

Karlheinz Essl

# **Kalimba**

for toy piano & CD playback

2005

Dedicated to Isabel Ettenauer

Karlheinz Essl

## **Kalimba**

for toy piano & CD (2005)

**Kalimba** is a piece for toy piano and CD playback which was composed in April 2005 for the pianist and toy piano performer Isabel Ettenauer. The piece is an attempt to break up the restricted sound world of the toy piano - not by superficial means of additional sound processing, but by the sound of the instrument itself. This is achieved by a CD which is played back by a small loudspeakers which is hidden inside the toy piano; this creates a perfect blend between the sounds of the instrument and the sounds from the loudspeaker. Furthermore, as the listeners won't notice any electronic devices, they might assume that all the music comes from the toy piano itself.

The piece is entirely based on an eight-tone scale which alternates whole and halftone steps. It was recorded from the Schoenhut Concert Grand Piano that Isabel uses to play in her performances. This material was processed by a computer program which was written by Karlheinz Essl in Max/MSP using compositional algorithms from his *Realtime Composition Library*. It creates five layers of the same basic soundfile which are affected by very slow glissandos. The result of these operations is stunning: starting from the original scale (which is also played synchronously on the toy piano), the sound gradually transforms itself through a rich variety of sonic transformations into a "chaotic" distribution of the 8 tones which finally fall together into chord repetitions.

In the adjacent part of the piece, the glissandos are expanded to a much wider range and - by forming an ambitus of 4 octaves in the end - a proportional canon of the form:

**1/4 : 1/2 : 1 : 2 : 4**

is created. Continuously, all layers except the (s)lowest are fading out, so that in the end only an transposition of the original recording 2 octaves lower (and 2 times slower) can be heard. This is the beginning of the „coda“ of the piece, where over the „ground“ of a slow toy piano melody the entire piece is compressed into a few seconds.

## Playing instructions

**Kalimba** was composed for a Schoenhut Baby Grand Piano with 37 keys from f to f3. The score is written one octave lower than actually sounding. As the sounds on the playback CD have been recorded from the toy piano model specified above, it must be played on such an instrument in order to achieve the perfect blending between the CD playback and the toy piano played live.

### Preparations:

- Put a small active loudspeaker into the toy piano
- Connect the loudspeaker to a portable CD player or mp3 player (iPod)
- Half-close the lid of the instrument
- Use the time display of the CD/mp3 player as a stopwatch to play along

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♩=75  
Start CD player

CD

0:09 Synchronous with CD R.H.

0:16

0:35

Karlheinz Essl (\*1960)

Toy Piano

(5x)

L.H.

*pp* *f* *p*

8

0:42

0:49

*f* *p* *f* *p* *f*

14

1:00 "tr" \*

1:07 "tr"

1:12 "tr"

1:16 rit. \*\* )

1:22 (♩=75)

*p* *ff* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p*

20

1:29

*f* *pf* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p*

\*) „tr“ irregular permutation of notes in brackets

\*\* ) rit: from trill speed continuously to ♩

33 1:36 rit. molto 1:46  $\text{♩} = 75$

*p* *ff* *f* *p* *f* *p* *ff* (*ff*) *p* *f* *p* *ff*

43 2:10

*p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p*

49

*f* *p*

52

*f* *p* *f* *p* *f*

55

*p* *f* *p* *f* *p*

58

~3:06

*f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f*

♩=75  
3:20  
"espressivo"

62

3:30 3:39 3:46

*p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p*

75

3:54 4:04

*f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f*

84 *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *f* *p* *ff*

9 9 9 9 8

4:13 rit. poco

89 *ff* *p* *f* *p* *mf* *p* *mp* *p*

8 8 6

a tempo (♩=75) 4:23

CD 95 4:30 4:35 4:41 4:48

*p* *f* *p*

108 4:54 5:07 *pp*

*f* *p* *f*