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Watching Paint Dry

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**Author**

Sapphocatherin, Mariabrice

**Publication Date**

2024-09-03

FOR PREVIEW ONLY.

The actual and only correct version is the online version  
(Google slides): [https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1MC4yaW9JNqTbU1O\\_EgT\\_5wOPAYfNBtAEefVVD0CNY5k/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1MC4yaW9JNqTbU1O_EgT_5wOPAYfNBtAEefVVD0CNY5k/edit?usp=sharing)

The videos do not work in this version.

Mariabrice Sapphocatherin

# Watching Paint Dry

Non-graphic score for any solo performer  
or any small ensemble

## DESCRIPTION

*Watching Paint Dry* is a piece in two movements for any solo performer. For each family of instruments, you will find a specific set of written and video instructions later in this score. For the small ensemble version, see [appendix](#).

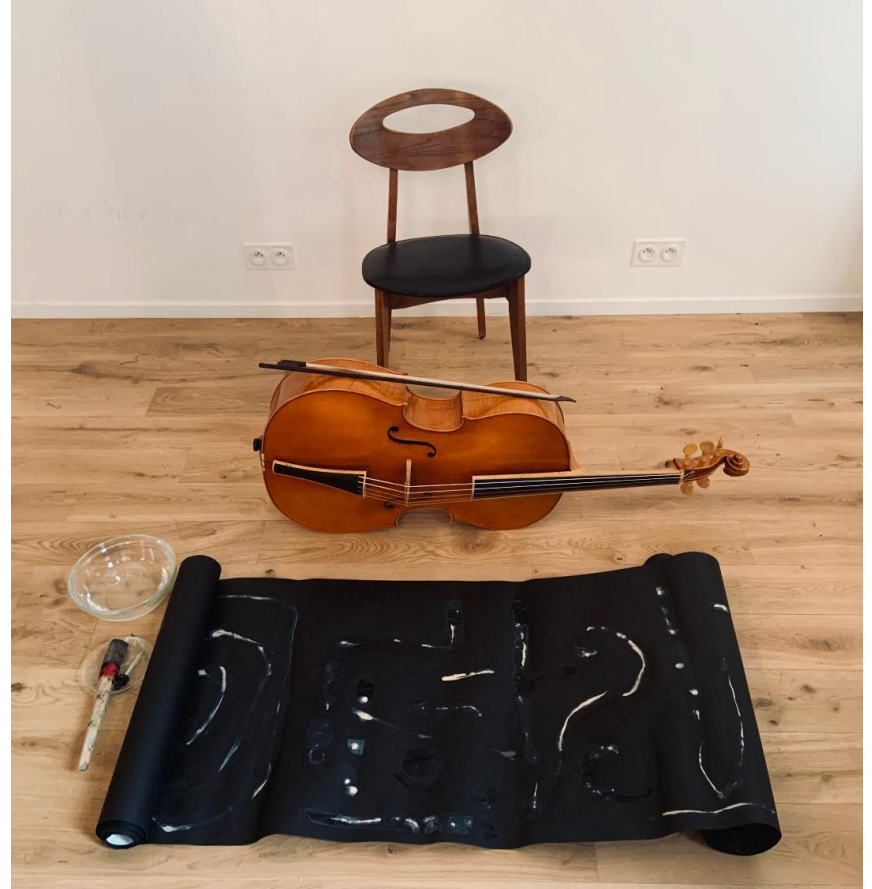
The two movements of *Watching Paint Dry* consist of one movement of painting, followed by one movement of playing any instrument and singing a song.

*Watching Paint Dry* is not a traditional graphic score. It is a temporal score, produced by the performers themselves. It describes density, stability, and questions techniques in a dynamic way. As the water and image sediment, these prompts can be seen as a practice towards impermanence.



The performer will need:

- Any instrument including voice and laptop.
- A roll of black card (of about  $150\text{g/m}^2$ ) of at least 2 meters with no upper limit. The performer may use the same roll for multiple concerts, by simply extending the fresque every time.
- Two brushes, or one brush and one dropper. The tools we use in the videos are just examples. Feel free to use other sizes and tools that fit your paper and aesthetics, and that make you happy.
- Paint with a receptacle. We chose white paint and white India ink in the examples, but similarly contrasting colours should work.
- Large bowl for water.



## DURATION

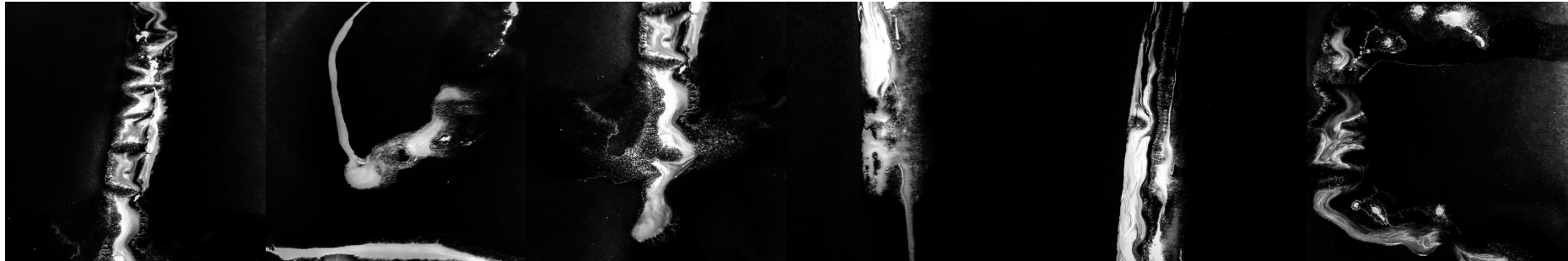
The duration is dependent on the speed of drying of the water on the card. This duration will vary according to different parameters: humidity and temperature of the venue; amount of water you will use to paint; type of card you will use. Practice for the needs of your specific duration. If you want the piece to be about 15 minutes long, make enough experiments to be able to estimate the appropriate amount of water. Error may occur, and therefore, you might also decide a maximum duration and not go beyond it even if the water is not totally dry.



## PERFORMANCE AND PRACTICE OF MOVEMENT I - CREATING THE FRESCO

The card, the paint, the water, the brushes and the instrument are all ready on stage before you start. The piece begins when you make the first mark. You may paint whatever you want. The painting technique is more important (for us, the quasi composers) than the aesthetics. How does paint interact with water? Does it bleed? Does the amount of water change the effect? Does the water or the paint come first? What is the amount of water needed for drying in the given duration you set? See video examples to follow.

Duration of movement I is also dependent on the total duration you set for the piece. You may paint for as long as you wish. Just never rush. For a 15 minute duration, we were averaging a 3 minute movement I. Feel free to do otherwise.



## Video examples for Movement I

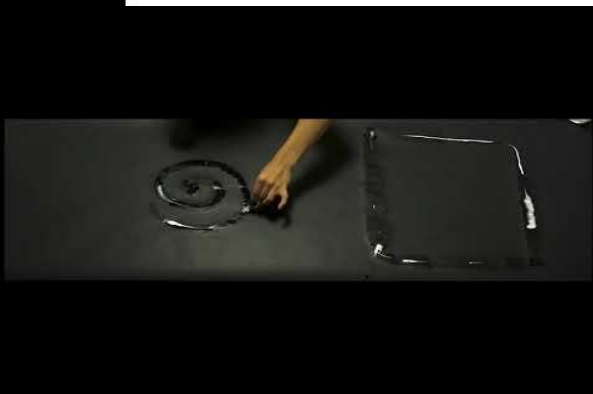


## Video examples for Movement I





## Video examples for Movement I



## PERFORMANCE AND PRACTICE OF MOVEMENT II - SOUNDING THE FRESCO

As soon as you are done painting, take your instrument and begin improvising. Choose freely your musical material, but limit it to one single idea. This idea can be a texture, a motive, or anything that you will be able to explore for the whole duration of Movement II. Refer to the video examples for inspiration.



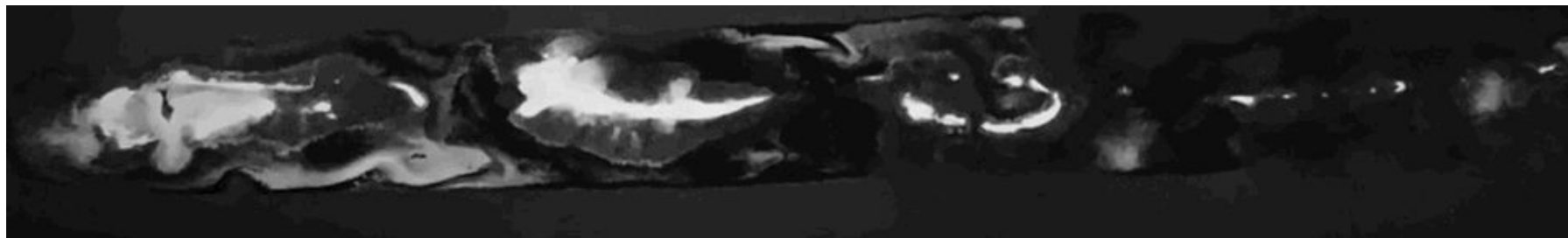
**The drying of the water corresponds to the density of your improvisation.** We do not define the word “density”, but make sure you avoid applying it to dynamic. Density could refer to the thickness of multiphonics, the amount of double and triple stops, the size of clusters, the amount of sustain pedal etc. (It all depends on the instrument you play, and you.) While the water dries up, the density of your improvisation shifts. Depending on how you distribute water on the paper during Movement I, you may anticipate the densities of the improvisation. Will you make pools? Will you favour thin, fast drying lines? Please refer again to the video examples for inspiration.

**The settling of the paint** (the way it is distributed, how it disappears or becomes clearer, etc.) **corresponds to the shift from the blurriness of the original musical material to its permanency as the paint itself sediments.** For example, very blurry and constantly changing multiphonics can settle little by little towards longer, clearer harmonics. In general, avoid reading the paint shape as pitch contours. Refer, again, to the video examples.

Are you reading the painting as a whole? Are you reading in a repeatable path? Are you roaming freely inside it? Are you exploring different states of dryness, ponds, dry areas, and in-between?



**The song:** Whenever you feel your improvisation has somehow settled, start singing a traditional song in your mother language *sotto voce*. The song evolves in parallel of the instrumental improvisation but should not affect it. If you are not a wind player, sing while you play. If you are a wind player, you either sing or play: you should interleave both as much as possible, trying not to interrupt the motor aspect of your improvisation. In both cases, the song should not be affected by the drying process of the water either. It can arrive at any point during Movement II. Its duration is free, as long as it fits the Movement.



## Video examples for Movement II (Strings)



water drying = speed of the bow

paint drying = variations of timbre  
very wet to very dry = lots of variations (bow pressure, left hand position...) to long, stable sounds

each stain = one string  
(left stain = string I; right stain = string IV)



water drying = density/frequency of changes in techniques, types of attacks and motives  
very wet to very dry = lots of changes to sparse changes

paint drying = clarity and precision of the techniques and motives

In this painting, water and paint have a very parallel evolution. Everything is dry after 14 minutes. Therefore, I decide to stop.

Dynamics are free.



water drying = density of harmonics/timbre  
very wet to very dry = *molto pondo* to *molto tasto*

paint drying = stability of left hand (finger pressure and position on the fingerboard are more and more stable)

Dynamics and strings are free.



I forgot to write down what I did for this one, but if I remember well:


water drying = counterpoint + number of strings  
very wet to very dry = complex counterpoint on all four strings to stable, long situations on one string

paint drying = arpeggio and left hand  
very wet to very dry = audible and complex arpeggios as well as constantly changing left hand to long bows on one string and stable left hand

Roaming freely inside the picture.  
Dynamics, left hand pizzicatos and sound qualities (multiphonics, harmonics and normal sounds) are free.




# Video examples for Movement II (Keyboard)



water drying = density/amount of weight (pressure from magnets) on the keys or strings for possible sympathetic resonances/preparations

paint drying = stability of ability to play, very wet to very dry = moving from inside action frame (near hammers), to edges of action frame (near keys), to middle of keys and edges of keys (traditional playing locations)



water drying = chords intersecting the paint drying melodic line (see below)  
very wet to very dry = interjections less to more frequent


paint drying = clarity of articulation of the melodic line  
very wet to very dry = very legato to staccato and sporadic

Speed increases as water and paint solidify.  
The more the colours mixed, i.e. the ink stayed wet because water was still in theory underneath it, the more mixed the single notes became with the chords. As the water would be in making the paint settle, although visually leaving the image.



water drying = density/size of cluster  
wet to dry = forearm and blocks to fist/hands/fingers notes

paint drying = stability of preparations/colours  
wet to dry = many different preparations changing all the time to none



water drying = depth (density) of sustain pedal

paint drying = stability of preparations (from unstable, heavy preparations to stable open strings and harmonics)

Dynamics: free  
Rhythm based on amount of space covered by mark making.  
Pitch controlled to lowest register.





## Video examples for Movement II (Wind)



water drying = from the impact of each drop to their own materiality

paint drying = from the relation of the three spots to the space surrounding them to their physicality; from the attention to the three to the extreme focus on the last one to dry



water drying = the circular breathing turns into a more natural way to breathe

paint drying = the exploration of the harmonics of the tube finds a stability through the paradox of water in the instrument

water drying = density of voice glissandi  
very wet to very dry = wide voice glissandi to no glissandi

paint drying = stability of the natural harmonics (the piece is played on one single fundamental)  
very wet to very dry = browsing through all the natural harmonics available on the single fundamental to staying on one stable note



water drying = the reading of the general initial gesture focuses more and more on what is left to dry

paint drying = the sound focuses more and more on the saturated high frequencies, in an attempt to follow the transformation of the painting



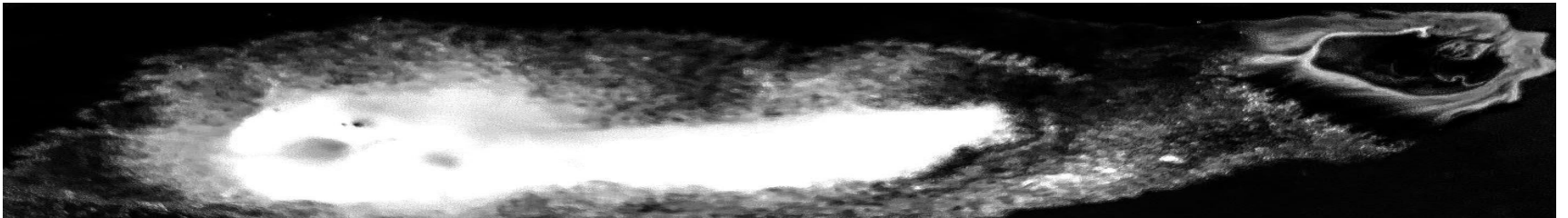
water drying = density of the variety of percussive sounds used  
very wet to very dry = large variety of different percussive sounds to key clicks only

paint drying = stability of sonic colours  
very wet to very dry = all kinds of sounds changing freely to stable percussive sounds only


## APPENDIX - Version for small ensemble

In the version for small ensemble, the performers follow the exact same instructions as the solo version. The things you should pay attention to are:

- You are each making your own painting.
- The beginnings of the second movement do not have to be synchronised. Start your own second movement when you are done painting.
- You all perform your own painting. So, while you strictly follow your two parameters (drying of the water and drying of the paint), you must also improvise a group sound with your colleagues.
- Sing your song whenever it feels right for you, meaning when your improvisation has settled. Therefore, the songs may or may not be synchronised.
- You will probably not finish together. The piece ends when the last painting is dry, or when you reach the maximum duration you set.







*Watching Paint Dry* was commissioned by Käthi Gohl Moser.

The quasi composers wish to thank Laura Mateescu, Claire Elizabeth, Colin Frank, Sam Gillies, Bernat Giribet and David Velez.

The video examples were performed by Brice Catherin, Laurent Estoppey, Maria Sappho and Eva Stavrou.



*Paris, Huddersfield, April to May 2019*