

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 $\text{♩} = 104$

Violin I: *pizz.* III *p* IV *sim.* *arco* IV III

Violin II: *pizz.* *p* always on 2 strings when possible

Viola: *pizz.* *p* *arco*

Cello: *pizz.* *p* *arco*

Violin I: *mp* *arco* IV *solo* III

Violin II: *pizz.* *arco* *p*

Viola: *arco* *p*

Cello: *pizz.* *mf* *f* interrupting aggressively

Violin I: *f sfz* *p* *mf* *assertively* 3 3 3 3

Violin II: *f sfz* *p* *mf* *assertively* 3 3 3 3

Viola: *p* *mf* 3 3 3 3

Cello: *p* *solo, espres. arco* *mp* *p*

14

solo, delicate but espres.

pizz. always on 2 strings when possible

mp

arco interrupting aggressively

pizz. always on 2 strings when possible

p

mf

f

arco

f sfz

mp

pizz.

mp

mp

18

arco

solo, espres.

poco f

mf

mf

pizz.

mf

22

pinging

sfzp

pinging

sfzp

mf

arco

mf

sim.

26

sfzp

sfzp

sim.

sfzp

sfzp

sim.

8^a

8^a

mf

48

51

55

59

62

65

68

a tempo—a well-oiled machine

73

77

81

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

85

89

(a tempo)—but something is broken

102

ff *f* *ff* *f*

106

molto sul pont. *V* *V* *V*
off the string *p* *ff* *p* *ff* *p* *ff*
mp *molto sul pont.* *V* *V* *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

* 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*

⑦ *as before*

34

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

38

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

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

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

47

cresc. *cresc.* *cresc.* *cresc.*

51 $\overset{3}{\text{♩}} = \overset{3}{\text{♩}}$ $\overset{3}{\text{♩}} = \overset{3}{\text{♩}}$ *breezily, relaxed*

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

55 $\overset{3}{\text{♩}} = \overset{3}{\text{♩}}$ *as before*

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

59

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

63 $\overset{3}{\text{♩}} = \overset{3}{\text{♩}}$ $\overset{3}{\text{♩}} = \overset{3}{\text{♩}}$ *as before*

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

67

$\text{♩} = \frac{3}{7}$
pp
pp

71

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

mp
mp
mp
sim.
sim.

75

mp
mp
mf
espres.
espres.
poco f
poco f

78

mp
mp
mf
espres.
espres.
poco f
poco f

81 $\text{♩} = 80$ *chattering animatedly*

81 $\text{♩} = 80$ *chattering animatedly*

82 *f* *mp* *pizz.* *arco* *V*

83 *f* *mp* *pizz.* *arco* *V*

84 *f* *mp* *pizz.* *arco* *V*

85 $\text{♩} = 112$ as before $\text{♩} = 116$ as before

85 *arco* *bouncing* $\text{♩} = 112$ as before $\text{♩} = 116$ as before

86 *bouncing* *f* *arco* *f*

87 *bouncing* *sub.f* *sub.f* *p*

88 *f* *mp* *sub.f* *p*

89 $\text{♩} = 48$ ($\text{♩} = 144$) *a rustic thrumming*

89 $\text{♩} = 48$ ($\text{♩} = 144$) *a rustic thrumming*

90 *p* *mf* *mf* *silvery*

91 *p* *mf* *mf* *silvery*

92 *p* *mf* *mf* *silvery*

93 *p* *mf* *mf* *silvery*

94

94 *silvery* *p* *mf* *mf*

95 *silvery* *p* *mf* *mf*

96 *silvery* *p* *mf* *mf*

97 *silvery* *p* *mf* *mf*

96

Musical score for measures 96-97. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of four staves. The first two staves are in treble clef, and the last two are in bass clef. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes and slurs. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

♩ = 92 frenetic, anxious

98

Musical score for measures 98-101. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of four staves. The first two staves are in treble clef, and the last two are in bass clef. The music is marked *p cresc.* and features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes and slurs. The key signature has one flat (Bb).

102

Musical score for measures 102-104. The score is in 3/4 time and consists of four staves. The first two staves are in treble clef, and the last two are in bass clef. The music is marked *f* and *mf* and features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes and slurs. The key signature has one flat (Bb).

105

Musical score for measures 105-108. The score is in 5/4 time and consists of four staves. The first two staves are in treble clef, and the last two are in bass clef. The music is marked *f* and *mf* and features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes and slurs. The key signature has one flat (Bb).

108 $\text{♩} = 112$ as before $\text{♩} \text{♩} = 60$ very swiftly, charging forward

2+3 4+3

f *arco* *f* *motoric* *sfz* *sfz*

113

sfz *sfz* *sfz*

119

sfz *sfz*

125 $\text{♩} = 180$ ($\text{♩} = 60$) as before (faster)

3 3 3 3 3 3 3

130

poco accel. -----

Musical score for measures 130-133. The score consists of four staves. Each staff contains complex rhythmic patterns, primarily triplets and sixteenth notes. The dynamics are marked *cresc.* in each staff. The tempo is indicated as *poco accel.* with a dashed line above the staff.

134

♩ = 40 very slow, wistful

Musical score for measures 134-137. The score consists of four staves. The first three staves contain complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes, with dynamics marked *ff*. The fourth staff features a melodic line with dynamics marked *p*. The tempo is indicated as $\text{♩} = 40$ very slow, wistful. A section is marked 8^a the afterglow.

3. MANNHEIM MACHINE

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

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

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

12

19

26

32

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

38

mp
p
cresc.
p
sub. ff
molto
p cresc.
p cresc.
p cresc.

45

f
f
prominently
f
f

52

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

57 *insistent*

f *insistent*

f *insistent*
arco

f played: (♩♩♩♩)

arco
pesante

f

61

sempre f

sempre f

sub.p

f sfz sfz

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

sub.p

sub.p

75

sub.f

sub.f

sub.f

sub.f

p

p

mf

mf

mf

84 churning busily (same tempo)

Musical score for measures 84-87. The score is in 3/4 time and consists of four staves. The first two staves are in treble clef, and the last two are in bass clef. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The music is marked *mf*. The first two measures have rests in the upper staves. The third and fourth measures feature active eighth-note patterns in all staves.

88

Musical score for measures 88-91. The score is in 3/4 time and consists of four staves. The first two staves are in treble clef, and the last two are in bass clef. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The music continues with active eighth-note patterns in all staves.

92

Musical score for measures 92-95. The score is in 3/4 time and consists of four staves. The first two staves are in treble clef, and the last two are in bass clef. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The music is marked *cresc.*. The first two measures have rests in the upper staves. The third and fourth measures feature active eighth-note patterns in all staves.

96

Musical score for measures 96-99. The score is in 3/4 time and consists of four staves. The first two staves are in treble clef, and the last two are in bass clef. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The music is marked *f*. The first two measures have rests in the upper staves. The third and fourth measures feature active eighth-note patterns in all staves.

100

sub.p mp p f

107

mf f heavy accents heavy accents

113

mf f sempre f

119

f p played: () f

123

p *cresc.* *ff*

p *cresc.* *ff*

p *cresc.* *ff*

p *cresc.* *ff*

128

p *gliss.*

p *gliss.*

mf *III* *melting* *slow glissando**

decresc. *melting* *slow glissando**

decresc.

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

135

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

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

p

p

139

bold, emphatic

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

sub. f *bold, emphatic*

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

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

146

mf

IV

mf

mf

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

decresc.

slow glissando

decresc. *slow glissando*
poco a poco quasi gliss.

decresc. *slow glissando*
poco a poco quasi gliss.

decresc.

p

sliding continuously

p

wide, slow vibrato

p

* 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*

sfz

f

cresc.

glissando: slow to fast

glissando: slow to fast

scratch tone (no pitch)

cresc.

slow glissando

ff

ff

ff

* 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 trill , Vc. to trill) 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 rit.*

sim.

sim.

sim.

sim.