CURB WEIGHT SURGICAL FIELD

duo for grand piano and two players

Mark Applebaum, 2010

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Commissioned by Aiyun Huang & Thomas Rosenkranz
for the soundSCAPE Festival, Italy, 2010
In memory of J. Karla Lemon
Duration: ~5'

The Score

After learning the piece, the players should paste reduced copies of the score into the pages of old hardcover books from which they may read in concert. It is preferred that the page-turns between the players be staggered. The books should be placed on the tuning pins or in another convenient location; however, the players should not call special attention to them: books should be handled as normal scores.

"Choreography"

Player 1 begins "inside" the piano (standing in the curvature of the rim) and migrates to the upper portion of the keyboard. Player 2 begins at the upper portion of the keyboard and migrates to the lower portion of the keyboard, playing the interior from that position.

Duration

Each of the twelve systems has a duration of 20"-25". Assiduous care should be taken to preserve the temporal arrangement of sounds as suggested by their visual appearance in the score. Modest fermatas, at the end of musical phrases, may be added *judiciously* in order to accommodate occasional equipment changes. As always, the composer asks for fidelity, not exactitude.

Subdivisions—such as 8th-note beams, 16th-note beams, triplets, and quintuplets—suggest the equal division of a local passage. However, the duration of a given rhythmic figure is not fixed throughout the piece. For example, triplets spaced over two centimeters are faster than triplets spaced over four centimeters.

Sustain Pedal, Piano Lid, Music Desk

The sustain pedal is depressed throughout the entire piece. The pedal may be "permanently" blocked down by wedging it from the back. The piano lid is fully open using full stick. The music desk (music rack) should be removed.

Equipment

Players may find it helpful to wear a plastic guitar thumb pick for plectrum and/or fingernail articulations. Thumb picks may be useful on the left and/or right hand. (Although less common, left hand thumb picks are commercially available.)

Player 1:
Plastic plectrum or plastic guitar thumb pick
Yarn mallet
Shaker
Metal bell
Length of chain

Player 2:
Plastic plectrum or plastic guitar thumb pick
A rubber ball or tennis ball
Chopstick
Soft mallets
Wire or plastic brush
Friction mallet
A single preparation of choice

Accidental Policy

Accidentals apply only to the notes to which they immediately adhere.

Legend

Many sounds are produced by playing directly on the interior of the piano. By way of a crude generalization, short sounds should be loud while longer ones may have a more modest dynamic.

The cast iron frame consists of metal casting "beams" or crossbeams that divide the strings into four sections. From high register strings to low register strings, these are referred to as A, B, C, & D. (From sections with long beams to short beams, they are D, C, B, & A.)

Player 1

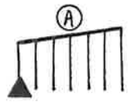
Pizzicato: the non-speaking portion of the string (the short length of the string between the bridge and the hitch pins) is loudly plucked with a fingernail or plectrum. The pluck may be made in Section A, B, or C. (If Section C is muted with felt, as is common on concert grand pianos, it should be avoided.) The particular string may change throughout the piece; however, plucks that occur in immediate succession should be made on the same string.

The interior of the curved, wooden rim of the piano is knocked percussively with the knuckles.

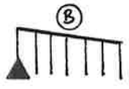
Moderately loud soundboard thump produced by percussively tapping the soundboard (through a sound hole in the casting) with the fleshy tip of the middle finger.

The side of one of the longer casting beams is struck with a medium or hard yarn mallet.

Click produced by percussively closing the short stick (into the long stick). The first occurrence of this sound can be prepared by opening the short stick before the commencement of the performance.

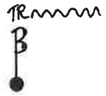


Ascending glissando along the non-speaking part of the strings of Section A (the short length between the bridge and the hitch pins) made with a plectrum or backhanded fingernail.



Descending glissando along the non-speaking part of the strings of Section B (the short length between the bridge and the hitch pins) made with a plectrum or backhanded fingernail.

The strings of Section A, as they cross the bridge, are strummed in glissando motion with a plectrum or the back of a fingernail. This action is performed immediately on top of the bridge.



Six-finger trill (the repetition of R4, R3, R2, L4, L3, L2) made with the flesh of the undersides of the fingers (but not quite the tips) on the side of a medium or long casting beam.

Six-finger trill (the repetition of R4, R3, R2, L4, L3, L2) made with the flesh of the undersides of the fingers (but not quite the tips) on the full stick that holds the piano lid open.

Slow "guiro" scrape of the highest wound string (Section D) with fingernail or plectrum. This should be a "dead-stroke" gesture that, upon completion, does not allow the string to ring or reveal its tuned pitch.

Four pairs of wound strings (Section D) are "wiped" by the flesh of four fingertips in a continuous pulling motion, thereby producing a kind of wheezing sound.

A shaker is placed on the given string (corresponding to the note played on the keyboard), thereby exciting the materials in the shaker and giving the note a peculiar, transformed sound. A recommended option is the *Meinl Headed Spark Shaker* whose membrane can be placed faced-down on the strings.

A metal object is placed on the given string (corresponding to the note played on the keyboard), thereby giving the note a strange, metallic, buzzing sound. The symbol is shaped like a metal bell; however, a metal object other than a bell can be employed.

A length of chain, deposited beforehand over several middle or low strings, is gently moved on the strings in a random, massaging motion.

The player mutes the given string (corresponding to the note played on the keyboard) with the flesh of a fingertip, thereby giving the played note a thudding, percussive sound with little pitch definition.

Player 2

Pizzicato: the non-speaking portion of the string (the short length of the string between the bridge and the hitch pins) is loudly plucked with a fingernail or plectrum. The pluck may be in any section that is not muted with felt. The particular string may change throughout the piece; however, plucks that occur in immediate succession should be made on the same string.

The side of one of the casting beams is rapped—loudly and percussively—by the knuckles.

The underside of the piano lid is rapped—loudly and percussively—by the knuckles.

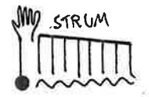
Percussive sound made by the keyboard lid. Prepared by closing the lid one or two inches, the lid is then percussively returned to its fully open (upright) position. This is not a violent gesture that imperils the piano.

Harmonic played loudly on the lowest string. The note is played on the keyboard while two fingers lightly touch the string a few inches apart, thereby producing a complex harmonic.

Low note (within the bottom octave of the piano) played on the keyboard while an object (a "preparation") is held against the corresponding string, thereby giving the note a colorful, highly distorted, alien sound.

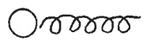
Moderately quiet open palm tremolo—a back and forth wiping with one hand—along several low strings (Section D). The wiping direction is parallel to the string, thereby producing a high frequency sound.

Rapid but quiet tremolo on the lowest string by wiping back and forth (parallel to the string) with a wire or plastic brush.



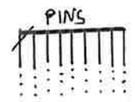
Several low strings (Section D)—approximately ten—are quietly strummed with one or more fingertips in a downward glissando motion.

The lowest strings (approximately four) are quietly "rolled" by trilling with a pair of very soft mallets (e.g., timpani mallets).



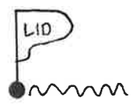
A rubber ball or tennis ball is quietly rolled, from right to left, across the low strings of Section D.

Several octaves of black notes on the keyboard are strummed horizontally (across the keyboard from right to left) with a chopstick. A series of clicks is produced; however, the keys are not depressed and thus the strings are not activated.



The tuning pins (Section B or C) are noisily stroked with a chopstick, spatula, wooden spoon, or other beater.

Glissando by stroking the non-speaking portion of the strings (the length between the bridge and hitch pins) of Section C with a playing card, index card, or other stiff piece of paper or cardstock in a medium dynamic. Ossia: should Section C be out of reach or muted by felt, Section B may be employed.



The underside of the lid of the piano is slowly wiped with a friction mallet (or a "super ball mallet"—a super ball attached to a stick or wedged on the end of a pointed, slightly flexible metal Revlon nail file), thereby producing a bizarre, groaning sound. Ossia: should the lid provide insufficient friction, a casting beam or the soundboard itself (on the left side of the piano beyond Section D) may be substituted.

The player mutes the given string (corresponding to the note played on the keyboard) with the flesh of a fingertip, thereby giving the played note a thudding, percussive sound with little pitch definition.

Unvoiced Vocalized Sounds

Staccato vocal sounds are always loud and emphatic.

Sustained sounds are, by default, loud (when possible); however, the players will adjust the dynamic of some sustained vocal sounds downward according to taste and in order to balance quieter, decaying piano resonances. Crescendos and diminuendos, when supplied, progress from silent to loud or from loud to silent, respectively.

Note: <u>all</u> vocalized sounds are *unvoiced*.

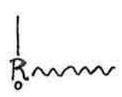
Explosive tongue click—a "clucking" sound.

Explosive kissing sound.

Explosive bilabial lip pop.

Whistled note with some wobbling of pitch; ossia: hummed note.

A noisy, audible inhalation through the mouth.



An unvoiced, rolled "r" as in the Spanish word "<u>r</u>ojo."

The adopted notational convention for the following sounds follows the international phonetic alphabet which is widely referenced. These six sounds have no trace of any vowel content:

Hissing sound: "f" as in the English word "<u>f</u>ife."

Hissing sound: "s" as in the English word "<u>s</u>ilence."

Hushing sound: "sh" as in the English word "hu<u>sh</u>."

Explosive "ch" sound: "ch" as in the English word "<u>ch</u>eer."

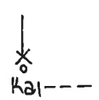
Explosive "k" sound: "k" as in the English word "<u>k</u>ite."

Explosive "t" sound: "t" as in the English word "<u>t</u>ight."

The following sustained sounds should be produced with ample saliva in the back of the mouth in order to make them noisy. While unvoiced, different high or low vowels are clearly conveyed by shaping the mouth to produce corresponding high or low frequencies. The circle symbol ₀ — meaning "unvoiced" in international phonetic alphabet — appears as a supplemental reminder.

MOUTH SHAPE:
HIGH VOWEL

The mouth is shaped to produce a noisy, unvoiced "ke" as in the English word "key."



The mouth is shaped to produce a noisy, unvoiced "ki" as in the English word "kite."

The mouth is shaped to produce a noisy, unvoiced "ko" as in the English word "cold."

The mouth is shaped to produce a noisy, unvoiced "koo" as in the English word "cuckoo."

MOUTH SHAPE:
LOW VOWEL

M. Applebaum, 2010

1

Interior

Voice

2

Player 2 At Keyboard

Voice

A

Metal

Scrape

B

3

Inhale

R

Ku f s

Ko sf

Ki

22 ma

Ko f

K ts

Ki

*3 octaves higher

1

Interior

Voice

2

Keyboard

Voice

Chains

B

Wipe

Bridge

Thump

Rim

Rim

Shaker

B

B

B

Ko

Ku

Kai

Inhale

K ts

ts

ts

ts

1

INTERIOR

B

THUMP

B

WIPE

TR

SCRAPE

VOICE

W

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INHALE

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BRIDGE

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THUMP

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KEYBOARD

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22 ma

FAST → SLOW

BRIDGE

SCRAPE

CHAINS

PLAYER 1 TO KEYBOARD...

1

VOICE

PLAYER 1 AT KEYBOARD

VOICE

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INTERIOR

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COVER

1

VOICE

KEYBOARD

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VOICE

INTERIOR

22 ma

K

t

INHALE

ts K

S

St

f

PREP

PINS

3

STRUM

Kai

Ko

Ki

Ku

LID

MALLET ROLL

L.V.

1:18:10 MENLO PARK

6