

Material Rhythms

for percussion quartet

William Susman

Susman Music

Material Rhythms

for Percussion Quartet

Performance Instructions:

1. The piece is in four movements. The total duration is approximately 11–12 minutes.

2. The tempos must not be faster than indicated.

3. The first three movements each use a different material: *I. Wood, II. Metal, III. Skin.*

Movement *IV. Mix* uses a combination of all three.

4. The setups for each percussionist must be identical, for example:

I. Wood: each percussionist plays a pair of wood slats, pitched high and low.

II. Metal: each percussionist plays 3 metal tubes, pitched high, middle and low.

III. Skin: each percussionist plays bongos, pitched high and low.

IV. Mix: a combination of the above instruments.

5. Whether using mallets or sticks, *they must be the same style and hardness* to create uniformity of sound. Ideally, they will all be the same manufacturer and model. For example, use med-hard plastic mallets on *Wood* and *Metal*, and use hard rubber mallets on *Skin*. For *Mix*, use hard plastic on everything.

6. The ensemble may choose the type of instruments to be used. It is important that the instruments be as close in relative pitch and timbre as possible, but it is understood that slight variations in pitch on *Wood* and *Metal* are natural. Drums should be tuned to precisely the same high and low pitches.

**Do not use marimba, xylophone, vibraphone, or glockenspiel bars as materials.

Here are some examples of materials to use:

Wood – pitched high and low

- *wood slats*, or
- *temple blocks*, or
- *log drums*, or
- *wood blocks*

Metal – pitched high, medium and low

- *metal tubes*, or
- *brake drums*, or
- *tin cans*, or
- *iron pipes*

Skin – pitched high and low

- *bongos*, or
- *congas*, or
- *tom toms*

7. The placement of the performers can be in a square, or in a line turned sideways, so that the audience can clearly see and hear the movement of sound without music stands blocking the view. The idea is to illustrate sounds moving in space between the performers. By having identical mallet / instrument setups, the emphasis is on how sound travels in space with subtle rhythmic shifts.

* * *

Special thanks to Joseph Gramley and Greg Zuber who are always a source of inspiration. Along with their students at the Juilliard Summer Percussion Seminar, Joe and Greg gave me invaluable insight in how to best phrase and clarify challenging sections. My admiration to Olivia Kieffer, and her students at Reinhardt University, Josh Vavases, Aaron Crowe, and Tyler Deal, who gave the first performance November 10, 2015. Thanks to Olivia for her insightful notes on the introductory comments.

I. Wood

$\text{♩} = 135$

Percussion 1 $\text{♩} = 135$ *p*

Percussion 2 *p*

Percussion 3 *p*

Percussion 4 *p*

II. Metal

$\text{♩} = 126$

pp *f* *pp*

pp *f* *pp*

pp *f*

pp

III. Skin

$\text{♩} = 120$

f

f

f

f

IV. Mix

$\text{♩} = 100$

wood *f* skin *p*

wood *f* skin *p*

wood *f* skin *p*

wood *f* skin *p*