

***Prestissimo con violenza, ma
molto espressivo con
intimissimo sentimento***

**for toy piano,
or other keyboard instruments**

Richard Whalley

Performance notes

This piece was conceived to be played on a three octave toy piano (range F below middle C to F 2½ octaves above), and was inspired by the sense in which sound can feel like it is being literally coaxed out of such a small instrument; it seemed to me that a unique, and strangely intense sense of struggle is generated by playing on such an instrument. This piece is an *étude* in drawing sound out of a small instrument.

Although conceived with the toy piano (and its noisy action!) in mind, like much keyboard music it is a piece about pitch and rhythm, and is intended for possible performance on a range of instruments. It is also intended as a piece that can be played more than once in the same concert, ideally on different instruments, and possibly in different versions (I am working on that!)

The score is somewhat idealistic in terms of the range of dynamics and articulations asked for, and all the composer asks is that the performer do what is possible to achieve the musical effect that is called for by such markings; different things are possible on different instruments. Below is a list of suggestions for various instruments this piece might be played on.

Toy Piano

The composer is very excited about how this piece might sound on toy piano. Everything should be possible (if not exactly easy) except for the high F# in bar 83, and the sustaining of the semibreve [whole-note] G# in bar 97. Dynamic markings and articulation are of course a little idealistic. For instruments with a slow action take the *ossia* at bar 127, and it is possible to leave out the bottom note of each of the R.H. triads in bars 81/82.

Harpsichord

The piece works better on a two manual harpsichord, so that at least two dynamic levels can be achieved. It is up to the performer to decide on registration if this is the case, but there is a problem with the music on the first page, in that the trill tends to come out too loud, and the staccato chords too soft in relation; whatever can be done in terms of registration to overcome this should be done, and the staccato chords may be played tenuto instead. Again, the composer looks forward to the irresistible clatteriness of hearing this piece on harpsichord.

Fortepiano

Due to the greater range of colour on fortepianos than on modern pianos, this piece should work very well on fortepiano. No sustaining pedal should be used, except possibly in bars 86-87 and bars 95-97. One possibility is to play the piece once with no soft pedal, then at a later point in the concert with the *una corda* pedal fully depressed, and possibly yet again with the *dampfer (regulator)* pedal depressed. Due to the uniformity of sound on modern pianos this piece is not highly recommended for modern pianos.

Chamber-organ

If more than one manual exists, then the guidelines given for harpsichordists also apply here. Staccatos need not be overly short, especially on the first page against the trill, and the composer acknowledges that the music is unlikely at any stage to sound *fortissimo martellato* but still invites performance on this instrument. This is one instrument where the long G# in bar 97 can come into its own! Be sure to be very rhythmic with the final octave F in bar 132.

Accordion

Given that accents can be given by the bellows, allowing a greater range of articulation than on the organ, the composer would love to hear the marriage of this piece with the characteristic sound of the accordion. In the *espressivo* sections in the middle of the piece, the player should really be as expressive as possible, and any places where there are simultaneous different dynamic markings, dynamics can be thought of like articulation, and become incorporated into the dynamic curve of the phrase.

Clavichord

Not recommended, unless the player can come up with a way of not risking gratuitous slicing of strings; a shame because the *espressivo* section could sound truly *doloroso* with the vibrato and pitch-bend possibilities offered by the clavichord!

Total Duration: approx. 3 minutes

27 *ff*

Musical notation for measures 27-34. Treble and bass staves. Dynamic markings: *ff*, *f*, *mf*. Includes a triplet of eighth notes in measure 34.

35 *mp* *p* *mf* (ad lib.)

Musical notation for measures 35-40. Treble and bass staves. Dynamic markings: *mp*, *p*, *mf*. Includes a slur over a triplet in measure 35 and a fermata in measure 40. Performance instruction: (stuttering).

41 (*f*) *ff* *f* martellato

Musical notation for measures 41-44. Treble and bass staves. Dynamic markings: *f*, *ff*, *f*. Includes a fermata in measure 41 and a martellato section in measure 44. Performance instruction: (5+5).

45 (2+3) *ff* *f* *f* *ff*

Musical notation for measures 45-48. Treble and bass staves. Dynamic markings: *ff*, *f*, *f*, *ff*. Includes a fermata in measure 45 and a 2+3 grouping in measure 46.

49 (2+3) *f* *f* *ff* *f*

Musical notation for measures 49-52. Treble and bass staves. Dynamic markings: *f*, *f*, *ff*, *f*. Includes a fermata in measure 49 and a 2+3 grouping in measure 50.

53 (2+3) *f* *ff* *f*

Musical notation for measures 53-56. Treble and bass staves. Dynamic markings: *f*, *ff*, *f*. Includes a fermata in measure 53 and a 2+3 grouping in measure 54.

57 (3+4) mf (4+5) (3+4)

61 ff martellato (non dim.)

66 sub. p. sub. f (non cresc.) secco

71 (f=f) f f

76 ff

80 ff mf