



Inside a Stone

For amplified solo piano and fixed media electronics

Tom Baker
2022

Commissioned by Jesse Myers
Dedicated to Cass Mahlin

Inside a Stone

To go inside a stone would be amazing. No responsibilities or work. To listen to the roar of a nearby river, the silence of the bottom of the ocean, or the birds chirping in the meadow. To have no worries and no being late to anything. To fill the inner walls of a stone with charts, maps, and pictures. The peacefulness and calming sounds would make the stone feel like home. To rest or think all day with no interruptions. Until hands pick you up and place you in their pocket for luck. . . I would love to go inside a stone. Then I could sit and think about the world around me.

–Cass Mahlin, age 10

Performance Notes

Inside a Stone requires a score, WAV file, and a box of river stones.

**The electronics are fixed media (Wav file) to begin playing at the beginning of the piece and play throughout. The score has a "Electronics" part showing the waveform of the sounds in time as a loose guide for the performer.

**Score and Fixed Media Wav File: tombakermusic.com/inside-a-stone.

** Minimum 2-3 microphones inside the piano, and 1 outside the piano facing the audience, for the player perform the rubbing together of two stones. The goal for amplification is to increase the volume of the sound of the rocks as much as possible, to make almost inaudible sounds audible.

**The stones used in the piece are collected from the banks of a beautiful river in the Methow Valley in Washington State.

**River Stones: contact composer for rental of stones: tom@tombakermusic.com.

Program notes

Inside a Stone was commissioned by pianist Jesse Myers in 2019. The piece was part of a set of works by several composers, with the only requirement be that the pieces be inspired and evocative of a particular place in Washington State (to be determined by the composer). This piece was inspired by a beautiful, small river in the Methow Valley. It has become the home waters of the composer, who has spent many years, hiking, swimming, and flyfishing in this river. All of the stones used in the making of this piece were collected in this place. Secondly, the poet Cass Mahlin, a young friend of the composer, penned the verse above after a trip to the river. This became the touchstone for the piece, which attempts to evoke what it might be like to listen to sounds and music from inside a stone.

Preparation of the space and piano (see pictures below):

Preplacement of the cairns:

Before the piece begins the performer should build 2-3 cairns that lead the performer from the stage entrance to the piano, using the cairn stones (C).

Preplacement of rubbing stones (R).

The piece begins with the performer rubbing two stones together, using the rubbing stones (R). The performer should enter the stage walking slowly and rubbing the two stones together. As the performer reaches the stage and the rubbing-stone-microphone, the piece begins with a cue to begin the clock and the fixed media.

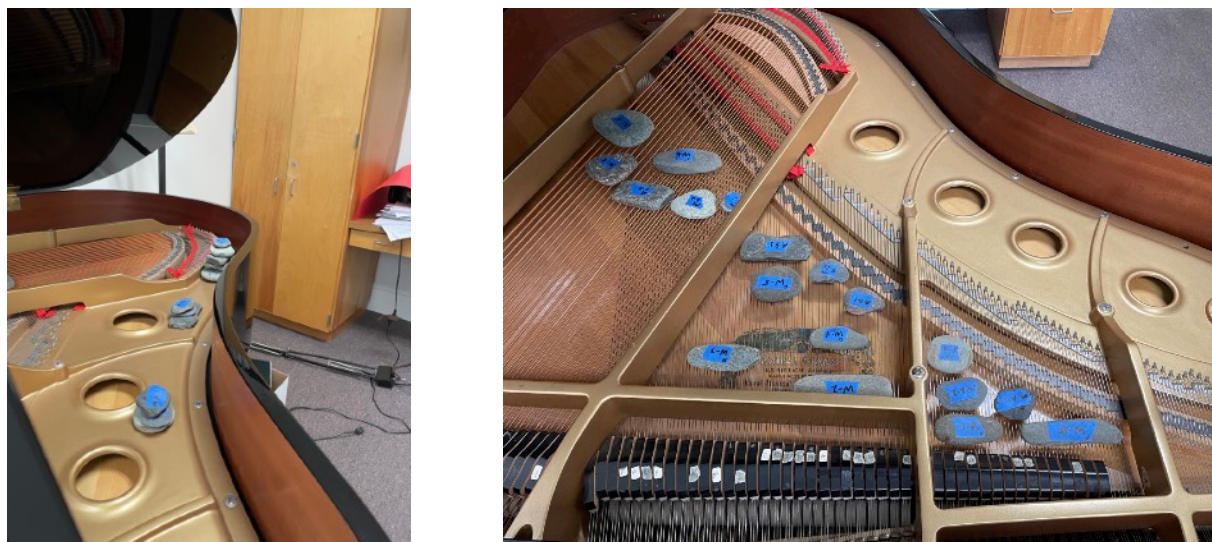
Preplacement of wobble stones (W):

The stones used to perform inside the piano are wobble stones (W). These should be preplaced before the piece begins, according to the photos below.



Preplacement (and placement during the piece) of the muting stones (M):

The stones used to mute the strings while playing at the keyboard are muting stones (M). They should be preplaced near or inside the piano to be ready for placement on the strings, as shown. Then the stones are placed during the piece at the prescribed time, according to the photos below.



INSIDE A STONE

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Approach piano following the 2-4 cairns built on the stage.
Pick up rubbing stones R-1 and R-2 from the piano.
At the rubbing mic near piano, begin the piece.

Slowly rub R-1 and R-2 cupped in the palms of the hands,
using circular motions or figure eight motions,
varying the speed and the dynamics (mostly very quietly)

The score is divided into two systems. The first system covers the time range 0.10 to 0.30. The second system covers 0.40 to 1.00. The 'Stones' track is a single line with a dynamic contour line and various dynamic markings: *ppp*, *p*, *ppp*, *p*, *ppp*, and *pp*. The 'Piano' track consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with a 'pedal off' instruction at the beginning. The 'Fixed-Media' track includes a 'begin playback' icon and a waveform visualization starting at 0.40, with the instruction 'electronics should be ppp-p'.

1.10 1.20 1.30

Stones

Piano

Fixed-Media

1.40 1.50 2.00

Stones

Piano

Fixed-Media

2.10 2.20 2.30

Stones

Piano

Fixed-Media

Slowly walk to playing position for inside the piano.


2.40 2.50 3.00

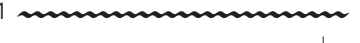
Stones

Piano

Fixed-Media

Pluck the stones (W0-W6) resting on the piano strings so that they wobble approximately following the graphics in the score. Do not stop the wobble, let it disappear naturally.

W-1 

W-1 

p ↔ *mp* →

Stones

Piano

Fixed-Media

3.10

3.20

3.30

W-2

W-1

W-0

W-2

Detailed description: This system of a musical score spans from 3.10 to 3.30. It features three staves: 'Stones' (top), 'Piano' (middle, with treble and bass clefs), and 'Fixed-Media' (bottom, with a play button icon). Vertical dashed lines mark time points at 3.10, 3.20, and 3.30. Wavy lines with labels are placed above the 'Stones' staff: 'W-2' from 3.10 to ~3.15, 'W-1' from ~3.15 to 3.20, 'W-0' from 3.20 to ~3.25, and another 'W-2' from ~3.25 to 3.30. Small black squares are positioned on the 'Piano' and 'Fixed-Media' staves at the 3.10, 3.20, and 3.30 marks.

Stones

Piano

Fixed-Media

3.40

3.50

4.00

W-4

W-3

W-1

W-4

W-5

W-2

W-3

Detailed description: This system of a musical score spans from 3.40 to 4.00. It features three staves: 'Stones' (top), 'Piano' (middle, with treble and bass clefs), and 'Fixed-Media' (bottom, with a play button icon). Vertical dashed lines mark time points at 3.40, 3.50, and 4.00. Wavy lines with labels are placed above the 'Stones' staff: 'W-4' from 3.40 to ~3.45, 'W-3' from ~3.45 to 3.50, 'W-1' from 3.50 to ~3.55, 'W-4' from ~3.55 to ~3.60, 'W-5' from ~3.60 to 3.50, 'W-2' from 3.50 to ~3.55, and 'W-3' from 4.00 to 4.00. Small black squares are positioned on the 'Piano' and 'Fixed-Media' staves at the 3.40, 3.50, and 4.00 marks.

4.10 4.20 4.30

Stones

Piano

Fixed-Media

W-2

W-1

pluck (l.v.)

8^{va}

p

4.40 4.50 5.00

Stones

Piano

Fixed-Media

W-0

W-2

W-1

W-2

W-4

W-6

8^{va}

mp

p

5.10 5.20 5.30

Stones

Piano

Fixed-Media

As electronics play, place the rest of the stones (M-stones) inside the piano according to the chart. It is fine for them to make some sound when placed, but it should be done quietly.

5.40 5.50 6.00

Stones

Piano

Fixed-Media

6.10 6.20 6.30

Stones

Piano

Fixed-Media

When all stones are in place, move quietly to piano keys...

6.40 6.50 7.00

Stones

Piano

Fixed-Media

7.10 7.20 7.30

Stones

Piano

Fixed-Media

mp *p* *mf* *p*

Ped. → Ped. Ped. →

5

7.40 7.50 8.00

Stones

Piano

Fixed-Media

mp *mf* *mp* *p*

Ped. Ped. →

3

8.10 8.20 8.30

Stones

Piano

Fixed-Media

loosely

mp

mf

Ped.

Pitches (position) are arbitrary and can include any accidental.
Slowly accelerate pattern over the time span, while moving
the figure lower and lower on the keyboard.

8.40 8.50 9.00

Stones

Piano

Fixed-Media

f

9.10 9.20 9.30

Stones

Piano

Fixed-Media

ff

ped.

9.40 9.50 10.00

Stones

Piano

Fixed-Media

f

ff

10.10 10.20 10.30

Stones

Piano

Fixed-Media

W-1

W-1

W-2

mf

mp

8

10.40 10.50 11.00

Stones

Piano

Fixed-Media

W-2

W-0

W-1

Ped.

8