

# PERCUSSIVE NOTES

Vol. 61, No.2, April 2023



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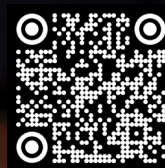
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# Rhythm! Discovery Center Announces Flooding Response and Relocation Plans

By Joshua Simonds



**R**hythm! Discovery Center (R!DC), the world's foremost interactive drum and percussion museum, will be relocating following water damage suffered in late December. A burst pipe caused significant damage to the museum's exhibit space at 110 West Washington Street in downtown Indianapolis. This location also housed offices for the Percussive Arts Society, the parent organization for R!DC.

There was no damage to Rhythm! Discovery Center's exhibits or its extensive drum and percussion collection, which has been moved to an offsite museum-quality storage facility. However, extensive damage to the museum's location prompted an evaluation of the organization's future in the space and created an opportunity to re-evaluate the museum's needs. Both the Percussive Arts Society and the museum have expanded in recent years. With growing collections, robust education programs, and increasing attendance, the museum needs a larger and more functional space.

"Relocating Rhythm! Discovery Center following December's flooding damage, while bittersweet, makes the most sense for the museum and PAS, our landlord and property management company, and our patrons," said Executive Director Joshua Simonds. "I look forward to working with the City of Indianapolis, our Board of Directors, and our funders to identify a new location that will better serve the expanding demands and growing audiences of Rhythm! Discovery Center."

No timeline for relocation of the museum has been determined. The physical museum will remain closed until the relocation is complete. The PAS offices temporarily relocated to 127 East Michigan St., Suite 600, Indianapolis IN 46204 on April 1.

"All of us at PAS and Rhythm! Discovery Center are committed to finding the right space to best serve our members and the greater Indianapolis arts community," added Simonds. "While unexpected, this situation is a great opportunity to revitalize our incredibly unique and treasured museum."

While the physical museum remains closed, Rhythm! Discovery Center will continue to steward and digitize its instrument collection and archive to increase access to these important materials, participate in educational and community events, and acquire additional historical percussion instruments for the museum's collection.

"Our mission remains the same: to advance the understanding of percussion and its role in world cultures through interactive educational experiences and active stewardship of our historical instrument collection," Simonds said.

For more information about Rhythm! Discovery Center, to view the collection, or to see the latest relocation updates, visit [rhythmdiscoverycenter.org](http://rhythmdiscoverycenter.org).



*Third Coast Percussion (L-R) Robert Dillon, Peter Martin, Sean Connors, and David Skidmore. Photo by Saverio Truglia*

# Third Coast Percussion

By Lauren Vogel Weiss



Chicago-based ensemble Third Coast Percussion (TCP) is celebrating an exciting 18th season. In November, their latest album, *Perspectives*, received two nominations for the 65th Annual Grammy awards, marking four years in a row (and the fifth time in seven years) the Recording Academy has recognized the group in the Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance category. TCP made its Carnegie Hall debut in New York City on January 20 to a sold-out audience. They also performed at the Lied Center in Nebraska with Danny Elfman, and at the Birds of Paradise Festival in The Netherlands and Belgium, which blends electronic artists and classical musicians in genre-bending concerts. And it's only April.

## THE ENSEMBLE

The current roster includes Robert Dillon, David Skidmore, Sean Connors, and Peter Martin. Third Coast Percussion's roots go back to the early 2000s, when all current and former members were attending Northwestern University. Skidmore and Dillon were also playing together in the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, a training ensemble for the Chicago Symphony.

"The Civic Orchestra gave us chamber music performance opportunities," recalls Skidmore, "so we formed a percussion quartet with me, Rob, Jacob Nissly [now the Principal Percussionist in the San Francisco Symphony], and Anthony Calabrese [currently teaching at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Geneva, New York]. We played numerous performances for Chicago Public Schools. Our first independent performance under the name Third Coast Percussion was in June 2005. Shortly after, Jacob and Anthony left, and Peter [Martin] and Clay [Condon] joined the group." Owen Clayton Condon left TCP in 2013 and was replaced by Sean Connors, keeping their personnel intact for the past decade.

"We had studied percussion ensemble in college," Skidmore explains, "so we

knew what music we wanted to play, but we still had a lot to learn. We didn't know how to find venues or market ourselves. The first couple of years we just played in locations that were either free or inexpensive. Then we started to get hired, mainly through friends we met at Northwestern or other percussion contacts. Our first real tour was during the 2009-10 season. We realized that we wanted to take it more seriously, so we got organized and put together a press kit." Third Coast Percussion became a not-for-profit entity in 2009.

During the ensemble's early years, the members lived in various locations throughout the country. Skidmore was teaching at the Peabody Conservatory in Maryland, Martin was a tenured-track professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, while Dillon taught at Loyola University in Chicago. "We would meet in Chicago, rehearse, and then go on tour. We were young and ready to go, but it was still tough," Skidmore says with a slight grimace. "The ensemble continued to get hired not only in the percussion world, but also by performing arts series. By the time we got to the 2012-13 season, the group was busy enough that we had to either cut back on performances or take the plunge. Being named the ensemble-in-residence at the University of Notre Dame helped tip the scales for us, and by the summer of 2013, Third Coast Percussion became a full-time job.

"During the past ten years," Skidmore adds, "we continued to grow. Our projects and tours became more ambitious, and we began to work with more composers. We are currently on tour between 100-150 days each year. We have also added non-performing staff members to help us out." TCP's office staff includes Managing Director Reba Cafarelli; Marketing and Development Manager Rebecca McDaniel, who also handles their social media and grant-writing duties; Administrative Assistant Mayshell Morris; and Production Manager Colin Campbell, who maintains their percussion instruments, packs and unpacks from tours,

and travels with the ensemble to gigs in the Chicago area, as well as an occasional out-of-town performance. Campbell also manages TCP's in-house video and audio content, which became particularly relevant during the pandemic.

Musically, the four performers are co-artistic directors. "Artistically, we're completely equal," explains Skidmore. "The decisions we make — how we run rehearsals, how parts are divided up, which composers we commission — are decided between the four of us. Then each of us has a different leadership role in running the business of Third Coast Percussion. I'm the Executive Director. For the first dozen years, I booked the ensemble. Now Reba handles those details, but if someone wants to talk with one of the artists, I'm that person.

"Peter is our Finance Director who is in charge of the budget and all the money that goes in and out," Skidmore continues. "Sean is our Technical Director, so he produces our shows, finds instruments, makes stage plots, all that kind of stuff. Rob is the Development Director, who handles our fundraising and grant writing, which allows us to do things like educational work. All the fundraising helps us stay on mission, do new things, and teach people about percussion."

Martin describes his duties as Finance Director. "There are pretty straight-forward tasks I do like bookkeeping, reporting and filing, managing expenses, etc. I joke that I became the finance director only because I was the one who set up TCP's first bank account! In all seriousness, though, I've learned quite a bit over the years. Planning annual operating budgets, managing project budgets, and managing the changes to our year-end forecasts take up a decent amount of my administrative time. I also manage our annual audit, which is a requirement with our Not-For-Profit 501(c)3 status. We're a mission-driven organization, and everything we do is part of that mission. Our books, operating budgets, and fiscal reporting is just another way to communicate that mission. Our artistic

values are communicated through numbers!"

Martin doesn't do all this work alone. "TCP is a team," he adds, "and we're fortunate to have amazing staff and a fantastic board of directors. Reba [Cafarelli] and Rebecca [McDaniel] help me out tremendously with their own work, and I have a wonderful Board Treasurer and finance committee who offer me so much guidance and support. We're a small arts organization, and as musicians/administrators we have 100% control over the art that we create. Part of that artistic privilege of having control over everything we do comes from our willingness to do these other non-artistic tasks, take them seriously, and do them at a high level."

Because the ensemble performs at numerous venues, Connors explains the different elements they consider as they prepare for concerts. "We have to construct a program that a presenter is excited about with repertoire that we all

are passionate about," he states, "and one that represents a diverse array of compositional voices. We then have to rehearse the music, which sometimes can be tricky from a logistics and scheduling standpoint. Oftentimes, we need to be rehearsing for several different concert programs at the same time. We always run through our programs top to bottom to make sure the flow between pieces makes sense, and quite often we'll make changes after running through them for the first time.

"On top of all of the artistic planning," Connors continues, "we have to do a ton of administrative work for each of our shows. Fortunately, it is divided up amongst the four ensemble members and our staff. These tasks include booking the show and settling on contracts with the presenter; compiling technical information for the venues through the creation of stage plots and tech riders; making sure that all of the instruments we need are

going to be provided; figuring out details of travel and accommodations; writing grants and asking for individual support to help on the financial side of things; and the list goes on. Plus, each concert and venue will inevitably provide a unique challenge that we'll have to prepare for in a specific way. For example, when we were preparing to play at Carnegie Hall, we taped the 20x24-foot stage in our rehearsal studio in Chicago and made sure that we could fit on a stage that size and still have room for dancers."

Dillon serves as TCP's Development Director. "I finished grad school with a great knowledge of how to play percussion, but almost none about how to be an arts administrator," he admits. "I certainly did not have any idea how to fundraise. What I've learned over the years is that a lot of people out there, as well as foundations, want to be part of something artistic. They're not just willing, but thrilled, to contribute financial-

## Meet Third Coast Percussion



**David Skidmore**, one of the ensemble's founding members, also serves as the organization's Executive Director. The Texas native graduated from Plano West Senior High School, just north of Dallas, in 2001 where he studied with Michael Hernandez and Shawn Schietroma. "They're the reason I'm a musician," he says, "and Mike got me interested in composing." Skidmore continued his musical education at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, where he studied with Michael Burritt and James Ross, earning a Bachelor of Music degree in 2005. Following a year of teaching private lessons, Skidmore studied with Robert Van Sice at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, where he earned his Master of Music degree in 2008. Skidmore also served on the faculty at the Peabody Conservatory of Music in Baltimore, Maryland for four years.

**Robert Dillon**, another founding member, is the Development Director for Third Coast Percussion. He started playing percussion at age nine in his elementary school band and joined the Metropolitan Youth Orchestra and Detroit Symphony Civic Orchestra when he was in high school. He graduated from Groves High School in Birmingham, Michigan in 1998. Dillon attended Northwestern University, where he studied with Michael Burritt and James Ross, earning a Bachelor of Music degree in 2002. He continued his musical education with Will Hudgins at the New England Conservatory of Music, where he earned his Master of Music degree and received the John Cage Award for Outstanding Contribution to Contemporary Music Performance. Dillon also served as Principal Percussionist in the Madison (Wisconsin) Symphony Orchestra (2007-08).





ly to musical endeavors that they find compelling. Building relationships with people who love the arts, and being able to include them in the process of creating Third Coast's work, is now a highlight of my job."

Away from their "desk jobs," Third Coast Percussion has been the ensemble-in-residence not only at the University of Notre Dame (South Bend, Indiana) but also at Denison University (Granville, Ohio). "Our main focus is integrating the arts into the larger campus," states Skidmore. "We've worked with scientists, architects, visual artists, creative writers – everyone you can think of – to find connections between the music that we make and other fields of study, which is really fun and very inspiring for us. We try to build new projects through the connections we make. We also do educational performances in these communities. We have an all-ages interactive, educational show called 'Think Outside the Drum,' which introduces musical concepts through percussion, and includes musical games we play with students in the audience. We also do clinics for high school and college percussionists all over the country. Since all four of us were teachers at some point in our careers, the teaching we get to do with Third Coast is really fulfilling for us."

TCP has also played at five PASICs: three Focus Day performances (Austin in 2006 and 2008 and Indianapolis in 2016), an Ensemble Showcase Concert in Indianapolis in 2014, and their first full-length evening concert in 2019. "We have been honored and humbled to have the opportunity to perform at PASIC a few times," states Martin. "Ever since my first PASIC in Dallas in 2000, where I got to see all my marimba heroes perform, PAS has provided so much inspiration to the percussion community."

## GRAMMY AWARDS

The Grammys are full of drummers and percussionists, but only six percussion ensembles have received nominations over the years. Cuba Percussion (2004), Los Angeles Percussion Quartet (2012), Sandbox Percussion (2021), and Ten Drum Art Percussion Group (2009) have each received one nomination; Tambuco Percussion Ensemble has received two (2005); and Third Coast Percussion has received six (five as performers and one as composers), plus one win for their 2016 recording of Steve Reich's works for percussion (celebrating the composer's 80th birthday). They even played at the 59th Annual Grammy award ceremony on February 12, 2017. <https://www.grammy.com/videos/third-coast-percus->

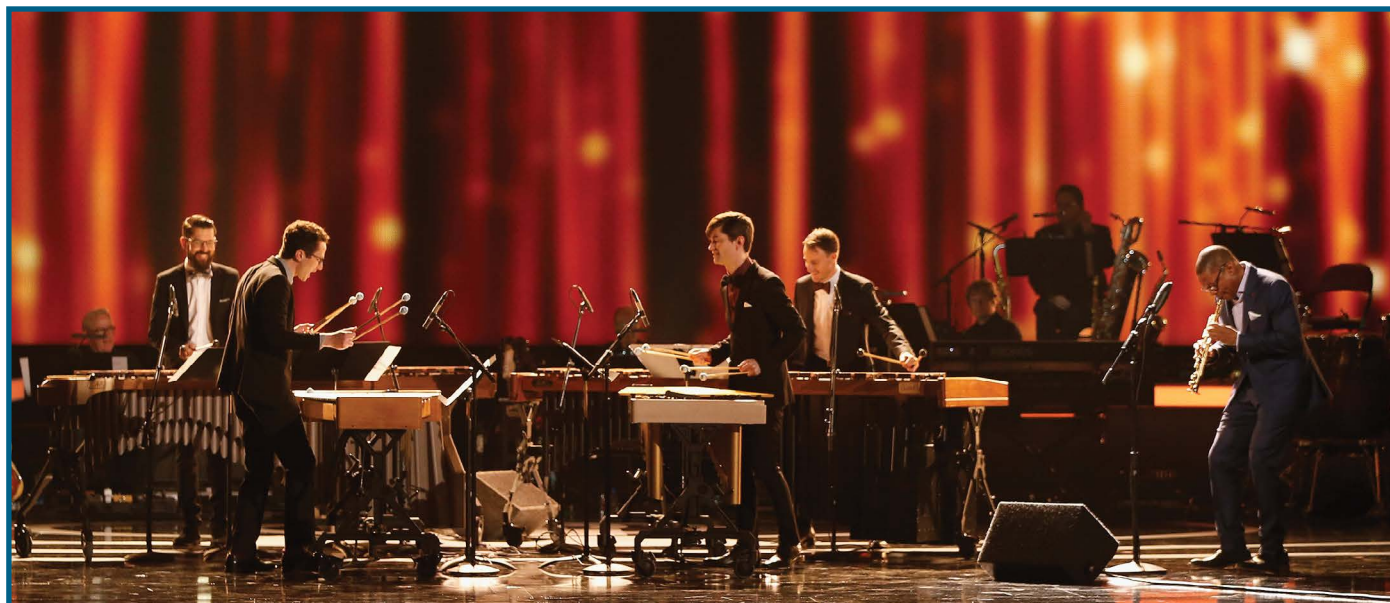
[sion-with-ravi-coltrane-premiere-ceremony-performance.](#)

Their 2019 album, *Perpetulum*, named for the piece Philip Glass wrote for the ensemble, was nominated for Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance, as was their 2020 recording, *Fields*, featuring music by Devonté Hynes (aka Blood Orange), who also performed on the album. In 2021, TCP's album *Archetypes* was nominated in both performing and composing categories, along with their collaborators, Sérgio and Clarice Assad. [More information about Glass's "Perpetulum," the first piece for percussion ensemble that he had ever composed, can be found in the [September 2019 issue of Percussive Notes.](#)]

TCP's most recent recording, *Perspectives*, was nominated in the Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance category as well as Best Engineered Album/Classical for 2022. "We really love the music and theme of the album," Skidmore says. "I think it is indicative of who we are right now as an ensemble. On this recording, we expand the limitations of what it means to be a classical musician."

The album includes TCP's arrangement of Glass's "Metamorphosis No. 1;" "Rubix," a piece composed and performed by TCP in collaboration with Flutronix [flutists and composers Nathalie Joachim

Third Coast Percussion performing with Ravi Coltrane at the 59th annual Grammy awards on February 12, 2017. Photo by Rich Polk



and Allison Loggins-Hull]; “Perspective,” a seven-movement suite by Jerrilynn Patton, the electronic musician known as Jlin; and Danny Elfman’s “Percussion Quartet.”

“This particular album features pieces from music creators with radically different backgrounds,” Skidmore explains. “Philip Glass is steeped in the classical music world, but our arrangement reimagines his music. The piece with Flutronix is co-composed by the performers, so it’s more like a rock band where the artists themselves are the creators. Jlin’s background is primarily in electronic music, so she comes to this project with a very different perspective. Danny Elfman, known primarily for his film scores, has recently been writing classical music. I believe this album is a really cool snapshot of how classical music is evolving.”

Connors recalls, “I loved having Jlin in

the studio with us, helping to shape the recording of her piece.” Dillon agrees, “Seeing Jlin and [producer] Elaine Martone talking about the music and vibing off each other’s energy while we were in the recording studio sticks in my mind.”

Connors adds, “It was a very unique and exhilarating experience to co-compose and record our piece with Allison and Nathalie from Flutronix while the piece was still taking shape. We really felt like a band, forming parts of the piece together in the studio in real time. But my favorite memory from that recording was that it was the first time Colin Campbell, our production manager, took on the role of producer for part of the session. Colin is really passionate about sound engineering and recording, which is one of his areas of expertise. It was super cool for him to start stepping into that role with Third Coast.”

Martin remembers recording Elfman’s “Percussion Quartet” during the middle of the pandemic. “We recorded at CRC [Chicago Recording Company], a very large studio in downtown Chicago. It’s usually bustling with engineers, staff, interns, and other artists, but the whole place was empty except for us and our engineers. Danny and his team were beaming into the session remotely. I remember taking breaks and everyone being in their own isolation booth – the perfect socially-distanced room layout! It was an odd recording experience – we didn’t know how it was all going to work out, and there were definitely some hiccups in the process – but it turned into a wonderful recording that I’m really proud of.”

Third Coast Percussion has released 15 albums to date, in addition to two singles and appearances on over a dozen oth-

## Meet Third Coast Percussion



**Peter Martin** is an ensemble member as well as the Finance Director for TCP. Growing up in a military family who lived all over the U.S. and abroad, he started taking piano lessons at age four before coming to percussion through drum set. “My teacher in high school, also an amazing vibraphonist, shared some recordings of Leigh Howard Stevens playing classical music on marimba. That was a really important point of intersection between my training as a classical pianist and my new interest in keyboard percussion instruments.” After graduating from high school on the Big Island of Hawaii in 1997, he began his musical education at the University of Northern Colorado, studying with Gray Barrier and Terry Vermillion. In 2000, he transferred to Rutgers University to study with She-e Wu and received his Bachelor’s degree in Music Performance in 2002. Martin then earned both his Masters and Doctoral of Music degrees from Northwestern University (in 2004 and 2011, respectively), where he studied with Michael Burritt, James Ross, and Paul Wertico. He served as Director of Percussion Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond (2009–13).

**Sean Connors** is an ensemble member in addition to his duties as Technical Director for TCP. A native of Ridgewood, New Jersey, he chose percussion in fifth grade because “I saw there were percussionists in every ensemble in our school, and I wanted to play in as many different groups and genres of music as possible.” He graduated from Ridgewood H.S. in 2000 before earning his Bachelor of Music in Performance and Music Education degrees from the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York in 2004. Connors then earned a Master of Music in Performance and Literature degree from Northwestern University in 2006 before starting his Doctoral degree at Eastman (2008–11). He was an assistant professor of percussion at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (2011–13) and taught elementary and middle school music in the Chicago suburbs (2006–08).





er albums. Their recordings range from percussion classics to world premieres, and many of their recent projects have been released on Cedille Records, known as Chicago's classical music label. "Our albums are a great way to introduce our music to people we can't reach on tour," says Skidmore. "Even though we tour a ton, we can't be everywhere every year. It's also important to us that our recordings are a tool for percussionists who are interested in how we interpret this music. When we were in school, we listened to recordings by Amadinda, Kroumata, Nexus, and so many others."

In addition to their prolific recordings, TCP performs dozens of live concerts every year. Any favorites? "That's an impossibly hard question," replies Connors. "There are a ton of concerts that were memorable for so many different reasons, but one in particular stands out. Right before everything shut down in 2020 at the onset of the pandemic, we got to perform at the Boulanger Initiative's WoCo [Women Composers] Festival in Washington, D.C. Almost all of the composers we had worked with were there in person, including Jlin, Gemma Peacocke, and Bana Haffar. Not only was it the premiere of Jlin's work 'Perspective,' and what turned out to be the last in-person concert for more than two years, it was just a really amazing gathering of incredibly inspiring musicians. It was a special memory that helped keep us going during a tough few years of playing for audiences over livestreams only."

Martin recalls a concert from August 2021. "There are so many reasons a concert can be memorable – an amazing location, venue, audience, program, or guest artist. We made our Paris debut at the Philharmonie de Paris. Not only was it our first performance in Paris, but also our first international concert since the beginning of the pandemic, which was a special experience for me, since I personally thrive with travel. It was also one of the first in-person concerts for many of the audience members since the pan-

dem, and you could really feel that energy, enthusiasm, and appreciation. It ended up being a very emotional concert for us as well as the audience, given the time and place."

## CARNEGIE HALL

Third Coast's Carnegie Hall debut on January 20, 2023, titled "Metamorphosis," featured the New York premieres of three pieces from their 2022–23 season repertoire. TCP was joined by Movement Art Is, a dance duo featuring the choreography of Jon Boogz and Lil Buck (although Cameron Murphy appeared for Boogz). The square stage was surrounded by audience members on all sides.

Connors described the mood in the theater. "Since we were performing in the round, there was a special electricity from the audience that we could feel from the stage. Both Third Coast and the incredible movement artists we were performing with really fed off the energy that the crowd was sending us from every direction."

Martin agrees that the dancers brought a huge amount of energy to the show. "There were times in the middle of the music that the audience began cheering and clapping; they were expressing that same energy we were all feeling on

stage. It was an emotional concert for us all, and it was fulfilling to have our audience so engaged with us and in the moment, with both the music and dance."

Skidmore explains that "Metamorphosis" is classical percussion music mashed up with American street-dance styles. "We love that kind of thing because it's completely unexpected by most people. It creates something really wonderful and unique that no one else can do. We hope to do more projects like this in the future."

The program began with a selection from "Agua da Amazonia (Waters of the Amazon)" by Phillip Glass, which the members arranged themselves. Drawing on both the original piano composition and an arrangement by the Brazilian musical group Uakti, TCP reorchestrated the music using mallet percussion instruments as well as melodica, desk bells, and almglocken.

The second piece, co-commissioned by Carnegie Hall, was "Perspective" by Jlin, which is featured on their recent album of the same name. The piece was composed as electronic tracks featuring samples of instruments from their collection, and TCP reimaged the music on their acoustic instruments. Their live version incorporates mixing bowls filled with

*Third Coast Percussion performing with Lil Buck (right) and Cameron Murphy (left) during their Carnegie Hall debut concert on January 20, 2023. Photo by Stephanie Berger*





water, bird calls, and a variety of gongs and tambourines, as well as drums, a marimba, and a vibraphone.

The concert included Tyondai Braxton's "Sunny X," also co-commissioned by Carnegie Hall, which will be included on TCP's upcoming album (to be released in the fall of 2023). The piece continued Braxton's recent exploration of combining electronic sounds generated with a modular synthesizer with live percussionists, while also utilizing instruments such as wooden and metal slats, steel pipes, Thai gongs, and crotales.

In his article for the *New York Classical Review's* website, George Grella wrote that Third Coast Percussion winningly melded music and dance traditions in their Carnegie Hall debut. "It was more than just a concert and an excellent performance. It was an involving and supremely entertaining concept brought to life. The fit between the mellow, beautiful harmonies of Glass and the complex timbres and rhythms of Braxton and Jlin was easy and strong. The connection was polyrhythms — Glass's may be closer to Brahms and Jlin's to Autechre, but they're both just beats. With the near continuous playing, the music sounded like the different movements of a large-scale percussion symphony, and while the moods and dynamics and colors shifted, there was a commitment to movement all the way through."

Dillon remembers Skidmore's "curtain speech" before the concert began. "He encouraged the audience to express their appreciation for anything they saw or heard at any point during the show, rather than following the traditional classical music convention of clapping only at the end. Hearing the audience clap and cheer every time one of our movement artists did something incredible — which is often in this show! — or when there was an exciting musical moment, filled me with joy. I also remember the long, intense build at the end of 'Sunny X,' which got the audience going, even though there were still 45 seconds left. What a thrilling atmosphere for a Carnegie Hall debut!"

## COMPOSERS

In addition to playing such percussion ensemble standards as Steve Reich's "Mallet Quartet," "Sextet," "Nagoya Ma-

rimbas," and "Music for Pieces of Wood" (featured on their 2016 Grammy-winning album) and the Second and Third "Constructions" by John Cage, TCP has

*Third Coast Percussion with composer Jerrilynn Patton, the electronic musician known as Jlin (center) in May 2022. Photo by Colin Campbell*



*Composer Missy Mazzoli with Third Coast Percussion following the premiere of her piece "Millennium Canticles" on December 7, 2022 at DePaul University in Chicago. Photo by Marc Perlish Photography*





also worked with dozens of contemporary composers through their commission projects.

Another unique aspect of Third Coast Percussion is that each member of the group is a composer/performer. Skidmore recalls one of his favorite projects the ensemble did. “Third Coast composed a new soundtrack for an existing film called *Paddle to the Sea*. It’s music we’re really proud of creating. We also just finished composing ‘In Practice,’ which we premiered at DePaul University last December. It was inspired by rituals and meditation.”

On that same December concert, they also premiered “Millennium Canticles” by Missy Mazzoli, who was a composer-in-residence with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and “Gauntlet” by Mark Applebaum. “Millennium Canticles” imagines the musicians as a post-apocalyptic group of survivors who struggle to remember the rituals and stories that once made them human. Applebaum’s piece transforms hundreds of tiny everyday objects into the sonic backdrop of a grand procession.

Other 21st-century composers who have written works for Third Coast Percussion, besides Elfman and Flutornix, include Donnacha Dennehy, Glenn Kotche, Gemma Peacocke, and Augusta Read Thomas, to name a few.

Another important project that TCP is passionate about is their Currents Creative Partnership. “We’ve been running this program for about ten years, and it continues to grow,” Skidmore explains. “It’s a way we have found to support composers and music creators who are early in their career or have never written for percussion, but want to have a good experience doing it. We provide commission fees and creative opportunities to artists who might not otherwise have them – and we get a new piece out of it! All of our commissioned projects are very collaborative, so we work very closely with the composers. Several of these pieces have entered our repertoire, like Ayanna Woods’s ‘Triple Point,’

which we have performed many times.”

Skidmore continues, “A composer might have tons of opportunities to write string quartets or piano pieces, but no chance to write for percussion, and we give them that opportunity, so it becomes an important part of what they do. Or we give someone who has never written a classical piece before a chance

to write one and, because we are collaborating with them, we can help with whatever aspects they are not familiar with.”

Third Coast Percussion’s mission is to “inspire and educate through the creation of exciting and unexpected musical experiences.” They have done that – and more. [PN](#)

*Third Coast Percussion performing “Gauntlet” by Mark Applebaum at DePaul University in Chicago on December 7, 2022. Photo by Marc Perlish Photography*



*Third Coast Percussion performing the world premiere of their own piece “In Practice” at DePaul University in Chicago on December 7, 2022. Photo by Marc Perlish Photography*



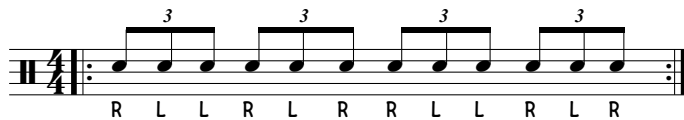


# Making the *Swingadiddle* Part of Your Drum Set Vocabulary

By Sean J. Kennedy

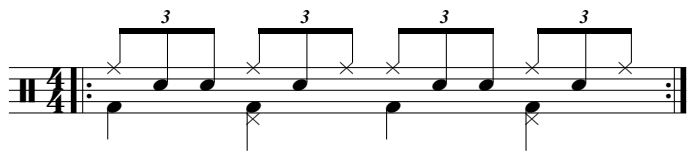
**O**ftentimes while chatting we use vocabulary words that we are familiar with and have used instinctively over and over again in conversation. Having a readily available repository of useful phrases, musical or otherwise, allows us to communicate much more quickly, and effectively with other people.

Similar to building a solid and instinctive verbal and written vocabulary, the same is true for our drum set vocabulary; it takes lots of focused individual practice and practical application in live playing situations to make it part of our personal vernacular. Back in the 1980s, my high school drum set teacher, Ray Deeley, taught me one of the most useful patterns that I've ever learned, which has become part of my personal drumming language:



Learning and practicing this pattern solved a problem for me. I was in my school jazz band and needed to play an extended solo in a swing tune. Having only played and listened to jazz for a very short time, I had a very limited jazz drumming musical vocabulary. Mr. Deeley showed me the basics of building a solo based off this motif. After I could play it correctly on a pad and then the snare drum, we added a simple hi-hat and bass drum part and started moving the right-hand part to different drums and cymbals – all while repeating the pattern – and, just like that, I could easily play a four-, eight-, or sixteen-measure solo that swung and kept the pulse for the band.

Here is the pattern expanded to the full drum set. Notice how the right-hand part is a standard swing ride pattern:



This is a very practical pattern with many useful, real-life applications. The drummer and the band can constantly hear and feel the swing pattern, no matter which drum or cymbal is being played, because the playing is motivic in nature due to the swing pattern being used throughout.

While preparing this article, I figured that I should let someone else look at it to make sure that I was on the right track, so, I sent it to PAS Hall of Famer, and friend, Mr. Harold Jones. The day after I emailed him my draft of this article, he emailed me back and said, "Call me, ASAP!" When we were able to chat live on the phone, he erupted with laughter and said, laughing, "Sean, I've been playing this pattern for the past year on my pad to keep my hands in shape! I thought that I had invented it!"

He went on to say, "For swing drummers, I consider it very important for them to learn and practice all of their rudiments on the snare drum and then orchestrate them around the entire drum kit, but *especially* the pattern here in this article. In fact, I think that this is so important that it should actually be a standard *swing drum set rudiment*, if there were such things. Sean, let's name it!"

From that point we went back and forth with a few options, and finally settled on calling it a *Swingadiddle*. Harold concluded, "I'm going to call it the 'Swingadiddle' from now on and tell every drummer that I know to learn it and practice it. It keeps the drummer swinging during comping and solos and really gives both hands a full workout!"

So there you have it; a pattern that I was taught by my first drumming hero, Ray Deeley, and have loved and used, making it part of my personal drumming vocabulary since high school, and then I find out that it is also loved by big band drumming royalty, Harold Jones. Well, that's good enough for me; it proved to me that this is a very valuable part of my drum set vocabulary, and well worth sharing here with all of you!

Here are some practice techniques that will help you to get the Swingadiddle in your hands.

## ISOLATION

In this set of variations, swing on the cymbal with your right hand, and then play the snare, as you'll see below, on beats 4, 3, 2, and 1. Using this "reverse order" just swings better in my opinion. I play each of these four times in the video demonstration, but you can and should repeat them more than four times until they all become comfortable.

### Isolation Variation 1

### Isolation Variation 2

In this variation we break up the snare drum rhythms to add some more nuance and flexibility to our left hand.

## ADDITION

This is the same sequence as Isolation Variation I, but this time, when you add a snare, keep it in the pattern. By the end of this sequence, you'll be playing a full Swingadiddle.

### Addition Variation 1

Addition Variation 2

variations, first on beat 4, then 3, and 2, finally leaving only the pattern on beat 1.

Subtraction Variation 1

Subtraction Variation 2

**SUBTRACTION**

In these examples contrary to the above variations, we'll start with the full Swingadiddle pattern, and then systematically eliminate snare drum notes in similar fashion to the previous

Video: *Vocabulary Lesson: Making a 'Swingadiddle' Part of Your Vernacular on Drum Set*





## PAD/SNARE EXERCISES

Finally, here are short sequences that you can perform on your pad/snare to gain more control of this pattern.

### Pad/Snare Variation 1 (Addition)

### Pad/Snare Variation 2 (Subtraction)

And there we have a relatively simple pattern expanded and explored more completely, as an example of making the most of a single idea. And yet, these examples are just the tip of the iceberg. Experiment with your own variations of this pattern!

Going through this process of development with the Swingadiddle reinforced to me the notion that it is not the *quantity* of our notes and patterns in practice and performance; what really matters the *quality* with which we execute them. It reminds me of the great quote by Bruce Lee: “I fear not the man who has practiced 10,000 kicks once, but I fear the man who has practiced one kick 10,000 times.” Focused practice on just one practical pattern like this can really pay off and solidify your drumming vocabulary. As an example, check out the short, improvised solo, based solely on the Swingadiddle, that I play at the end of the demonstration video, and like Harold Jones says, “Keep swinging!”

Sean J. Kennedy performs with The Gardyn Jazz Orchestra, The Doc Severinsen Tribute Band featuring Jay Webb, and is principal percussionist with the Philadelphia Boys Choir and Chorale. An active freelancer on stage and in the studio, Sean is producer and host of a music-industry podcast, *Backstage at The Enharmonic*, a member of PAS Drum Set Committee, author of numerous drum set, percussion, and improvisation books, and in 2018 presented a TEDx Talk about the history of the drum set. An adjunct drum set and percussion professor at Arcadia University, Sean is also on the instrumental music staff at the Upper Dublin and Wissahickon School Districts in suburban Philadelphia. For more info, visit: [www.seanjkenedy.com](http://www.seanjkenedy.com).

# Marimba FUNdamentals

## An Introduction to the One-Handed Independent Roll

By Dr. Gifford Howarth

**T**he one-handed roll on marimba is treated as a “right of passage” for developing four-mallet percussionists. One could suggest that there are a series of technique etudes, exercises, and solos that players focus on *before* they need to incorporate the one-handed roll, and a set of repertoire recommended *after* this specific ability is developed. For most young percussionists, the learning curve for this technique is slightly longer than that for other concepts within four-mallet playing.

I have been fortunate to have worked with thousands of developing players over the past 20-plus years, and I would like to share my conceptualization of this special technique. I also want to credit one of my former teachers, Ted Rounds, who was critical in the development of my own four-mallet technique. This article will share his concept behind the one-handed independent roll.

### THE FOUNDATION

Develop the technique one hand at a time. Some folks like to go through the entire process with one hand before they start the second hand. Some choose to do just a couple of steps with one hand, then catch up with the second hand. Either will work.

I label the mallets left to right: 1 – 2 – 3 – 4. Visualize the independent rotation motion. In your right hand: mallet 3 rotating for an inside rotation, mallet 4 rotating for an outside rotation. Normally, we like to separate these single rotations. For example, as you rotate mallet 3, mallet 4 *should not* move a lot. I label this a “single rotation.” For the one-handed roll, we need to replace this idea. Instead, we use what I call a “fluid rotation.” As one mallet approaches the bar, the other mallet in that hand comes up. This results in a “teeter totter” or see-saw effect.

Contrary to the independent rotation you have been developing, you want to use this alternative concept. In a sense, we are purposefully approaching the independent rotation incorrectly. One mallet comes down to strike the bar simultaneously with the other mallet coming up.

Start without any mallets in your hand and hold the hand/wrist out in front of you as if you were going to play. Rotate your wrist in place. Think of this as twisting open a doorknob. Move back and forth, back and forth, and do not stop! Perform this slowly and stay relaxed. This is the basic motion needed.

### THE BABY-STEP APPROACH

Let’s focus on measure 1. It is in an interval of a 5th because this is especially comfortable in our hands. The exercise is in quintuplets (“five-lets”) because we want the pulse and stress to alternate between mallets. Set your metronome to slow quarter notes. Be very *relaxed* and *slightly* bring out the tenuto – only slightly. Keep your arms, wrists, and mallets *low*. I suggest playing the non-tenuto notes around 2.5 to 3 inches off the bar and the tenuto about 4 to 4.5 inches. Loop the first measure over and over again. If necessary, slow the pulse down. Get completely comfortable with the first measure before gradually increasing the tempo.

For the rest of the exercise, the pitches change one mallet at a time on the tenuto. The intervals change between 5ths, 6ths, 4ths, 3rds, 7ths, and octaves. You don’t need to play the exercises exactly as written. I have noticed that the 5ths, 4ths, and 6ths seem to be the easiest. The beat must stay constant (with the metronome), and the fluidity of the five-lets is important. Don’t worry about how high or loud you are playing; just stay relaxed and let things flow.

## EXPERIENCING THE CONCEPT

Once you are comfortable and confident with the basic idea, increase the speed a little, still approaching the exercise as written and maintaining that slight tenuto. At this point, I suggest you get *both hands* to the same comfort level before moving forward. If you feel up for it, change to the five-lets to septuplets (7's). Slow down the overall pulse so that fluidity is not lost. Playing the exercise in triplets is not recommended because the frequency of tenutos is too high. The original five-lets seem to work best for most students. Try to get *both hands* to the same comfort level, but it is understood that your dominant hand will most likely progress quicker.

The next step is to keep the pulse solid via the metronome but *remove* the tenuto. Keep the constant five-lets but with no stress. Going further, feel free to make up your own exercise! You can slowly creep up or down the instrument if you wish, or you can explore different directions, but keep the pitch changes on the pulse. Open up the interval range between the mallets. Expand into 7ths and octaves.

You can also start experimenting with the roll speed. Increase the tempo or decrease the tempo to do so. Fluidity should always

be maintained. Lastly, take away the metronome and let things speed up or slow down organically in your hand. Keep experimenting and making up your own versions of the exercise.

## TRUE APPLICATION

Finally, let's take this up notch, assuming you have nice fluid motion in one hand, the tenutos are gone, and you are nice and relaxed. While you play a one-handed roll in one hand (interval of a 4th, 5th, or 6th), randomly play any note pattern/rhythm you want with your other hand. For example, as you play a right-handed independent roll, play random notes with mallets 1 and 2. Start with no sense of pulse and your free rhythmic choice in the non-rolling hand. It's perfectly acceptable to sound like a child just striking different bars. The main focus with this mini-concept is whether your *roll* gets affected by the random playing with the other hand. For most folks, the answer is a very strong yes. Folks with a piano playing background might find this easier (due to independence of the hands).

The next step is to play solid, slow, eighth notes in the non-rolling hand; is this affecting the flow of the roll? As you strike the eighth note in your pattern, is your rolling hand slightly shifting its speed so that mallet 2 and mallet 3 strike at the exact same time? Or mallet 1 and 4, or 2 and 4, 1 and 3, etc.?

Getting the two hands completely independent of each other usually takes a long time; don't get frustrated! There are several intermediate marimba solos that call for one hand to do an independent roll. Explore these pieces a little. I also use the J. S. Bach Cello Suites or Violin Sonatas and Partitas as resources from which to create a legato musical line while playing an independent roll. This is not written in the original versions, but I like to adapt them.

There are several steps in the overall process where you can create/compose your own exercise or even an etude. Feel free to think outside the box while staying true to the basic concepts and process. Lastly, don't forget to *enjoy!*

## THE EXERCISE

**Dr. Gifford Howarth** is Associate Professor of Percussion at Bloomsburg University located in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania. His previous teaching duties included teaching at Penn State University, Michigan State University, and Nazareth College (Rochester, N.Y.). Dr. Howarth has received degrees from Michigan State University (DMA), Kent State University (MM), and Ithaca College (BM). He has presented clinics and workshops throughout the United States, Canada, Asia, and Europe, including Singapore, China, Thailand, The Netherlands, Sweden, and Malaysia. His four-mallet method book, *Simply Four*, and several other works are available through Tap Space Publications.



# New and Expanded Techniques for the Vibraphone

## Part 2: Prepared Vibraphone and External Resonators and Reflectors

By Stephen Solook

**W**hen society shut down due to the pandemic two years ago, I had excess time to fill. I decided to learn more about the vibraphone. I started to ask myself how I would like to see the instrument developed. When I found a technique I wanted to know more about, I started to research it from its conceptual origin. This research ultimately turned into my first collection of etudes that are meant to expand upon the vibraphone's technical ability.<sup>1</sup>

Since the collection's completion, I have expanded on those techniques and explored more ideas. My article in the December 2022 issue of *Percussive Notes* discussed a technique for holding two bows in one hand, and bending pitches. In this article I will discuss prepared vibraphone and using external resonators. One thing to keep in mind: although I developed these techniques on vibraphone, all these ideas work on other instruments.

### PREPARED VIBRAPHONE

Prepared vibraphone is nothing new, but most preparations consist of adding white noise, restricting resonance, or adding attack. With experimentation, I

have found different types of preparations that focus on timbral change rather than white noise. I separate these preparations into two categories: additive sounds or preparations, and combined sounds.

"Additive sound or preparation" is when a vibraphone bar activates or strikes another instrument. Depending on the instrument, it generally only adds the sound of that instrument to the sound of the bar. The easiest way to achieve this preparation is to place instruments just below the bar; after the bar is struck, the bar reacts and strikes the instrument below the bar. The instrument that is below the bar should be placed on foam or another material that allows the instrument to "bounce" so it can resonate. On top of the activated instrument, I place a piece of moleskin or felt in between the contact points (see Example 1). In many cases, an

Example 1



additive instrument will have the option of activating more than one adjacent bar. With the foam below and felt on top, the contact noise is minimized when the bar is struck (see Example 2). I have primarily used tambourines, woodblocks, and various types of cowbells, but many other instruments should work well too.

Example 2



"Combined tones" alter multiple aspects of the bar, while also hearing an associated instrument. You can place instruments that have a small center balance point on top of the bar and "attach" it using a small amount of duct seal<sup>2</sup> at that center point (see Example 3). This putty is tacky but firm enough to hold instruments in place and balanced. This material also allows the vibraphone bar to resonate, although at a reduced amount.

Example 3: Notice the duct seal on the nipple of the gong.



The attached instrument should be placed somewhere between the center of the bar and the node (See Examples 4 and 5). When the bar is struck, the attached instrument resonates along with the bar. Because the bar and attached instrument are deadened by the compound, the vibraphone bar and the attached instrument timbres meld into a combined sound.

Example 4



Example 5



Additionally, I may use reusable rubber twist ties to help balance the attached instruments to make sure they do not hit each other or the bar. For example, I wrap one end of the tie around the edge of the gong, and possibly place a part under the gong, to help with stability, while the other end is tied to the frame (see Examples 6, 7, and 8).

I have found that nipple gongs and

Example 6



Example 7



smaller jing cymbals are effective in melding sounds. The two aspects that seem to ensure the sounds meld together are: there is a clear center balance point

Example 8



where the instrument can be attached, and the accompanying instrument cannot be too thick beyond the attachment point.<sup>3</sup> When trying to meld the two sounds, the attached instrument does not need to be the same pitch in the harmonic series, but that may produce a more noticeable result.

This video is an example of the sounds, and how they can sound in context. <https://youtu.be/e5kjl66ysy8>.

Here is a video of my etude “Bacchus Festival” for prepared vibraphone: <https://youtu.be/vE6uA-py7V4>.

## EXTERNAL RESONATORS AND REFLECTORS

When thinking about the core parts of a vibraphone, it is hard to ignore the resonators. During my early experiments, I found it is possible to use external items to act as resonators, allowing an external object to amplify the pitch of a given bar with objects such as cups, bottles, bowls, etc. It is also possible to amplify the overtones instead of the fundamental, but this technique is less reactive and works better when playing and amplifying closer to the node. Additionally, the shape of the resonator changes the sound, and some objects can amplify bars that are not in the same harmonic series.

There are several ways to identify what pitches will resonate with a selected resonator. The first method is a guess and check method. Here are the steps:

1. Close or remove the resonators.
2. With the pedal down, play the lower half of the natural keys in quick succession.
3. Move the selected resonator a few centimeters to an inch above the struck bars, quickly.

4. Notice if any of the bars became louder.
5. Repeat the process for the upper half of the keyboard.
6. Narrow the results by playing a smaller selection of notes. Can include accidentals at this point.
7. Repeat the process until the most effected notes are identified.

Check out this video for the guess and check method: <https://youtu.be/8A4yZCeqvHU>

Here is a video of me experimenting with a series of objects.<sup>4</sup> <https://youtu.be/G8KzhFloval>

You can more precisely identify the resonant frequency if needed. For these steps you will need know the frequency of the pitch you are trying to amplify, the length of that soundwave, and physical measurements of the object you are working with. If you are looking to amplify a specific bar or object already in your possession, identify the frequency using a tuner<sup>5</sup> and have a list of frequencies with their wavelengths available to you.<sup>6</sup> Next, divide the wavelength by 4.<sup>7</sup> This will give you the shortest distance to amplify the fundamental. An object that is close to the width of the bar or object should work, but it is not a guarantee. Here is a formula that can help identify the specific pitch of an object you are using or looking for:

**Formula to help identify fundamental pitch of a closed tubular resonator.**

$$L = [(s/f)/4] - d/3^8$$

Where:

L = Length of the resonator, in cm.

s = Speed of sound, in cm/sec (ca. 34,400 cm/sec)

f = the desired frequency, in Hz

d = diameter of the resonating tube, in cm.

Do not assume an object will amplify the specific bar you are trying to affect. Let the resonator tell you what bar to use, not the other way around.

The external resonator experiments showed me that sometimes an object could create a “wah-wah” effect when waved above the bars but did not amplify

the pitch. In this circumstance the sound is reflected, but not amplified. This is the same technique as a hand vibrato. Additionally, you can reflect a larger amount of notes when using flat objects other than one’s hand, such as a book or folder. It is worth noting that you can reflect a set of notes in one area of the instrument while playing in another, and it will only affect the notes below the reflector. If you are looking to affect a larger number of notes without turning on the motor, this effect can work. While a reflector and external resonator sound similar, they are different scientific phenomena and offer different musical options. Here is my “Resonator Etude 2,” which demonstrates the motor versus reflector, along with individual amplified notes. (<https://youtu.be/UK-DiGgF1xo>)

For other examples of how external resonators can be used, refer to my additional Resonator Etudes. “Etude 1” uses the external resonators as amplification and rhythm devices; “Etude 3” explores harmonics and sliding between small clusters while playing similar notes; “Etude 4” shows the glissando range possibility of a single resonator.

**CLOSING THOUGHTS**

These are just some ideas I have been experimenting with. Remember, while each of these techniques is presented on vibraphone in these articles, all of them can work on other instruments. I believe we are part of a living art, and that art will grow and expand with time. To me these ideas are part of that expansion. I hope we can all collectively grow our art with curiosity.

**ENDNOTES**

1. Solook, Stephen. “Vibraphone Etudes for Extending Technique.” Bachovich Music Publications. 2020.
2. Duct seal will leave the compound on the bar when removed and will dampen the bar if not cleaned.
3. For example, triangles are generally a consistent thickness, and rin (or singing bowls) do not have a small enough center balance

point and the edge is too thick.

4. All the objects in this video use the guess and check method to identify the effected pitch(es).
5. There are free tuner applications available for smart phones.
6. I use this list, but it is not the only one available, <https://pages.mtu.edu/~suits/notefreqs.html>
7. Generally, with a tubular object, we use the antinode to amplify the fundamental, which is a quarter of the length of the soundwave.
8. <https://members.efn.org/~qehn/global/building/tubes.htm>

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Stephen Solook teaches percussion at Buffalo State University. He is also a dance accompanist at the University at Buffalo, an extra percussionist for the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, and a member of the voice percussion duo Aurora Borealis. Steve’s *Vibraphone Etudes for Extending Technique Vol. 1 & 2* are available through Bachovich Music Publications. His current research is on expanding the vibraphone as well as the cross intersection of music education and dyslexia. Dr. Solook received his doctorate from the University of California San Diego. His primary instructors were Steven Schick, James Preiss, Glen Velez, Michael Warner, Gordon Stout, Conrad Alexander, and Greg Giannascoli.



# Terms Used in Percussion

## The Tambourin Provençal Revisited

By Michael Rosen

The Tambourin Provençal (sometimes spelled provençale) is a folk drum of cylindrical shape, made of rather thin wood (usually beech) with two calf heads. The drum in Photo 1, from my collection, measures 70.5 cm (c.27.75") deep and 34.29cm in diameter (c.13.5"). The batter head is a slunk head (unborn calf) on which is stretched a single snare of string called *la chanterelle* (the string), defined as the E string of a string instrument in French, while the bottom head, called a *chevrette*, slightly thicker, is often made of a young goatskin and serves as the resonating head. The drum in the photograph was made for me in 1978 by Marius Fabre in Provence. Fabre's company is still making drums to this day by André Fabre, the son of the original maker.

The body of the instrument is hand carved and often decorated with floral designs. The heads are held on with wooden counterhoops that are held on by thin ropes called *laçage*, and they are tuned with "ears," called *coulants* in French, like a rope drum. The counterhoops have 10 wooden boutons (projected buttons or studs) to which the *laçage* is attached. When the *laçage* is pulled up toward the top counterhoop with the "ears," the pitch of the drum gets higher. This is like a rope-tensioned military drum on which

the "ears" are pushed down (the opposite direction to the tambourin) to tighten the pitch and is played on the batter head. You might say the tambourin is played upside down!

The tambourin provençal is held over the left forearm on a sling called *la bretelle*, made of either leather or heavy cloth, at a slight incline, while the same hand

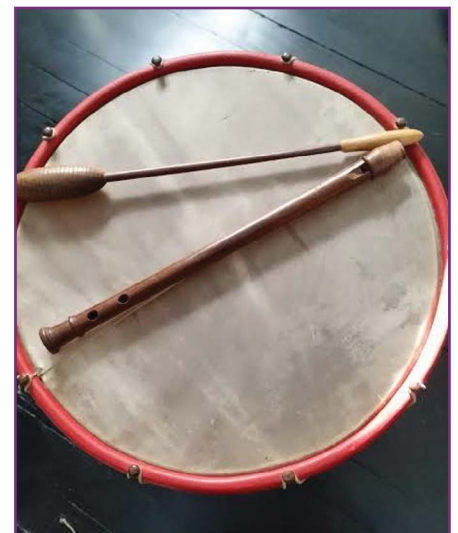
*Photo 1: Tambourin Provençal made by Marius Fabre*



holds a three-hole wooden recorder type instrument called *le galoubet*. It is struck directly on the single snare (*la chanterelle*) on the batter head very lightly with the stick called *la massette* in the right hand gripping the bulbous egg-shaped part of the mallet. The player touches the drum with his/her right hand with the delicate mallet while playing and fingering the *galoubet* with the left hand. (See Photo 2.)

It is said that one does not hit the drum but rather "touches" the tambourin provençal lightly. The word in French

*Photo 2: Closeup of the top head showing the massette and the galoubet. Note the thin single snare (chanterelle) on the top head. The massette is held in the hand by the large bulbous end, and the small end strikes (touches!) the drum.*



is *toucher*. This drum is often played in groups of as many as 20 players adorned in fanciful traditional costumes (see Photo 3). Often the songs played are in 6/8 time in folk music and sometimes accompanied by other instruments and/or dancers. The effect when played is that of a drone not unlike bagpipes, which may be the reason that the alternate name for the drum is *musette provençal*, which is the term for a bagpipe from Provence.

The instrument has made its way into only a few compositions of the classical literature, although many composers use the term *tambourin*, leaving off the *provençal* part, to indicate a deep drum with or without snares. The only piece I know that calls for the instrument specifically is “Suite L’Arlésienne” by Georges Bizet. If readers know of other scores that call for the *tambourin provençal*, please let me know.

In addition to the *Tambourin Provençal* there are other similar folk instruments in France such as the *timbalon*, which has a conical-shaped body made of pottery or metal. It also has two heads with thin ropes and “ears” to tighten the head. Note that the word *timbalon* is also the Spanish word for *timbales*. Confusion abounds!

The Basque (Euzkadi) tradition has a similar drum called *txistu* (see Photo 4),

which is smaller and also played on the batter head with a recorder by the same player, but has no snares. (See [www.youtube.com/watch?v=jApVfUsIdMk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jApVfUsIdMk) for a fantastic performance with a symphony orchestra.)

The *tamboril* (see Photo 5) is another

Photo 4: A Basque *txistu*, which does not have a snare and is much smaller than the *Tambourin Provençal*.



drum of the same type from Spain, slightly larger than the *txistu* and also played on the batter head. Although the same player doesn't play the pipe, it is played with a small ensemble. Just to add to the confusion *tamboril* is also the Spanish word for monk fish! In Great Britain the player plays the pipe and a small drum of the same type, which is called a *tabor*. It was used in Medieval times to accompany the Morris Dance. (see [www.youtube.com/watch?v=zS\\_\\_oBFqVik](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zS__oBFqVik)) The word *tabor* is also used as a generic term for drum in many languages.

A certain confusion has arisen because the word for tambourine in German is “tambourin.” This has led to the belief by conductors as well as percussionists that the composer is calling for a tambourine. Some editions indicate this, but it is the wrong instrument to use in the music of Bizet. A German publisher printed the first edition of Bizet's music, and in this case the translation and/or editor is the source of the confusion. So, if you see the term “tambourin” in a work by a German composer, use a tambourine, but if you see “tambourin” in the music of Bizet published by a German company use a *Tambourin Provençal*. “Tamburin” is the actual spelling in German, but editors have left the French spelling, adding to even

Photo 3: A group of players in Provence at a festival



Photo 5: *Tamboril* (tabor) in Valencia, Spain



more confusion. Whichever instrument you choose, be sure to discuss it with the conductor before the first rehearsal!

My thanks to Michel Faligand for permission to use his article that appeared in the French magazine Pages Percussives, No. 14, August 5, 2006 as a basic source for this article. For more information on le tambourin provençal see the following Percussive Notes articles: "Terms Used in Percussion" in Vol. 16, No. 3, Spring/Summer 1978 and Vol. 18, No. 2, Winter 1980; and "Focus on Performance" in Vol. 25, No. 2, Winter 1987.

I hope the information in these articles will help performers choose the appropriate instruments when they perform. I invite readers to send me questions about "Terms Used in Percussion" and any other subject of importance. I will answer you directly and then print your questions for the benefit of readers of Percussive Notes. You

can e-mail your question to me at [mrosen@oberlin.edu](mailto:mrosen@oberlin.edu).

## YOUTUBE VIDEOS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6xjG-mcTlBIM> is an excellent description of the instrument. It is in French, but he demonstrates how to play and it is quite easy to follow.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Io9C-qry0rA>. Be sure to watch André Gabriel, called the "Paganinni of the Tambourin" just for fun at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zp-ORJz6CFw>.

**Michael Rosen** is Emeritus Professor of Percussion at Oberlin Conservatory of Music, where he founded the Oberlin Percussion Group. He was elected to the PAS Hall of Fame in 2019. He was Principal Percussionist with the Milwaukee Symphony from 1966–72 and has performed with the Grand Teton Music Festival, the Cleveland Orchestra, the

Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, and the Concertgebouw Orchestra. He was a member of the PAS Board of Directors and is an Associate Editor of *Percussive Notes*. He has recorded for Opus One, Bayerische Rundfunk, Albany, Lumina, and CRI labels and is a sought-after clinician for marimba and cymbals. **PN**

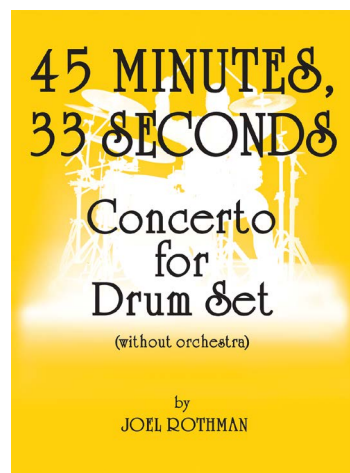
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# The Gigging Pan Player

By Patrick Fitzgibbon

Over the past 15 years, I have led countless gigs on steel pan. These performances have included weddings, parties, corporate events, festivals, and concerts. For the most part, these gigs paid well, and I booked them myself without using an agent. There are pan players throughout the world with similar experiences. In many parts of the United States, there is a market for these types of performing ensembles. It has been my experience that

most people enjoy the timbre of the steel pan and appreciate learning a bit about its history. For a percussionist with steel pan experience, these gigs can provide a steady and reliable income stream. This article will cover preparing for and creating these types of opportunities.

## DEFINING GOALS

Before creating any new ensemble, it is wise to define some basic goals for the project. Some ensembles may want to play a couple of festivals each year, while others may be looking to gig every week. Perhaps the project is a creative outlet without much financial expectation, or is focused on community engagement and education. All of these are excellent and, in many cases, achievable goals.

## INSTRUMENTATION

Many pan players are accustomed to playing in a large high school or university band or perhaps have been lucky enough to perform with a Panorama band in Trinidad, New York, or elsewhere. The sound and feeling of a large ensemble can be exhilarating. I am lucky enough to direct a university band and remain passionate about arranging, composing and performing music with a large ensemble. However, in the gigging world, a large ensemble is often financially and logistically impractical. That is not to say booking gigs with a large steel band cannot be done, but I have had much more success working with smaller ensembles. A few examples of band configurations include:

- **Quartet:** tenor pan, guitar pan (or seconds), electric bass, drums. This is straight-forward in that the melodic part is covered by the tenor, and the guitar is responsible for strumming/comping chords. Two-note strumming can be tricky at first if one is accustomed to voicing chords with a full steel band. When strumming/comping with a quartet, a guitar or seconds player will need to keep in mind that the root of each chord is covered by the bass, and they need to maintain smooth voice-leading from chord to chord. When playing calypso in this situation, common steel band strum rhythms work well.



Another option would be to have a string guitarist or even a pianist instead of another pan player. When the budget allows, I like to work with a quintet with percussion added as well (tenor pan, electric guitar, electric bass, drums, percussion).

- **Trio:** tenor pan, guitar pan and drums. This instrumentation is not ideal but is sometimes necessary for gigs where the budget is not adequate for a quartet. In this situation, the guitar player will need to define the root of each chord and as much of the quality as possible.

- **Solo:** tenor pan with tracks. This is something potential clients will often ask for. It is common to find pan musicians using this type of setup on cruise ships and at beach resorts. Because of this, many people have become familiar with it and want to hire someone for their event with a similar sound. It's something I often try to avoid because I find it so much more satisfying and enjoyable playing with live musicians, but for some gigs it is all the budget will allow. The most important thing for this type of gig is to invest some time and effort into creating great sounding tracks. There are software programs that enable musicians to program styles and chord changes. Also tracks can be created using a DAW if one has the skills and gear necessary.

Of course, there are many other options. The goal is finding an instrumentation with a full, satisfying ensemble sound that is financially and logistically practical.

## MUSICIANSHIP SKILLS

There are some basic musicianship skills needed for these types of gigs:

- **Technique:** Often, clients will ask steel bands to play three, four, or even five hours. To play for this long, a pannist will need great technique with an easy fluid motion getting around the instrument.

- **Reading:** When playing three to six hours of music, it is difficult to have everything memorized. Developing reading chops allows pan players to cover more music and will make it easier to add repertoire. As with any instrument, sight-reading improves when it is included as part of a consistent daily practice routine.

- **Improvisation:** Having the ability to improvise over the chord changes of a given song is central to a gig like this. When working with a small band, including improvised solos makes the performance much more engaging and enjoyable for everyone.

## BAND LEADER SKILLS

For any band to function properly at a professional level, there should be a strong leader at the helm. In addition to being a knowledgeable musician, a band leader should be organized, efficient, a clear communicator, and fun. A band leader should provide musicians with the means for learning repertoire for the band. For instance, if a band is going to work from lead sheets or specific arrangements, they should be neatly compiled either into a notebook/binder or on a file to be read off of a tablet. If musicians are expected to learn the music on their own, a band

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leader should provide reference recordings. Also, if there are rehearsals involved, they should be run in a time-efficient manner with specific expectations communicated beforehand. This way a band will be able to quickly work through a large amount of repertoire. Professional musicians juggle multiple commitments and rehearsal time is often limited.

Once gigs are being booked, musicians should be provided with all the necessary information in a simple and clear format. This would include the event, start/end time, load-in time, location, repertoire, dress code, and payment. During the gig itself, band leaders will often need to give cues for breaks, solos, endings, etc., and quickly call tunes or have set lists prepared. Beyond all this, a band leader should foster a relaxed and fun environment where the band and audience can engage with the music and enjoy themselves.

## REPERTOIRE

Outside of the Caribbean, there is a small repertoire of songs that people might expect to hear a steel band play. In my experience, playing in the U.S., this repertoire is limited to those artists who have had commercial success in the U.S. and have some association with Caribbean music. For example, an American who grew up in the 1960s might request a steel band to play Harry Belafonte; from the '70s they may ask for Bob Marley or Jimmy Buffet; '90s it might be *The Little Mermaid*.

Of course, none of those have much to do with actual steel band music, but there is an association with the Caribbean. It would be wise for a steel band to have a few of these tunes in their repertoire. Beyond that, the music performed can largely be decided by the band leader. What has worked well for my band is a mix of music from Trinidad (calypso, soca, and music written for steel band) and recognizable pop and jazz tunes.

Steel Sound Ensemble



## PAN CULTURE

The history of pan should never be far from the mind of any musician performing with these instruments. Pan arose from a violent struggle against cultural repression and is inextricably linked to the identity of Trinidad. Through the efforts of Ellie Mannette, Cliff Alexis, and many other pioneering musicians, pan has become an international instrument, taking root all over the world. Still, its origins are often misunderstood. Regardless of the type of gig, when performing pan there is an element of "edu-tainment." While a pannist may be hired to provide entertainment, it's important for them to find a way of educating their audience by acknowledging and honoring the culture and history of the instrument. This can mean including a brief history as part of a concert, or simply talking with interested audience members after a gig. I have even created school programs geared towards educating students about the instrument.

## TYPES OF GIGS/BOOKING

When a new ensemble starts trying to book gigs, one of the first things needed is a high-quality video of the band performing. The video(s) must be easily accessible online with a simple link. Many potential clients will also want a song list that contains at least enough music to cover two sets.

One common gig that can be great, especially for young musicians, is a cruise ship. Several companies hire solo or small ensemble pan groups to play on the deck during cruises through the Caribbean. To get these gigs, musicians need to work directly with a company or go through an agency that specifically hires musicians and entertainers for cruise work. For me, doing a cruise ship gig when I was fresh out of music school was a wonderful way to travel and provided me with some much-needed professional experience in the early stages of my career.

When working in a local market, musicians need to get the word out in any way possible. A good way to start is contacting any local agency that is active in booking bands. This might be the type of agency that books cover and party bands for weddings and other events. Getting on one of these agencies' rosters can yield some bookings. Another idea is to use a booking website designed for people to hire bands directly. These sites often involve a small monthly fee, but if the service is providing contacts that lead to gigs, then it can be worth it. New bands may also need to do some old-fashioned hustling by contacting venues directly. This would involve identifying venues that have regular live music where a steel band might work (restaurants, bars, music venues, country clubs, summer concert series, or festivals), figuring out who in charge of booking, and pitching the band.

## SECURING THE GIG

Once a potential client is interested, they should see a video example of the band so that they know exactly what to expect. Then the discussion of payment can begin. When deciding on a



band fee, it is important for musicians not to undervalue themselves, keeping in mind that their skills often took years to acquire. It is usually best for a band leader to ask the potential client what type of budget is available. This way the client will not get scared off if the number is too high, and the musicians will not lose out on money if there is a large budget. Because I work as a quartet, trio, and soloist, I can accommodate most budgets. Sometimes the client wants to know the band's fee up front, in which case the band will need to have an agreed upon figure based on the number of players, amount of time, location, etc.

Another thing to keep in mind is the fundamental difference between gigging at a restaurant and bar verses being hired to play a wedding, party, or corporate event. The restaurant or bar manager hiring bands is trying to make money and thus will often spend as little as possible on live music. On the other hand, event planners has a budget that they are ready to spend.

Once the date, time, place, and price are agreed upon, it should all be presented in a performance contract that both parties must sign. Some venues will have their own performance contracts they will want to use, but most often it will be the responsibility of the band leader to provide one. The contract should include when the payment should be made, and if it is an outdoor event, as steel drum gigs often are, what happens in the event of inclement weather.

## CONCLUSION

I hope this article can provide young pannists with some guidance on how to effectively pursue gigging on their instrument. With some concerted effort, these gigs can provide a steady income stream and a fulfilling outlet for skills developed on pan.

**Patrick Fitzgibbon** is a musician based in the Detroit area who has made his career performing, teaching, and composing. Patrick is a professor of music at Oakland University, where he teaches courses in world music, aural skills, and steel band. He regularly performs with many of Detroit's top musicians as well as his own quintet (Patrick Fitzgibbon Band), and his steel drum ensemble (Steel Sound) and Rela Percussion. His original compositions can be heard on his albums *The Travelers* and *Just Ahead* and have been published with TapSPACE and C. Alan Publications. His compositions have been licensed for use by Ford, Bosch Automotive, and Investigation Discovery Studios. Patrick earned his bachelor's degree in music performance from Michigan State University, his master's degree from Oakland University, and has studied traditional music in India, Ghana, Jamaica, and Trinidad.



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# State of the Art of Interactive Drumming

By Robert J. Damm

**T**he PAS Interactive Drumming Committee (IDC) sponsored a panel discussion on the state of the art of drum circles at PASIC 2022. Robert J. Damm moderated the panel, which consisted of Jim Boneau, puck glass, Arthur Hull, and K. Michelle “Yeshima” Lewis. “Drum Circles Suck!” was the provocative title for the session in which panelists were confronted head-on with questions generated from negative press about drum circles. While these negative comments included some valid criticism, they also reflected some misconceptions and stereotypes. The panelists reacted to negative comments about drum circles and candidly discussed negative experiences they have had in drum circles.

This dialogue led to reflections on how to facilitate more successful interactive drumming events and illuminating perspectives on best practices to foster musicality and positive social interaction. Highlights from the session are shared below.

**Jim Boneau:** Certainly, I’ve had negative experiences. I don’t go through life thinking I’m not going to have negative experiences. That attitude helped me learn that I want to move drum circles towards musicality. I don’t have an expectation that a group of third graders is going to get to a professional level, but I still want to give them the experience of a musical connection. I was

reintroduced to music and drumming as an adult when somebody came and led a drum circle at my place of business. That drum circle was socially connecting because there was a facilitator who set the intention of “We’re going to create music, and we’re going to connect socially.” Furthermore, that facilitator had the skills to help us do it. My grounding is in facilitated, community-based events. I have gone to other places where a facilitator is not necessarily welcome because the group has played together for a long time and has a different experience. There are different flavors and types of drum circles.

**puck glass:** i did not enjoy the first few drum circle events i attended. They

were part of my coursework at school, and we were required to go to them as music-therapy majors. Looking back now, i think a lot of my negative reaction was from being a little afraid of the situation. i was showing up with expectations that affected how i received the experience. The drum circles were being facilitated by students who were uncomfortable facilitating, and everybody could feel that anxiety. My style of drum circle is not “Let’s play in the park without our shoes.” There are ways i like to facilitate and ways i like to be facilitated. Not every space has to be for every person. That doesn’t mean it’s an unwelcoming space; it just isn’t my space.

PASIC 2022 Panel (L-R): Robert Damm, Yeshima, Arthur Hull, puck glass, Jim Boneau



**Arthur Hull:** The words “drum circle” cover a vast array of amazing opportunities to make connections, share spirit, and do rhythm care. What I have found — from people who are working with prenatal drum circles all the way to people who are doing hospice drum circles and everything in between — is that the negativity comes from a judgement regarding the lack of connection. My first negative experience was my first rainbow-gathering, hippie, thunder drummer circle where we dug a ten-foot-wide pit to sit in and another pit for the fire. We just floundered for two-and-a-half days. Crazy! An amazing, loud, noisy, quiet, tired, and bloody experience. When you walk into a hippie thunder drummer circle in the park, you will find moments of connection and bliss and beauty amongst the chaos, and that’s what most of the participants are trying to experience.

From the PASIC point of view, where there are a lot of professional percussionists, even walking into the drum circles that we have facilitated here, there’s an over judgement. Sometimes, loudness hurts, and it’s our responsibility as facilitators to keep the volume down. I say, “The softer the volume, the more the listening, and the more the music.” Even in a family-friendly community drum circle, you start with joyful noise — not music and connections — and move the group towards musicality, to that place where it isn’t the rhythmical expertise that defines the quality of the music. Rather, it’s the connection that you help them make with, to, and for each other.

**Yeshima:** There are drum circles for therapeutic purposes, recreational purposes, and so on. It’s the context in which we are making a judgment call that must be considered. I have attended a few drum circles in which I did not have a good experience. This was because I’m a highly sensitive person and the big and loud events do not help me, or make me feel good. These experiences helped me learn what I like to do as

a facilitator. If I’m going in as a percussionist who loves drumming and loves playing solos, then I appreciate the opportunity to express myself. I may have attended a drum circle that I did not like, but there may be other people who would have said that particular drum circle was the most amazing experience they’ve ever had. That’s the beauty of this buffet of opportunities and experiences in group drumming that is assembled in a circle and includes instruments that you can strike, shake, or scrape.

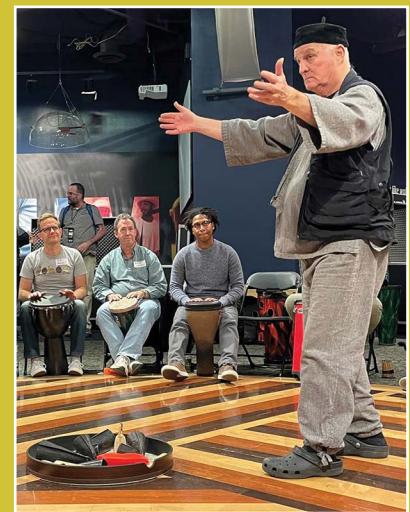
*In a Facebook post, an individual concluded that people in a drum circle don’t understand how to play accompaniment parts, and everyone solos at the same time, instead of taking turns, which results in chaos — defined as complete confusion and disorder. Panelists spoke about the role of soloing in a drum circle and how they handle the situation where some participants want to solo the whole time while some participants never want to solo.*

**glass:** i care about this question because i am in the “never want to solo” group. Participants come to drum circles as different people with different needs. i don’t want someone to solo the whole time because that is not what it means to listen. i often lean into the question “Why are we here?” As a facilitator, i may not say it in so many words, but the answer is, “We are here to make music together and to communicate with each other in various ways.” Facilitators must address the issue that some people in the group are talking a lot. Being heard is important, so if no one is responding to you and people can’t demonstrate that they are listening, then the group is not having a conversation; someone in the group is on a rant. There is no ranting allowed in the drum circle. i make it clear before the circle starts that “no” is a valuable response. Consent matters in all forms and ways, so if participants don’t want to do “a thing,” they are not required to do “a thing.” The opportunity for solo-

ing exists and the group would love to hear an individual’s voice because this is a situation in which participants have a chance to express themselves.

**Hull:** The person who wrote that statement about “parts, accompaniment, and solos” actually knows what he is talking about from the context of a musician, or a percussionist, or a culturally specific trained drummer. We are facilitators of entry-level, accessible drum circles. We go into schools and music-therapy situations. We work with people who have Alzheimer’s disease. We do family-friendly, community drum circles. People who show up to these events don’t have that sense of soloing or accompanying, at all. They don’t have that kind of understanding and musical sensibility; we do.

Our job as facilitators is to embrace the joyful noise and start manipulating, and “teaching without teaching,” by saying things like “All the low drums keep on playing and everybody else stop.” One of the low drummers hap-



The words “drum circle” cover a vast array of amazing opportunities to make connections, share spirit, and do rhythm care.  
—Arthur Hull



pens to be grandma, and she goes, “Oh, there are other low drummers, and I’m a low drummer, and we’re a team,” and the whole group comes back in. The people who were listening will never not hear the low drummers.

Facilitators are sneaky in the way we guide participants to the place where they find out that less is more; that instead of using all your notes to fill up space, you can use your notes to make space for other people to be creative. The traditional, culturally specific rhythm people look at a drum circle and see it as a total disrespect to the culture that they are studying as traditionalists, and as irresponsible in relationship to sharing the music. There’s no music there. The music is in the hearts of the people sharing their rhythmical spirit, and the facilitator’s job is to guide participants to that.

**Yeshima:** Some people don’t realize they are soloing the whole time. They are not completely aware that they are covering up beautiful music because they are so far off into the zone. I can’t be the judge of what that person is experiencing. That’s not my role as a facilitator. What I can do when a person

is soloing is get everybody quiet and then cut the group off so that person gets to solo. Then I call everyone back with, “One, two, back to the groove.” At that point, everybody is synched into the amazing thing that the soloist was doing and then we go on.

**Boneau:** People show up to a drum circle because they want to play. It is important to create an inclusive environment for that person who doesn’t know that we are trying to create a shared space of dialogue and it’s not just about one person. As facilitators, we must establish the awareness that a drum circle is about all of us. We serve the group in so many ways. We help people see that life is not an either-or situation, it’s a both-and situation.

**Hull:** There are two kinds of ignorant soloists. There are people playing “loud and happy and excited” and there are soloists who have chops and they’ve been trained inside their culturally-specific area what soloing is according to that culture. A jembe player who has the ability to solo has worked up to the point where soloing means nobody else is soloing, and they are ignorant in relationship to sharing the space. Then there are soloists with an agenda who think, “I’m going to show them that I have chops. Look at me!” One way to deal with the ignorant soloist or the agenda soloist is to help them understand that they need to share the space with others. I find three or four soloists and then I showcase them together, taking turns, and bring them all together. Hopefully they get tired enough that they will quiet down so we can all play together.

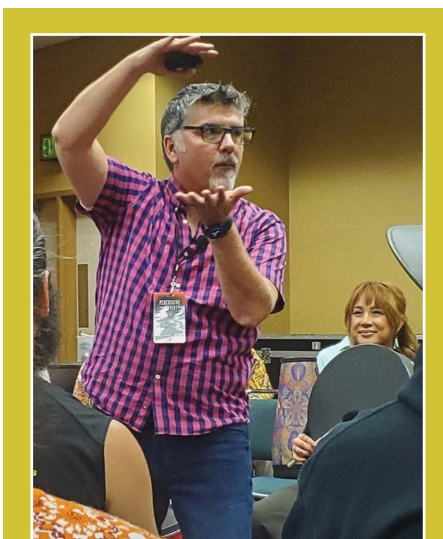
**glass:** It is important to add that this issue is context-specific. If I’m going to facilitate a group one time, I’ll handle it very differently than if this is a group I’m going to see six times. If there is a therapeutic goal to the drum circle event, I might recognize that a person may feel unheard in life. If I know that, I might intentionally give that person the opportunity to play something and have

the group respond — call-and-response. This demonstrates that the person is a valued member of the community and is being heard.

**Hull:** The definition is in the context. At Liberty Park in Toronto, every Tuesday night, in the summer, 300 people grab all the picnic benches and make a huge 50-foot circle. Out of the 300 people, there are maybe 100 soloists from the point of view that you think they are soloing, but they don’t see it that way. It’s a fantastic event for some people, but other people think there are too many soloists because they are thinking about that context. We generally talk about facilitated rhythm-based events and now it’s more definable, and manipulatable, and persuadable regarding moving people towards connection that results in musicality. There is a whole other side, because in therapy, those drummers are not soloing; they are expressing something.

*Another opinion posted on Facebook was the statement that “Drum circles suck.” A person went on to say that drum circles “end up a cacophonous mess because most people who participate in them are (a) not drummers, (b) high, or (c) not drummers who are high.” Panelists were asked to address the unfortunate association of drugs or alcohol that some people have with drum circles.*

**Hull:** Members of the Drum Circle Facilitators Guild (DCFG) have been trying desperately for many years to educate people to see the ignorance of that statement. What that person defined is a Sunday drum circle in the park that is unfacilitated and anybody can show up. The drum brings in all kinds of people. Years ago, that was the definition of a drum circle. I was part of that movement; it was wonderful and horrible at the same time. I finally took action to help people listen to each other. Now look at who and where we are in relationship to the facilitated process that we have created and developed over the last 30 years. That kind of drum cir-



An important strategy is to create a welcoming environment.  
—Jim Boneau

cle still exists today and is an entry-level experience for some people who go to two or three of these and then ask, “Is that all there is?” The answer is “No, that’s not all there is!” We’ve been able to take rhythm-based and facilitated events into almost every population that exists on the planet, not just in our culture, which is amazing, powerful, and beautiful.

*The person who was so against drum circles concluded that he wanted no part of the “dreaded drum circle of death” experience with so called “non-drummers.” Panelists considered the question of successfully facilitating an interactive drumming event in which individuals with significant drumming experience and novices with no drumming experience can come together in a way in which everyone has a musically and socially satisfying experience.*

**glass:** The concept of a “non-drummer” is problematic. I don’t know if I’ve ever met a “non-drummer.” I’ve worked with a lot of populations such as medically fragile people and older adults. I’ve worked with plenty of people who consider themselves non-drummers. But if



Participants come to drum circles as different people with different needs.  
—puck glass

you can hit, strike, and shake, you’re a drummer. There are people who have never played drums, or feel uncomfortable doing so, but they can be facilitated. They are still drummers; they just don’t know it yet. Anyone who wants to participate is a drummer! Is it sometimes difficult to walk into a drum circle as an experienced drummer and play with “non-drummers”? Yes, it can be. If you are showing up because you want to have a high-level music experience, then you are not in the right place. Or, it’s time to figure out what your place is in that environment. Even if there is a facilitator, you can be a part of making sure this group functions well because the person next to you is a drummer who wants to play and be happy and be a part of something social, and probably wants to learn something. A lot of people who might consider themselves “non-drummers” still want to participate. If you can take a moment to show them something like how to make three different sounds on one drum, they can become good drummers somewhat quickly.

**Robert J. Damm:** Another percussionist recently posted an essay on Facebook prescribing drum circles as shared community music experiences where everyone improvises, creates, and plays for fun. He explained that a drumming activity that is led or conducted is not a drum circle, is something quite the opposite of a drum circle, so it should be called something else. It seems no two people have the same idea of what a drum circle is. Yeshema provided an example of a unique type of facilitated interactive drumming experiences that led to discourse with the audience about a wide variety of facilitated drumming events and what vocabulary might best describe these myriad programs.

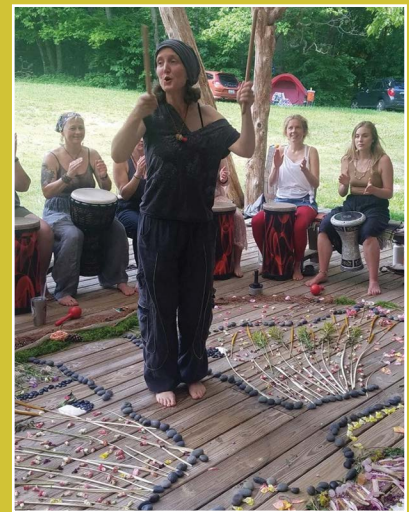
**Yeshima:** I do “Sing, Say, Drum, Pray,” which is an interactive drumming event in the shape of a circle with percussion instruments that you can strike, shake, or scrape. It was born out

of a Baha’i convention I attended. My co-facilitator sings mantras that come out of Baha’i faith texts. She reads off a text that speaks to her and relates it to a chosen topic such as transformation or letting go. The people in the group then come up with a word inspired by that quote, which turns into a rhythm, and we begin from there.

**Greg Whitt** (Executive Director of the DCFG, who was in the audience): In the same way that carpenters don’t talk about hammers and other tools when they explain what they do, we facilitators should focus on outcomes such as building connections or fostering wellness when we describe our work.

**Hull:** Babatunde Olatunji said that if we keep doing what we’re doing and stay on the mission, we will eventually have a drum in every household.

**Arianna Monge** (Rhythm and Wellness Manager for Remo, who was in the audience): John Fitzgerald gave us



I may have attended a drum circle that I did not like, but there may be other people who would have said that particular drum circle was the most amazing experience they’ve ever had.  
—Yeshima

the language of “facilitated interactive rhythm experience.”

*The panelists were asked by a member of the audience to recommend strategies to engage reluctant drum circle participants.*

**Yeshima:** “Everybody rumble!”

**Hull:** Rumble games are safe. Nobody is going to be embarrassed or forced to perform. Saying “play this rhythm!” can be intimidating to people. Out of a rumble game can come simple rhythms, or you can pass out foundations for them to explore. Keep your heart open, keep the space open, and “they will come.”

**Boneau:** An important strategy is to create a welcoming environment. I make sure to smile, greet participants, and learn their names. Another strategy is to create relationships by asking if they have played in a circle before or enjoy other kinds of art. Find a way to have a connection with participants so they can start to develop trust. As a facilitator, I don’t know what participants are

bringing into the room. I don’t know what their home life is like. I don’t know what a kid just said to them before they came into the room. I try to create a safe space before we even hit the drum.

**John Yost** (Co-chair of the IDC, who was in the audience): A good facilitator teaches the group to listen to itself, helps make space for musical dialogue, and connects people to the “one.” This all comes full circle when we realize that people drumming together, even in a circle, can be any number of experiences. It could be a class, a ritual, an ethno-specific jam of some sort, an unled drum circle, or a facilitated circle. This work is constantly being redefined. There are so many ways to use the tools we have as percussionists to help people connect to themselves and each other.

**Damm:** Most of the negative press about drum circles comes from people who are comparing drum circles with culturally-specific percussion ensembles

or referring to unfacilitated or badly facilitated drumming events. In a jembe/dundun ensemble, for example, participants play assigned parts to perform traditional music. In a drum circle, participants make up patterns, which may be inspired by a culturally-specific foundation, but never consider what they are doing to be a performance. It’s enough that people who have never played a drum before keep a steady beat and create simple patterns that fit with the groove. The intention in drum circles is to help participants feel the unique joy that comes from playing drums and to feel a sense of community in the synergy of in-the-moment freestyle group drumming.

**Hull:** I hope our panel and resulting article reveal the depth and commitment of the thousands of people who use rhythm care as a life enhancement tool and are dedicated to using FIRE – Facilitated Interactive Rhythm Experiences – to make the world a better place.

**Robert J. Damm** is Professor of Music, Director of Music Education Partnerships, and Coordinator for the Minor in Music and Culture at Mississippi State University, where he teaches World Music, African American Music, Music of Africa, Music of Latin America, and Native American Music. He studied in Cuba, Ghana, and Mali; is certified in Orff-Schulwerk and Smithsonian Folkways World Music Pedagogy. He also directs Jembe Den African percussion ensemble.

**Jim Boneau** has collaborated with Arthur Hull for over 20 years in drum circle facilitation and leadership/mentorship. Jim serves as curriculum designer, master facilitator, and teacher of the Village Music Circles Mentor Training. Jim is also an executive coach, mas-

ter facilitator of leadership workshops, and author of *The Rumble Zone: Leadership Strategies in the Rough & Tumble of Change*.

**puck glass** is passionate about making music accessible to all and has taught and facilitated music for people of all generations. puck received undergraduate degrees in music education and music therapy from Seton Hill University under the direction of RJ Heid, and a master’s degree in music performance from the University of Missouri under the direction of Megan Arns. puck is Communications Manager for the PAS Diversity Alliance and on the Professional Opportunities Committee. puck received the 2016 Outstanding PAS Supporter Award.

**Arthur Hull** is the founder of Village Music Circles and is at the core of the modern, facilitated, drum-circle movement. He has taught thousands of drum circle facilitators around the world through his intensive training Playshops. His books include *Drum Circle Spirit*, *Drum Circle Facilitation*, *Drum Circle Games*, and the *Drum Circle Facilitators Handbook*.

**K. Michelle “Yeshima” Lewis** is passionate about drumming, teaching, and strengthening community. An educator and percussionist of 26-plus years, Yeshima, through DrumSmart LLC, provides group drumming opportunities in world music using world music pedagogy, drum circle facilitation to support social and emotional learning, and professional development for music educators.



# Cage's Percussion Players: Gender and Amateurism in the Percussion Ensemble

By Haley J. Nutt

*John Cage, Professor of Percussion at Cornish school, sat at a grand piano and raised a half-inch board high in his right hand. Semi-circled around him were half a dozen girls with drums, cymbals, dinner bells, woodblocks and other odd lots of looser hardware and kitchen furnishings, including a lime rickey bottle (empty) and a tin wash boiler. Professor Cage signaled with his piece of flooring, and his little band of noise makers swung into action.<sup>1</sup>*

Most percussionists would agree that John Cage was an indispensable figure in the history of Western percussion.<sup>2</sup> The percussion ensemble works he composed in the late 1930s and early 1940s, all of which feature global percussion instruments and “found” sounds that demonstrate novel approaches to timbre, rhythm, and form, paved a path forward for the burgeoning genre. These compositions, especially the popular “Third Construction” (1941), can be heard today by a collegiate or professional group at almost every PASIC, not to mention the dozens of performances that occur on college or university campuses across the world every year. Though Cage continues to receive immense recognition and respect across the international percussion community, and these early percussion works are highly esteemed, his women colleagues and their lack of technical skill as percussionists are rarely acknowledged for their impact on the composer’s experimentation with non-traditional techniques and instruments.

A comprehensive examination of the programming, specific performers, and media’s reception of Cage’s all-percussion concerts on the West Coast helps to contextualize an unprecedented moment in the history of the percussion ensemble in which women were granted agency to contribute to the birth of the genre. In addition, the exploration of contemporary norms in regards to gender and amateur “musicking” of that time period will ultimately demonstrate how women’s roles were essential in the

cultivation of a performance aesthetic that celebrated camaraderie, collaboration, and artistic curiosity.

John Cage’s interests in non-Western music and percussion instruments were first shaped through his interaction and friendship with American avant-gardist Henry Cowell in New York in the early 1930s. Cowell was at the time heavily involved with the Pan-American Association of Composers (PAAC), an organization that made possible the first extant percussion compositions in the Western world by facilitating connections and collaborations between modernist composers in the Americas. Cowell was in many ways at the center of the earliest period of percussion ensemble development: in 1933, the same year the two men met, Cowell played piano for the premiere of Edgard Varèse’s “Ionisation” and published “Fugue for Eight Percussion Instruments” by PAAC-affiliate William Russell in his New Music Orchestra Series.<sup>3</sup> Although the young Cage was initially interested in extending the twelve-tone techniques of the Second Viennese School, his studies with Cowell, and particularly his enrollment in Cowell’s Primitive and Folk Origins of Music course at New York’s New School for Social Research in 1934, would soon lead to a change to his compositional aesthetic.<sup>4</sup>

In 1935, Cage returned to Los Angeles to briefly study with Arnold Schoenberg, but continued to correspond with Cowell for the next several years; his first two works for percussion, “Quartet” (1935) for any four percussion instruments and “Trio” (1936) for a small assortment of woodblocks, tom-toms, and bass drum, also date from this period.<sup>5</sup>

After working as a dance accompanist at UCLA in 1937, Cage relocated to Northern California in early 1938 and showed up unannounced on the doorstep of another of Cowell’s protégés: Lou Harrison.<sup>6</sup> The two bonded over their similar interests in non-Western music and modern dance accompaniment, prompting Harrison to introduce Cage to choreographer and

dancer Bonnie Bird, who was in California at the time to assist with a summer course at Mills College. As the recently hired Director of the Cornish School's dance program, Bird was in desperate need of a skilled accompanist and described to Cage a large closet in the dance studio that contained over 300 percussion instruments.<sup>7</sup>

It should be noted that the Cornish School, founded in 1914 by pianist and voice teacher Nellie Cornish, was a well-established place of learning by the late 1930s, nationally recognized for its holistic approach to fine arts education. Known today as the Cornish College of the Arts, the school continues to uphold its historic legacy of supporting and empowering artistic experimentation and innovation.

The progressive approach of Cornish and the modern dance department's instrument closet intrigued Cage, so he accepted Bird's offer and moved to Seattle with his wife, Xenia, a few months later. The institution's reputation and resources would soon become key to the cultivation of a West Coast approach to percussion composition and performance as Cage, surrounded by open-minded dancers and with hundreds of globally sourced instruments at his disposal, could now fully explore the possibilities of percussion.

On December 9, 1938, the first-ever, all-percussion concert in Western history took place at Cornish. The event was presented by "John Cage and Group," which consisted of Doris Dennison, a Cornish dancer who taught eurhythmics and rhythmic analysis courses; Xenia Cage, John Cage's wife and avant-garde painter and sculptor by profession; Merce Cunningham, a dance student at Cornish at the time; Edna Mae Coffman, likely another dance student; and Joyce Wike, an anthropology student and dancer. The concert was "assisted by" Bonnie Bird and three of her star dancers – Dorothy Herrmann, Syvilla Fort, and Merce Cunningham – who performed an original modern dance choreography to Ray Green's "3 Inventories of Casey Jones."<sup>8</sup> This work, as well as the other five compositions on the program, featured quintessential "found" instruments, including glass bottles, bamboo sticks, iron pipes, and automobile parts. With the exception of Cage's two pieces ("Quartet" and "Trio"), Cowell had published the other three works on the program in his 1936 (No. 18) *New Music Orchestra Series*. These include Green's "3 Inventories of Casey Jones," William Russell's "Waltz and Fox Trot," and Gerald Strang's "Music for 3 Players." Although there is little newspaper coverage of the historic event, "3 Inventories of Casey Jones" was performed again by Bird and her Cornish Dancers at the Tacoma College of Puget Sound on January 11, 1939, with Cage, Coffman, Dennison, and Wike performing the percussion parts.<sup>9</sup>

The broader Seattle community was more informed of the next all-percussion concert of the season, which occurred on Friday, May 19, 1939. Notices of the event were advertised in the *Seattle Star*, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, and *N.E. Independence* over the course of the week, highlighting the public's increasing

interest in the convergences of percussion and modern dance.<sup>10</sup> This program again featured Cage's "Trio" and Russell's "Waltz and Fox Trot," as well as new works, including Russell's "March Suite" and "Studies in Cuban Rhythms," Harrison's "Counter-dance in the Spring" and "Fifth Sinfony," Cowell's "Pulse," and Johanna Beyer's "Three Movements for Percussion," a work composed just a few months prior and dedicated to Cage.<sup>11</sup> The performers of the concert were the same as in December, but with the addition of four more women: Imogene Horsley, a historical musicologist; Margaret Jansen, a pianist on faculty; and Lenore Hovey and Lenore Thayer, both likely students at Cornish.<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps the most compelling evidence of both the essentiality of women in West Coast percussion performance and the localized success of Cage's endeavors is the final all-percussion concert at Cornish that took place on December 9, 1939. As seen in the published program for the concert [Figure 1], twelve performers from various departments within the school participated, all of which were women, and twenty-three individuals or couples from across the Pacific Northwest sponsored the event.<sup>13</sup> Recently composed works by Cowell and friends were again featured on this program, but perhaps the most significant addition is Amadeo Roldán's "Ritmicas V and VI," two short pieces com-

Figure 1: Cage's third concert at the Cornish School in Seattle, December 9, 1939.

**PROGRAM**

**PULSE** . . . . . **COWELL**  
 dragon's mouths, wood blocks, drums, tom toms, rice bowls, temple gongs, cymbals, gongs, pipe lengths, brake drums

**FUGUE** . . . . . **RUSSELL**  
 snare drum, xylophone, tympani, piano, cymbals, triangle, orchestral bells, bass drum

**DIRGE** . . . . . **COUPER**  
 two pianos, one of which is tuned a quarter tone higher than the other

**RITMICAS, V and VI** . . . . **ROLDAN**  
 claves, maracas, guiro, cow bells, quijadas, bongos, drums, marimbula

**EN TIEMPO DE SON**  
**EN TIEMPO DE RUMBA**

**INTERMISSION**

**CONSTRUCTION IN METAL** . **CAGE**  
 thundersheets, orchestral bells, string piano, sleigh bells, cow bells, temple gongs, brake drums, cymbals, anvil, gongs

**RETURN** . . . . . **COWELL**  
 dragon's mouths, wood blocks, tom toms, bells, cup gongs, gongs, wind bell, cymbal, lion's roar, wailer

**3 DANCE MOVEMENTS** . . . **RUSSELL**  
 dinner bell, steel bar, cymbals, drums, wood blocks, bottle, piano

**WALTZ**  
**MARCH**  
**FOXTROT**

**PLAYERS**

MARIE BALAGNO  
 MARY ANN BIER  
 XENIA CAGE  
 DORIS DENNISON  
 DENISE FARWELL  
 DOROTHY FISHER  
 IMOGENE HORSLEY  
 LENORE HOVEY  
 MARGARET JANSEN  
 MARJORIE LIVINGOOD  
 LENORE THAYER  
 LENORE WARD

**NOTES**

"I honestly believe and formally predict that the immediate future of music lies in the bringing of percussion on one hand, and sliding tones on the other, to as great a state of perfection in construction of composition and flexibility of handling on instruments as older elements are now."  
**HENRY COWELL**

**MILDRED COUPER** lives in Santa Barbara, California. Her "Dirge" is published in the *New Music Quarterly*.

**AMADEO ROLDAN** (1900-1939) was born of Cuban parents in Paris. In 1932 he was appointed Conductor of the Philharmonic Orchestra of Havana.

**WILLIAM RUSSELL** is at present in Los Angeles, where he is engaged with the Chinese Shadow Play Company.

"I felt that noise, the unrelated noise of life, such as this in the subway, had not been battered out as would have been the case with Beethoven still warm in the mind, but it had actually been mastered, subjugated. The composer had taken this hated thing, life, and rigged himself into power over it by his music. The offense had not been held, cooled, varnished over, but annihilated, and life itself made thereby triumphant. This is an important difference. By hearing such music, seemingly so much noise, when I actually came upon noise in reality, I found that I had gone up over it."  
**W. C. WILLIAMS**

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posed nine years prior by the Cuban composer — thus predating Varèse’s “Ionisation” — that had yet to be performed in any country until this evening.

According to an article in the *Seattle Star* published two days later, the concert was received favorably by its 200-person audience. The author of the review, music enthusiast Gilbert Brown, wrote that opinions varied from “a verdict of ‘musical blackout’ to ‘it’s wonderful,’” but he also insisted that “every spectator at least got a bang out of the concert, to judge from the whoops of laughter that greeted the shaking of metal ‘thundersheets,’ the thumping of automobile brake drums, the clang of anvil, the behemothian bellow of a big bull-roarer, and the pounding of tomtoms.”<sup>14</sup> Although Brown makes light of the concert in some ways, his review indicates that, overall, the audiences enjoyed listening to the novel percussion sounds and watching Cage’s group of women — his “little band of noise makers” — perform.

Less than a month later in January 1940, Cage organized an amateur percussion ensemble known as the “Cage Percussion Players.” This group, which included his wife Xenia, Margaret Jansen, and Doris Dennison, as well as Cage and Harrison, immediately began touring across the Pacific Northwest, performing all-percussion concerts at the University of Idaho, the University of Montana, Whitman College in Washington, and Reed College in Oregon.<sup>15</sup>

Following the end of the spring semester at Cornish, the Cages moved back to Los Angeles so that John could teach and establish a research laboratory of percussion at Mills College. Both Jansen and Dennison moved with them, allowing the ensemble to continue concertizing percussion works at Mills and other nearby institutions for the next year and a half.<sup>16</sup> Despite more opportunities to perform the latest percussion compositions, concertgoers continued to perceive the percussion ensemble genre as entertaining and amusing. For example, a writer in the *San Francisco Chronicle* announced the program of Cage and Harrison’s upcoming concert on May 14, 1941 in the following manner: “The orchestra will be composed of drums, gongs, bell, brake drums, and sheet metal, and all selections will be original compositions of Cage and Harrison...You’d think they could at least play ‘Old Man River,’ ho ho.”<sup>17</sup> Due to circumstances of gendered musical aesthetics of the period, it is likely that the audience found the program even more entertaining and novel when they realized that the primary performers were women.

In terms of compositional output, however, this two-year span was the most prolific percussion period for both Cage and Harrison. Notable works written during this time and premiered by the Cage Percussion Players include Cage’s “Second Construction” (1940) and “Third Construction” (1941), Harrison’s “Canticle #1” (1940) and “Song of Quetzalcoatl” (1941), and “Double Music” (1941), which was composed by both Cage and Harrison.<sup>18</sup> These works are significant because they embody the primary stylistic techniques associated with the West Coast ap-

proach to percussion composition and performance: they each incorporate numerous Eastern-inspired and homemade instruments in their works, and they helped to expand the melodic possibilities of so called “non-pitched” instruments through the use of graduated sets of tin cans, tom-toms, or other idiophones and membranophones. Furthermore, these compositions are all written for only four to five percussionists, do not require immense technical skill to perform successfully, and embody a collaborative chamber music approach wherein all performers are equally valuable.

Cage and Harrison were reaching the end of their percussion era in 1942 as John and Xenia Cage relocated to Chicago in January or February, and Harrison moved to Los Angeles to work with Lester Horton’s dance company in August.<sup>19</sup> Cage’s last chamber piece to feature percussion instruments, “Imaginary Landscape No. 3,” was premiered in Chicago at the Arts Club on March 1, 1942.<sup>20</sup> The concert caught the attention of the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) who asked the composer to create a soundtrack for *The City Wears a Slouch Hat* (1942), a radio play by Kenneth Patchen.<sup>21</sup> Hoping that the success of the play would lead to more radio commissions, Cage and Xenia moved to New York that summer. With no promise of employment and lacking the funds to transport his percussion equipment from Chicago, however, the Cages’ fortunes soon turned; following one last all-percussion concert on February 7, 1943, Cage redirected his compositional and concertizing endeavors exclusively to the piano and prepared piano for the remainder of the decade.<sup>22</sup> Without his diverse array of percussion instruments or curious dance-percussionists at his disposal, all resources he once had on the West Coast, Cage was obligated to reevaluate his compositional approach.

The stylistic and technical characteristics of Cage’s percussion ensemble compositions thus reflect the specific social and cultural environments in which he worked while on the West Coast. As previously mentioned, most of the performers were professional dancers who exhibited immense interest in the composer’s ideas, yet had no professional training in percussion performance. Unlike classically trained professionals, these dancers, mostly women, were “grateful for any sounds or noises that could be produced.”<sup>23</sup> To compensate for the performers’ lack of technical skills, Cage avoided writing rolls or other difficult rudimental techniques into his own pieces, and the majority of the works he programmed by other composers were equally undemanding in the utilization of difficult rudiments and orchestral percussion instruments.<sup>24</sup> In fact, none of Cage’s percussion works from this time require a snare drum or other type of military drum, and one of the few works that Cage commissioned during the Cage Percussion Players’ 1941 West Coast tour, Carlos Chávez’s “Tocatta for Percussion Instruments,” was never performed due the ensemble’s inability to play the challenging drum rolls in the opening measures.<sup>25</sup> Although “Third Construction” is arguably Cage’s most challenging percussion



work because of the abundance of polyrhythms and fast tempos, the piece was successively premiered by the woman-dominant ensemble in San Francisco on May 14, 1941.<sup>26</sup>

The West Coast approach is aptly summarized in Cage's own article in *Dance Observer* from 1939 in which the composer describes how his percussion music from this period "could be played by a group of literate amateur musicians, people who had not developed instrumental skills on a professional level and therefore still had time to enjoy playing music together with their friends."<sup>27</sup> Rather than focus on legitimizing their percussion works within the classical music realm, Cage chose instead to prioritize the participation of his friends by writing chamber works that required little technical skill but were still innovative and exciting to perform. As illustrated by the lighthearted nature of the scant reviews and announcements of Cage's percussion concerts printed in local newspapers, the West Coast percussion's impact was relegated to the sidelines of musical culture, yet such a marginalized position allowed women to contribute and codify a percussion performance aesthetic – one modeled on innovation, curiosity, and social bonds – that continues to be celebrated and upheld by contemporary groups today.<sup>28</sup>

The West Coast percussion scene exemplifies gendered themes regarding women and amateurism that date back more than a century in American music culture. As the piano became more affordable and popular among middle and upper-class families in the mid-nineteenth century, women were encouraged to learn the instrument as part of their cultural training to become sober and unselfish members of society. There was an unspoken understanding, however, that a woman would acquire only modest skills to entertain friends and family within the home, without seeking or achieving artistic status.<sup>29</sup>

American society became somewhat more open to female performers in the early twentieth century as tenets of first-wave feminism became more widespread, but the novelty factor of seeing women perform on a public stage was far more essential to the performers' visibility and agency than their technical skills. Indeed, all-women orchestras, jazz bands, and marimba bands were immensely popular in the decades preceding and during World War II, but the success of these all-girl acts largely relied on an acute understanding of gendered performance practices within a highly visual, sexualized, and racialized musical culture. Perceived most often as curious spectacles and cultivated amateurs, women musicians who maintained an appropriate level of desirability and feminine performativity could effectively entertain the American masses without threatening social norms.<sup>30</sup>

Although the participation of women in the percussion ensemble more specifically was relegated to a niche setting along the West Coast, Cage's percussion ventures in the late 1930s and early 1940s also reinforced, and were dictated by, the same gendered cultural practices. Instead of trying to professionalize the

genre within more "serious" circles of art music and soliciting the participation of male musicians, Cage embraced the support of their modern dance community and accepted the amateur accessibility of their percussive endeavors, allowing more women to contribute and cultivate artistic agency. Not only did these women premiere some of the most historic works in percussion ensemble repertoire, but their amateur and novel status helped shape an approach to percussion performance that emphasized community, multidisciplinary, and artistic collaboration.

A comprehensive understanding of Cage's experimental approach to percussion composition, as well as the limited reception of his all-percussion concerts, requires a closer investigation of the complexity of cultural norms across American musical culture, as this article has attempted to illuminate. To fully appreciate the music that was composed and premiered as part of the West Coast percussion movement, the women who were given agency to contribute meaningfully to the genre, within a context that emphasized collaboration and social musicking over perfection and professionalism, must be acknowledged.

## ENDNOTES

1. Gilbert Brown, "You're Wrong—Not Flat-Wheel Tram but Percussion Music," *The Seattle Star*, December 11, 1939, 2.
2. The significance of Cage within the international percussion community is perhaps best exemplified by the PASIC Focus Day theme of 2012, "Thank you, John Cage, for EVERYTHING," which commemorated the composer's 100th birthday. As Focus Day co-host Bill Salek wrote in a *Percussive Notes* article that previewed the event, "Cage was one of the most important pioneers leading us to the state of our art today." Bill Salek, "Focus Day 2012: Thank You, John Cage, for EVERYTHING!" *Percussive Notes* 50, no. 6 (September 2012): 6.
3. Leta E. Miller, "Henry Cowell and John Cage: Intersections and Influences, 1933-1941," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 59, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 57.
4. James Pritchett, Laura Kuhn, and Charles Hiroshi Garrett, "John Cage," *Grove Music Online*, July 10, 2012, accessed May 31, 2022, <https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.ezproxy.library.wvu.edu/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002223954>.
5. "Works Index," *John Cage Trust*, 2016, accessed June 2, 2022, <https://johncage.org/pp/john-cage-works.cfm>.
6. Lou Harrison (1917-2003) had taken Cowell's non-Western music course in the summer of 1935 at the University of California Extension. At the time of meeting Cage, he was working at Mills College as a dance accompanist. Bird originally offered Harrison the job at Cornish, but he was content at Mills. Leta E. Miller and Fredric Lieberman, *Composing a World: Lou Harrison, Musical Wayfarer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 17-8; Leta E. Miller and Fredric Lieberman, *Lou Harrison* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 13.
7. Miller and Lieberman, *Composing a World*, 17.
8. Robert Stevenson, "John Cage on His 70th Birthday: West Coast Background," *Inter-American Music Review* 5, no. 1 (Fall 1982): 11.

9. Ibid.
10. "Seattle Man Music Pioneer," *Seattle Star*, May 12, 1939; "Cage to Direct Concert May 19," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, May 14, 1939; *N.E. Independent*, May 19, 1939.
11. Although a New York resident and PAAC affiliate at the time, Beyer was close friends with Cowell and likely met Cage through Cowell sometime in early 1939. She is one of the only female composers from this pre-war era of percussion ensemble composition. Stevenson, "John Cage on His 70th Birthday," 15.
12. Stevenson, "John Cage on His 70th Birthday," 14.
13. Leta Miller, "Cultural Intersections: John Cage in Seattle (1938–1940)," in *John Cage: Music, Philosophy, and Intention, 1933–1950*, ed. David W. Patterson (New York: Routledge, 2002), 62.
14. Brown, "You're Wrong," 2.
15. Laura Kuhn, "John Cage's Percussion Collection (July 8, 1940)," *John Cage Trust* blog, September 14, 2017, accessed June 27, 2022, <http://johncagetrust.blogspot.com/2017/09/john-cages-percussion-collection-july-8.html>; Leta E. Miller, "The Art of Noise: John Cage, Lou Harrison, and the West Coast Percussion Ensemble," *Perspectives on American Music, 1900–1950*, ed. Michael Saffle (New York: Routledge, 2000), 59; "Doris Adele Dennison 1908–2009," *Mills Quarterly* (Summer 2010): 31.
16. Leta E. Miller, "Cultural Intersections," 81.
17. Herb Caen, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, quoted in B. Michael Williams "John Cage; Professor, Maestro, Percussionist Composer," *Percussive Notes* 36, no. 4 (August 1998): 58.
18. "Second Construction" was premiered at Reed College on February 11, 1940. Harrison's "Canticle #1" was premiered at Mills College on July 18, 1940, on a program that lists seventeen total performers; all six members of the Cage Percussion Players are included on the personnel list, however, so it is likely that these individuals performed the piece. "Third Construction," "Song of Quetzalcoatl," and "Double Music" were all premiered on May 14, 1941, in San Francisco. Miller, "Henry Cowell and John Cage," 48; "Harrison (Lou) Papers: Music Manuscripts," *Online Archive of California*, 2005, accessed June 6, 2022, [https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt3489q4r5/dsc/#aspace\\_6644ca0046b7ecc2fe5c3faad0f4513c](https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt3489q4r5/dsc/#aspace_6644ca0046b7ecc2fe5c3faad0f4513c).
19. Cage had accepted a job teaching an experimental music class at the Chicago School of Design. Miller and Lieberman, *Composing a World*, 21.
20. Kenneth Silverman, *Begin Again: A Biography of John Cage* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2010), 45.
21. Silverman, *Begin Again*, 48–9.
22. It is interesting to note that newspapers cite marimba pioneer Ruth Stuber Jeanne as Cage's primary assistant for this performance, yet another demonstration of women's support in the composer's percussive endeavors. N.S., "Percussion 'Music' Heard at Concert," *New York Times*, February 8, 1943, *ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times with Index*, 14; Silverman, *Begin Again*, 55–6.
23. John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 86.
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25. John Richard Hall, "Development of the Percussion Ensemble through the Contributions of the Latin American Composers Amadeo Roldán, José Aldévol, Carlos Chávez, and Alberto Ginastera," (DMA diss., Ohio State University, 2008), 61.
26. Miller, "The Art of Noise," 59.
27. John Cage, "Goal: New Music, New Dance," *Dance Observer* 6, no. 10 (December 1939): 296–97.
28. Sō Percussion, one of the leading contemporary chamber percussion groups of the twenty-first century, emphasizes these same ideals in their vision statement located on their website: "To create a new model of egalitarian artistic collaboration that respects history, champions innovation and curiosity, and creates an essential social bond through service to our audiences and our communities." "Mission and Vision," accessed June 29, 2022, [sopercussion.com/about/](http://sopercussion.com/about/).
29. Nancy Stewart, "Women in American Music, 1800–1918," in *Women and Music: A History*, ed. Karin Pendle (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 199.
30. A level of desirability and feminine performativity deemed "appropriate" differed depending on the musical genre being performed, the race and class of the performers, the instruments played, and many other factors. For more specific investigations of this phenomenon within a variety of scenarios, I recommend the following sources: Beth Abelson Macleod, "Whence comes the Lady Tympanist?" *Gender and Instrumental Musicians in America, 1853–1990*, *Journal of Social History* 27, no. 2 (Winter 1993): 291–308; Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); Kristin A. McGee, *Some Liked It Hot: Jazz Women in Film and Television, 1928–1959* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2009); and Katherine Elizabeth Ramsey, "Frédérique Petrides and the Orchestrette Classique: A Women's Orchestra Performing Contemporary American Music," (MA Thesis, University of Iowa, 2015).

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# Equipping College Students for a Marching Percussion Career in the U.S.

Dr. Thomas P. Goddard

**T**he mission of a balanced music curriculum is to equip college students for a career that interests them. Every year, many students graduate with a desire to pursue the marching arts as a vocation, but without sufficient guidance on how to achieve that goal. Despite the various ways in which marching percussionists receive training, gain experience, and become successful in an ever-changing artistic activity, there is a lack of research that defines a clear path toward establishing a fruitful career within the field.

This study examines the perspectives of marching percussion professionals who have carved their path in the industry. Guided by Creswell's research design model, this qualitative inquiry identifies viewpoints from marching percussionists that can be used to guide the creation of a comprehensive percussion curriculum.<sup>1</sup> Illustrating the experiences of people who have made marching percussion an occupation, surveys were conducted with many successful marching percussionists to create a list of surfacing motifs represented in their stories. Outlooks on performing, teaching, composing/arranging, and the industry have emerged as themes integral to the success of one's marching percussion employment. Therefore, these motifs are essential learning elements throughout college.

Having a professional's knowledge and experience is needed to develop a more efficient percussion curriculum that will improve the discipline of marching percussion. The field of inquiry in marching percussion has only recently been explored as a valid research model. This project serves as an example of the intersection of this young genre of percussion mixing with the traditional percussion curriculum. Additionally, this study and the ideas of new percussion curricula could encourage further investigation by other percussionists to apply this growing research method to all styles within the genre of percussion.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SURVEY

To learn how professionals in the marching percussion activity have achieved and maintained productive careers, the acquisition of skills and the application of their proficiencies need to be identified and scrutinized. With that goal in mind, a survey was developed to answer two Research Questions:

1. What crucial skills must a college percussion curriculum incorporate to prepare the percussion major to begin a successful career in the field of marching percussion?
2. In what ways can collegiate students apply college percussion training for an

occupation in the field of marching percussion?

Anonymous participants for the survey were selected from several Facebook rudimental and marching percussion groups that are closed to the public. Respondents must have had prior professional marching percussion experience to become an authorized representative of the social media faction, so the sample population contains reliable and relevant experience. A total of 107 surveys were completed, which serves the more distinctive marching percussion subgroup in the United States well. Eligibility for participation in the survey includes participants being 18 years of age or older, being employed in the field of marching percussion at the high school/college level or DCI/WGI level, and having at least one year of experience as a performer, educator, or composer/arranger in marching percussion.

The survey questionnaire took place on Qualtrics XM, which hosted the survey online and provided a template for preparing the format of the inquiry. The survey questionnaire is presented in Figure 1.

The survey was formatted so that it could be completed on a computer, tablet, or smartphone with internet access. The cross-sectional inquiry was available for participants to access online starting on



August 23, 2021, and was open for seven days. The survey response was incredible, despite participants traveling home and recovering from DCI World Championship Finals, teaching percussion and band camps, and starting the fall semester as a student or educator.

A combination of descriptive statistics and thematic analysis conveyed the results of the survey responses. For example, the Likert scale and dichotomous questions used descriptive statistics to realize the survey outcome. Data from Likert-type questions “may be considered interval level, [so] a number represents the strength of the responses from positive to negative: always (5), frequently (4), sometimes (3), rarely (2), never (1).”<sup>2</sup> This step involved finding the “mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum,” and variance as the statistic choices.<sup>3</sup> From this analysis, the researcher ascertained the feelings from the participant sample about the inquiry.

Thematic analysis constituted the other portion of investigating the data. The select-all-that-apply and free-response questions involved examining themes among the responses. Recurring words and phrases were pursued that interpreted emerging themes from the data to complete this analysis. Sorting the data and organizing it in a table was a suitable way to display the findings in an organized design. From this structure, a narrative explained the survey outcome and related it to marching percussion.

## RESEARCH QUESTION ONE

Research Question One seeks to identify which crucial skills a college percussion curriculum must incorporate to prepare a percussion major to begin a successful career in the field of marching percussion. It can be hypothesized that: Crucial skills that a college percussion curriculum must incorporate to prepare the percussion major to begin a successful career in the field of marching percussion should include performing, teaching, and composing/arranging. Various questions in the survey are designed to test this hypothesis.

## Performing

Survey Item Four asks how well-prepared respondents felt for their first significant marching percussion performance (college, DCI, WGI, theme park, stage show, etc.). The results of this Likert scale inquiry indicate that 4.67% felt unprepared, 28.04% were “somewhat prepared,” and 67.29% believed they were prepared. These results reveal that many participants received significant ensemble and private practice in their training to strengthen their performance. This can be attributed to the typical trajectory of four years in high school marching band, possibly high school indoor drumline experience, and a college marching band membership.

Survey Item Seven supports the results from Survey Item Four when it requests

how the participant learned marching percussion elements. “Drumline/marching band” experience amounted to 49.76%, “Private instruction/lessons” held 23.92%, “YouTube videos/media” contained 18.18%, and 8.13% selected “Other” and designated their appropriate responses to this “select-all-that-apply” inquiry.

Of those who chose to specify the exact place they learned marching percussion elements, five articulated DCI experience, four expressed taking lessons from DCI/WGI veterans and/or DCI/WGI clinics/audition camps, and one learned by drumming with others. The culmination of these reactions proves that observing recordings of DCI/WGI performances, learning in private and ensemble settings, and preparing for auditions benefits the learner and aids performance technique.

Figure 1: Survey questionnaire

**INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR THESIS**  
*Equipping College Students for a Marching Percussion Career  
in the United States*

1. How well prepared did you feel for your first marching percussion teaching position?
2. How well prepared did you feel for your first professional marching percussion audition (DCI, WGI, theme park, stage show, etc.)?
3. How well prepared did you feel for your first marching percussion composing/arranging job?
4. How well prepared did you feel for your first significant marching percussion performance (college, DCI, WGI, theme park, stage show, etc.)?
5. What is your perception of time spent (typically 2–3 class sessions in a semester) on the topic of marching percussion in the undergraduate percussion methods course?
6. How many academic marching percussion courses did you take at the undergraduate level?
7. How did you learn marching percussion elements? (Please select all that apply.)
  1. Private instruction/lessons
  2. Drumline/marching band experience
  3. YouTube videos/media
  4. Other (please specify)
8. Should there be more undergraduate courses in marching percussion that involves performing, teaching, and composing/arranging?
9. What education or skills do you believe are needed to be a successful marching percussion professional?
10. How can one prepare performance, instruction, and composition/arranging skills to be successful in the field of marching percussion?

## Teaching

Survey Item One investigates the preparation level for the participant's first marching percussion teaching position. Of the three response options, 16.82% chose "Not prepared," 51.40% selected "Somewhat prepared," and 31.78% designated they were "Definitely prepared." These results show that young educators feel at least somewhat ready for their first marching percussion instructional job.

If marching percussion teaching methods are not sufficiently learned in college, this outcome may be attributed to the inexperienced educator having several years of DCI or WGI performance experience and spending many additional years in the marching activity. Possessing extensive experience as a performer in DCI or WGI ensembles has often been the only source of training needed to pursue instructional employment in the marching arts. However, if one spends all their time on a single instrument, the marching percussionist is limited to only having the proficiency to teach one instrument. Learning instructional approaches to many percussion instruments while also having DCI or WGI experience on a specialty instrument may benefit aspiring marching percussion educators to be successful in their first instructional year.

## Composing and Arranging

Survey Item Three scrutinizes how the survey contributors felt about marching percussion composing or arranging preparedness for their first job. The answers reveal that 20.75% were "Not prepared," 57.55% felt "Somewhat prepared," and 21.70% felt they were "Definitely prepared." Most of the respondents were apprehensive to begin their first creative role in marching percussion because of their composing and arranging inadequacies.

The questionnaire does not request which composing and arranging courses one took in college, but it can be assumed that most did not pursue degrees in music

composition or theory. A composition degree would aid one's ability to arrange for melodic instruments, but likely not battery percussion. It can be deduced that a typical music composition or theory course would not affect the outcome of this question because the battery percussion compositional elements make this genre of percussion unique.

## Research Question One Summary

The results to Survey Items One, Three, Four, and Seven reveal that a college percussion curriculum must incorporate performing, teaching, and composing/arranging skills in order to sufficiently prepare a percussion major for a career in the field of marching percussion. These aspects in the marching percussion genre are interrelated and rely on each other to build a well-rounded percussionist, supporting the hypothesis of Research Question One. Performers often need to instruct others or compose music in addition to playing their instruments, educators rarely teach without demonstration, and composers/arrangers must understand how the instruments work and what possibilities can be achieved within this musical and visual idiom. Having a blend of these abilities may serve the marching percussionist well in pursuing employment.

## RESEARCH QUESTION TWO

Research Question Two asks: In what ways can collegiate students apply college percussion training for an occupation in the field of marching percussion? This question leads to the hypothesis: Collegiate students can apply college percussion training for an occupation in the field of marching percussion in terms of ensemble auditions or job interviews, pedagogy techniques, and portfolio submissions. Feedback from the survey includes answers to questions about these topics.

## Auditions or Interviews

In Survey Item Two, the survey asks how prepared respondents felt for their first professional marching percussion audition (DCI, WGI, theme park, stage show, etc.). Of the three answer choices, 25.23% of the participants were ill-prepared, 41.12% felt "Somewhat prepared," and 33.64% said they were "Definitely prepared." The number of people who chose each response is close, which disallows any one to rise above the others in preponderance. Seventy-one marching percussionists (66.36%) lacked confidence when performing their first audition compared to thirty-six (33.64%) who were self-assured in their first audition. The product of this question demonstrates that the majority were not secure in their first audition.

## Pedagogy Techniques

Survey Items Nine and Ten encompass many aspects of the marching percussion activity and summarize the overall survey. Survey Item Nine asks respondents what education or skills are needed to be a successful marching percussion professional. Survey Item Ten seeks to identify (1) how one can prepare a quality marching percussion performance, (2) constructive instruction within this idiom, and (3) composition/arranging skills that support the marching arts.

Within Survey Items Nine and Ten, pedagogical skills and applications are apparent from the responses. First, keywords such as "education," "teaching," "pedagogy," and "instruction" were listed 143 times and discussed. Second, twenty-five entries mentioned the importance of learning pedagogical techniques from an experienced marching percussion educator. Third, the importance of communication was emphasized sixteen times, including ways to articulate marching percussion elements to students. Next, the "care" of instruments, the "maintenance" of equipment, and proper "tuning" techniques were listed fourteen times, indicating the significant need to teach pupils proper instrument preserva-

tion. “Listening” concepts were brought up ten times. Furthermore, teaching about the “history” of the marching percussion genre was recorded eight times throughout these two inquiries.

### Portfolio Submissions

Within free-response Survey Items Nine and Ten, the application of marching percussion elements emerged as a theme. Some of these motifs involved “performance” and “practice,” “composition” and “arranging,” following through by acting on one’s dream, and “adaptability.” The connotation of performance often refers to playing an instrument; however, it also concerns the practice of submitting music or drill design for a job application, competition submission, or cataloged on a personal or marching percussion publisher’s website.

One’s interview performance or the audio quality of an arrangement’s sound

file can both critically affect the reputation of the professional. Of the 112 times that the themes “performance” or “practice” were recorded in the survey, about half were articulated relating to music composition, arranging, or visual design. The motifs “composition” and “arranging” became keywords when introduced 105 times throughout these two inquiries. Following through with one’s aspiration to “write” music, “design” a show, or “create” a marching percussion presentation was highlighted thirteen times. Moreover, the ability to “adapt” and alter one’s musical or visual creation was expressed eleven times – thus, making this a crucial part of becoming successful in this genre of percussion.

### Research Question Two Summary

Survey Items Two, Nine, and Ten indicate a negative application of marching

percussion abilities. A prevalence of doubt when performing one’s first audition, the need for more educational opportunities, and the significance of preparing one’s compositional portfolio became evident when analyzing the survey results. Conversely, many participants declared that experience in marching percussion facilitated their path toward learning how to apply their skills in the job market successfully. Research Question Two and its hypothesis emphasize the concern of employing marching percussion skills in one’s first employment. Having a plan to execute one’s proficiencies may be crucial to starting a career.

### MARCHING PERCUSSION CURRICULUM

While the marching band techniques class traditionally has one chapter devoted to percussion, it does not concentrate on this marching section. The percussion





# The traditional music degree often does not give enough academic, creative, and practical provision for one to pursue employment in marching percussion.

methods course typically includes a few class sessions on marching percussion but also does not focus on this specialty. Even though it is the professor's decision what to include in the course curriculum, many composition or music theory courses do not even mention marching percussion arranging. For universities that possess an indoor drumline course, it can be assumed that the emphasis is placed on learning the competitive show, performance techniques, and how to play to one's best ability.<sup>4</sup> Acknowledging this lack of coverage of marching percussion techniques, three curriculum-specific inquiries are investigated in the survey.

Survey Item Five explores the participant's perception of time spent on the topic of marching percussion in the undergraduate percussion methods course. Most standard percussion methods courses for music education majors in the United States typically only allocate two or three class sessions in a semester on this genre of percussion. To summarize the outcome, 83.65% of participants chose "Not enough time," 10.58% selected "Just right," and 5.77% designated "More than enough time" dedicated to this topic in the methods class. From this query, a significant majority of the survey contributors believe that the undergraduate program of study does not concentrate enough time and pedagogy on marching percussion elements.

Survey Item Six asks how many academic marching percussion courses the participants took at the undergraduate level. The response from this survey item reveals that 63.55% experienced no courses, 20.56% completed one course, 4.67% accomplished two courses, 0.93% achieved three courses, and 10.28% finished four or more courses. These results divulge that most students did not study

marching percussion in a formal curriculum. They may have learned through a marching band class, indoor drumline ensemble, or a marching percussion-focused independent study in college; however, most participants did not learn the marching percussion vernacular in any undergraduate curricula.

Survey Item Eight, the only binary query in the survey, asks if more undergraduate courses in marching percussion should involve performing, teaching, and composing or arranging. Of the two options offered, 84.91% indicated Yes and 15.09% selected No. This outcome confirms that the mass who completed the survey believe more marching percussion undergraduate course options should be created and available for study. The asymmetric inquiry does not have an option to articulate which subjects (performance, pedagogy, composition/arranging) are needed more among collegiate curricula. Due to this limitation, one must consider the responses to Survey Items Nine and Ten to decide which courses may be more in demand.

## SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The results from this survey warrant the need for more undergraduate curriculum to be established and available for students to pursue in an undergraduate course of study. The artistry of marching percussion has traditionally been learned through the experience of performing in DCI, WGI, or other organized ensembles and not from an educational institution. Research Questions One and Two sought to unveil the key ingredients that make one flourish within the marching percussion activity, and the survey's conclusions supported the hypotheses. The survey responses identify superior skills in marching percussion and the importance of suc-

cessfully applying them in an authentic context. Possessing this knowledge will aid the college music administrator, music school dean, or professor to devise a curriculum that may support one's pursuit of employment in the field of marching percussion.

## CONCLUSION

The objective of this inquiry was to complete a research study that can assist to create a clear path toward preparing students for a career in the field of marching percussion. Even though the traditional music degree includes many aspects of the percussion family, it often does not give enough academic, creative, and practical provision for one to pursue employment in marching percussion. The success of a music education program may include "the techniques, methods, curricula, and methodologies employed by the teacher; the students' backgrounds, previous musical experiences, and motivations; and the instructional setting."<sup>5</sup> While these aspects of music education have shaped the typical music department, various "teaching techniques and methods [have] been transmitted historically from one generation of teachers to the next."<sup>6</sup> For decades, teachers frequently have instructed the same way and "often fail to explore the best possible teaching techniques, methods, curricula, and methodologies."<sup>7</sup> This has been the issue in the genre of marching percussion; therefore, academic methods may need to change for the curriculum to stay relevant in a developing percussion artistry. Exploring the current perceptions of marching percussion skills that need to thrive in an undergraduate curriculum of study and the application of one's college percussion training for their occupation is the impetus that drove this academic ex-

amination. Just like concert, commercial, or jazz percussion are all common specializations in an undergraduate percussion degree, marching percussion should be another option. This is represented graphically in Figure 2.

Senior Lecturer Annie Mitchell acknowledges that “curricula, and therefore educational provision, should reflect the ideas, values and issues of merit and worth to its society.”<sup>8</sup> If marching percussion is popular among society’s entertainment offerings, then it should be explored in greater detail in a formal academic degree. Marching percussion and the marching arts intertwine into a genre of music that is currently prevalent in high schools, colleges, and professional ensembles throughout the United States. For this reason, college percussionists should be equipped for a marching percussion career in the United States.

## ENDNOTES

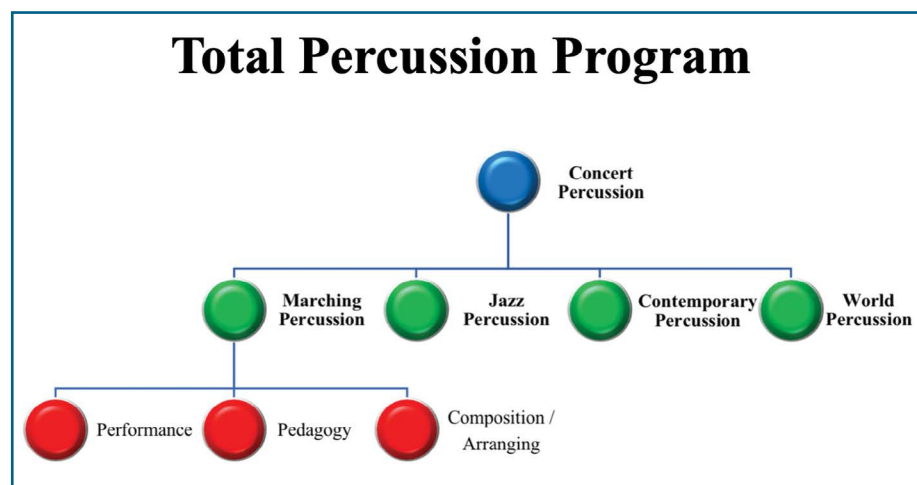
1. Creswell and Creswell, 179–211.
2. Froehlich and Frierson-Campbell, 205.
3. *Ibid.*, 206.
4. Buyer, 53.
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8. Mitchell, 73.

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Figure 2: Representation of marching percussion in a total percussion program



# Electro-lithic Art: Earth's Oldest Materials as Visual Art and Music

By Kurt Gartner

**R**ecently, Nate McClendon invited me to participate in an intriguing interdisciplinary collaboration. McClendon, a truly innovative teacher and performer of music, is Museum Specialist at the Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art at Kansas State University. In 2021, he launched the project, "Hear What I'm Seeing?" In this series of videocasts, McClendon invited musicians to tour the museum, find works that speak to them, react to them verbally, then respond through live musical performance.

After multiple museum tours, I chose to focus on David Lebrun's installation, "45 Paleolithic Handaxes" from his larger project, *Transfigurations: Reanimating the Past*. Lebrun, a film director, producer, cinematographer, and editor, captured hundreds of high-resolution digital still photographs of these ancient European tools. Utilizing his additional experiences in anthropology, one of Lebrun's broad goals is to reveal qualities of specific cultures through original aspects of his art.

As he photographed the handaxes, it became increasingly clear to Lebrun that the makers of these tools were creating pieces not only of function, but also of beauty. Subsequently, he created a digital animation, in which each selected handaxe image morphs visually into the next. "They become as like something alive and breathing," Lebrun said. "Changing and evolving, changing in shape over time." In the museum, the installation's display comprised an 84-inch 4K primary video monitor and two smaller, secondary monitors in a darkened room.

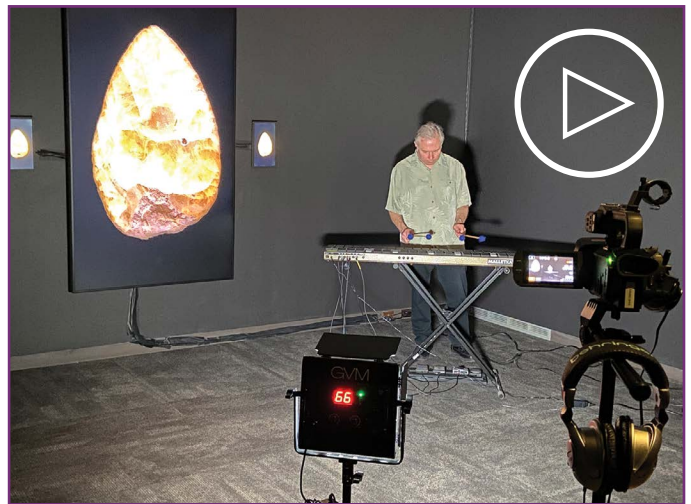
The experience of this installation is further enhanced by the musical score of Yuval Ron, which is realized electronically, functioning as a soundscape that develops gradually, like the animation. While other musicians involved in the "Hear What I'm Seeing?" project chose extant musical pieces to perform in response to the art works they chose, I had chosen the only work in the museum with an audio element of its own. Therefore, it

seemed much more appropriate to perform an improvisation in response to the work — a response to both the visual and audio elements of the installation.

After considering the revelation that handaxes were considered objects of beauty as well as utility, I was reminded of a sort of musical parallel: the lithophone. I have seen such an instrument, thanks to the PAS museum (the Rhythm! Discovery Center), and written historical accounts. However, I did not have access to such an instrument for the performance. Since the installation is digital, however, I found it especially fitting to use a digital sample library instead. Performing on a MIDI controller through a DAW, I found it a fitting response — the oldest items in the museum (stones), being presented through the most modern technology in the museum (digital video and audio).

An outstanding lithophone sample set was developed for the Vienna Symphonic Library. For this project, however, I chose

*Video rig for recording session.*





“The Skiddaw Stones,” a sample library captured from an English lithophone, originally dating to 1840. The library, developed by Soniccouture, Ltd., features the sounds of ancient hornfels, a metamorphic rock with great resonance — at least by rock standards. The imperfections of the sampled instrument, along with the ancient European origin of the sampled rocks, seemed to be a great match for the aesthetic of the animated video.

Like the animation, the colors of Ron’s score evolve slowly, with phrases that use long-tone pad-like tones to undulate like the morphing images they accompany. Striving to create an improvisation that would be complementary to this work, I played sparsely and simply, generally conforming to the evolving modalities of the piece. Since the articulate sound of the lithophone was in stark contrast to the timeless feeling of the work, I used some digital audio effects to add length to my musical gestures. While I used some digital reverb, I avoided extreme effects in this regard. More helpful was the introduction of a moderate, spacious echo. To connect further with the timeless sense of the

installation’s animation and musical score, I added the elements of digital delay and echo to my performance. In fact, the initial sound of each gesture was not heard until about a half-second after the gesture was actually made. Although I experimented with other digital effects to further “morph” the sound of my performance, I wanted neither to diminish the identity of the original sound of the lithophone, nor to distract from the animation and original score.

I was grateful to Nate McClendon for temporarily sharing the digital media files of the installation in advance of my performance, so that I could analyze the audio track, ponder, and experiment a bit with the improvisation. In the spirit of the videocast, however, I set up my rig of computer, Ableton Live/Kontakt, and malletKAT Grand on site, literally inside the space of the installation. It takes several minutes for the animation to cycle completely through, but I had a mental score that included key aspects of the animation and of the accompanying musical score. McClendon did a multi-camera shoot and later edited the performance and excerpts of our interview together to produce the finished videocast.

Serendipitously, Lebrun was on the campus of Kansas State University only days after my recording session, and I was able to speak with him at length about his project, including his gathering of images, conversations with curators of museums holding the original pieces, and his interactions with composer Yuval Ron. Our discussion affirmed my fascination with his project and my concept of complementing the installation as I did.

As is often the case, the technology itself was not really the focus of this project. However, it represented a logical set of tools to realize a collaborative work — an original musical response to an existing piece of visual art — with multiple layers of underlying meaning. All in all, a very rewarding experience.

Kurt Gartner in Conversation with artist David Lebrun



Handaxes. Photo by Sophie Osborn



## SELECTED SOURCES

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# Avoiding Playing-Induced Headaches

By Dr. Stephen K. Workman

**M**any musicians struggle with headaches that plague them throughout their careers. Drummers are no exception to this. It is a good thing the drums are such quiet instruments, right? It is sheer torture to have a pounding headache when you have to perform or practice for hours on end.

A quick fix option usually involves some kind of pain killer to get you through the day. While this can be a temporary solution, it may lead to a long-term dependence that can damage your liver and other organs in the process. It is much more effective to correct the habits that could be contributing to your headaches. In this article, I will go through some ways that you can proactively get your headaches under control without feeling like you are either constantly suffering or taking medications.

## HEARING PROTECTION

It is no secret that higher volumes can lead to headaches and both short- and long-term hearing damage. Wearing different types of hearing protection can be helpful. Varying levels of protection are available for both ear plugs and muffs. Percussionists are exposed to a variety of pitches and volumes that can all have a negative effect on your hearing. You can try different types of ear plugs or muffs

to protect your ears and, therefore, your head.

When choosing hearing protection, be sure to consider how many decibels you are exposed to, the pitches, and for how long. Meeting with an audiologist can guide you if you are unsure of what to do. Know that when it comes to hearing protection, you definitely get what you pay for. The earplugs you buy at the airport so you can sleep on the airplane are better than nothing, but will not be especially effective for percussionists in the long run. Be sure to find the one that works best for your situation and is engineered for musicians. This will help you protect your ears and decrease headaches without sacrificing different pitches or sound quality.

## VISION

Excessive squinting can lead to headaches. If you find that you are squinting a lot, then it is time to see your optometrist. This can be a sign that you either need glasses or stronger lenses. Sometimes the answer can be as simple as picking up some readers at the store. It becomes especially important if you are in a situation where you are reading a lot of music. Changing your position or the location and height of your music stand can also help you avoid squinting excessively.

Another way your vision can lead to

headaches is by having too much screen time. While technology has been a great convenience and has added to entertainment options, the constant bombardment of different types of lighting often leads to headaches. Whether you are reading music, reading a book, watching television, working on a computer, or playing video games, be sure to give your eyes a break from the screens.

## POSTURE

Many of the muscles that support your neck, upper back, and shoulders can cause headaches if they are consistently strained too much. It can be from how you position yourself or how your body subconsciously handles stress. Either way, you should avoid bad posture.

Vision and posture can be closely linked when it comes to causing headaches. If you are having trouble seeing something, then you will likely alter your posture to make things right. The most common way percussionists adjust their position is by jutting their chin forward to get their head closer to the music. This will create tension and muscle spasms in your neck that will lead to a headache.

Don't slouch, hunch, or jut your chin forward. Be sure to keep your head and shoulders back, and your spine straight to decrease your odds of posture-induced headaches. See my article ["The core be-](#)

hind your performance” in the August 2022 issue of *Percussive Notes* for more detailed information on how to improve your posture.

## CLINCHED JAW

There are many reasons people start clenching their jaw: stress, anxiety, dental work, trauma to the jaw, etc. Sometimes people don't even realize they clench until it has been going on for months or even years. The increased pressure on the jaw from clenching translates to headaches. In addition to that, you can also damage your teeth.

There are a few ways to help with these headaches. Try using a mouth guard anytime you suspect that you may be clenching during the day, or make sure that your teeth maintain a small gap between the bottom and top molars. Massaging the muscles around the jaw can also alleviate your pain. Another option is stretching the jaw by pushing your tongue against the roof of your mouth. You should notice a slight decrease in the built-up tension near the jaw joint that is right in front of your ears.

## FOOD AND HYDRATION

Proper nutrition allows your body to create energy, recover from physical and mental demands, and heal. Being a drummer is physically, mentally, and intellectually demanding. Your body will not be able to keep up with all of these demands if you do not keep up with your dietary requirements. Your body will start screaming at you if it does not get what it needs in order to function. Headaches are one of the most common ways it will yell at you.

Water intake is extremely important in improving the overall function of your body. Over half of your body weight is made up of water. If you are not consistently replenishing your water, then dehydration will set in. Headaches are one of the early signs. A few guidelines have been proposed over the years. The classic suggestion is about 64 ounces of water per day. I see this are the bare minimum,

and you should be drinking a lot more water than that each day. I tell my patients to drink about 100 ounces each day. That number can easily go up if you are especially active, or if the weather is hot.

As far as food goes, many different diets can be helpful, depending on your nutrition needs. If you do not follow a specific diet, here are some concepts to implement to help with headaches. The first is to not neglect fruits and vegetables. Also, try to limit how much caffeine you drink each day. The equivalent of 1-2 cups of coffee each day is a good ballpark-figure to go with. Another tip is to decrease how many sweets and unhealthy sugars you take in.

## SUMMING UP

Headaches can be a major disruption to anyone's day, but they can be especially troublesome to a drummer. Maintaining these simple healthy habits can be the most effective way to keep those pesky headaches at bay.

Dr. Stephen Workman is a chiropractic physician practicing in Cedar City, Utah. In addition to his Doctorate in Chiropractic, he has a master's degree in Sports Medicine and two bachelor's degrees in Human Biology and Exercise Science. He is the Health & Wellness editor for *Percussive Notes*. He has also been involved with the PAS Health & Wellness committee since 1998. Dr. Workman specializes in treating musician and sports injuries along with improving performance. He has treated many professional musicians, dancers, and athletes over the years. Dr. Workman has been playing the drums professionally for almost 25 years, and teaching for over 20 years. Dr. Workman can be reached at [DocSWorkman@gmail.com](mailto:DocSWorkman@gmail.com).



# Mallet Fundamentals for Drummers

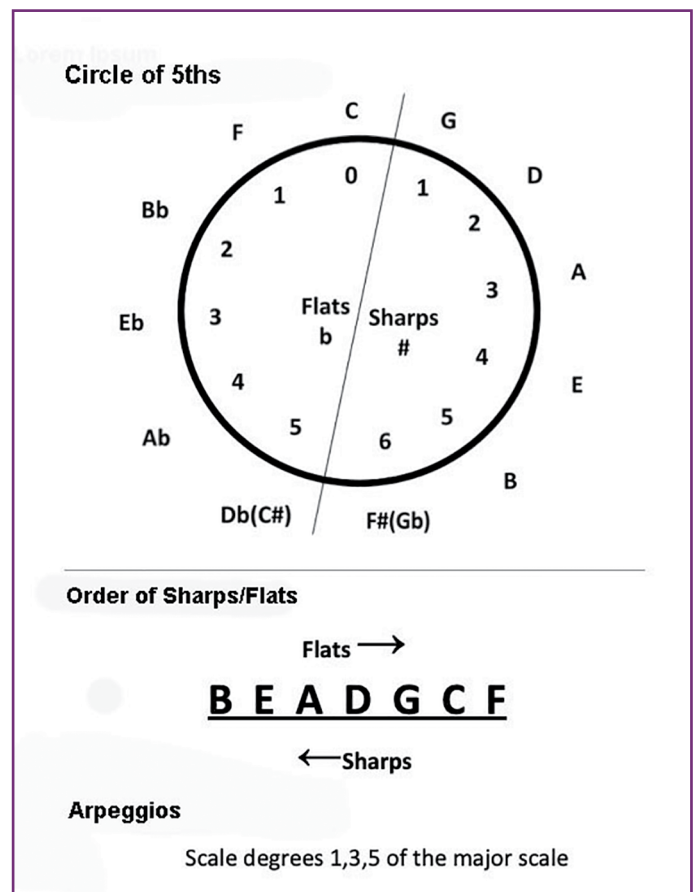
By Andy Kolar

**M**any young percussionists are pigeon-holed into being either a drummer or a mallet player. While this can make sense from the standpoint of utilizing the strengths of students, over time it can stunt a well-rounded percussion experience. When first learning music fundamentals, all other instrumentalists learn note names, fingerings, and scales in elementary and middle school. In contrast, many drummers move on to more complex rhythms because they don't use many of the same concepts in their music. This is often why drummers are more comfortable with difficult rhythms than their peers. While the band is playing whole notes to work on embouchure, note duration, or basic fingerings as beginners, drummers are often already playing eighth or sixteenth notes to fill the same duration of time. This article aims to give a quick guide for directors who are trying to make up for lost time with their drummers when introducing mallet percussion.

For drummers who don't already have a background in pitched percussion, it is critical to distill information down into as few steps as possible and to have very clear parameters for what they should know. The major scale is the foundation for the majority of what students will play. Therefore, this methodology is based around the circle of fifths and being able to know the following concepts: 1. Key Name; 2. Key Signature; 3. Arpeggio (this would be an "optional" addition).

The outside of the circle has the names of the keys, and the inside of the circle has the number of flats or sharps that are used in that key. The circle is also divided in half between the flat keys and the sharp keys. Although the key of C is not a flat key, it makes for a better visual presentation to split the circle in half.

Many drummers may not know where notes are on the keyboard, so teaching students how to locate a few pitch landmarks on the keyboard is a critical step. One method is to use food. There are groupings of three and two accidentals on the upper manual of the keyboard. The note to the left of the three



accidentals is F (fries) and to the left of the two accidentals is C (cheeseburger). Most people want more fries (F) than cheeseburgers (C), so the mnemonic device would be "Two cheeseburgers, three fries," while the student traces the two accidentals down to the C, and the three accidentals down to the F.

Utilizing other senses will enhance any knowledge the student is learning. Therefore, it is helpful to have students say each note name as they play it. They may be reluctant to do this in a group setting unless everyone is participating, but it is an easy way for students to connect letter names with the phys-

## Teachers should force all percussion students to learn the layout of the keyboard and the shape of each scale.

ical instrument. Students can repeat their phone number easily because they have said it repeatedly over time. The same theory holds true for learning note names until the student starts to recognize the physical landscape of a mallet instrument more easily without having to say the note names.

Some directors put Post-its or tape on each bar hoping that will help students connect note names with the physical bar. The problem with this method is that it is a crutch that will have the student looking for the letter name instead of recognizing the location of the bar on the instrument. Teachers should play the long game and force all percussion students to learn the layout of the keyboard and the shape of each scale.

For students to understand key names and key signatures simultaneously, they should, again, say both aloud before playing each key. For example, "The key of F has one flat, which is B-flat." Pay particular attention to the terminology students use. They may say "The key of F-flat has one flat" because they are thinking about F being a flat key, or "The Key of D has two sharps, which are F and C." Although they likely mean F-sharp and C-sharp, that's not what they said. It is worthwhile to be picky

about what terms are said to avoid potential confusion down the road.

Another critical component is the order of flats and sharps (BEADGCF). The phrase "Bead-Greatest Common Factor" can help to remember the order, but any acronym could be used. It is important to re-emphasize that this order is always the same. If there is one flat, it is *always* B-flat. If there are two flats, they are *always* B-flat and E-flat. Likewise, if there is one sharp, it will *always* be F-sharp. If there are three sharps, they are *always* F-sharp, C-sharp, and G-sharp.

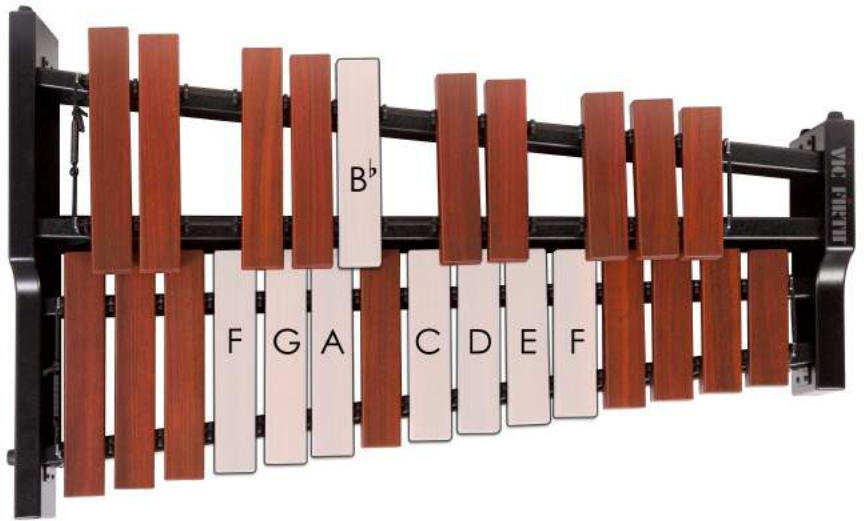
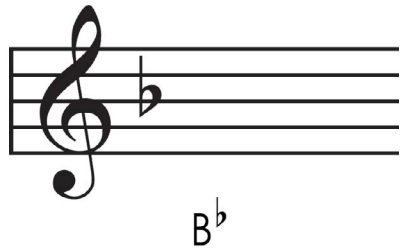
It should also be brought to their attention that this order of flats/sharps is not necessarily the order in which they will appear in the scale. They are the order that the key signature will be listed in their music. For example, the key of A-flat has four flats, which are B-flat, E-flat, A-flat, and D-flat, but the order that they will be played in the scale is A-flat, B-flat, D-flat, and E-flat. It is helpful to bring up this discrepancy ahead of time, and after they have identified the correct order of flats or sharps, they should then find them again in the order that they will be played in the scale. Remember that many drummers don't see key sig-

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## ONE OCTAVE SCALE & ARPEGGIO



## TWO OCTAVE SCALE & ARPEGGIO



## 1 GREEN STUDY #1



## 2 GREEN STUDY #2



## 3 THIRDS



## 4 DOUBLE STICKING



## 5 DOUBLE STOPS



## 6 ARPEGGIO INVERSIONS

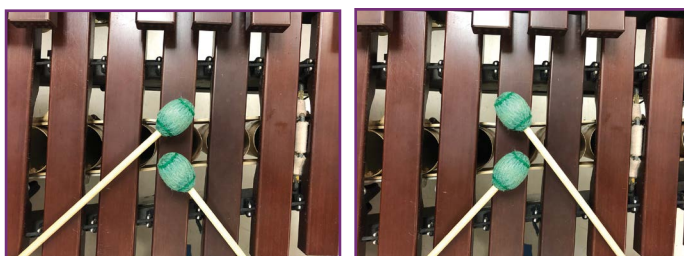




natures in their music, so they may not even know what a key signature is, let alone be comfortable understanding the order of flats or sharps in music.

Arpeggios are the next component for students to learn. While learning the major scales is the most important, arpeggios are a good addition, especially for more advanced students. This is also a good jumping-off point to talk about chords in general – again, for more advanced students. Students should identify the three notes in the arpeggio immediately after they identify the key and key signature. For example, “The key of E-flat has three flats, which are B-flat, E-flat, and A-flat, and the arpeggio is E-flat, G, B-flat.”

Most drummers are right-handed and will default to starting scales and/or arpeggios on the right hand. This can make things slightly more difficult because students will be reaching across their body to start and end each scale. Instead, beginning scales and arpeggios with the left hand can help to avoid this issue. It is also helpful to establish a “home position” for the mallet heads in relation to each other. While the center of the bar will produce the best sound, it can make playing scalar patterns difficult with the mallet heads having to swing around to avoid each other. Therefore, students should pick one of their mallets to always remain on top when playing naturals. This will allow a student to reach the next note in the scale without having to cross mallets. This is an important habit to instill in the beginning phase of learning. It does not necessarily matter which position is chosen, so long as it is always employed while playing.



Many drummers will want to jump right into playing and will attempt to “figure it out” along the way, only stopping if something sounds obviously wrong. Attempting to simultaneously find notes on the keyboard as well as figure out keys and key signatures can be a tall task. Therefore, more time should be spent on the “book work” of knowing the information first. This will

help set students up for success, since they will have a basic familiarity with the information. It is likely students will not have much time to practice on an actual mallet percussion instrument, so even something like a piano app on their phones can be useful for students to practice the physical layout of each scale or arpeggio. This information can be written down and quizzed, like any other subject matter that has specific information that needs to be learned. At the bottom of this page is a chart that could be used either as a stand-alone sheet or broken out and studied on individual note cards.

Technique for mallet percussion is the other area to address for drummers. Most drummers play with a downstroke, where the stick or mallet stops close to the drumhead after being played. Most concert percussion instruments produce a better and rounder sound when played with an upstroke, where after the instrument is struck, the stick/mallet comes up off of the instrument. “Start Up, End Up” is a simple phrase to describe the correct stroke motion.

Vic Firth and Balter Mallets have put together a free poster, e-book, and play-along tracks for the purpose of helping teach two-mallet fundamentals. This is a great addition to the rudiment poster that is in many band rooms for percussionists. Samples of this e-book are included on the previous page and on the next page, with permission.

While this is not a comprehensive list of topics that should be covered for students learning mallet percussion, these areas are learned by all other instrumentalists when they first start out. There should be no difference in the expectation for percussionists to learn the same information as other instrumentalists. These topics are the foundation of music and if drummers aren’t expected to learn the same language as other musicians, the divide between “mallets” and “drums” will only keep increasing. Drummers should learn scales, mallet students should learn rudiments, and everyone should praise that versatility. Percussionists all need to be given the proper foundation of skills that are required for their instrument to be successful.

**Andy Kolar** is the Associate Director of Bands and Percussion Professor at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, Conn. He holds a BME degree from Slippery Rock University and a Master of Music degree from the University of Oklahoma.

Key	Key Signature	Arpeggio	Key	Key Signature	Arpeggio
G	F#	G-B-D	C	Nothing	C-E-G
D	F#-C#	D-F#-A	F	Bb	F-A-C
A	F#-C#-G#	A-C#-E	Bb	Bb-Eb	Bb-D-F
E	F#-C#-G#-D#	E-G#-B	Eb	Bb-Eb-Ab	Eb-G-Bb
B	F#-C#-G#-D#-A#	B-D#-F#	Ab	Bb-Eb-Ab-Db	Ab-C-Eb
F#	F#-C#-G#-D#-A#-E#	F#-A#-C#	Db	Bb-Eb-Ab-Db-Gb	Db-F-Ab

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### Major Scales and Arpeggios

The grid displays 12 major scales and arpeggios, each with a musical staff and a mallet diagram. The keys shown are: C, F, B<sup>b</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>, A<sup>b</sup>, D<sup>b</sup>, G<sup>b</sup>, B, E, A, D, F<sup>#</sup>, C<sup>#</sup>, G, and D.

### Two Mallet Exercises Practice these exercises in all 12 Major Keys.

The exercises are: 1 GREEN STUDY #1, 2 GREEN STUDY #2, 3 THIRDS, 4 DOUBLE STICKING, 5 DOUBLE STOPS, and 6 ARPEGGIO INVERSIONS.

### Chromatic Scale

The diagram shows a xylophone with arrows indicating the path of a chromatic scale across the keys. Below it is a musical staff showing the chromatic scale notation.

### Recommended Keyboard Mallets

The mallets shown are: M135 - Belle / Xylo (Very hard - light and cutting), M134 - Belle / Xylo (Medium hard - Dark and Solid), B8811 - Belle / Xylo (Medium - Warm and Clear), B888 - Xylo / Mar (Medium hard - warm and clear), B228 - Vibes (Medium hard - Clear and Articulate), B238 - Vibes / Mar (Medium - All purpose Mallet), M212 - Marimba (Medium - All purpose Medium Mallet), and M211 - Marimba (Medium Soft - Full Warm Sound).

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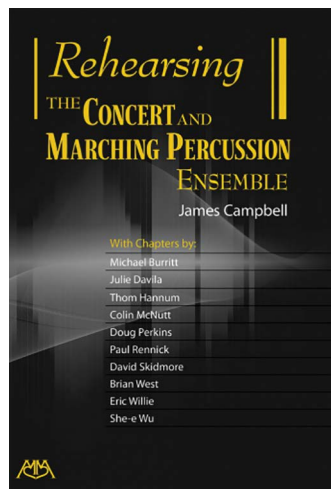
Andy Narell & Peter Erskine PASIC 2022

# New Percussion Literature and Recordings

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## Difficulty Rating Scale

I-II	Elementary
III-IV	Intermediate
V-VI	Advanced
VI+	Difficult



## GENERAL REFERENCE

### Rehearsing the Concert and Marching Percussion Ensemble

James Campbell

\$19.95

Meredith Music

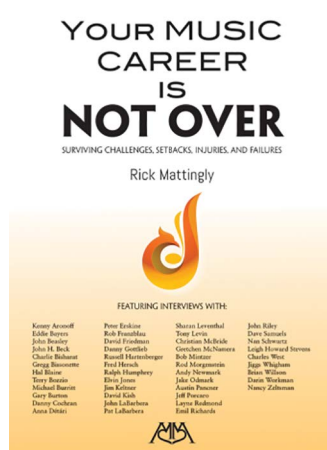
Web: [video overview](#)

Not only is this book absolutely essential for school and college percussion teachers, it should be a “must read” for all percussion peda-

gogy courses. Percussion ensemble icon James Campbell has assembled chapters from ten of the world’s leading marching and concert ensemble directors, creating a book that is thorough and easy to digest. Contributing writers are Michael Burritt, Julia Davila, Thom Hannum, Colin McNutt, Doug Perkins, Paul Rennick, David Skidmore, Brian West, Eric Willie, and She-e Wu.

Each contributor uses ten or so pages to outline their philosophy, thoughts on rehearsal planning, communication, player development, equipment-related issues, and other topics specific to their approach to ensemble rehearsal and performance. While Campbell has taken care to highlight both concert and marching instructors, it was no surprise that teachers at the highest level essentially communicate similar concepts regardless of genre. At 116 pages, it is a relatively quick read, but each chapter leaves readers with practical advice they can apply immediately during their next rehearsal.

—Jason Baker



### Your Music Career is Not Over

Rick Mattingly

\$24.95

Meredith Music

Web: [video overview](#)

This excellent new resource from Rick Mattingly should be read by everyone. At the core, this book is a collection of stories from 45 top musicians recounting times that they experienced setbacks or failures. The musicians include jazz

musicians, studio musicians, classical musicians, college professors, and other professional performers. They are not just percussionists but include other instrumentalists. Mattingly states that the purpose of the book is to show that even those we look up to have had their struggles.

The book is broken up into ten chapters, and each covers a different area of mishaps. These range from losing an audition, to getting fired, injuries and illnesses, and even just embarrassing situations. The stories include situations that are funny as well as ones that are devastating. To hear some of the top musicians in the world discuss times when they were down is very eye-opening.

This book should be on everyone’s bookshelf. It is an easy read, with each story covering three pages at most, but the majority being about one page in length. I believe students could really learn from this book and see that even those who we view as the most successful have had hard times as well. Professionals reading this book will definitely find some stories they can relate to, and will most likely find themselves reflecting on their own past situations. This book lets us see that everyone has been there, but the light at the end of the tunnel is always shining.

—Josh Armstrong

## KEYBOARD PERCUSSION SOLO

### Ensoñación (Reverie) IV

Juan Álamo

Ed. Arthur Lipner

\$18.00

MalletWorks Music

Instrumentation: 4.5-octave marimba

Web: [score sample](#), [audio recording](#)

“Ensoñación” (Spanish for “reverie”) is a work for solo marimba in the style of a 19th-century Puerto Rican *danza*. Throughout the piece’s five-minute performance time, composer Juan Álamo produces a comfortable dance feel with pleasing harmonies that will leave a smile on the listener’s face.

There is a melody-with-accompaniment texture throughout, with clear-cut repeating formal sections like other similar dance forms. The opening presents a simple melody and bass line, introducing the harmonic basis for the piece, but each subsequent section adds a new



element of complexity or technical challenge. Both hands are constantly moving, with many extended passages of sixteenth notes in a single hand, including instances of a quasi-Alberti bass in the left, where the player must constantly alternate mallets. Much of the work feels pianistic, but still idiomatic on marimba. The tempo is not terribly fast, but these technical challenges make achieving the right style and feel more difficult (though Álamo's beautiful recording of this solo makes it sound easy).

"Ensoñación" is a lovely addition to the marimba repertoire, as pleasing to the ears as it is challenging. Since the lowest note in the piece is a G, it is also playable without a 5-octave marimba, which is a nice bonus. This work is suitable for a solid university student who can take full advantage of the composer's flowing and musical style.

—Marco Schirripa



### Fiddle Tunes for Marimba I-II

Traditional  
Arr. Patrick Roulet  
\$14.95

Meredith Music

**Instrumentation:** 4.3-octave marimba

Written as an avenue to introduce percussionists and mallet players to the rich traditions of American and European folk-dance music, these 22 tunes are accessible, fun, and functional. All of the selections are based on old-time American, Scottish, Irish, and English fiddle tunes, and are meant to be performed with two mallets. Some of the familiar melodies include "Chicken Reel," "Swallow Tail Jig," and "Irish Washerwoman."

For each tune, there is an accompaniment line that is primarily made up of simple bass tones and chordal punctuations, and is written so that both parts can be played on a shared low-A marimba. Given the nature of these tunes, I can easily see a beginning percussionist (6th or 7th grade) playing the lines as a solo performance test without the accompaniment. Of course, we all know making music is fun with others, so performing as a duet (either with a teacher or classmate) is encouraged.

Additionally, Patrick Roulet prompts

performers to listen to variations of these classic tunes to come up with their own interpretation and variation, and then write it down on the blank music lines provided at the bottom of each page. All in all, this would be a great addition to the library of a private-lesson instructor or band director to be used as sight reading, fun and easy duet material, or as an end-of-the-section playing test.

—Joshua D. Smith

### Four Fantasies for Solo Marimba, Volume 3 III

Robert Oetomo  
\$17.00

Edition Svitzer

**Instrumentation:** 4.3-octave marimba

**Web:** [score sample](#)

*Four Fantasies for Solo Marimba, Vol. 3* is a collection of written-out improvisations like Robert Oetomo's previous two collections. Two items of note, however, make this collection stand out. First, all four pieces are composed specifically for a 4.3-octave marimba instead of a 5-octave instrument, and second, the "Four Fantasies" were conceived to be performed either as standalone pieces or as a full, multi-movement work.

Like much of Oetomo's music with which I am familiar, each Fantasy is tuneful and flowing, with smooth voice leading. Despite some complex harmonies, the pieces are idiomatic, comfortable, and enjoyable to play. From a technical standpoint, each movement has moments requiring challenging concepts such as one-handed rolls, polyrhythm, or the performance of simultaneous moving lines. These technical challenges are seldom combined, though, significantly lessening the burden on the player. The one-handed rolls are paired with a simple ostinato, and one of the two simultaneous moving lines is strictly scalar.

Oetomo's third set of Fantasies is a wonderful addition to the repertoire for 4.3-octave marimba, an area that tends to lack substantial modern compositions. Its beautiful harmonies and idiomatic nature make it appealing to a wide variety of players and listeners. The technical challenges are not too much for an advanced high school player to overcome, but this is a great work for marimbists of any level!

—Marco Schirripa

### Kind of Ballad IV

Johannes Steinbauer  
€16.00

Edition Svitzer

**Instrumentation:** vibraphone

**Web:** [score sample](#), [video recording](#)

German percussionist and composer Johannes Steinbauer brings us this new solo ballad for vibraphone. It is a beautiful piece with some rhythmic and technical elements that can challenge a young player, but with enough written-in wiggle-room to meet those challenges. This would also be great for seasoned veterans to display their expressiveness.

"Kind of Ballad" can be separated into three major sections: the introduction, the melody, and the outro. The first 23 measures are a notated

improvisation, including runs up and down the instrument in quintuplets, septuplets, nontuplets, as well as more common rhythms. We also see a few different time signatures employed, such as 8/4, 5/4, and one measure of 9/8. Although this looks overly complicated, this entire section is meant to be played freely and with much rubato, making it much more approachable than initially perceived. This is another example of the irony of notated improvisation: freedom on paper looks complicated.

After the first third of the piece, we enter the singable section of the composition. This is noticeably less complicated, being made up of simple melodic ideas, similar harmonic language as the opening, and one unchanging meter. The final phrases of the main tune glide smoothly into the outro, which includes the last statements of the melody played at the highest register of the vibraphone. Here also, the performer brings back the expressive rubato of the intro, which is used to make the final gestures get slower and slower until the end, as if the lights on the performance are gradually fading to black.

Outside of the rhythmic complexity of the introduction, this piece is not complicated. It would be a great work for a young player who wants to delve into a four-mallet jazz ballad and work on such techniques as different types of dampening, since there are no pedal markings. One of the most enjoyable aspects is how story-like it is — the scene and atmosphere shaped by the detailed introduction, the monologue expressed in the melody of the middle section, and ending with the gradual exit of the orator as they slowly disappear into the night. This is truly a composition that performers at all levels can enjoy and make their own.

—Kyle Cherwinski

### "Just the 4 of Us" and Other Inspiring Works for Marimba IV

Mark Goodenberger  
\$25.00

MalletWorks Music

**Instrumentation:** 4.3-octave marimba

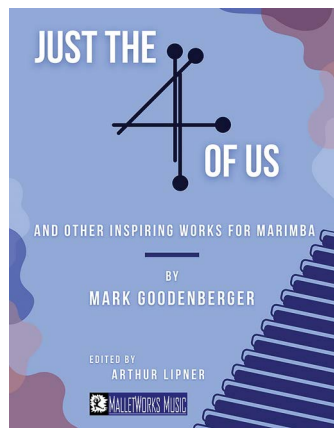
**Web:** [score sample](#), [video recordings](#)

This is a thoughtful compilation of original compositions for 4.3-octave marimba. The 16 solos focus on various technical issues, including clarity of double laterals, consistency of double verticals, clean shifting of pitches during rolled chorales, and rapid scalar passages. These etudes transcend simple technical exercises, though, and could easily be utilized in performance settings.

Mark Goldenberger's stated purpose for the book was to fill a gap in the repertoire for 4.3-octave marimba that both developed technique and was musically satisfying to perform. These charming compositions do just that, giving the performer a wide array of styles and characters to choose from.

Arranged in order from easiest to most difficult, the collection begins with "Awaken 2," a simple etude in C-major composed entirely of double vertical strokes. Goldenberger keeps the etude from being trite with judicious use of accents





and mixed meter, giving a simple technical etude musical merit. The etudes continue to develop in difficulty, integrating rolled chorales (“Different Rolls for Different Sounds”), melodic independence (“Grace”), and extended octave passages (“Octavia”). Perhaps the most ingenious aspect of the collection is the text interspersed between pieces. Goldenberger includes personal anecdotes and thoughts (“Mark’s Musings”) about practice techniques, mental health, inspiration, performance preparation, and compositional strategies. Of particular interest are the “Preparation” notes for a number of the etudes; in these sections, Goldenberger breaks down the solo into digestible chunks, giving practice tips and strategies.

This collection combines enjoyable, tuneful pieces with thoughtful technical advice and philosophical ponderings. A useful tool for students and teachers alike, I would recommend this as an addition to any marimbist’s collection.

—Hannah Weaver

### Ney Rosauo Song Book for Vibraphone, Volume 1 V–VI

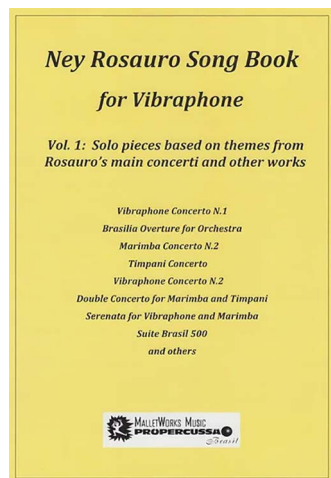
Ney Rosauo  
\$22.00

MalletWorks Music

Instrumentation: 3-octave vibraphone

Web: [score sample](#), [video recording](#)

Repurposing one’s work for new instruments, performers, and audiences is a time-honored tradition among classical composers, and Ney Rosauo finds himself in good company with his recently released collection *Song Book for*



*Vibraphone, Volume 1*. With his 70th-birthday PASIC gala concert still fresh in our ears, the famed Brazilian performer-composer is ready to introduce his substantial catalog of works to a new generation of percussionists, this time in the form of 15 solo vibraphone arrangements of previous material, which essentially amounts to a solo vibraphone fake book that is worthy of both the recital stage and the cocktail-hour gig.

In true fake book style, each solo is an easily readable combination of melody and more-or-less simple accompaniment, with chord changes printed above the staff in case the performer wishes to embellish or improvise. Yes, the book gives the impression of a simple “greatest hits” collection at first glance, but dig deeper and you’ll find a substantial body of work that can immediately be put to use in one’s “gig music folder” (a welcome bit of news to college percussionists hunting for their first side gigs).

But we shouldn’t overlook this collection’s educational value; by cherry-picking melodies from his repertoire and whittling them down to their bare essentials (with a few extended techniques retained for color and, let’s face it, fun), he has created an accessible and expressive series of etudes fitting for undergraduate study (perhaps also for particularly advanced high school students).

More than half of the pieces in this collection come from music *not* originally written for the vibraphone, which I believe is a wise choice. There’s enough nostalgic red meat for vibraphone enthusiasts to sink their teeth into (such as the lullaby from his first vibraphone concerto, and themes from “Prelude and Blues” and “Vibraphone Concerto No. 2”), but also some reimagined gems from other works, including his concerti for marimba, timpani, and more.

This collection can be many things: lesson-worthy etudes, gig-worthy lead sheets, and decades-spanning highlight reel. The one thing it *isn’t* is surprising; Rosauo’s romantic and jazz-influenced tendencies are on unapologetic display, and are sure to please audiences and student performers alike.

—Brian Graiser

### Room of Live V

Benjamin Wittiber  
€14.80

Bewimusic

Instrumentation: 5-octave marimba

This five-minute unaccompanied marimba solo provides the intermediate/advanced four-mallet marimbist with a reflective, lyrical solo jazz experience. This 59-measure solo is printed on five separate pages (one-sided), which avoids page turns. Tonally, the composition alternates between C-minor and C-major, before concluding in E-flat-major. There are indicated tempo markings, from an opening quarter-note equals 58, to an ending tempo marking of quarter-note equals 38.

“Room of Live” has a harmonic language similar to a Pat Metheny’s compositions with some beautiful substitute harmonies. His compositional process presents the conceptual challenges of pensive arpeggiated figures throughout its presentation. This solo would be appropriate as a contrasting marimba piece for an advanced percussion solo recital.

—Jim Lambert

### Vermilion Bird V–VI

Heng Liu  
\$26.75

Edition Svitzer

Instrumentation: 5-octave marimba

Web: [score sample](#)

“Vermilion Bird” delightfully pairs virtuosity with melody by giving the audience and player all of the flash that they want without sacrificing a central theme and musicality. In ancient Chinese mythology a Vermilion Bird is one of the four mythical creatures of heaven; it represents fire and the worship of the sun. Heng Liu certainly embodies that in this piece with a bright theme and fiery cascade of notes.

“Vermilion Bird” begins with a bang then quickly reduces to a simmer as the theme is established. Though the tempo is fast it doesn’t feel rushed as the notes flow along and build. A melody is always heard amidst the flow, ensuring that the piece is not just technically impressive. Each section contains its own style while still maintaining cohesiveness.

The player needs to be very technically and musically proficient, with the ability to accomplish large leaps through the entire 5-octave range and bring out the central melody while maintaining a fast pattern. This piece is beautiful and rewards the player for putting in the work.

“Vermilion Bird” is sure to be an audience favorite at any recital, as it is lovely to listen to and impressive to watch. It would be a wonderful addition for any advanced marimbist.

—Marilyn K. Clark Silva

### Violet IV

Adam Tan  
€15.00

Edition Svitzer

Instrumentation: vibraphone

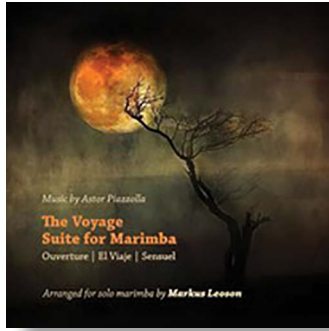
Web: [score sample](#), [audio and video recordings](#)

“Violet” is a beautiful work appropriate for intermediate-level performers. It requires four mallets throughout and calls for rotation strokes, single mallet strokes, double stops, and one-handed grace-note figures. For the majority of the piece, the right hand carries the melody and the left hand plays accompaniment, so careful balance is imperative. There are also numerous rhapsodic runs that cover most of the range of the vibraphone. Adam Tan includes stickings for these, although he states in the performance notes that players can use their own. Mallet dampening is also indicated, although I found the notation a little bit confusing regarding what to dampen when. Pedaling is explained, but not explicitly notated in the score.

The title of the piece comes not from the flower or color, but from the main character of the anime series *Violet Evergarden*. Knowing nothing about anime, I found Tan’s program note describing Violet’s “selfless desire to always help” useful in my understanding of the piece. The musical material is sunny and consonant, moving through various manners of representation using the same or very similar material. In that regard, “Violet” is somewhat like a theme and variations.

Tan has recently gained popularity with his marimba solos. For those who enjoy them, I highly recommend “Violet” — his first work for vibraphone.

—Joseph Van Hassel



### The Voyage - Suite for Marimba IV+

Astor Piazzolla

Arr. Markus Leason

€20.00

Edition Svitzer

Instrumentation: 5-octave marimba

Web: [score sample](#), [audio recording](#)

These arrangements of three pieces by Astor Piazzolla ("Overture," "El Viaje," and "Sensual") highlight the composer's compositional emphasis on Argentinian Tango Nuevo, and are suited for a marimbist who has a solid grasp of four-mallet technique, expression, and performance confidence. The pieces are different in character and tempo, and all have their own charm and appeal. A YouTube search of the titles will yield examples of the original music, which do not deviate much from these arrangements.

It should be noted that these pieces are not arranged in the same fashion as the familiar "Libertango" solo, in that the approach here is more pianistic with lighter and thinner chordal accompaniment and more emphasis on single-line melodic presentations. Additionally, the quickness of some of the melodic lines will require agile mallet-to-mallet facility, as is found in the playing style of Theodor Milkov. All in all, these pieces have a unique charisma about them, which might be a nice deviation for someone looking for a new type of marimba piece to present to an audience.

—Joshua D. Smith

## KEYBOARD PERCUSSION DUO

### Sword Shield IV

Adam Tan

€20.00

Edition Svitzer

Instrumentation: 3-octave vibraphone, 4.3-octave marimba

Web: [score sample](#), [audio recording](#)

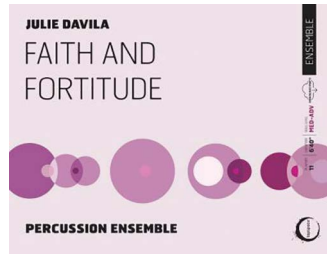
Adam Tan has provided another excellent piece for the duet repertoire. Written for marimba and vibraphone, the piece requires each player to have a firm grasp of four-mallet technique along with an excellent sense of ensemble playing.

This work represents two forces at battle with each other. One part performs virtuosic lines while the other "defends" with chordal accompaniment. Along the way these roles switch between the players, and both come away realizing that they can be stronger if they combine forces. With this, each player needs to be able to switch between offensive and defensive roles. When playing the

accompaniment, a strong rhythmic foundation will be required to allow for the lyrical player to shine. Throughout, Tan gives musical direction with phrases like "more pronounced, heroic" and "charging onward, with confidence" that will help the performers along this journey.

This new duo will be sure to please audiences in any setting, from a collegiate recital to percussion ensemble concert. The audience is sure to enjoy watching two players battle it out onstage to see who comes out on top.

—Josh Armstrong



## PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

### Faith and Fortitude IV-V

Julie Davila

\$45.00

Tapspace Publications

Web: [score sample](#), [audio recording](#)

Instrumentation (11 players): glockenspiel, 9 concert toms, 2 vibraphones, 5 bell plates, 2 metal bowls, chimes, two 4.3-octave marimbas, 4.5-octave marimba, 5-octave marimba, 6 suspended cymbals, 2 Vibra-Tones, vibraslap, timpani, concert bass drum, tam-tam, djembe, brake drum, woodblock, triangle, 2 splash cymbals, impact drum, snare drum, hi-hat, China cymbal

Written during a challenging time in Julie Davila's life, "Faith and Fortitude" uses a thematic structure of five notes representing the five letters in the word "faith." Likewise, quintuplets are a rhythmic theme used throughout the piece. This large percussion ensemble contains a wide sonic palette where the pitched and unpitched instruments often share the roles of theme, ostinato, and embellishment.

"Faith and Fortitude" requires a large percussion section with a full instrument inventory. For schools that have the resources it contains some valuable pedagogical opportunities. The glockenspiel and chime parts are a lot less involved than the other mallet parts and are a good option for beginning players. Likewise, the timpani part isn't overly difficult and would be a good opportunity for a student needing more experience. More advanced students have the opportunity to play fast four-mallet marimba parts, or experiment with vibraphone dampening.

This piece has changing meters and provides a good opportunity for students to get comfortable with switching between simple and complex meters. The quintuplets occur throughout, both as eighth notes and sixteenth notes. "Faith and Fortitude" is not easy, but at just over four minutes it is structured in a way to make it a doable learning experience for players who have some reading background. It would be a good choice for an advanced high school or undergraduate percussion ensemble wanting to work on

quintuplets, changing meters, and polyrhythms in ensemble playing.

—Marilyn K. Clark Silva

### Freerider III

Patrick Speranza

\$38.00

Tapspace Publications

Instrumentation (10-13 players): glockenspiel, 2 low drums, vibraphone, suspended cymbal, xylophone, 4-octave marimba, 4.3-octave marimba, 4 timpani, 2 shakers, snare drum, bongos, triangle, 3 concert toms, hand cymbals, tambourine, suspended cymbal, ride cymbal, China cymbal, brake drum, bass drum

Web: [score sample](#), [audio recording](#)

"Freerider" is a medium-easy work that uses a range of common percussion instruments to make a full, impressive sound. It combines interesting melodic themes and simpler, yet effective, rhythms to create an adventurous, mysterious, exciting piece of music that will no doubt become a favorite of middle and high-school students.

About the work, the composer writes: "In 2017, American climber Alex Honnold became the first person to complete a free solo ascent of El Capitan in Yosemite National Park. This daring achievement has been described as one of the greatest athletic feats in history. 'Freerider' is named after the route that Alex followed in his ascent of El Capitan. The music is meant to capture the warrior mentality that Alex describes in his preparation to complete his free solo ascent."

This ensemble piece is an excellent choice for performance and learning more about music theory. The clever orchestration is somewhat flexible, as noted in the performance notes, and ensures that every player's voice is important, as well as featured appropriately. There is an opportunity to dive into this music and have deeper discussions with students regarding the notation on the pages, not only the sounds they make: *How* was this composed? *What* is the composer's intent? Students can also learn more about key signatures, modes (minor, harmonic minor, chromaticism, etc.), and harmonic progressions. Rhythmically, it's interesting to see and hear how the basic rhythm groups sound when they are overlapped (sixteenth notes, offbeat-accented eighths, quarter-note triplets, etc.). Clearly, this is a wonderful piece for the developing ensemble that wants to take their playing to a new level.

—Cassie Bunting

### Medieval Percussion Suite II

Kyle H. Peters

\$35.00

Tapspace Publications

Instrumentation (4 players): tambourine, snare drum, tenor drum, bass drum

Web: [score sample](#), [audio recording](#)

This three-movement work for young percussionists is based on styles or images from the Medieval period. Kyle H. Peters explains that each movement is meant to teach the performers "important skills to be successful while making music with others."

The first movement, "Waltz," is meant to increase confidence in playing music in 3/4. The rhythms are downbeat-heavy (bass drum and other instruments with accents), while also featuring eighth-note patterns, some flams, and playing on the rim of the drum. Additionally, the

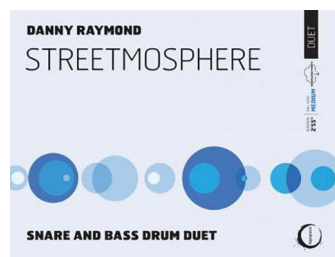
dynamics are quite varied with a good bit of soft playing.

For the second movement, "Carol," Peters explains that the drums are treated as melodic instruments. As a result, each part is much more independent from the others as opposed to the homophonic texture of the first movement. Dynamics are very clearly notated to show which part should stand out in each phrase. In this movement, some performers are required to play drags, syncopated accents, and some sixteenth-note rhythms.

"Joust," as you may guess, depicts the medieval contest. Thus, the music is marked at a bright tempo and characterized by the "1 &a, 2 &a" rhythm to represent a galloping horse. This movement requires performers to play in quick 2/4 time with sudden dynamic changes and more frequent sixteenth-note rhythms.

This piece is well-suited to serve the purpose for which it was composed: young percussionists with a small setup learning how to play independently, as well as together with their peers. I recommend "Medieval Percussion Suite" for any young percussion ensemble looking for a varied, accessible, and rewarding musical experience

—Justin Bunting



### Streetmosphere IV

Danny Raymond

\$25.00

**Tapspace Publications**

**Instrumentation (2 players):** snare drum, marching bass drum, cowbell

**Web:** [score sample](#), [audio and video recordings](#)

This funky new duet by Danny Raymond does not disappoint! Raymond is well known for writing groove oriented, often drum-corps inspired pieces that are educational, entertaining, and challenging. "Streetmosphere" fits comfortably into this tradition as an approachable duet for snare drum and mounted bass drum, which features rhythms from the rumba and guaguanco styles while offering room for the players to make the piece their own.

In a form reminiscent of a drumline cadence, this piece provides an opportunity for two intermediate performers to be introduced to, or showcase their skills in marching percussion, the Latin styles of rumba and guaguanco, and/or chamber music. While accessible for players with a variety of playing experiences, there are isolated sections with exposed rolls and tricky sticking in the snare drum part. In the bass drum part, there are frequent syncopations where the player is asked to navigate between the drum and a mounted cowbell, although it has notably fewer notes than the snare drum part.

With its high energy, short length, and repetition, this piece is very audience friendly and worthy of consideration for high school or

advanced middle school students interested in solo and ensemble playing. The score is cleanly notated and comes with digital parts and a notation key. In addition, Raymond offers useful performance notes for both the snare drum and bass drum parts to aid with preparing the piece, instrument substitutions, or even orchestrating it as a drumline cadence. Congratulations Danny Raymond on this welcome addition to the chamber-music repertoire.

—Quintin Mallette

### Three Laughs IV-V

Arthur Lipner

\$55.00 digital; \$65.00 print

**MalletWorks Music**

**Instrumentation (10-14 players):** glockenspiel, xylophone, vibraphone, 5-octave marimba, 4.3-octave marimba, chimes, snare drum, bass drum, timpani, optional bass guitar, three concert toms, other auxiliary percussion instruments, various household items

**Web:** [score sample](#), [video recording](#)

"Three Laughs" blends traditional percussion instruments with a variety of found objects to create a unique theatrical experience. The piece requires a minimum of 10 players with an additional four parts to be used at the director's discretion. The found objects are common household items including hair dryers, bubble wands, crescent wrenches, electric drills, ping pong balls, juice jugs, iPhone ringtones, bicycles, and rubber ducks. Additionally, "Three Laughs" features 12 themes from well-known pieces such as Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, "Habañera" from Carmen, "Frère Jacques," "On Top of Spaghetti," and "Yellow Rose of Texas." It is most suited for advanced percussion ensembles.

The rhythmic and technical components are quite manageable throughout the piece. Intermediate four-mallet experience is needed for two of the keyboard parts, which use double vertical and single independent strokes only. There are a few syncopated rhythms throughout, though most are supported by other players in the ensemble. The real challenges include theatrical elements and utilizing some of the more unusual objects. In addition to having several instrument changes, some players take on more of a performance role as they need to "sell" these elements to the audience. It is important to have players interested in acting in order to make the music more convincing overall.

"Three Laughs" is a great addition to the growing repertoire for percussion ensembles, especially if you are looking for something an audience has never experienced before. It is a worthwhile composition for students as well, serving as a gateway into the world of theatrical percussion.

Note: There is also a wind ensemble version of "Three Laughs." Visit the publisher's website for details.

—Danielle Moreau

### Time Dilation IV

Francisco Perez

\$44.00

**Tapspace Publications**

**Instrumentation (8 players):** glockenspiel, 2 vibraphones, two 5-octave marimbas, mounted kick drum, suspended cymbal, ribbon crasher or similar sound

**Web:** [score sample](#), [audio and video recordings](#)

Commissioned by James Campbell for the PASIC 2019 Collegiate All-Star Percussion Ensemble, "Time Dilation" is a rhythmic and colorful work that will satisfy audiences and performers. Regarding the inspiration for the piece, the composer states, "Gravitational time dilation is an astronomical phenomenon whereby it was theorized (and recently proven) that time is not an absolute measure in our universe. Simply put, time dilation indicates that the faster an object in our universe travels, the more the 'experience' of time is affected (slower) compared to another object in a different environment."

Beginning in a 5/4 at a brisk quarter note equaling 250, a five-note motif is stated in the marimba parts that serves as the connective tissue throughout the work. While other instruments initially reinforce this rhythm, they eventually "pull away" through rhythmic augmentation (longer note values, as seen in the glockenspiel part) or hemiolas that work "against the grain" of the meter (notably in the percussion part and eventually other instruments). These devices create a constantly spinning texture against a tonal and "pop" harmonic backdrop.

While none of the parts are especially difficult, the frequent rhythmic interplay and breakneck tempo will demand players of a certain confidence and maturity. Only two of the marimba parts and the glockenspiel part require four mallets, and the writing consists of block chords and idiomatically broken chords that would be attainable by an advanced high school to intermediate college player. Although the size of the instrumentation might necessitate the use of a conductor, the performance of this piece as a chamber work is not out of the question, depending on the level of the players involved.

—Jason Baker

## MULTIPLE PERCUSSION SOLO

### Southern Gothic V

Jason Baker

\$15.00

**Tapspace Publications**

**Instrumentation:** glass bottle, metal bowl, two woodblocks, bongos

**Web:** [score sample](#), [audio and video recordings](#)

"Southern Gothic" is exactly the kind of piece that I salivate over as a university educator. In a hair under three minutes, Jason Baker packs in an enormous amount of conceptual, technical, and interpretational growth for students who are starting to build a relationship with the field of multiple percussion. Refreshingly (and correctly), "Southern Gothic" subverts the idea that multiple percussion is just concertizing stand-up drum set by bringing things back down to our Cage- and Harrison-inspired origins of sophisticated music for unsophisticated (and therefore accessible) objects. Instead of tin cans, Baker uses a glass bottle and a mixing bowl, but the sentiment is the same: a poverty of means can still lead to a wealth of expression.

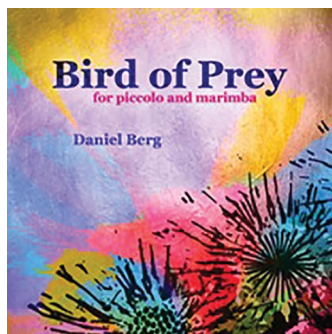
This piece seems tailor-made to address the exact concepts that should be the focus of early multiple percussion study: learning which questions to ask *before* playing a note, exploring and curating the sounds of nontraditional



percussion instruments (e.g., those not found in the average five-piece drum set), and building an adaptable and sensitive technical touch suited to playing a set of instruments with differing responsiveness. William Kraft's excellent and time-tested suites for percussion achieve some of these goals, but the 21st-century percussionist's need (and really, obligation) to question everything on the page requires the kind of conceptual training that few works can provide at a relatively accessible level of technical demand. I'm delighted to point out that "Southern Gothic" is exactly that kind of piece.

On top of its educational value, "Southern Gothic" is a genuinely charming slice of solo percussion music that checks three important boxes: it's fun to play, fun to listen to, and fits into a backpack. For all of my focus on the pedagogical side of things, the piece is also a short but impressive technical barnburner that would be equally welcome on a public concert or degree recital. I expect this solo will become a popular option for university juries, but I think it would also be an excellent addition to a school or public concert given by a traveling professional. In any event, I strongly recommend this work to anyone looking for a shorter multiple-percussion solo project that will be both technically and conceptually rewarding.

—Brian Graiser



## MIXED INSTRUMENTATION

### **Bird of Prey** V

Daniel Berg

€20.00

Edition Svitzer

**Instrumentation (2 players):** piccolo, 4.3-octave marimba.

**Web:** [score sample](#), [audio and video recordings](#)

Piccolo and percussion are not a combination you see every day, and I wasn't sure what to expect. However, Daniel Berg's command of harmony and texture is captivating. Berg has created an interesting chamber work for percussion that is accessible for the audience while technically and musically challenging for the performers.

In just under three minutes, and after a flurry of notes, Berg has crafted a frenetic texture reminiscent of the power, majesty, and elegance associated with the raptor. Throughout "Bird of Prey," the range of each instrument is manipulated to allow its distinct characteristics to shine through, all while the performers maneuver frequent meter changes and a sea of notes. An aura of danger and alertness is exuded from carnivorous birds, a trait the performers emulate as they suddenly align out of an abyss of scalar passages and are asked to stop deftly before

falling into cavernous rests, a pitfall to be aware of during the learning process.

Despite my initial uncertainty about this chamber pairing, Berg has managed to capture the haunting folk quality of the piccolo, perfectly suited for the more mellow marimba. Additionally, Berg smartly orchestrates for the low-A marimba, often featuring it using idiomatic permutations and rapid scalar passages in the mid to lower register, making this piece not only musically gratifying but also accessible for many players without access to a low-C instrument.

"Bird of Prey" comes with a score and parts. It should be noted that while the parts are beautifully engraved, they are not laid out for performance and would require memorization, digitizing, or copies for performance. This intriguing piece would make a great addition to any graduate or professional recital and provides a great opportunity for collaboration amongst colleagues. I highly recommend "Bird of Prey" and am pleasantly surprised by Berg's ingenuity!

—Quintin Mallette

### **Murmurations** V

Adam Bruce

\$42.00

Tapspace Publications

**Instrumentation (3-5 players):** 3 snare drums, 3 concert bass drum (or 1 shared drum), 2 optional pianos

**Web:** [score sample](#), [audio and video recordings](#)

Taking influence from the flying patterns of starling birds, Adam Bruce's newest percussion trio plays right into the ebbing and flowing nature of these flocking displays. "Murmurations" features three snare drummers, each with a bass drum, along with the option to add two written piano parts. These parts can also be added as an electronic backing track, allowing for multiple options for performance. In addition, Bruce includes an optional video track demonstrating various avian formations to be played during an improvised interlude.

Sharing inspiration from Christopher Deane's iconic "Vespertine Formations," Bruce utilizes several similar techniques to help produce shifting sonorities across the drums. Rather than using marimbas, Bruce arranged the work for three sizes of drums: piccolo, snare, and field. Each player also uses a bass drum, but this could be done with one or three bass drums. By delaying entrances and incorporating quicker rhythms and subdivisions, "Murmurations" effectively creates imagery reminiscent of starlings flowing through the sky.

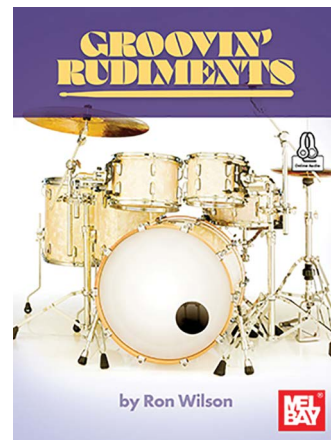
All three percussion parts are uniformly challenging. In the opening, each player rhythmically shifts between triplet diddles, sixteenth notes, and quintuplets. This pattern serves as a main theme to be recalled later. The middle section features an improvised brush passage to emulate the bird patterns that can be visually included in the performance. The final major section incorporates sextuplet patterns that split between the three players à la bass drum threes.

The piano parts are a little sparser, with occasional patterns that help drive the music forward. Light, lyrical lines float above the rhythmic texture along with punching bass lines that come together to help bring melodic life and character to the piece.

With a performance time of around 6½ minutes,

"Murmurations" would be a good addition for an advanced high school or university ensemble, providing a respite away from the traditional flash and flair of percussion works, while also delivering an enjoyable performance with nuance and contours.

—Matthew Geiger



## DRUM SET

**Groove Manipulation: Transposing**

### **Groove Rhythms Around the Drum Kit** IV

Andy E.P.

\$25.00

Self-published

Drum grooves are often predictable. When listening to a standard rock beat, the listener typically expects to hear eighth notes on the cymbal. The bass drum is heard on counts 1 and 3 while the snare drum is on 2 and 4. This book flips the traditional roles of the instruments. For example, the bass drum and cymbal parts may switch places. This creates a different feel while keeping the underlying rhythm intact. The author refers to this concept as "manipulation." A block-style chart is used to aid in the reader's understanding of each manipulated groove.

The manipulation concept is applied to such styles as bossa nova, samba, funk, R&B, Afrobeat, hip-hop, swing, and 6/8 rock. The grooves are presented with several variations, where the instruments are mixed and matched in different combinations. Drum charts are also included, where the drummer can experiment with switching between the original groove and its manipulated variations. The manipulations produce interesting grooves.

While the variations may not always fit into traditional styles, they challenge one's coordination. They may also inspire drummers to apply rhythms in a new way. The concept should interest those who are looking to add some spice to their grooves.

—Jeff W. Johnson

## Groovin' Rudiments II—III

Ron Wilson

\$19.99

Mel Bay

Drummers often learn rudiments on a drum pad or snare drum. They are told that the rudiments can be phrased around the drum set to create musically interesting grooves, solos, and fills. Unfortunately, the books that apply rudiments to the drum set are generally geared toward drummers at an advanced level. This book gives beginning- to intermediate-level drummers an opportunity to utilize rudiments on the entire set.

All 40 PAS International Snare Drum Rudiments are presented first on snare drum, then orchestrated around the drum set. For example, the single-stroke roll is played as a 16th-note hi-hat pattern with the snare drum playing on counts 2 and 4. It is also utilized as a drum fill idea, moving the alternated single strokes around the drum set. Numbered rolls are also utilized as grooves and fills.

Paradiddles and paradiddle-based rudiments are used creatively as well. The single paradiddle and triple paradiddle are played in a funk context, while the double paradiddle and paradiddle-diddle are played with a 6/8 blues feel. Flam rudiments such as the flamacue, flam paradiddle, single flamed mill, and pataflafla are phrased in a half-time rock context. Other flam rudiments are applied to the shuffle and slow blues styles. Drag rudiments are applied to a number of styles, including the waltz and "train" beat.

The reader should have general knowledge of the basic note values, such as quarter notes, eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and eighth-note triplets. Time signatures utilized include 4/4, 3/4, and 6/8. Supplemental audio tracks are accessible online. The tracks include full-band performances, as well as the band minus drums.

Applying rudiments to the drum set from the start makes them seem less mysterious and more approachable. Better yet, drummers will have fun while practicing their rudiments!

—Jeff Johnson

## The Whistle Drummer III

Johannes Steinbauer

€25.00

Edition Svitzer

**Instrumentation:** drum set, police whistle, apito (samba whistle), siren (if available), brushes, bow

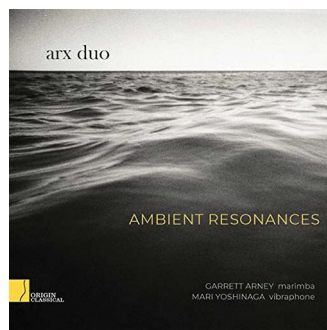
**Web:** [score sample](#), [audio recording](#)

"The Whistle Drummer" is a wonderful piece for solo drum set. The composer writes, "It aims to showcase the drum set as a solo instrument and demonstrate the musical stories we can tell with it, combined with a few effect instruments." The piece is in three movements ("NYC," "PARI," and "RIO"), each representing various styles and techniques on the drum set. The first movement includes jazz, funk, drum-and-bass, and more. The second movement is slow and dreamlike, using a lot of effects. The final movement features Brazilian styles and some theatrics.

Rarely does a percussion solo (for any instrument) have notation and engraving as meticulous and clear as "The Whistle Drummer." Johannes Steinbauer has done a marvelous job writing out the parts needed while still leaving some room for the player to improvise in sections. This would be a perfect solo for someone who is or wants to be a serious drum set player. Yet it

remains accessible to the audience throughout its 15-minute runtime. I highly recommend "The Whistle Drummer." It is the perfect addition to any recital or professional drum set performance.

—Joe Millea



## RECORDINGS

### Ambient Resonances

Arx Duo

Origin Records

If there is a mastery of performing the music of the late Peter Klatzow to be had, the Arx Duo has it. Their album *Ambient Resonances*, named after the Klatzow piece of the same name, is about as perfect a realization of the page as I can imagine. The duo seamlessly blends timbres and interactions perfectly. The sound achieved with marimba rolls and vibraphone chords in the second movement is the type of *sostenuto* and precision that most percussionists only dream (or think) they are playing. It is a testament to the duo's ensemble skills and experience. Anyone who is looking for the way to play Klatzow should look no further than the Arx Duo.

"Sonata for Marimba and Vibraphone" by Juri Seo is, as the composer says, "my response to some of the initial conversations I had with the Arx Duo, who longed for large-scale harmony-driven music for mallet percussion (...music for piano or string quartet that happens to be for percussion...)." The piece has an incredibly pianistic style, especially the first movement, "Fire." Cascading lines are masterfully performed, creating a sense of a single player controlling the timbre and texture. The second movement is free in structure, exploring beautiful harmonies with a very accurate scoring of birdsong peppered throughout. The final movement, "Water," is once again very pianistic but with some stunning timbres created by blending the right harmonic language, rolled marimba, and slow vibraphone motor.

The final piece on the album is "Evergreen" by Robert Honstein — a five-movement, 30-minute work based on a poem titled "The Shortest Day" by Susan Cooper. This is by far the most audience-accessible piece on the album; it balances very nicely with the first two pieces, which are both a more challenging experience for the listener. As is common with the music of Honstein, "Evergreen" manages both beauty and tension throughout, and the Arx Duo makes it sound easy.

While the audio mix on *Ambient Resonances* could be described as clean, clear, and consistent, I personally wanted more overall presence and closeness of the players in the audio mix. Not necessarily Chet Baker's "My Funny Valentine,"

but something to close the gap between listener and performer. The level of musicality of the Arx Duo is on full display on *Ambient Resonances*. If I were a composer who wanted what I had written brought to life, I would look no further than the Arx Duo. After listening to the full album, it is abundantly clear that Garret Arney and Mari Yoshinaga are musicians of the highest caliber. If I had any criticism of their playing it would be that I want to hear not just the precise realization of the composer's score, but the expression of the performers themselves and what they think of the music — something I acknowledge is very difficult to express outside of a live performance.

*Ambient Resonances* belongs in everyone's personal, professional, and academic library. It is without a doubt one of the most well performed percussion duo albums released in recent memory and will endure as such for as long as people listen to recorded music.

—Joe Millea

### Concurrent Sentience

Coulter Hamilton

Kreating Sound

Coulter Hamilton consists of percussionists Ron Coulter and Sean Hamilton, who describe themselves as composers and improvisers. This recording was made close to the beginning of the COVID-19 lockdown, with the performers describing this forced hiatus as resulting "in a fresh and zesty musical encounter." Contributing to this freshness, the recording represents the first time that Coulter and Hamilton improvised together. The instrumentation is a drum set (high tunings for Coulter and low tunings for Hamilton) augmented with various percussion instruments, found objects, and electronics, including radios.

*Concurrent Sentience* consists of eight tracks with a total duration of a little over an hour. The first track, "Well Chuffed," has an energy reminiscent of free jazz, with both performers playing mostly loud with little break. There is a bit of repose as the piece ends and the performers use brushes to roll on drums, and sticks played sparsely on cymbals. The second track, "No Trace," begins with soft lo-fi electronic sounds that gradually become denser during the track's nearly 11 minutes. Moments in this track sound like 1980s video-game music, which I found very cool. The third track, "Scrum," moves back to drums and cymbals. Although it's often pretty dense, the sounds are mostly sustained and soft, contrasting with the rollicking energy of "Well Chuffed." There is a metallic, industrial sound to this piece, particularly in its use of cymbals, scrapes, and shrieks.

Throughout the album there are sounds that are difficult to identify, whether they are found sounds or from more traditional instruments. The fourth track, "Seed & Cast," is the shortest piece, and it uses what sound like woodblocks and muffled toms (amongst other sounds) to create a sort of dripping sound. Like many of the tracks on this album, "Seed & Cast" builds in density as it progresses.

The second half of the album starts with the sound of radio static in "Joyfleet." Like "No Trace," this is another track that uses lo-fi electronics to create a rather soft and ominous sound world. "Fragile Stem" is another metallic track, starting with sparse cymbals that tumble forward into something resembling a steady pulse (for a brief moment). "Substance Abuse" starts with what

sounds like feedback combined with squeaky and bowed cymbal sounds. I enjoyed the soft, subtle nature of the opening of this track. These sounds provide a backdrop for a more energetic drum solo before moving into sustained metal sounds. The final track, “Cowboy’s Breakfast,” starts out loud and drummy. In contrast with some of the other tracks on the album, this one gradually gets softer, only growing a little bit in volume to end the album.

*Concurrent Sentience* is an enjoyable album that speaks to the virtuosity and creativity of its performers. I highly recommend checking it out!

—Joseph Van Hassel

### Extension of a Dream

Fisher/Lau Project

#### Self-Released

Featuring a diverse range of composers and percussion duo music that spans the past 50 years, *Extension of a Dream* is an ambitious recording. Striving to “showcase innovative development in percussion,” the group has selected repertoire that represents standard pieces in the percussion duo catalog as well as works that have not gotten as much attention.

Opening with “Duo de Marimbas” from the larger work, “Le Livre des Claviers,” the connection between the two performers is impressive as they connect gestures seamlessly throughout the work. Their blending of tone blurs lines together, making it hard to hear where one player ends and another begins. Albin Singleton’s “Extension of a Dream,” written in 1977 and revised in 1987, strives to address the social injustice of South African apartheid. Utilizing two multi-percussion setups, car horns and police whistles (meant to represent South African police brutality) are joined with the more traditional instruments. The work is just over 20 minutes long and moves between sparse, atmospheric sections and denser polyrhythmic areas.

“The Loneliness of Santa Claus” by Swedish composer Fredrick Andersson is a classic marimba duo that is spacious and meditative in nature. The performance is well executed, and this recording captures the atmosphere of the piece well, though it is unfortunate that the spaces in the piece are occasionally marred by various clicks and footfalls which take away from the purity of the resonance.

The recording closes with “Yi (憶) Six Short Images for Marimba Four Hands” by Tona Scherchen-Hsiao. Written for two players on a single marimba, the piece explores a variety of colors on the marimba through various implements and specific articulations. Each movement is unique in character and offers a great closing work to the recording.

The Fisher/Lau Project has created an impressive and high-quality contribution to the percussion duo repertoire with this recording. The sensitivity and detail conveyed in their performances places this recording on a very high level, making it something that would be enjoyed by anyone who takes a listen.

—Brian Nozny

### Oh, Hugo!

David Whitman

#### Ropeadope Records

*Oh, Hugo!* continues David Whitman’s success as a band leader and drummer. Following on the heels of *Oh, Clara!* and *Soul Flow*, Whitman

released this third album in 2022, recorded a few years earlier in 2018 at Capitol Studios. All tunes on this album are originals, composed by trumpeter Andrew Neesley, who also performs on every track except one. Overall, this short album – less than 30 minutes – provides a brief glimpse into the musical aesthetic of Whitman and his septet, one with more traditional jazz roots and an expressive tone.

With each diverse selection in the album, Whitman draws direct influence from some of the iconic jazz drummers of the past century like Art Blakey, Paul Motian, Philly Joe Jones, Vernel Fournier, and Tony Williams. Along with the clear inspirations from jazz traditions – for a brief example, check out the Miles Davis reference at the end of “What I’d Be Like” – it is obvious that Whitman and Neesley also share an influence of classical music. A great example is the tune “Soft Eyes & Sweet Lips,” the only trio on the album and a beautiful performance from pianist Geoffrey Keezer.

One of the more eloquent and interesting aspects of the album is Whitman’s brush work. The touch is beautiful with intricate flourishes that embellish the right moments and highlight the melodic interplay occurring around the group. As a general overview, Whitman’s drumming in this album is colorful, tasteful, simple, and relaxed. If you are looking for a more traditional drummer-featured track, he lets loose in “Strapped,” but aside from this uptempo tune, Whitman remains restrained and supportive. *Oh, Hugo!* offers a short tribute to a young boy welcomed into Whitman’s family, with music that helps to sweetly tell that story from start to finish.

—Matthew Geiger

### Peixinho Patriarca Percussão

Drumming GP

#### Self-Released

*Peixinho Patriarca Percussão* is an excellent album by the Portugal-based percussion group Drumming GP. It features compositions by Jorge Peixinho and Eduardo Luís Patriarca, including two works for percussion sextet and two works for electronics.

My favorite composition on the album is “Morrer em Santiago” – a 12-movement work for six percussionists. As stated in the liner notes, it is dedicated to politician Salvador Allende and is saturated in a mass of political ideology. The piece uses common percussion instruments including timpani, marimba, woodblocks, and metal objects, as well as several unique colors such as tongue clicks, whistling, and multi-phonics played on a wind instrument.

“Empty Time/Empty Space” is the only composition on the album by Patriarca. Though utilizing the same instrumentation as “Morrer em Santiago,” it is more lyrical and reflective. Both works are expertly performed by Drumming GP, showcasing their nuance and virtuosity as an ensemble.

*Peixinho Patriarca Percussão* is a beautiful album that highlights the compositional styles of both Peixinho and Patriarca as well as the dynamic talent of Drumming GP.

—Danielle Moreau

### Play Off

Vasco Mendonça

#### Holuzam

This recording of the percussion music of composer Vasco Mendonça is the result of his artistic residence with the Portuguese ensemble Percus-

sion GP from 2019 to 2020. Included on the CD are three multi-movement works: “Play Off,” “American Settings” (which includes South African countertenor Stephen Diaz), and “Three Memos,” and the single-movement work “Aphasia.”

“Play Off” works around the idea of the performers playing a game between each other, similar to a playoff in sports. The work showcases a diverse palette of timbres as well as the variety of skill sets the performers have. It’s easy to hear the performers play off each other, only to then converge on unison figures with power and precision.

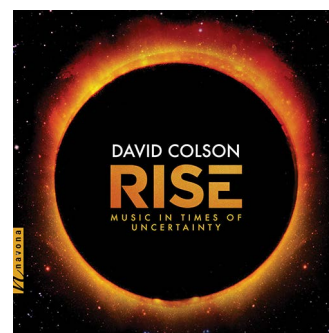
“American Setting” is based on text by American poets Terrance Hayes and Tracy K. Smith. In the composer’s words, “Contemporary America these days is a kind of dizzying fiction: a staging of excess, intent, and transcendence onto which we seem to be unable to stop projecting our own aspirations and anxieties.” This dizzying fiction is apparent in the work as it runs the gamut of styles from spacious and contemplative to driving and playful.

“Three Memos” is a set of etudes with the performers sharing the same instruments as an attempt at studying material reduction. The first movement, “On counting and quiet,” explores wooden textures. The second, “On silent and irrational rhythm,” is performed on metallic instruments, and the final movement, “On quickness and precision,” combines both instruments from the first two movements.

The final piece, “Aphasia,” refers to the medical condition, particularly Wernicke’s Aphasia, where “the ability to grasp the meaning of spleen words is chiefly impaired, while the ease of producing connected speech is not much affected.” Containing electronic sounds as well as acoustic, Mendonça does a brilliant job of blurring the lines between where the electric sounds end and the acoustic ones begin.

“Play Off” is a brilliantly performed and well recorded CD. The sound quality is excellent, and Mendonça’s writing has incredible depth and variety to it. Fans of contemporary percussion ensemble repertoire would do well to check out this CD.

—Brian Nozny



### Rise: Music in Times of Uncertainty

David Colson

#### Navona Records

“Rise” was composed by David Colson for Lori Sims (pianist) and Clocks in Motion Percussion. Described as a “micro-concerto for piano and percussion quartet,” this work consists of five movements and is a little over 20 minutes long. Clocks in Motion Percussion consists of John Corkill, Kyle Flens, Christopher G. Jones, and Sean Kleve.

From the very first note on the bass drum, this



recording grabs your attention. The first movement immediately introduces a lot of the voices that will be heard throughout the work: piano, marimba, vibraphone, xylophone, various cymbals and metals, claves, whirly tubes, and a very large drum. At first, the music heavily invokes the mood of primitivism. After the piano and percussion ensemble have a conversation (perhaps a heated argument?), you begin to hear that the piano is a character that is distancing itself from everything else.

The texture begins to thin over time, leading to the second track for solo piano. The piano's melodic ideas are like multiple characters in a story, but not quite harmonious in rhythm, as one might expect. It's like an aural version of an impressionistic painting — perhaps melancholy, perhaps a little scary, perhaps pensive. The quick scalar lines could be meant to invoke a story. It could also be like your eyes seeing different parts of the painting without any order; taking everything in as it comes.

In the third and fourth movements, the piano continues while marimba, vibraphone, and xylophone interject to tell their own story. At times, they are following the same trail. At other times, voices are juxtaposed to each other — playing in time, but using a different feel, different set of rhythms that are not meant to line up as we're used to. The end of the third movement turns into a hypnotic groove, which is unlike anything we're heard up to this point. It's fascinating how a groove comes to be out-of-place.

The full arsenal is brought back in the final movement, which has many interesting textures and ideas. Drums, metals, keyboards, wooden instruments, and piano fill the texture to the end. After this back-and-forth between piano and percussion ensemble, the final few moments bring us another groove that almost seems like a Reich-inspired melody. It's an incredible effect and a great ending.

The recording quality is nicely done with an obviously large amount of hard work. I think it would be fun to acquire the score and follow along on the next listening. Congratulations to everyone involved for a wonderful project!

—Ben Cantrell

#### **Soul Flow**

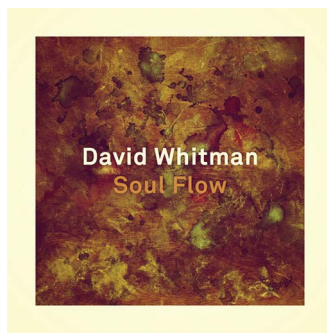
David Whitman

#### **Ropeadope Records**

David Whitman successfully takes on the role of drummer, composer, and bandleader in this new album. The first track, "Come What May," is the only piece not composed by Whitman. Andrew Neesley penned this laid-back swing tune, which features a muted trumpet solo by John Raymond and organ solo by Jared Gold. Whitman gives the listener a taste of his soloing abilities, which will be heard throughout the album.

"Home" is a New Orleans-inspired track, with Whitman gradually increasing in intensity throughout the piece. Whitman seems to have the knack of playing stimulating rhythmic phrases without losing the overall feel. "Shuffle Blues" is a mid-tempo swing tune. Whitman starts off by playing a standard cross-stick on count 2 with two swung eighth notes on count 4. As with the previous tunes, he builds the intensity through the use of dynamic and rhythmic contrast. "No Car Blues" is another tune where the tempo is a bit slower but the energy is high.

"I Had a Friend" features trombonist Francis-



drum. The tune features a trombone solo, organ solo, and drum solo. "No Sir, Yes Sir" is an uptempo Latin tune with blazing solos by Raymond, Torres, and Whitman. Gold also adds interesting solo phrases over a moving horn line. "With Love" is a ballad with a beautiful trumpet melody. This track especially showcases the instrumentalists' abilities to play in a delicate nature without sounding too mellow.

The album does not sound as if it is led by one person. Instead, it is a combined effort with everyone playing to support the music. It can be appreciated by jazz aficionados as well as casual listeners.

—Jeff W. Johnson

co Torres, who shines on this track. Whitman is careful to support Torres, using brushes and later gravitating to sticks. "Rear View" pays tribute to the stylings of Thelonious Monk, with Whitman grooving in 4/4 while switching to a double-time feel at certain points. He even implies a 6/8 time feel at one point. The tune leads into a thunderous drum solo. Although Whitman uses rhythmically complex ideas, listeners can still tap their feet through his drum solo.

"Here We Go" is a bouncy, eighth-note-based groove with Whitman providing both a backbeat and strategically-placed upbeats on the snare

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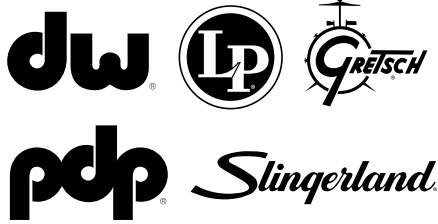
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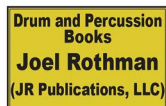
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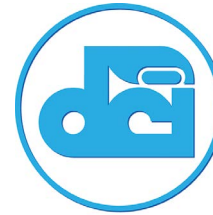
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# From the Rhythm! Discovery Center Collection

## Harry Partch Correspondence to Emil Richards

Gift of Emil Richards, 1993.06.27

Harry Partch (1901-74) was an American composer, music theorist, acoustician, and inventor of numerous musical instruments. His creative endeavors focused heavily on the use of scales built on unequal temperament, such as a 12-pitch scale within an octave using unequal-sized half steps, and microtones, such as a 43-pitch scale within an octave using unequal tunings throughout its range. He also used "just intonation" as a basic system with which to structure his various scales. Partch created and built numerous instruments using these various unique tunings and then composed music for them.

Between the years 1963 and 1974, PAS Hall of Famer and legendary studio recording percussionist Emil Richards routinely corresponded with Partch by mail, and a collection of 26 letters (with envelopes) and postcards, as well as numerous photographs of Partch, his ensemble members, and his instruments are housed in the PAS Archives. The letters, preserved by Richards, generally detail only one side of their communication, as all of them originate with Partch. However, the letters sometimes answer questions or inquiries from Richards to Partch, and often detail significant details of Partch's life, both personal and professional, such as his struggle to find adequate housing for his instruments, or his thoughts on performances, recording projects, and interactions with musicians and the press.

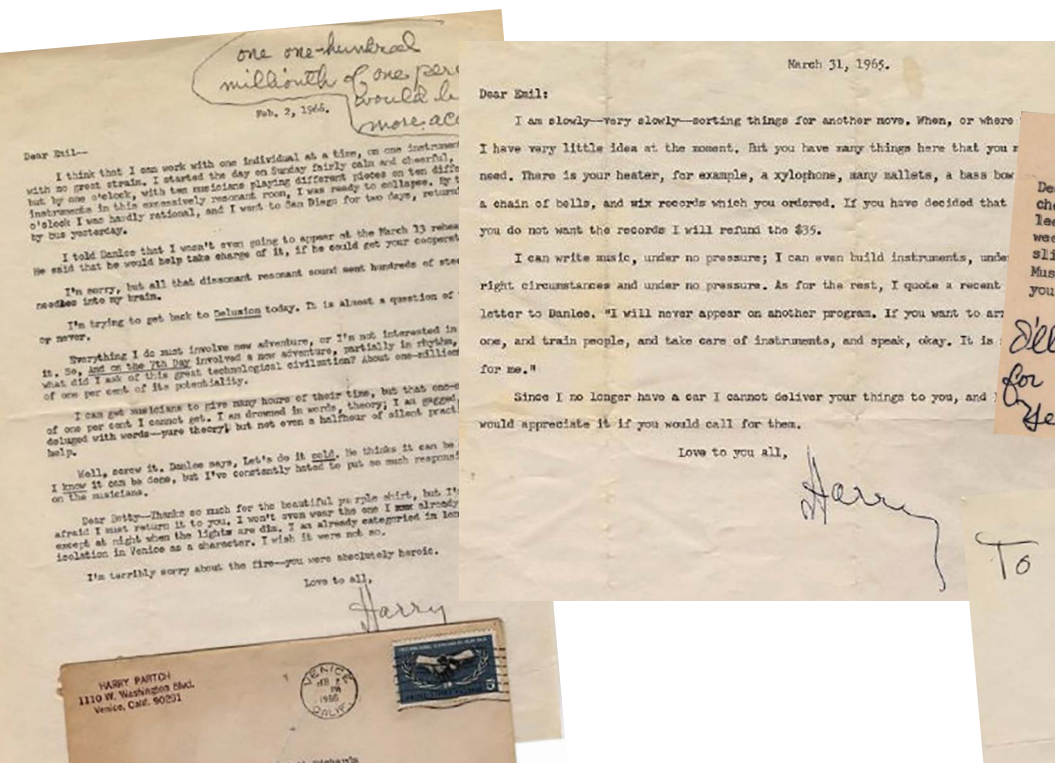
People mentioned by Partch within the letters, in chronological order of first mention, include Danlee Mitchell, Carl Haverlin, Paul Beaver, Shorty Rogers, Larry Bunker, Lynn Blessing, Bill Loughborough, Mike Ranta, Dr. Martin Kamen, Leo Hamilton, Bill Kraft, John and Peta Madie (husband and wife), Helen Raitt, Don Ellis, "Dear Emil-Betty-Mike" and small Emil and Claudio, Mrs. Stanley Freeman, Mrs. Aschleman, Jan Stewart, Ray Kendall, Hilda Mullin, Eve Eshelman, Betty Freeman, Bertha, David Ward-Steinman, Gil Evans aka Gil Green, Paul Earls, Gary Burton, "Dear Ensemble" (14 musicians and conductor), Cecil Spiller, Jim Monte, John Grayson, "Danlee, Bill, and Jim (who now lives in the apartment below me)," Lou Harrison, "You and Danlee, Betty, Linda," Dean Drummond, Jerry Goldsmith, and Erv Wilson.

For more comprehensive information on the life, instruments, and music of Harry Partch, visit [harrypartch.com](http://harrypartch.com).

—James A. Strain, PAS Historian



Emil Richards playing Harry Partch's "Quadrangularis Reversum"



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