Steven Snowden

A Watched Pot

For Teakettle,
Six metal mixing bowls
and electronics

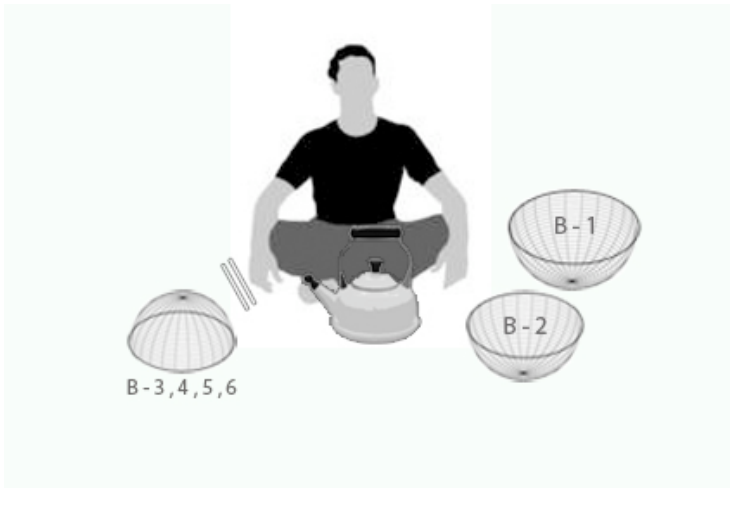
Commissioned by
Rosalyn Nasky and Owen Weaver

A Watched Pot

Commissioned by
Choreographer Rosalyn Nasky and Percussionist Owen Weaver

Program Notes

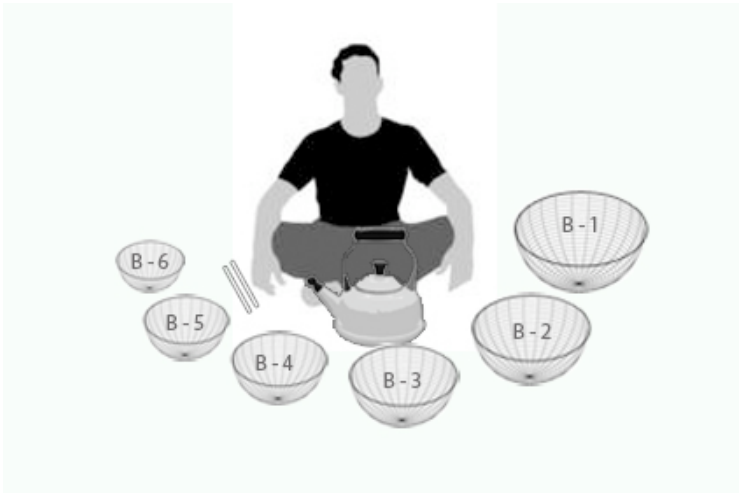
Scored for a teakettle, mixing bowls, and electronics, *A Watched Pot* explores the sonic possibilities of everyday objects. Coupled with a complex electronic counterpart, these repurposed kitchenwares set the stage for a dream within the mundane. Aside from the (human) whistling sections at the beginning and end of this piece, all electronically produced sounds come from manipulated recordings of a single teakettle.



Setup

To begin the piece, the player should arrange the bowls as indicated in this diagram. Bowls 3-6 are stacked with the rim down so that only bowl 3 is showing. The score indicates specific times that bowls 3-6 are to be removed from the stack (unpacked) and when they are to be flipped from rim down to rim up. The teakettle should contain one to two cups of water for the pitchbend solo section.

Once all of the bowls are unpacked they should be arranged in a semicircle around the player so that he or she can easily reach all of them as well as the teakettle.



Gear

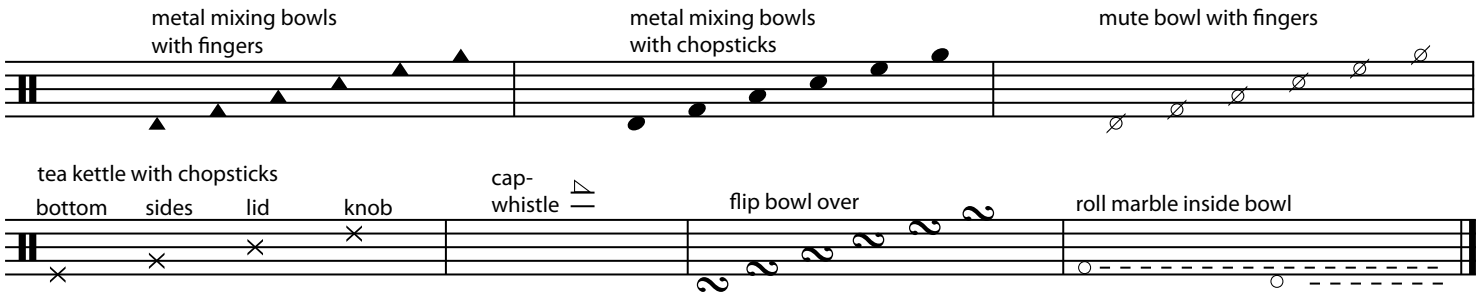
1 pair of chopsticks
1 teakettle*
6 metal mixing bowls**
2 marbles

You will likely also need a large towel or pad if performing on a hard surface. Otherwise the bowls may rattle when struck and slide away from you.

*The teakettle should have certain components that correspond to the notation in this piece. It should have a removable cap-whistle, a lid with a knob on top. Care should be taken to find a teakettle with a wide and (mostly) flat bottom to facilitate pitch bending when it contains water.

**The mixing bowls should produce distinctly different pitches with B-1 being the lowest and B-6 the highest. I've found that cheaply made bowls with a thin-gage are often the most resonant.

Notation



General performance technique

Playing the bowls with the rim up:

The bowls should always be struck on the rim whether played with fingers or chopsticks.

Playing the bowls with the rim down:

The bowls should always be struck near the center of the dome when played with fingers or chopsticks.

Unpacking the bowls:

When the bowls are being unpacked near the beginning of the piece, they should be silently removed from the stack and placed in position. All bowls should be initially placed with the rim up and turned over when indicated. ("flip B-#")

The marble roll:

The marbles are initially rolled very slowly inside of bowls 1 and 2. By grasping the bowl by the rim and moving it in a circular motion, the marble's speed should be gradually increased until momentum allows it roll along the inside wall of the bowl unaided. This should allow the marble to continue rolling without touching the bottom of the bowl for 15 seconds or more so that it only occasionally requires additional force. Throughout the beginning of this piece, sufficient force should be periodically added during rests of sufficient length in order to maintain the marble's path on the inner wall of the bowl. This continues until "allow B-# marble to lose momentum" is indicated.

The teakettle pitchbend solo (meas. 76-89)

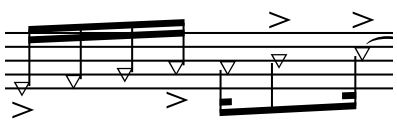
Technique:

At the end of measure 75 the teakettle should be picked up by its sides and held between the player's palms. It should be held in such a way that the player can easily strike the underside of the kettle with his or her fingers. By titling the kettle backwards and forwards, the player can then control its pitch. Though specific notation is provided, the player can choose to improvise all or part of this section. Depending on the size and shape of the kettle one or two cups of water should be sufficient to produce a prominent pitchbend effect.

Notation:

-Pitchbend indications

The relative pitch of the kettle (corresponding to the degree of tilt) is indicated by the note head's placement on the staff.



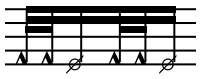
In this example, the underside of the kettle is struck with the player's fingers as he or she bends the pitch upward over the course of two beats. The player's fingers should immediately pull away from the underside of the kettle after each attack to allow maximum resonance.

-Finger roll

Quick finger rolls are indicated with this note head.

-Dead mute

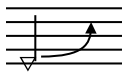
Similar to dead stick or palm mute technique, the player strikes the underside of the kettle with all four fingers simultaneously and mutes the kettle for the rhythmic duration indicated.



In this example, two dead mutes punctuate two quick finger rolls.

-Strike then bend

In this example, the kettle is struck and then immediately tilted back to bend the pitch as it resonates.



A Watched Pot

For solo percussion and electronics

Steven Snowden

♩= 60

Perc.

5

Big Band Hit!

begin B-1 marble
Very slow — *full speed*

*metro
begins here

12 0:44

unpack B-2

unpack B-3

unpack B-4

1:00

begin B-2 marble
Very slow — *full speed*

unpack B-5

unpack B-6

23 1:28

mf *f* *mp* *mf* *mp*

27

f *mp*

flip B-5

pick up chopstick #1

f

31

2:08

p *mp*

flip B-6

35

f

flip B-4

allow B-2 marble
to lose momentum

flip B-3

pick up chopstick #2

39

mp *f*

41

allow B-1 marble
to lose momentum

2:48

f *p* *mp*

44

© 2010 Talking Rocks Press

A Watched Pot

46

48

3:12

50

52

♩= 90

3:28

55

mf

p

58

61

3:55

mp

64

67

6

f

mp

70

4:18

mf

73

pick up
teakettle

ff

4:29

76

teakettle pitchbend solo

f

78

80

82

5

5

5

6

A Watched Pot

84

6

86

3

3

3

88

♩= 90

90 building up a head of steam

5:09

pp

92

94

mf

96

5:30

98

6

ff

mp

100

102

f

6

ff

104

p

106

108

6:00

110

mp

A Watched Pot

112

mf

114

116

f *p*

6:21

118

fp *fp* *fp* *fp*

120

fp *mp*

122

mf *pp*

124

f

126

♩ = 120

flip B-2 flip B-1

6:52 Now we're cookin'

130

ff

133

136

7:39

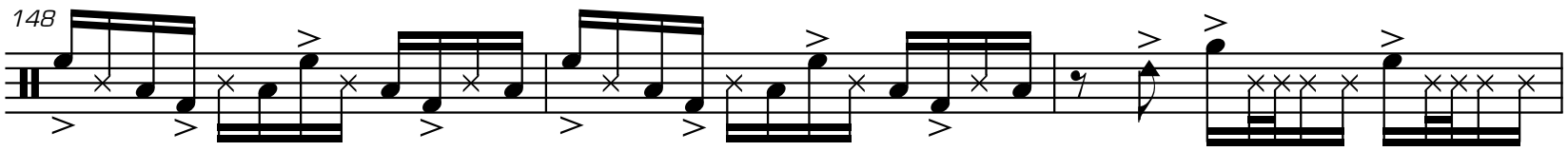
139

142

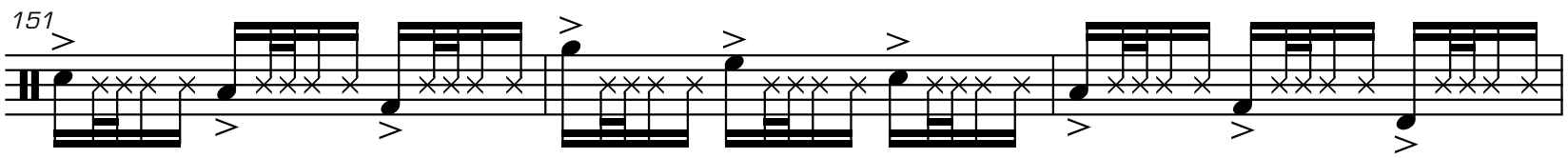
145

A Watched Pot

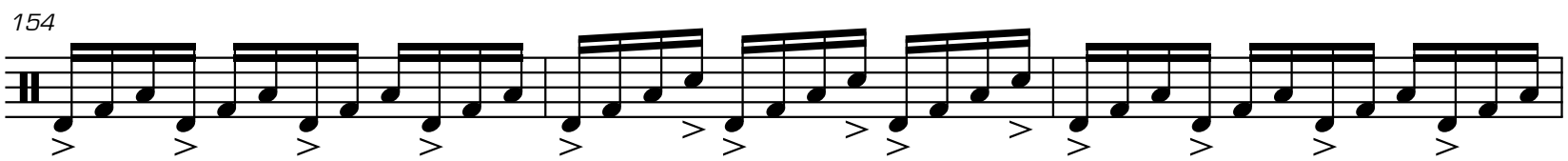
148



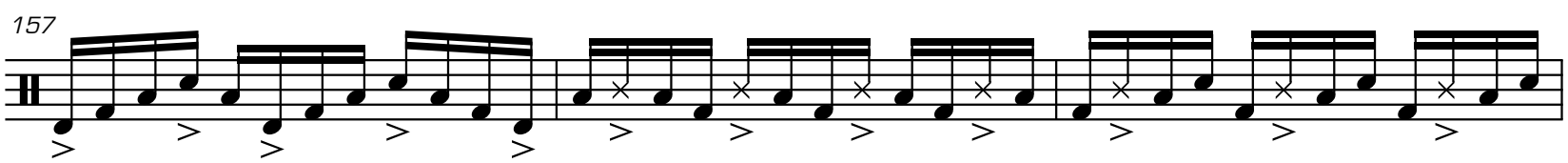
151



154

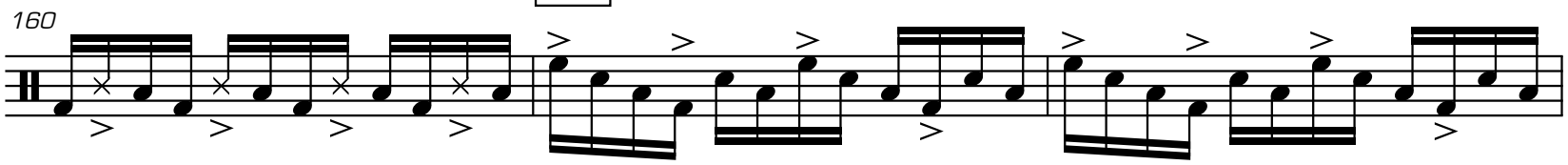


157

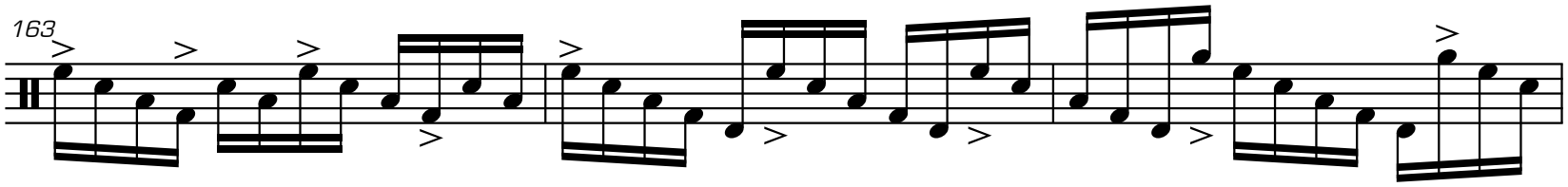


7:39

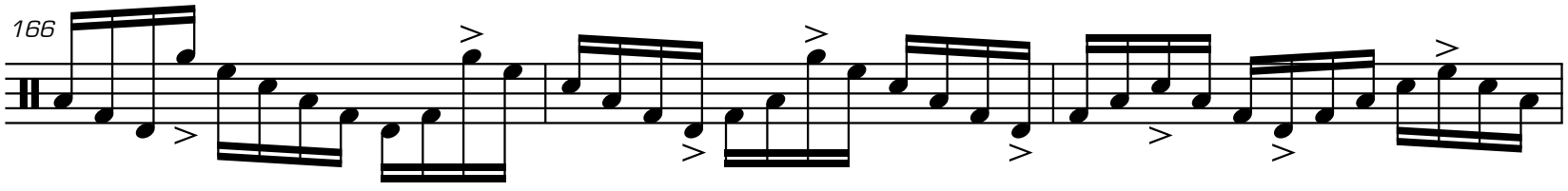
160



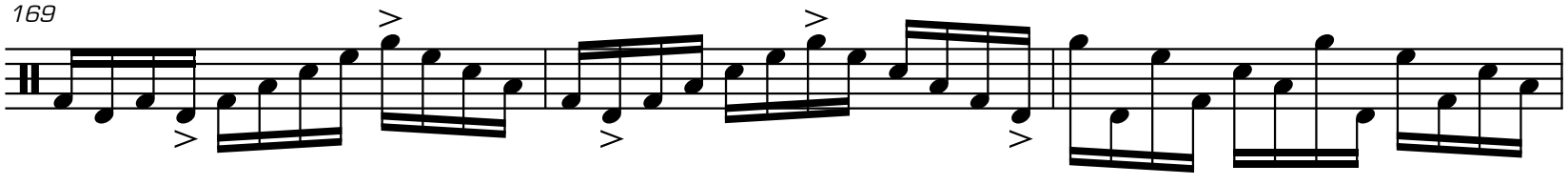
163



166



169



subito ***p***

172

romove that cap-whistle
and put it in your mouth.

f

8:00

175

ff *mp*

178

ff *pp* *ff* *pp*

181

ff *mp*

184

ff *ff*

187

190

193

subito ***p***

A Watched Pot

196

spit that
cap-whistle
across the room

8:34

ff *ff*

199

p

202

ff

205

mp

208

mf

211

f

214

ff *fff*

217

now slow 'er down drop by drop...

220

9:09 *rit. into phase with the whistle waltz...*

♩. = 139

mp

223

229

236

241

247

252

molto rit.

grinding to a halt