James Weeks

Hyetophony
(Rain-sounding)

Version 2

For many voices and instruments (minimum 18)

2025

Duration: open (at least 10 minutes)

The piece can be performed on any suitable surfaces, including instruments (for example, the bodies *or open strings** (see below) of string instruments, keys of woodwind instruments, paper, plastic lids or the heads of drums). Suitable surfaces are ones which make a satisfyingly rain-like sound when tapped.

Participants should be spread around the performance space, yet able enough to be able to hear each other's very soft sounds.

Ideally, materials would be memorised and the piece performed with eyes closed, to encourage listening. If this is not possible, try to perform as much as possible with eyes closed.

Duration and Order of Performance

Duration (no less than 10 minutes) can be decided in advance, or intuited in performance.

There are two materials, **Rain-tapping** and **Rain melodies**.

-   The piece begins out of a short period of silence, no less than 15 seconds, performers entering independently with Rain-tapping at any point.

-   The first half of the piece consists purely of Rain-tapping.

-   In the second half, Rain-tapping continues and is joined by the Rain melodies. Once a player finishes their Rain melody they should continue with the Rain-tapping.

-   The piece ends by each player dropping out from the Rain-tapping independently, creating a long fade.

Rain-tapping

Each player performs independently.

With both hands, tap gently at a comfortable speed and soft dynamic on your chosen surface. Avoid audible repetitive rhythms and create a smooth (*legato*), intricate texture.
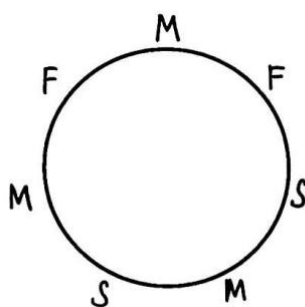
Listen in closely to the delicate sounds made by the fingertips on the surface. Move between fingertips and fingernails (a sharper, louder sound) ad lib.

Vary the speed and intensity of the tapping as a group, following the diagram below.

F= fast
M = medium
S = slow

                    M
            F   F

        M   S

            S   M

Begin <u>at any M point</u>, and move (together) in either direction around the circle. Each complete circle should take <u>at least 10 minutes</u> (possibly more), so that listeners do not detect a noticeable repeating pattern. Arrive at each new point collectively and gradually, through listening. If necessary, a leader, visible to all participants, can facilitate this subtly.

Avoid drawing attention to yourself or playing louder than other performers; enjoy being part of the overall texture.

Stop and listen sometimes (not only in the slow sections). Take care of the texture: for example, if many others have stopped, you may need to continue until they have joined back in.

Change to a different surface from time to time; each hand could also be on different surfaces.

* *String players:* from time to time, move onto the **open strings** of your instrument. Continue to tap rather than pluck the strings, aiming for a very subtle resonance as you pull off each time. This can happen more and more as the piece continues and the Rain melodies are sounding.

Rain melodies

After the halfway-point in the performance, begin to add in Rain melodies.

Each performer creates their own melody by following a line through the page of notes given overleaf. The line can go in any direction at any point from one note to the next.

The melody should have between 4 and 8 notes only.

Imagine each note as a raindrop on a window, through which light is refracting:

- each note is a long, breath-length tone (8-12 secs), with long pauses between each

- perform them as softly as possible, gently gleaming, as follows:

    o whistled (breathy rather than clear) at any octave
    o hummed
    o played on a soft instrument (string, clarinet, flute, guitar or harp *tremolando*, etc.), at pitch, or in a higher octave as a **natural harmonic**

- tuning is flexible – occasional notes can be performed flat or sharp by up to a quartertone (but not all)

Stagger the starts of the Rain melodies so you don't all come in at once.

Judge when to begin each successive note by listening to what is happening around. The texture should grow gradually into a delicate web of overlapping soft gleams.

Return to Rain-tapping after your melody.