Melt III

for soprano, flute, and guitar

Stephen F. Lilly

written for the Ecco Chamber Ensemble
(2018)

Melt III
Setup

Tie a long string to a bolt or screw, and freeze it in a 32 ounce (or similar) plastic or silicon container almost completely full—the bolt should sit at the bottom of the container, across a corner, while a minimal amount of string traverses the water diagonally to the opposite corner at the top of the container (most of the string will be outside the container and not frozen in the resulting block of ice).

For the performance, suspend the ice block at least 6 feet above the ground using a sturdy frame or microphone stand, tying the block to the frame or stand with the string—the ice block will weigh about two pounds so make sure the frame or stand can support this. Beneath the block, a resonant glass bowl should be placed to catch the water drops. This bowl may be placed on top of a table, but the water drops should be allowed to fall at least 4 feet—from block to bowl. If desired the table and surrounding floor may be covered with towels to protect against splashing, but care should be taken not to dampen the resonance of the bowl.
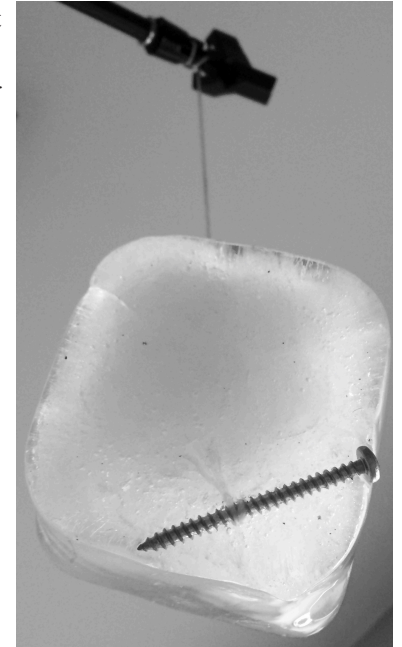
The bowl and ice block may be illuminated with lights. These lights should not generate too much heat—LED flashlights work well, but avoid using powerful stage lights. The temperature surrounding the ice block should be between 70°F and 75°F.

Melting generally begins about twenty minutes after placing the ice block in the room temperature environment. It will take several hours for the block to melt, so it is feasible for the ice to hang up to an hour before the performance. Once dripping, the water drops should average between 2.5 and 4.5 seconds between drips.

The performers should be positioned behind the ice block and bowl such that they can each see the water drops fall and land.

If desired, the bowl may be subtly amplified, but under no circumstances should any of the instruments be amplified.

The duration of each page, as of that of an entire performance, is left to the discretion of the performers.

For each event, the selection of pitch(es) is also left to the discretion of each performer—the order of pitches on the staves do not connote a preferred sequence; they are simply listed from stable to bending down to bending up, and within these categories from low to high. When bending a pitch, it should be done evenly over the entire duration of the event, reaching the indicated amount of bend—or a close approximation thereof—right before cutting off the note.

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Page I:
- Play this page as an ensemble—*each event is guitar and soprano followed by flute.*
- Do not rearticulate within an event—all contributions to an event by soprano and flute should be performed on a single breath.
- Repeat this page as many times as desired, but leave some silence between events—no more than one water drop.
- Proceed individually to Page II—i.e. unsynchronized.
- Once one performer has proceeded to Page II, (the two remaining) follow within a drop or two.

When a water drop lands:

Soprano

*hum a single note with a **duration up to 1 drop**,
i.e., cutting off before or with a subsequent drop.*

p

Synchronize

*Choose a fundamental—the whole notes—and **play 1 or 2 long tones** from the indicated harmonic series—this can include the fundamental. As quietly as possible, sneak in after guitar and soprano, and **cut off before or with a subsequent water drop**.*

Flute

if b-foot available

about a sixth-tone flat (30 cents)

p as possible

Guitar

*play a single pitch or a simultaneity of 2-4 pitches
(pitches can be fretted, open, or harmonic—all
sounding notated pitch 8vb); allow note(s)
to **decay naturally**.*

sffz

Melt III

Page II:
- Play this page independently—***events are individualized***, no longer coordinated by the ensemble.
- Start each event—a single pitch/bend/simultaneity—with the landing of a water drop and ***end before or with the landing of the very next water drop***.
- Repeat this page as many times as desired, but leave ***no more than 1 water drop of silence between events***.
- Performers proceed individually to Page III—i.e. unsynchronized.

*For each event, **sing or hum** a single pitch selected from the following.*
*Use a **different vowel sound** for each event.*

| stable pitch | bend pitch up | bend pitch down |

S

pp ~ mp

*For each event, play a **single pitch** selected from the following.*
***Vary timbre** for each event—straight tone, vibrato, or fluttertongue.*

| stable pitch | bend pitch up | bend pitch down |

Fl.

p ~ mf

*For each event, play a **single pitch** selected from the following **or a simultaneity** consisting of pitches selected from the following.*
***Vary timbre and octave transposition** for each event—for timbre, incorporate natural and artificial harmonics as well as ponticello and tremolo.*

| stable pitch | bend pitch up | bend pitch down |

Gtr.

mp ~ ff

Melt III

Page III:

- Play this page independently.
- Start each event—a single pitch/bend/simultaneity—with the landing of a water drop and **end before or with a subsequent drop—not necessarily the one immediately following** the initiating drop.
- Repeat this page as many times as desired, **putting more and more silence between events** until all that is left is the sound of dripping water.