SIMON EMMERSON

PIANO PIECE I

(1971-72)

with preparation or

electronic modulation

Preview File Only

for Roger Smalley

PIANO PIECE I

A melodic line is constructed from the following groups of notes (to some of which further grace note groups are added):

Unprepared/
Unmodulated

Rubber preparations/
Modulation level '½'

Metal preparations/
Modulation level '1'

A: Prepared piano version:

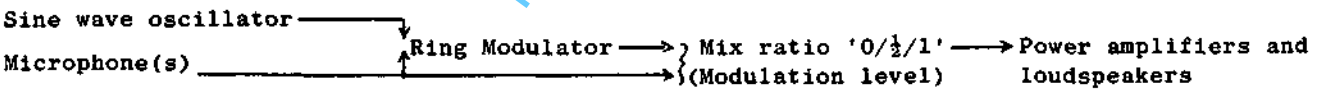
i) Rubber preparations: strips or small wedges placed near to the point of hammer strike. For 1 and 2 string notes it does not matter if adjacent notes are obscured slightly with the exception of the bass C as the adjacent D flat from the unprepared group must remain clear. If the bass C has only a single string, a wedge must be placed between it and the adjacent B (natural),if it has two strings a wedge must be placed between them.

ii) Metal preparations: 2/16"-3/16" bolts.All notes indicated have two or more strings.In each case a bolt should be wedged vertically between two strings near the point of the hammer strike. For those notes with three strings a second bolt should be wedged vertically at the half way nodal point between the middle and the other outer string.

The third clef refers to the electronically modulated version only.

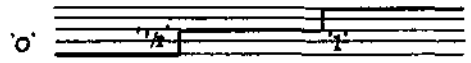
B: Electronically modulated piano version:

The whole work is modulated with a sine tone of frequency 233 Hz.(B natural).



A mixer with equalisation would normally be needed and the addition of compressors (which might be part of a high quality ring modulator) would improve the quality. A stereophonic version could also be elaborated.

The modulation level - the ratio of directly amplified to modulated sound - is indicated on the third stave: '0': unmodulated but amplified; '½': modulated sound colours but does not dominate; '1': total predominance of modulated sound.



The pianist could control the modulation level with a pedal. Or a second performer could use the joystick control of an EMS VCS3 or Synthi A synthesiser,pinned to control the relative levels of its two output channels (one direct sound, the other modulated,panned together to mix).Any mixing system may,however,be substituted.At least two channels of amplification are required,one loud-speaker to be placed each side of the piano.

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PROGRAMME NOTE

Piano Piece I (1971) is built from a single idea. A 'melodic' note may be 'obscured' in two ways: horizontally by embellishment with grace notes, vertically by timbre alteration. A simple relation links three degrees of this obscurity to duration and loudness of each individual note. A simple square (6 by 6 notes each with associated values of loudness,duration and degree of obscurity) was generated and the piece created by reading the result in a spiral fashion - hence the steady changes in density and the accelerations.

Two versions exist: in one the timbre obscurity is obtained by preparation of some of the notes with metal and rubber objects placed between the strings. In the other, the piano is ring modulated with a constant sine wave frequency. The three timbre obscurity degrees are indicated in the score by indications for amplification alone,amplification plus colouration, domination of ring modulated sound.

Piano Piece I was first performed at concerts of the Cambridge Contemporary Music Society by Roger Smalley and the composer (assisting); 11th March 1971 (prepared piano version),26th November 1971 (modulated piano version).

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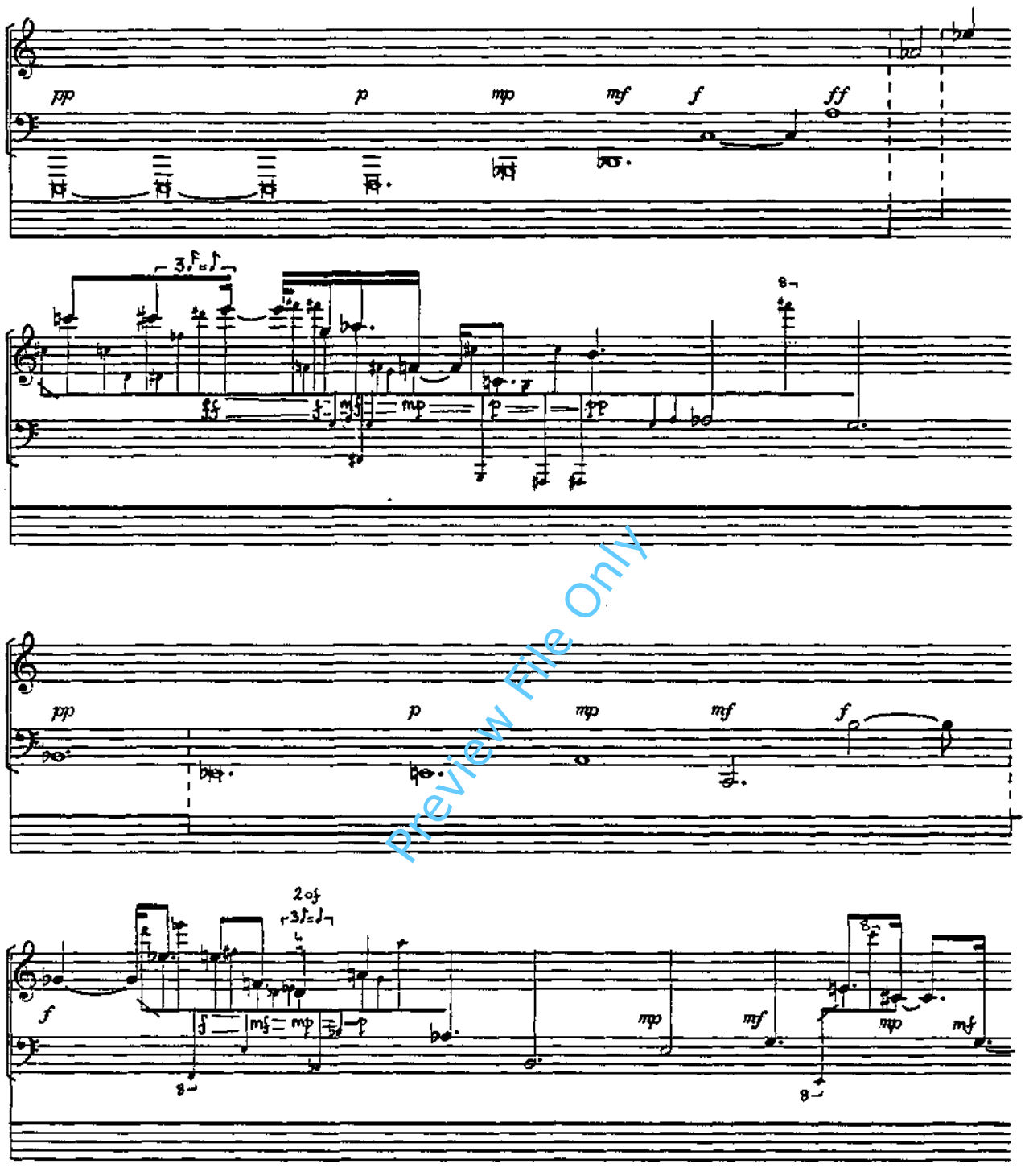
PIANO PIECE 1

for prepared piano

or piano with electronic modulators

SIMON EMMERSON

(1971–72)



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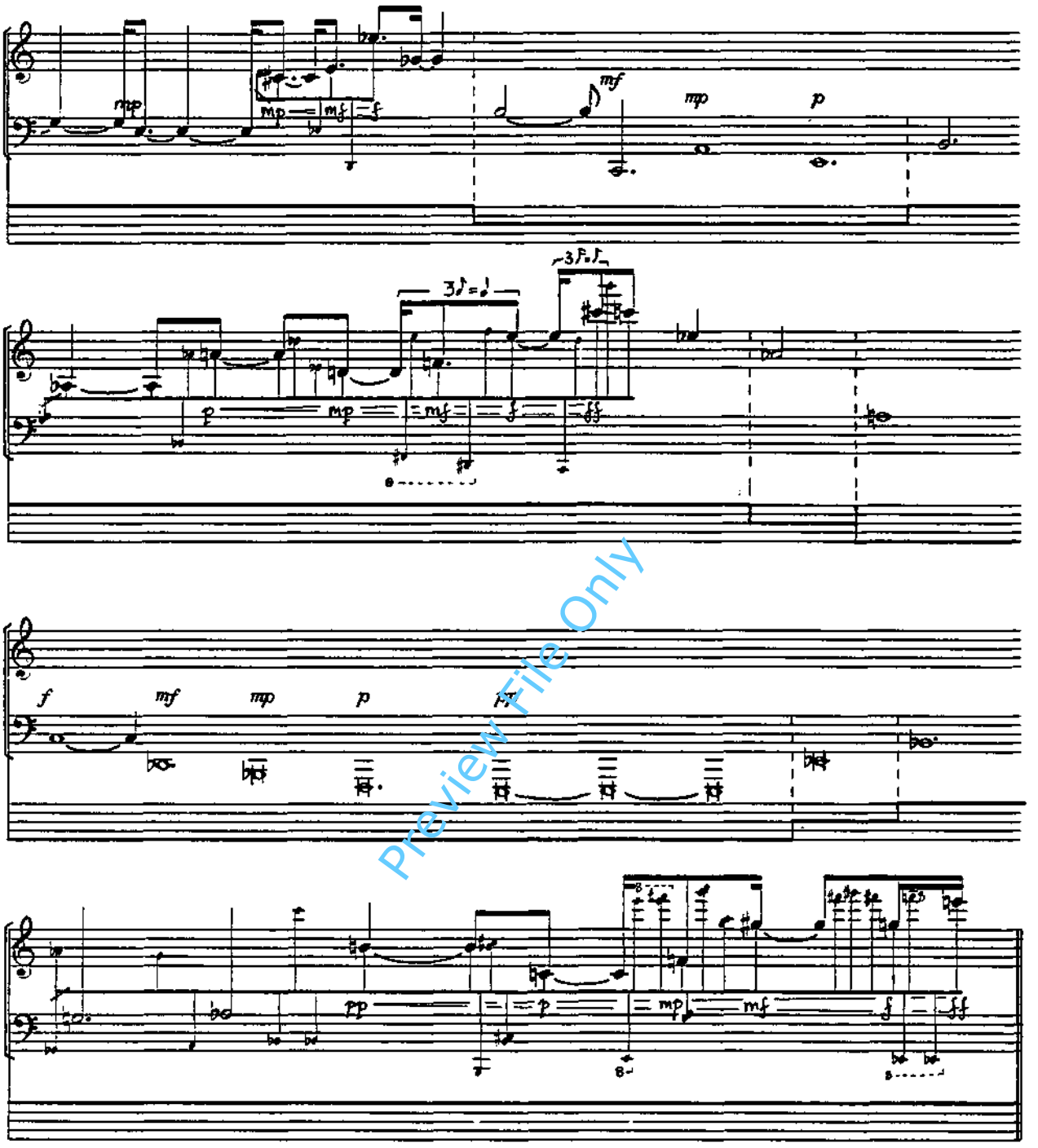

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