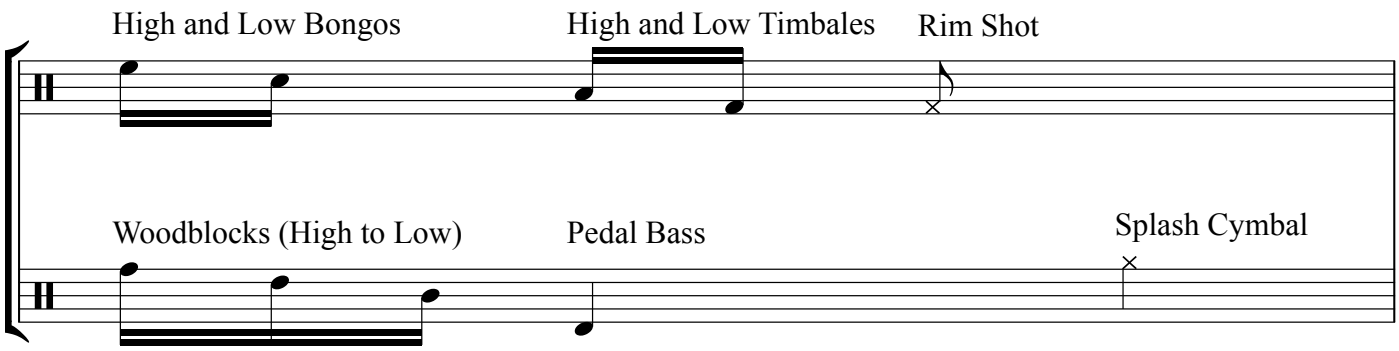
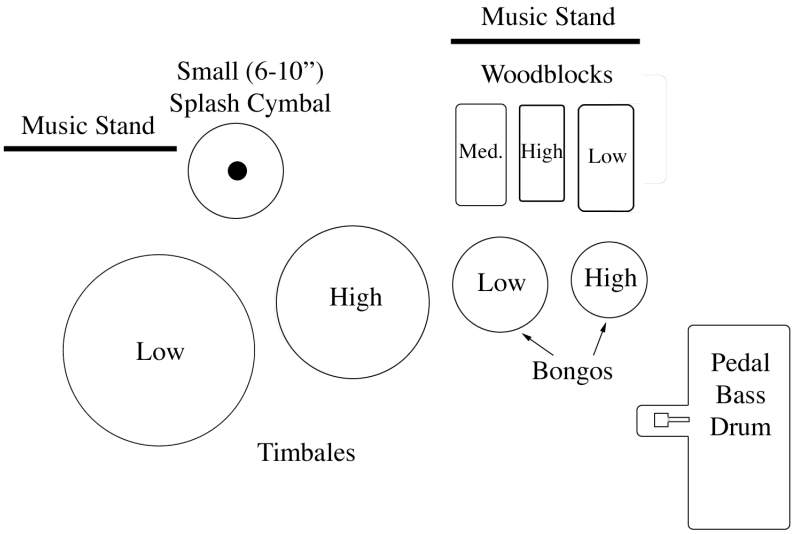


Recommended Setup



For section A use woodtip sticks that produce a full sound from the woodblocks.
For section B use yarn mallets.

Notes

I commissioned Beth to compose a solo for me after attending a clinic by Bill Moersch at the University of Kentucky in the Spring of 2002. After deciding upon a medium and instrumentation, composition began in the Fall of 2002 and I received the first draft in December of that year. Revisions and changes were made and the second draft was completed with the composer in March 2003.

Background Noise is written for three woodblocks, bongos, timbales, pedal bass drum, and splash cymbal. The piece is an extended Rondo form, Prologue-A-B-A-C-A-B-A-Coda. The Intro and A theme are based on a 16th note grid sequence in the woodblocks where notes are left out , then added back in the bongos. The five different possible groupings of the four note pattern are presented in repetitions using the Fibonacci sequence. Intro: 21, 13, 8, 5, 3, 3 A: 5, 8, 13, 21, 2. The B section is characterized by the addition of the timbales and splash cymbal. This section is in free meter with varying duple and triple eighth-note groupings and delicate virtuosic passages around the drums. Landmarks are indicated by splashes and rim shots on the low timbale. These landmarks become more and more frequent leading up to the end of the section. Some interesting effects in this section include chokes and vibrato on the low timbale. The C section is a free improvisation. The coda is a review of all the instruments used in the piece.

To me, the A section represents the static background hum of machinery and natural events that surround us in our everyday lives. As we become aware of the existence of these sounds they periodically take a place in the forefront of our minds (B section), getting louder and softer in our mind's ear relative to how much we pay attention to them. Occasionally, these sounds can even demand our complete concentration (C section). But in the end they always return to the background.

-- by Kyle Forsthoff

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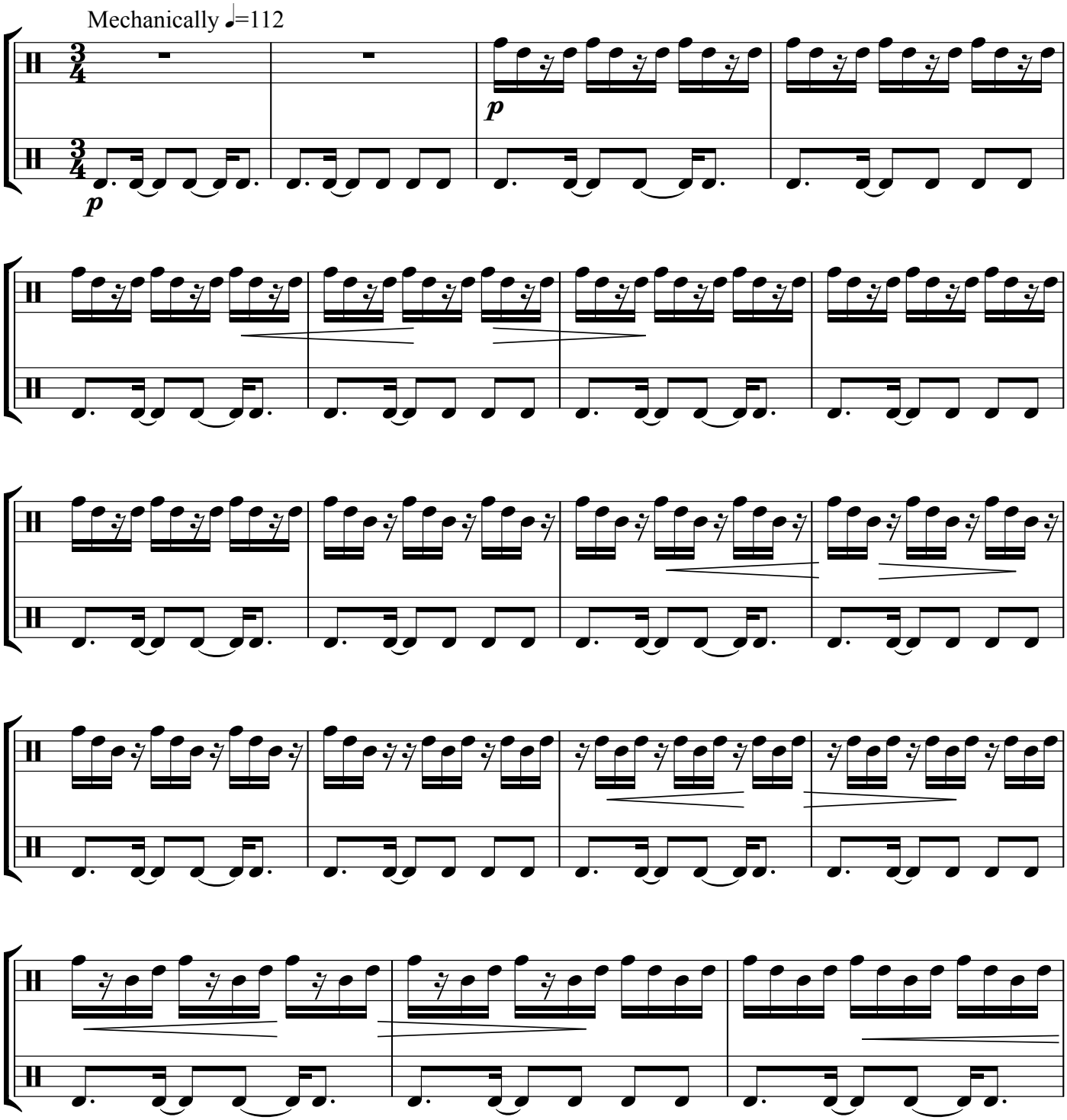
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