FOUR DREAMS
for sax/bass clarinet, percussion, piano, and electronics

Commissioned by the Fromm Foundation, the Harvard University Music Department, and the Harvard University Core Program

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Four Dreams attempts to capture the texture of the dreamworld—a place of bizarre occurrences, incoherent thoughts, and unacknowledged anxieties. In my attempt to portray this world realistically, I have narrated, more or less without editing, the content of several dreams. It should be emphasized that these dreams do not reflect my waking beliefs, feelings, or vocabulary. In fact, I have often been surprised by the content of my sleeping thoughts.

The first dream is completely and solely a dream. The second dream is a dream that is also a memory. The fourth dream was once a prediction. The third dream is an imagination, a dream of unmediated meaning, the science of the future or maybe a philosophical fantasy. The text here is written and performed by my friend Christian Bök (pronounced "book"), language poet extraordinaire, vowel virtuoso, rhapsode, and author of “Eunoia.”

The piece is for piano, percussion, electronics and tenor saxophone or bass clarinet. The electronics are controlled by a footpedal connected to a synthesizer, which is in turn connected to a computer. The pedal is played by the sax/clarinet player, who triggers the electronic sounds by tapping the pedal. The text is part of the electronics part. Except for the third dream, it is my voice that is narrating.

Text:

First Dream: I’m the Queen of England and, um, my Ladies-in-Waiting are showing me around the Castle. It’s filled with beautiful furniture, and um, fabrics. A four-poster canopy bed. And the King of England are these two gay guys. They live in the wing of the castle across from mine. And the, the two wings meet at this beautiful room with a ... grand piano in it. All inlaid with pearl. And the King of England, they have this little dog. And they’re being very flamboyant, and joking to each other and calling each other “sister.” So I’m like: “wait a minute!” “Is this a gay dream?” And they’re like: “No. No dude. No, you’re just the Queen of England. It’s not a gay dream at all. It's cool, man. It’s no problem.”

Second Dream: I’m, uh, ... I’ve got this really long beard and my hair is like, down to my back in dreadlocks. And I’m wearing layer after layer of torn clothes. There’s a license plate hanging around my neck by a chain. And, um, and I’m standing in a bank. On the main street of the small town where I grew up. And there are these voices in my head. And they’re trying to get me to do something. They’re like: “Go ahead, man. It’d be cool, yeah.” “Yeah, that’d be really cool.” And as far as I can remember they want me to take my clothes off and start singing this old TV commercial at the top of my lungs. And I’m trying to remain calm, and I’m carrying on a conversation with these voices. And I’m explaining that what they want me to do, really isn’t a very good idea. But the voices are really insistent, they’re like “yeah, yeah, dude, this would be so great.” But I tell ‘em no, and this makes them mad. And then the start to insult me and to
threaten me. They’re like “you pussy!” They’re getting louder. “You’re not man enough!” “Faggot!” And they’re telling me they’re not going to shut up until I do what they say. So finally, just to make them stop, I do. “At McDonald's, we do it all for you.” Immediately, the voices change. Now they’re really angry at me. They’re claiming they were just kidding. And that only a complete moron would’ve taken them seriously. “Oh, Jesus!” “What the fuck were you thinking?” “What is going on in your head?”


Fourth dream. This dream starts with a sound. It’s a long low sound. Like music. Stretched. To the tempo of the universe. And the sound lifts me off my feet, into the air. Tossing me like a seagull in a hurricane. Eventually, it sets me down into the middle of the woods. My friends are sitting there. On fallen logs. Some have baby strollers. They’re dressed outlandishly, with pleats and ruffles, and hats, and they’re carrying parasols and canes. Flittering all around are these funny little leprachaun-like things with pointy ears and goatees, even the women. You can tell that they’re ghosts, because each one is wearing a green mechanics’ jacket with a little patch on the front left that says: “ghost.” And then, as the music swells, this woman starts walking toward me, dressed in white. There’s a mythological dude behind me, with white curly hair and a white beard and cloven goats’ feet; and he asks if I’m willing to marry this woman. And even though I’ve never seen her before, and I can smell the marijuana on his breath. I say that I will. And the funny thing is, this is exactly how it happened. Not one detail is a lie. I’ve got one of the little green jackets to prove it. What I’m trying to say is, this is how it really happened. This is one dream that came true. This is how … I became … happy.
NOTES TO THE PERFORMERS

The piece is busy, and balance is key: make sure the voice can be heard at all times, and make sure the piano is not overwhelmed by the louder instruments. The kick drum should be heavily muted.

The electronics are controlled by a footpedal connected to a computer. The pedal is played by the sax/clarinet player, who triggers the electronic sounds by tapping the pedal. Software and pedal are available from the composer.

The electronics part is notated in the score (and the wind part) as a series of notes; these can be used during rehearsals (or in case of a mishap in performance) to jump to the appropriate electronics part. Each pedal tap triggers the note after the most recent keyboard note received. Thus, if one wishes to start at rehearsal DD, one should press Program 3 and then play note F3 on the keyboard prior to starting. The next pedal tap will trigger the appropriate electronic sound.

The electronics may also be played by a fourth performer playing synthesizer (or pedal) solo.

The piece as a whole should have a rock vibe; if the wind part is played by a bass clarinet, then the sound can be rough and folksy—imitating the feel if not the actual timbre of a jazz saxophone.

A copy of the full score is available at http://music.princeton.edu/~dmitri/fourdreams.pdf

A recording is available at http://music.princeton.edu/~dmitri/fourdreams.mp3
PERCUSSION SETUP

Note that the two top staves have different clefs so they maintain their identity if only one staff is notated. The pedals for the bass drum and hi-hat are often operated with the back of the foot.
INTRO

both hands: four hard yarn mallets
rit ....

FIRST DREAM  \( \bullet = 144 \)

1. "Elec.
2. "Perc.
5. "Pno.
8. "Cl.

And, um, my Ladies-in-Waiting are showing me around the Castle. It's filled with beautiful furniture, and um, fabrics. A four-poster canopy bed.

I'm the Queen of England.
And the King of England
are these two gay guys
They live in the wing of the
castle across from mine.
And the two wings meet at this beautiful room with a grand piano in it.

All inlaid with pearl.
And the King of England, they have this little dog.

And they're being very flamboyant, and joking to each other and calling each other "sister."

So I'm like: "wait a minute!"

"Is this a gay dream?"
And they're like: “No. No dude. No, don’t worry about it. No, you’re just the Queen of England.”

It's not a gay dream at all, It's cool man.

It's no problem.”
INTRO (REPRISE)

both hands: four hard yarn mallets

Sax./Cl.

Perc.

Pno.

Elec.
SECOND DREAM

hi-hat, operated with foot pedal

r.h.: triangle beater

l.h.: hard yarn mallet

ossia: hard plastic mallet, for a "toy piano" sound

Second dream.
I'm, uh, ...

I've got this really long beard, and my hair is like, down to my back.
And I’m wearing layer after layer of torn clothes.

There’s a license plate hanging around my neck by a chain.

in dreadlocks.
And, um, and I’m standing in a bank on the main street of the small town where I grew up.

And there are these voices in my head. And they’re trying to get me to do something.
They’re like: “Go ahead, man. It’d be cool, yeah.”

“Yeah, that’d be really cool.”

let the bass become very muddy
And as far as I can remember, they want me to take my clothes off and start singing this old TV commercial at the top of my lungs.

And I'm trying to remain calm, and I'm carrying on a conversation with these voices.
let the bass become very muddy

And I’m explaining that what they want me to do,

really isn’t a very good idea
But the voices are really insistent, they’re like “yeah, yeah, dude, this would be so great.”
But I tell 'em no, and this makes them mad.

And then the start to insult me and to threaten me.
They’re getting louder.

“They’re not man enough!”

“They’re like “you pussy!”

“Faggot!”

“You’re getting louder.

“Faggot!”
And they’re telling me they’re not going to shut up until I do what they say.

So finally, just to make them stop.
"At McDonald's, we do it all for you."
Immediately, the voices change. Now they’re really angry at me.

They’re claiming they were just kidding.
And that only a complete moron would’ve taken them seriously.

“Oh, Jesus!”

“What the fuck were you thinking?”

“What is going on in your head?”
THIRD DREAM

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Third dream: the language of thought.

"Ubu hubbub, blabbering robbergut, a rootabega tubablurb gluttenous kettledrum cumbersome gummybears of bourbon."
both hands: four hard yarn mallets

one handed, as fast as possible (hard yarn mallet)

“Ubu juju bungeejump dung beetle jumbo jets, a jamboree
of wombats jabberwock lumberjack jelly beans of Belgian.”
Sax./Cl.  

Perc.  

Pno.  

Elec.  

(CC)  

310

314

320

Elec.
Perc.
Pno.
Elec.

324

like a jazz drummer

r.h.: drumstick

r.h.: triangle beater and hard yarn mallet

l.h.: two hard yarn mallets

"Ubu bamboo zombie got bombadier as bazooka boom kazoo Gesundheit ink poodle nincompoop. No gazebos go berzerk."

r.h.: two hard yarn mallets
“Ubu Buddha übermenschnl troubadour
oh bees, oboe, Beelzebub boobytrap
scuba gear juggernaut of bugaboo,
bugger off.”
FOURTH DREAM

long notes with a pronounced decay:
(this entire movement)

Sax./Cl.
Perc.
Pno.
Elec.

Fourth dream. This dream starts with a sound.
It’s a long low sound. Like music stretched to the tempo of the Universe. And the sound lifts me off my feet, into the air.

Eventually, it sets me down into the middle of the woods.

Tossing me like a seagull in a hurricane. Eventually, it sets me down into the middle of the woods.
My friends are sitting there. on fallen logs. Some have baby strollers. They’re dressed outlandishly, with pleats and ruffles, and hats, and they’re carrying parasols and canes.

Flittering all around are these funny little leprechaun-like things with pointy ears and goatees, even the women.
You can tell that they’re ghosts, because each one is wearing a green mechanics’ jacket with a little patch on the front left that says: “ghost.”

And then, as the music swells, this woman starts walking toward me, dressed in white.
There's a mythological dude
behind me, with white curly hair
and a white beard and cloven goats' feet;
and he asks if I'm willing to marry this woman.
And even though I’ve never seen her before,
and I can smell the marijuana on his breath.
I say that I will.
And the funny thing is, this is exactly how it happened.

I’ve got one of the little green jackets to prove it.
What I'm trying to say is, this is how it really happened.
This is one dream that came true.
felt covered drumsticks

This is how I became happy.