

Solo Suite for 4 Timpani

Michael Shun

About the Piece:

This suite explores the rhythmic and melodic possibilities of the timpani. Despite being devised into three movements, the suite has been designed to be played without breaks in between movements.

The first movement is a theme and variations on an originally composed march theme. The slow and grand introduction slowly incorporates gestures to usher in the metric modulation to the march tempo. The variations explore inverting the theme, accelerating the rhythmic activity with sixteenth note triplets, and emphasizing the intervallic content by rolling on two drums simultaneously. Towards the end of the movement the theme is transformed with a gradual acceleration and deconstruction of the pitch content as the performer must gradually lower the pitch of each of the drums while the theme is played.

Inspired by the *Adagio* of Elliot Carter's "Eight Pieces for Four Timpani", the second movement is the transitional segment to set up the tuning scheme for the third movement. The *glissandi* create the melodic contour as each drum slowly approaches its target pitch. The thunderous climax is an aleatoric section that also revisits the previous movement's idea of rolling on two drums to create vertical sonorities.

The third movement has its inspirations in dance rhythms of Indian *kathak*. The overall shape of the piece is a large crescendo that slowly develops into the dance rhythm in its full form (7+9, or 2+2+3+2+3+2+2), immediately followed by a deconstruction of the material that features little "solos" on each drum.

Special thanks goes to composition mentor Professor Matthew Jaskot and percussion instructor Jonathan Hess for their respective insights in composition and performance.

Performance Notes:

Like in Carter's timpani pieces, (N) stands for playing on the normal playing zones of the timpani, (R) for near the rim/bearing edge, and (C) for the center.

The triangle noteheads indicate indeterminate pitch. Triangles pointed down indicate playing the drum's lowest possible pitch, while triangles pointed up indicate its highest. These will vary across timpani sets.

Movement two should feel as though it is in free time, and noteheads in parentheses need not be accurate; the general contour should be the priority of each line.

Performance time c. 15 minutes

Solo Suite for 4 Timpani

I. Theme and Variations

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Maestoso ♩ = 78

Timpani

ff marcato

(N)

10

ff

20

(C) **f** (C) [stems up]

pp **pp** (R) [stems down]

28

stems up **dim.**

(R) (N) **mf**

34

mf (C) (N) **Tempo di Marcia** (♩ = c. 104)

p **f**

41

mp

49

f **mp** **mp staccato** Variation I:

57

(N) (R) **p**

134

sfz *fp* *sfz* (R)

140

sfz *fp* *ff* (R) (N)

147 ^{V:} ♩ = ♩

mp

152

subito pp *sub. f* (R) (N)

158

mf *mp* *p* *f*

164

VI: (♩ = ♩) (N)

mf

170

pp (R)

177

mf (R) (N)

184

$\text{♩} = 78$ VII: **accel.** *moto perpetuo*

*The accelerando should be gradual throughout the variation,
but should be played as fast as possible by the new metronome marking.

191

** marcato markings denote pedaling that drum down gradually to its lowest pitch by the end of each phrase.

199

$\text{♩} = 156$ (or as fast as possible)

203

molto rit. *attacca*

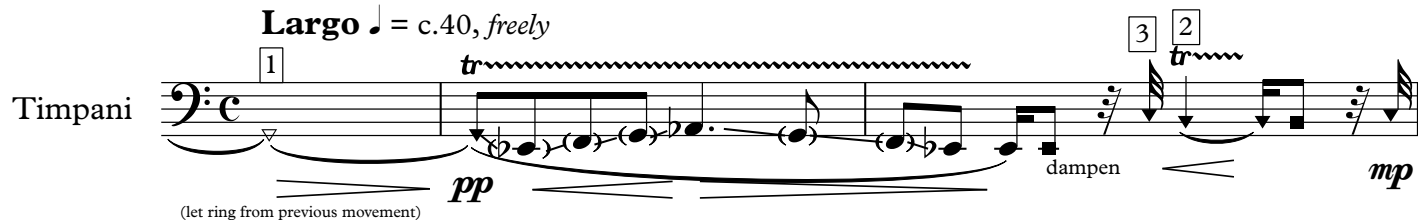
II. Intermezzo

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soft, roller mallets

Largo ♩ = c.40, *freely*

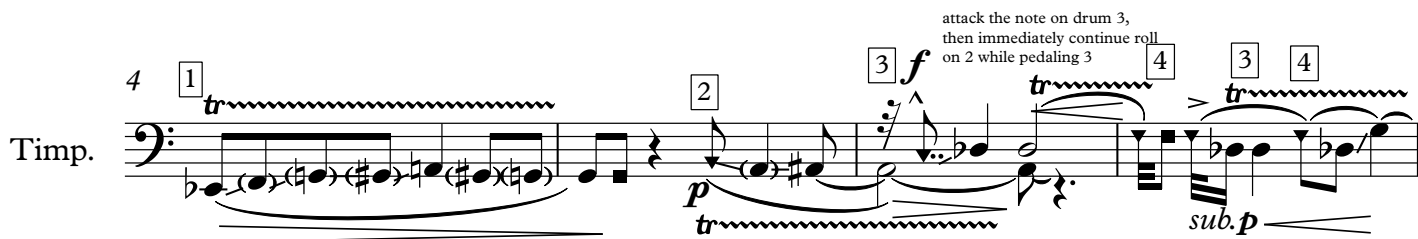
Timpani



(let ring from previous movement)

pp dampen *mp*

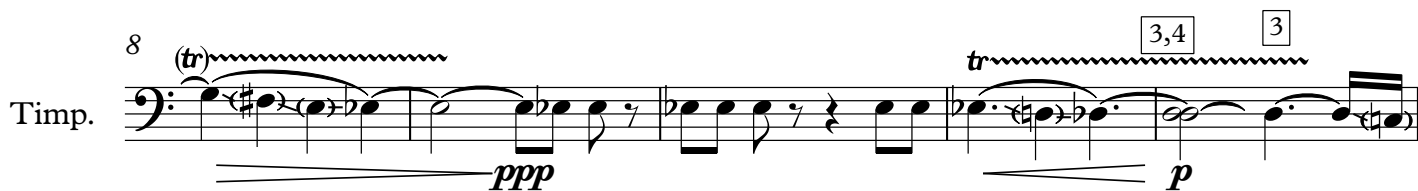
Timpani



attack the note on drum 3, then immediately continue roll on 2 while pedaling 3


p *f* *sub.p*

Timpani



ppp *p*

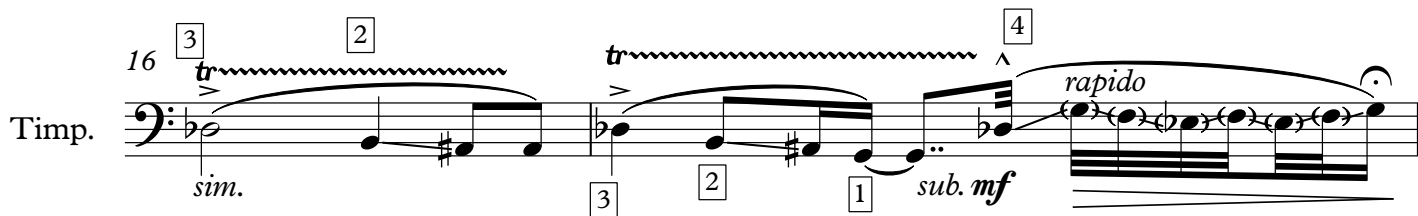
Timpani



*pedal 3 up to Db
*pedal 2 up to G

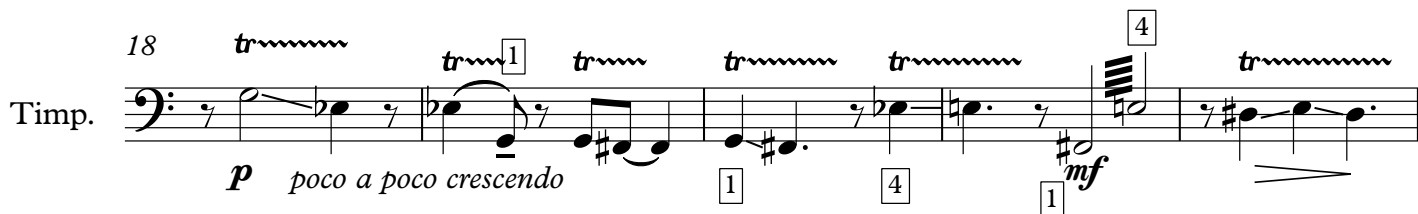
sfz

Timpani



sim. *sub. mf* *rapido*

Timpani



p poco a poco crescendo *mf*

Timpani



molto dim. *sfz* *sim.*



28
Timp. *p* *ad lib. drums 2-4* *c. 6"* *mp*

31
Timp. *mf* *ad lib. drums 1-3 c.6"* *ad lib. 2-3 c.12"* *sffz* *niente* *attaca*

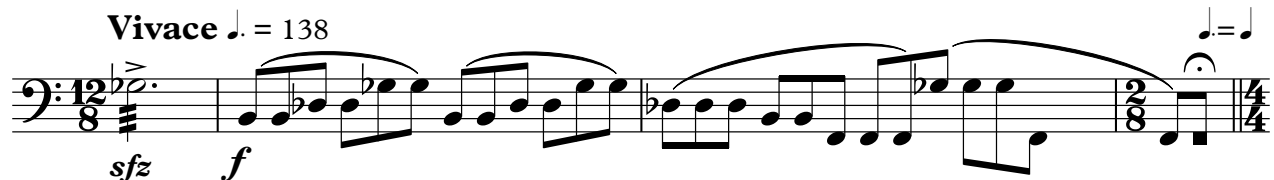
Gradually end decrescendo rolling on the lowest drum.

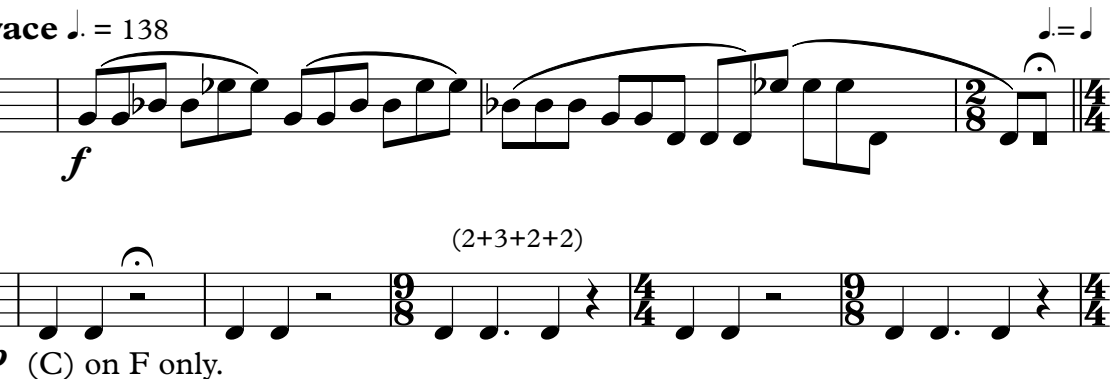
III. Kathak-esque

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B D^b
F   G^b

Vivace ♩. = 138


Timpani 

4 

10 

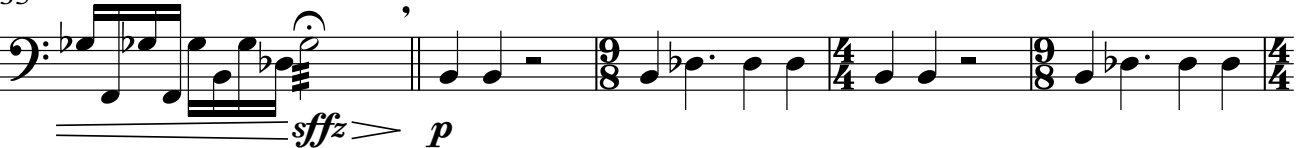
15 


20 

25 

28 

32 

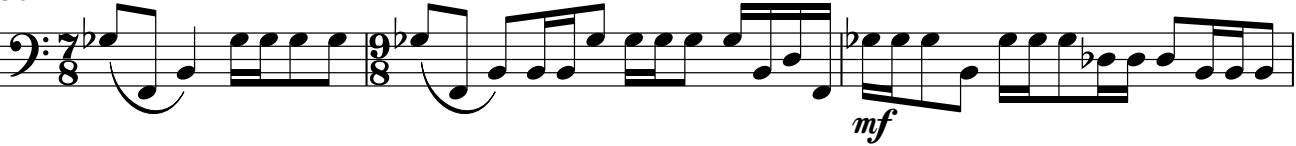
35
Timp. 
sffz > *p*

40
Timp. 
p *sub. mf* *p*


44
Timp. 
sub. mf *p* *sub. mf* *sim.*


48
Timp. 

52
Timp. 

56
Timp. 
mf *accel.*

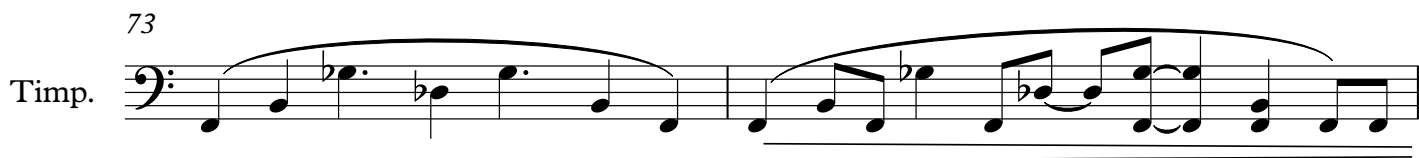
59
Timp. 

62
Timp. 
f

64
Timp. 
mp ♩ = 138

67
Timp. 

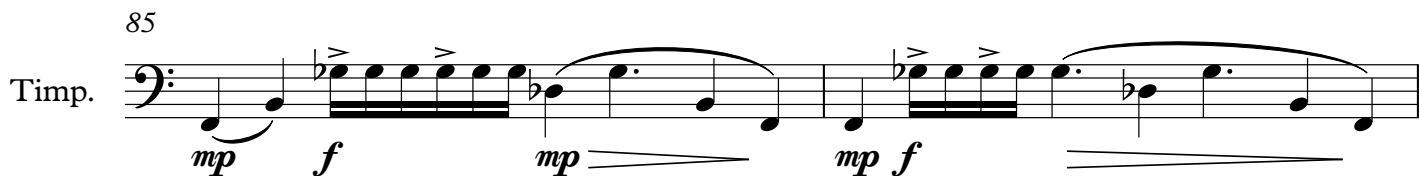
70
Timp. 

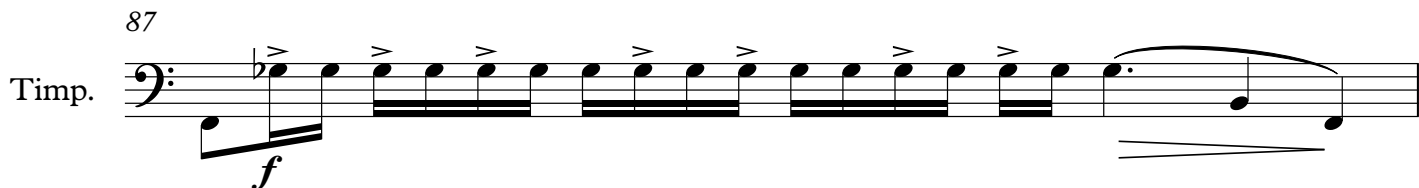
73
Timp. 

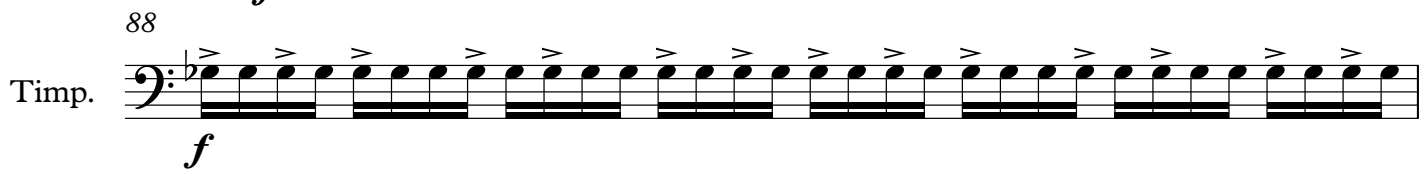
75
Timp. 

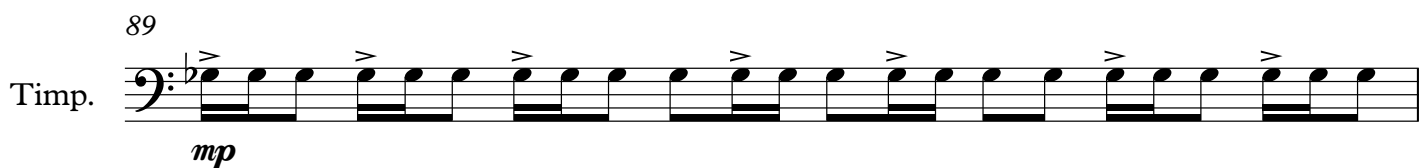
79
Timp. 

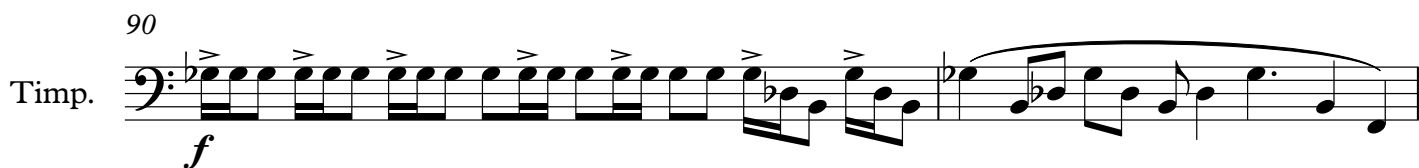
82
Timp. 

85
Timp. 



87
Timp. 

88
Timp. 

89
Timp. 

90
Timp. 

92 Switch L.H mallet to soft mallet

  *p staccato*

Timp. 

95

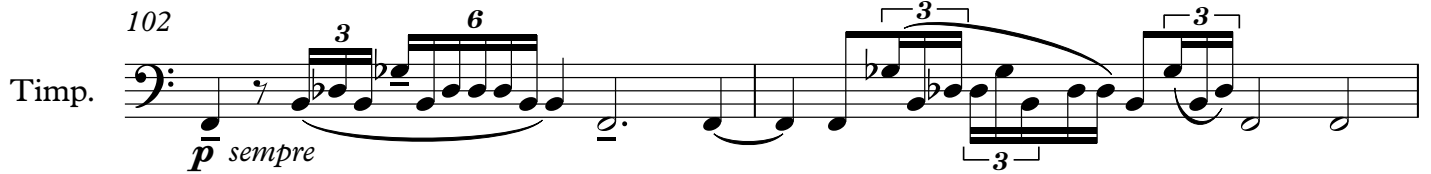
Timp. 

98 R.H. mallet to soft mallet

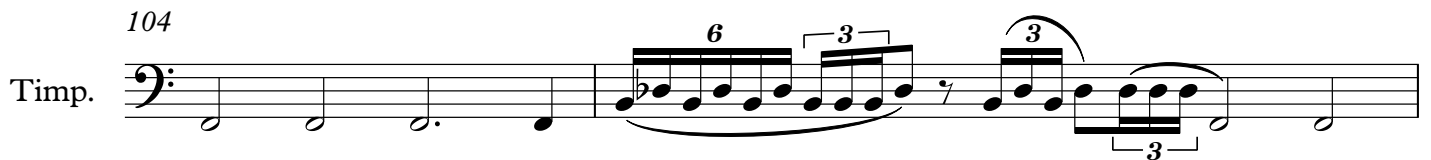
 

Timp. 


102

Timp. 

104

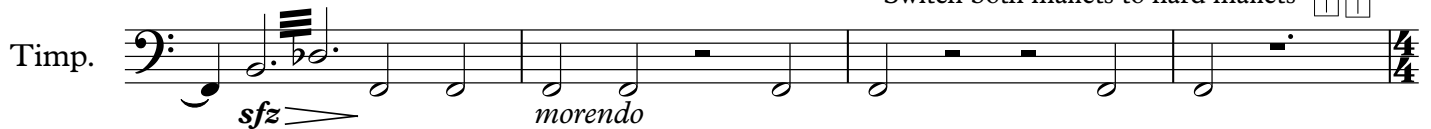
Timp. 

106

Timp. 

109

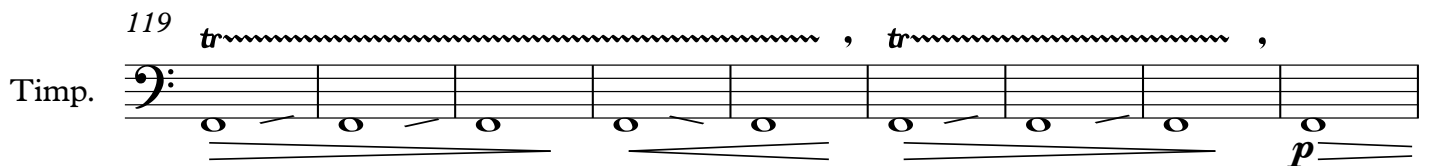
Switch both mallets to hard mallets  

Timp. 

113

Timp. 

119


Timp. 

gradually pedal to higher indeterminate pitch for three bars.

pedal lower for two bars, but no lower than F.

pedal up, as before.

128

Timp. 
ppp highest possible pitch. *poco a poco rit.* *fff*

136

Timp. 
tr *a tempo*
grad. return to F. *molto rit.* *pp* *sffz*


139

Timp. 
f *mf*

142

Timp. 

144

Timp. 
ff *(05/16/17)*