

# Diatoms

*for electric guitar*

Andrew May  
2001

# Diatoms

## for electric guitar

### Performance note

The player should have a continuous pedal to move between a "*clean*" and a "*dirty*" or distorted sound. The two should be roughly balanced in dynamic (obviously the clean sound will have a wider dynamic range). Gradual movements from clean to dirty or vice versa are indicated by "—> *dirty*" or "—> *clean*," with a crescendo sometimes given above the staff to indicate the rate of change.

The player must use a flatpick during most of the piece ("**with pick**"), but occasionally plays "**with fingers**."

A note head consisting of two thick vertical lines (▮▮) means hit the strings with the palm of the right hand (creating a "thunk" as well as damping the strings).

Glissandi should be slow and long.

Quiet, rhythmically varied sections may be played with a great deal of *rubato*. Sections with repeated note values should be played in absolutely strict time.

Accidentals apply only to the note (or series of repeated notes) they immediately precede.

Trills are to the next diatonic pitch (and coincidentally but not accidentally, all trills are half-step trills). They should be attacked with the right hand, but the trill should be continued with the left hand only. The ornament marked "**l.h.**" should also be played with the left hand only.

Dynamics and articulations are of primary importance.

### Program Note

Diatoms are microscopic organisms that build tiny, elaborate shells for themselves, each one different from the next, and all astounding in their geometric elegance and radially symmetrical patterning. In modern industry, they are used by the billions—mostly for polishing and grinding (diatomaceous earth is a common ingredient in toothpaste, among other things). In this work, the tiny and intricate patterns a guitarist makes on the fretboard and strings are alternately viewed microscopically in all their beauty, or transformed into a grinding, powerful energy, according to needs of the moment. Diatoms was written for virtuoso electric guitarist (and pianist, and composer...) Chapman Welch.

--Andrew May, 2001

# Diatoms

for Chapman Welch

Andrew May (2001)

♩ = 54

*clean*

with pick

(left-hand only)

Electric Guitar

Electric Guitar

4 *Grand Pause*

7 *f p* *f* *p* *f* *mp*

11 *with fingers* *ritardando ...*

15 *with pick* *a tempo* *faster: ♩ = 72* *half and half*

18 *fp* *f* *mp* *f* *mp* *mp*

-> dirty dirty  
 22 
  
 26 
  
 29 
  
 tempo I: ♩ = 54  
 32 *clean with fingers*
  
 36 *ritardando ...*
  
 39 *tempo II: ♩ = 72*