

second language  
for percussion solo

christopher burns



*Second Language* (2005) is a companion piece to a percussion solo titled *The Language of Pilots* (2004). A recomposition (perhaps even a remix) of the earlier work, *Second Language* shares an instrumentation (hi-hat cymbal and snare drum), gestures and phrases, and a density of activity and sound with its sibling. There are also sharp contrasts between the works. Where *The Language of Pilots* develops materials over long spans of time, *Second Language* emphasizes the accumulation, repetition, and variation of short rhythmic patterns. And while *Pilots* is loud and extroverted, *Second Language* is hushed, emphasizing the subtle flickering and scraping of wire brushes across the instruments.

*Second Language* was commissioned by Deborah Miller, and is dedicated to her and Chris Froh on the occasion of their wedding.

**Performance notes and indications:**

Battery: pedal hi-hat, snare drum (batter head), snare sticks, wire brushes

Any activities involving a partially or fully-open hi-hat are to be left ringing (*sempre lasciar vibrare*). In sparse passages the sound may be left to decay naturally; in dense passages it may be cut off by a closed hi-hat stroke.

The instrumental timbres should be as flexible, mobile, and diverse as possible. The sounds are often intended to result from the combination of actions rather than from individual notated events; "in-between" and even extraneous sounds are welcome, especially in dense passages.

Dynamics between brushes and sticks should be balanced; this necessitates very quiet performance with the sticks. Amplification may be used if necessary to create an adequate (but not loud) volume for the audience.

Duration 5 minutes.

striking position:

pedal position:

The diagram shows two staves. The top staff is for the hi-hat, with notes and symbols indicating striking positions: lower bell, edge, upper bow, upper bell, closed tight (no resonance), "normal" closed (some resonance), partially open, fully open, pedal stroke (no stick), and gradual transitions between different pedal positions. The bottom staff is for the snare drum, with notes and symbols indicating striking positions: center, rim, snares on, and snares off (as sounding events: silent changes are indicated by text instructions).

playing technique / stick selection:

The diagram shows a single staff with notes and symbols indicating playing techniques and stick selection: normal sticking, timbale-style sticking, deadstick, sidestick, single-stick drag sustain as long as feasible but do not roll, drag transitioning into deadstick (drags may also move across surface), brush hit (no sustain), brush stir, and brush stir changing surface position.

second language

for solo percussion  
for chris and deborah

christopher burns

♩ = 68  
[stick | brush + stick]

hi-hat

snare drum

*pp*  
(snare on)

*p* *mp* *mf* *pp* *pppp* *p* *pppp*

7/4 27/16 7/4

3

*p* *mp* *mf* *pp* *mp* *pp* *pppp* *pp*

7/4 13/8 7/4

5

*p* *ppp* *mp* *pp* *p* *pp* *mf* *pp*

7/4 27/16

♩ = 62

5:3

♩ = 68

7 *p* *mf* *p* *pppp* *ppp*

7/4

9 *p* *mf* *pp* *p* *pp* *mp* *p* *pp* *mp*

7/4

11 *pppp* *p* *pp* *ppp*

7/4

♩ = 54

13 *p* *mp* *p* *pp* *mf* *ppp*

6/4

[brush | brush]

15

11/8 *p* *mf* *ppp*

6/4 *mf* *ppp*

17

*mp* *pp* *p* *ppp*

11/8 *p* *ppp*

19

*pp* *p* *ppp*

6/4 *p* *ppp* 5/4

21

5/4 *pppp* *ppp* *ppp* *pp* *ppp* *pp* *ppp* *p* *ppp* *p* *ppp* *p* *mp*

5/4 5/4 5/4



Musical score system 1 (measures 36-42).  
 Top staff:  $\text{♩} = 68$ . Measures 36-42. Dynamics: *pp*, *ppp*, *p*, *ppp*, *p*, *pp*, *p*, *ppp*, *p*.  
 Bottom staff: Measure 36 starts at *pp*. Measure 42 ends at *pppp*.  
 Time signatures:  $\frac{4}{4}$ ,  $\frac{8}{8}$ .

Musical score system 2 (measures 39-46).  
 Top staff:  $\text{♩} = 54$  (measures 39-42),  $\text{♩} = 68$  (measures 43-46). Measures 39-46. Dynamics: *pp*, *p*, *mp*, *pp*, *p*, *mf*, *pp*, *ppp*, *p*, *pp*.  
 Bottom staff: Measure 39 starts at *ppp*. Measure 46 ends at *p*.  
 Time signatures:  $\frac{4}{4}$ ,  $\frac{8}{8}$ ,  $\frac{13}{16}$ ,  $\frac{3}{4}$ .

Musical score system 3 (measures 43-48).  
 Top staff: Measures 43-48. Dynamics: *pp*, *p*, *ppp*, *p*, *mp*, *pppp*, *pp*.  
 Bottom staff: Measure 43 starts at *pppp*. Measure 48 ends at *pppp*.  
 Time signatures:  $\frac{3}{4}$ ,  $\frac{13}{16}$ ,  $\frac{3}{4}$ .

Musical score system 4 (measures 48-54).  
 Top staff: Measures 48-54. Dynamics: *pp*, *pppp*, *p*, *ppp*, *p*, *pp*, *mp*, *p*, *pp*.  
 Bottom staff: Measure 48 starts at *pppp*. Measure 54 ends at *p*.  
 Time signatures:  $\frac{13}{16}$ ,  $\frac{3}{4}$ .

53 *ppp* *mp* *pp* *pppp* *ppp* *mp* *pp* *pppp* *ppp* *pp*

7:8 5 3 3 7:8 5 5 3 3 7:8 3 7:8 3

3 5

11/16 *p* 2/4

58 *ppp* *p* *ppp* *p* *ppp* *p* *pp* *mp* *ppp* *p* *pp* *mp* *ppp* *ppp*

3 5 5 3 5 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

7:8 3 7:8 3 7:8 3 7:8 3 7:8 3 7:8 3 7:8 3 7:8 3

2/4 11/16 2/4 7/16 2/4 2/4 5/16

65 *ppp* *p* *ppp* *p* *p* *mp* *pp* *p* *mp* *mf* *p* *mf* *f* *fff*

9:8 9:8 9:8 3 5 7:8

5/16 2/4 3/8 5/16 3/8 1/4 3/8 1/8