

Brad Decker

# Serpentine

For Tympanist and Electroacoustic Accompaniment  
2010 / 2011



## PROGRAM NOTE:

Serpentine, for Timpanist (playing four timpani, suspended cymbal, tamborine, two temple gongs, and bongos) and electroacoustic accompaniment, explores the timbral and expressive possibilities of the timpani. Small, differing fragments are superimposed to create new gestures with new contexts. These are then superimposed with other combinations. Eventually, these combinations reveal the original fragments, but reinterpreted. The typanist tunes the set of drums continually during the work, resulting in sounds that may or may not be exactly in tune. This is intentional; the work exploits the idea of gradual change through glissando. The title of the work symbolizes a cyclical passage from beginning to end in this manner. The electronic portion of the work processes recorded samples of the timpani part, as well as those of the *oud*, a middle-eastern plucked string instrument. Many thanks to Mark Enslin for his assistance. Serpentine was commissioned by percussionist Andrew Buchanan.

## TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS:

This work is intended to be presented on a concert stage, with soloist center. The electroacoustic accompaniment is to be presented in quadraphonic style, with 4 discreet audio channels (left front, right front, left rear, right rear) at the four corners of the seated audience. A monitor mix of all four channels, and an in-ear click track, is recommended for the performer. The accompaniment is fixed into 4 digital audio files.

## INSTRUMENTATION:

Four Timpani (32", 29", 26", 23") with Timpani Mallets

Suspended Cymbal mounted above the timpani to the left or right of center.

Two (2) Temple Gongs resting on pads. (Difference in pitch should be roughly a minor second.) These can be resting on a table or music stand above the timpani to the left or right of center (opposite the cymbal).

Two Bongos. These should be mounted above the center two timpani.

## BEATERS:

Timpani Mallets (and/or the butts of the sticks)

Drum Sticks

Medium Yarn Mallets

## TUNING:

The initial intonation is provided. There are quite a bit of tuning procedures in this work. Attempt to make them as exact as possible. Some gestures however, are intended to expose the slight tuning differences of two timpani that have been tuned to the same pitch. This will most likely create a difference tone.

## IMPROVISATION:

There is a section of this work that is to be improvised. Rhythms are only suggested to provide the performer with a rough idea of the primal nature of this section. The passage should be performed on any of the four timpani. Only the passage within the brackets are to be improvised in this manner. Immediately after the bracket, the music is to be performed as normal.

## LEGEND:

x = muted note: hold down drum head with opposite hand while fully striking the note with the other.

♪ = cue sized notes are to be interpreted as notes of less importance. "Ghost notes" should be struck in a lighter manner than the surrounding events.

Diamond-shaped note heads indicate the use of the hands to articulate the event.

Slashed notes: perform the passage on the temple gong, as it sits on the timpani.

For further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. b.decker75@gmail.com



I II III IV

for Andrew Buchanan  
**Serpentine**

For Tympanist and Electroacoustic Accompaniment

Brad Decker  
 b.decker75@gmail.com

♩ = 70

4/4

Tape *sweep up.* *shadowy timpani figures* *drone...*

1 [0:00] With Mallets

Timpani *sweep down.* *barely there.*

Suspended Cymbal

Tamborine

Temple Gongs (2)

Bongos

5

Tape

Timpani *suddenly* *Tune I to F2*

9

Tape

2 [0:22]

Timpani *barely there.*

13

Tape

Timpani *suddenly* *Tune III to E3*

17

Tape

3 [0:54] *Tune IV to F3*

Timpani *distant* *barely there.*

21

Tape

Timpani *distant* *barely there.* *loud as hell.*

25

Tape *drone drops to sub audio* *metals, sustained*

again! gently. *II III* *Mallet Handles* *Ord.* *Mallet Handles*

Suspended Cymbal *ffff pp sfp* *an interruption. pp* *f p* *sim.* *pp f p*

Tamborine *p < ff* *p < ff*

Bongos *f* *fff*

30

Tape *cymbal roll* *tambourine sounds*

Bongos *pp* *f* *pp* *f*

*4* *1:40* *Ord.* *Mallet Handles* *Ord.*

34

Tape *Mallet Handles* *Ord.* *l.v.*

Suspended Cymbal *-ff* *p* *fff* *pp* *ff* *fff*

*5* *1:56*

37

Tape *timp.*

Temple Gongs (2) *p* *f* *p* *sf*

Bongos *ff*

*II* *as if tuning it.* *5* *3*

40

Tape *tambourine sounds*

*6* *5* *6* *6* *6* *2:17* *3* *7* *3*

*=f* *sf* *sf* *sf* *sf* *ff* *sf* *sf* *fff* *p*

43

Tape *Tune I to Eb 2*

*ff* *p* *fff* *l.v.*

46

Tape

Oud.

7 2:34

Mallet Handles

Ord.

Suspended Cymbal

Tamborine

Temple Gongs (2)

Bongos

*p* *f* *ff* *p* *f* *sf* *pp* *ff*

*f*

51

Tape

Mallet Handles

8 3:05

Suspended Cymbal

Tamborine

Temple Gongs (2)

Bongos

*f* *ff*

*ff* *fp* *ffff* l.v.

*fp*

57

Tape

suddenly.

Mallets smoothly.

sim.

Suspended Cymbal

Tamborine

Temple Gongs (2)

*ff* l.v. *f* l.v. *pp* *pp* *pp*

61

Tape

Mallet Handles 9 3:29

Mallets

Mallet Handles

suddenly.

Suspended Cymbal

Tamborine

Temple Gongs (2)

*pp* l.v. l.v. *ff* *f* *f* *f* *f* *ff* *f* *f* *ff*

67 *background rhythm ..... grows in intensity*

Tape

Mallets *reverently, evenly.* *sim.* **10** **4:00**

Suspended Cymbal  
Tamborine

Temple Gongs (2)

74

Tape

*build again.*

Suspended Cymbal  
Tamborine

*pp sf*

76 *rising sweeps* *rhythm grows stronger*

Tape

**11** **4:27**

Suspended Cymbal  
Tamborine

Temple Gongs (2)

Bongos

81

Tape

Suspended Cymbal  
Tamborine

Bongos

84 *rhythm stops*

Tape

**12** **4:51**

Suspended Cymbal  
Tamborine

*ffff* *< ff >*

Place high-pitched Temple Gong on II,  
Place low-pitched Temple Gong on IV.

89

floating string sound / metallic taps

fast rattle

Tape

13 5:01 Med. Yarn Mallets Played on Gong

14 5:15 With Hands

Bongos

96

fast rattle.....pitch bend

cymbal

metal fragments

Tape

15 5:32 Place Cymbal Upside Down on III Remove Gongs from Timpani

Played on Cymbal

drone...

on Drum on Cymbal

Take Cymbal off Drum Set back on Cymbal Stand

Bongos

103

high chirps

glass

Tape

16 5:53 (timpani)

Timp. Mallets

grow evenly, reverently.

Bongos

109

(high chirps)

(glass)

drone...

Tape

Bongos

111

drone...

Tape

17 6:17

Improvise. Rhythms are suggested.

primal, yet eloquent.

Bongos

115

Tape

drone rises up...

118

Tape

drone rises up... rising up... large sweep... cymbal

122

Tape

quiet serene drone... drone descends slowly

126

Tape

drone descends slowly

Med. Yarn Mallets

Suspended Cymbal

Tamborine

Bongos

smoothly. with added conviction.

131

Tape

gravelly drone

tambourine sounds and oud samples grow and continue

temple gong

descending drone

20 7:28

Timp. Mallets

Tune I to Ab2

Suspended Cymbal

Tamborine

Temple Gongs (2)

Bongos

f pp ff p 6 f f f f f f f

138 descending metal texture 8

Tape

21 7:46

barely there.

142 descending metal texture

Tape

temple gongs

suddenly. Tune III to Bb2

146 ascending metal texture

Tape

Mallet Handles

22 8:13

barely there.

150

Tape

temple gongs

Tune IV to D3

suddenly.

154 texture slowly fades

Tape

Fingers

23 8:41

158

Tape

162-164

(Hold, wait for tape part to die away.)