

STRING QUARTET NO. 4
STRANGE MACHINES

Karim Al-Zand
(2022)

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Program Note:

Strange Machines imagines three quirky musical automata. In *Alberti Machine* we encounter a steam-punk music box, its buttons, levers and dials adjusting a familiar accompanimental pattern until the machine breaks. Bach meets Rube in *Goldberg Machine*, a contraption that careens between variations in a musical chain reaction. *Mannheim Machine* is a cliché-bot, an unhinged device that furiously spits out distorted musical tropes from the dawn of the symphony.

Duration: 12'

- | | |
|---------------------|----|
| 1. Alberti Machine | 4' |
| 2. Goldberg Machine | 4' |
| 3. Mannheim Machine | 4' |

for the Balourdet Quartet, with support from Chamber Music America's Classical Commissioning Program

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1. ALBERTI MACHINE

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Mercurial: running like clockwork,
but constantly changing gears abruptly ♩ = 104

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

pizz. III *IV* *sim.* *arco* IV III

p

pizz. *p*

pizz. *p*

pizz. *p*

always on 2 strings when possible

p

5

pizz. *arco* *solo* IV III

mp

arco *p*

interrupting aggressively *pizz.* *mf* *f*

10

f sfz *p*

f sfz *p*

p

solo, espres. arco *mp* *p*

assertively *mf* *assertively* *mf*

3 *3* *3* *3* *3* *3* *3* *3*

14

solo, delicate but espres.

pizz. always on 2 strings when possible

mp

arco interrupting aggressively

p

mf

f

arco

f sfz

mp

pizz.

mp

arco

mp

18

poco f

mf

arco

solo, espres.

mf

mp

pizz.

mf

22

pinging

sfzp

mf

arco

mf

sim.

26

sfzp

sfzp

sim.

sfzp

sfzp

sim.

8^a

8^a

48

poco f
arco
arco *pizz.* *poco f*
mp
mp

51

mp serene *f frenetic*
mp serene *f frenetic*
mp serene *f frenetic*
mp serene *f frenetic*

55

mp *sub. ff disruptive*
mp *sub. ff disruptive*
mp *sub. ff disruptive*
mp *sub. ff disruptive*

59

ff *mf*
ff *mf*
sub. ff *mp*
sub. ff *mp*

62

mf cresc. 3

cresc. 3

(sim.) cresc. 3

65

ff 3

ff 3

ff 3

ord. 3

short

sfzp 3

68

a tempo—a well-oiled machine

smoothly mp cresc.

smoothly mp cresc.

smoothly mp cresc.

73

poco f decresc. p

poco f decresc. p

poco f decresc. p

77

musical score for measures 77-80. The score is in 4/4 time and features four staves. Measures 77-80 show a gradual increase in volume, marked with *cresc.* and *mp*.

81

musical score for measures 81-84. The score is in 4/4 time and features four staves. Measures 81-84 show a gradual decrease in volume, marked with *f* and *decresc.*.

poco rit. — — — — — a tempo—each cog with its own rhythm

85

musical score for measures 85-88. The score is in 4/4 time and features four staves. Measures 85-88 show a change in tempo and dynamics, marked with *p*, *pizz.*, and *mf*.

89

musical score for measures 89-92. The score is in 4/4 time and features four staves. Measures 89-92 show a continuation of the musical theme, marked with *mf*.

92

off the string
gently

94

a wrench in the works
a very dramatic glitch

arco 3 3 3 3 3 3 *ff* *a very dramatic glitch* *ff*

96 *accelerando.**

[illegible]

* Each duo accelerates slightly, passing the tempo on to the next duo. The glissandi in m. 101 are as fast and frenetic as possible. The exact number of notes and specific pitches need not be followed, though each duo should enter together and end at roughly the same time.

** Emerge from (and begin before the completion of) the violin glissandi. Repeat the figure several times before going on to m. 103.

(a tempo)—but something is broken

102

ff *f* *ff* *f*

106

molto sul pont. *V*

off the string *p* *ff* *p* *ff* *p* *ff*

mp molto sul pont. *V*

harm. tr *p* *ff* *p* *ff* *p* *ff*

mp

stop suddenly on the string

2. GOLDBERG MACHINE

Capricious*; tempo and mood are volatile, constantly changeable

♩ = 112 *grand and imposing* ♪ = 120 *light and playful*

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

2/3 pizz. arco

f

pizz. arco

f

(pizz.) arco

f

4/4 dancing

p

dancing

p

tr

sub.ppp

pizz.

poco f

* Most of the frequent changes of character and tempo in this movement—usually indicated with double barlines—are *sudden* and *immediate*, like flipping a switch.

4 suddenly aggressive (same tempo) as before

f *fp* abruptly *tr* *sub.pp* *ff* *arco* *pizz.* *poco f*

7) *as before*

Violin I: *f*, *tr*, *fp*, *ff*, *tr*

Violin II: *f*, *fp*, *sub.p*

Cello/Double Bass: *f*, *fp*, *arco*, *f*, *fp*, *ff*

Piano: *f*, *fp*, *ff*

34

gliss. *p* *f* *sim.* *poco f*

38

shimmering *p* *sibilant* *gliss.* *sim.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *p* *f* *sim.*

42 $\text{♩} = 180 (\text{♩} = 60)$ wild and unrestrained

turbulent *f* *turbulent 3* *f* *turbulent 3* *f*

47

cresc. *cresc.* *cresc.* *cresc.* *f*

51 $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ breezily, relaxed

ff *molto* *p* *pizz.* *p* *mp* *mp*

55 $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ as before

arco *mp* *sub.f* *cresc.* *sfz* *f* *f* *sub.f* *cresc.* *sfz*

59

sfz *sfz* *sfz* *ff* *ff* *sfz* *sfz* *ff*

63 $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$ as before

molto *p* *pizz.* *p* *mp* *mp* *mp* *mp*

67 $\text{♩} = \text{♩}^3$

pp

pp

pp

71 $\text{♩} = 80$ with a very gentle lilt

mp

mp

mp

sim.

sim.

sim.

75

mp

mp

mp

mf

poco f

espres.

espres.

poco f

78

mp

mp

mp

mf

poco f

espres.

espres.

poco f

♩ = ♩ (♩ = 80) *chattering animatedly*

81

3 3

f *mp* *pizz.* *arco* *pizz.* *f* *mp*

♩ = 112 as before ♩ = 116 as before

85

arco *bouncing* *2+3* *f* *sub.f* *p*

♩ = 48 (♩ = 144) *a rustic thrumming*

89

p *mf* *mf* *silvery*

94

silvery

96

98 $\text{♩} = 92$ frenetic, anxious

p cresc.

102

f

mf

105

130

poco accel. - - - - -

cresc.

cresc.

cresc.

cresc.

134

♩ = 40 very slowy, wistful

ff

ff

ff

ff

8^a the afterglow

p

fp

pp

p

p

3. MANNHEIM MACHINE

Extremely Swiftly; lightening in a bottle, manic ♩=176+ (184?)

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

* All tremolos are measured, whether indicated ♩ or ♩ .

12

19

26

32

f *fp* *gingerly* *p* *mp* *sub. ff* *molto* *tr*

38

p *mp* *p* *cresc.* *sub. ff* *molto* *p cresc.* *tr*

45

f *f* *prominently* *f*

52

played: (mf) *spritely* *mf* *pizz.* *mf* *sim.* *cresc.* *cresc.*

57 *insistent*

f *insistent*

f *insistent*

arco *f* played: (*mf*)

arco *pesante*

f

61

sempre f

sempre f

sub.p

f sfz sfz

sub.p

f sfz sfz

sfz sfz

67

mp *molto cresc.*

sub.p

molto cresc.

ff

sub.p

sub.p

sub.p

sub.p

molto cresc.

ff

sub.p

75

sub.f

p

mf

sub.f

p

mf

sub.f

p

mf

sub.f

p

mf

84 churning busily (same tempo)

mf

cresc.

f

100

sub.p

sub.p

sub.p

p f mp p f

107

f

f

mf

f

heavy accents

heavy accents

113

sempre f

f

f

f

119

p

p

f

f

played: (trill)

123

cresc.
ff
cresc.
ff
cresc.
ff
p
cresc.
ff

128

gliss.
p
gliss.
p
III
mf
melting
decresc.
*slow glissando **
mf
decresc.
*slow glissando **

* Continue the same interval pattern, sliding down the fingerboard.

135

gliss.
gliss.
light, joyous
gliss.
gliss.
light, joyous
p
p

139

bold, emphatic
sub.f
bold, emphatic
sub.f
bold, emphatic
sub.f
bold, emphatic
sub.f
ff
sfz
sfz
sfz
sfz

146

152 *molto rallentando** ————— slowing almost to a standstill

* A pronounced and precipitous slow down, as though the machine has been unplugged and is winding down, losing all energy. Measure 160 may continue slowing/repeating, *ad lib*. The music is abruptly cut off by the Vc. scratch tone, which acts a “switch,” turning the machine back on.

160 — — — — — [♩ = 120] accel. — — — — — a tempo (or faster)
 — — — — — [♩ = 60] suddenly roaring back to life*

* Glissandi are coordinated to arrive at the designated pitch on/in time with Vln. I. They begin slurred, transitioning to measured tremolo (Vln. II, Vla to , Vc. to ) roughly halfway through, eventually catching Vln. I. The transition need not be coordinated, but should “lock in” at m. 164.

168 *molto pesante—but in tempo, if possible* *poco riten.*