

*Full Score*

**Buttery  
Dopped  
Corn**

**for Brass Quartet  
and Silent Performer**

**Sam C Henderson**



# Program Notes

*Inspired by real events, watch as havoc ensues when a college student attempts to pop popcorn in his dorm's microwave.*

“Buttery Popped Corn” is comedic chamber piece / theatrical skit for brass quartet and silent performer. It is simultaneously an experiment in set-based quasi-atonal writing in which much of the emphasis was put on free-form composing; as ideas would “pop” into my head, those same ideas would find their way into the piece. While much of the piece was structured around a set of pitches and two rhythmic motifs, much of the organization of pitches, miscellaneous effects, and narrative “skits” were, once devised, immediately translated to the piece. The end result is a chaotic piece that at times feels a bit out-of-hand – much like an inexperienced college student who doesn’t quite know when to stop cooking a bag of popcorn.

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## Skits

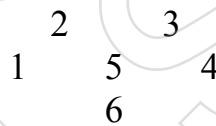
### Materials

- Box crudely made to look like a microwave
  - Box must have an open side and must be large enough to fit two fully popped bags and one unpopped bag of popcorn.
  - Suggested approach: staple five pieces of printer paper on each of the five external sides of the open box. On the side directly opposite of the open side of the box, hastily draw a microwave door and scrawl the word “microwave” in large letters.
- Two fully popped bags of popcorn
  - One bag should be made to look burnt. This can be done via permanent marker, black construction paper, etc. or, at your own discretion, actually burning the bag of popcorn **in a controlled, safe, and isolated environment with easy access to safety equipment.**

- One unpopped bag of popcorn, still in the plastic wrapping
  - Suggested approach: to better prepare for Skit 2, put a slight tear in the wrapping so that it is easier to remove quickly.
- A phone, preferably turned off for the performance

### **Pre-Performance**

The stage is set up with four chairs and stands for the quartet in an arc. The two middle chairs (2, 3) should be placed slightly further apart. In addition, there is one bench (5) and one table/stand (6) placed in the focal point of the arc facing each other. It will look like this from the audience's perspective:



The box with the two popped popcorn bags inside is placed on the table/stand (6), the open side facing away from the audience.

The trumpet stand will also have a triangle clamped to it.

**(In between skits, Silent Performer may elect to “play” on phone or participate in other silent time-wasting activities.)**

### **Skit 1**

Ensemble comes on stage to applause. Once ensemble members are seated and applause dies down, Silent Performer enters and sits on bench (5). They throw unpopped bag of popcorn into the box.

### **Skit 2**

After the intro, SP remembers the bag of popcorn is wrapped. They unwrap the popcorn and throw it back into the microwave. (The wrapping may be discarded on the stage or, for potential additional comedic effect, thrown into the microwave as well)

### **Skit 3a**

After the end of the extended non-metered popping section (m. 40), SP gets a phone call, gets up from the bench, and walks towards the exit.

**3b** SP opens the door and walks out.

### **Skit 4a**

SP enters from offstage.

**4b** SP walks to bench, sits down, and pulls out a fully popped bag of popcorn (unburnt). They shake it around, contemplate opening it, then throw it back in the microwave.

### **Skit 5a**

SP hears hissing and starts to look increasingly concerned.

**5b** When the alarm sounds, SP freaks out, brings hands to face out of frustration, messes with box, etc. They get up, rush towards the exit, and leave. (Alternatively, a second silent performer – backstage personnel, assistant, etc. – opens the exit door and signals wildly to SP that they need to leave quickly. SP begrudgingly acknowledges the gestures and rush towards the exit.)

### **Skit 6**

SP enters, shamefully acknowledges the smoky microwave, and sits down. They cautiously take the burnt bag of popcorn out of the microwave, fumble and drop it (as it is incredibly hot), then sit back, dejected and defeated, with an optional facepalm.



# Buttery Popped Corn

Sam C Henderson

## Skit 1

**Allegro con commedia** (♩ = c 152)

Cup Mute \*

Trumpet in B<sup>b</sup>

Horn in F

Trombone

Tuba

Measures 1-4 of the score. The first measure is marked with *sffz mf* and *Cup Mute*. The second measure is marked with *p* and *Straight Mute*. The third and fourth measures are marked with *p* and *Straight Mute*. The fifth measure is marked with *p* and *Straight Mute*.

Measures 5-8 of the score. The first measure is marked with *Senza sord.* and *mf*. The second measure is marked with *Senza sord.* and *mf*. The third measure is marked with *Senza sord.* and *mp*. The fourth measure is marked with *Senza sord.* and *p*. The fifth measure is marked with *Senza sord.* and *fp*. The sixth measure is marked with *Senza sord.* and *mf*. The seventh measure is marked with *Senza sord.* and *pp*. The eighth measure is marked with *Senza sord.* and *mf*.

\* Notes with a tremolo marking can be either flutter-tongued or growled. It is encouraged that you switch between the two at different points throughout the piece.

# Buttery Popped Corn

9 *Senza sord.* *Squeeze*

*mf* *mf* *ff* *ff* *mf* *ff* *mf* *ff*

12 *Skit 2\**

*mp sempre staccato* *mp sempre staccato* *mp sempre staccato* *mp sempre staccato*

17

*Tongued* *Tongued*

\*The lower note is to either be played such that no sound is produced past the initial tonguing of the note or palmed on the mouthpiece with moderate force. The higher note is a tongue click away from the instrument.



Buttery Dopped Corn

20

Musical score for measures 20-21. The system consists of four staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a dynamic marking of *mf*. It features a melodic line with a 'Squeeze' instruction and a fermata over the final note. The second staff is in bass clef with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The third staff is in bass clef with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The bottom staff is in bass clef with a dynamic marking of *mf* and contains a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes marked with 'x'.

22

Musical score for measures 22-23. The system consists of four staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a dynamic marking of *mf*. It features a melodic line with a 'Squeeze' instruction and a fermata over the final note. The second staff is in treble clef with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The third staff is in bass clef with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The bottom staff is in bass clef with a dynamic marking of *mf*.

24

Musical score for measures 24-25. The system consists of four staves. The top staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a dynamic marking of *mf*. It features a melodic line with a 'Squeeze' instruction and a fermata over the final note. The second staff is in treble clef with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The third staff is in bass clef with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The bottom staff is in bass clef with a dynamic marking of *mf*. Both measures 24 and 25 feature triplet markings (indicated by a '3' over the notes) in the top three staves.

Buttery Hopped Corn

26

*f*

Musical score for measures 26-29. It consists of four staves. The top two staves are in treble clef, and the bottom two are in bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The music is in 7/8 time. The first two staves feature a rhythmic melody with eighth and sixteenth notes, marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The bottom two staves provide a harmonic accompaniment with dotted rhythms and eighth notes.

30

Musical score for measures 30-34. It consists of four staves. The top two staves are in treble clef, and the bottom two are in bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The music is in 7/8 time. The melody in the top staves becomes more complex with sixteenth-note runs and accents. The bass staves continue with a steady accompaniment.

*molto rit.*

35

Musical score for measures 35-38. It consists of four staves. The top two staves are in treble clef, and the bottom two are in bass clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The music is in 4/4 time. A dashed line above the staves indicates a *molto rit.* (ritardando) section. The melody in the top staves features a series of eighth-note runs with accents. The bass staves provide a rhythmic accompaniment with eighth and sixteenth notes.



Buttery Popped Corn

Skit 3a  
Tempo ♩

41

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

*rit.*

Scoop

Skit 3b

Largo (M.M. ♩ = c. 72)

46

*fff*

*fff*

*fff*

*fff*

*fff*

*fff*

51

*sub ppp*

*sub ppp*

*sub ppp*

*sub ppp*

*f*

*f*

*f*

*f*

*pp*

*pp*

*pp*

*pp*

56

Musical score for measures 56-58. The score is written for four staves (two treble and two bass clefs). It features dynamic markings of *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *pp* (pianissimo). The music includes triplet patterns in the bass clef staves and a melodic line in the treble clef staves.

59

Musical score for measures 59-62. The score is written for four staves. It features dynamic markings of *ffpp* (fortissimo pianissimo), *mp* (mezzo-piano), and *ff* (fortissimo). The music includes melodic lines in the treble clef staves and rhythmic patterns in the bass clef staves.

63

**Skit 4a** **Skit 4b** *Tempo ♩*

Musical score for measures 63-65. The score is written for four staves. It features dynamic markings of *ffz* (fortissimo with accent), *fff* (fortississimo), and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The music includes melodic lines in the treble clef staves and rhythmic patterns in the bass clef staves. The tempo is marked *Tempo ♩*.



**Skit 5b**

**Alarming** (♩ = c. 69)

Vamp until Silent Performers exit

79

*ff* *fff* *fff*

Approx. pitches

Sing high to low

*ff*

82

Tempo ♩

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

**Skit 6**

86

*fff* *fff* *fff* *fff* *p*

Triangle

*fff*