

Odd! Pianos: Sound, Noise AND Music ...

For amplified piano and tape

Reference Score

Ian Percy

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(live piano part, chronometric timings and written concrete cue-points)

Duration: 8' 16"

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2002/13

**Odd! Pianos:
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This single source, single movement electroacoustic composition for amplified piano and tape was originally composed from the sounds of a Steinway grand piano during 2002. The piece was literally rescued from the trash in late 2009 when (following a studio clear-out) the composer picked the score out of the bin and decided to give the work 'one last glance' ...

The audio was remastered and the score layout was revised early in 2010. Wishing to edit and recompose the piece later in 2010, the original software had long since been extinct and so the source concrete parts could not be accessed. Instead, the concrete audio was digitally remastered, and the original samples were overlaid alongside the master file in an attempt to clean and embellish the soundworld as much as possible.

When it came to recomposition of the live part in preparation for a concert performance in November 2010, it was found that everything sounded like a forced misfit; past and present composing styles were simply too far apart. Recomposition therefore concentrated upon tidying rhythms, shaping and defining dynamic gestures and generally balancing textures.

The formal relationship between pitch-distribution in the different sections of the original was (at times) quite random, and so more linear melodic statements were introduced to act as transition between pitch materials. The sequence, order and repetition of micro units were adjusted to present more recognisable phrases and motives alongside elements of vertical development and linear progression. This also instilled a more tangible sense of form within the sonic textures of near constant concrete crescendo and release.

The concrete audio was remastered again in May 2013, when the full score was also revised into its present state.

Odd Pianos is an unusual piece (one could even call it odd) with passages reminiscent of the work of Conlon Nancarrow for automated player pianos. It is an obvious throwback to the dissonance and atonality of mid twentieth century modernism, but it is certainly not just an academic piece. Emotive and passionate, at times naïve and uncouth, this work is loud and aggressive within a near constant state of crescendo and decay that certainly demands the listener's attention.

Ultimately, the re-mastering, rescore and recomposition of this single movement for amplified orchestral piano and tape was a worthwhile exercise, salvaging an evocative blast from a compositional past that the composer doubts he will ever revisit.

Concrete Parts and Amplification:

The concrete parts have been mixed for multiple stereo-pair analogue diffusion (surround sound), with additional summated (central) mono and sub-bass (LFE) files. The piano is amplified throughout but should only be mixed to a dedicated pair of speakers front and centre of the stage, either side of the piano.

Performance:

The pianist requires a thick guitar plectrum for the parts played on the strings. A jazz plectrum known as the 'Little Stubby' provides the best results for this piece.

The plucked string parts are composed to be performed live through the aid of an additional part score, and it is advisable to label the relative piano strings before performance, but there is also the option to leave these parts on the concrete tape or play them at the keys instead.

Parts of both scores are quite difficult to read and play, but this movement is mainly concerned with timbre and gesture, so a level of approximation in rhythm is acceptable at times. During the fast, textural crescendos, some notes (especially in the bass) can even be omitted to simplify performance. It is always important that the temporal shape and proportion of materials is observed in order to maintain the relationship between live musician and fixed media.

The timings given in the score have been synchronised with the playback of digital audio files and cue points provide aural cues to concrete landmarks. These files are available from the composer via the contact details given at the end of the score.

Odd..! Pianos: Sound, Noise AND Music

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Ian Percy

[Study score: live piano part with accurate timings and written cue-points highlighting concrete landmarks]

Piano

0' 00" $\text{♩} = 120$ An atmospheric tape introduction...

0' 10"

0' 16"

0' 20"

0' 26"

ambient noise and environmental sound → subtle concrete textures emerge → subtle metallic percussive gestures → piano ostinato and fade

door opens → Creaking door → hissing tape → piano lid opens → humming B \flat microtone

piano **ppp**

0' 30" **A** $\text{♩} = 40$ Patient & lyrical, but with growing aggression... plucked strings [thick jazz guitar plectrum]

0' 50"

0' 55"

1' 12"

1' 18"

1' 22"

*Cue hissing tape → *Cue percussive sound → *Cue hissing tape → *Cue squeals → *Cue hissing tape

subtle rubato → poco rit. → poco accel. → [attack the bass 'E' notes to make the strings vibrate] → poco rit. → [to keys]

16 **sforzando** → **p** → **mf** → **mp** → **mf** → **f** → **ff** → **fff** → **p** → **mp** → [to keys]

Ped.

move to the keyboard
and wait for the first
blues bar sound to
start to decay

2 1' 30"

[B] ♩ = 120

*Cue [blues bar decay]

1' 38"

1' 40"

26 [norm.]

Ped.

[low B♭]

1' 44"

1' 50"

[low B♭]

8va

ff

f

fff

8vb

8vb

1' 54"

1' 58"

2' 00"

2' 06"

*Cue

[tape arpeggio]

*Cue [piano sequence enters on the 6th tape arpeggio and plays a similar overlapping phrase]

arpeggiate chords

8va

f

ff

f

fff

f

8vb

8vb

low A

15ma

2' 08"

2' 12"

2' 18"

plucked strings [plectrum]

2' 30"

3

[texture builds]

*Cue
tape cresc.
& perc. roll

C

 $\text{J} = 60$
Hesitant, then agitated...
poco accel.

[to keys] D

 $\text{J} = 120$

squealing tape

tape piano beaters

[to plucked strings]



2' 34"

*Cue

tape piano beaters phrase

tape cresc.

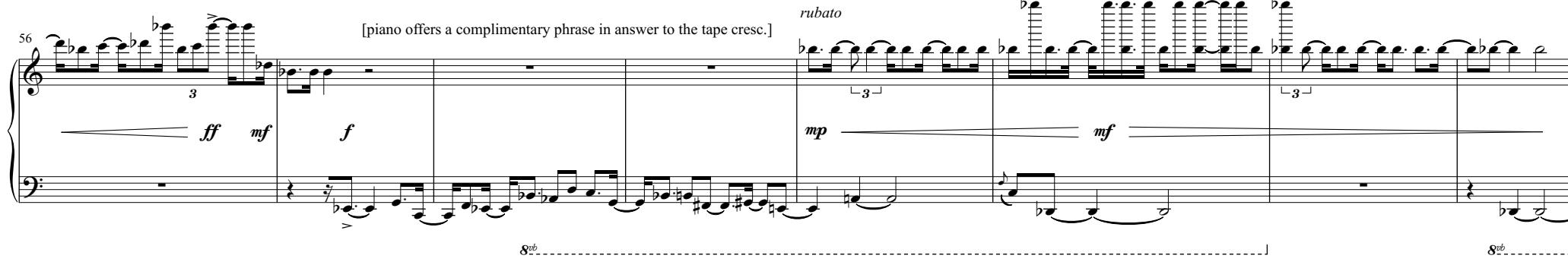
rhythms and resonances

2' 42"

*Cue

hissing tape

2' 48"



2' 50"

*Cue

tape pluck
bass string

2' 54"

thin percussion

squeaks

subtle squeals on tape

3' 05"

3' 18"

timpani
stroke

G

 $\text{J} = 120$

thin percussion

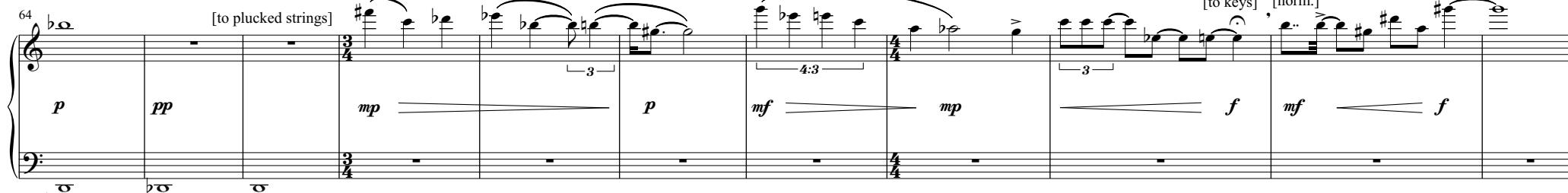
metallic stabs on tape

poco rit.

pitch resonance on tape

[to keys]

[norm.]



(8)-----]

4' 3' 22"

metallic stabs on tape

squeak

timpani stroke

3' 30"

drone on tape

3' 36"

*Cue

hissing tape

3' 40"

cash register percussion

3' 44"

squeal

75

3' 46"

squeal and drone cresc.

3' 50"

*Cue tape cresc.

3' 52"

H

3' 56"

cash register percussion

87

4' 00"

cash register percussion

texture builds towards subtle cresc.

tape gliss

4' 06"

*Cue

tape plucked string phrase
signals start of long cresc.

4' 10"

4' 12"

4' 16"

4' 20"

94

4' 22"

4' 26"

4' 30"

4' 34"

5

I *Cue

aggressive bass and metallic scraping sounds build in texture and intensity

tape plucked string phrase ends

8va

105

p fff ff f ff

3 3 3

3

4' 36"

4' 40"

4' 44"

aggressive bass and metallic scraping sounds build in texture and intensity

bouncing metal balls

(8)

112

mf fff ff [approx.]

3 3

3

4' 46"

4' 48"

4' 52"

4' 58"

5' 00"

[approx.]

***Cue**timpani
stroke

aggressive bass sounds

metallic string stabs phrase

aggressive bass

***Cue**timpani
stroke

hissing tape

117

fff ff mf f

3 3 3

6 3

[broken cluster]

8vb

130

5' 12" texture builds → 5' 16" J 5' 20" textures build towards cresc. → metallic percussion [approx. through to fig. K] 5' 24"

ff *mf* *f*

5' 26"

metallic percussion and resonance

textures build towards cresc.

137

5' 32"

*Cue

hissing tape

tape cresc.

5' 34"

5' 38"

5' 44"

5' 50"

*Cue

squeals

K

tape gliss

tape ostinato and motif

rubato

140

8 5' 54" *Cue [sounds like change in a cash register] hissing tape L

5' 58" textures build towards cresc.

6' 04"

151

mf

f

[octaves through to fig. M]

6' 08" 6' 10" *Cue [prominent scraping sound] squeal motif

6' 16" textures start to fade

6' 20"

158

ff

6' 22" *Cue [subtle metallic bouncing percussion] hissing tape

6' 28" M

6' 32" *Cue [squeal motif] textures build towards cresc.

6' 34" piano phrase plays in reaction to a similar event on tape

165

mf

pp

mf

mp

mf

6' 36" 6' 40" 6' 44" 6' 46" 6' 50" 6' 54" 6' 58"

textures build towards cresc.

172

[octaves through to Fig. N]

*Cue $\text{♩} = 60$

resonant tape cresc.

thin wooden rhythms

tape drone

[to plucked strings]

[to plucked strings]

7' 02" 7' 28" 7' 44" 8' 16"

tape drone → hissing tape hissing tape thin metallic percussion drone builds towards cresc. → squeals and tape cresc. quiet perc. & resonances

N $\text{♩} = 40$ Patient & lyrical, but with growing aggression... poco rit. poco accel. poco rit. squeal motif

Plucked strings [plectrum]

subtle rubato

181

patient & lyrical, but with growing aggression...

attack the bass 'E' notes to make the strings vibrate

wait for tape harmonics

squeal motif

poco rit.

ff

poco accel.

ffff

p

mf

mp

f

ff

p

mp

sfz

ff

p

mp

sfz

Ped.

musician can tap any B♭ string inside the piano with the fingertip and fade rhythm with tape to end

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