

FLUTTERINGS

*2015 Portland Percussion Group Composition Contest – Honorable Mention
Dedicated to my friend Dr. Chris Whyte*

Kit Mills

INSTRUMENTATION

Player 1

Brushes (pair)
Drumsticks (pair)
A pencil, pen, or thin stick
12"-16" square of cardboard (or similar surface)
Maracas (pair)
Hand Towel (wet and wrung out)
Small, firm pillow (e.g., a decorative couch pillow)
One or more sheets of newspaper

Player 2

Brushes (pair)
Drumsticks (pair)
12"-16" square of cardboard (or similar surface)
Cabasa
Wooden spoons (pair; either serving spoons or eating utensils)
Finger Cymbals (pair)
One or more sheets of newspaper

Player 3

Brushes (pair)
Drumsticks (pair)
12"-16" square of cardboard (or similar surface)
Eggshaker
Guiro (and stick)
Bamboo Chimes (shared with Player 4)
Wood blocks (three, pitched high to low)
Small, firm pillow (e.g., a decorative couch pillow)
One or more sheets of newspaper

Player 4

Brushes (pair)
Drumsticks (pair)
12"-16" square of cardboard (or similar surface)
Large rainstick
Sandpaper blocks
Vibra-slap
Castanets (mounted horizontally)
Bamboo Chimes (shared with Player 3)
Hand Towel (wet and wrung out)
Small, firm pillow (e.g., a decorative couch pillow)

Optional Player 5

Crash Cymbals (pair)

PROGRAM NOTES

Flutterings features an almost constant rustling of sound, using a wide array of conventional auxiliary percussion instruments and some unconventional "found" instruments, most notably small pillows, hand towels, and cardboard squares (or boxes). Written with the idea that each percussionist could pack all (or most) of his required gear into a suitcase, *Flutterings* relies on idiomatic percussion rhythms while avoiding the frequent bombastic nature of "drumming music." Idiomatic though its rhythms may be, *Flutterings* often requires the overlapping of contrasting rhythms and beat subdivisions between players, resulting in complex cross-rhythms that camouflage the basic pulse. Set mainly in 3/4 meter, the work draws heavily upon two main rhythms, a driving straightforward 16th note feel and the basic "jazz ride" feel. These rhythms appear in various guises, starting on various beats of the measure, and using various note durations. Listeners may find themselves tapping their foot to the groove one moment, and wondering where the true pulse is in the next. The colorful variety of instruments used ensures that the percussionists' "flutterings" continually change colors as the music moves onward. I hope you enjoy seeing and hearing percussion in some new ways as you experience this fun piece.

PERFORMANCE NOTES

(not for program use)

How this piece appears to the audience is as important as how it sounds, so I invite the performers to creatively plan their staging of *Flutterings* with this in mind. While the piece could be performed seriously, it has some built-in potentially comic effects, including: holding a pillow on one edge and smacking it against some surface; snapping wet hand towels for percussive accents (perhaps also spraying the audience); shaking, tearing and crumpling sheets of newspaper; and using wooden spoons similar to "traditional" spoons between one's hand and thigh to create rhythms. Where players use the pillows, snap their towels, or throw their crumpled paper is up to them.

Because *Flutterings* involves some unusual physical actions, players with mobility or flexibility challenges may wish to perform their parts seated at a large table in order to be able to more easily facilitate playing all of the required effects. Otherwise, the piece could be performed standing, seated, kneeling, or any other setup that works for the ensemble.

All Players:

In *Flutterings*, each player uses a small pillow as a percussive device. These pillows should be roughly 12"-14" from end to end, preferably square in shape, and firm rather than squishy or soft. They should have enough heft to make some noise when swung into a surface (in the score it says "hit floor", which is one option) or played upon with sticks, and enough durability to easily withstand aggressive usage. Each player will need one or more trap tables (or equivalent space) for storing instruments. Players may set down instruments quietly or choose in some cases to set them down audibly and in rhythm.

All players use brushes in mm. 117-137, a passage in which the eighth notes are swung. I've tried to evoke a big band feel in this section, including a "shout chorus" in mm. 128-135. Note that m. 131 is played with straight eighth notes, but otherwise the swung eighths continue until m. 138.

Use brushes like a jazz player: traditional grip in the left hand is typical and seems to allow a smoother sound when moving in circles. I call for circular sweeps (LH only), side-to-side sweeps, taps (normal vertical strokes), and "chokes", which involve pressing one or both brushes (depending upon what's indicated) firmly down on the surface. The playing surface can be anything that has a texture that allows the production of clearly audible sound during sweeps. From my own experience, I recommend using a 12"-16" square of cardboard duct-taped to an X-stand, but feel free to experiment with other materials or setups. All of the brush patterns and rhythms are easily playable, provided one positions the brushes properly—good brush playing is almost a dance or game of tag between the two brushes as they weave around each other on the playing surface.

Players 1, 2 and 3:

These three players each use a sheet of newspaper to create various effects: shaking the paper to get a tremolo "mini-thunderstorm" effect; tearing the paper in short, quick movements in order to produce a rhythmic attack; crumpling up the paper (in m. 195); and throwing the crumpled up paper to the floor, in rhythmic sequence. I also ask Player 1 to play accents on the paper with a drumstick in one hand while continually shaking the paper with the other: this technique adds rhythmic attacks to the tremolo.

Players 1 and 4:

These players should snap (like a whip) the wet hand towels in the rhythms indicated. Players are welcome to use larger towels than indicated, but full-size bath towels may be cumbersome and more difficult to use rhythmically.

Players 3 and 4:

These players share the Bamboo Chimes, although Player 4 uses them the most. In general, I ask the players to sweep them with a free hand (or back of a hand) while holding or preparing to use another instrument.

Player 1 only:

In m. 7, the LH continues to sweep circles in a quarter note rhythm, while the RH taps the given rhythm. In m. 89, after the downbeat that ends the maracas shake, move the maracas in a circular motion to create a softer sound. Alternate hands as written to create the composite eighth note rhythm. In m. 207, the player should muffle both maracas against the chest or shoulders on beat 3 to ensure that they no longer rattle by the time of the downbeat of m. 208.

Player 2 only:

Beginning in m. 15, sweep LH in circles lasting two beats. Sweep the RH pattern at the same time, staying out of the way of the LH. If the player hasn't played brushes previously, one way to execute this rhythm is to trace a letter "Z" with the right hand, playing the bottom line of the Z on beats one and three, the top line on beats two and four, and the diagonal line on the "uh" of beats two and four. The top line (beats two and four), during which the RH will be sweeping from left to right near the top of the playing surface, should coincide with the LH being out of the way nearing the bottom of the playing surface. If this seems confusing, the player should ask a jazz drummer to demonstrate.

In m. 29, the player abruptly switches to tapping all notes, accenting all RH strokes in a five-note pattern that cuts across the beat (I have bracketed these groupings in the music). Player 3 is also playing triplets during mm. 29-33, albeit grouped in a four-note pattern. The two players should be sure to play the triplet pulse in sync. In m. 117, the RH should play the "Z" sweep pattern again, with the LH lightly tapping the notes that fit around the swing pattern. In m. 144, Player 2 should play the wooden spoons in the traditional, almost castanet-like manner, clapping alternately between the palm of the free hand and the player's thigh.

Player 3 only:

In m. 97, Player 3 may play the Bamboo Chimes either with the back of a hand or with the Guiro stick. The rhythm beginning in m. 99 should create the illusion of one quarter note plus two eighth notes (e.g., one, two and, three, four and, etc., but within the triplet subdivision); the accented note will be scraped twice as long as the two subsequent unaccented notes. Player 3 may decide whether to use drumsticks or some type of mallets to play the wood blocks solo beginning in m. 146.

Player 4 only:

In m. 7 and elsewhere, Player 4 should tilt the rainstick steeply enough for the sound to begin immediately, and if necessary, alter the slope of the stick to ensure that the rain effect lasts close to the full duration indicated. In m. 170, one hand tilts the rainstick while the other sweeps the bamboo chimes. In mm. 202-208, one way to alter the color of the stick-clicking and enhance the crescendo is to begin the passage with a tighter grip on the sticks and gradually loosen the grip to allow the sticks to more freely resonate.

Final Comments

That's it! I hope you enjoy *Flutterings*, and encourage you to contact me at www.kitmills.com with any comments or questions you may have. Additionally, if you plan to perform the piece in public, please let me know the details and I will be happy to publish them on my website, along with a link to your ensemble's website. I look forward to seeing you and your ensemble play the piece, whether live or on video, and wish you great success!

Duration: c. 7'15" or shorter

FLUTTERINGS

Kit Mills

for Percussion Quartet (with Optional Fifth Participant)

♩ = 90+

Player 1
Brushes *LH sweep in circles*
mf

Player 2
Brushes *LH sweep side to side*
mf

Player 3
Eggshaker
mf

Player 4
Hold Rainstick in one hand
Bamboo Chimes (sweep with free hand)
mf (l.v.)

Detailed description: This block contains the first system of the musical score, measures 1 through 12. It features four staves for Player 1, Player 2, Player 3, and Player 4. Player 1 plays brushes with a left-hand circular sweep. Player 2 plays brushes with a left-hand side-to-side sweep. Player 3 plays an eggshaker. Player 4 holds a rainstick in one hand and sweeps bamboo chimes with the other. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 90+ and the dynamic is mezzo-forte (mf).

1
7 RH taps >

2
3
4
Rainstick (flip once) (l.v.)
mf

Detailed description: This block contains the second system of the musical score, measures 13 through 12. Player 1 has a melodic line with seven right-hand taps. Players 2, 3, and 4 continue with their respective rhythmic patterns. Player 4 has a rainstick part that includes a flip once. The dynamic remains mezzo-forte (mf).

13
1
2
3
4
Sandpaper Blocks (slide back and forth)
mf

Detailed description: This block contains the third system of the musical score, measures 13 through 18. Player 1 continues with the melodic line. Player 2 has a triplet pattern. Player 3 continues with the eggshaker pattern. Player 4 plays sandpaper blocks with a sliding motion. The dynamic is mezzo-forte (mf).

19
1
2
3
4
Guiro (scrape)
Vibraslap
mf (l.v.) simile
f

Detailed description: This block contains the fourth system of the musical score, measures 19 through 24. Player 1 continues with the melodic line. Player 2 has a triplet pattern. Player 3 plays a guiro with a scraping motion. Player 4 plays a vibraslap. The dynamic starts at mezzo-forte (mf) and increases to forte (f). The section ends with a simile marking.

26

1

2

3

4

taps (accent all RH)

32

1

2

3

4

to paper

Solo

f

simile

dim.

39

1

2

3

4

shake paper

f *to pillow (set down brushes)*

hit floor

pp *shake paper*

to pillow *hit floor*

f *shake paper*

47

1

2

3

4

to pillow

hit floor

FLUTTERINGS

56

Big! to sticks

Big! to sticks

to sticks and pillow

Big! to sticks

play pillow with sticks

p

63

play pillow with sticks

mp

mf sub.

play pillow with sticks

mf

play pillow with sticks

mf

mf sub.

mf sub.

mf sub.

fp

68

Optional Repeat

f

mp

f

p

f

pp

f

mp

f

p

f

pp

f

fp

f

p

pp

f

p

pp

74

f sub.

pp

f sub.

pp

f sub.

pp

f sub.

pp

f sub.

pp

f sub.

pp

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