

Eetu Ranta-aho

# Whack-a-mole

for master mole and pianist

2024

**Music Finland**





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Whack-a-mole is a piece for 2 pianists, one of whom is called 'master mole'. Master mole is operating on the side of the piano, using only the insides and not touching the keyboard. The pianist is sitting at the keyboard, eyes covered with a blindfold throughout the piece.

Necessary equipment for the piece:

- depending on their size, 5 or 10 neodymium stick magnets. Try to find magnets which, when tilted and released, wiggle back and forth independently. It might be useful to attach 2 magnets on top of each other to increase the wiggling time.
- a toy squeaky hammer
- 5 mole plush toys
- 1 blindfold
- 1 rubber head mallet
- credit card/other objects with which to make sound from the strings

In the piece, the blindfolded pianist needs to find the 5 keys prepared with stick magnets, which the master mole sets in place beforehand / at the beginning of the performance. The pianist must not know which keys will be prepared with the magnets. The magnets should be placed on strings, where wiggling of the magnet creates a richly resonating sound, and where the magnet does not fall easily or be accidentally attach to a bar inside the piano. Do not prepare the pitches played by the pianist in the first bar of the piece.

Before the start of the piece, the master mole should hide the 5 mole plush toys inside the body of the piano.

The piece starts with the master mole introducing themselves as the 'master mole' and explaining the audience the idea of the piece. The pianist can be off-stage still at this point, and the master mole can show the audience where they put the magnets (even taking suggestions from the audience, if suitable for the situation), before escorting the already blindfolded pianist, who carries the toy squeaky hammer, from back-stage to their seat. If necessary, the magnets can also be prepared in advance.

The master mole then starts to wiggle the magnets, one by one never letting them fall over, and making sure that most magnets are moving all the time, unless otherwise specified in the score. The master mole should also add atmosphere and depth of soundscape by occasionally softly playing some of the lowest strings with the rubber mallet, and by making some sounds, for example scraping a credit card in fast motion along a string. These sounds should never be in the foreground, rather they just add some timbre.

The pianist starts by playing the keyboard according to instructions in the score. Once they hit a key which has been prepared by a magnet (♠), it sounds different, and signifies that a mole is found.

The pianist continues to play according to the score, and then to MOLE WHACKING MUSIC, in the end of which they must hit the toy hammer to the piano. At the same time the master mole simultaneously throws away one of the mole plush toys from inside the piano and removes the magnet from the score.

The piece ends with MOLE WHACKING MUSIC (the final hammer strike simultaneous with the F major *fff* do not hit the instrument), after which the master mole stands up for applause and let the master mole remove the blindfold.

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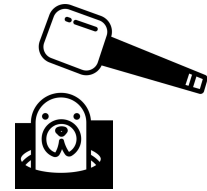
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Master mole starts wiggling the magnets and playing low strings with a mallet. Pianist: wait for 20-30 seconds before starting to play.

dedicated to Johannes Piirto and Milica Zakic



**A** **Pensive, carefully searching** ♩ = 72

play notes at random until you find a mole

**MOLE CONFIRMATION #1**

Once you find a mole, repeatedly hit the note. Accel ad lib.

**MOLE WHACKING MUSIC** (each time wilder!)

♩ = 240 Repeat 2-3x

no break *p-f* 5-9x 8<sup>va</sup> 5-9x 15<sup>ma</sup> *f* *ff*

(example) each time go further and add notes (denser, larger clusters each time)

8<sup>ba</sup> (any low cluster) pedal off!

Squeaky hammer (hit the side of the piano)

Master mole throws away 1 toy

proceed to the next section (B-E)

during MOLE WHACKING MUSIC master mole should make nervous, squeaky prepared sounds. Only high frequencies. Let the magnets stop their motion naturally.

**B** **With more determination, but still with subdued energy**

Play random repeated notes in this kind of rhythm, often going back to already played notes until you find the next mole.

Master mole continues

5"-7"

When you find a mole, play MOLE CONFIRMATION #1 and MOLE WHACKING MUSIC again.

**C** **Search with implied gestures. Nervously, 'edgy', with ad lib. unnatural accents. When you find a mole, proceed to MOLE CONFIRMATION #2**

Master mole continues wiggling

5"-7"

**MOLE CONFIRMATION #2**

**Poco a poco più aggressivo.** Widen the register of the gesture and reverse it ad lib. The last note always should be the 'mole-note', ad lib. ca. 5-8 times. Then go back to mole whacking music

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**MATION #3**

4-6x

**E** **Hit the keys with the hammer (x-noteheads)**

Master mole wiggles the last magnet

Examine the hammer closely

**LAST MOLE CONFIRMATION - go CRAZY!!!**

**accelerando poco a poco** repeat 3-5x

Neighbouring notes may sound when you hit the mole-note. Alternate with hand and hammer.

**LAST MOLE WHACKING MUSIC**

Master mole lifts up the last plush toy with one hand and makes squeaky prepared sounds with the other. Throw away the toy at the last chord

♩ = 240

15<sup>ma</sup> 8<sup>va</sup> *fff*