

## **Legerdemain (2008)**

*Legerdemain* is a set of two virtuosic movements for hand drums written for the brilliant percussionist Daniel Kennedy. The first movement, *Module*, is based on a very simple idea. A span of time is populated with a few events. The time span repeats in cyclic fashion, and with each repetition new events are added, while the old ones are retained, resulting in a gradually increasing density. A point of maximum density is reached, and maintained for a period of time. Abruptly, the more resonant sounds of the drums are withdrawn, leaving only the dry slapping sounds, and the density begins a process of reduction dissipating the energy that has been built up, and leading to a cadence. A new lyrical idea appears, with a folk-song like character, as a counterpoise to the intense energy of the preceding music, and introduces a “harmonic” dimension: the drums are hit simultaneously to produce something analogous to chords. The piece ends with a flourish recalling its earlier dynamism. The second movement, *Raison*, is more complex formally, an exploration of nested proportionality, hence the title. It is also an exploration of some of the contrapuntal possibilities of unpitched percussion. Certainly the different tones, timbres and registers of the various drums lend themselves to a kind of contrapuntal effect much exploited in *Module*, where melodies played with the drums’ tones emerge from a thicket of of less resonant dead strokes. In *Raison* the contrapuntal idea that presents itself is one of melodic material presented against a backdrop of sustained, single-hand rolls.