

Chladni Figures

for Tenor Saxophone & Solo Multi-Percussion

[~6']

by

Connor Simpson

(2026)



M E R E F L Y P R E S S

Chladni Figures

for Tenor Saxophone & Solo Multi-Percussion

2026

circa 6 minutes

Connor Simpson

Mere Fly Press (ASCAP)

Written for Erin Rogers and Dennis Sullivan of Popebama as a part of the 2026 Arts Letters & Numbers' Creative Music Institute

Instrumentation

Tenor Saxophone

Percussion

Movements (Figures)

Fig. 1

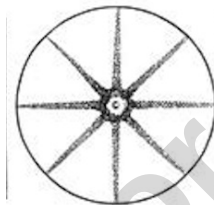


Fig. 2

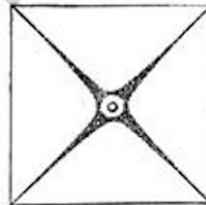
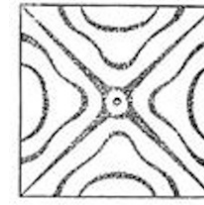


Fig. 3



Program Notes

Chladni Figures takes its title from a physical phenomenon where resonance becomes visible. When a rigid surface, such as a metal plate, is bowed or vibrated at specific frequencies, certain regions vibrate in the opposite direction as others, divided by still lines known as nodes. If the plate is covered in sand, for example, the grains are naturally pushed away from the vibrating regions and collect along the still, silent nodes. These resulting geometric shapes are the primary inspiration for this piece. The music evokes not only the acoustic environment of this physical process but also treats the stark, striking shapes as works of art. Musically, the piece is guided by three main figures. As the work unfolds, these figures are overlapped, stretched, and combined, creating a dynamic soundscape where shape dissolves into noise, and coalesces into resonance.

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Performance Notes

Saxophone

Multiphonic Catalogue:

Each multiphonic is given a numeric label, e.g. [4], based on its first occurrence within the piece. e.g. mm. 1. Multiphonics may be substituted if needed based on the player/instrument however, care should be taken to match the dynamic, expression, and tone of the notated multiphonic.

T. Sax.

pp

pitched → air

pitched/air noise - indicates a gradual transition from pitched tone to air noise e.g. m. 3



harmonics/overtones e.g. m. 21



measured vibrato- gradually introduce an accelerating vibrato

A few brief notes, dynamic/tone throughout should always remain fragile, delicate, and unstable. Multiphonics can transform, waver, and shimmer, when slurring between two multiphonics, tones may break or squeak. The overtones beginning in fig. 2 should stand out within the piece as drastically stagnant in tone, vibrato, and dynamic. Teeth tones should fight, and fail, to be as steady as possible, while being intricately unsteady and broken.

Performance Notes (cont.)

Percussion

Equipment:

Crotales (Low Octave Preferred)

2 Suspended Cymbals

Snare (snares off)

Tam-Tam or Wind-Gong

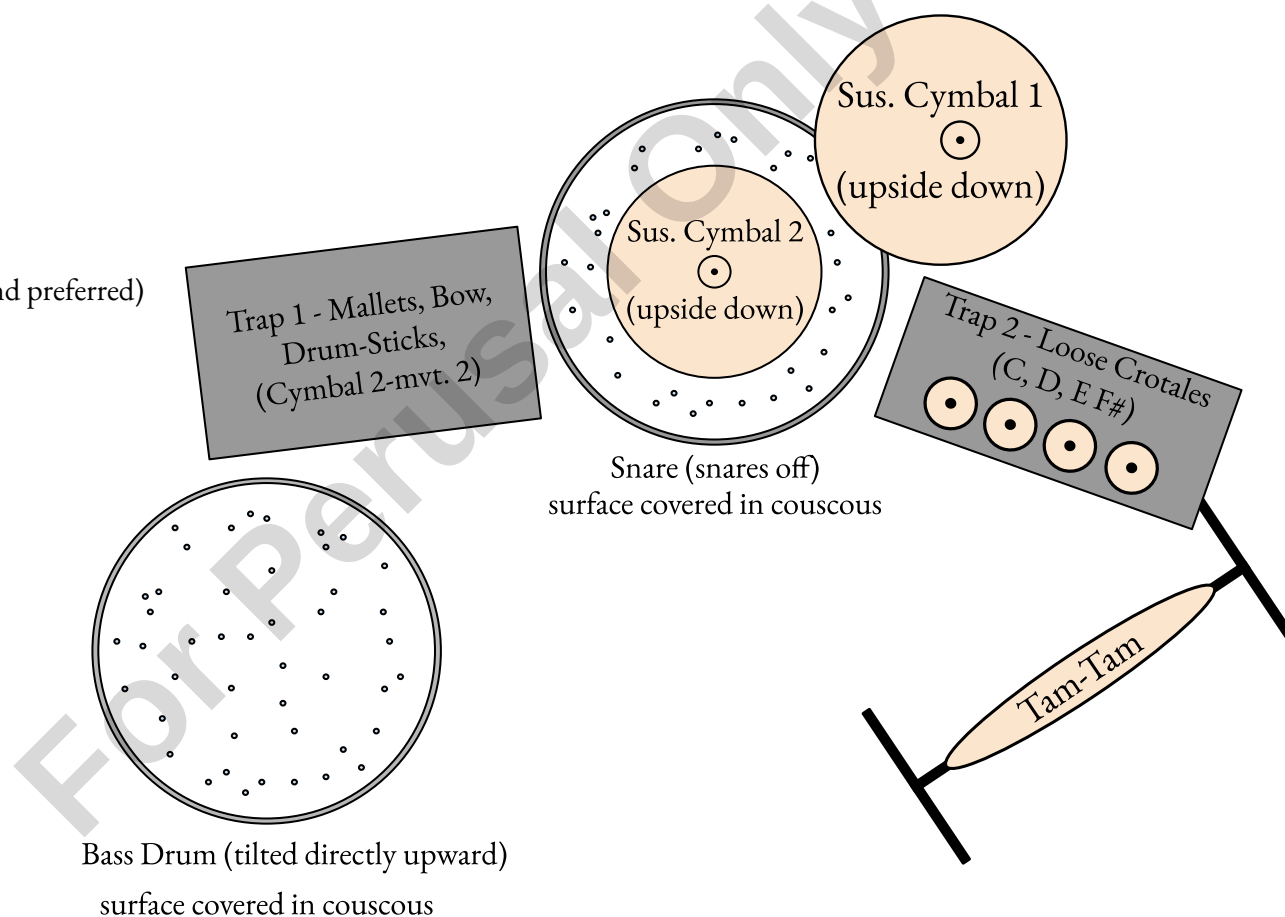
Large Drum (Bass Drum preferred)

Bow

Superball Mallet (Flumi/Egong wand preferred)

Drum-Sticks

Suggested Setup Diagram:

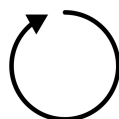


Performance Notes (cont.)

Percussion (cont.)



push crotale from rim to center of snare, e.g. m. 31



rub superball mallet across membrane, freely changing direction,
dynamic may fluctuate within notated range e.g. m. 11

A few brief notes, dynamic/tone throughout should always remain fragile, delicate, and unstable. Bowed tones may begin extremely slowly, introducing a bit of air/noise before a crescendo into tone. Bowed tam-tam may be freely replaced with superball/flumi if tam-tam/gong cannot be bowed. Mallets/drumsticks may be freely substituted, to better fit the blend, balance and dynamic motion of the piece. At times the superball mallet e.g. ("isolate rattle" m. 34) is used to excite the membrane of the drum and the couscous with as unobtrusive of a tone as possible. When the more often used "squeak" of a superball mallet is desired, it is denoted in the score with the term "squeak".

Chladni Figures

for Erin Rogers and Dennis Sullivan of Popebama

Connor Simpson

Fig. 1

Like a candle in the dark
flickering, bleak

pitched air

cloudy, suspended

quaking, looming

sus cymbal 2
begin with very slow bow (skittering)
arco

Snare push down and drag pellet of couscous across drum

prepare superbowl mallet

superball start slowly (skittering) isolate rattle

introduce squeak

prepare bow

beating

ppp pp n

ppp

n pp n

n pp

n

pp

pp

n

pp

n

mp

pp

p

n

mp

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]

9 12

Tenor Saxophone

Percussion

T. Sax.

Perc.

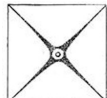
24

Fig. 2

Singing from the sky ♪ = 58

vast, cosmic

senza vib.

Fig. 2  **24**

Singing from the sky ♩ = 58
vast, cosmic
senza vib.

21

erupting

choke cymbal
l.v. (snare/couscous)

roll near bell

erupting
l.v.

move sus cymbal to trap table

T. Sax.

Perc.

p **n** **n** **mp** **p sub.** **3** **3** **3** **p**

singing

p **n** **mf**

27

T. Sax.

30

Crot.

placing each crotale (c, d, e f#) atop snare when bowing

uncerthly, infernal arco

rim

center

Snare

drag couscous

34

T. Sax.

3

Crot.

drag couscous

3

40 Fig. 3



Falling into noise $\text{♩} = 44$
crumbling teeth
as steady as possible

Four distinct pitches as teeth tones in given contour

44

sim.

pp

prepare superbail mallet

Snare

murmuring superbail squeak

gradually add vibrato

failing

pp

cymbal scrape

dynamics ad lib

pp

Chladni Figures

47 50

T. Sax.

p *pp* *p* *mp*

superball squeak

prepare bow

tam. arco

prepare superball mallet

Perc.

mp *mp* dynamics ad lib *n* *mp*

53

air tone with sporadic key clicks

ca. 6" ca. 8"

T. Sax.

n *mp* *n*

Snare

isolate rattle superball ca. 6"

B. Dr.

superball isolate rattle ca. 8"

Perc.

n *p* *n* *p* dynamics ad lib.