

Steven Snowden

Tacoma Narrows

Percussion Ensemble

Tacoma Narrows

Commissioned by
The Truman State University Percussion Ensemble

Approximate duration: 12 min.

This piece was inspired by the collapse of the Tacoma Narrows suspension bridge on November 07, 1940. Crowds gathered as "Gallop Gerti" wobbled uncontrollably as a result of a steady 42 mph wind. This speed coincided with the structure's natural resonance and produced a self-reinforcing motion that eventually sent the bridge crashing into the Strait of Puget Sound.

Percussion 1

Chain*
Sheet metal*
Triangle
Metal Pipe*
Bucket of water
Brake Drum
Wood Plank

Mallets

2 med soft
2 med hard
2 chop sticks
2 snare sticks

Percussion 2

3 Octave Vibraphone
(shared with P3)
5 Paint Cans
Bongos
Wood Plank

Mallets

4 med soft
4 soft
2 timbale sticks
1 bow

Percussion 3

5 Octave Marimba
3 Octave Vibraphone
(shared with P2)
5 Paint Cans
Bongos
Wood Plank

Mallets

4 med soft
4 soft
2 timbale sticks
1 bow

Percussion 4

Metal Pipe*
Brake Drum
Bucket of Water
Large Drum*
Rachet
1 D4 Crotales
Deep resonant object*

Mallets

2 med soft
2 med hard
1 hard
2 heavy bass drum
1 bow
1 superball
2 chop sticks

Percussion 5

Metal Pipe*
Brake Drum
Bucket of Water
Large Drum*
Rachet
1 C#4 Crotales
Deep resonant object*

Mallets

2 med soft
2 med hard
1 hard
2 heavy bass drum
1 superball

Percussion 6

Metal Pipe*
Brake Drum
Bucket of Water
Medium-sized Drum*
Flex-a-tone
1 A4 Crotales
Deep resonant object*

Mallets

2 med soft
2 med hard
1 hard
2 heavy bass drum
1 bow
1 superball
2 chop sticks

* Additional details about these instruments are given in the performance notes.

Tacoma Narrows

notation key

The notation key defines symbols used in the score for six percussion parts. It includes symbols for chain strike, metal pipe strike, scrape, dip in bucket, swing, wood plank, triangle, vibraphone, marimba, metal cans, wood plank, bongos, deep resonant object, large drum, medium-sized drum, flex-a-tone, and A4 crotales.

chain.....
strike up slide slide down
 ↑ left right ↓

metal pipe.....
strike scrape dip in bucket swing wood plank triangle

Percussion 1 H 4/4

Percussion 2 G 4/4

Percussion 3 F 4/4

Percussion 4 H 4/4

Percussion 5 H 4/4

Percussion 6 H 4/4

Performance Notes

Scalable/flexible instrumentation and player location:

Much of the instrumentation for this piece can be scaled according to availability and size/structure of the performance space. If a 5-octave marimba is not available or feasible, the part can be played on a second vibraphone with the lower octave shifted up. The size of the pipes, drums, metal cans, wood planks, chain, and deep resonant objects is left up to the discretion of the performers. If possible, the location of the players should provide an “enveloping” experience for the audience, perhaps even going so far as to position players 4-6 away from the main performance area. For example, in the premiere performance, players 1-3 were on stage and players 4-6 were on a wrap-around second story balcony in the concert hall. Players 4 and 5 were on either side of the hall midway between the back of the hall and the stage and player 6 was just behind the audience. While this kind of surround setup will have the greatest dramatic impact, the ensemble’s ability to play together accurately should be the primary concern.

Metal pipes:

The size of these pipes can be scaled according to the performance area and the other instruments that are chosen. Pipes that produce a fairly non-focused pitch are preferred, however the most important sonic characteristic for these pipes is that their sound is able to sustain for 8 seconds or more after they are struck at a high dynamic level. The premiere of this piece was performed using artillery shells roughly 2.5 - 3 feet long, though other sizes and types of pipes will work. No two pipes should be exactly the same length, however the shortest pipe should be no less than half the size of the largest pipe.

How to hang it:

This will likely require that a hole be drilled through the pipe so that it can be hung from a string or rope and vibrate freely when struck. Players 1 and 4-6 will need some kind of a stand (most likely akin to a suspended cymbal stand) from which to hang his or her pipe.

How to hold it:

All players with pipes are required to hold them with one hand from the rope that it can vibrate freely. In the third movement, they will also need to swing their pipe and dip it in a bucket of water while playing.

How to grind it:

In the first movement, players 1 and 4-6 will need to produce a continuous grinding sound using their pipes. This can be achieved by rubbing the pipe on an abrasive circular object. In the premiere performance, this sound was achieved by rubbing the pipe along the outside edge of a brake drum, however this sound could be achieved with a clay pot or even a flat abrasive surface.

How to dip it:

Players 1 and 4-6 will need buckets of water large enough to facilitate partial submersion of their pipes. By raising or lowering their pipes in to the water, he or she will be able to change the pitch of the pipe as they strike it or as it resonates.

In this example, the player rolls (one-handed) while dipping the pipe into the bucket of water over the course of four beats and then raises it back out over the course of two beats.



How to swing it:

This technique requires that the player hold his or her pipe by the rope and swing it at a specified rate and direction after it’s struck. This will produce a subtle “wobble” in pitch and amplitude as the end of the pipe swings near the floor.



In this example, the player strikes the pipe as it swings forward so that it comes to its highest point (either forwards or backwards) on the downbeat of each quarter note.

Wood planks:

These planks should be of a similar (though not exact) size. Other wooden objects (such as wood blocks or dowels) could also be used. In the premier performance, wooden handrails in the hall were used.

Metal cans:

Any type of metal cans (from small tin cans to large paint cans) could be used; depending upon what will balance best with the rest of the ensemble.

Chain:

The size and length of the chain will depend upon the scale of the other instruments. Depending upon the performance space and size of the scalable instruments, the chain could be performed on the floor rather than on a table. This would allow for the greatest dramatic impact, but may not be well suited to a “scaled down” performance of this piece.

Playing surface:

The chain should be placed on a hard (possibly metal) surface large enough to allow the player to freely slide the chain from side to side. In the premier performance, these actions were performed on a tam-tam lying face down on the floor.

Pile it up:

At the beginning of movement 2, the chain should be piled up on the sheet metal so that it can be struck by a snare stick and produce a somewhat similar sound to that of a ribbon crasher. If the resulting sound is sufficiently articulate or loud, an actual ribbon crasher or other instrument producing a “trashy” metallic sound could be used.

Kneading:

There is quite a bit of room for interpretation here. I’m looking for a metal “rustling” sound that gets progressively more intense leading up to the climax of movement 2 in bar 38. This is also a means to provide dramatic/theatrical intensity.

Lift and smash:

Player 1 will need to lift, slam, and slide the chain on the playing surface. This is indicated by up, down and left/right arrows in the part. Though this should be quite a dramatic effect, the player should do all of this while accurately executing the notated rhythms and not completely overwhelming the rest of the ensemble.

Large and medium-sized drums:

The large drums could range from large toms to large bass drums, while the medium-sized drum should be somewhat smaller. In the premiere performance, two large bass drums and a large tom were used.

Deep resonant object:

This object should produce a rumbling sound with little to no defined pitch. It is preferable that this is some kind of structural element of the performance space, though a freestanding object could be used instead. In the premiere performance, large metal support beams and metal portions of hand railing on the balcony were used.

Please feel free to email me with any questions at
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Tacoma Narrows

I. morbid curiosity

Steven Snowden

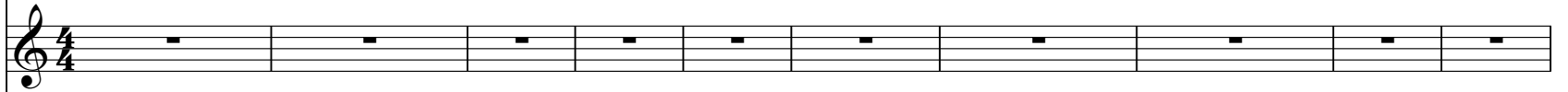
Captivating ♩ = 72

pipe grind

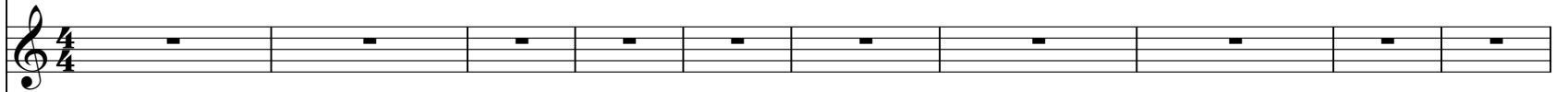
Percussion 1



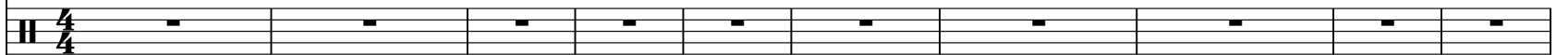
Percussion 2



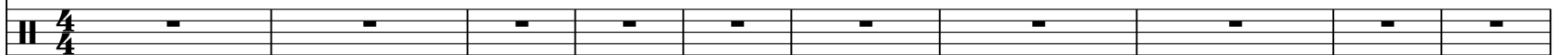
Percussion 3



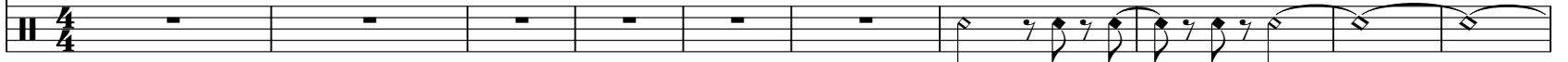
Percussion 4



Percussion 5



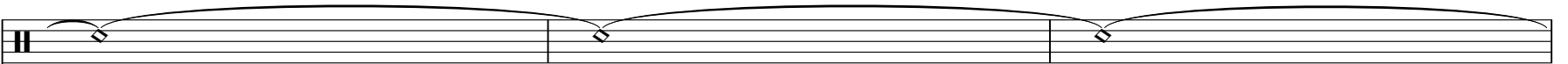
Percussion 6



pipe grind

II

Perc. 1

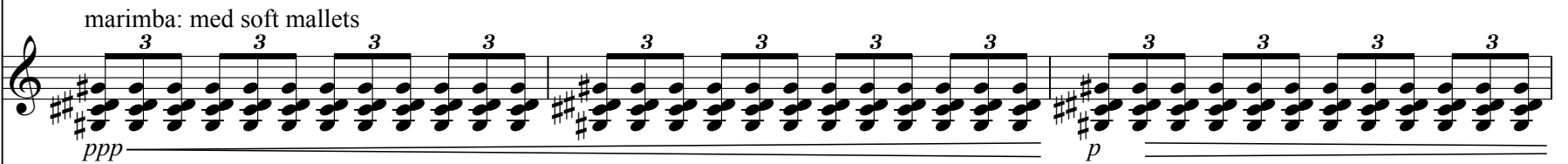


Perc. 2



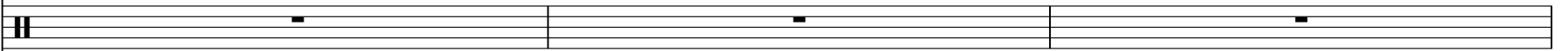
Perc. 3

marimba: med soft mallets



ppp *p*

Perc. 4

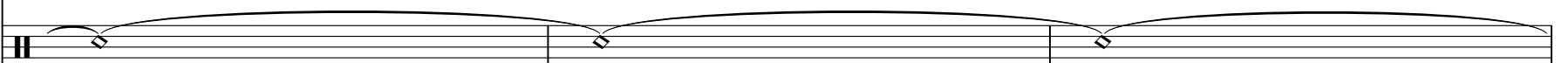


Perc. 5



pipe grind

Perc. 6



14

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

Perc. 4

Perc. 5

Perc. 6

3 3 3 3

ppp

ppp

pipe grind

18

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

Perc. 4

Perc. 5

Perc. 6

Red.

vibes: med soft mallets

ppp

mp

mp

21 hang pipe

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

Perc. 4

Perc. 5

Perc. 6

27 stike pipe: chop sticks

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

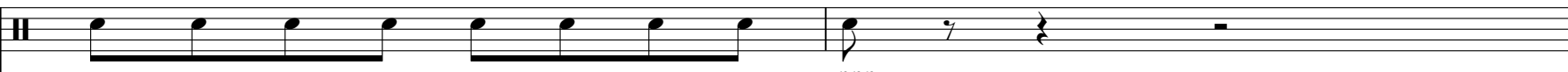
Perc. 4


Perc. 5

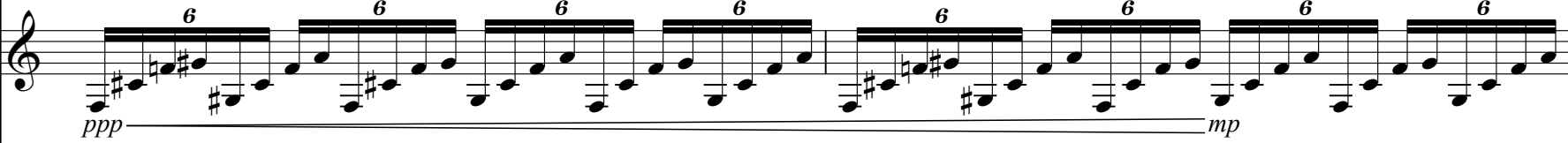
Perc. 6


hang pipe

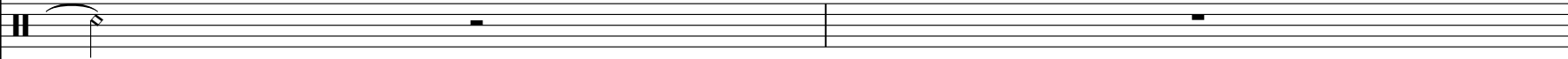
30

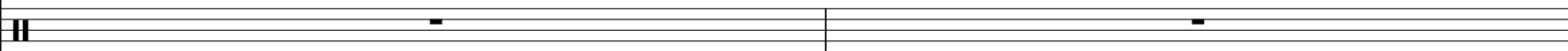
Perc. 1  *ppp*

Perc. 2  *ppp* * *ppp*

Perc. 3  *ppp* *mp*

Perc. 4  *ppp*
strike pipe: chop sticks

Perc. 5 

Perc. 6 

32

Perc. 1 

Perc. 2  *p* *ppp*

Perc. 3  *6*

Perc. 4  *p* *ppp*

Perc. 5  *pp* *p* *pp*

Perc. 6  *ppp* *mp*

large drum: superball

strike pipe: chop sticks

34

wood plank: med soft mallets

Perc. 1 

Perc. 2 

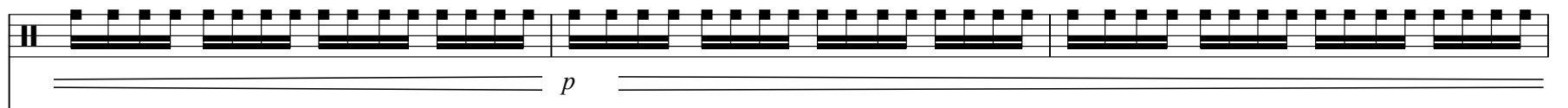
Perc. 3 

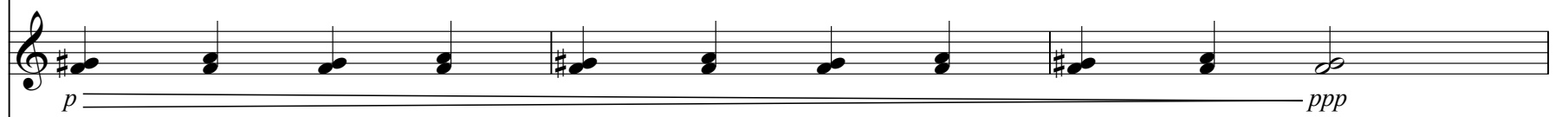
Perc. 4 

Perc. 5 


Perc. 6 


36 ♩ = 108 (←  =  →)

Perc. 1 

Perc. 2 

Perc. 3 

Perc. 4 

Perc. 5 

Perc. 6 

Perc. 1 
ppp *ppp*


Perc. 2 
wood plank: med soft mallets
ppp *mp*


Perc. 3 
wood plank: med soft mallets
ppp *ppp*

Perc. 4 
wood railing: med. soft mallets
ppp *mp*


Perc. 5 
mp


Perc. 6 
mp


Perc. 1 
mp

Perc. 2 
pp *mp*

Perc. 3 
mp

Perc. 4 
ppp

Perc. 5 
large drum: superbball
ppp *p* *mp* *p* *f*

Perc. 6 
pp *mp*

48

47

Perc. 1 *ppp* *mp*

Perc. 2 *ppp*

Perc. 3 marimba: soft mallets *ppp* *ppp*

Perc. 4 *mp* *pp*

Perc. 5 wood railing: med. soft mallets *ppp* *mp* *pp*

Perc. 6 medium drum: superboll *p*

51

Perc. 1 *ppp* *mp*

Perc. 2 *p* *ppp*

Perc. 3 *p* *ppp*

Perc. 4 *mp*

Perc. 5 *mp*

Perc. 6 *mf* *p* *mp*

55

Perc. 1 *ppp*

Perc. 2

Perc. 3 wood plank: med soft mallets *ppp*

Perc. 4 *ppp*

Perc. 5 *ppp*

Perc. 6 *p* *f* deep res. object: heavy bass drum mallets *pppp*

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for measures 55 through 60. Percussion parts 1 through 5 are marked with *ppp* and play a consistent rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Percussion part 6 starts with a dynamic range from *p* to *f*, then has a section marked *pppp* with a deep resonance object. The score includes clefs, stems, and dynamic markings.

61

59

Perc. 1 *mf*

Perc. 2 *mf*

Perc. 3 *mf*

Perc. 4 *mf*

Perc. 5 *mf*

Perc. 6 *p* *pp*

Detailed description: This block contains the musical notation for measures 59 through 61. Percussion parts 1 through 5 are marked with *mf* and play a consistent rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Percussion part 6 has a dynamic range from *p* to *pp*. The score includes clefs, stems, and dynamic markings.

63

Perc. 1  *pp*

Perc. 2  *pp*

Perc. 3  *pp*

Perc. 4  *pp*

Perc. 5  *pp*

Perc. 6  *mp* *p* *mf*

67

71

Perc. 1  *ppp* *n*

Perc. 2  *ppp* *n*

Perc. 3  *ppp* *n*

Perc. 4  *ppp* *n*

Perc. 5  *ppp* *n*

Perc. 6  *mp* *f* *pp*

Perc. 1

Perc. 2
vibes: soft mallets
ppp *Led.* * *p* *Led.*

Perc. 3
marimba: soft mallets
ppp

Perc. 4
deep res. object: heavy bass drum mallets
pp

Perc. 5
deep res. object: heavy bass drum mallets
pp

Perc. 6
mp *pp*

Perc. 1

Perc. 2
* *ppp* *Led. (until sound fully dissipates)*

Perc. 3
mp *ppp*

Perc. 4
p *mp*

Perc. 5
p *mp*

Perc. 6
p *mp*

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

Perc. 4

Perc. 5

Perc. 6

The score consists of six staves for Percussion 1 through Percussion 6. Percussion 1, 2, and 3 have rests in all measures. Percussion 4, 5, and 6 play a rhythmic pattern of dotted quarter notes. Percussion 4 has dynamic markings *mf*, *f*, and *ff*. Percussion 5 has dynamic markings *mf*, *f*, and *ff*. Percussion 6 has dynamic markings *mf*, *f*, *ff*, and *fff*. All parts end with a fermata in the final measure.

Tacoma Narrows

II. 42 mph

Steven Snowden

Hostile ♩ = 84

chain pile: snare sticks

metal cans/bongos: timbale sticks

large drum/metal pipe: hard mallets (mute drum with cloth)

large drum/metal pipe: hard mallets (mute drum with cloth)

metal pipe/medium drum: hard mallets

Percussion 1

Percussion 2

Percussion 3

Percussion 4

Percussion 5

Percussion 6

4

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

Perc. 4

Perc. 5

Perc. 6

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

Perc. 4

Perc. 5

Perc. 6

8

metal pipe (hanging): snare sticks

Perc. 1 *ff* *p* *ff* *ff*

Perc. 2 *ff* *p* *ff* *p* *ff*

Perc. 3 *ff* *p* *ff* *p* *ff*

Perc. 4 *ff*

Perc. 5 *ff*

Perc. 6 *<ff*

12

Perc. 1 *pp* *p* *ff* *p*

Perc. 2 *p* *mf* *p* *f* *p* *mf* *p* *mp* *p* *p* *f* *>*

Perc. 3 *p* *mf* *p* *f* *p* *mf* *p* *mp* *p* *p* *f* *>*

Perc. 4 *f* *mf*

Perc. 5 *f* *mf*

Perc. 6 *p* *ff* *p*

17

19 (strike with L + R together)

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

Perc. 4

Perc. 5

Perc. 6

p *mp* *f* *p* *f* *p*

mp

p *mp* *f* *p* *f* *p*

mp

f *p* *mf* *p*

19

21

♩ = 126 (← ³ = ♩ ♩ →)

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

Perc. 4

Perc. 5

Perc. 6

ff

p *ff*

p *ff*

f *ff*

mf *f* *ff*

mf *f* *mf* *ff*

26

27

knead chain with hands controlled movements, but with intense focus

Perc. 1 *p*

Perc. 2 *p mp*

Perc. 3 *p mp*

Perc. 4 *pp ff pp mf*

Perc. 5 *pp ff pp*

Perc. 6 *mf f p*

superball

31

becoming wild, uncontrolled

Perc. 1 *mf*

Perc. 2 *mf*

Perc. 3 *mf*

Perc. 4 *pp pp f*

Perc. 5 *mf pp pp*

Perc. 6 *mf f p*

38 Brutal

forcefull grab bulk
of the chain pile

35

Perc. 1 

Perc. 2 

Perc. 3 

Perc. 4 

Perc. 5 

Perc. 6 

hard mallets

40

Perc. 1 

Perc. 2 

Perc. 3 

Perc. 4 

Perc. 5 

Perc. 6 

44 ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ (keep chain suspended and slowly reach toward triangle) trinagle: tap with chain 47 ↓ → ↑

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

Perc. 4

Perc. 5

Perc. 6

48 ↓ ← ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ → ↑ ↓ → ← ↑

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

Perc. 4

Perc. 5

Perc. 6

52

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

Perc. 4

Perc. 5

Perc. 6

(slide rapidly back and forth)

superball

p

56

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

Perc. 4

Perc. 5

Perc. 6

triangle: bow

pp

ff

ratchet

fff

ratchet

fff

flex-a-tone

gliss.

f

p

fff

Tacoma Narrows

III. Engulfed

Steven Snowden

Hazy, nostalgic ♩ = 52

hold pipe by rope: one-handed roll with med. soft mallets

Percussion 1

Percussion 2
vibes: soft mallets

Percussion 3
marimba: soft mallets

Percussion 4
hold pipe by rope: one-handed roll with med. soft mallets

Percussion 5
hold pipe by rope: one-handed roll with med. soft mallets

Percussion 6
hold pipe by rope: one-handed roll with med. soft mallets

9

Perc. 1
pipe dip

Perc. 2
bow

Perc. 3

Perc. 4
swing

Perc. 5
pipe dip

Perc. 6
crotale: bow

16

Perc. 1 *pp mp mp pp mp pp*

Perc. 2 *p ppp*

Perc. 3 *p mf p*

Perc. 4 *pp mp mf*

Perc. 5 *p mp pp mp pp mp 3*

Perc. 6 *ppp*

ord.

hang pipe

crotale w/ bow

flex-a-tone:
bow

22

28

med hard mallet

Perc. 1 *mp 3 pp p mp ff f*

Perc. 2 *mp p mp mf f Ped.*

Perc. 3 *pp p mf f*

Perc. 4 *p mp 3 pp ff ff*

Perc. 5 *pp mp pp ff ff*

Perc. 6 *mf p ff ff*

hold pipe by rope

pipe swing: med hard mallet

pipe swing: med hard mallet

med hard mallet

29

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

Perc. 4

Perc. 5

Perc. 6

mp *p* *f* *mp*

vibes: bow

to vibes (shared w/ P1)

mp *ppp*

f

f *mf*

pipe swing

f

33

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

Perc. 4

Perc. 5

Perc. 6

mf *mp* *mp* *f* *mf*

vibes: bow

crotale: hard mallet

36

Perc. 1 

Perc. 2 

Perc. 3 


Perc. 4 

Perc. 5 

Perc. 6 

41

gradually allow pipe's swinging to subside naturally

Perc. 1 

Perc. 2 

Perc. 3 

Perc. 4 

Perc. 5 

Perc. 6 