This piece was completed November 10 1989 but composed mostly in 1983 and 1984 while working on (in fact, as part of) the opera *La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même* after Marcel Duchamp’s painting of that name. A long ballet dominating the middle of the second act, the center of the opera, was conceived as representing the mechanical workings of the Bride and her Bachelors, with solo material given, respectively, to violin and piano. This sonata is the piano material, lacking all other music (solo and choral singing and orchestral accompaniment) but fleshed out slightly with additional notes.

There are two intentions: to make an extended, somewhat virtuosic piece of music for solo piano, and to retain the arbitrary, quirky, stiff characteristic of Duchamp’s conception. The part of the bachelor apparatus that is most present is the “chariot” or “glider,” a contraption that comes and goes in a reciprocating movement, sounding its “litanies (slow life: everyday junk: onanism: buffer of life”) and actuating an elaborate train of machinery which ultimately fails to strip bare the bride.

Sonata: Bachelor Machine was first played by Eliane Lust, July 25, 1990, in San Francisco, on a wonderful program also including Debussy’s Hommage à Rameau, Bartók’s Sonata, 1926, and Schumann’s Davidsbündlertänze. What a night!

Parts of the sonata were later used by the choreographer-stage director Margaret Fisher for mixed-media productions of her own: for these, Eliane returned to the piece, even performing it in costume while being towed, with her piano, from one side of the stage to the other.

The three movements are called Cadre, Desires and Frustrations, and Action and Inaction. I wouldn’t mind finding an English word for the title of the first movement, but nothing quite does what the French *cadre* does: framework, context, grouping…

The music of the Sonata can also make a fairly substantial Piano Concerto, a Big Concerto to complement the Small Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, but it hasn’t yet been notated, except as part of the Duchamp opera. Perhaps one day.

i: Cadre page 1  
ii: Desires and Frustrations 4  
iii: Action and Inaction 11

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I: Cadre

Steady, $\frac{3}{8} = 69$

count all rests precisely
II: Desires and Frustrations

\[ \text{\textbf{mf}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{p}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{mp}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{pp}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{mp}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{Sognando (half-pedal)}} \]

\[ \text{\textbf{II: Desires and Frustrations}} \]
Abruptly (lo stesso tempo)

Dry: no pedal
Always dry and without pedal; left hand louder than right
III: Action and Inaction

\[ \text{\textcopyright}\ 120 \]

132

137

145
Always loud; no pedal
Evenly: no feeling of beats
Count precisely
Slightly slower

fff loud, like bells
$\sum \sum \sum \sum$

1983-1989

Ile d'Arz, Berkeley, Healdsburg

$7'21'$