

# Percussionist

Official Publication of the PERCUSSIVE ARTS SOCIETY

## Percusionist

#### OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE PERCUSSIVE ARTS SOCIETY

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#### The Domestication of the Snare Drum

Rey M. Longyear

Several writers, with varying degrees of success, have attempted to trace the evolution of the snare drum. Much less attention, however, has been given to the domestication of this instrument: the history of its being brought from the drill field and route march into the concert hall. This topic is a frontier of musical research and involves not only the history of this instrument but also some aspects of military sociology, the drama, and the changing attitudes of audiences between 1780 and 1830.

One need only examine Filippo Bonanni's Gabinetto musicale (1723)<sup>1</sup>, Johann Christoph Weigel's Musicalische Theatrum (1715)<sup>2</sup>, or the many writings of Johann Mattheson to see the lively interest which 18th-century writers on musical instruments took in folk instruments and their practice. During the 18th century the snare drum was such an instrument, for its use in art music was so limited as to be virtually non-existent, and the military music which has come down to us in American and French editions as a heritage of rudimental drumming<sup>3</sup> was not set down in notation until the 19th century. When and how the snare drum was introduced into "art" music is a frontier of research which would make an excellent doctoral dissertation.

Military music is the most obvious place to look. After 1780 compositions in a "military" vein became quite popular, and one need only mention Haydn's "Military" symphony and Mass in Time of War, Mozart's C major piano concerto (K. 467) and the aria "Non piú andrai" from his Marriage of Figaro; and the host of military concertos whose culmination is the first movement of Beethoven's violin concerto. Yet the snare drum does not appear in any of these compositions.

The principal reason may have been the aristocratic character of the armies in most of the centres of military activity—England, France (before 1789), Austria, and Prussia. Composers in those countries wrote their "military" pieces in an idiom which would be acceptable to their aristocratic and bourgeois patrons. The military bands in the armies of the time used full-scale military bands whose percussion were the "janissary" instruments: triangle, cymbals, and bass drum, whereas the snare drum was used chiefly on the march. What composers and audiences recognized as military music was not the fife and drum groups, but the elaborately uniformed military bands which

played in the Vauxhall Gardens, on the Ringstrasse, or outside the palaces of Versailles and Sans-Souci.

Reluctance to incorporate the snare drum even into outdoor music may be seen in the large corpus of music for wind instruments, ranging from "military symphonies" to marches and pas de manoeuvres, written for ceremonies of the French Revolution. Only in the funeral marches, such as the Marche lugubre (1793) by Francois Gossec (1734-1829) or the funeral march for General Hoche (1797) by the Italian Giovanni Paisiello (1740-1816) are snare drums used, and they are to be muted (voilées). Occasionally one encounters a "tambour turc" (a synonym for snare drum), and the parts may have been added as an after-thought, for a symphony for wind instruments by Charles-Simon Catel (1773-1830) has printed parts for most of the instruments but manuscript parts for "tambour turc," cymbals, and a few unusual wind instruments.

Napoleon can be credited with bringing a new kind of martial music, as well as a new kind of war, to the continent of Europe. His armies ranged from Spain to Moscow, and the drums of his Grande Armée echoed throughout the streets of Italy, Austria, Germany, and Poland. Research into the music of his armies has been virtually non-existent, but one bit of evidence shows that his era made the snare drum an integral part of the open-air percussion section. I refer to the "outdoor" music of Ludwig van Beethoven.

Virtually all of Beethoven's music, not only marches but even the Polonaise and Ecossaise for military band, written for outdoor performance calls for the snare drum as well as the "Janissary" instruments. Beethoven used several terms to describe this instrument: "Tükisches [sic] Tromel," "Tamburo di Soldato," and "kleine Trommel" as well as the more conventional "tamburo militare." The drum parts are notated in various ways: in treble clef, just below the staff in treble clef, bass clef, or in bass clef on the same line with, but above, the bass drum. The parts are extremely simple, consisting of single-strokes, short rolls, and long rolls—no "rudimental" virtuosity here! One is quite surprised that Beethoven, who demanded virtuoso performance from his timpanists, would have written such baby-simple snare drum parts; and two theories can be advanced: (1) the parts were doubled and needed to be simple in order to achieve precision or (2) the player, if only one were used, improvised from his part.

Final evidence for the firm place occupied by the snare drum in

outdoor military music during the Napoleonic period is found in the first publication (1818 or 1819) of Beethoven's "Marsch für die bömische Landwehr," later published as the "York'scher Marsch" by Schlesinger in Berlin in a collection of "marches for complete Turkish music for the Prussian army." (Sammlung von Märschen für vollständige türkische Musik für die preussische Armee). By this time a complete military band, therefore, included a snare drum as a regular component.

The chief means through which the snare drum was brought indoors and into the symphony orchestra were incidental music for the drama, battle pieces, the opera, and "entertainment" music. Much additional research needs to be done in all three areas, many more scores need to be investigated, but a survey of these four genres reveals the genesis, at least, of the elaborate snare drum parts of the later 19th century.

Incidental music was an integral part of English drama, especially Shakespeare's plays, and this dramatic effect received great invigoration after 1750 in Germany, not only through the Shakespeare revival but also through the fact that the same theatres were used for operas and plays, and the Prince could not afford to keep his orchestra idle on nights when no operas were given. Especially the historical dramas of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1739-1832) and Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) contain a lavish use of incidental music in which the snare drum is the martial instrument par excellence. A good example of its use—and non-use—can be seen in Beethoven's incidental music to Goethe's Egmont: the snare drum offstage (!) rolls during Egmont's dream, whereas in the song "Die Trommel gerühret!" the drum is depicted by the timpani (16th-note single strokes in vivace).

A host of battle pieces were written during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic periods; audiences evidently found this a vicarious means of participating in the victories of their military leaders. The battle pieces of the French Revolution, like Catel's La Bataille de Fleurus, did not utilize the snare drum; it is in the pieces of the Napoleonic era, especially those written to celebrate his defeats, that the snare drum regularly appears. In his Wellington's Victory or the Battle of Vittoria, Op. 91, Beethoven gives specific instructions for the placement and use of the snare drums:

Also on each side [of the stage] there must be two standard military drums, which will play an opening cadence just before each march; it must only be mentioned that the cadences should not last too long, yet longer than indicated, and whenever possible should be in the

distance and come increasingly closer to represent, by this deception, the approach of the troops.<sup>5</sup>

The drum cadences representing the English (not too fast) and the French (more lively) armies are quite simple. In the "Sturm-Marsch" both the "English" and "French" drums play four-stroke ruffs. Although in his original version for the symphony orchestra plus Mälzel's mechanical instrument, the Panharmonicon, the snare drums were used in the final "Victory Symphony," they are omitted from Beethoven's revised and final version for orchestra alone.

The snare drum is a featured solo instrument in Carl Maria von Weber's cantata Kampf und Sieg, written to commemmorate the Battle of Waterloo. The part for this instrument is simple but more imaginative than those of Beethoven. Whereas Beethoven thought of the snare drum as an outdoor or offstage instrument, Weber brought the instrument into the Orchestra. He may not have been the first composer to do so but must be counted as the first major composer to take this step.

Of greater impact was Rossini's overture to his opera La Gazza Ladra (1817), wherein the snare drum is prominently featured as a solo and accompanying instrument. Now that Napoleon had been packed off to St. Helena and the Holy Alliance was keeping the peace in Europe, audiences could be tinillated by this musical reminiscence of the Corsican ogre at the head of his Grande Armée. Whereas Weber's cantata was limited to Germany, Rossini's opera spread throughout Europe.

Rossini was a master of effects and certainly had found a successful one, as witness the numerous imitations. The most effective of these is Auber's overture to Fra Diavolo, originally written in 1823 for an occasional piece, Vendome en Espagne, to celebrate the crushing of a revolt in Spain by French troops under the auspices of the Holy Alliance. The overture contains a quite elaborate and consistent use of the snare drum.<sup>6</sup>

As the Industrial Revolution spread through Europe, many new industries arose, one of which was "entertainment" music. A new type of composer arose, one who specialized in "light" music rather than symphony or opera. One of the first of these was the Austrian Josef Lanner (1801-43), the musical ancestor of Josef and Johann Strauss. In examining Lanner's waltzes one sees the increased prominence given to the snare drum, not as an afterbeat instrument but as a producer of crescendos and augmenter of volume. One would do well

to study the music of Louis-Antoine Juillien (1812-60), the Kostelanetz and Leroy Anderson of his day, who gave extremely popular concerts in England and America (brought here by P.T. Barnum) as well as in his native France. It is not inconceivable that the snare-drum parts in Juillien's music anticipate the virtuoso parts of the second half of the 19th century.

By the middle of the 19th century the snare drum was an infrequently used, albeit effective, instrument of the symphony orchestra. One can examine some instances of its use: the long roll (along with three timpani tuned to the tonic chord of G major) at the end of the fourth movement of Berlioz' Symphonie Fantastique (1830) or the brilliant part in the overture to Ferenc Erkel's opera Hunyadi László (1844). The improvements in this instrument made in 1837 must have rapidly spread, for in 1842 Wagner specified Rührtrommel (field drum) rather than kleine Trommel or even Militärtrommel in his overture to Rienzi, and Meyerbeer wrote an extremely imaginative snare drum part in the "marche indienne" in his opera L'Africaine (performed 1868). The way was now prepared for such virtuoso examples of orchestral snare-drum writing as in Suppe's Pique Dame and Rimsky-Korsakov's Scheherazade.

#### FOOTNOTES

R. M. Longyear, "The Domestication of the Snare Drum"

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Frank Ll. Harrison and Joan Rimmer (eds)., The Showcase of Musical Instruments (New York, 1964).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Documenta Musicologica XXII (1961).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> E.g., Frederick Fennell, *The Drummer's Heritage* (New York, 1956), Robert Tourte, *Méthod de tambour* (Paris, 1946), pp. 31-34. See also John K. Galm's admirable "A study of the Rudiments Used in Foreign Military Drumming Styles," *Percussionist II* (1965), pp. 10-25.

Constant Pierre, Les Hymnes et Chansons de la Révolution (Paris, 1904), pp. 839-60.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>The student of the history of the bass drum should examine Beethoven's preface, for he specifies not only the small military bass drum but also larger ones, "at least five Viennese feet high," to produce the effect of cannon shots.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Tradition must rear its ugly head: is the 32nd-note pattern at the opening a single-stroke roll, an open five-stroke roll, or a closed roll? A field drum was unquestionably used for this part; therefore the first two choices are most logical, and the first choice is most in keeping with the character of the music. One may further note Beethoven's care in his percussion parts to differentiate between single-strokes and unmeasured rolls.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Cited in Hugh W. Soebbing, "The Evolution of the Snare Drum," *Percussionist II*, 3 (1965), p. 7.

#### Zyklus Max Neuhaus

I first saw the Zyklus score in January of 1962. At that time I was excited a great deal by several ideas, although they didn't actually form themselves until sometime later.

The most important of these was this particular superimposition of two concepts of improvization and composition—the possibility of a performer being able to "improvise", with fully composed elements, within a composed structure.

At that time however, I had no idea of the difficulties involved in realizing this idea. They began with the problem of "constructing the instrument". i.e. discovering the optimum position\* for each one of the instruments and finding the means to place them in such positions. Thus they would solidify into one instrument upon which the maximum number of versions of the piece would be possible.

This solidification of the thirteen instruments, which the piece employs, into one is largely something that occurs in the performer's mind; he begins to think of the vibraphone or the drums not as individual instruments, but as different areas or "notes" in the color scale he has available to him. However, there is one physical condition concerning the instrument placement that, I believe, enables the performer to achieve this conception. This is that the movement



\*Only the approximate placement of the instruments is given in the score.

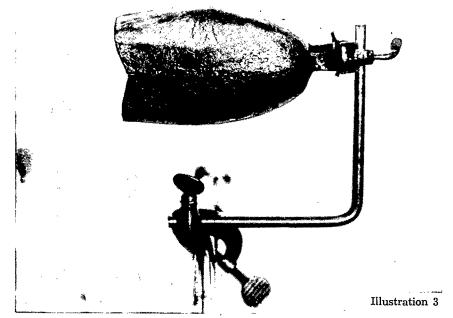
from any one instrument to any other involves no more than one step. As long as one foot remains in place (in a given passage) the Kinesthetic orientation is not lost.

This means that the set-up must be extremely compact—everything compressed on the horizontal plane and expanded on the vertical, at the same time allowing space for all the possible pathways of the stick. (Illust. 1)

In the case of the drums—which are arranged in a zig-zag pattern, instead of in a row, and raised on different levels to allow for rimshots—this compressing not only reduces the overall size of the set up but allows many groups of notes to be played with one hand. (Illust.



Most of the instruments in the piece present mounting problems of some sort; either because of the position that they must be placed in or because they are traditionally played unmounted and held in the hand. The cowbells are typical of the problem of mounting a percussion instrument securely (to withstand fortissimo strokes without changing its position) and yet leaving it free enough so as not to be muffled. I found, if the cowbell was fastened to one end of a soft aluminium "L" shaped rod by means of a clamp (which was insulated from the bell itself by rubber), that the combined give of rod and rubber was enough to allow the bell to vibrate freely, as well as stop most of the transmission of vibrations to the stand. (Illust. 3)



With the tam tam and gong the problem of playing a tremolo with one hand was solved simply by reversing them, thus exposing an edge to the performer which can be inserted between two sticks held in one hand. (Illust. 5) This also allows the use of a padded clamp to muffle the tam tam when there isn't time to do it in the usual manner. (Illust. 5) I also use this technique of rolling with one hand to solve the problem of the continuous trill on the vibraphone for one page of the score. (Illust. 4)

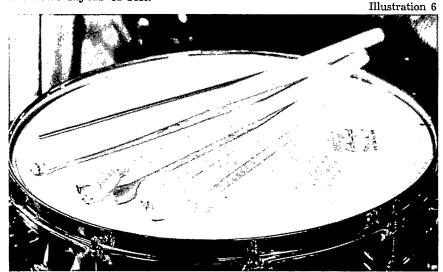


Illustration 4



Illustration 5

I use four different types of sticks in Zyklus—a small steel rod for occassional triangle and cowbell notes, snare drum sticks for the passages which center around the drums, and hard and soft beaters. (Illust. 6) I felt that the hard and soft beaters should meet two requirements; one that they should be the epitome of that type of stick i.e. the hard, to have an extremely high degree of impact sound, and the soft none at all. Two, that they should both be capable of the full range of dynamics. The hard is a nlyon stick covered with two layers of leather to keep from destroying the instruments. (The durability of the nylon seems to lend itself very well to my style of playing.) The soft stick has a medium hard rubber core covered with two layers of felt.



The procuring of an African log drum is, at least here in the U.S., a difficult problem. However, there are two substitutes which seem to be very satisfactory. The first of these is a wood drum, which is simply a wooden cylinder with a wooden head glued on one end. I use these, and the only problem I have found was mounting them in a place where they could be played. A second alternative is a smaller drum constructed exactly like the wood drum only made of cardboard. This actually seems to have a sound closer to that of the log drum but unfortunately it deteriorates very quickly under fortissimo strokes.

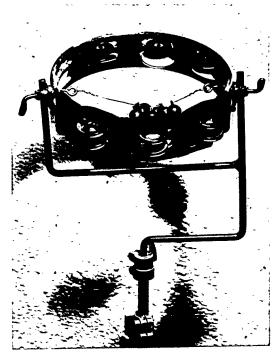
Finding instruments with correct pitches is a considerable difficulty, even though the performer can manipulate pitch to a certain extent. For instance, certain cowbells (usually flat ones) can be tuned by bending the lip, although sometimes this tends to deaden the sound.

Pitches on the log drums may be lowered by adding tape to the lip. The length of the cylinder of the cardboard and wood drums relates to pitch. With the latter a tunable skin head may be added to the other end. However, it is the sound of an instrument, not the pitch which is the most important here, or at least as long as no real melodic cliches result.

With the suspended Indian bells and tambourine I found it necessary, in order to have a fortissimo that matched that of the other instruments to construct a sort of spring cradle for it. (Illust. 7) This also gave the instrument an after vibration which I didn't find objectionable.

After an analysis of the new techniques that an improvised version would entail, I found it necessary, in order to learn these techniques and to play the instrument itself, to compose a fixed version and learn to play it.

To give the reader an idea of the notation, I have included a photograph of a page of this fixed version showing the point at which I begin. (Illust. 8) In order to avoid page turns I have glued several



pages on one piece of cardboard. It will also be noticed that all the variable elements have been cut out and glued onto the time scale at the places where I chose to play them for this version. This was just my way of notating my decisions.

A large part of this article was written for the express purpose of helping other percussionists, who want to learn the piece, to solve some of the practical problems which are involved.

Illustration 7

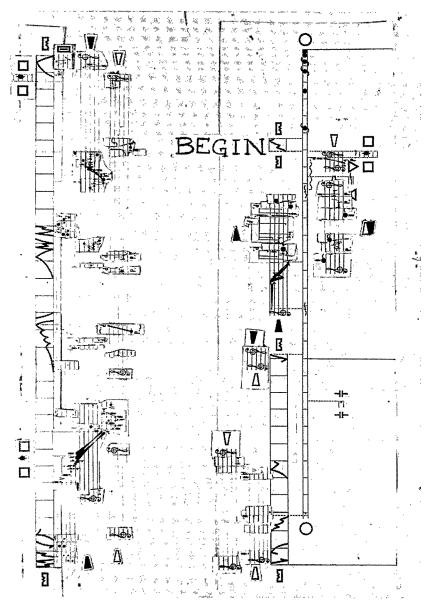


Illustration 8

#### **New Materials**

"Fission" Solo for Two Mallet Instrument in Duet Form, by Morris Lang, Published by Henry Adler, New York, 1965, \$2.00 (Includes explanation of 12 Tone School of Composition with complete analysis of the development of "Fission".)

Schubert Unaccompanied Song Studies, Freely transcribed for Mallet Percussion by Musser, Campbell, and Feldstein, Published by Henry Adler, N.Y. \$1.50. Contains 23 short Schubert melodies designed to expand understanding of Romantic style with instructions for rolls and general style hints.

12 Themes With Jazz Improvisation in Duet Form, by Barry Miles, Published by Henry Adler, N.Y., \$2.00. Although this book could be used for sight reading and technic building its primary purpose is to approach jazz improvisation through its relationship to Harmony.

Percussion Keyboard Technic, for Marimba, Xylophone, Vibraphone, and Bells, by Thomas McMillan, Published by Pro-Art, \$2.00. As a Method Book for mallet instruments this book offers excellent music selection and good organization.

Tympani, Instructions for Playing Igor Starvinshy's "Sacre du Printemps", The Rite of Spring, by Charles L. White, Published by Charles L. White, P.O. Box 76271, Los Angeles, California 90005. \$15.00. This may well be the most unique new publication for percussion to appear on the scene for some time. It is highly specialized but very interesting. It would be indispensable for any serious tympanist.

#### **Organizing The School Percussion Section**

#### by Gordon Peters

The first step in improving a percussion section is to meet with your chief drummer. If you have not yet appointed one, you will find that doing so will benefit all concerned. Whether you choose him by seniority, ability (which includes versatility with all the percussion instruments<sup>1</sup>), rotaton, or sectional vote is largely a personal matter. Democracy and equal opportunity are good guides in choosing a principal percussionist, but, practically speaking, the music director must make his choice on the basis of what is best for the entire organization. The timpani chair is a "section in itself," and putting the timpanist under another percussionist's jurisdiction, or having him in charge of the percussion section, is usually over-burdening and impractical.

The primary responsibility of the principal percussionist is to distribute parts and assign players to instruments. This should be done as soon as the music is put into the folders. After the principal percussionist has studied the music, he should make a chart listing the names of the pieces, the players on each instrument, and other necessary instructions. The chart should be left inside the folder with the music for the other players to peruse in advance of the first rehearsal.

#### SAMPLE ROUTINE CHART

Title	Gordon	Jim	Sam	A1
Concert Overture	Bells Chimes Vibraharp	Bass Drum Xylophone Triangle I Temple Blocks. #7 only	Pair of Cymbals Suspended Cymbal Temple Blocks (all except #7)	Field Drum Tambourine Triangle II
Symphony	Machine Castanets Castanets on Paddle Sleigh Bells	Bass Drum Small Tambourine	Cymbals (pair) Gong	Snare Drum Suspended Cymbal Slapstick

NOTE: "Home Base" Instruments
Mallet-keyboards: Gordon Cymbals: Sam
Bass Drum: Jim Snare Drum: Al

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>The music director has the responsibility to encourage his percussionists to learn to play all the instruments in the percussion section. The lack of versatility many times prevents the percussion section from playing all the parts indicated in the music. Yet more important: a percussionist may wish to continue playing in college or even play professionally; without experience and training on all the major percussion instruments before college (ideally before high school), his competitive position is greatly weakened.

Each player should mark neatly in black pencil what he plays and when he is to move to another instrument. The director should decide whether a percussionist is assigned to a "home base" instrument to play throughout a program (author's preference, but use rotation from program to program), or whether the players are rotated among the various instruments for each separate piece.

It is the principal percussionist's additional task to see to it that all the instruments needed are available and in good playing condition. He should inform the director if any instruments are missing or damaged or if any special-effect instruments are required. It is preferable and will help to minimize mistakes if only one person is on a part. If more percussion players are needed than are normally assigned to the section, this should be made known to the director. Each percussionist should have his instruments set up by rehearsal time. If having a class the preceding hour prevents him from doing this, he should work out an arrangement with a colleague.

#### PREPARING FOR CONCERT

Once the concert program is determined, the physical set-up of the percussion instruments must be considered. During the course of an average program, it is often necessary to move both players and instruments. These movements must be kept to a minimum. There is nothing more distracting to an audience than noise and excessive movement. If there are duplicates of instruments, they should be put to use to minimize movement. This is particularly important in the performance routine of a percussion ensemble.

A common difficulty in public school bands or orchestras is that the drummers often become discipline problems. Many times this is due to their having nothing to play. The music director should help the percussionists by seeing to it that they are kept busy by assigning them to a percussion ensemble, sectional rehearsal, repair and cleaning project, or some other constructive musical activity.

If the parts to be played are few and the number of drummers many, two players can be assigned to a marimba, reading from a piano score marked by the conductor. If the music department does not own a marimba, the music director might well make this a priority on his instrument purchase list. There are numerous potential advantages to be derived from this instrument (see article in the October 1962 issue of "The Instrumentalist": "The Use of the Marimba in the Band").

#### IN GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Because the grammar school music director is confronted with a number of problems at the beginning of the school year, including giving attention to the other instruments of the band or orchestra, and because the music on this level contains inadequately printed percussion parts, the percussionist is usually relegated to a "sit and be quiet" role. When this situation is prolonged, the player's interest and love for music slowly withers, and the orchestra or band soon is without drummers.

This problem is often best resolved by not involving the drummers in the band or orchestra until they are technically developed enough to contribute to the ensemble. Formation of a percussion ensemble is an excellent vehicle to use as a primer to the band. The motivational benefits and musical progress achieved are well worth the little extra time.

A growing number of publishers have fine materials for percussion ensembles at this level utilizing all combinations of instruments; these include: Joseph Berryman, The Band Shed, Petal, Mississippi; Kendor Music Publishers, Delevan, New York; Music for Percussion, Suite 611, 1841 Broadway, New York; and Southern Music Publishers, San Antonio, Texas.

If we only take time to understand some of the problems of the percussionist, we can improve discipline, interest, and musical results.

### An Index Of Articles On Percussion In The School Musician

Edited by James Sewrey

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#### by Ron Fink

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#### **Our Contributors**

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REY M. LONGYEAR . . . Since the inception of PAS Rey Longyear has been an aggressive and stable force for the Society's progress. His recent move to the University of Kentucky as Associate Professor of Musicology and Graduate Advisor places him in the well-deserved position of authority as chairman of the PAS committee on "Musicology and Ethnomusicology," as it relates to the percussive arts. His article in this issue should be of interest to all members.

Gordon Peters is Principal Percussionist with the Chicago Symphony and Percussion Specialist at Northwestern University. As the first official president of PAS he has consistently shown more than just a vital interest in the percussive arts through his indefatigable efforts in behalf of PAS. It goes without saying that the knowledge, skill, and energy of our first president will permeate the total effort of the Society in terms of tangible and intangible contributions, in this issue and all succeeding issues.

#### **Percussive Arts Society**

PURPOSE—To raise the level of musical percussion performance and teaching; to expand understanding of the demands, needs and responsibilities of the percussion student, teacher, and performer, and to promote a greater communication between all areas of the percussion arts.

OFFICER REPRESENTATION CATEGORIES—Professional; College Education; High School, Grammar School Educational; Drum Corps; Dealer; Publisher; Manufacturer; and Members at Large.

PUBLICATION—"THE PERCUSSIONIST", a quarterly journal.

MEMBERSHIP—REGULAR: \$2.50 annually (to be raised to \$5.00, beginning April, 1966)

STUDENT: \$2.50 annually (any full-time student at any educational level)

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#### SPECIFIC PROJECTS UNDER CONSIDERATION

- A. Improvement of percussion solo and ensemble contest adjudication standards and procedures.
- B. Percussion education in general: all categories and at all levels (curriculum, pedagogy, materials).
- C. The marimba: its educational use in the band.
- D. Percussion literature improvement: methods, solos and ersembles, percussion parts to band, orchestra, and stage band music.
- E. The acoustics of percussion instruments.
- F. Standardization of terminology and notation of percussion instruments.

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