

JAMES W. PARKER

B O O M T O W N

FOR VIOLIN AND ELECTRONICS

Program Note

BOOMTOWN is a piece about what happens to communities when industries close up shop and hit the road. It is an echo through the halls of shuttered factories and the cold shafts of vacant mines, a memory of the lost identities of strong willed and stronger hearted people of the world, and a song of hope. As a native Texan, the story of a “boomtown” is a common one. Oil or natural gas is found in an isolated community far from the big city, then industry moves in and brings jobs and prosperity to the community. Eventually the resources dry up, and since there’s no more money to be made, companies pack up and move out. The piece serves as a reflection of a community at the beginning of the difficult process of rebuilding and redefining itself.

Written for Sasha Yakub as part of the 2020 1:2:1 String Intensive

Performance Instructions

In *BOOMTOWN*, I ask performers to take some loose instructions in the score and spin them into a piece of music. The instructions are left intentionally vague in some ways, and intentionally specific in others. You are encouraged to make the piece your own and interpret the instructions however you see fit.

Fiddling

The roots of *BOOMTOWN* are in the old time fiddle tradition, in which almost every note is a double stop. Many double stops are notated, but feel free to experiment with other combinations that might come to mind.

Electronics

The included software is required for performance of *BOOMTOWN*. Details on setup and installation can be found later in this document. The software applies different effects to the performer's sound in each section. The software "listens" for certain pitches to know to move on to the next section. These are indicated by a circled notehead in the score. Be sure not to play this pitch until you are ready to move to the next section. When you are ready to move on, be sure to play the indicated pitch as a single note, not as a double stop.

Scordatura

The first and second strings should be tuned down a whole step from A and E to G and D.

Three Lines

Since scordatura can be very confusing, the piece is notated in three different ways. The top staff is in tab notation, with the bottom line indicating the low G string (4th string), the second line from the bottom indicates the low D string (3rd string), and so on.

The second staff is the piece written as it sounds, indicated by the word (sounding) written underneath "Violin" on the left side of the system.

If you were to ignore that fact that your strings are tuned differently than normal and you played the bottom staff, what is written in the middle staff (the "sounding" staff) would sound.

Fulcrum pulses

This is a technique described by fiddler Bruce Molsky in [this video](#). Essentially, under one bow you play one long note and rhythmically dip the bow so that it plays a shorter note on an adjacent string. I am not a fiddle player, and Bruce explains the video much more eloquently than I can.