

PRISON CELL (1989/2008)

Program Notes

Prison Cell is a ten-minute percussion duet that musically, theatrically and symbolically represents a prison cell. The work centers around variations of a traditional, tonal theme and an original, more dissonant theme. The original theme and its variations are taken from a tone row built on the scale degree one half step above the tonal theme. This tonal theme is continuously alluded to through modulations, variations, chromaticism and dense, slowly evolving rhythmic and chordal structures. When the central, tonal theme is finally introduced, it is never completed, creating tension that is prolonged through the second half of the piece. The tonal theme eventually becomes immersed in the tone row and gradually fused into the original theme. The mutated, skeletal rhythmic motive of the tonal theme is all that remains.

The percussionist inside the set-up represents a prisoner. The percussionist outside the set-up plays two roles: when walking behind, this player represents the oppression of the cell; when walking in front, the player represents influences on the cell by outside forces such as prison guards. The tubular chimes represent the bars of a cell.

– RP
(Revised 1/2008)

Instrumentation/Specifications of Instruments

Percussion 1

3 Roto Toms (8",10",12") - 1 pair of drumsticks
2 Timpani -1 pair of hard timpani mallets
Military Drum (with snares) - 1 pair of drumsticks
4 Music Stands (suggested)
Trap Table (suggested)

Percussion 2

Vibraphone (F-F) - 4 medium cord or yarn mallets
Tubular Chimes (B-flat [optional] or C to C) - 2 hard chime mallets
Military Drum (with snares - use Percussionist 1 mil. drum) - 1 pair of drumsticks
3 Music Stands (suggested)
Trap Table (suggested)

World Premiere
Composer's Forum
Robert Mcewan and David Carlisle, percussion
Eastman School of Music, Kilbourn Hall
Rochester, NY, USA
February 10, 1990

Duration: 10 minutes.

Explanation of Notation

- n*** – niente
- /** – subito (when placed before a dynamic, i.e. ***f***)
- ▼** – short staccato (staccatissimo)
- ▲** – hard accent
- ≡** – tremolo
- ∩** – Let note ring/vibrate indefinitely until the sound dies out naturally—do not dampen.
- ()** – All markings in parenthesis are courtesy/cautionary markings.
 - All extended programmatic indications in brackets in the score do not appear in the parts.
 - All grace notes (including beamed grace notes with slashes) are to be played immediately before the beat they proceed. They are to be played very close to the beat and as fast as possible.
 - All accidentals last for the entire measure, unless they are canceled out by another accidental (such as a natural sign). Accidentals only apply to the line or space they are on.

Performance and Recording Notes

- *Prison Cell* is meant to be both aurally and visually stimulating. Ideally, it should be recorded as a video with surround sound. The performers should feel free to be visually creative (i.e. wearing prison guard and prisoner-type clothing) and tastefully theatrical.
- The lighting for *Prison Cell* should be fairly low most of the time throughout the piece. The players may use stand lights.

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Set-Up

