Soft Rain of Sticky Notes is an experimental musical theater song cycle for voice and chamber ensemble about the struggle of being productive and getting work done with ADHD. The narrative progresses over five songs through different stages of getting work done and the struggles the vocalist faces with ADHD. The musical draws on elements of a variety of music, such as musical theater, musical comedy, pop, indie, jazz, avant-garde, punk, pop punk, metal, metalcore.

This paper is divided into five chapters. Chapter I introduces in detail the musical and contextualizes where it fits in experimental musical theater. Chapter II discusses the text and narrative, and how these relate to ADHD. Chapter III introduces the musical themes and motives used throughout the musical. Chapter IV goes over the musical elements and techniques, discussing the use of genre and improvisation, and how they relate to ADHD. Chapter V summarizes the essay, and synthesizes the narrative and musical analysis to show succinctly how each song is connected to symptoms of ADHD. The chapter further discusses how music and text is used to convey these symptoms. Finally, it is shown how the variety of genres, the wide-ranging musical influences, and the use of improvisation relate to the unfocused, unstill, unpredictable life of a person with ADHD.
SOFT RAIN OF STICKY NOTES: AN EXPERIMENTAL MUSICAL THEATER SONG CYCLE ABOUT ADHD FOR CHAMBER ENSEMBLE

by

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION AND PRECEDENCE

Introduction

Soft Rain of Sticky Notes is an experimental musical theater song cycle about the struggle of being productive and getting work done with ADHD. The musical was written for one vocalist (who plays the unnamed main character), violin, clarinet, cello, bass guitar, and drum set. The musical’s narrative progresses over five songs through different stages of getting work done and the struggles the vocalist faces with ADHD.

Soft Rain of Sticky Notes employs a variety of genres to throughout the musical, such as; musical theater, especially the work of Dave Malloy; jazz, such as Ascension by John Coltrane; avant-garde theater, especially Eight Songs for a Mad King by Peter Maxwell-Davies; punk and pop-punk, such as The Wonder Years, Aaron West and the Roaring Twenties, and Pierce the Veil; musical comedy artists like Bo Burnham; indie pop, such as Young the Giant; and metal and metalcore artists like Slipknot, A Day to Remember, and System of A Down.

At times the musical switches rapidly or suddenly between these genres, and at others it works to meld several genres together. The vocal style is meant to be a cross between pop, theater, and the more aggressive style found in punk and metal. It also features many instances of spoken word and speech-singing and sections where the text is meant to be improvised or is unwritten. Similarly for the musicians, throughout the cycle there are several sections with varying degrees of freedom. There are sections that are unmeasured, sections where the ensemble is only loosely coordinated by one of the performers, and sections where the performers are asked to improvise, either freely or around a given parameters.
This song cycle is intended to be performed in a variety of small venue contexts and locations, from smaller theaters, black box theaters, and bars with performance spacing. The performers should be on stage just behind the vocalist, ideally with no elevation or separation between the audience and the performers. Lighting and set dressing should also be minimal, if done at all. If one were to provide any set dressing, the goal should be to make the set look like a work room, office, or studio. A desk or table covered with papers and a desk chair would be the first thing to consider. Any additional props or set dressing would be at the discretion of the musical director, keeping the work room aesthetic in consideration.

Precedence

*Soft Rain of Sticky Notes* fits between experimental music theater described by musicologist Björn Heile, Davies avant-garde monodrama *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, and the musicals by Dave Malloy, especially *Ghost Quartet*. Defined broadly by David Bithell, experimental music theater is:

An interdisciplinary practice centered on the exploration of nontraditional relationships between the fields of music and theater. The term often is used to distinguish works from the mid-20th and 21st centuries that do not clearly fit into the established categories of contemporary opera or musical theater and usually refers to projects initiated by musicians.¹

Heile goes further in his article *Toward a Theory of Experimental Music Theatre*:

“Showing-Doing,” “Non-Matrixed Performance,” and “Metaxis”:

…experimental music theater refers to a type of performance in which theatrical actions are created by music making (playing of musical instruments or other sounding objects, singing). This form needs to be distinguished from other types of music theatre, such as opera and related genres, in which music accompanies theatrical action. Experimental musical theater focuses on the performance aspect, rather than the music alone, and takes after many other aspects of performance art.²

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² Björn Heile, *Toward a theory of experimental music theatre*, (Oxford Handbooks Online, 2013)
Heile goes on to distinguish it from traditional opera in two ways; one being the separation of stage and a pit orchestra; and two being the “union of singing and acting,” to drive dramatic roles. In experimental music theater, in contrast, there is no separation from stage and instrumentation, and there are no dramatic roles.³

I must note an important distinction in language. The medium Heile talks about in this article he calls “experimental music theater,” wherein I am defining *Soft Rain of Sticky Notes* as “experimental musical theater.”

Dave Malloy uses a constant pushing of boundaries and merging of genres. His musical *Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812*⁴, is described as an electropop musical. The musical begins with traditional acoustic instruments, and utilizes some avant-garde harmonic devices and extended techniques (4:10). Most notably the harsh vocals found in some of the characters (heard in the beginning of the example). During the first act, the electronic elements are brought into play to represent one of the characters (6:45).

His musical *Ghost Quartet*⁵ was written for only 4 musicians, who simultaneously sing, play multiple characters, and perform their instruments. The narrative is completely nonlinear and covers multiple stories that are loosely connected. The music covers several genres, from folk (32:43), Thelonious Monk (54:02), and middle-eastern influenced vocalizations (17:28).

The musical has been produced for many small theaters and performance venues, including the McKitterik Hotel and Next Door at New York Theater Workshop.

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³ Ibid.
⁴ Dave Malloy, “The Opera,” May 18, 2017, studio recording. 4:10 https://youtu.be/0mVJRo8etM8, Retrieved April 25, 2022
While *Soft Rain of Sticky Notes* uses some elements of avant-garde and experimentation as discussed by Heile, it is intended to fit more into the lineage of musical theater, in a similar vein of *Ghost Quartet*, with its use and blending of varying genres, implied narrative structure, and especially through its intended small venue performance space.
CHAPTER II: NARRATIVE STRUCTURE, TEXT, AND MEANING

The story of *Soft Rain of Sticky Notes* is structured over its five songs around the vocalist getting work done and the struggles they face to complete a task at hand due to symptoms of ADHD. The task is unspecified, referred to as “it” throughout the cycle, acts a throughline throughout the cycle, completing “it” is the character’s main objective. Each song progresses in stages, from the difficulty of beginning to the eventual completion of the task, and ends with a realization that there is always a next task. Each song describes or personifies symptoms of ADHD that factor into the struggles faced by the vocalist. These are inspired by my own day to day experience with ADHD, which are focused on or exaggerated in the musical. Figure 1. is a table summarizing the events of each song and the narrative arch of the cycle.

**Figure 1: Timeline of the Songs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Soft Rain of Sticky Notes</th>
<th>Sisyphus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocalist tries to convince themselves to get “it” done.</td>
<td>Vocalist has begun working but cannot decide which task to work on. Vocalist decides to work on “it”.</td>
<td>Vocalist celebrates their completion of “it”, while reflecting on the struggle of work. Vocalist realizes a new “it” and the cycle is implied to repeat.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ants</td>
<td>Soft Rain of Sticky Notes</td>
<td>Sisyphus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocalist describes how difficult it is to get started.</td>
<td>Vocalist has begun working but cannot decide which task to work on. Vocalist decides to work on “it”.</td>
<td>Vocalist celebrates their completion of “it”, while reflecting on the struggle of work. Vocalist realizes a new “it” and the cycle is implied to repeat.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Below is a more detailed discussion of each song.
**Focus**

The cycle starts with Focus. This song is a dramatization of executive dysfunction, which is the psychological inability to start or complete tasks. Theoretically, the vocalist struggles to begin the “it” task, which is the main task the vocalist will attempt to be completed throughout the cycle. The vocalist is asked to improvise spoken text along the lines of, “Just sit down. Just get it done.” The vocalist is meant to try to sit down, but every time the vocalist tries, they immediately stand up.

**Ants**

Bridging to the next song, Ants covers how difficult it can be for someone with ADHD to sit still and extends that concept to the constantly racing mind of someone affected. The opening line, “I can’t sit still,” puts it succinctly.

Having “ants in your pants” is a common rhyming idiom told mostly to children who cannot sit still. The song plants this idiom with the line, “When I was younger, I was told that silly rhyme that kids are told,” which has its payoff at the end of the song.

The song talks about the difficulty of finding a comfortable position, and touches on the discomfort even simple clothing can present. When I was a very young child, I could only wear one certain kind of sock and I did not comfortably wear jeans until I was in late high school. Throughout this section, the vocalist’s shirt plays the antagonist, as it continually bunches up (which is also a real thing that happens to me).

These lyrics reference the still unmentioned ants, which act as a metaphor for the vocalist’s constant urges to move and constant stream of consciousness. The vocalist sings, “They’re in my brain. They’re in my brain. All of these thoughts, they will not stop, they’re unrestrained.”
The lines, “And I tap, tap, tap…” is a reference to the omnipresent need for stimulation, and is a direct reference to my own constant tapping on different objects. My sister has wondered how, and is annoyed that no matter where I sit, I am always able to find something to make a noise on.

At the end of the song, the vocalist pays off the ants idiom that was planted before, repeating the line, “I’ve got ants in my pants,” several times before extending it to a grotesque, visceral point with the following:


The vocalist is meant to repeat, “I’ve got ants in my brain,” an unnumbered amount of times, yelling, screaming, or singing, and eventually abandoning any pitch or rhythm that is written in the music.

*Soft Rain of Sticky Notes*

The subject of this song focuses on the difficulty of prioritization. The vocalist has the “it” task in mind, but all other tasks seem equally important. As the song progresses, the vocalist gradually figures out how to prioritize the “it” task. The title of this song, as well as the cycle itself, comes from a short blog post I once read, wherein ADHD is described, “It’s like living in a soft rain of post-it notes.”

The song is divided into 10 sections, labeled in order as Intro, and their corresponding rehearsal marks thereafter. The song rapidly changes genres in each section, which creates an atmosphere of instability and unpredictability that reflects the overall frenetic and anxious mental state of the vocalist.
In the intro, the vocalist wonders aloud what they should do in the present and what they will do in the future. However, the drama of this short section rises intensely, reaching desperation as no one is able to answer the questions.

In section A, the vocalist tries to begin the “it” task, tries to choose that, but is distracted by other thoughts, represented here in the clarinet. The text here is improvised, save for the ending dialogue, where the vocalist addresses the clarinetist, pleading with them to stop. The clarinetist responds, “Only with Vyvanse!” Vyvanse is a medication used to treat ADHD and is one of the medications I took.

Section B the vocalist explains the struggle they are facing with the following lines, “Everything is underlined, and I can’t seem to prioritize. So, I don’t know how to choose which one of them I need to do.”

The vocalist immediately begins to list out each task they have. The text here is again improvised, the only thing written is the ending, “… and all of them are underlined,” which cues the next section immediately.

The text here, “Everything is underlined. Everything is underlined. Urgent. Urgent,” is anxious and angry, matching the punk musical style, and highlights the urgency felt by the vocalist.

With a dramatic style shift from punk to a demented form of a laid back, crooner style, big band tune, the vocalist now attempts to prioritize the tasks that were previously listed. As the vocalist tries this, however, they again realize the vast number of tasks they have and sarcastically break into song, “have a fuckton of things to do. A metric fuckton of things to do.”

Here, “fuckton” is imagined as a large unit of measurement. This is pushed further into absurdity by specifying that it is a measurement use by the metric system, before breaking into a
tangent about a made-up origin of the “fuckton.” A prewritten example is given, but the vocalist is encouraged to diverge from this text, improvising and free associating.

This is meant to reflect the way people with ADHD can often find themselves jumping from one topic to another in a stream of conscious. I am especially guilty of this, as well as overexplaining topics, sometimes completely unprompted. The ensemble stops and the vocalist is left to finish their monologue about the fuckton on their own, ending with the written line, “…everything is underlined,” which cues the ensemble into the section, which is a repeat of previous material.

Section G conveys a sort of resignation to all of the tasks. The vocalist has given up trying to pick just one thing and decides they will have to, “Get everything done at the same time.” This blends into the next section, a refrain featuring the following lines, “I have to sit down and get everything done. Just sit down and get everything done.”

Section H ends with a self-demanding repetition of the words, “just sit down,” followed by a resigned alteration, “can’t sit down,” and a declarative, “I can’t just sit down,” as the vocalist expresses the immense difficulty of what should be a simple step to completing a task. The section ends with a brief lyrical reprise to Ants, with the phrase, “I can’t sit still.”

The song ends when the vocalist finally realizes they do not have to do everything, and they pick one task, with the lines, “Just do everything. Just get everything done. Maybe just get one thing done. Just get it done.” This is mirrored in the ensemble, as they, one by one, gradually drop out, until the clarinet is the only one left.

Hyperfocus
This song is named after the state of intense focus that people with ADHD experience. Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder is often known as an inability to maintain focus. It is better to think of the disorder as the inability to regulate attention. So, while the previous definition is partly true, people with ADHD do experience a deficit of attention, they also experience this hyperfocus state. In this state, a person will maintain intense focus for long stretches of time, potentially hours. While in this state, it is difficult to break away from what they are doing. This is partly due to the intense burst of productivity and the difficulty of reentering this state once broken, even for a short time. Even so much as stopping to use the restroom could be enough to break them from this state. As such, people with ADHD tend to experience an inability to judge the passage of time, known as time blindness, become unaware of their surroundings, and forget to eat or stay hydrated.\(^6\)

At this point in the narrative, the vocalist has entered this state, and is finally able to complete the “it” task.

The lyrics are about being in the state of intense focus.

The world dissolves to only what’s in front of me.

Attention, centered. Blurred my periphery.

Focus.

*Sisyphus*

The final song in the cycle, *Sisyphus* is theatrically very relaxed compared to the rest of the cycle, as the vocalist calmly celebrates the completion of the “it” task, while reflecting on the intense struggle it was to get there. The song ends with a sudden burst of energy, as the vocalist realizes their freedom from obligation:

---

Now I have time to go outside. The world is mine. I can’t deny. Time to run and jump and sing and scream with all this time I now have free. It’s mine. It’s mine.

The world is mine.

However, this freedom is trifled by the music, reprising the opening to *Ants* as the vocalist remembers the other tasks they must complete. The ensemble finishes and the vocalist ends with the words, “until tomorrow.”

The gut punching bait and switch ending of *Sisyphus* was inspired by the song *If You Could See Her* from the musical *Cabaret*. The entire song leads the listener to believe what the vocalist believes: that they are free from the task. This is until they are hit with the final words, left with not even with a stinger, to leave the cycle uncomfortably concluded.

The title draws from the Classical Greek myth of Sisyphus, who, after being caught trying to escape Hades, was sentenced to push a boulder up a hill every day, only for the boulder to fall once it reached the top. Sisyphus then had to walk down the hill and start over, for eternity. With this cyclical ending, I wanted to emphasize that, though the vocalist did complete the task, this is a daily struggle experienced by those with ADHD.
CHAPTER III: REOCCURRING MUSICAL DEVICES

*Soft Rain of Sticky Notes* contains three reoccurring themes, motives, and harmonic devices. These are the *Focus* theme, the *Ants* motive, and the *just sit down* chord.

*Focus* theme

**Figure 2: The Focus theme is the vocal line at the end of Hyperfocus**

![Focus theme notation]

*Just sit down* motive

**Figure 3: This motive appears in the song Soft Rain of Sticky Notes.**

![Just sit down motive notation]
It has two identifying factors; it is a harmonic device, the chord is always a $C^6(\#11)$ (though it is found in slightly different arrangements throughout the cycle), and it has a rhythmic function, breaking the flow of a triplet feel with straight eighths except for in one instance when this is reversed. Figure 3 is an example to show how the motive functions rhythmically (more in context examples of these will be shown later).

**Figure 4: showing rhythmic function**
Figure 5: This motive comes from the song Ants and is sung by the vocalist.

Below is a timeline which lists and summarizes the occurrence of use of each reoccurring device in each song. More detail on these occurrences will be provided in the following chapter.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Ants</th>
<th>Soft Rain of Sticky Notes</th>
<th>Hyperfocus</th>
<th>Sisyphus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus theme</td>
<td>in the clarinet at the beginning (m. 1 – 16)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ants motive</td>
<td>in clarinet (m. 18, 20, 21)</td>
<td>Home of the Ants motive (m. 4 – 8, 41 – 45, 50 – 54)</td>
<td>Ants motive appears at the end of the refrain in the vocals. (m. 65, 89)</td>
<td>Ants motive found in the violin line. (m. 3, 5, 11, 14, 17, 31, 37, )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Sit Down</td>
<td>at the end, bridging into the next song. The is the only time the motive in triplets, interrupting an eighth note feel and reversing its normal rhythmically interrupting feature. (m. 22 – 25)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Home of the Just Sit Down motive. (m. 66 – 89)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Just Sit Down motive is found twice at the end of the B sections. (m. 24, 44)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER IV: MUSICAL ELEMENTS AND TECHNIQUES AND THEIR RELATION TO ADHD

Use of Genre

A main feature of the musical is the variety of genres referenced throughout the musical. They are either based in one genre, shift suddenly between several genres, or blend genres. This feature acts as a reflection of several symptoms of ADHD, such as the constant switching between tasks, fast paced stream of conscious, sudden high energy levels, and anxiety that is often comorbid with ADHD.

Punk and Metal:

Punk and Metal are referenced heavily throughout this musical, and Soft Rain of Sticky Notes in particular. In this is achieved through several techniques, such as emulating a guitar chug (m. 1-8), which is a low-pitched chord or single note played on distorted, typically palm muted guitars. The clarinet simulates guitar feedback (m. 5-8). The bass references metal with its strange bassline (m. 28-32) that is reminiscent the guitar riff in of Metallica’s Master of Puppets.7

Sections C and F are entirely inspired by punk music, especially in its drum beat and the aggressive style of singing the vocals demand. The violin and cello play on the off beats, which simulates how a guitar would play in a punk style like this.

Section G takes inspiration from the beginning of the ending section of the song Sugar by metal band System of a Down.8 The tempo and rhythms are led by the vocalist and should be in a

natural speaking rhythm. The ensemble loosely follows the vocalist, articulating syllables when they are given the lyrics and playing together only where stemmed notes are given.

Section H features a four-bar looping build that is loosely inspired by the build in *Cigarettes and Saints* by pop-punk band The Wonder Years\(^9\), with its powerful lyrical repetition at the end. The dramatic slowing of the tempo at the end of this section comes from the tension in the space found at the end of the song *Scissors* by Slipknot\(^10\).

### Musical Theater:

The music for the song *Ants* was inspired by the introduction to the song *One by One* by *One* from the musical *Ordinary Days* by Adam Gwon\(^11\). The overall intensity is in reference to punk music, reminiscent of *Totally Fucked*\(^12\) from the musical Spring Awakening, whose music was written by Dunkin Sheik. This is represented in the always unstable harmony, quickly moving rhythms throughout, as well as the constant tempo changing, shown in the chart below. This constant motion represents the vocalist’s inability to maintain stillness, both physically with their body, as well as their constantly changing center of focus.

The final song, *Sisyphus*, especially the lyrical flow throughout but particularly toward the end, was inspired by *What’s This?* from the musical animated film The Nightmare Before Christmas, whose music was written by Danny Elfman\(^13\).

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Jazz:

Section D of *Soft Rain of Sticky Notes* attempts to emulate the laid-back swing feel of a big band tune, juxtaposed with demented, tense harmony. The vocalist is given a few rhythmic cues to hit, akin to how a rhythm section in a jazz band might be given cues for important hit-points, and a general melodic contour to follow for those cues, but no melody is written, as the vocalist is instructed to improvise the melody in a “laid-back crooner style”.

Pop and Indie

The song *Hyperfocus* took its initial inspiration from *Island* by indie pop band Young the Giant\(^4\), and, though it is quite different, the idea of a gradual build straight to the end was retained. The intention for this song is for it to sound like it is being composed in real time. The song is meant to be a mostly instrumentally led song, with the vocalist’s role only coming to the foreground at the end. Most of the song follows an 8-bar chord loop structure, and each instrument is given a line that gradually changes with each loop. As the song develops, the instruments move through different iterations of their respective lines.

Avant-Garde Theater and Improvisational Elements

Another important feature of the musical is the use of improvisation text and music and other free elements, such as free jazz, avant-garde theater, graphic scores, and certain styles of metal. This feature is used for several reasons, such as comedic effect in the text, as well as to create specific sounds, usually of high intensity, and to allow for some sections to be free of a tempo.

\(^{14}\) Young the Giant, “Island,” September 10, 2013, studio recording, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Q7QkZRaSuI, Retrieved April 26, 2022
The ending of *Ants* is an example of this. The intention for the ending is for the ensemble to complete fall apart, blending the energy of many rock song endings and some of the freedom found in free jazz, to reflect the stress of the vocalist (figure 6.)

**Figure 6: Ending of *Ants***

*Soft Rain of Sticky Notes* has many instances of improvised text and singing, and many sections for the musicians to improvise around given parameters. These touch on elements of performance art seen in Cathey Berbarian’s *Stripsody*, as well as John Cage’s *Aria*, especially in their lack of strict musical timing.

For most of *Hyperfocus*, the vocalist is given words that will become the lyrics. These are given first in small chunks, one to a few words a time, in random arrangement. The vocalist is
meant to repeat these words as if they are trying to make sense of them. Every 4 to 8 bars, the vocalist is given new words which they are to add to the previous phrases.
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

*Soft Rain of Sticky Notes* is an experimental musical theater song cycle about the struggle of getting work done with ADHD, and covers a range of symptoms the main character must overcome to complete their task, referred to as “it”. It is structured around five songs, in each of which the vocalist gradually progresses through stages of productivity until they finally complete “it” and the music ends with the implication that the cycle will repeat and that these struggles are a daily cycle.

The text and music are inspired by and connected to ADHD, and draw heavily from my personal experience with it. The musical utilizes two important techniques and elements to achieve this connection: an intentionally wide range of genres and influences, as each song is either in a different genre, or blends or switches genres; and several instances of improvisation in the music, text, and lyrics. Both of these elements are used instill a certain instability of focus and lend to a sense of unpredictability to the entire musical.

While the musical uses symptoms of ADHD as an internal antagonist to the vocalist, each of the songs spotlight specific symptoms of ADHD. The song *Focus* uses executive dysfunction as inspiration, which is the inability or extreme difficulty of starting a task. With its looping back of the form, the song has a hard time starting until right at the end when it is launched into the next song. *Ants* focuses primarily on the inability for one to sit still and transcends that idea into the mental state of one with ADHD, which is constantly running and leaves the person without any control over their train of thoughts. To convey this, it constantly changes tempos and uses unstable harmonies, reflecting the constant motion and perpetual discomfort about which the vocalist sings. *Soft Rain of Sticky Notes* uses the element of rapid genre changing to demonstrate decision paralysis, especially when deciding what task to do, and difficulty prioritizing any one
task. *Hyperfocus* is specifically about the state of intense focus that people with ADHD can enter, and demonstrates this through its slightly changing lines that each instrument is given, which are completed at the end of the arch form that takes the entire song to complete. *Sisyphus* reminds the listener that this is a daily struggle, as material from *Ants* is referenced throughout the song, and ends with the lines “Until Tomorrow.”

Reflecting on the song cycle, *Soft Rain of Sticky Notes* is a broad overview of the symptoms that one with ADHD must cope with. Moving forward, I have a few ideas about very specific aspects of ADHD that I would like to narrow in on and express musically. I believe that theatrical elements would be useful, and in addition to a primarily vocally driven medium, it would be interesting to explore elements of dance and performance art.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Focus

Just sit down. Just get it done.

Ants

I can’t sit still.

I can’t sit still.

I can’t sit still.

I can’t sit still.

I can’t sit still.

When I was younger, I was told
that silly rhyme that kids are told.
I will probably never be comfortable.

Because my shirt is all bunched,
And my desk chair isn’t right.
And the desk is all messed up,
I’ll adjust all things in sight.
Now my shirt’s again bunched up,
and my mind has its own will.
It must constantly adjust.
Can't I ever just sit still?
This damn shirt is all bunched up.
I'll drive myself insane!
How is my shirt still all bunched up?!
AH!
My fucking shirt's still all bunched up!
I give up,
I give up,
I give up, I give up, I give up, I give up, I give up.
Because I fucking can’t sit still
They’re in my brain.
They’re in my brain.
All of my thoughts,
They will not stop,
They’re unrestrained.

There’s no silence!
There’s no stillness!

And I tap tap tap tap tap tap tap
On the wall on, Or the table,
or the chair, or my knee
and my brain, has to think, about every little thing
all at once, it’s a mess, feels like somethings in my head,
scratching, crawling, picking, feasting, gnawing
I’ve got ants in my pants,

I’ve got ants in my pants,

I’ve got ants in my pants,

I’ve got ants in my pants,

I’ve got ants in my shirt,

I’ve got ants in my socks,

I’ve got ants in my hair,

I’ve got ants in my skin,

I’ve got ants in my brain,

I’ve got ants in my brain,

I’ve got ants in my brain,

I’ve got ants in my brain.

*Soft Rain of Sticky Notes*
What do I do now?

What will I do next?
What should I do?
What should I do?
What should I do?

(Improvised text)

(Spoken to clarinetist)

“Will you stop??”

(Clarinetist responds)

“Only with Vyvanse.”

Everything is underlined
And I can’t seem to prioritize
so I don’t know how to chose
which one of them I need to do.

(Improvised text)

… and all of them are underlined.

Everything is underlined.
Everything is underlined.

Urgent!

Urgent!

(Improvised text)

I have a fuckton of things to do
A metric fucktons of things to do
Which is 2.33 fucktons in imperial

(Improvised text)

Given example text: “I know this because I researched the origin of the fuckton as a
measurement and the difference between the metric and imperial. It’s a fascinating history that
could be entirely false because when I say research I mean read a Wikipedia article and I did it
all because I didn’t know what to work on at the moment.”

As I’ve said I have a fuckton of things to do and everything is

Urgent!

Everything is underlined.

Everything is underlined.

Urgent!

Urgent!

I have to sit down and do everything.

Just sit down and get everything done.

Get everything done at the same time.

Simultaneously work on everything.

Sit down and get everything done.

I have to sit down and get everything done.

Just sit down and get everything done. (Repeated eight times)

Just sit down.

Just sit down.

Just sit down.

Can’t sit down.
Can’t sit down.
Can’t sit down.
I can’t just sit down.
I can’t sit still, I can’t sit still.
Just do everything.
Get everything done.
Maybe just get one thing done.
Just get it done.

Hyperfocus

The world,
Dissolves,
to only what’s in front of me.
Attention,
centered.
Blurred my periphery.
Focus.

Sisyphus

I actually
got it done.
Oh my god, I actually
Got it done.
What a relief, I can’t believe I actually
got it done.
I’ve come so far, was that so hard to actually
just sit down
for hours, for hours, for hours, to chisel out something, of value and meaning
or anything, anything, just do anything
please get something done
but at least for today, I can say
Oh my god, I actually
Got it done.
What a relief, still can’t believe I actually
got it done.
What a relief, now I can sleep, and wake up to
Peace of mind
That’s something done, something done, one thing done, one thing done
I finally sat
And I got it done
Got it done
Just sat down and
Got it done
Now I’m done
Finally done

Now I have time to go outside, the world is mine, I can’t deny
Time to run and jump and sing and scream,
With all this time I have now free
It’s mine, its mine, the world is mine
Until tomorrow…”
Soft Rain of Sticky Notes

Joshua Weitz

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for voice, violin, B♭ clarinet, cello, bass guitar, and drum set

duration: ca 20'

Program Notes:

Soft Rain of Sticky Notes is an experimental musical theater song cycle about the process of trying to get work done with ADHD. Through the musical, the vocalist is trying to get “it” done, and each song touches on various symptoms of ADHD, which stand in the way.

Performance Notes:

The vocalist should keep in mind the “it” task. “it” is intentionally left unspecified, so that it could be anything, but it is a big task that is weighing on the performer throughout the performance, and finishing “it” is the main goal of the vocalist.

Each song should be performed with minimal breaks between, and where *attacca* is written, there should be no breaks.

*Ants:*

The ending of *Ants* should be very chaotic and with no coordination between the players. They should all end in their own time, the only restriction being to not go on for too long.

Soft Rain of Sticky Notes:

The vocalist should improvise some of the lyrics. The spoken text in Rehearsal A is placeholder text, meant as a guide for the vocalist to take and make something more relatable to them. In measure 47, the text is meant as a sample tangent. The vocalist can follow this text if desired but is encouraged to deviate from the written word and free associate, so long as the vocalist ends with the directed text.

Section G should not be taken too slowly. Where lyrics are provided, each instrumentalist should articulate for every syllable, loosely following the vocalist. Ensemble should play stemmed notes together.

Section I should move at the pace of the clarinetist. The clarinetist should feel free to take their time through their long notes. The ensemble should follow, gradually dropping out as the clarinetist moves through the section.
Hyperfocus:

For the vocalist, this song features repeating, improvised text at random. The boxed text indicates what the vocalist can say, and each time the boxed text appears, the vocalist can add that text to their ramblings. When text appears that is not boxed, the vocalist is meant to say those words only, not repeated. When standard notation appears, the vocalist should sing normally.

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Focus

music and lyrics by
Joshua Weitz

$J = 90$

Pacing around, constantly sitting down and immediately standing.

Spoken, Repeating:
‘Just sit down.
Just get it done.’
Unsettled

Voice:

Vln.

Cl.

Vc.

Bass

Dr.

loose hats

I can't sit.

still, I can't sit still. I can't sit still. I can't sit still. I can't sit still.
When I was younger I was told, that silly rhyme that kids are

surrendered
10

B

annoyed

Because my

21

shirt is all bunched up,

and my
desk chair isn't right, and the

desk is all messed up I'll ___ ed —
increasingly frustrated

just all things in sight. Now my shirt's again bunched up. And my

mind has its own will. It must constantly adjust. Can't I ever just sit still? This damn
Voice

44

Voice

shirt is all bunched up. I'll drive myself insane! How is my

Vln.

Cl.

Vc.

Bass

Dr.

32

3/4

Dunraveling

unpitched

follow conter

yell

Voice

shirt still all bunched up?! Ah!

My fucking
36
Voice

shirts still all bunched up! I give up, I give up, I give

Vln.

f

mf

Cl.

mf

Vc.

Bass

mf

Dr.

38
Voice

up, I give up, I give up, I give up, I give up.

Vln.

Cl.

mf

Vc.

mf

Bass

Dr.
Voice

wall, on the table, on the chair, on my knee and my brain, has to think, about

Vln.

fp

Cl.

fp

fp

Vc.

fp

fp

Bass

fp

fp

Dr.

mf

f

Voice

e - vry lit - tie thing, all at once, it's a mess, feels like some-things in my head

Vln.

fp

Cl.

fp

Vc.

ff

Bass

fp

Dr.
ants in my brain, I've got ants in my brain, I've got.
I completely unhinged
free time
don’t end together
yelling, speech-singing
**free time**
spoken hastily

**a little slower**
sing contour

**drum fill will**
continue into rest
go on after it ends

**Voice**

**Vln.**

**Cl.**
ascend quickly
finish after singer

**Vc.**
ascend quickly
finish after singer

**Bass**
fill, continue briefly
after ensemble stops

**Dr.**

---

**A**
voice and clarinet only

sit and begin the "it" task
lyrics spoken

begin a different, less important task

**Voice**
That's really going to
need some focus.
maybe I should do
something else first.
take your time

**Cl.**
Start slowly and accel.
End somewhat obviously.
That can wait, I should focus on this other thing now.

Will you stop?

Only if you make me!

B

Uptempo train beat

Ca. \( \frac{3}{4} = 140 \)

Sung

Everything is underlined, and I can't seem to prioritize. So I
don't know how to choose, which one of them I need to doo doo doo doo.

vamp
vocalist tries to list tasks

...and all of them are underlined

walk
Vocalist tries to prioritize aforementioned task, keeping in mind the “it” task.

Straight accel.

funciton of things to do  skeet  ba do  a metric fusion of things to do  skeet  ba do
upempo train beat
ca. $c = 140$
spoken quickly

tangent about metric vs imperial fucktons, free associate until you circle back end with: As I've said I have a fuckton of things to do and everything is underlined. vocalist continues their tangent, everyone else waits for cue

47

And that's 2.33 fucktons in imperial I know this because I researched the origin of the fuckton as a measurement and the difference between the metric and imperial. It's a fascinating history that could be entirely false because when I say research I mean read a Wikipedia article and I did it all because I didn't know what to work on at the moment. As I've said I have a fuckton of things to do and everything is underlined. 6

punk beat, aggressively
ca. $c = 160$

32

ff

Urgent

Everything is underlined

Everything is underlined

Urgent Urgent

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff
F loosely in tempo with previous section
frustratedly

sung

Voice

What do I do? What do I do? What do I do?

Vln.

Cl.

Vc.

Bass

Dr.

similar
eascent chromatically

fill

G unraveling
tempo at a natural speaking rhythm
free time, loosely coordinated

Where lyrics are provided, articulate for every syllable. Loosely follow the vocalist. 
Ensemble should play stemmed notes together.

Voice

I have to sit down and do everything.

Vln.

Cl.

Vc.

Bass

ad lib.
sparse fills

Dr.

normal bowing

sul pont.

normal bowing

p

sf2

sf2
Voice
Just sit down and get everything done.
gradually ascend cont. articulating syllables

Vln.
gradually ascend cont. articulating syllables

Cl.
gradually ascend cont. articulating syllables

Vc.
gradually ascend cont. articulating syllables

Bass

Dr.

Voice
Get everything done at the same time.

glass cont. articulating syllables

Vln.
glass

Cl.

Vc.

Bass
(follow voice)

Dr.
Voice
simultaneously work on everything

Vln.
glass

Cl.
p

Vc.

Bass

Dr.
alla Anti

Voice
sit down and get everything done.

glass, change string when necessary

Vln.
glass.

Cl.

Vc.

Bass

Dr.
Refrain
ca. $j = 63$
(pick up bar)

Voice:
I have to sit down and get ev-ery-thing done just sit down and get ev-ery-thing done!

Vln.:

Cl.:

Vc.:

Bass:

Dr.:

Voice:
Have to sit down and get ev-ery-thing done just sit down and get ev-ery-thing done!

Vln.:

Cl.:

Vc.:

Bass:

Dr.
Voice:

have to sit down and get ev-ery-thing done
just sit down and get ev-ery-thing done

Vln.

Bass

Dr.

Vc.

Cl.

dig in.

dig in.
Voice

have to sit down and get everything done
just sit down and get everything done

dig in

Vln.

Cl.

Vc.

Bass

dig in
dig in
dig in

dig in

Dr.

molto rit...

spinning out of control

Voice

have to sit down and get everything done
just sit down, just sit down, just sit down, can't sit down,

dig in

Vln.

Cl.

Vc.

Bass

Dr.

choke

fff
free time, coordinated with clarinet
quietly, desperately

spoken gradually realizing you don't have to do everything simultaneously

Voice

Vln.
random rhythms behind bridge

Cl.
cresc. over texture

Vc.
random harmonics

Bass
scratching with pick or nails

Dr.
snare drum rustling
Hyperfocus

unmeasured, free time
ca. 30"

Vocals
harmonic gliss

Violin
wind and key clicks

B♭ Clarinet
harmonic gliss

Violoncello
pick slides, string scrapes

Bass Guitar
play twice, leave space between repetitions

Drum Set
random rhythms and noises

Vln.

Cl.
wait for bass cue

Vc.

Bass

Dr.
45
Vocals
The world dis-solves

49
Vocals
ten-tion... cen-tered

Dr.
16
20
E

46

The world dissolves to only what's in front of me

Vocals

Vln.

Cl.

Vc.

Bass

Dr.

32

65

Attention Centered Blurred my Periphery

Vocals

Vln.

Cl.

Vc.

Bass

Dr.

36
Vln.

Cl.

Vc.

Bass

Dr.

73

Vln.

Cl.

Vc.

Bass

Dr.

[Focus]

Vocals

slowly drop out

Dr.
Vocals

85
The World dissolves to only what's in front of me

Vln.

Cl.

Vc.

Bass

similar beat with hats

Dr.

89
ten-tion Centered Blurred my Pe-ri-phe-ry

Vln.

Cl.

Vc.

Bass

Dr.
On my god, I actually got it done...

What a reset. I can't believe I actually got it done...
54
Vocals
I've come so fast. Was that so hard to actually just sit down? for

Vln.

Cl.

Vc.

Bass

Dr.

19
Vocals
hours for hours for hours tochunks out something of

Vln.
pizz.

Cl.

Vc.

Bass

Dr.
Value and meaning, or anything, anything, just do anything.

Please, get something done, but at least for today I can say...
Vocals

What a relief. still can’t believe I actually

Dr.

brushes

Vln.

Cl.

Vc.

Bass

On my god, I actually got it done.

arco
off the string
even on tenutos
Vocals:

got it done... What a relief. Now I can sleep, and wake up to

peace of mind. That's something done, something done, one thing done, one thing done
I finally sat and got it done, got it done, just sat down and

got it done now I'm done. Fin'ly done
Now I have time, to go outside, the world is mine, I can't deny. Time to

run and jump and sing and scream, with all this time now I have free. It's