

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## I - Soldier's Theme

**Hard Felt**  $\text{♩} = 92$  march like

*n cresc.* *f* *p*

*f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p*

*f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *pp*

*dim.* *p cresc.* *f*

**21**

**30**

*f*

to F

Sample  
Image



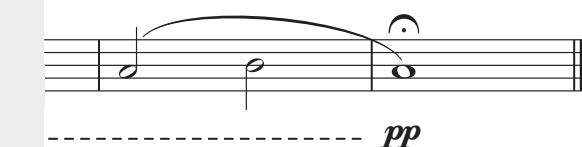
49



50



Sample  
Image



## II - Called to War

Wood **Lento** **accel.**

*n cresc.*

**♩ = 127 Allegro**

gong *sim.* **ff** **mf**

sub. **p** **f** **p** **pp** *cresc.*

**ff** **mp**

**mp**

**pp**

Sample  
Image

\*The low C does not need to sound as written. The low drum is set with the pedal at its lowest setting, allowing the drum to be indeterminate in pitch.

Musical score for "The Tragedy of a Young Soldier" by Walker. The score is written in bass clef with various time signatures (4/4, 3/4, 9/16, 5/4, 6/16, 5/8, 3/4). It includes dynamic markings such as *cresc.*, *f*, *ff*, *mf*, and *pp*. Measure numbers 34 and 46 are circled. The score features complex rhythmic patterns with many beamed notes and rests.

Sample  
Image

Musical score for "The Tragedy of a Young Soldier" by Walker, showing percussion notation. It includes a 4'' section labeled "shells" and a 3'' section. The 4'' section has a dynamic of *f* and a 1.v. marking. The 3'' section has a dynamic of *f* and a 1.v. marking. The 5'' section has a dynamic of *p* and a 1.v. marking. The score includes a "scrape" instruction and an "attaca" marking.

### III - The Aftermath

Soft Felt  $\text{♩} = 50$  Lento

6 *ppp* *f* *pp*

6 *ff* *pp*

6 *f* *mf*

*mp*

*mf*

3. *mf*

*f*

6 *p* *ff*

Sample  
Image

\*\*These pitches do not need to sound as written. All drums should be set with the pedals at their lowest setting, creating an indeterminate pitch in the drums.

42

**Fading and slowing**

top note = halfway to center



55 A tempo



half note time = 50



mp



# Sample Image

**final heartbeats**