

jp merz

# drops on a living surface

for piccolo duo and electronics

6' 30"

2014

## Program Notes:

This piece imagines the cone of a loudspeaker as a thin barrier between the physical and digital world -- a surface for drops of electricity to come alive. These drops begin quietly, almost bell-like, and accumulate into a majestic, electric rainstorm.

This piece was the result of a collaboration with flutists/piccoloists Caitlynn Winkler and Leo Sussman. Much thanks for their feedback and time spent on bringing this piece to life.

## Technical Notes:

Equipment Needed:

- a laptop
- an audio interface
- two condenser microphones
- a single button MIDI foot pedal
- a stereo PA

The performers should be facing each other at least 5 feet apart with their side to the audience. The microphones are plugged directly into the interface and should be placed as close to each performer as possible. The Piccolo 1 player should operate the foot pedal. While sound checking, start the patch and adjust the mic sensitivity so that quiet sounds trigger the “electric raindrops”. Skip ahead to Cue 3 and make sure the loud bass sounds are not constantly triggering the “raindrops” (occasional triggering is alright). Adjust the dry level to blend the sound of the acoustic piccolos with the electronics; amplification may not be necessary/painful starting at Cue 9. Cue 9 should be the loudest section, the bass frequencies of the kick drum sound should be lie underneath the piccolos and the other electronics, rather than overpowering. 2 channels of audio are sent from interface to the PA.

# drops on a living surface

jp merz

♩ = 52  
① like electric raindrops

Except for notes with slurs or tenuto markings, all notes should be played staccato and always employ a percussive, consonant, or airy technique chosen at your own discretion. Complex rhythmic figures are provided to give a clear sense of growth; however, you should not worry about playing these with rigid accuracy rather they should sporadic and irregular. These directions last until m. 26

Picc. 1

Picc. 2

Picc. 1

Picc. 2

Play given pitches in a similar fashion to the previous measure. (Staccato, chaotic, small groupings, segmented)  
The intensity/density should increase over the first measure and decrease the same amount over the second measure.  
The effect should produce a seamless transition between m. 8 - m. 11

Picc. 1

Picc. 2

Picc. 1

Picc. 2

drops on a living surface

2

Picc. 1 *ffp*  $\rightarrow$  *ff* *fp*  $\rightarrow$  *ff*

Picc. 2 *ffp*  $\rightarrow$  *ff* *fp*  $\rightarrow$  *ff*

Seamless transition sim. to m. 9 except only increase in intensity/density.  
Note groups should be slurred. You should abruptly synchronize on m. 22

20

Picc. 1 *sffz*  $\rightarrow$  *ffp*  $\rightarrow$  *ff*

Picc. 2 *sffz*  $\rightarrow$  *ffp*  $\rightarrow$  *ff*

Seamless transition sim. to m. 9 except only increase in intensity/density.  
Note groups should be slurred. You should abruptly synchronize on m. 26

24

Picc. 1 *sffz*  $\rightarrow$  *sffz*

Picc. 2 *sffz*  $\rightarrow$  *sffz*

29

Picc. 1 *sffz* *ffp*  $\rightarrow$  *f* *sffz* *bisb.*

Picc. 2 *sffz* *f* *sffz* *bisb.*

harmonic gliss (o)

4

drops on a living surface

Delicate; somewhat playful

35

Picc. 1 *f*

Picc. 2 *f*

40

Picc. 1 *f*

Picc. 2 *f*

45

Picc. 1 *fp*

Picc. 2 *fp*

harmonic gliss (#)

49

Picc. 1

Picc. 2

drops on a living surface

53

Picc. 1

Picc. 2

6

*ff* *pp*

*ff* *mf*

♩ = ♩. (♩ = 70)

7

Picc. 1

Picc. 2

8

9 (not in sync with electronic beat)

*ff* *p* *ff* *p* *fff*

*ff* *p* *fff*

60

Powerful and Brilliant; Maestoso-esque

Picc. 1

Picc. 2

*ff*

66

Picc. 1

Picc. 2

10

11

*p* *fff* harmonic gliss

*p* *fff* harmonic gliss

drops on a living surface

72 Fast, slurred, irregular bursts using the given notes in any order.

Picc. 1

Picc. 2

Synchronization in this measure is not necessary but, make sure that the downbeat of m. 77 is synchronized.

76

Picc. 1

Picc. 2

*ff* *mf* *p* *f*

*ff* *pp sub.* *ff* *p* *mf* *p* *f*

80

Picc. 1

Picc. 2

*fp* *ff* *fff*

*fp* *ff* *fff*

84

Picc. 1

Picc. 2

*p* *fff*

*p* *fff*

drops on a living surface

88

Picc. 1

Picc. 2

*mp*

*mp*

91

Picc. 1

Picc. 2

*p* *ppp* *ff*

*p* *ppp* *ff*

15 16

Detailed description: The image shows a musical score for two Piccolo parts, Picc. 1 and Picc. 2. The first system covers measures 88 to 90. Picc. 1 starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). It features a melodic line with slurs and triplets, marked with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. Picc. 2 has a similar melodic line with triplets and a *mp* dynamic. The second system covers measures 91 to 96. Picc. 1 begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic, followed by a crescendo to pianissimo (*ppp*), and then a fortissimo (*ff*) triplet. Picc. 2 follows a similar dynamic path. Measure numbers 15 and 16 are circled above the staves. The score concludes with a double bar line.