

Niels Rønsholdt

**THE MERMAN**

for chamber ensemble, audio playback, electronics and video  
2008

# INSTRUMENTS

Flute

Clarinet (B♭) - normal and contrabass

Tenor Saxophone (B♭)

Trombone

Percussion

Guitar

Piano

Violin

Viola

Cello

## PERCUSSION

- Gran cassa
- Thunder blade or a steel plate
- Guiro
- Some dry leaves on a table or the like (amplified).  
Touched, moved, squeezed etc. with the hands (softly)
- Large suspended cymbal (soft mallets)
- Glockenspiel (soft mallets)

## WOODWINDS



Bowing 'outwards' (from pont. to tasto) /  
'inwards' (tasto to pont.)  
without bowing in the ordinary directions  
(unless where indicated)



The bow (col legno) slides over the bridge and hits  
the tailpiece (still with the wood)  
where the strings are attached.  
Then slides back in the opposite direction (cello).  
The grace note is on-beat.



Left hand 'lift-off pizz.' or 'flageolet tapping':  
The strings are not plucked but the fingers are  
simply lifted off the strings. While bowing ordinarily,  
flip the bow until the wood of the bow hits the string.  
First in one direction and then immediately in the other.  
The Tempo (32nds) should be regarded  
as approximate. The sound of the phrase is somewhat  
chaotic which is intended.

## PIANO



slide up / down the white keys with the  
fingernail (no toneproduction)



slide up / down the white keys with a guitar  
plectrum (hard) or the like (no toneproduction)

The exact starting and ending keys of glissandoes are meant only  
as guidelines. The keys of the piano are amplified with  
4 microphones each routing to different loudspeakers  
(see 'Amplification, Electronics & Audio Playback')

## WOODWINDS



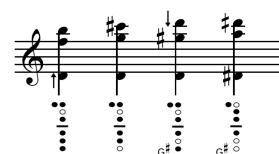
Inhale / exhale audibly through the clarinet.

[gr.]



Growl tones

Suggested fingerings for the multiphonic chords  
in the third movement:



## AMPLIFICATION, ELECTRONICS & AUDIO PLAYBACK

4 loudspeakers are surrounding the audience in a traditional quadrophonic set-up.

The live electronics consist of signal processing through maxMSP (4 channels). Audio files are played back in 4 channels.

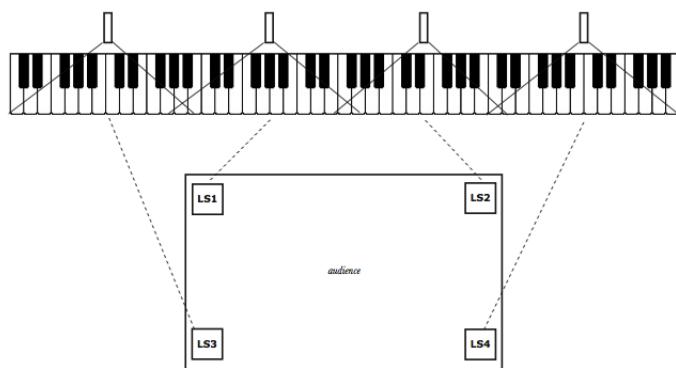
Notes in the score describe the nature, starting and end points of electronic manipulation and audio playback.

All instruments are amplified

The following instruments are processed real time in maxMSP as well:

Contrabass clarinet, Trombone and Cello

The keys of the piano are amplified with 4 microphones each leading to a different loudspeaker:



## VISUALS

- Video projection controlled by the interactive video software Isadora. Alternatively, a simple slide / keynote software can be used.

- Ability to fade in/out all stage lights

'The Merman' consists of five short movements. After each movement the lights (preferably all lights, including note stand bulbs) fade out and a small video sequence (still photos) is projected.

In the last movement, lights fade out / video begins in the beginning of the horn solo (m. 44 ff.)

Visuals are optional.

### **The Merman** (2008)

'The Merman' is a visual and musical story for chamber orchestra about a merman that crawls onto land in order to meet a mermaid, which turns out to be a sculpture. This dark and somewhat sarcastic paraphrase of 'The Little Mermaid' is musically more playful and wide ranging than Rønsholdt's other works. The dramaturgical move from a to b is shown visually as still images: The Merman's rise out of the North Sea and movement across the land to the meeting with the Little Mermaid at Langelinie in Copenhagen. The music freely throws light on the story from various points of view in the five movements. Determination in Rønsholdt's works often ends brusquely and this is no exception: The bittersweet mood of the work culminates in the final movement with a citation of the German poet Heinrich Heine's The North Sea : "Happy is the man who has reached harbor and leaves the storm behind him". This is however not how it turned out for the merman for whom land meant death and a woman who turned out to be of bronze.

The Merman was commissioned by TRANSIT Festival and Champ d'Action and premiered October 2008.

This version for 10 instruments is made in 2013 and premiered by SCENATET

[www.nielsroensholdt.dk](http://www.nielsroensholdt.dk) • [www.edition-s.dk](http://www.edition-s.dk)

# The Merman

Niels Rønsholdt 2008

$\text{♩} = 60$  [energetic]

Flute

Contrabass clarinet (in B $\flat$ )

Clarinets in B $\flat$

Tenor Sax

Trombone

$\text{♩} = 60$  [energetic]

Percussion

Guitar

Piano

key gliss. (↑)  
(finger nail)

Electronics,  
playbacks,  
amplification etc.,  
actions,  
descriptions

Piano keys amplified.  
Playback: GROOVE 1 (grooves follow measures)

Violin

simile:

ord.

(scord.)

mf

Viola

jeté

mf

Cello

col legno

pont

$\wedge$  [simile]

$\wedge$

hitting tail piece

6

Fl.

Cl.

T. Sx.  $\sharp$

Tbn.

perc.

Gtr.

Pno.

Electr.

VI.

Vla.

Vlc.

*p*

*gliss.*

*p*

*ord.*

*simile:*

*p esp.*

*jeté*

*(col legno)*

*Left hand "flageolet tapping"*

Fl.

Cl.

T. Sx.

Tbn.

perc.

Gtr.

Pno.

Electr.

VI.

Vla.

Vlc.

Fl. 27

Cl. 27

T. Sx. 27

Tbn. 27 *gliss.*

perc. 27 *Guiro*

Gtr. 27 *mp*

Pno. 27

Electr. 27

VI. 27 *(mf)* *energetic*

Vla. 27 *jeté* *mf*

Vlc. 27 *mf*

Fl. 31  
 Cl. 31  
 T. Sx. 31  
 Tbn. 31  
 perc. 31  
 Gtr. 31  
 Pno. 31  
 Electr. 6  
 VI. 9  
 Vla.  
 Vlc.

Measures 31 and 6 of the score. The score includes parts for Flute, Clarinet, Trombone, Percussion, Guitar, Piano, Double Bass, and Electronics. Measure 31 starts with sustained notes on the first two staves, followed by a dynamic change and a crescendo. Measure 6 features complex rhythmic patterns and dynamics, including a 'Gran Cassa' instruction for the Percussion part.

Musical score page 43. The score includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Cl.), Trombone (Tbn.), Tuba (T. Sx.), Guiro (perc.), Guiro (perc.), Piano (Pno.), Electric Bass (Electr.), Violin (Vi.), Viola (Vla.), and Cello (Vlc.). The score features various musical markings such as dynamics (mf, f, mp), articulations (sfz, col legno), and performance instructions (e.g., '8-1'). The piano part includes a melodic line with grace notes and dynamic markings like '10' and 'f'. The electric bass part features sustained notes with '8' and '2' markings. The cello part includes dynamic markings like 'f' and 'sfz'.

Fl.

T. Sx.

Tbn.

perc. [arco: bow on the rim]

Gtr. *mp*

Pno.

Electr.

VI. 10 bow on the body of the violin

Vla. "f" bow on the body of the viola

Vlc. "f" bow on the body of the cello

||

$\text{♩} = 56$

Fl.

Cl.  $p$

T. Sx.

Tbn.  $p$

perc.

Gtr.  $pp$

Damp strings lightly with right hand near the bridge while striking

Pno.  $p$

(ped.)

Bass clarinet and contra bassoon:  
Realtime buffering/manipulation

Electr.

VI.  $\text{♩} = 56$

Vla. pizz.  $pp$

Vlc. pizz.  $pp$

*p* espr. arco *p* espr. arco *p*

Niels Rønsholdt: The Merman - Score - 14

Fl. 19

Cl. 19

T. Sx. 19

Tbn. 19

perc. 19

Gtr. 19

Pno. 19

Electr.

Vi. 19

Vla. p

Vlc. espr.

1. 2.

1. 2.

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

*Glockenspiel*  
[soft mallets]

*p*

*pp*

(white key gliss.)

*8* *8* *8*

*1.* *2.*

*mf*

*mf*

*port.*

*mf*

*port.*

*port.*

Fl.

Cl.

T. Sx.

Tbn.

perc.

Gtr.

Pno.

Electr.

Vi.

Vla.

Vlc.

36

36

36

36

36

36

36

36

36

36

pizz.

pp

pp

>

>

port.

p

p

>

>

36

36

36

36

36

36

36

36

36

36



14

Fl.

Cl.

T. Sx.

Tbn.

perc.

Gtr.

Pno.

Electr.

VI.

Vla.

Vlc.

24

Fl.

Cl.

T. Sx.

Tbn.

perc.

Gtr.

Pno.

Electr.

Vi.

Vla.

Vlc.

Right hand: place thumb and index finger on each side of the b-string and slide up/down with the nails hitting the frets

*mf*  
(with piano)

[energetic]

(r.h.)

3

3:2

3

ff

ff

Fl. *V* *pp*

Cl. *Clarinet (in Bb)*

T. Sx. *pp*

Tbn. *pp*

perc. *Gran Cassa* *tr*

Gtr. *Left Hand: slide (without striking) up A and D strings in a way so that the nails hit the frets*

Pno.

Electr.

VI. *ff* *V* *pp*

Vla. *ff* *V* *pp*

Vlc. *V* *ff* *pp*

*top note played, bottom note sung*

51      3:2      3:2      3      piu      piu      p      p  
 Fl.      Cl.      T. Sx.      Tbn.      perc.      Gtr.      Pno.      Electr.      Vi.      Vla.      Vlc.  
 51      3:2      3:2      3      piu      piu      f      [gr.] 3      [gr.] 3      [gr.]  
 T. Sx.      Tbn.      perc.      Gtr.      Pno.      Electr.      Vi.      Vla.      Vlc.  
 51      3:2      3:2      3      piu      piu      pp < (molto)      f >      f >      f >  
 T. Sx.      Tbn.      perc.      Gtr.      Pno.      Electr.      Vi.      Vla.      Vlc.  
 51      3:2      3:2      3      piu      piu      pp < p < (molto)      p  
 T. Sx.      Tbn.      perc.      Gtr.      Pno.      Electr.      Vi.      Vla.      Vlc.  
 51      3:2      3:2      3      piu      piu      (molto)  
 T. Sx.      Tbn.      perc.      Gtr.      Pno.      Electr.      Vi.      Vla.      Vlc.  
 51      3:2      3:2      3      piu      piu      3:2      3:2  
 T. Sx.      Tbn.      perc.      Gtr.      Pno.      Electr.      Vi.      Vla.      Vlc.  
 51      3:2      3:2      3      piu      piu      (white key gliss.)      (l.h.)      3:2  
 T. Sx.      Tbn.      perc.      Gtr.      Pno.      Electr.      Vi.      Vla.      Vlc.  
 51      3:2      3:2      3      piu      piu      ff sub.      ff sub.      ff sub.  
 T. Sx.      Tbn.      perc.      Gtr.      Pno.      Electr.      Vi.      Vla.      Vlc.  
 51      3:2      3:2      3      piu      piu      ff > (sim.)      ff > (sim.)  
 T. Sx.      Tbn.      perc.      Gtr.      Pno.      Electr.      Vi.      Vla.      Vlc.  
 51      3:2      3:2      3      piu      piu      ff > (sim.)  
 T. Sx.      Tbn.      perc.      Gtr.      Pno.      Electr.      Vi.      Vla.      Vlc.

69

Fl.

p

Cl.

3:2

[gr.] 3 [gr.]

T. Sx.

f >

Tbn.

69

perc.

Guiro

(\*)

3:2

Gran Cassa

[arco: bow on the rim]

f

69

Gtr.

3:2

3:2

Pno.

3:2

3:2

Electr.

VI.

3:2

Vla.

3:2

Vlc.

3

IV

10             $\text{♪} = 60$  [energetic]

Musical score page 8, measures 10-11. The score includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Contrabass clarinet (in Bb), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Sx.), Trombone (Tbn.), Percussion (perc.), Gran cassa, Piano (Pno.), Electric piano (electr.), Violin (Vl.), Viola (Vla.), and Cello (Vlc.).

Measure 10:

- Flute: Rest
- Contrabass clarinet (in Bb): **ff**, sim. sempre
- Clarinet (Cl.): **ff**, sim. sempre
- Bassoon (Sx.): **ff**, sim. sempre
- Trombone (Tbn.): **ff**, sim. sempre
- Percussion (perc.): **ff**, sim. sempre
- Gran cassa: **ff**, sim. sempre
- Piano (Pno.): **ff**, sim. sempre
- Electric piano (electr.): **ff**, sim. sempre
- Violin (Vl.): (ord.)  $\begin{smallmatrix} \text{V} & 9 \\ \text{V} & \end{smallmatrix}$ ,  $\begin{smallmatrix} \text{V} & 9 \\ \text{V} & \end{smallmatrix}$ ,  $\begin{smallmatrix} \text{V} & 9 \\ \text{V} & \end{smallmatrix}$ ,  $\begin{smallmatrix} \text{V} & 9 \\ \text{V} & \end{smallmatrix}$ ,  $\begin{smallmatrix} \text{V} & 9 \\ \text{V} & \end{smallmatrix}$
- Viola (Vla.):  $\begin{smallmatrix} \text{V} & 9 \\ \text{V} & \end{smallmatrix}$ ,  $\begin{smallmatrix} \text{V} & 9 \\ \text{V} & \end{smallmatrix}$ ,  $\begin{smallmatrix} \text{V} & 9 \\ \text{V} & \end{smallmatrix}$ ,  $\begin{smallmatrix} \text{V} & 9 \\ \text{V} & \end{smallmatrix}$ ,  $\begin{smallmatrix} \text{V} & 9 \\ \text{V} & \end{smallmatrix}$
- Cello (Vlc.): (col legno)  $\begin{smallmatrix} 3 & 3 \\ 3 & 3 \end{smallmatrix}$ ,  $\begin{smallmatrix} 3 & 3 \\ 3 & 3 \end{smallmatrix}$ ,  $\begin{smallmatrix} 3 & 3 \\ 3 & 3 \end{smallmatrix}$ ,  $\begin{smallmatrix} 3 & 3 \\ 3 & 3 \end{smallmatrix}$ ,  $\begin{smallmatrix} 3 & 3 \\ 3 & 3 \end{smallmatrix}$

Measure 11:

- Flute: Rest
- Contrabass clarinet (in Bb): Rest
- Clarinet (Cl.): Rest
- Bassoon (Sx.): Rest
- Trombone (Tbn.): Rest
- Percussion (perc.): Rest
- Gran cassa: Rest
- Piano (Pno.): Rest
- Electric piano (electr.): Rest
- Violin (Vl.): (ord.)  $\begin{smallmatrix} \text{V} & 9 \\ \text{V} & \end{smallmatrix}$ ,  $\begin{smallmatrix} \text{V} & 9 \\ \text{V} & \end{smallmatrix}$ ,  $\begin{smallmatrix} \text{V} & 9 \\ \text{V} & \end{smallmatrix}$ ,  $\begin{smallmatrix} \text{V} & 9 \\ \text{V} & \end{smallmatrix}$ ,  $\begin{smallmatrix} \text{V} & 9 \\ \text{V} & \end{smallmatrix}$
- Viola (Vla.): (ord.)  $\begin{smallmatrix} \text{V} & 9 \\ \text{V} & \end{smallmatrix}$ ,  $\begin{smallmatrix} \text{V} & 9 \\ \text{V} & \end{smallmatrix}$ ,  $\begin{smallmatrix} \text{V} & 9 \\ \text{V} & \end{smallmatrix}$ ,  $\begin{smallmatrix} \text{V} & 9 \\ \text{V} & \end{smallmatrix}$ ,  $\begin{smallmatrix} \text{V} & 9 \\ \text{V} & \end{smallmatrix}$
- Cello (Vlc.): (ord.)  $\begin{smallmatrix} 3 & 3 \\ 3 & 3 \end{smallmatrix}$ ,  $\begin{smallmatrix} 3 & 3 \\ 3 & 3 \end{smallmatrix}$ ,  $\begin{smallmatrix} 3 & 3 \\ 3 & 3 \end{smallmatrix}$ ,  $\begin{smallmatrix} 3 & 3 \\ 3 & 3 \end{smallmatrix}$ ,  $\begin{smallmatrix} 3 & 3 \\ 3 & 3 \end{smallmatrix}$

Left hand  
"flageolet tapping"

Musical score for orchestra and piano, page 15, measures 15-22. The score includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Cl.), Trombone (T. Bn.), Bass Trombone (T. Bn.), Percussion (perc.), Guitar (Gtr.), Piano (Pno.), Electric Bass (Electr.), Violin (Vln), Viola (Vla.), and Cello (Vcl.). The score features dynamic markings such as *p*, *cresc.*, *ff*, *espr.*, *jeté*, *mf*, *ord.*, *Groove 2*, and *col legno*. The piano part includes complex rhythmic patterns and dynamic markings like *fff* and *ord.* The strings section includes markings for *vibrato* (*vib.*) and *col legno*.

Musical score for orchestra and electric instruments, page 10. The score includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Cl.), Tenor Saxophone (T. Sx.), Bassoon (Tbn.), Percussion (perc.), Guitar (Gtr.), Piano (Pno.), and Electric Bass (Electr.). The score features a mix of traditional notation and rhythmic patterns. The electric bass part (Electr.) includes complex rhythmic markings such as 'ord.', 'simile:', '(r.)', '9', '10', and '(ord.)'. The score is set in common time (indicated by '8') throughout.

## V

*Fl.* ♩ = 42 [murmuring] 10  
*Cl.* Clarinet (in Bb) 10  
*T. Sx.* 10  
*Tbn.* 10  
*perc.* 10  
*Gtr.* ♩ = 42 [murmuring] 10  
*Pno.* ♩ = 42 [murmuring] 10  
 Playback: very deep ambient noise.  
 Cello (str q. A: real time pitch shifted + delay  
 Horn: Real time buffering/manipulation  
*Electr.* ♩ = 42 [murmuring]  
*VI.* Con sord. (tonwolf) ♩ = 42 [murmuring] 10  
*Vla.* Con sord. (tonwolf) ♩ = 42 [murmuring] 10  
*Vlc.* solo; rubato e espr. con sord. ♩ = 42 [murmuring] 10  
 3 3:2 3:2 6

Fl. 35

Cl. 35

T. Sx. 35

Tbn. 35

perc. 35

Gtr. 35

Pno. 35

Electr.

VI.

Vla.

Vlc.

Large suspended cymbal  
very soft mallets

*p*

*ppp*

Trombone:  
real time buffering/manipulation.  
1. setting 1  
2. setting 2

Strings: Play and hum (unison or octave)  
the melody simultaneously

*ppp* molto vibrato

*ppp* molto vibrato

*ppp* molto vibrato

3:2

3

59

Fl.

Cl.

T. Sx.

Tbn. *p* espr.

perc. damp slowly

Gtr.

Pno.

Electr.

Vi.

Vla.

Vlc.

This is a page from a musical score for a ten-piece ensemble. The instrumentation includes Flute, Clarinet, Trombone, Bassoon, Percussion, Guitar, Piano, Electric Bass, Violin, Viola, and Cello/Bass. The score is numbered 59. The music is divided into ten staves. Measures 1-5 feature rests for most instruments. Measures 6-10 introduce rhythmic patterns. The Percussion and Electric Bass staves provide harmonic support with sustained notes. The Violin, Viola, and Cello/Bass staves also contribute to the rhythmic patterns. Dynamic markings include 'p' and 'espr.' for the Bassoon in measure 10, and 'damp slowly' for the Percussion. Measure 10 concludes with a series of rests.