

Giraffe Study

for Solo Marimba

after Qdwa ("The Giraffe")

as sung and played on the dengho (thumb piano) by Xashe Xishe,
a performance recorded in Grootlaagte, Botswana by **Clark Wheeler**

Giraffe Study is a fantasy response to a fascinating track on Clark Wheeler's revelatory CD of field recordings of the music of the Bushmen of Botswana.* This track on the "When We Were Free" CD is a hypnotic performance of the song called Qdwa ("The Giraffe") as sung and played on the "thumb piano" by Xashe Xishe, one of the oldest dwellers of his village. His singing and the gamelan-like collection of pitches and sounds resonating from his "dengo" (placed on a coffee can) mystified and mesmerized me. Capturing this kaleidoscopic mixing of timbres, the magical mantras of irregular patterns, and the aching loneliness of the old man's voice seemed an appropriate study to engage the superb skills and adventuresome imagination of marimbist Payton MacDonald. The score asks for four mallets composed of extremely different materials to create a heterogeneous panoply of timbres, and the rhythmic and dynamic deployment of these is notated in the first minute of the piece in a precisely erratic way. Once this sound world has been established, the marimbist is free to apply similar timbral disjunction for the remainder of the piece, employing various kinds and degrees of improvisation related to the notated patterns, melodic shapes and cadenza breaks which form the narrative shape of the work.

*<https://bushmanmusic.bandcamp.com/>

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Don Freund

June, 2011

for Payton MacDonald

$\text{♩} = 76$

Musical score for the first system of "Giraffe Study". The score consists of four staves, each representing a different material: Hard Yarn (R. H.), Plastic, Wood (L. H.), and Soft Yarn. The music is in common time (indicated by a '8'). The Hard Yarn staff starts with a dynamic of *mf*. The Plastic staff starts with *p*, followed by *f*, *mf pp*, *mfmp*, and *p*. The Wood staff starts with *mp pp*, *p*, *pmp*, and *mp*. The Soft Yarn staff starts with *mf*. Measure numbers 18 and 19 are indicated above the staves.

4

Musical score for measures 4 through 6 of "Giraffe Study". The score continues with the four staves: Hard Yarn, Plastic, Wood, and Soft Yarn. Measure 4 starts with *f* for Hard Yarn, *mpmf* and *mpmf* for Plastic, *p* for Wood, and *p* for Soft Yarn. Measure 5 starts with *p* for Hard Yarn, *pp* and *mp* for Plastic, *p* for Wood, and *mf p* for Soft Yarn. Measure 6 starts with *mp* for Hard Yarn, *p* for Plastic, *mf* and *mp* for Wood, and *p* for Soft Yarn. Measure 7 follows, starting with *mf* for Hard Yarn, *pp* for Plastic, *p* for Wood, and *p* for Soft Yarn.

7

Musical score for measures 7 through 10 of "Giraffe Study". The score continues with the four staves: Hard Yarn, Plastic, Wood, and Soft Yarn. Measure 7 starts with *p* for Hard Yarn, *mp pp* for Plastic, *p* for Wood, and *pp* for Soft Yarn. Measure 8 starts with *p* for Hard Yarn, *p* for Plastic, *pp* for Wood, and *pp* for Soft Yarn. Measure 9 starts with *mp* for Hard Yarn, *pp* for Plastic, *p* for Wood, and *pp* for Soft Yarn. Measure 10 starts with *mf* for Hard Yarn, *pp* for Plastic, *f* for Wood, and *pp* for Soft Yarn.

10

mp mp f pp

mf mf f mf

p pp mp mp

pp mf mp pp

pp mp pp f mp

pp mp

13

f f f p mf pp

mp mp p pp

pp p pp

mf p mp

f f mf p pp

mf p mp

f f mp pp

p pp mp

17

p mp pp

p pp f mp

mf mp mf p pp

p mp pp

p mp pp

p pp mp pp

mf p mp pp

p pp mp pp

p mp pp

p mp pp

p pp

Mix mallets ad lib. (a great deal of timbral variety is desired.)

22

ff, declamatory, free

26

31

35

39

43

46

50

Cadenza: Free, recitativo

55

60

65

69

75

78

80

$\text{♩} = 92 \text{ (very free)}$

83 Mix mallets ad lib. (a great deal of timbral variety is desired.)

mf

86

89

92

f

95

99

102

109

114

118

122

126