

Steven Snowden

The Devil's Nine Questions

Piano Quintet

The Devil's Nine Questions

In 1956, Max Hunter, a traveling salesman from Springfield, Missouri, took his reel-to-reel tape recorder into the backwoods of the Ozark Mountains. Over the course of the next 20 years, he recorded and catalogued over 1600 folk songs as sung by the people who lived in those rugged hills of Southern Missouri and Northern Arkansas.

While browsing this collection, I was struck by the beautiful simplicity of the voices of those Missouri and Arkansas folks who shared their talents and recollections with Hunter. However, one song in particular caught my attention. In 1963 Hunter recorded Nancy Philley of Fayetteville, Arkansas singing *The Devil's Nine Questions*. What really intrigued me about this recording was the stark contrast between Philley's pure voice and the dark subject matter of the lyrics. This contrast inspired me to compose this piece, which uses the original folk tune as a melodic cornerstone, and programmatically addresses each of the nine questions and answers.

As a native of the Ozarks countryside, this piece took on a special importance for me. In the process of composing this work, I realized that it actually represented many of the feelings I associate with being separated from the people and places that I love. Among these emotions are nostalgia, fear, anger, and longing.

Lyrics from the original folk song, *The Devil's Nine Questions*

Answer me questions nine
Sing ninety-nine and ninety;
Or I'll take you to hell alive,
And you are the weaver's bonny.

What is whiter than the milk?
Sing ninety-nine and ninety;
What is softer than the silk?
And you are the weaver's bonny.

Snow is whiter than the milk,
Sing ninety-nine and ninety;
Down is softer than the silk,
And I am the weaver's bonny.

What is higher than a tree?
Sing ninety-nine and ninety;
What is deeper than the sea?
And you are the weaver's bonny.

Heaven's higher than a tree,
Sing ninety-nine and ninety;
And hell is deeper than the sea,
And I am the weaver's bonny.

What is louder than a horn?
Sing ninety-nine and ninety;
And what is sharper than a thorn?
And you are the weaver's bonny.

Thunder's louder than a horn,
Sing ninety-nine and ninety;
Death is sharper than a thorn,
And I am the weaver's bonny.

What's more innocent than a lamb?
Sing ninety-nine and ninety;
And what is meaner than womankind?
And you are the weaver's bonny.

A babe's more innocent than a lamb,
Sing ninety-nine and ninety;
She-Devil is meaner than womankind,
And I am the weaver's bonny.

You have answered me questions nine,
Sing ninety-nine and ninety;
You have good bone and none of mine
And you are the weaver's bonny.

Approximate Duration: 14 min.

The Devil's Nine Questions I.

Steven Snowden

Viscous $\text{♩} = 63$

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Cello

Piano

shimmering
bowed a little closer to the bridge

f

ff

mf

p

gliss.

ff

ff Tolling

6

9

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Pno.

pp

pp

pp

f

ff

f

mf

pp

f

ff

3

3

3

The Devil's Nine Questions

10 13

Vln. 1 *f* *mf* *pp* *p* *näive (very little vib.)*

Vln. 2 *p* *näive (very little vib.)*

Vla. *mf* *p* *näive (very little vib.)*

Vlc. *p* *näive (very little vib.)*

Pno. *pp*

14

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc. *niente*

Pno. *ppp*

The Devil's Nine Questions

4

20

Musical score for measures 20-23. The score includes staves for Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vlc.), and Piano (Pno.).

- Vln. 1:** *mp* gradually increasing vibrato
- Vln. 2:** *mp* gradually increasing vibrato
- Vla.:** *mp* gradually increasing vibrato
- Vlc.:** *mp* ominous, pesante
- Pno.:** *mp* ominous, pesante

8vb

24

Musical score for measures 24-27. The score includes staves for Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vlc.), and Piano (Pno.).

- Vln. 1:** *mf* building intensity
- Vln. 2:** *mf* building intensity
- Vla.:** *mf* building intensity
- Vlc.:** *mf*
- Pno.:** *mf*

(8vb)

The Devil's Nine Questions

28

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Pno.

(8^{vb})

32

34

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Pno.

(8^{vb})

f

p

ppp

pp

The Devil's Nine Questions

37

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Pno.

no vibrato

increasing vibrato

ppp

42

Viscous

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Pno.

ff

f

mf

pp

ff

ff

mf

ff

ff Tolling

3

The Devil's Nine Questions

46

Vln. 1
mp *p* *pp*

Vln. 2
mp *p*

Vla.
mp *p*

Vlc.
mp *p*

Pno.
mp *pp*

3 3 3 3

50

Attacca

Vln. 1

Vln. 2
mf *niente*

Vla.
mf *p*

Vlc.
mf *niente*

Pno.

The Devil's Nine Questions

II.

*Because of the large number of chromatic pitches in this movement, accidentals have been applied to all notes that are flat or sharp, regardless of where they reside in a measure. All pitches with no accidental are assumed to be natural.

Jagged and Biting ♩ = 90

Vln. 1
 Vln. 2
 Vla.
 Vlc.
 Pno.

This system of the musical score includes staves for Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, and Piano. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 90. The music is in common time (C) and begins with a dynamic marking of *ff*. The piano part features a complex, chromatic melody in the right hand, while the strings play a rhythmic accompaniment. An *8va* marking is present above the piano staff.

Vln. 1
 Vln. 2
 Vla.
 Vlc.
 Pno.

This system continues the musical score with staves for Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, and Piano. The tempo remains ♩ = 90. The music continues with the same *ff* dynamic. The piano part includes an *8va* marking. The score concludes with a 3/4 time signature change and a final common time (C) signature.

The Devil's Nine Questions

7

Vln. 1 *pp* *ff* *pp*

Vln. 2 *pp* *ff* *pp*

Vla. *pp* *ff* *pp*

Vlc. *pp* *ff* *pp*

Pno. *pp* *ff* *sfz* *pp*

10 11

Vln. 1 *ff*

Vln. 2 *ff*

Vla. *ff*

Vlc. *ff* *p* *ff* *aggressive and gritty*

Pno. *ff* *mp* *fff* *palm clusters*

The Devil's Nine Questions

10

14 15

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Pno.

8va wailing *ff*

8va wailing *ff*

wailing *ff* *sfz*

sf sul C *ricochet* *gliss.* *gliss.*

p *mf*

19 21

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Pno.

8va *ff*

8va *ff*

ff

fff *p* *f*

The Devil's Nine Questions

23 ^(*guz*) 26 *secco*

Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vlc.), and Piano (Pno.) parts for measures 23-26. Measure 23 includes a *guz* marking and a triplet. Measure 24 features *p* dynamics and *sul C* *ricochet* *gliss.* markings. Measure 25 has *ff* dynamics and triplets. Measure 26 includes *gritty* and *secco* markings. The piano part includes *fff* dynamics and *gliss.* markings.

27

Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vlc.), and Piano (Pno.) parts for measures 27-30. Measure 27 has *ff* dynamics. Measure 28 has *mp* dynamics. Measure 29 has *ff* dynamics. Measure 30 has *ff* dynamics. The piano part includes *fff* dynamics.

36

Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vlc.), and Piano (Pno.) parts for measures 36-38. The strings play a sustained chord with a crescendo leading to a fortissimo (sfz) dynamic. The piano part features a complex rhythmic pattern with accents and slurs.

39

Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), Violoncello (Vlc.), and Piano (Pno.) parts for measures 39-42. Measures 39-41 continue the string fortissimo (sfz) texture. At measure 40, the piano part begins a new melodic line marked piano (p). At measure 42, the strings change to piano (p) and the piano part continues with a new melodic line.

The Devil's Nine Questions

42

ff

ff

ff

ff

8va

ff

ff

This system contains measures 42 and 43. It features five staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, and Piano. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The music is marked *ff* (fortissimo). The Piano part includes an *8va* (octave) marking. The score shows complex rhythmic patterns with many slurs and accents.

44

f

f

straining

ff

palm clusters

f

This system contains measures 44 and 45. It features five staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, and Piano. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The music is marked *f* (forte) and *ff* (fortissimo). The Viola part is marked *straining*. The Violoncello part has a *3* (triple) marking. The Piano part includes *palm clusters* and is marked *f*. The score shows complex rhythmic patterns with many slurs and accents.

The Devil's Nine Questions

47 49

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.

mp
mf
cantabile
mf
mp

50

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.

f

The Devil's Nine Questions

descending into chaos

55

54

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Pno.

pp

(Lea.)

57

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Pno.

mf

ff

ff forearm

repeat gesture while sliding up the E string

evaporating

evaporating

evaporating

evaporating

evaporating

becoming harmonics

(Lea.)

The Devil's Nine Questions

Delicate, Flowing $\text{♩} = 60$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$)

60

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Pno.

release pedal slowly and gradually to hear individual dampers retouch the strings. (growl effect) *

leg.

70

76

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Pno.

leg.

80

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Pno.

88

90

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Pno.

pp *p* *pp*

solo cantabile

96

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

pp *mp*

Pno.

103

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

pp *mp*

Pno.

111

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Pno.

p

ppp *p* *ppp*

120

121

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Pno.

pp *mp* *mp*

p

130

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

pp *mp*

Pno.

*

The Devil's Nine Questions

140

Vln. 1
 Vln. 2
 Vla.
 Vlc.
 Pno.

f *pp*
mf *pp*
 8va
 Ped.

148

Vln. 1
 Vln. 2
 Vla.
 Vlc.
 Pno.

pp *expansive* *mp*
pp *expansive* *mp*
pp *expansive* *mp*
 (8va)

156

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.

pp *mp*
pp *mp*
pp *mp*
pp *mp*

(8va)

164

Vln. 1
Vln. 2
Vla.
Vlc.
Pno.

p *mf* *pp*
p *mf* *pp*
p *mf* *pp*
p *mf* *pp*

(8va)

172

Vln. 1 *mp*

Vln. 2 *mp*

Vla. *mp*

Vlc. *mp*

Pno. *(8va)*

179

Vln. 1 *mp*

Vln. 2 *mp*

Vla. *mp*

Vlc. *mp*

Pno. *(8va)*

mf

molto

ppp

186

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Pno.

193 Jagged ♩ = 90 (♩ = ♪)

pp

pp

pp

f

pp

f

ff

mp

ff

mp

ff

mp

f

p

ff

The musical score is for a section of 'The Devil's Nine Questions'. It features four string parts (Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello) and a Piano part. The score is divided into two systems. The first system starts at measure 186 and ends at measure 192. The second system starts at measure 193, which is marked as 'Jagged ♩ = 90 (♩ = ♪)'. The string parts are marked with dynamics such as *pp*, *f*, and *ff*. The Piano part is marked with *f* and *p*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

The Devil's Nine Questions

194

Vln. 1
sf mp sf mp ff pp p
sul pont.

Vln. 2
sf mp sf mp ff pp p
sul pont.

Vla.
sf mp sf mp ff pp p
sul pont.

Vlc.
sf mp sf mp ff pp
cantabile p

Pno.
ff pp ff
3 3 3

197

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.
mf
3
f
becoming desperate and hysterical

Pno.
p
3

202

Violin 1 (Vln. 1) and Violin 2 (Vln. 2) parts include *ord.* markings. The Viola (Vla.) part includes a *f* dynamic. The Violoncello (Vlc.) part includes a *p* dynamic. The Piano (Pno.) part features *ff caustic* markings and triplet figures.

205

Violin 1 (Vln. 1) and Violin 2 (Vln. 2) parts include *f* and *pp* dynamics. The Viola (Vla.) part includes *f* and *pp* dynamics. The Violoncello (Vlc.) part includes *p* and *ff* dynamics. The Piano (Pno.) part features quintuplet figures.

The Devil's Nine Questions

208

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Pno.

212

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Pno.

215 216

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Pno.

ff tutti

ff tutti

ff tutti

ff tutti

ff tutti

217

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Pno.

ff tutti

The Devil's Nine Questions

219 220

Vln. 1 *mp*

Vln. 2 *p*

Vla. *f*

Vlc.

Pno. *f* *fff* *mp*

molto accel.

222

Vln. 1 *ff* *fff*

Vln. 2 *f* *ff* *fff*

Vla. *ff* *fff*

Vlc. *p* *f* *fff*

Pno. *fff* *fff*

III.

vulnerable ♩ = 54

Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, Piano

ppp ethereal
ppp ethereal
ppp ethereal
ppp ethereal
ppp like distant bells

Leo.

Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, Piano

12 14
pp
pp
pp

20 22

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Pno.

ppp

ppp

ppp

ppp

pp

pp

28 31

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Pno.

pp

pp

pp

ppp

pp

38

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Pno.

pp

pp

pp

pp

mp

mp

mp

mp

8va

mp

44

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vlc.

Pno.

f

f

f

f

ppp

ppp

ppp

ppp

f

mp

ppp

p

ppp

3

3