PERCUSSIVE NOTES

Vol. 64, No. 1, February 2026

FOCUS ISSUE:

Global Pathways in Percussion

Switzerland Basel Drumming Academy • Percussion Education in South Korea
Experiencing Samba in Brazil • Costa Rican Marimba • Norwegian Drum Tunes
The Global OAcademy • Spanish Txalaparta • Marching Arts in China
Women Drummers of Colombia • Percussion Training in Japan
Zimbabwe Zebra Collective • French Light Wall System • and more…

A MODERN MOVEMENT, CLASSICALLY COMPOSED

Opus One by majestic®

MOS1330BR

HEAR THE OPUS ONE SERIES HERE

The Majestic Opus One Snare Drum Series is built for the workplace... the Concert Hall Stage! The new 13x3 brass snare drum joins the 4", 5" and 6.5" brass instruments in the collection producing clear, sensitive articulations that work with the orchestra and in musical life beyond the audition.

— Christopher Lamb
Principal Percussionist, New York Philharmonic

SEE AND HEAR THE ENTIRE SERIES AT MAJESTICOPUSONE.COM

Contents

PN

GLOBAL PATHWAYS IN PERCUSSION

COLUMNS

PERCUSSIVE NOTES

How to reach the Percussive Arts Society:

VOICE 317.974.4488 **FAX** 317.974.4499
E-MAIL percarts@pas.org
WEB www.pas.org
HOURS Monday–Friday, 9 A.M.–5 P.M. EST

Percussive Notes is an international, peer-reviewed journal published by the Percussive Arts Society. It features scholarly articles representing performance practices, research, pedagogy, and historical information in all areas of percussion, as well as reviews of performance literature, method books, recordings, and videos relevant to the study and performance of percussion. • Annual memberships to the Percussive Arts Society® begin in the month dues are received and applications processed. *Percussive Notes* (ISSN 0553-6502) is printed in the USA at Johnson Press of America, Inc., Pontiac, IL and is published February, April, June, August, October, and December by the Percussive Arts Society, 127 E Michigan St., Suite 600, Indianapolis 46204; telephone: 317.974.4488. Periodicals Postage paid at Indianapolis, IN 46206 and additional mailing offices. Annual print subscription rate: $60 (with $75 membership) • POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Percussive Notes, 127 E Michigan St., Suite 600, Indianapolis 46204 • Correspondence regarding change of address, membership, and other business matters of the Society should be directed to: Percussive Arts Society, 127 E Michigan St., Suite 600, Indianapolis 46204; telephone: 317.974.4488; fax: 317.974.4499. • Editorial material should be sent to: Rick Mattingly, *Percussive Notes*, 127 E Michigan St., Suite 600, Indianapolis 46204 • Advertising materials should be sent to: *Percussive Notes*, 127 E Michigan St., Suite 600, Indianapolis 46204 •

As we turn the page on 2025 and enter a new year, I find myself reflecting on the extraordinary success of PASIC50 this past November. What an unforgettable celebration it was! With record-setting attendance of more than 7,800 participants from across North America and at least 24 countries, our community came together in Indianapolis for a truly historic convention. From the opening moments with the Wula Drum and Dance Ensemble to the electrifying finale with Galactic, we didn't just celebrate a milestone, we ignited the next chapter of our beloved Percussive Arts Society.

The energy throughout those four days was palpable. We witnessed over 100 sessions spanning the full spectrum of percussion, celebrated the premiere of more than 25 new works, and experienced unforgettable performances from such artists as Les Percussions de Strasbourg, Dafnis Prieto, Stefon Harris, Nancy Zeltsman, and so many others. The largest ever performance of John Luther Adams' "Inuksuit" in White River State Park was a highlight that embodied the communal spirit at the heart of PAS.

Beyond the convention center, we brought percussion into Indianapolis Public Schools and partnered with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, demonstrating our commitment to sharing the percussive arts with the broader community. To everyone who attended, presented, performed, volunteered, and contributed to making PASIC50 such a memorable milestone, thank you!

As I write this message, I'm mindful of the global theme woven throughout this issue of *Percussive Notes*. The articles and features in these pages offer a remarkable journey across continents and cultures, from the marimba traditions of Costa Rica to the disciplined percussion education systems of South Korea and Japan, from the powwow drums of the Lakota people to the rudimental drumming of Norway, and from the women drummers leading Colombia's new cumbia movement to the cross-cultural artistic practices bridging East and West. This issue beautifully illustrates what makes our community so vibrant: percussion is truly a universal language that transcends borders and brings people together.

This global perspective reminds me of one of our key strategic priorities as we move forward with the 2025–2027 Strategic Plan: advancing the PAS mission globally. The content in this issue reflects the breadth and depth of percussion traditions around the world, and it reinforces our commitment to being an inclusive organization that celebrates, supports, and learns from the diverse voices within our field. Whether it's the Basel Drumming Academy passing the beat forward in Switzerland, the marching arts flourishing in China, or innovative approaches like the Light Wall System transforming how we think about percussion performance, these stories demonstrate the creativity and passion that define our global community.

PASIC Virtual Sessions once again launched in December, offering free public access through the end of 2025 before becoming a member-exclusive benefit in 2026. This initiative extends the PASIC experience beyond those four days in November and provides valuable educational content to our members throughout the year. It's another example of how PAS continues to expand member resources and engagement, one of our strategic priorities.

As we look ahead to the rest of 2026, I encourage you to stay connected with

PAS through your local chapters, committee involvement, and the many resources available to you as a member. The momentum from PASIC50 should propel us forward with renewed energy and purpose. Together, we will continue building on our rich history while creating new opportunities for the next generation of percussionists.

Warm regards,
Thad Anderson
President, Percussive Arts Society

Introduction: Global Pathways in Percussion

By Shane Jones

We often describe percussion using terms like "global" or "world," labels that can be useful shorthand but rarely reflect how music is learned, shared, and experienced. Such language tends to group traditions by origin or style, even though percussion practices are shaped by people and circumstance. Shifting the focus from categories to pathways allows us to think more clearly about how percussion moves through the world. Pathways emphasize process rather than placement, acknowledging that all percussion traditions exist within networks of influence, responsibility, and care.

This Focus Issue of *Percussive Notes*, Global Pathways in Percussion, explores these ideas through a range of cultural, educational, and artistic perspectives. The word "global" here emphasizes inclusion — an understanding that percussion traditions are part of a shared human practice, informed by place and history, but never defined in opposition to one another.

The articles in this issue do not attempt to define "world percussion," nor do they offer a catalog of global styles. Instead, they trace pathways. These pathways reveal how percussion is learned, transmitted, adapted, and sustained over time, presenting percussion as a practice grounded in people — developed collectively, shaped through mentorship, and carried forward by communities that invest meaning beyond sound or technique alone.

As you engage with this Focus Issue, we invite you to consider your own place within these pathways. How did you come to the instruments and traditions you practice? Who created access for you, and who entrusted you with knowledge? How might your own choices as a performer, educator, or listener help shape pathways for others?

It is our hope that Global Pathways in Percussion encourages thoughtful engagement with percussion as a shared human practice. When approached with care, curiosity, and awareness, these pathways do not lead away from one another, but toward deeper mutual understanding.

Dr. Shane Jones has studied and performed around the globe, including in Brazil, China, Mexico, Trinidad/Tobago, Puerto Rico, West Africa, and across the United States. He serves as Director of Percussion/Distinguished Associate Professor of Music at Utah Valley University and as Associate Editor of World Percussion for Percussive Notes. Shane has performed on Broadway as drummer/percussionist for the musical 1776 at 54 Below. He was the percussionist for *Tina – The Tina Turner Musical* national tour in Utah, drummer for the off-Broadway premiere of the Tony Award and Pulitzer Prize-winning rock musical *Next to Normal*, and the regional tour of *Cabaret*. He has performed with such artists and groups as Boyz II Men, Ben Folds, Guster, Patti Austin, Eurovision-winner Tajči, and the Hot Sardines as well as local jazz and rock bands. He performs regularly with the Utah Symphony Orchestra, Ballet West, and Diamond Empire bands and is the primary drumset recording artist for endorsed/licensed Broadway musical tracks by Right On Cue Services.

The Global Percussion Movement in 20th-Century North America

Part 1

By Julie Spencer

Why do we play percussion? And why do so many of us keep learning new things over the years, never tiring of the adventure? Maybe that's who percussionists are — people who tend to be naturally curious and enjoy discovering and figuring things out. When we look around, we see possibilities everywhere! But what makes a person want to look for new possibilities?

A friend of mine, a nationally respected player, had the comical theory that most of us have had some kind of brain trauma that kickstarted more unique thinking. He interviewed dozens of players at multiple PASICs, and found that an overwhelming number of us, myself included, had suffered one or more concussions in our lives!

In PAS, we belong to the family of players that has the largest international membership society of any instrument. We come together annually at PASIC to learn from our colleagues in different genres and from different countries. We are the group of instrumentalists who continues inventing new instruments, new ways of playing, and new kinds of music at an astonishing rate. We are often composers, entrepreneurs, conductors, improvisers, multi-instrumentalists, interdisciplinary artists, and multi-genre musicians. We are the people who listen to the pulse, to the fabric at the heart of music, keeping track of the subdivisions, the rests, the sequence of the sections of a piece, and filling tiny pockets of time with surprising sounds and deep emotion. We are the ones who keep people together, like musical sheep dogs! We signal other musicians for changes, and generally make the music feel good. What we do makes people dance and, in some cultures, even enter alternate states of consciousness, like trance.

In the symphony orchestra percussion section, it's an inside joke who the real conductor is: the timpanist, of course! The big band drummer is the bandleader. The drummer of the gamelan orchestra is, in fact, the leader, and the lead drum in the Ghanaian drumming ensemble directs the dancers and singers. The surdo provides the steady, driving bass of samba drumming and dance, and the clave is the piercing metronome at the heart of Afro-Cuban and Latin ensembles. The jazz drummer sets up the return of the tune after many choruses of solos and keeps things swinging. The tabla provides the unswerving foundational structure on which elaborate Indian raga improvisations rely. Film-session percussionists create invisible worlds of emotion using large collections of international percussion instruments.

Because of all these roles that percussionists play in just these few examples, it is not surprising that we find ourselves at the forefront of many musical developments. I suggest that there has been a global percussion movement in 20th-century North America that specifically happened when and where it did because of the converging of many historic factors and particularities in the field of percussion. One of the most fundamental contributions of PAS is the awareness that there is a very real global community of percussionists. What does that mean for all of us, and how does it affect the music we want to make?

20TH-CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS

Some examples of 20th-century developments in Western percussion from international sources exploring sonic possibilities for more kinds of instruments include film scoring as the nascent art of filmmaking was developing a sound component. American composer George Antheil, living in Paris, created a score for the avant-garde short film *Ballet Mécanique* about modern industrialization with 16 mechanical pianos, xylophone, and percussion, with a later arrangement including electronic instruments, multiple pianos, an airplane propeller, and a large percussion ensemble.

Clair Omar Musser developed the idea of a classical marimba orchestra, in the tradition of Mexican and Guatemalan marimba ensembles, but for Western

classical music transcriptions and a new kind of concert marimba, with different ranges that mirrored string instrument ranges. Beginning in the 1920s with Darius Milhaud's "Concerto Pour Batterie et Petit Orchestre," the first multi-percussion concerto, and then Paul Creston's "Concertino for Marimba," the new horizon of a solo concert percussion instrument was being unlocked, which led to the beginning of international competitions for solo percussionists — another kind of meeting place for a larger world community. Japanese marimba soloist Keiko Abe made her first tour in the United States in 1977, bringing the music of Japan to percussionists in the U.S., and she was also featured at PASIC.

The first American professional Japanese-heritage drummer, Kenny Endo, had already begun popularizing Taiko after Taiko Grand Master Seiichi Tanaka established his first American Taiko ensemble in 1968 in San Francisco. Percussion had a long-revered position in the music of Kabuki theater, Gagaku court music, and Taiko drumming in Japan. The second wave of international modern marimba production, following the work of Clair Musser and J.C. Deagan, Inc. in the U.S., was from Japan, and then Europe, and it continued gaining traction with the steady rise of major manufacturing companies in the U.S.

Instrument production, music composition, playing styles and techniques, artistic applications, and ensemble concepts were being profoundly affected within North America by these and other music traditions, instruments, and players from multiple countries, ethnicities, and cultural heritages. The stage had been set for new perspectives in music, and particularly percussion, to take root specifically in North America, influenced by music cultures that predominantly feature percussion as a main instrument group, and from cultures with a history of compositions and genres that feature a range of percussion instruments for varied cultural settings.

ACADEMIC AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

Academic developments in North America have given more impetus to the development of percussion as an international musical culture. The beginning of music therapy as a healthcare profession with university studies and degree programs coincided in the early 1970s with the 20th-century North American global percussion movement. Music healing has made use of instruments, techniques, and philosophies of good health that have coalesced out of many world traditions. The use of gongs, meditation bowls, bells, patterns of vibrations, and extremely slow rhythmic structures have been part of incorporating music into alternative Western healing procedures, combined in some settings with yoga and spiritual practices from a range of religious traditions from different cultures and countries.

PAS began publishing articles addressing health and body awareness for injury healing and prevention in *Percussive Notes* as part of a general field of information that percussionists were eager to explore. The drum circle phenomenon, which became more well known through presentations at PASIC, starting with Arthur Hull, grew out of the idea that drumming in many cultures is not part of a profession but rather social involvement for the good of the community at large. The founding of the societies for ethnomusicology and for music therapy in America, SEM and AAMT respectively, coincided with the beginnings of new schools and university studies and then with programs and degrees for the study of world music, which began principally as the study of drumming, dance, and singing from Africa, and of gamelan orchestras with keyboard percussion instruments, gongs, drums, flutes, and singing from Indonesia, followed by the establishment of university programs of study for Latin American drumming, Indian drumming, sitar and sarod, and programs for Brazilian samba drumming and dance and additional Trinidadian steel pan instruments, which had recently been invented for larger steelbands.

The phenomenon in pop music of members of the Beatles studying meditation and music in India, resulted in international renown for George Harrison's sitar teacher, Ravi Shankar, when he came with them to London and then the United States. At the Woodstock festival of 1969, released as a recording in 1970, half-a-million audience members were introduced to classical Indian raga by Shankar, presented on the same stage as virtuoso guitarist Jimi Hendrix, folk singer/activist Joan Baez, rock singer Janis Joplin, ethnomusicologist/folk singer Arlo Guthrie, Latin American musician Carlos Santana, and the bands Sly and the Family Stone, Crosby Stills and Nash, The Who, and The Grateful Dead. These developments all concurrently contributed to the global percussion movement in 20th-century North America.

INSTRUMENTS

We percussionists benefit from instrument treasures in musical cultures the world over, especially since PAS has become an increasingly international organization, with the yearly draw of PASIC. A couple of questions have come up over time, because more of us have been learning the instruments, techniques, and music styles of other kinds of music apart from the ones of our home country.

I start with a simple question that leads to interesting answers that explain some of the confusion of nomenclature, how we talk about the names of instruments, and the traditions and history they come from. My first question is: Do we know where the instruments come from that we think are part of our own culture and music? Many traditions employ a lot of different instruments, like the Western classical tradition for orchestral percussion. Many names of old instruments in the world are rooted in the idea that the object sings when we play it, which means the player simply facilitates the instrument itself singing.

Instruments have always traveled with

the people who created them, and they have often been imbued with meaning beyond music, or anthropomorphized as having a living spirit. The reasons for people's migrations have often been tragic, because of international systems of human enslavement, territorial invasions, civil war, and genocide, as well as for individual economic improvement, and greater religious and personal freedom. The many waves of change in the American demographic landscape have included all of these.

One of the most resilient cultural artifacts that people bring with them, sometimes even more lasting than a language, is their music. And North America has been the place generating the music that the world has wanted to listen to since the inventions leading to recording and amplifying music made it possible for music to be transmitted to faraway places through radio and LPs. The main culture effecting all that change in the development of pop, rap, R&B, soul, gospel, jazz, blues, funk, and fusion, to name a few, gave the music of America its rhythm and improvisation and melodic content from African drumming and singing, from the enslaved generations of people originating from the West Coast of Africa. What the world calls American music actually belongs to the world outside of America — at least in its origins.

Early 20th-century composer Henry Cowell liked to say that he wanted to live in the whole world of sound. Cowell started sticking things between the piano strings, making it sound more like a percussion instrument, because he studied gamelan with Javanese and Balinese gamelan masters Raden Mas Jodjhana and Ramaleislan. He was inspired by the massive new sounds coming out of the bronze keyboard percussion and gongs, and he changed the course of contemporary music. He invented the idea of prepared instruments, of alternate techniques to create different sounds from the same instruments, as he was trying to approximate the sounds he had heard and learned to play that originated in Indonesia.

A lot of percussionists had early access to learning the music of many world cultures because we had the advantage of already being musicians trained in different techniques of striking objects together or with our hands and fingers. By contrast, violinists did not create a new movement in their instrument category to learn music from all over the world. Not many music traditions use bowed string instruments, and those that do, do not have equal temperament in their tuning and do not use the same scales, so that a Western classical violinist would have less similarity in the crossover of their technical skill than a percussionist might have in learning instruments that are played with sticks and mallets on keyboard instruments or drumheads. So when anthropologists and musicologists started making international field recordings, as Alan Lomax famously did, to preserve little-known music traditions, the musicians who started paying attention were often percussionists, maybe because we were faster at understanding underlying rhythmic structures.

But where do all these sounding objects come from in the history of instruments? What are the stories of instruments that are often called "world music" instruments? A quick description of the argument about terminology goes something like this: There is growing objection to the term "world music" to describe a kind of music or instrument, because of an objection to colonialist thinking that is embedded in the perspective. To call some traditions "world music" is based on the assumption of pre-eminence of Western power and culture that designates everything originating outside of so-called Western culture as "world" culture, as if Western culture is not part of the world, but rather separate (or superior) to it. Part of this reasoning comes from the fact that it was previously taught that musical cultures of the world had traditional or folkloric music, which was also referred to in the early research as "primitive" music, using racist terminology. But Western classical traditions were considered to be the only classical or highly regarded music of a developed society.

One of the most resilient cultural artifacts that people bring with them, sometimes even more lasting than a language, is their music.

Largely from the efforts of people like Ravi Shankar and violinist Yehudi Menuhin and their seminal *West Meets East* recording and 1967 performance at the United Nations, did respect for the "classical" music from other cultures gain acceptance. The term "world music" retains for many a hierarchical underpinning. The reason that there are still programs and degrees of study and festivals, etc., bearing the name "world music" is a testament to the fact that there is an effort to rehabilitate the meaning of the word "world" to include all music traditions, while also showing respect for traditions and instruments that are less likely to be included in a conventional path of study in a university system, for instance, or to indicate to audiences that instruments and music genres will be played that are more representative of the whole world of sound, as Cowell would say.

But how did so many percussion instruments go from their cultures of origin into being foundational instruments

in completely different music traditions? How do we talk about them, and how does that affect us as percussionists? When Mozart first heard music from Turkey, which included triangles, and then wrote a significant part for triangle in his opera *Entführung aus dem Serail* (*Abduction from the Seraglio*) in 1781, he had no idea that the triangle would become part of every orchestral percussionist's toolkit 200 years later. In Western classical percussion, there hasn't really been an open acknowledgment that most percussion instruments come from places and times fully separate from their modern uses, in the oldest instrument family: percussion. Wherever people live in communities and societies, their own music and the ways to describe its value have grown up alongside of them. When we learn to play percussion instruments that are important in unique ways to particular groups of people, it's part of respecting the music and the people to be aware of those things, at least nominally.

There are always more things to hit or scrape, and different ways to create sounds on idiophones and membranophones, the main categories musicology uses to classify most of what we do. But that doesn't capture the whole picture. When we talk about percussion and the different kinds of music in which it plays a central part, the words and names we use are as diverse as the instruments themselves, and they are as specific to who we are and where we come from as are the instruments.

In the Western classical tradition of studying percussion, students dive into whole families of instruments, like keyboard, hand, and small percussion. Instruments can be divided according to types of ensembles: drum corps, big band, orchestral, wind, and chamber ensembles that have additional groupings like snares, tenors, basses, cymbals, electronics, timpani, drumsets, gongs, accessories. Divisions of instruments and kinds of music are defined by many things over time. Advertising and marketing decisions in the recording and manufacturing industries can affect wide sweeping changes. Changes in nomenclature in the field of publishing with textbooks, research material, reviews of recordings and literature, composers' score indications, and sociological reflections on the usage of instruments can bring about subtle changes in how we talk about things. The doubling lists for percussionists in musicians' union guidebooks affect the transparency of the variety of instruments that session percussionists are expected to provide on sound scoring stages and in studios. And according to the titles and subcategories of major awards and festival descriptions, how we talk about what we do shifts from year to year, along with the winds of pop culture and popular internet hashtags and comparisons of the number of views and amount of engagement with internet posts.

Categorizations can be based on cultural traditions, religions, or nationalities and geographic areas and their population identities — the places, people and the time in history that music and instruments come from, for instance, Latin, Afro-Cuban, Brazilian, First Nation, Indigenous, Caribbean, Middle Eastern, Sufi, Southeast Asian, Gospel, Reggae, Baroque, American folkloric, an Ewe village, etc.

The material used in the construction of the instruments is another way to see a bigger picture: Is it constructed from wood or bamboo, carved from stone or formed from clay, hung with wires or free standing, smooth textures like glass, or animal skins? Do we strike the surface or shake it, rub it, scrape it, spin it, or dip it in water? Do we alter the tension of the head, like timpani, with a hand crank or with foot pedal systems? Is the instrument moveable, carried, held, amplified, controlled by body motion with sensors? Are resonators made from natural gourds or molded into individually tuned metal tubes? Are the tunings conventional and standardized or individual? Is the instrument handmade or mostly factory finished? Are there any intentionally vibrating attachments such as ears on djembes or bottle caps on mbiras, or tiny membranes covering the holes of resonators or extended techniques or preparations for additional sound layers?

Do we play with individual fingers directly on the heads like frame drums or the tabla, or is the motion with many simultaneous parts of the body, like the drumset? Is the combination of movements individualized for a personal style or sound on the instrument, or is it choreographed with many players who practice coordinated unison movements? Do the instruments require predominantly large muscle movements, such as for a marching ensemble or with Taiko drumming?

What is the performance space? A large grassy field, a hotel lobby, a concert hall, a tent? Is the music associated with competitions or social functions? Do we play with two short rubber-tipped beaters, like on the steel pans, or with six yarn-wrapped mallet heads on long shafts like in contemporary marimba literature? Is the music composed or can the player improvise — or both? The vibraphone, for example, began as a sound effect in radio studios, but picked up another couple of octaves and became a staple instrument in jazz, played often by musicians who were pianists as well as by drummers. Frame drumming, like drumset playing in jazz and rock bands, relies on the ability to maintain a rhythmic form and tempo, playing often in combination with other musicians, but is expected to include the freedom of creating patterns and embellishments and also solo figures or longer improvised solos that are expressive of the individual style of the player within the parameters of a tradition.

A typical university percussion performance track teaches students to focus on technique and repertoire, learning to read notation carefully but quickly, and maintain a schedule of rehearsing and performing in ensembles that use a percussion section as well as percussion ensembles. Learning instruments from traditions that are outside of the home of a percussionist means being expected to memorize material by ear, instead of re-

lying on reading parts and scores. It is often part of the process that melodies and lyrics, and forms of songs and dances, are as important to learn as the drumming parts.

Catching the nuances of phrasing and subtle differences in articulation, getting comfortable in the feel of what is accented or ghosted, or where a phrase can lay back and when it can't, are priorities that students are expected to understand. Teachers might require large amounts of repetition because they are waiting for students to demonstrate an understanding of the subtle differences in how the meter and phrases are perceived to fit together, flowing in and out of triple and duple feels, with multiple subdivisions superimposed over each other.

The concept of visualizing music broken into measures with a beginning and an end is so tied to the tradition of Western notation that students coming from outside a certain musical tradition have to first reorganize how they visualize the music in their heads, and how they feel it in their bodies. These are the kinds of experiences that create life-changing differences in how we hear and understand and work with each other as musicians, getting rid of what we think are normal assumptions, as if everyone in the world had the same way of listening and understanding. A good example to start with is looking at where the instruments have come from that are part of the standard Western classical music percussion cabinet.

It's important to be open to the history of cultural artifacts, symbols of religious and ethnic belonging, the place attachment of music, the meanings that are specific to a musical language and its sonic characteristics so we can respect the people who developed the systems of music and instruments that we get to meet when we step outside of whatever musical world we come from. Percussion in the first half of the 21st century is becoming its own culture and owes its existence to the artistic imagination of drummers everywhere who are getting to know each other in large part because of PAS, *Percussive Notes*, PASIC, PAS Day of Percussion events, and percussion festivals and competitions world-wide. All of us are, in one way or another, curious to try something new, to find out what that new sound is, and to feel the exceptional thrill when we let the music move us. To feel alive in visceral ways with burgeoning neural networks we cannot describe or barely fathom is part of the draw we experience when we decide to learn a new instrument, because it's not just about an instrument; it's about the people we meet and listen to, and the music they invite us to be part of, that makes us feel more connected to each other. It offers the possibility to create a deeper understanding of the experience of making and sharing music.

We are a group of people especially inclined to bring others into a community of a shared reality — making a living with one of the best jobs there is, and with some of the most unusual people in the world! Being a drummer, a percussionist, a person who plays all the things we play, means that most of us have a wish list of things we don't yet play! We create our communities, choose our musical family members, and co-create our musical dreams, based on the music we enjoy playing and love listening to. The instruments in Western classical percussion pedagogy — the ones that are part of the percussionist's basic toolkit, used by players, students, children, teachers, and top professionals — all have specific origin stories and crossover functions that became part of the history of many musical genres. Percussion is a global culture in itself, and it continues to develop in ways that may be difficult to perceive, but nonetheless affects all of us continuously.

ORIGINS

There's a small percussion instrument ubiquitous in all American schools in boxes with children's toys, in cabinets of high school band rooms, and in university instrument storage rooms, that has two identical looking parts, and we hit one of them against the other one. They're called claves, a Spanish word that basically means the "keystone" to a structure or a code. That's because the music tradition that the claves are part of needs the claves to maintain the center of the music, the structure, the thing that all the other instruments listen to.

But claves in the Western percussion tradition are used more like a spice, or a punctuation mark in a sentence, to highlight something. The two-measure clave groove at the core of many Latin and Afro-Cuban music forms, with its distinctive syncopated 2-3 or reversed 3-2 pattern goes back as far as sub-Saharan African music traditions, and moved from there to Cuba, where it became the backbone of much of the music we call Latin or Afro-Cuban music, and that typically includes dance and songs and certain triadic voicings of harmonies and articulation of melodic forms.

Most school band programs have a guiro, several kinds of shakers, and at least one triangle with a hanging clip and several beaters somewhere in the back of a cabinet. The guiro comes from the Caribbean, specifically Puerto Rico as early as the 16th century, in the Taíno culture. Some form of rattle is endemic to a majority of world cultures and dates back millennia to Africa, Pacific Island cultures, and the Americas. They can be made of gourds or turtle shells or wood, and be filled with everything from beans and seeds to stones or shell beads. With attached handles they are also called maracas, and have long traditions in healing rituals, communication, and are part of many toy instruments for children, as well as in contemporary classical compositions, and in many genres of music. Maracas also developed as a virtuosic solo instrument in such countries as Venezuela. The triangle has been around for thousands of years, with the oldest ones we know dating back to ancient Egyptian dynasties.

The drumset was constructed as an American invention in New Orleans, as Ragtime piano playing and compositions

were widely popular just before the beginning of the 20th century. Ragtime jazz piano was pulled into small ensembles that branched out into different instrumentations as the new musical style of New Orleans jazz took shape with trumpeter/composer/singer Louis Armstrong at the helm. It distinguished itself from the origins of blues, work songs, and call-and-response vocal styles in the history of American Black music throughout the time of human enslavement in the Americas.

The cymbals included in the drumset have ancient origins in Central Asia, Turkey, and today's Middle East, going back thousands of years, in religious music of many cultures, in dance, rituals, rites of passage, and theatrical accompaniment. The woodblocks that were part of the first drumsets were hand carved with ornamentations from China and were called Chinese woodblocks or temple blocks. And the tom-toms were small Chinese barrel drums. Behind the drumset there was sometimes a gong, making the first drumsets look more like a late 20th-century percussion ensemble setup than a modern jazz drumkit. Rock drummers continued that early aesthetic of having different drums, with an array of tuned tom-toms and many cymbals, and crowd-pleasing solos with theatrical elements, like in Taiko drumming, and also throwing the sticks and catching them in rhythm, like in drum corps.

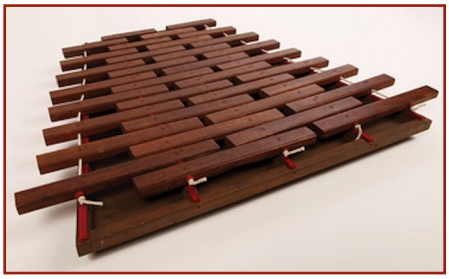
An early drumset showing a mounted Chinese tom-tom, temple blocks, and various cymbals.

The mbira is a widely played instrument today, by musicians and hobby enthusiasts. It probably originated on the African West Coast near today's Cameroon several thousand years ago before spreading to most regions of the African continent, undergoing a major development in modern day Zimbabwe, by the Shona people about 600 A.D. The name kalimba is a derivation from other names used in Bantu languages. When a variation was introduced without an amplification gourd, it became the popular instrument known colloquially as the thumb piano. The typical cross rhythms, hocketed patterns, and hemiolas created by the different rhythmic motives of each hand have been widely influential in many musical styles since its popularization.

A mbira without resonators from Zimbabwe

The European xylophone was first used in written music of the 16th-century Renaissance period in Germany when it was called the straw fiddle because of the tuned wood bars resting between bunches of straw to give more resonance and to keep them separate. It was also called "wooden clatter," probably because of less precise tuning practices. There was the four-row xylophone with staggered bars, which were then redistributed into a two-row chromatic arrangement, like a keyboard, in the 1800s, when the name xylophone was first used. It came from the Greek words "xylon" (wood) and "phone" (sound).

A four-row xylophone



Wooden instruments with bars that are struck with some kind of stick come from many places. Archaeological/anthropological evidence suggests that the earliest xylophones may have been a gathering of different pitch registers of stones, even before modes and scales. Mallet instruments on the African continent include the amadinda and akadinda in Uganda; in Mali, the balafon; in Ghana the gyil; in Nigeria the kundung; in Zambia, the silimba. In Asia, there is roneat aek of Cambodia; in Vietnam the bamboo ladder dan t'rung; the bamboo rindik in Bali; the gambang kayu in Java; the mokkin in Japan; the pateteg in the Philippines; and the ranat ek in Thailand. The marimba became the national instrument of Guatamala and part of the cultural bedrock of Mexican music, with uniquely diamond-shaped wooden resonators instead of gourds, and multiple players in rich harmonies on each instrument.

An African balafon

The modern marimba is merely the newest of all the international versions, a crossover instrument developed in the U.S. in its largest common size today of five octaves that we call the concert marimba. The American innovators J.C. Deagan, Inc. and composer Harry Partch created fascinating instruments of many combinations of sounds, materials, sizes and layouts, many of which are in the

Wells-Rapp Center for Mallet Percussion Research at Kutztown University, or with the Grammy-winning performing group the Partch Ensemble in California, as well as in the PAS collection of historic instruments. The large marimbas were developed for the new musical genre of solo marimba music and marimba orchestras, as well as the four-octave xylophone played in jazz and Ragtime music, all of which have relatively tuned resonators under each bar, and they are part of the instrumentation in the 20th- and 21st-century repertoire of Western classical orchestral and contemporary music ensembles. These modern mallet instruments have been adapted to include tuning of the first several harmonics in the harmonic series of each tone, to be useful in mixed instrument ensembles with well-tempered tuning.

The frame drum has been documented from over 5,000 years ago in what is present-day Turkey, and it was blended somewhere along the line with the metal jingles of the ancient sistrum, used in various cultures for religious ceremonies or dance accompaniment. The sistrum is a handheld stick with one or more arms mounted with multiple jingles that are quickly shaken to sound like what we call a roll, or rhythmically, in a meter. And after all these years, where is this hybrid instrument used the most often outside of the Middle East? It's one of the most identifiable percussion sounds of American gospel music in the now famous style of the Motown Rhythm & Blues (R&B) recordings with tambourine!

A sistrum

CULTURAL EVOLUTION

Instruments, like languages and styles of music, change over time: Culture is society in motion. Our art and how we create it is affected by the spaces where we live, the people around us, and the materials we have at hand. Before the Bronze Age we didn't have metal instruments. Before the industrial age, we didn't have electronic synthesizers. In the digital age, we can control sound with sensors and body movement, with light, and with brain waves to create movement and sound from a person's thoughts. What will our instruments of the digital world sound like at the end of this century? How will we map the interface from this century's music of the world onto that future horizon of our musical selves?

With a broader historical and cultural eye to see that instruments, like music and people, don't usually come from just one place, the case can be made that we need a broader historical and sociological understanding of what "world music" means. A new definition closer to the lived reality of all our unique but unifying experiences as percussionists might help us consider the power of our mutual inter-connectivity as the foundation of an inarguable kind of demographic group — a group that can ideally represent what is best in humanity, honoring the importance of individual heritages and, at the same time, respecting the need on planet Earth for exactly the kind of uniting and inspiring energy that percussionists have a habit of bringing to the table.

Our field actually is the whole world of sound — everything that makes a sound when we touch it, including our own hearts and bodies, which are impacted by the touch of sound. Sound that has no borders, no nationalities, no gender, no ownership. Sound belongs to all the world and to everyone who respects its intrinsic power to stir the emotions and the imagination and what is good in us. Musical sound is the air we breathe and the water that sustains us. It simply is.

We have the joy, the honor, the blessing, and the enormous good fortune of being percussionists, with the added bonus that everywhere we go, there are new instruments to discover, new cultures to learn from, more sonic possibilities to explore, more friends to make, and mentors to respect and honor, and a life journey to treasure as students of the world of percussion.

Julie Spencer is an American composer, percussionist, and artist living in Germany, and is a member of the PAS Board of Advisors. Spencer studied Ghanaian drumming, Balinese gamelan, and North Indian tabla at the California Institute of the Arts.

Zebra in Motion: Cross-Cultural Poetics of Percussion and Visual Art

By Dr. Michael Gould and Dr. Masimba Hwati

CHITSVA CHIRI MURUTSOKA

New things come to those who search for them/the new thing is in the foot — in the journeying out of familiar territory

How did we get here? Wrapped in emergency blankets with leather helmets made in Bucharest, electric guitars formed into spears, a trumpet with a bell from a Ram's horn, a cascade of drumheads for water to flow through and over into reflecting pools holding ceramic bowls that act as bells to alert the river deity of possible human intervention.

We are a collaborating duo known as the Zebra Collective, working at the intersection of percussion practices, visual art, sound, and music. Our work takes the form of art installations, activations, recordings, writings, and observational studies. Both of us are very much visual artists, musicians, and humanists. We apply various amounts of pressure to surfaces to create — visually and/or aurally. We also are observers of how we situate ourselves on the planet and observe others, or as Carlo Rotello so eloquently states: "assembling the equipment for living and considering equally on how to live." In our minds (and yours hopefully), there is no such thing as "world music" or, for that matter, "world percussion." There is simply art and music everywhere — in every culture happening 24 hours a day, 7 days a week simultaneously across the planet.

We have learned that when we are stirred and moved by the artsound of other cultures, we must listen with our whole bodies, the way sensitive percussionists settle into an unfamiliar rhythm, meter, or groove. Our experiences have shown us that entering, staying within, and eventually leaving a community all require an ethical cadence — a way of moving with care as citizens of a shared world. We know now that cultural immersion takes time; earning trust cannot be rushed.

Dwight Conquergood's wisdom has guided us: ethical ethnography is dialogical, a co-performance, co-presence anchored in presence, reciprocity, and deep listening rather than extraction.

Zebra Collective (Photo by Arthur Dlamini)

Through our journeys, we have come to understand that this slow, attentive, rhythm-sensitive approach is essential when creating and collaborating across multiple cultural soundscapes.

What about the picture on the previous page: Does it fit in squarely with a conservatory model, a school of music, a school of art? It is an amalgamation of our duo's individual and collective experiences happening in a moment in time at a particular place.

Where cultural boundaries are increasingly blurred yet fiercely policed, artistic evolution requires stepping beyond the familiar — embracing the unknown not as threat, but as fertile ground for creative world-building. World-building is the practice of co-composing a lived and shared cosmology — much like arranging an ensemble that combines percussion and visual arts practices and philosophies. Here, sounds, bodies, materials, and environments co-create meaning. It is the ongoing crafting of a relational universe through embodied knowledge, multisensorial encounters, and cultural memory. In Chidzimbahwe (the culture and language of the people of Zimbabwe) and other indigenous epistemologies, world-building is less about inventing imaginary realms and more about *activating* the worlds already vibrating beneath and around us: ancestral, ecological, communal, and improvisational.

As Zebra Collective, our collaborative exploration embodies a practice that actively resists institutional silos and algorithmic hierarchies in favor of hybridization, fluidity, and ethical engagement.

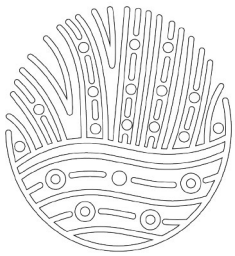
Our work troubles and agitates the compartmentalizing regime that divides according to artistic disciplines racial and cultural identities.

Our work, merging percussion and visual art, challenges simplistic notions of "world music" or compartmentalized disciplines, instead treating art as a living process of multisensory invention and collective memory.

Cross-cultural collaboration, for us, is never merely additive, nor is it immune to the frictions of politics, provenance, and identity. Instead, it is a generative struggle: an ongoing process of negotiating differences with care and openness, cultivating new forms that haunt, stretch, and re-imagine inherited traditions. Ultimately, this article contends that authentic artistic and social diversity is neither categorical nor tokenistic, but relational — earned through the messy, (rhythmic) practice of shared world-making, and realized wherever artists refuse to be boxed in by institutional algorithms.

While going into the art of collaboration is beyond the scope here, we can say that working with anyone involves trust, patience, openness to the other's rhythms, gratitude, and humbleness. It involves a lot of discussion, coffee, and the ability to view your collaborators' work and work flow, and balance that with your own. Eventually, when two or more parties understand each other's personal artistic histories, technical abilities, intentions, the subject at hand can be better articulated into a new combined work. With a good working relationship, the work ebbs and flows over time, and with that, more iterations, refinements, and new works emerge.

EXPOSITION



~~*Zebra*~~ as a living crossroad —
a quiet parliament of donkey, horse, and mule
braided into one moving score.
Hooves strike the earth — ◎ ◎ , □ □ —
disciplined percussion, each gallop a polyrhythmic stroke
remembering every ancestor in its lineage.
Black-and-white skin: a living canvas,
a visual philosophy of contrast, interval, negative space — pattern as pulse, pulse as pattern.
Zebra moving in packs, motion crafting ensembles —
collaborative percussion circles.
Here be ~~*Dragons*~~, here be ~~*Zebras*~~,
here be moving installations where rhythm, image,
and collective instinct fold into each other.

For the past several years, we have worked on a project titled *Nyami Nyami*. It takes its inspiration from the river deity by the same name. It is the snake-like river god of the Zambezi river. The Zambezi River, Africa's fourth largest, epitomizes the intricate dilemmas of our time — a growing need for energy weighed against preserving local resources and biodiversity. Our work on this project also critiques colonial legacies and their ongoing impact on communities in the Global South. The

British erected the Kariba Dam on the river in 1955, displacing thousands and heightening flood risks for millions. Traditional Tonga beliefs imbue the Zambezi with divine presence, envisioning the river god *Nyami Nyami* as a guardian spirit. The Tonga interpret the hardships incurred during the dam's construction as a sign of the deity's wrath, longing for *Nyami Nyami's* intervention to reclaim their homeland. Our collaboration underscores the interconnected challenges humanity faces during the Anthropocene.

Nyami Nyami draws its ontological force from Chidzimbahwe culture, and we honor that lineage in everything we do. Yet our task as artists is not to guard culture as a relic but to push it to its trembling edges — to place ourselves and our inheritances in generative crisis. Out of that crisis, new worlds become possible. When we build new worlds around *Nyami Nyami*, we do not seek to erase the accepted ones; we seek to haunt them. We trace the shadow-lines, the afterlives, the frequencies that remain when a cosmology is stretched beyond its expected borders. By merging percussion and philosophy with visual art and philosophy, we create a hybrid language capable of speaking the elsewhere — the not-yet-named, the not-yet-born, the otherwise. As Zebra Collective, we commit ourselves to these oneiric possibilities, the dream-terrains that erupt when several cultures, disciplines, and cosmologies collide. These collisions do not destroy; they generate. They reveal what Édouard Glissant calls *sabirs* — bridging tongues, creole intensities, contact zones where languages rub against each other until new sense surfaces.

In this space of collision and sabir, we practice a Chidzimbahwe futurism rooted in *Nyami Nyami's* ancestral current yet unafraid to disturb, stretch, and reconfigure its limits. Our work lives inside this productive disturbance, this generative haunting, this insistence on worlds beyond the visible horizon.

DEVELOPMENT

"Rume rimwe harikombi churu" —
"One person cannot surround a termite mound."

Nyami Nyami is sculpture, sound, percussion, performance — a river god moving through time, tracing the tremors of the Kariba Dam, echoing social, cultural, ecological loss. We have done five iterations, each a pulse, a resonance, a new call-and-response between history and imagination.

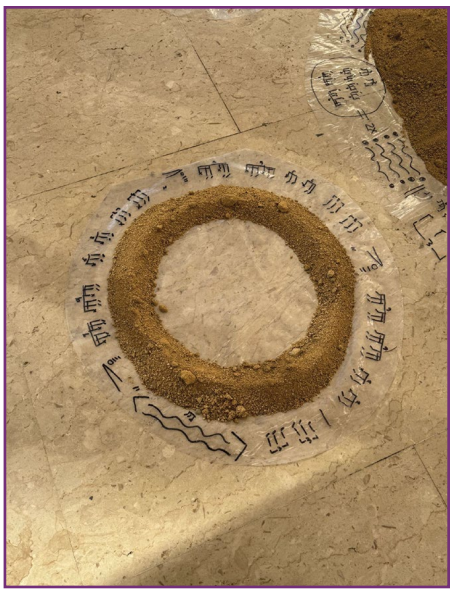
As the Zebra Collective, we listen with whole bodies. Indigenous knowledge, percussion, visual art, material practice, digital technology — these are not separate instruments but layers in a single ensemble. Each vibrates, calls, answers, overlaps; each carries stories of our ongoing relationships with the world, with others, with nonhuman beings.

Every material hums with lineage — drumheads and skins, carved objects, waveforms, stars mapped across the night. They cross-rhythm, collide, syncopate, making space for improvisation, for memory, for possibility. The world itself becomes a resonant body, and we, its co-performers.

Our guiding question is rhythm itself: how do resonance and dissonance, harmony and tension, carry the poetry of relationality? How do these pulses tell stories of care, accountability, and belonging? We attend to tremors, echoes, silences, surges. Each surface — skin, metal, wood, circuit, cosmology — is both drum and score, anchor and catalyst. Together they compose a work about coexistence, about listening, about the ethics of moving through and with the world.

The project is composed of multiple symbolic layers, each carefully designed to narrate the arrival, presence, and departure of *Nyami Nyami*. This narrative is communicated through sonic elements, creating a layered sound dramaturgy where each component holds symbolic meaning, drawing from a collective vocabulary of motifs and metaphors.

The live performance aspect is improvisational, shaped by the forms and textures of the sculptures and by graphic scores distributed across the surfaces of the installation. In this way, the sculptures and visual scores serve both as anchors and catalysts for spontaneous sonic exploration.



How does one create sound in conjunction with world building, specifically in context to *Nyami Nyami*? By looking deep into the story we are trying to convey and the poetics of relationality, we build out sound, texture, form, motifs. In the installation itself there are five visual elements all tied to one another that help direct the sonic palette. Each of these five elements helps create and dictate the music.

1. Drumheads and Drums: Nature Reflectors via Water
2. Electric Guitars: Sounding Spirit Protectors
3. Vibrating Bowls: *Nyami* Alert for Human Intervention
4. Reflecting Pools: Star Gazers
5. Sand and iconography

The five elements of the installation act as its own ecosystem: water flows through the drumheads and cascades down into the reflecting pools. The sound of dripping water is assisted by the bowls floating in the pools striking one another and vibrating from internal mechanisms. The guitars can function on their own as sounding sculpture, but during our activations we strike and pluck these with

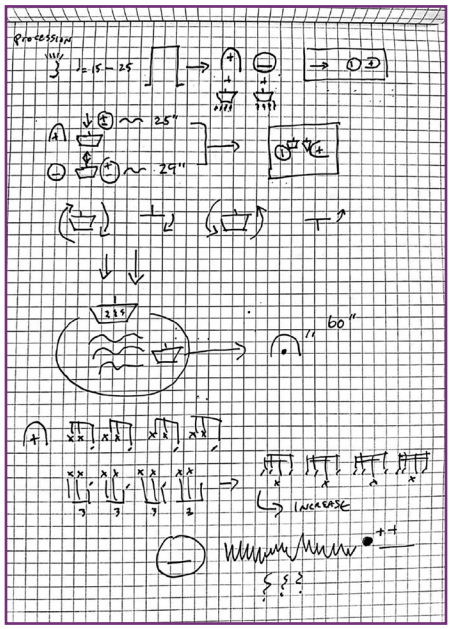
additional support of looping and sampling. The installation itself is covered with iconographic information from our own personal journeys as well as in the form of motifs that form a graphic score.

Aside from the sound the installation makes on its own, we as the Zebra Collective also activate the installation through live performance. When it is set up, for example, in a museum or gallery, we include a track that plays on a loop when we are not present. The vocabulary for the music comes from our own history and background; this includes the use of drums, percussion, singing, live electronics, field samples, amplified found objects, and using all of these as an artist would with a large palette of implements from a variety of sticks, mallets, and brushes, to homemade brushes using natural materials found within Zimbabwe.

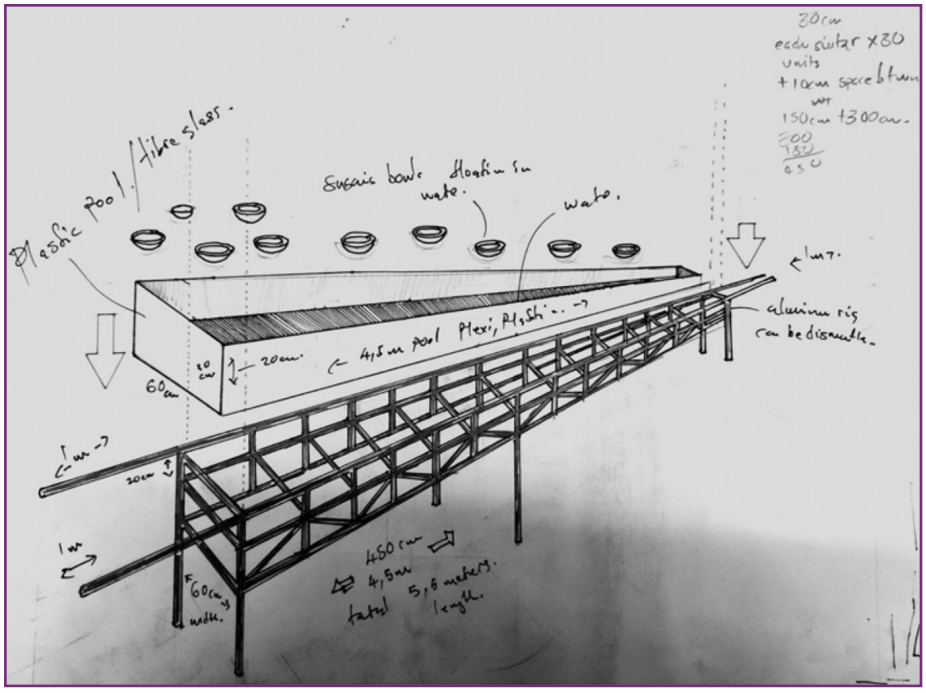
Entering into the performance space is framed by the arrival of the Zebra Collective holding what sounds like boiling pots of water. In the procession, we enter our own sacred space together with the help of ritual — the ritual of costumes, procession and repetition — carrying bowls that eventually float in the reflecting pools. We face one another and create a duet with the sounding bowls; eventually the signal is given to place these gently in the pools for the arrival of *Nyami*. A motif happens that signals the arrival of *Nyami* on the drums, and this begins the large musical performance portion. The goal is to create a musical atmosphere that envelopes everyone via motifs and trance. Either of us can launch a motif or idea that can be explored together or separately — some familiar and some not.

At times, Masimba Hwati may perform

Procession Bowl Score Sketch and Nyami *Entrance (Gould)*



Early sketch of reflecting pool (Hwati)



on the sculptures themselves, with the guitars being amplified and processed through loops and samplers. Michael Gould may begin a long trance section that is based on heartbeat rhythms; these rhythms and ostinatos tie into the human experience, feel familiar, and create the bedrock for entering in a trance state. The end of the piece is the Zebra Collective moving back to the pools to collect the bowls from the water and using the water itself to cleanse the space, returning calm and breaking the trance state from the *Nyami* world into our current one. All of the music comes like the visual aspect of the piece — from trusting each other, dialogue, experimentation, improvisation and the idea of play; the joy in which we get to create together.

Gould: Our project builds off of prior work, and for me it is specifically related to climate change and using percussion not only as a means of making music but also as the subject of visual art; entangling the two is a natural progression for me. With my piece *A World Without Ice*, large blocks of ice were used as actuators as drips and streams of water onto amplified concert toms. The randomness of the ice melting in itself was beautiful both aurally and visually. *Nyami* takes this a step further with towers of drumheads — stripped-down versions of drums that act as a cascade, river, or vehicle for water to flow through and over. Masimba's own work resonates with me and very much crosses over by using instruments not only as beautiful objects but beautiful sounding objects; we have met in the nexus of both performance and creating sounding works of art.

Hwati: I approach the *Nyami Nyami* project — and our collaboration — from the premise that indigenous knowledge systems can serve both as method and as process for thinking through climate change and questioning human activity in relation to it. I grew up with childhood stories about *Nyami Nyami* and how this river deity guided the life of the Zambezi and the Tonga people who lived along its banks. These stories stirred my imagina-

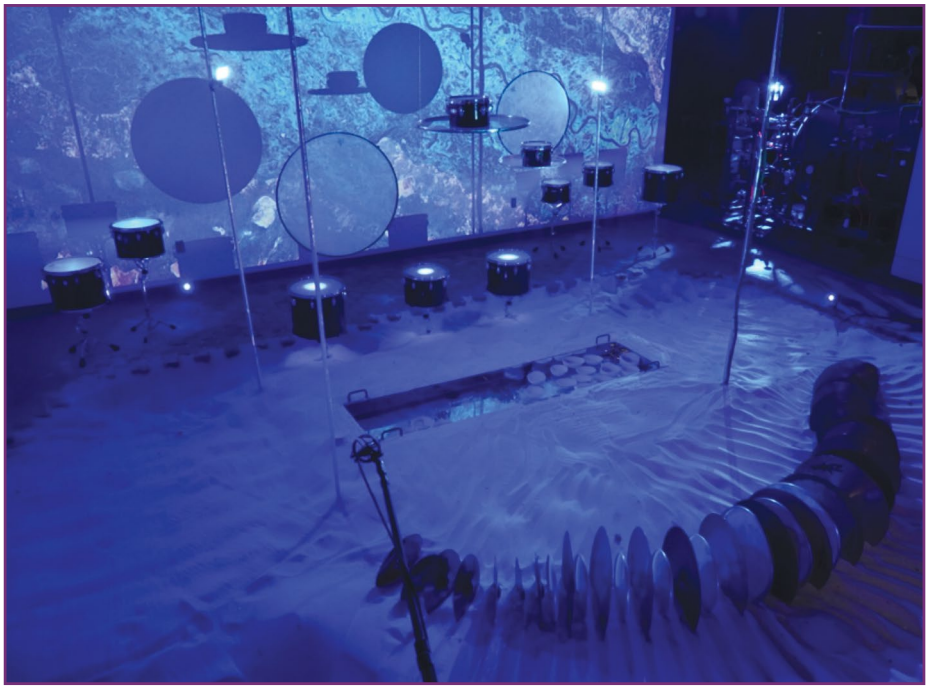
tion early on, and they continue to haunt and fascinate me today. In our collaboration, I use sculpture and sound as departure points in our artistic research. I am fascinated by how Mike's percussion practice overlaps with my own, and how together we activate the sculpture in percussive ways and through other exploratory methods.

RECAPITULATION

The Politics of the Downbeat: Collaboration Under Constraint

This article is not simply another critique of Western institutional culture set against Indigenous systems of knowledge. Rather, drawing from our work as Zebra, it emerges from lived encounters with the frictions surrounding collaborative practice — especially in contexts like South Africa, where percussion philosophies and visual art paradigms intersect yet remain heavily policed. Our intention is to put into crisis the siloed, disciplinary fragmentation that shapes both the humanities and the arts. This fragmentation extends into the policing of cross-cultural collaborations, where questions of provenance, identity, and history are too often flattened into rigid, pre-authorized categories. Thinkers like Édouard Glissant and Fred Moten argue that opacity, entanglement, and cross-cultural translation are essential conditions for emancipatory work and artistic life rather than problems to be managed. These perspectives challenge the limited frameworks that dominate many contemporary art scenes.

Nyami Nyami, *Water Never Lies (in deep time), Iteration #3, Zebra Collective, Geotechnical Lab, University of Michigan, North Campus, December, 2023. Photo by Peter Smith*



National Gallery of Zimbabwe, July, 2025, Installation/Activation. Photo by Tadiwa Siyano

Our South African experience sits at this intersection. Certain circles of contemporary art culture perform a publicly radical, anti-colonial posture while quietly depending on the very institutional structures they claim to resist. This kind of funded radicalism becomes a cruel optimism, producing fragile politics of appearance, privileging image over transformation, and performance over relational risk. Within such ecosystems, only a narrow group benefits: rhetorical elites who curate decoloniality as style rather than practice.

Our interdisciplinary work — rooted in percussion, sculpture, and visual art — cuts across these divides. Johannesburg made this clear. Our practice unsettled the pseudo-chic, mall-curated aesthetic of the venue where we performed. We found ourselves navigating a dense fog of xenophobic provincialism disguised as class refinement: rude and inhospitable baristas hiding behind a Japanese brand name, territorial boer Afrikaners irritated by the equal footing our collaboration represented, longing for the apartheid days when racist ideology protected their social dominance.

Within this environment our collaboration met disproportionate resistance. The art world had no ready-made category for this form of partnership. Be-

cause we refused preassigned scripts of guilt, hierarchy, or racial melodrama, our work unsettled existing comfort zones. In response, thin accusations of "appropriation" were mobilized not as ethical inquiry but as a disciplinary mechanism — a way to force our project back into familiar ideological containers.

The irony was sharper still: our performance also disturbed sectors of society who themselves suffer under South Africa's neo-apartheid conditions. Their response echoed what Sándor Ferenczi calls *identifying with the aggressor*: an appeasement reflex, a desire to become the "better underdog," to protect the very system that oppresses them. Achille Mbembe has written extensively about this phenomenon — the way post-apartheid South Africa often reproduces the psychological architecture of domination, manifesting as xenophobic self-enclosure and a desire to mirror the oppressor's authority. In this sense, violence against the outsider becomes a distorted route toward belonging, a tragic internalization of apartheid's old logic.

Within this climate, the political force of interdisciplinary practice becomes unmistakable. Percussion, for us, is not merely sound-making: it is a *tactical method of deconstruction*. A drumstroke is a refusal. A polyrhythm is a counter-archive. Syncopation is a deliberate interruption of inherited order. Each strike tests the surface of a space, revealing the tensions it holds and exposing the fractures beneath. Rhythm teaches how systems maintain themselves — and how they can be disrupted and broken.

Visual art operates similarly. Sculptural forms become propositions for other ways of living. Materials carry the memory of extraction and exploitation, and by reshaping them we reshape the very narratives they once served. When images, objects, and sound converge, they create a grammar of resistance: an embodied language capable of unsettling categories, challenging hierarchies, and opening relational futures where enclosure collapses.

In this way, percussion and visual art become political tools — not through slogans, but through form, texture, resonance, and rupture. They carve openings in places where oppression demands closure. They re-tune spaces saturated with fear and suspicion. They model alternative modes of coexistence by insisting on collaboration, co-presence, and the unpredictable energies of improvisation.

The inter-disciplinary motions between sound, rhythm, image, and space form a potent philosophical and pragmatic toolkit. They enable us to question, unsettle, and ultimately dismantle oppressive regimes and inherited patterns of exclusion. In this sense, our practice insists on relation over enclosure, resonance over fear, and creative errancy over inherited boundaries.

Genuine collaboration is always a form of world-making — messy, relational, risky, and fundamentally unpredictable. What passes as "radical politics" in certain art spaces often suppresses precisely this unpredictability. Our project exposed these contradictions, and the system responded by attempting to delegitimize what it could not name, contain, or comfortably display.

In this sense, our work is less about critique and more about calling for an ethics of entangled practice — one aligned with Chidzimbahwe's embodied epistemologies and with broader African philosophies of collaborative becoming. Such an ethic rejects dismemberment in favor of remembering, and challenges any politics — left, right, or otherwise — that fears the transformative potential of truly shared creation.

CODA

"Chitsva chiri murutsoka" —
"The new is at your feet."

There is a certain disassociation of the corporeal nature of percussion within Western percussion pedagogy. Acknowledging this within the context of our duo has been an important awakening. Movement within music-making, creation, and expression has formed an important ingredient to acknowledge within the framework of *Nyami*. This also includes reckoning with non-Western percussion in our own pedagogical systems. In our experience, people map their own experiences onto ours; they see what they want to see and hear what they want to hear. At times, arguing that the drums (in very much the form of a Western drumset) are echoing familiar traditional patterns and styles of music they know, when, in fact, no such references were being made. In

Photo by Arthur Dlamini

the visual, they see iconographic patterns and familiarity, when, in fact, they might be Japanese kanji or graphic elements from the lexicon of graphic scores, or even petroglyphs and hieroglyphics.

Chidzimbahwe culture, like many African and majority indigenous knowledge systems, refuses the split of art and music-making from the body. It begins with the body — with vibration carried through the soles, the spine, and the spirit. It centers multisensorial encounters with the human and the more-than-human: ancestors, instruments, landscapes, and unseen collaborators. Here, learning is not extraction but participation; not abstraction but embodied presence; not dismemberment but re-membering.

These practices underscore that art is not mere representation; it is invention. Through cross-cultural percussion and visual art, artists create new temporalities, ecologies, and ontologies. They inhabit Glissant's "Poetics of Relation," Tsing's "contaminated diversity," and Moten's fugitive relationality, producing living fields of sound, matter, memory, body, geography, and spirit. Healthy diversity, then, is relational rather than categorical. It emerges from embodied, participatory encounters rather than institutionalized lists of cultural types or "world music" categories. In resisting the algorithmic policing of creativity, such work models an ethics of artistic and ecological relationality.

Percussionists, composers, and visual artists — especially in academic contexts — must challenge institutional hierarchies that privilege Western classical norms. Embracing hybridity, rhizomic networks, and cross-cultural collaboration nurtures embodied knowledge, collective creation, and multisensorial world-making.

By merging visual art with percussion, practitioners can confront colonial his-tories, evoke ancestral memory, and propose ecological and social futures. Education, whether formal or informal, should prioritize presence, multisensorial learning, and relational practice. Such approaches are not mere enrichment — they are essential for cultivating a more diverse, alive, and just artistic and social world.

Zebra Collective is an interdisciplinary collaboration between Dr. Michael Gould and Masimba Hwati PhD bringing together experimental sound and percussion practice, contemporary art, and embodied research across sound, performance, and visual practice. Rooted in cross-cultural exchange and decolonial inquiry, centering indigenous knowledge, the collective explores sonic materiality, ritual, memory, and relational modes of listening through collaborative composition, installation, and performance. Working across academic, artistic, and community contexts, Zebra Collective develops shared practices that foreground sound as lived, communal, and politically resonant knowledge.

Michael Gould is an internationally recognized scholar and performer in the field of drumset and contemporary percussion performance and pedagogy, Gould's wide range of collaborations, performances, and artistic works explore themes from nature, memory, to optimizing timing for athletes. He is a Professor of Music at the University of Michigan in the percussion department, the Residential College in Literature, Science & the Arts, and the Director for the Center for World Performance Studies.

Masimba Hwati is a multidisciplinary artist working in sculpture, sound, performance, micro-politics, and indigenous philosophy, exploring everyday forms of resistance and negotiation. He holds a PhD in Art Practice from the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and an MFA from the University of Michigan, with work in major collections across Africa, Europe, and North America. His projects include publications *Der Seeteufel* (2022) and *Sokunge (As if)* (2021), and sound works such as *Mshika-shika Guerilla Poetics* and the *Black Market* (2021), *Lakenights* (2019), *Hwati-Collino* (2020), and *Soil, Root, Leaf* (2025).

Pura Vida! The Sound of Costa Rica Through its National Instrument: the Marimba

By Fernando Meza and Raziel Acevedo Álvarez

The marimba is the national instrument of Costa Rica. This designation, established by legislative action in 1996, brings with it a unique focus of attention, not only to the music performed on the instrument, but to the entire culture surrounding the marimba in the country. From the builders of instruments to the carriers of performance traditions, and from environmental concerns surrounding the woods needed to make the instruments to the role that the marimba plays in everyday life in different communities, this instrument holds a unique place in the hearts of Costa Rica's citizens. The government of the country has recognized the importance of the instrument within its culture over the years, and has also created a number of other designations around it, such as the National Day of the Marimbist, established in 2004 to be celebrated yearly on the last Sunday of August; the Day of the Marimba, Cultural Heritage of the Nation, established in 2015 to be celebrated every July 25; and in 2017 the National Day of the Costa Rican Marimba, to be celebrated every year on November 30.

Prior to arriving at the chromatic marimba we know and celebrate today in Costa Rica, its predecessors were single-keyboard, diatonic instruments. The first of these was a *marimba de arco,* an instrument with heavy African influences, documented by William Eleroy Curtis in 1888 in his book *The Capitals of Spanish America*.[1] (See Figure 1.)

This instrument eventually morphed into one with short legs, meant to be played sitting down, just like its predecessor, before it evolved into others with longer legs, to be played standing up, which accommodated a larger range. All of these diatonic instruments had resonators made from gourds, bamboo, wood, or tin, and had the unique feature of creating a buzzing sound, an element that is representative of all Mesoamerican marimbas. The marimba de arco is unfortunately no longer in use in Costa Rica, although it maintains a vibrant culture in its northern

Ensamble de Marimbas y Percusión UCR Guanacaste

neighbor, Nicaragua, as well as in certain regions of Guatemala. However, other kinds of diatonic marimbas are still in use in Costa Rica and, besides Guanacaste, can also be seen and heard in the provinces of Puntarenas and San José. (See Figure 2.)

The use of the marimba in Costa Rica is described in various texts, starting in the 19th century, with some of them mentioning the role and spirit with which the instrument functioned as a provider of music for parties and dances, particularly in Guanacaste, a province located in the northwest part of the country, where the marimba tradition was born. Through these descriptions, the joyful and fun-loving disposition of the people in Guanacaste is made clear, as is the leading role the marimba had in social gatherings, something that is maintained to this day in that part of the country. Although it is not unusual to run into marimba groups in unexpected places in Costa Rica — farmers' markets, restaurants, pedestrian streets, tourists' spots, etc. — during January you can expect to listen to many of them in the city of Santa Cruz, where in celebration of the Fiestas Típicas Nacionales, there is a different marimba group performing in every corner of the city, showcasing the immense talent for the instrument in the country.

Figure 1: Marimba de arco. 1888. Curtis, W. E. p.215.

Figure 2: Diatonic marimba, property of Werner Korte. San José.

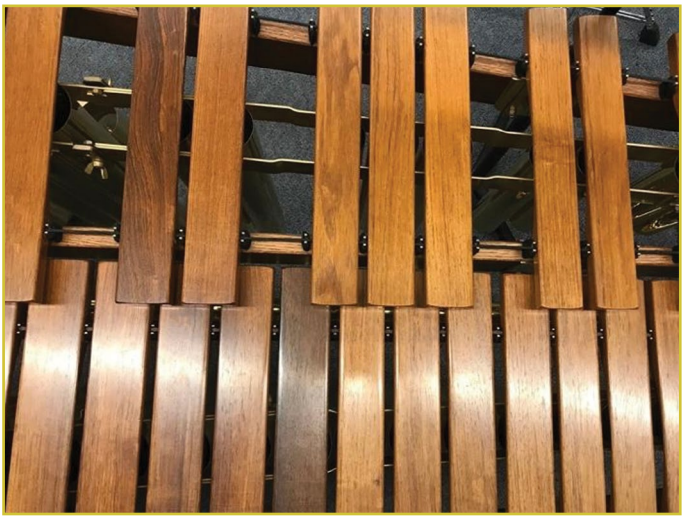
PHOTO BY FERNANDO MEZA

The first chromatic marimba arrived in Costa Rica from Guatemala in 1910, not long after the first instrument of its kind was created in that country by Sebastián Hurtado Mazariegos. It was not until 1937 however, that the *marimba doble,* as it came to be known because of its two frames — one for the accidentals and one for the natural keys — began to take hold in Costa Rica. At that time, and primarily as a result of the curiosity of two marimba craftsmen (Marcos Duarte and Demetrio Arrieta), who took it upon themselves to take measurements of a Guatemalan marimba and reproduce it in their own workshops, builders began to become interested in creating their own chromatic instruments, and a new chapter in the musical life of Costa Rica was born. That initial curiosity led to the creation of the first instruments *in situ* and paved the way for others to follow, thus starting the tradition of building marimbas locally. Because the original builders based their design on a Guatemalan instrument, the keyboard layout of the chromatic marimba in Costa Rica follows that of its Guatemalan counterpart, which is *not* like the piano, as can be observed in the accompanying two photographs. (See Figures 3 and 4.)

In the traditional format, the natural keys are placed directly in line with the accidentals, with the naturals being placed to the left of where one might expect them to be (i.e., G-natural in line with F-sharp, etc.).

Costa Rica has had many outstanding marimba makers over the years, including some who have been recognized beyond its borders, such as Miguel Torres Rosales (1927–2019), an iconic figure in the marimba world of Costa Rica. During his lifetime, Torres Rosales shared his knowledge with a number of builders, including two of the more important representatives of a new generation of marimba makers today: Eduardo Villafuerte Jirón ("Chepelito"), and Oscar Biolley Quesada, the latter recognized as the only builder actively involved in the construction both of traditional and concert marimbas.

Figure 3: Concert marimba keyboard (piano format).



The traditional marimba in Costa Rica is not a solo instrument but one that is played in ensemble based on its configuration and size. One such configuration, referred to as *marimba escuadra,* consists of two marimbas: one large instrument (6½ octaves) called *marimba grande,* usually played by four players, and one of medium size (4 to 4½ octaves) called *marimba tenor,* played by two or three. Sometimes a smaller instrument is used in lieu of, or in addition to, the tenor, called *requinto,* played by two players. The *marimba grande* can also be found on its own being played by three or four musicians, or as the keyboard instrument within a *marimba orquesta,* an ensemble where, with the addition of such wind instruments as saxophones, flutes, trumpets, and/or trombones, as well as drums, hand percussion, bass, and singers, it fulfills the role of the piano for many Latin styles of music.

Among the various elements that make traditional marimbas unique in their construction, the wooden resonators, in particular, provide the characteristic sound of the instrument through a mirliton effect, created from a thin membrane obtained from pigs' intestines. Known as *telilla* in Costa Rica, this membrane is attached to the resonators in their so-called "belly button" — a circular hole towards the bottom of the wooden box, over which a layer of natural beeswax is applied to hold the *telilla*. The membrane serves the function of creating a buzzing sound when, after striking the bar, the sound waves traveling through the air inside the resonator go through it and activate a mirliton effect with their vibration. This sound is quite a revelation for those who hear it for the first time, but it is the very foundation of the traditional marimbas in the entire Mesoamerican region, and the sound that preceded the concert marimbas we all know and use in our musical activities today.

Costa Rica has been recognized over the years as one of the most peaceful countries in the world and a leader in the areas of environmental conservation, education, and health. With a literacy rate of 98%, no army, socialized medicine, and policies that protect about 25% of its territory for national parks and/or environmental purposes, the country boasts of a system that is progressive and mindful of its citizens' well-being. While nature has always played an important part in the country's identity and laws are strict regarding natural resources, illegal deforestation has negatively impacted access to certain kinds of woods needed in the production of marimbas. The difficulties faced by marimba makers in obtaining natural materials legally — both financially and with regards to supply/demand — inspired the creation of the Marimba Forest in the city of Santa Cruz, Guanacaste, a plot of 23½ acres dedicated to the growth and ecological harvesting of woods needed in the making of traditional marimbas and mallets. This forward-looking project was conceived by Randy Juárez, a local music teacher and marimba maker, who started it in 2017 as a dream to be able to preserve the tradition of the marimba in the area. It has now been developing for over eight years, and it is a source of great joy to see it growing as part of the marimba community of Costa Rica.

Figure 4: Traditional marimba keyboard in Costa Rica.

ENDNOTE

1. Curtis, W.E. (1888). *The Capitals of Spanish America*. New York. Harper & Brothers. *https://archive.org/details/capitalsofspanis00curt/page/n7/mode/2up*

Fernando A. Meza is Professor of Music and Director of Percussion Studies at the University of Minnesota School of Music. A native of Costa Rica, Meza was Principal Percussion/Associate Timpani of its National Symphony Orchestra from 1989–91, and taught at the University of Costa Rica, the National Center for Music, and The Ohio State University prior to his appointment at the U of M in 1993. He has performed in Japan, USA, and Costa Rica with Keiko Abe, and is a regular guest with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra and Minnesota Orchestra, with whom he has toured, and recorded internationally. He is one of the five original percussionists for the Broadway production and original-cast recording of Disney's *The Lion King*, and he was on the faculty for the Orchestra of the Americas from 2003 to 2023.

Raziel Acevedo Álvarez is Professor of Music at the University of Costa Rica and was Director of the Pre-College Program of Musical Arts in Santa Cruz, Guanacaste until 2024. As a researcher, he has authored publications about the traditional music of Guanacaste, its rhythms, instruments, and builders, and he has offered courses and conferences in countries throughout the American continent, Europe, and Asia. He performs regularly with traditional marimba ensembles and is an active educator of marimba in the city of Santa Cruz, birthplace of the marimba in Costa Rica.

Txalaparta of the World

By Quey Percussion Duo (Gene Koshinski and Tim Broscious)

One of the best aspects of being a percussionist is the endless number of opportunities to experience the immeasurable ways performers around the world exhibit our craft. Whether it is a new technique, instrument, or style, those new experiences not only provide a performer with new skills, but can also reinforce existing skills. As a professional duo for over 20 years, our playbook has always been focused on prioritizing this sense of curiosity by assuming the role of perpetual students.

Our most recent adventure took us to the Basque Country in Northern Spain to study txalaparta, a unique style of music originating in (and largely limited to) the Basque Country. Txalaparta has always piqued our interest, so we sought out one of the best Txalaparta groups in the world, Hutsun (*pronounced: oh-CHOON*). Hutsun (comprised of members Anai Gambra Uriz and Mikel Urrutia) is based in Pamplona, Spain and is one of very few professional txalaparta groups in the world. After several years of correspondence with Hutsun we were given the opportunity (via a generous grant through the University of Delaware) to carry out a study intensive we designed together; an immersive txalaparta experience in the Basque Country.

One of Hutsun's primary goals is to spread the art and joy of txalaparta around the world — a sentiment acknowledged in the title of this article (which was our WhatsApp group name given by Hutsun). Their passion was palpable from the first minute we met them, and one cannot help but be inspired by their artistry. Our hope is to pay forward the knowledge and experiences provided to us by Hustun, to whom we owe a debt of gratitude.

The purpose of this article is not only to recount our experience by offering a brief history and explanation of the art form, but also reveal the underlying benefits of exploring this instrument, as it offers a fresh way of honing core musical skills found in nearly all styles of percussion performance.

WHAT IS TXALAPARTA?

Txalaparta (*pronounced: CHAH-lah-par-tuh*) is a musical style that might be best characterized as a community music-making activity. It is most often played on large wooden boards by two (sometimes three or four) players, each player with a pair of large hardwood dowels. Txalaparta is a Basque word with no clear translation, but it serves as the name for both the style and the instrument.

A Brief History of Txalaparta

Txalaparta largely only exists in The Basque Country, an area just over 8,000 square miles that straddles Northern Spain and Southern France and inhabits

just over 3.1 million people. The history of txalaparta likely finds its roots in the 18th Century (potentially earlier), but its inception is not clear. The first known documentation of txalaparta was in 1882 where it is mentioned in Severo Aguirre Miramón's book *Fabricación de la sidra en las provincias vascongadas y su mejoramiento*. Hutsun explained that the lack of information about txalaparta history is likely due to the attempt to suppress the Basque culture by Spanish dictator Francisco Franco (1892–1975) who ruled in Spain from 1936–75.

While there are various theories as to its initial purpose, txalaparta is most certainly rooted in the process used to manufacture apple cider in the 18th Century (and perhaps earlier). During that time, apple farmers would make cider by first crushing apples with large wooden tampers. Three or four people would take turns striking the apples in rhythm while they sang a song celebrating the event. Then, a very large wooden spindle press would finely crush the apples to squeeze the juice from the fruit. Once the cider was made, a single plank from the press would be removed, taken outside, laid across two baskets, and used to celebrate the completion of the manufacturing process by singing and playing a rhythmic "game" on the board with the same tampers used to crush the apples.

As this specific cider-making process phased out and Francoist suppression intensified, txalaparta performance began to decline. By the early 1960s it is believed that only three "baserriak" (or "farmhouses") were preserving the txalaparta tradition: the Sausta House (Zuaznabar brothers), Bilandegi House (Zabelegi brothers), and Erbetegi-Etxeberri House (Goikoetxea brothers). But in the 1970s two families of scholars (the Artze brothers and the Beltran brothers) began to research and disseminate the music and cultural nature of txalaparta performance. These scholars became responsible for broadening awareness and popularizing txalaparta throughout the Basque region. The practice that was once a single celebratory event transformed into a social game played among friends, in the streets, and at social gatherings.

Only two cider factories continue to manufacture cider in the traditional manner: Gamioxarrea Baserria in the town of Arizkun (Navarre region) and Igartubeiti Baserria in the town of Ezkio-Itsaso (Gipuzkoa region). To this day, the workers still participate in the celebration ceremony. During our trip, we were afforded the opportunity to travel to the Gamioxarrea factory, see the tools and the enormous spindle press, and participate in a mock celebration with the traditional wood tampers on a large plank in the countryside of Navarre. This was a special experience we will not soon forget.

Txalaparta's role in the social fabric

Hutsun estimates that only around 100 people are an active txalapartari (one who plays txalaparta), and merely a handful of those are professional performers. Many Basques know about txalaparta and can even casually participate in the game. But for most, txalaparta is a musical game associated with food, drink, and fun, and not primarily intended for the concert hall, let alone in-depth academic study. In fact, many of the local shop owners and cafe waiters were perplexed as to why we would travel nearly 4,000 miles to study this "game." To us, txalaparta is mesmerizing. Its technical, expressive, and improvisational elements are boundless, but the community music-making experience found at the heart of txalaparta is the real gem.

Video embedded in the web version of this article.

TXALAPARTA CONSTRUCTION

Txalaparta is most often constructed with a set of hardwood boards, from as little as one board if performing traditional txalaparta, and up to six or more boards in a modern approach. The wood can

Apple Crushing at the Gamioxarrea Baserria

be of any type, but most often the best woods are those in the hardwood category (e.g., oak, cherry, maple, sapele, walnut, etc.). Soft wood (e.g., pine), is certainly acceptable, but will provide a lower, duller, pitch and is far less durable. It is also best to avoid knots in the wood in order to get the purest pitch from the board. There are no rules as to the number of boards or even if they are to be the same type of wood. You can mix and match boards in any number and species to create a personalized instrument.

Any size board is possible, but a typical set contains boards that are approximately 2 inches thick, 4-5 inches wide, and 42–58 inches long. The bigger the board, the lower the pitch, so start large and incrementally cut it shorter until you reach the desired pitch.

To create a stand for the boards, it is most common to use a pair of sawhorses and adorn the top rails with foam or other soft material. The boards then rest on the sawhorses at their nodal points (to find the nodal point, measure the entire length of the board and multiply by .22). It is also a good tip to put moleskin or felt in between the boards (on the nodal points) so they do not make sound if they hit together during performance.

TUNING

In most cases the txalaparta is not tuned to specific pitches. Most instruments are a combination of random pitches and woods. In fact, since hardwood is expensive, many communities would put together a txalaparta by different individuals, each contributing a single board. With that said, it is possible to create specifically tuned instruments, and there are certainly examples of that, especially in Hutsun's work. If you are interested in tuning the boards, the same rules apply as tuning marimba and xylophone bars. If you want to avoid all of that heavy lifting, we have found success with the "cut a little off and listen" approach to create a cohesive txalaparta.

OTHER MATERIALS

Beginning in the 1980s and continuing to evolve, performers have experimented with different materials, some becoming standard "add-ons" to the boards. The most common additions are the 55-gallon plastic shipping barrel and a slap board referred to as the "crack" (or the Basque spelling "krak"). The top of the plastic

Barrel

Slapboard

Authentic wooden Txalaparta

barrel is cut off and turned upside down, placed on foam, and struck on the bottom. The crack is made of a stack of thin boards bound together with tape or a single nail through the entire stack. Between these two instruments you can augment your txalaparta with a kick drum sound (barrel) and snare drum sound (crack).

There are also txalaparta that are made of metal, stone, ceramic, and glass. For example, Hutsun has a chromatically tuned stone txalaparta they made specifically to perform with other instrumentalists (e.g., their work with the jazz ensemble JELtrío). There are no strict parameters, as sounds and materials may vary greatly between performers. However, the wooden txalaparta is considered standard and most typical.

STICKS, GRIP, AND STROKE

Txalaparta sticks are hardwood dowels approximately 1.5 inches in diameter, 15 inches long, and have a slight taper from top to bottom — often including a thin layer of felt on the striking surface. They are held in the thumb, index, and middle fingers with the back fingers loosely wrapped around. The stroke is primarily driven by the arm, with a very pronounced motion, engaging nearly the entire upper body. The stick takes a precise vertical path, straight up and down, quickly rebounding off the board. The stick should stay in constant motion, which requires using more or less space in the air depending on the velocity and volume.

BASIC TXALAPARTA FRAMEWORK

As we mentioned, many consider txalaparta a game. In this game there is essentially only one basic rule, which is that the players are never to play at the same time. Txalaparta performance hinges on passing rhythmic material back and forth (most often a short, fixed grouping or pulse). Through improvisation the players work together, never in competition, to create a cohesive work. While some modern groups (like Hutsun) have created original composed works, there is no standard body of repertoire as txalaparta is an improvised music.

NOTATION

Txalaparta notation is often written on a single line with up and down stems extending from that line. For typical two-player txalaparta, the up stem denotes one player while the down stem denotes the other. Variations of these stems represent different ways of playing. For example, a dotted line represents a silence (or playing the note in the air), a shorter line is a softer note, a line with a beam across the end is a double stop, and an "x" can signify a "special" note such as a stick click or glissando.

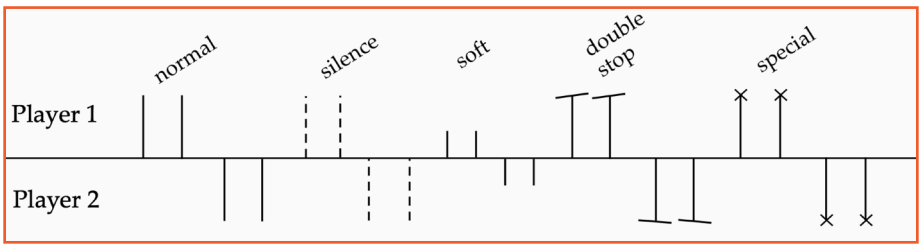
Adding numbers to the lines can denote specific surfaces or boards to be played, facilitating notation for contour or melody.

TXALAPARTA STYLES AND BASIC PERFORMANCE

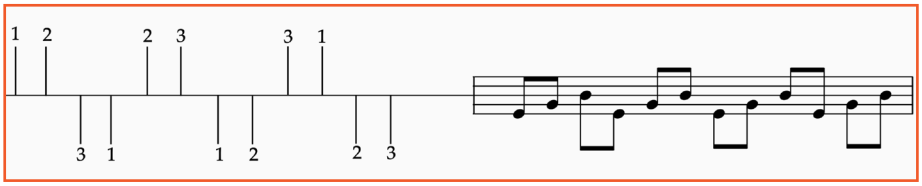
There are two main styles of txalaparta playing: Txalaparta Tradizionala (Txalaparta Traditional) and Txalaparta Berria (Txalaparta Modern). In its purest form, Txalaparta Traditional, also known as "Ttakun" (*pronounced chu-KOON*), is played only on a single board. It is comparatively slower than the modern style and in compound meter (6/8 feel). However, as the tempo accelerates, the rhythm straightens out into a duple meter (2/4 feel), blurring the line between the traditional and modern approach.

The two players in this style must adhere to distinct rules. Player 1, referred to as "Ttakun," plays the ttakun rhythm, which is two notes with an emphasis on the second note. This player is grounded in this onomatopoeic rhythm and should never deviate. Player 2, referred to as Herrena or Errena (*pronounced err-RAYN-uh*), has more flexibility in their performance, although it is limited to three choices. They may play two notes (the ttakun part), one note (known as "herrena"), or no note (known as "hutsun" meaning silence). If one note is played, it is either the first or second note of ttakun. To create further interest, the players are

Txalaparta Notation



Melodic Contour



free to move their playing spots around the board to explore timbre.

Txalaparta Modern (also known as the onomatopoeia "Ta-Ka") provides greater freedom for both players in rhythmic framework as well as the addition of multiple boards to expand the range of the instrument. The basic structure of this style is an evenly spaced duple feel with a slight emphasis on the first note (which contrasts the accentuation of the second note in the traditional style). In the modern style, both players now have the flexibility to play both notes, either the first or second note, or no notes. This style lends itself to more virtuosic playing (as compared to traditional txalaparta) showcasing higher energy, faster tempi, and the addition of a more complex rhythmic vocabulary. In modern's basic structure the players play two, one, or no notes; however, they may also add double stops, sound effects, and faster notes (three, four, or more notes) as long as the players maintain the basic rule of not playing together. Essentially this translates into one player being on the beat and the other off the beat, resulting in the performers' ability to do anything they want as long as they stay on their side of the beat. The success of the piece will be measured by the ability of both performers to work together to improvise a cohesive composition.

ADVANCED ELEMENTS OF IMPROVISATION

As txalaparta evolved, so did the vocabulary used to improvise. The following techniques can be threaded together in innumerable ways to craft an elaborate composition with a more complex texture. Silence (often performed as ghost strokes) is used to create tension in the motoric drive of the music. This is also a way to communicate with the other player, signaling that a change may be coming. Dynamics are used to bring variety to the energy of the improvisation. Accents are used to highlight different rhythmic patterns, but can also be orchestrated thoughtfully to reveal a melody or contrapuntal line. As mentioned above, playing a dense collection of notes (three, four, or more) within a player's "side" is used to thicken the texture and raise the virtuosity of the performance.

A common practice technique called Pulidora (meaning "copy machine") is used to refine these techniques. In this exercise one player is the "leader" while the other is the "follower." The follower attempts to precisely mimic the leader. A variation of pulidora is for the follower to have an informed musical reaction to the leader rather than an exact copy. An example of this might be the follower playing the same accent patterns as the leader but on different boards, or on the same boards but with different accents. A second variation is for the follower to respond in a contrary manner. For example, if the leader plays soft, the follower plays loud, or if the leader plays higher boards, the follower plays lower boards. It is important to reinforce the notion that this is not a competition and the leader is not attempting to trick the follower. The performers work together in this exercise to hone their improvisational skills, reaction time, and teamwork.

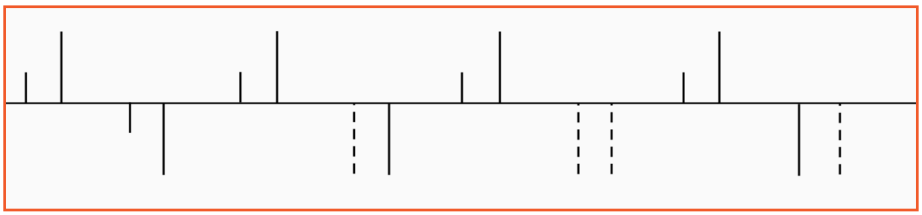
CREATING A VOCABULARY

A duo that plays together frequently often develops personalized rhythmic patterns or musical vocabulary that can be integrated into their improvisations through subtle cues. Hutsun introduced us to a number of their "rudiments," which were often named after the location in which they were developed.

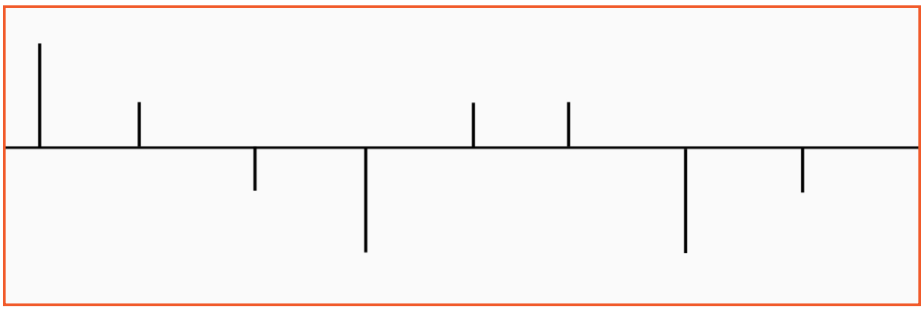
Example 1 is a simple groove they call Tarifa (a city in the southernmost point of Spain) that frequently shows up in their improvisations.

Example 2 is another typical pattern

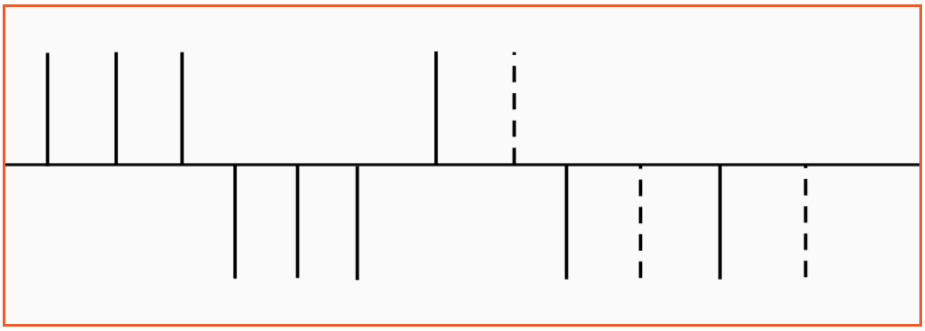
Txalaparta Traditional with Herrena options



Example 1: Tarifa



Example 2: Ezpata Dantza



called Ezpata Dantza. This pattern is widely known by many txalapartaris since it is the rhythmic framework of a traditional Basque "Sword Dance."

BASIC FORM

The basic form of a "toccata" (the common word used for a txalaparta improvisation) is entirely free, but most have similar characteristics. To begin, one player simply starts playing their part at their desired pace and the other player jumps in. From there the improvisation can take any shape with energy, texture, timbre, dynamics, and tempo fluctuating quite rapidly, like a musical amoeba. The ending may be executed in many ways, but there are a few common strategies. The most common ending that we witnessed in our studies was a molto accelerando on the lowest board. As the hocket reaches terminal velocity, one of the players ends the toccata by either slamming their stick down flat on the boards or knocking the other player's stick out before they play. Another common ending was for the players to diminuendo, again usually arriving at the same board and then fading out.

BENEFITS OF STUDYING TXALAPARTA

In addition to the obvious musical benefits of studying any style of music, txalaparta has unique perks for musicians of any age or experience level. The foundational skills found at the root of txalaparta are transferable to all modes of percussion performance. Txalaparta will quickly get to the heart of one's core rhythmic ability, listening and improvisational skills, and basic chamber music capabilities without the need to own expensive gear or spend countless hours learning a detailed technique or prerequisite vocabulary.

Txalaparta is the ultimate form of percussive accessibility, right next to bucket drumming and other similar activities. The "quick start" nature of the activity (grab a friend and a few boards) is extremely appealing and perfect for schools, community programs, and hobbyists, yet the intrinsic value found in txalaparta can be enjoyed by those at all levels.

There is no gatekeeping in txalaparta. All are welcome and no prior experience is necessary to participate. It connects community members having cursory skills with master performers well versed in the art. As a finale to our intensive, Hutsun organized a party at their home. We met friends and family of the Basque txalaparta community from all backgrounds and professions (most of them not "musicians"). We all took turns playing "the game" together and indelible musical moments were abound, whether we were performing with novice txalapartaris or highly experienced performers.

During our intensive, between seemingly endless rounds of coffee and hitting boards, it was confirmed over and over that txalaparta is a prime example of how music can bring a community together.

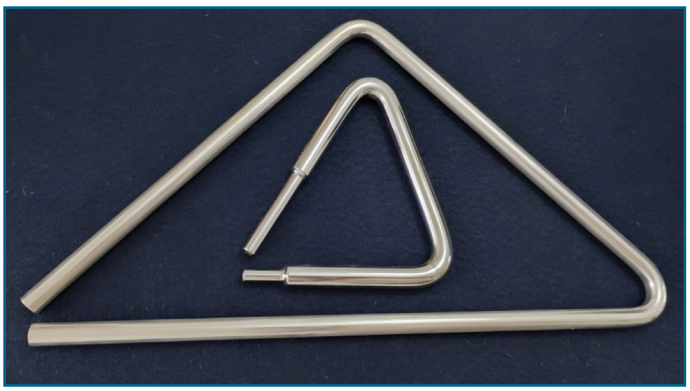
Quey Percussion Duo (Gene Koshinski/Tim Broscious) blends traditions of contemporary, cross-cultural, classical, and popular music to create colorful sound worlds that often place focus on interlocking counterpoint and musical multitasking. They have performed across the globe in ten countries and four continents, and have worked with music festivals, art galleries, chamber music series, professional orchestras, TV/film, and have engaged in more than 200 university residencies worldwide. QPD has recorded for the Innova, Naxos, Centaur, Equilibrium, and Neuma record labels and their focus on creating high-level social media video content has led to over 4-million views of their performances. QPD holds the only full-time residency by a percussion duo in the U.S. at the University of Delaware. For more info visit *www.qpdmusic.com*.

The Brazilian-Style Triangle in the Symphonic Repertoire

By Dr. Pedro Sá

In Brazilian percussion we have a unique way of using the triangle. *Ferrinho* (little iron in English) is the old name for the triangle in musical ensembles in the northeastern countryside cities of Brazil. The iron style or *baião* style (a northeastern Brazilian rhythm) is also the particular style of playing the northeastern rhythms and a few rhythms with rural and dance influences from Portugal. It's called "iron" due to the rustic, metallic iron sound the instrument produces. Larger triangles, up to 12x16 inches, can be found.

Comparison between a 12x16-inch Brazilian-style triangle and a standard 6-inch Alan Abel triangle.



It consists of an ostinato played with the down/up movement with the triangle beater, alternating at the base and upper side of the instrument, which is held directly in the player's hand, and which, when dampening and releasing the triangle, produces two timbric intonations that rhythmically and sonically characterize the style.

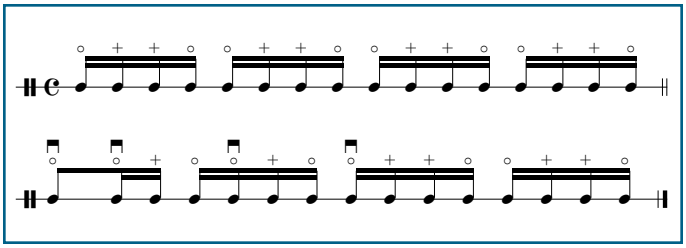
These two timbric intonations (open sound/closed sound), which, despite being sedimented in the northeastern Armorial aesthetics (the Brazilian poet and writer Ariano Suassuna created the Armorial movement, intending to create an authentic Brazilian art form, with popular roots), did not have, in the 1950s, a way of writing that could translate the characteristic sounds into musical writing. The Brazilian composer César Guerra Peixe defined them as two scalar sounds, in the score instructions from his "Symphonic Suite n. 2 — Pernambucana," in 1955. He even drew a triangle on the score, intending to obtain the two intended intonations. But regarding notation, Guerra-Peixe did not write the triangle part. He had doubts, and also at that time there was still no written notation for this instrument.

In his work "Le Marteau Sans Maître" (1953/1955), Pierre Boulez used the northeastern Brazilian-style triangle in a short passage in the last two measures of the Fourth Part, needing to use, for the same reason as Guerra Peixe, a small indicative "text" in the way of articulating the open/closed sounds.

The same can be seen in the "Brazilian Overture" by Edino Krieger, a piece from 1955, where the composer also inserted the Brazilian-style triangle, from the sixth to the twelfth measure of rehearsal number 80, also using the text. In his work "Canticum Naturale" written in 1972, he even used a text, although the writing already existed.

WRITING

As I'm giving examples of doubts about writing for the Brazilian-style triangle, here's my suggestion on how to write for the instrument. The staff can be a single line, and it's not necessary to create new symbols: the characteristic effect of the open sound and the closed sound is represented by the symbols "o" (open) and "+" (closed) written over the notes, according to the musical example. If necessary, the initial direction of the triangle beater movement, up or down, can be indicated by articulation signs.



CLOSING REMARKS

This article focuses on some specificities of the Brazilian-Style Triangle, emphasizing its use in the symphonic repertoire, commenting briefly on the first and most relevant works, as well as proposing how to write for the instrument. If you have any doubts, please email me at pedro.timpano@gmail.com.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

Araújo, Samuel. *César Guerra-Peixe: Estudos de Folclore e Música Popular Urbana*. Belo Horizonte: UFMG, 2007.

D'anunciação, Luiz. *Triângulo*. Manual de Percussão, Volume IV. Percussão Complementar. Caderno 1, 2ª Ed. Rio de Janeiro: Melódica Percussiva, 2004.

Didier, Maria Thereza. *Emblemas da Sagração Armorial*. Ariano Suassuna e o Movimento Armorial. Recife: Editora Universitária da UFPE, 2000.

Solomon, Samuel. *How to Write for Percussion: A Comprehensive Guide to Percussion Composition*. Second Edition. NY: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Master Thesis

Moita, Pedro. *Notação para Instrumentos de Percussão com Som de Altura Indeterminada: Uma Revisão Bibliográfica*. Dissertação de Mestrado. UFRJ, Rio de Janeiro, 2011.

Sá, Janaína. *A Percussão na Obra Museu da Inconfidência, de Guerra-Peixe*. Dissertação de Mestrado. Unirio, Rio de Janeiro, 2012.

Sá, Pedro. *A Sistematização da Escrita Para os Instrumentos Populares Brasileiros Com Som de Altura Indeterminada de Luiz D'Anunciação. Conceitos e Análise de Quatro Obras*. Dissertação de Mestrado. Unirio, Rio de Janeiro, 2009.

Dr. Pedro Sá has been a timpanist for four decades, and since 2002 he has been principal timpanist at Petrobras Symphony Orchestra (Opes) in Rio de Janeiro. He first appeared as soloist with the OSB (Brazilian Symphony Orchestra) in 1996, performing the world premiere of the David Korechendler's "Symphony N° 3 (Psalmi Tehilim), for Solo Timpani, Wind Instruments and Chorus," and most recently in 2025, performing solo marimba repertoire. Performance studies have been with such artists as Luiz D'Anunciação, Mestre Caboclinho, Miquel Bernat, Arthur Lipner, Michael Rosen, and Paul Yancich. He has also studied composition with Nelson de Macêdo. Pedro holds a doctor's degree in Music Performance from Unirio and has been Adjunct Professor of Percussion at the UFRJ School of Music since 2007, where he also serves as Associate Researcher/Percussion Consultant at the Museum of Musical Instruments Delgado de Carvalho. Pedro has given solo performances and educational presentations at venues throughout the U.S., including performances with UNCG Percussion Ensemble and a masterclass at Oberlin Percussion Institute, and in Brazil, Uruguai, Argentina, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Portugal. Together with Janaína Sá, he is a founding member of the Duo Sá de Percussão, having performed and taught at several PASICs and music-educator conventions.

Lakota Powwow Singers at the Drum

By Robert J. Damm

Connecting the community, synchronizing the movements of dancers, and preserving traditions: the Native American powwow drum serves as the spiritual and cultural heartbeat of the nation. The songs carried by the drum honor people and significant events; they provide a living epigonic link to the past. Native American drumming practices transcend the boundaries of performance, serving as a conduit for prayer, healing, and resistance. Drawing upon the wisdom and experience of Severt Young Bear Sr. (Oglala Lakota), founder and lead singer of the Porcupine Singers (Figure 1); Ronnie Theisz, Distinguished Emeritus Professor of English and American Indian Studies at Black Hills State University and longstanding core member of the Porcupine Singers (Figure 2); and Tara Browner (Oklahoma Choctaw), Professor Emeritus of Ethnomusicology at the University of California, Los Angelas (Figure 3); this article presents a brief introduction to Northern-style powwow drumming, and specifically the practices of the Porcupine Singers.

Although not Lakota by ancestry, Ronnie Theisz was recognized for his contributions in the field of Lakota song tradition by awards received from the Oglala Sioux Tribe and The Native American Heritage Association. Through his lived relationship with Severt Young Bear, Jim Clairmont, and other members of the Porcupine Singers and deep engagement with Lakota culture and language, Theisz supported the preservation and understanding of Lakota traditions in published articles, books, and recordings. For additional information, see also the interview of recently deceased Jim Clairmont, member of the Porcupine Singers, in the PAS publications archive.[1]

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LAKOTA PEOPLE

"The Porcupine Community is located on the Pine Ridge Reservation, home of the Oglala Sioux Tribe. Referring to them-

Figure 1. Severt Young Bear, Sr. (1934–1993)

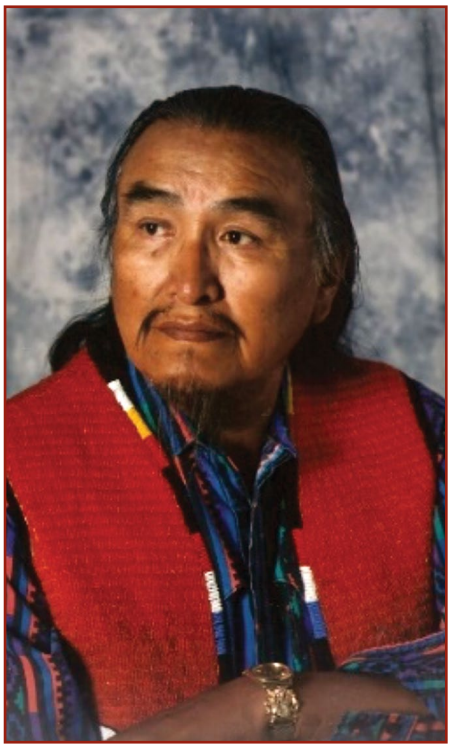


Figure 2. R.D. Theisz (b. 1941)

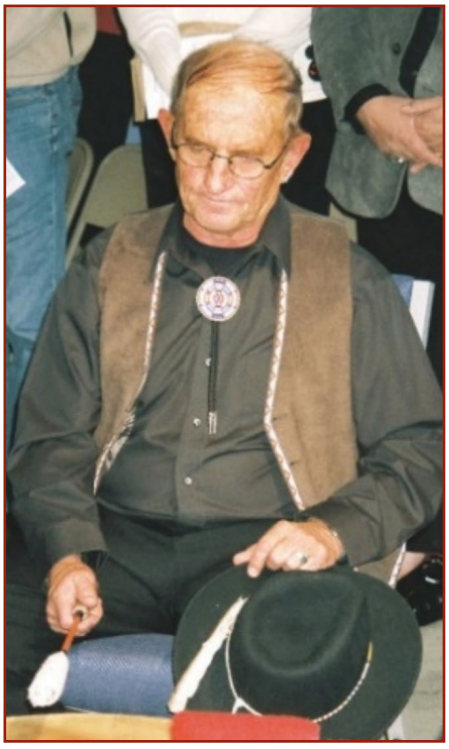


Figure 3. Tara Browner (b. 1960)

selves as Lakota — a term also used for their dialect of the Sioux language — the Oglala Sioux belong to the confederacy known historically as the Seven Fires. Early written documents of the middle 17th century place the Sioux in the woodlands of present Wisconsin and Minnesota. Pressured by their Cree and Chippewa enemies and attracted by the plentiful buffalo herds of the plains, the Sioux began migrations south to the Minnesota River during the latter 1600s. In the 1740s and 1750s, the western Sioux bands acquired horses as they turned westward into South Dakota. In the process, the Lakota enthusiastically exchanged their woodland culture for that of the nomadic plains buffalo hunter.

"The entry of Euro-Americans, with the occasional involvement of people of color, became disturbing to the western Sioux bands by the time of the 1849 California gold rush. In 1851, the United States government negotiated the first Fort Laramie Treaty with the Sioux, a treaty of peace and friendship which recognized tribal landownership on the Northern Plains. Sioux resistance to encroachment by white settlers and soldiers along the Bozeman Trail (leading from Fort Laramie into Montana) culminated in Red Cloud's war of 1866–1868. This war ended with the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, which guaranteed protection from further white settlement and exploration to Sioux lands, known as the Great Sioux Reservation, located in today's South Dakota.

"The discovery of gold in the Black Hills in 1874 led to subsequent unsuccessful efforts by the United States government to buy the Black Hills from the Sioux, and ultimately led to the defeat of Custer at the Little Big Horn in 1876. Despite this dramatic victory, the Sioux were quickly forced onto reservations by the decimation of the buffalo, which were virtually extinct by the late 1870s. From 1879 on, Sioux children were forcibly sent to federal and mission schools to be assimilated. Assimilation frequently took place in off-reservation boarding schools followed by summer placements with local farmers. The waning decades of the 19th century saw the Sioux living a life of boredom, hunger, apathy, failed policies, and general shock. This culminated in the Ghost Dance and Wounded Knee massacre of 1890.

"Today, the Pine Ridge Reservation continues to be plagued by poverty and its accompanying sociocultural problems. The grand flowering of the spiritual warrior people on the plains, which spanned scarcely a century, thus ended in confinement to reservations, a life of near starvation, as well as educational, cultural, and spiritual oppression. The love of their land, the persistent caring support of extended Lakota families, and their cultural fabric for those who would avail themselves of it are the anchors that have provided a countervailing force, a source for whatever future the Sioux forge for themselves."[2]

PORCUPINE SINGERS

"The legacy of the Porcupine Singers (Figure 4) is one that is deeply rooted in the Lakota tradition of its members beginning in the 1860s in the Young Bear Family. Each generation has provided a new group of singers to carry on the tradition of composing and singing songs. Under the leadership of Severt Young Bear, the group reached its greatest recognition during the 1970s and 1980s when it became one of the first drums to travel widely throughout North America on the powwow trail."[3] [In the context of the powwow or *wacipi* (literally "they dance" in the Lakota language), the term "drum" refers to both the physical instrument and the group of singers who play it.]

"In the early 1990s, the sons and nephews of some of these traveling Porcupine Singers began to form their own group known as Brotherhood Singers. In 1993, the remaining members of the original traveling Porcupine Singers passed on the title and the responsibility of continuing their tradition of singing and song making to these young men, the New Porcupine Singers (Figure 5), under the leadership of Melvin Young Bear."[4] As of 2025, the Porcupine Singers are no longer actively performing.

Figure 4. Porcupine Singers in the 1970s (Standing L–R: Drury Cook, Severt Young Bear, Jerry Fallis, Jim Clairmont; Kneeling L–R: Ronnie Theisz, Francis Menard)

ORIGIN AND FUNCTION OF THE DRUM

Tail Feather Woman is credited in traditional stories that describe the origin of the powwow drum: "Sometime after 1862, a Dakota woman called Tail Feather Woman (Wiyaka Sinte Win) was living in a particular village. She was by her camp gathering food when U.S. soldiers attacked her village. She ran for her life from the blue coats who were on horseback, and she dove in the lake. She hid there for four days, sometimes under the water so as not to be seen, breathing through a hollow reed. During that time, she prayed for deliverance. She was visited by Creator, who gave her a vision about the construction of a great drum. Creator spoke to her and told her how to build the peace drum and how to conduct the healing drum ceremony. She was told that the beating of the drum would have a transformative power to bring unity to the people. She arose from the water by the calling of the spirit and the crying of her family, whereupon she was able to walk unseen through the camp of the blue coat soldiers and across the plains until she found her family. She passed on the vision, along with the songs and protocols for the ceremony, which is practiced to this day."[5]

The drum was given to the people by the Creator in a sacred manner so that they can celebrate life. The people are happy and at peace when they hear the beat of the big drum. The drum, referred to as "Grandfather," is viewed as a living being, and its sound may represent thunder as well as the heartbeat of Mother Earth. The powwow — also known as the big drum ceremony — features singing of prayer songs and healing songs accompanied by the drum. When the drum is played in a sacred way to accompany the spiritual songs, the ancestors are also called to attend the gathering.[6]

Oglala medicine man Black Elk spoke about the sacred nature of the drum: "Since the drum is often the only instrument in our sacred rites, I should perhaps tell you here why it is especially sacred and important to us. It is because the round form of the drum represents the whole universe, and its steady strong beat is the pulse, the heart, throbbing at the center of the universe, it is the voice of Wakan Tanka (Great Spirit) and this sound stirs us and helps us to understand the mystery and power of all things."[7]

"When approaching a powwow, long before the singing is heard or the dancers are seen, there is the drumbeat itself. It echoes out into the sky and rumbles down through the earth, representing the heartbeat of all humanity. Over and over when I ask singers and dancers about their pow-wow experience they refer to the drum and the power of its sound."[8]

Drumming occupies a central place in Lakota cultural expression, serving as both a musical and spiritual conduit through which history, identity, and cosmology are transmitted. The drum is deeply embedded in the lifeways of the Lakota people. Traditionally crafted from natural materials and imbued with symbolic meaning, the drum, often described as the "heartbeat of the nation," functions as a bridge between the physical and spiritual realms. Through social and intertribal settings such as powwows, Lakota drumming articulates a collective voice that unites generations and affirms cultural identity. An understanding of Lakota drumming comes from seeing it within the larger context of the history, spirituality, and worldview of the Lakota people.

Figure 5. New Porcupine Singers in 2011 (Standing L–R: Wesley New Holy, Kristian Theisz, Ronnie Theisz, Robert Waters, Melvin Young Bear [lead singer and drum keeper], M J Bull Bear, Lawrence Young Bear, Jr., Carl Koch, Jr.; Kneeling L–R: Eric Theisz, Clyde Squirrel Coat)

CONSTRUCTION OF DRUMS AND STICKS

"Old people said the drum was the heartbeat of grandmother earth, the sound of vibrating in the earth. The word for drum is *cancega*, or wooden bucket. It was made of cottonwood, and there was usually only one person in that band or extended family gifted in the making of drums. It was he who would go to mark a cottonwood tree and at a certain time of the year would cut it down and cut out a certain section for the drum rim. He would then thin it out to the right thickness. He'd select the right part of the hide to get the same thickness through the drumhead. If the head was going to be buffalo hide, the rim would be thick; if elk, thinner; and if deer, still thinner yet. He would put the raw hide on it and then, in his own way of tightening the hide, get

the right tone from it. That was based on his dream and his gift."[9]

As of 1977, it was reported that "most of the Middle Western Woodlands and Plains Indians used bass drums, and that old Indian drums are now seldom seen except in museums (Laubin, 105–107)."[10] "At smaller Northern powwows, the drums most often seen are old, commercial, marching-band bass drums; at larger events, more recognized drums tend to have handcrafted instruments. Ludwig seems to be the commercial brand of choice, probably because Ludwig Drums of Chicago is an established firm and many used Ludwig drums are available. Commercial drums usually are equipped with heavy cowhide heads for indoor and outdoor summer use. However, the original plastic (mylar) heads are retained on some instruments meant for outdoor use, because plastic heads function well in humid, wet weather. Drums are generally 26 or 28 inches across by 18 inches in height, tuned low, and muffled with duct tape. Drums that have skin heads are generally tuned to a higher pitch, because natural animal rawhide is far less durable than plastic under heavy use. When the head is slack or damp, it easily rips or can be punched through. Occasionally, a drum might be covered with elk hide rather than cowhide. Elk is more expensive and difficult to obtain than cowhide, but to a certain extent a drum is more powerful — both in sound and spirit — if covered with elk."[11]

Remarkably, the present-day powwow scene almost exclusively features hand-crafted drums made by Native artisans, reflecting both a renewed pride in heritage and a conscious effort to preserve ancestral knowledge. This shift signifies a broader movement toward cultural revitalization and authenticity within indigenous communities.

"The drum, as far back as I know, has always played a big part in public events. We use three different drums. The first is the rawhide drum, usually deer hide. It is homemade, with a round, wooden frame. Today, these drums are used mostly for ceremonies. Also, some families request that you sing at their gathering, but that you bring your traditional rawhide drum. Since you can't control the pitch of these drums except with heat [e.g., putting them out in the sun or next to a fire], they are today mostly used only at ceremonies and Sun Dances.

"The second kind of drum is the commercial bass drum. Some singers have always liked them because you can control the pitch with the turn keys on them. The bass drum became popular around 1960 when the Cook Brothers Singers from Red Scaffold on the Cheyene River Reservation came around this area. Since the Cook Brothers' singing became really popular in the early 1960s, everybody hit the secondhand stores and talked to high school bands to try to buy a bass drum. The tone of your voices and the tone of the drum has to match up. A bass drum, if you replaced the plastic head with a deer hide, could be adjusted to do that at any time.

"The third type is the hand drum, which was usually used at traditional social dances and some ceremonies. A long time ago, at social dances, four or five guys with hand drums would sit against the wall and sing, keeping the same rhythm on their drums. Sometimes they would be asked to stand in single file in the center of the hall or wherever the dance was being held, and everybody could dance around them because they didn't take up that much room. In addition, the hand drum was always important for individual singing."[12]

"Drumsticks come in a variety of shapes and sizes, with the Northern versions generally longer than the Southern. The shafts of sticks range from 14 to 20 inches long and from one-half to three-fourths of an inch in diameter. Shafts are made of tree branches, birch dowels, or fiberglass fishing rods. Because of their flexibility and durability to rebound, fishing rods are the modern material of choice; the ends that strike the drum are wrapped in wool, leather, or white faux fur. Like drums, drumsticks are usually decorated in some way, most often being wrapped with colorful tape."[13]

"What you make the sound with is the *icabu* (drumstick). We have four different types going way back. For the traditional ceremonies, they take a plum or wild cherry or ash stick and heat it over a fire until it dries out and tightens. For some ceremonies a flat buffalo hide served as a drum, and this stick would make a flapping sound on it. Later on, they sewed leather in the form of a small pouch on the end. Some of the old-time singers used to wrap copper wire and cover it with strips of inner tube, wrap it with cloth, and then cover it with this leather pouch. Sometimes they bought brand new leather gloves and cut the thumbs off it for the drumstick head. Later on, the old Bull Durham tobacco sacks came in. Sometimes they'd stuff cotton in it for a softer beat. In the 1960s sheepskin heads came in. Today we prefer fiberglass sticks or fishing-pole sticks because they last longer.

"You can always tell by a singer's drumstick if he is a respected singer. His drumstick is always nice and neat, and

Drums are considered sacred objects embodying the heartbeat of Mother Earth and connecting people to their ancestors and the spirit world.

when he goes to Rosebud Fair or to Oglala Nation Powwow, he makes sure he gets a new one. He might even carry one with a leather head and another with a softer sheepskin head. You can tell the kind of singer by the way he takes care of his drumstick; after all, that's his main equipment. My brother-in-law, George Squirrel Coat, makes my drumsticks and for those singers at our drum. I like to balance my drumstick evenly so that my arm won't get tired over those long periods of singing. The handle and the head parts will be in balance so I can sing for hours. It's up to the singer. Some singers use lighter or shorter drumsticks, some use sheepskin, and some use leather heads on their sticks. I always carry one of each with me."[14] "Generally, hide drums use leather-headed drumsticks while the bass drums use a softer fur covered stick."[15]

GENDER ROLES

According to Lakota tradition, men only are permitted to sit at the drum to strike it. *Wicaglata* (women singers) typically stand behind the men to sing the "women's part" an octave higher than the men. This protocol is still largely upheld, especially in ceremonial or traditional powwows, but there are some changes being seen in intertribal settings.

An ethnomusicology article published in 1986 listed 20 drum groups situated in the Northwestern Plains that were comprised of family members such as the wives or daughters of the male singers. Female singers in these groups participated fully with the men — drumming, leading songs, and seconding the leader. The Ironwood Singers [featuring Ben Black Bear, Sr.], a previously all-male drum from South Dakota, later included the wife [Sandra Black Bear] of one of the singers [Dave White] as a drummer in the group. All-female groups were seen as early as 1973, including The Big Mountain Singers (Shoshone) and the Kingbird Singers (Ojibwe), which was started by a Lakota woman.[16] The Mankillers, all-women Northern-style powwow drum group established in 1991, included Rain Archambeau-Marshall (Yankton Sioux and Choctaw) in their diverse lineup of Native American women founding members. Women's drums continue to emerge. Recently [September 2025], an all-women's special category was included at the annual Stalew Powwow held in Langley, British Columbia in Canada. The event was shared across social media and sparked many discussions about tribal teachings concerning women drumming at powwows.

CARE, ETIQUETTE, AND HONOR FOR THE DRUM

A drum keeper in Native American culture fulfills the vital role of safeguarding, maintaining, and respecting the sacred drum. This esteemed position involves protecting the drum from harm (usually wrapping it in a special blanket when it is not in use), teaching others its proper use, and making/embodying the drum's spiritual significance as a representation of the tribe.

"Most drums and many drumheads are painted or taped with traditional designs that have meaning to the players and honor the drum. Marching band-style bass drums are often wrapped in embroidered cloth or buckskin to disguise their previous function. Drums treated in a traditional way are kept in special enclosures ("drum houses") when not in use. When taken out for performance, the drum will be treated with the consideration due to a living entity and given gifts of tobacco. Between each powwow session the drum is carefully and respectfully covered."[17]

Drums are considered sacred objects embodying the heartbeat of Mother Earth and connecting people to their ancestors and the spirit world. Giving gifts to a drum, particularly tobacco, is a respectful way to honor this sacred connection. Traditional tobacco, a sacred plant in many indigenous cultures, is considered a gift from the Creator and is used for prayers, healing, ceremonies, and as a token of respect. Giving gifts to the drum signifies showing gratitude and nourishing its sacred role within the community. Offering tobacco demonstrates reverence for the drum as a living entity. It's a way to express gratitude for the drum's ability to facilitate healing, strengthen community, and connect individuals to their culture. "Old people and young people have come to touch the drum to share its energy over the years; dancers have thrown money on it in appreciation for the music it helped to make. I think the drum took care of the singers who sat around it in a respectful way."[18]

"Special names may be given to the drum, and lots of singers now have the name of their group painted on their drum. Some even honor their drum and treat it as if it were a person. We named our drum *Oyate Ho Nah'umpi* (The People Hear Its Voice) in a drum ceremony in 1974 because that drum brought honor and respect to those singers who sit around the Porcupine drum. At Ring Thunder *Wacipi* Days Powwow, four respected singers, Dave Clairmont, Ben Black Bear, Matthew Two Bulls, and Cecil Spotted Eagle, gave it the name. They hit the drum four times and then sang four different types of songs on it while out in the center of the dance shade to give it the proper breaking in. We also set some rules. We put tobacco on the drum before we start singing and we pray briefly when we make that offering. We never put food or coffee on it. Anyone who has been drinking must stay away from the drum. We sing a special drum song as the first song at any gathering, and we conduct ourselves in a respectable way when we set that drum in the center of our circle. Whether it's a powwow, a Sun Dance, or a dancing contest, we treat that drum with respect."[19]

Severt Young Bear wrote about sacred cultural items given to honor his drum. "We began to travel widely and as the years went by, we were given more and more honors. Frank Andrews came over to the drum and gave us a special pipe. Later, Calvin Jumping Bull joined the Porcupine Singers and gave our drum a war bonnet over a hundred years old that had belonged to Amos Bad Heart Bull.

In 1974, we traveled all over the United States and won 24 singing contests in 24 states. We made the staff that belongs to our drum with 24 black-and-white eagle tail feathers on it to represent the contests we won, and we've carried it with us ever since. The traditional eagle staff with eagle feathers all along it was carried by warriors into battle to touch the enemy. It was a way of counting coup. I thought that instead of tribes going against each other in battle, we were today using our drumsticks and the drum, using our voices to compete against each other through songs, the traditional songs of our tribes."[20]

The sacred pipe is revered as one of the most important ceremonial objects of the Lakota. The feather bonnet is similarly regarded with deep spiritual and cultural significance. In Lakota culture, the eagle staff serves as a sacred symbol of honor, leadership, and connection to the spiritual world. The staff symbolizes the pride, spirit, and integrity of the Lakota people. For a group on a spiritual journey, the staff is carried to reinforce the spiritual focus of the trek. Each feather on a staff tells a story of determination and skill. The eagle, which flies closest to the heavens, is believed to carry the prayers of the people to the Creator. The feathers on the staff embody this connection. The eagle feather is also used in smudging, a traditional ceremony that involves burning sage, sweetgrass, or cedar for purification and healing. R.D. Theisz explained that the group decided to "formalize various phenomena focused on the drum and its singers" and that "naming the drum, awarding the drum an eagle feather bonnet, and various ceremonial actions were effected to create a spiritual identity for the drum, not just a thing-like personification. The newly formalized Porcupine Singers then agreed to be recorded for the first time with Canyon Records to make sure that songs were sung correctly by younger singers in the future."[21] They went on to record 10 albums.

DRUMMING AND DRUMBEATS

"As we listen to the drumbeat in Lakota songs, we hear either a steady beat with no accents for some songs, or a heavily accented, 1-2-1-2 beat for others. The latter is a sign of social dances. The steady, slightly accented or heavily emphasized 1-2 nature of the Lakota drumbeat is said to reflect the rhythm of the human body — breathing, heartbeat, pulse, and circulation — so when an experienced group of singers sing, their drum rhythm has an infectious, physiological effect on listeners that inexperienced singers cannot achieve. The participatory and communal nature of Lakota song is thus explained as a result of the physiological effect of the drumbeat."[22]

Different types of drumbeats are stylistically varied and tailored to the specific dance styles they support. The "parade beat" is a slow, steady "processional" beat used for serious or specially dignified songs or parts of songs. Song texts are more audible during the parade beat. Sometimes walking in time is performed on this beat. The "Omaha beat," ranging from slow to medium to fast, is the most frequently used dance beat. Although apparently straight or steady in nature, this beat does employ a slight pulsation on alternate beats, especially in the drum beat of the more traditional singers (**1**-2-**1**-2-**1**-2-**1**-2-); the boldface number indicates the more forceful beat. The "social dance beat" applies to those dances where men and women dance as partners, as in the rabbit dance and Sioux 49 or intermixed in a circle as in the round dance."[23]

"In addition to form and text, a primary determinant of song type is the organization of its underlying rhythmic pulsation pattern into either duple or triple meter and the relationship of that pattern to a dancer's footwork. Based upon dancer footwork, I have coined the expressions single beat [quarter notes], double beat [eighth notes], and triple beat [eighth note and quarter note shuffle as in compound meter such as 12/8] to characterize the linkage between dancers and songs. In Western terms, these would be described as two variations on duple-meter (single and double) and triple-meter pulsation."[24]

"Occasionally, singers will add loudly accented beats or honor beats into their drumming. They are either a sign of feeling the joy of renderings a good song, or, when placed into the second half of each rendition — when the song text may often cause a softening of the beat — it reminds dancers of the beat. At other times, these accented drumbeats, in warrior or veteran songs, also symbolize gun shots. Finally, the sequence of stronger beats in the final endings of songs are signals that the song is about to end."[25]

In an interview with Browner, Norma Rendon, Oglala Lakota dancer, explained: "When they do those honor beats, then the dancers will raise their fans. And what they are doing is honoring their people; they're honoring the veterans, anybody who has ever been in war, and *Tunkashila*, the Great Spirit. And those four honor beats are for the People."[26]

When asked about misunderstandings by outsiders regarding Native American drumming, R.D. Thiesz referred to the Hollywood "Indian drumbeat" stereotype (one accented quarter note followed by three unaccented quarter notes).[27] The stereotype was used in old Westerns and cartoons to signal the appearance of Native Americans. For decades, this musical trope acted as an aural shortcut for filmmakers, immediately signaling the presence of Native people, often as an impending threat, such as an ambush. This simplistic and inaccurate musical motif inaccurately represents the complexity and diversity of actual Native American music.

"The sound of the drum goes beyond our physical being so the Great Spirit can hear it. Still today, the drum plays an important role in our ceremonies, our Sun Dances, and even our powwows."[28] Drumming continues to play a vital role in sustaining the Lakota worldview and the sacred rhythms of Indigenous life. Lakota drumming is the heartbeat of the people, uniting generations in the shared rhythms of identity, resilience, and cele-

bration. Through its powerful rhythm, the drum summons dancers to the arena, gives voice to the songs of ancestors, and holds sacred space for cultural survival and spiritual expression.

Thanks to Norman Roach (Lakota) for recommending the culture-bearers who provided the content for this article.

ENDNOTES

1. Ritter, Jonathan (1996). *Conversations With a Lakota Drummer*. *Percussive Notes*, August 1996.
2. Young Bear, Severt & R.D. Theisz (1994). *Standing in the Light: A Lakota Way of Seeing*. University of Nebraska Press, xxvii–xxxi.
3. *Porcupine Singers: Traditional Lakota Songs* (1997). Liner notes by Ronnie Theisz and Mary Boley. Canyon Records, CD.
4. *Porcupine Singers: Alowanpi – Songs of Honoring* (2011). Liner Notes. Canyon Records, CD.
5. White, Bruce "Honoring Wiyaka Sinte Win/Tail Feather Woman and her vision" *https://www.minnesotahistory.net/wptest/?page_id=882*
6. Torrie, Jeremy (2004) *Pow Wow Trail/Vol.1: The Drum*. Video: Arbor Records Ltd.
7. Brown, Joseph and Black Elk (1953). *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux*. University of Oklahoma Press, 69.
8. Browner, Tara (2002). *Heart of the people: Music and Dance of the Northern Pow-wow*. University of Illinois Press.
9. Young Bear, Severt & R.D. Theisz (1994). *Standing in the Light: A Lakota Way of Seeing*. University of Nebraska Press, 47.
10. Laubin, Reginald and Gladys (1977). *Indian Dances of North America*. University of Oklahoma Press.
11. Browner, Tara (2002). *Heart of the people: Music and Dance of the Northern Pow-wow*. University of Illinois Press, 72.
12. Young Bear, Severt & R.D. Theisz (1994). *Standing in the Light: A Lakota Way of Seeing*. University of Nebraska Press, 45–46.
13. Browner, Tara (2002). *Heart of the people: Music and Dance of the Northern Pow-wow*. University of Illinois Press, 72.
14. Young Bear, Severt & R.D. Theisz (1994). *Standing in the Light: A Lakota Way of Seeing*. University of Nebraska Press, 45–48.
15. Personal communication with Ronnie Theisz, 2025.
16. Hatton, Orin (1986) "In the Tradition: Grass Dance Musical Style and Female Pow-wow Singers." *Ethnomusicology*, Spring-Summer, 1986, Vol. 30, No. 2, University of Illinois on behalf of Society for Ethnomusicology, 208–214.
17. Browner, Tara (2002). *Heart of the people: Music and Dance of the Northern Pow-wow*. University of Illinois Press, 72.
18. Young Bear, Severt & R.D. Theisz (1994). *Standing in the Light: A Lakota Way of Seeing*. University of Nebraska Press, 48.
19. Ibid, 45 and 48.
20. Ibid, 72–73.
21. Personal communication with Ronnie Theisz, 2025.
22. Theisz, R.D. (2003). *Sharing the Gift of Lakota Song*. Dog Soldier Press, 39.
23. Black Bear Sr., Ben and R.D. Theisz (2023). *Songs & Dances of the Lakota*. Sinte Gleska University Publishing, 8.
24. Browner, Tara (2002). *Heart of the people: Music and Dance of the Northern Pow-wow*. University of Illinois Press, 83.
25. Theisz, R.D. (2003). *Sharing the Gift of Lakota Song*. Dog Soldier Press, 39.
26. Browner, Tara (2002). *Heart of the people: Music and Dance of the Northern Pow-wow*. University of Illinois Press, 86.
27. Personal communication with Ronnie Theisz, 2025.
28. Young Bear, Severt & R.D. Theisz (1994). *Standing in the Light: A Lakota Way of Seeing*. University of Nebraska Press, 48.

Dr. Robert J. Damm is Professor of Music and Director of Music Education Partnerships at MSU. He studied music and culture in Cuba, Ghana, and Mali. He is a certified Orff-Schulwerk teacher and a Smithsonian Folkways certified teacher of world music. He is the coordinator for the Minor in Music and Culture, which he developed for students with an interest in non-Western music, especially the music of Africa and the African Diaspora. He teaches courses in the Music and Culture curriculum including Music of Africa, Music of Latin America, African American Music, Mississippi Blues, and Native American Music. He teaches a drum circle class for First-Year Experience students and facilitates drum circles for recreational/educational events throughout Mississippi. Damm's teaching reflects his commitment to community engagement, best practices in interdisciplinary collaboration, experiential learning, and the African philosophy of human interconnectedness known as Ubuntu.

No Meio da Roda: When the Music Takes Over, Listen

By Dr. Melinda A. Leoce

I'm being pushed into the middle of a *samba de roda*, or samba circle, by a group of well-dressed Brazilian 20-somethings. They're encouraging me to dance samba in the middle of the circle as I protest that I'm not a good dancer and I only need to use the bathroom and go back to join my friends. But "no" is not an acceptable answer, so I find myself attempting the quick, difficult footwork as everyone cheers me on. I've practiced the samba step (in my spare time, I am a licensed Latin-dance fitness instructor), but it doesn't come nearly as naturally to me as it does to the Brazilians who grew up doing it.

One of the best pagode groups I've ever heard plays a few feet away. I would feel more comfortable joining in with them, picking up a tamborim or reco-reco and outlining the famous partido-alto rhythm present in so many well-known Brazilian songs. Yet I'm forced to stay in the moment, and I realize that no one is judging my dancing. Everyone is there to sing, laugh, drink caipirinhas, and celebrate one occasion or another. We are all dancing, singing at the top of our lungs, glistening with sweat, and basking in the live music.

Dancing to a pagode group.

Suddenly, I look up and see Tori, one of the people I initially came to the restaurant with, holding up her phone and filming me. I can imagine that she was thinking, "You went inside to pee and now you're in the middle of the crowd dancing a solo?!" We share a few laughs, and she continues to take pictures, shaking her head at the absurdity of the situation. This is the only way I can describe one of the most amazing nights of my life, during one of the most amazing trips of my life, in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil in the early summer of 2025.

Before my visit, I had been dreaming of traveling to Brazil for almost 20 years. If you are also dreaming of your own destination, wherever it may be, read on.

DISCOVERING YOUR PASSION

My love for Brazilian music started at the University of Central Florida where my mentor, Jeff Moore, along with the other UCF faculty and Brazilian percussionist Ney Rosauro hosted a summer camp for a few years. The camp included the traditional offerings of classical percussion clinics, percussion ensemble, and masterclasses. With Rosauro on the faculty, along with excellent players like pandeiro expert Brian Potts, the camp had a heavy Brazilian influence as well. We would perform samba batucada, play many of Ney's pieces at the final concert, and host international students from Brazil, Spain, and elsewhere.

I thought that the first thing I'd encounter would be some kind of Brazilian drumming; however, on the first night of the camp the instrument that Ney brought out looked to me like a ukulele. I found out later that it was a *cavaquinho*, a small Brazilian guitar that you will hear in intimate settings, like bars or restaurants, all the way to the Sambadromo during Rio's Carnaval (amplified, of course, to be heard over the sound of hundreds of drummers in the parade). Ney began singing and the students from Brazil joined in, seeming to know all the lyrics by heart. The feeling was warm, immediately creating a close-knit community out of the camp participants who hadn't known each other just a few days prior. That was it; I was completely enamored and wanted to know as much as possible about the music and culture of this country that was so new to me.

While I appreciated the bossa nova charts we played in my high school jazz band, I had no idea how much Brazilian music would factor into my career at that early stage. One of my favorite things about the percussion program at the University of Central Florida was how diverse it was. We hosted guest artists specializing in all areas of percussion: from marimba soloists to champions of contemporary and theatre percussion, from professional chamber groups to steel pan legends like Liam Teague, we were exposed to *everything*.

With so many excellent and varied opportunities throughout the undergraduate experience, most graduate-school bound students had a better idea of what they wanted to pursue. When I started my undergraduate degree, I had come from the world of competitive high school marching band and knew very little about the vastness of the percussion world. A program that offers a wide range of ensembles, guest artists, and performance opportunities was perfect for me, and it is a great place for someone who is open-minded and searching for their "spark." If this also sounds like you, I suggest researching undergraduate and graduate programs to ensure that the offerings align with your interests and vision.

BECOMING AN AUTODIDACT

Over the next few years, I started to do my own haphazard "research." I learned a handful of Brazilian Portuguese words and phrases, listened to as much Brazilian music as I could get my hands on (mostly Djavan and Maria Rita), and started practicing my conversation skills. I also listened to every podcast and watched every documentary that I could find. If it had the word "Brazil" in the title, I eagerly added it to my playlist. I was starting to build an understanding of the geography, culture, and music of Brazil. Considering the ubiquitous nature of the internet, this process has only become easier. You can find workshops, YouTube videos, online lessons, and more to aid in your personal journey.

I went to The Florida State University for my masters degree in Percussion Performance, and I earned a concurrent World Music Certificate. While there wasn't much of a Brazilian offering in the program at that time, I had an incredible steel pan teacher from Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. Mia Gormandy, and began to learn about the historical connections between music in the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. I was starting to understand that much of the music that I gravitated towards came to the Americas by way of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and had originated in Africa. As I was researching programs for my doctoral studies, I wanted nothing more than to go to a place where I could dive deeper down this path. Sitting in the audience at Indiana University's World Showcase Concert at PASIC 2011 was the moment where my goal became clear: I wanted to be a part of that ensemble.

Two years later, I moved to Bloomington, Indiana, and started my doctorate at Indiana University. Performing in the Brazilian and Afro-Cuban ensembles under the direction of Michael Spiro was a highlight of my degree. While I had studied a lot of Brazilian music, this was the first chance that I had gotten to play in an advanced bateria, and it was essential to my development. Professor Spiro, now retired, had studied in Cuba and Brazil and played with some of the best artists from those genres. He brought an incredible level of authenticity and rhythmic complexity to everything we performed. In addition to Professor Spiro, I was surrounded by incredible musicians and scholars who had done research in Brazil, Cuba, and Trinidad and Tobago. I pursued workshops, clinics, lessons, online courses, and private Portuguese lessons. By this point, I had also started to present clinics around the country on beginning Samba Batucada rhythms, regional styles of Brazilian music, and more. Yet I was aware of a gaping hole in my knowledge; regardless of all the study, I had never stepped foot on Brazilian soil. Traveling to Brazil had been a dream for years, and I started to take the steps to make it a reality.

SETTING GOALS AND MAKING DREAMS A REALITY

In the Fall of 2024, I saw a social media post promoting a 10-day trip to Salvador de Bahia, Brazil. Participants would be traveling with Global Citizen Adventure Corps (GCAC), a non-profit organization that was founded to "better facilitate service-based travel opportunities for young people from under-represented backgrounds who might not have that opportunity otherwise (*www.globalcitizenadventurecorps.org*)." The trip was open to students and community members and the itinerary looked incredible. This trip to Bahia felt like perfect timing for me and I immediately made the down payment and started preparing for the adventure.

An amazing group of women, ages 17 to 77, signed up for the trip. In the months leading up to our departure, we built friendships over Zoom meetings and learned more about the specific area we'd be visiting. Salvador is the capital of the state of Bahia, the hub of Afro-Brazilian culture in Brazil. In the mid-1500s, Salvador was not only the capital of Brazil, but the "first slave market in the New World, with slaves arriving to work on the sugar plantations (*https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/309/*)." The poignant history of slavery, colonization, and the struggle of the black population is alive in the city, but it exists alongside the continued celebration of black culture. In addition to my research about the area, I also prepared by learning from a private Brazilian Portuguese tutor to increase my language skills.

On our first evening in Brazil, we saw the Balé Folklórico de Bahia perform, had our first taste of Bahian cuisine, and then wandered through the narrow, hilly streets of the Pelourinho during sunset. Suddenly, we exited an alley and emerged into the famous Praça de Sé. Bright colored buildings line the perimeter of the huge square, and it is one of the most photographed places in Salvador. I instantly recognized the spot where I was

standing as the background in one of my favorite videos of the samba reggae school, Olodum (amazingly, we saw Olodum live in concert a few days later). It was a surreal and amazing moment, one of hundreds that would happen over the following days.

Our final day in Salvador was special. We spent the day with master percussionist Viviam Caroline Queiros, who recently founded an all-female samba reggae band, Yayá Muxima. We discussed the importance of samba reggae and the history of Salvador. Everyone in our group, regardless of experience, picked up drums and learned a few rhythms. Later, Viviam invited me to perform with the women of Yayá Muxima in their *aula aberta*, or open rehearsal. We played for nearly two hours with both locals and tourists as our audience, some just passing by and others dancing along the whole time. Performing alongside so many inspiring Brazilian women, connecting through drumming, was an experience that I will never forget.

Outside the Praça de Sé. Photo by Julie Hill

Performing with of Yayá Muxima. Photo by Julie Hill

All my experiences in Salvador, from being encouraged into the middle of the samba circle to playing samba reggae in the streets of the Pelourinho, made one thing clear: music truly is *everywhere* in Brazil. This was something I inferred before visiting, but I had to be present to fully understand how much music is woven into the fabric of daily life. When you're traveling abroad, the most unremarkable experience, such as having a conversation with a cab driver or coffee shop owner, transforms into something significant. The connections you make with those individuals, along with the companions you travel with, are precious and life-changing.

Acknowledgements: Dean Jeff Moore, for creating a curriculum that exposed us to so many diverse types of percussion and sparking the passion in myself and so many other students through the years. Ney Rosauro, for embodying the warmth and playfulness of the Brazilian people and composing so much excellent music that brought Brazilian regional styles to the United States. Dr. Brian Potts, for encouraging me to follow my passion and pushing me to keep learning the language and eventually get myself to Brazil. Dr. Gustavo Miranda and Aquim Sacramento, for the inspiring performances and teaching me my first few Portuguese words. Dr. Julie Hill, for her work in Brazil and being a wonderful mentor. Global Citizen Adventure Corps (GCAC), for facilitating incredible opportunities for students and beyond. Bernardo Aguiar and Gabriel Policarpo, for their inspiring performances and teaching. Michael Spiro, for the excellent leadership of the IU Brazilian ensemble. Gabriel Oliveira, for being the best Portuguese teacher. Viviam Caroline Queiros and the women of Yayá Muxima, for welcoming and enlightening us. Finally, my Dad, Daryl Leoce, for giving me that Kleber Jorge CD.

Dr. Melinda Leoce is Assistant Professor of Percussion at Adams State University in Alamosa, Colorado. She also serves as the Secretary of the Colorado PAS chapter. In the summer months, Melinda is a percussion instructor at Interlochen Arts Camp in Michigan, a position she has held since 2022. In addition to her teaching duties, she maintains an active performance schedule. Recently, she performed as a substitute percussionist with the Air Force Academy Concert Band based in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

The Basel Drumming Academy: Passing the Beat Forward

By Moritz Frei

Every year, on a Monday morning at the end of winter, thousands of people gather in the historic center of Basel, a small city on the banks of the Rhine River in northern Switzerland. They wait in silence for the church bells to strike four o'clock. Suddenly, several thousand drummers and piccolo players in elaborate costumes fill the narrow alleys of the Old Town with music: the Morgestraich has begun! This marks the start of the Basel Fasnacht, a 72-hour celebration that was added to UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2017.

Among the remarkable variety of formations and individual masked figures performing in the streets — and occasionally inside restaurants — the *cliques* stand out: ensembles of drummers and fifers, sometimes just a handful of people, sometimes more than 100 strong, and some with histories spanning more than a century. Their distinctive drumming style, known as Basel drumming, is recognized and highly respected among percussionists worldwide.[1]

The cultural significance of drumming in Basel was already recognized by 1888, when the Nobel Prize laureate Carl Spitteler wrote: "The true hallmark of the Basel Fastnacht [*sic*] are the afternoon and nightly drum processions. Drumming is not merely a concomitant to carnival; it is its whole purpose."

Today, in addition to countless smaller and more loosely organized groups, around 40 so-called *Stammclique* remain active. Each of them is centered around its *Stammgesellschaft*, or core membership. Members who prefer a slower pace later in life join the *Alte Garde* (Old Guard). To ensure a constant influx of young players, most cliques operate their own drumming and fifing schools, where children — typically from the age of six to eight — receive musical instruction. After around three years of training, they may perform in the *Junge Garde*, the youth section of the clique.

The common motivation behind this is to actively carry the tradition of Basel Fasnacht forward. Teaching is often entrusted to members of the Stammgesellschaft themselves, who guide children through their first steps on their instrument.

Although the Fasnacht's roots reach back to the Middle Ages, it has evolved constantly over the centuries. The first large cliques emerged in the second half of the 19th century. Such figures as Carl Dischler, Joseph Wintzer, and Fritz Berger — the latter being well-known even among Scottish and American rudimental drummers — shaped the development of Basel drumming. They expanded the established repertoire with new compositions and laid the foundation for what is now considered a modern drumming style.

The works that are now regarded as classic marches have, in recent decades, been joined by increasingly complex and adventurous compositions. These modern works are especially popular

Olympia Junge Garde, Fasnacht 2023

among younger drummers, but they also demand a higher level of technique and rhythmic understanding. As expectations rise, so do the demands that are placed on instructors. Finding qualified teachers has become increasingly difficult, especially because most drummers are amateurs. A further challenge is the high fluctuation in enrollment numbers: some cliques have a large youth section, while others have only a handful of students. This can be challenging to manage — for instance, when, due to high demand, an annual course has to be organized for 20 children. The opposite can also occur: only one or two children may sign up, thus tying up a disproportionate amount of teaching resources.

THE BASEL DRUMMING ACADEMY

This is where the Basler Trommelakademie (Basel Drumming Academy, BTA) comes in. Founded in 2018, BTA offers structured level-based courses for young drummers who already belong to a clique but wish to improve their musicianship. Many of the students want to pursue drumming not only for Fasnacht, but also for concerts, drum shows, and competitions.

The Academy also supports cliques directly in their training efforts. Beginners are sent to the BTA, where qualified instructors provide foundational instruction for beginners in small groups of about five children. Students from different cliques are often mixed within the same group. The Academy also welcomes drummers who are already enrolled in other schools but seek additional instruction.

THE LEARNING PATH — TRADITION MEETS MODERN PEDAGOGY

Reaching the level required to perform at Fasnacht for the first time is demanding. It typically takes three years of instruction before a student is ready. Even then, their repertoire at this point represents only a small portion of what the Junge Garde — let alone the Stammgesellschaft — performs.[2] The reason lies in the complexity of the fundamentals embedded in the repertoire. Unlike many other drumming traditions where participation is possible with basic rhythms, the Basel style requires mastery of complex rudimental figures such as the *5er-Ruf*, *Doublés*, *7er-Endstreich*, and *Tagwachtstreich*.

In traditional training, these rudiments are practiced at slow tempos and gradually accelerated. The BTA complements this with a modern approach that aims to give learners earlier success and a clearer sense of the musical context of the rudiments. For example, the *5er gebunden* (continuous 5-stroke roll) forms part of the *7er-Endstreich*, which in turn is contained within the *Mühleradstreich*. A student who has mastered the *5er* can add two strokes to produce the *7er-Endstreich*. The *Mühleradstreich* then emerges by extending with the remaining four strokes (see Figure 1).[3]

Similarly, the *11er* (11-stroke roll) can be built from two *5ers*; many children intuitively feel the length of the *11er* once they have internalized two *5ers* in sequence (see Figure 2). In both cases, the figures together add up to one crotchet/quarter note.

TRADITION AND NEW HORIZONS

Alongside instrumental training, conveying the tradition of Fasnacht remains important. While most of this responsibility lies with the cliques — such as costume and mask-making, unique internal

Figure 1: Development from a 5er *to the more advanced* 7er-Endstreich *and* Mühleradstreich.

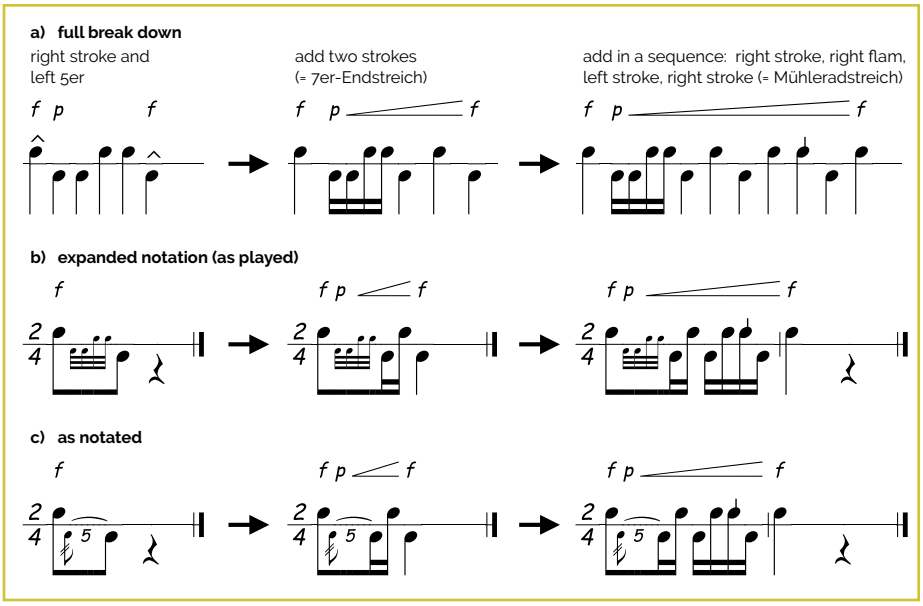
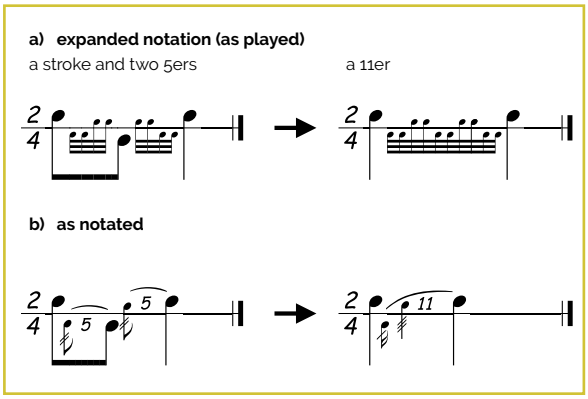


Figure 2: Development from two 5ers *to an* 11er.



customs, and the "dos and don'ts" of the Basler Fasnacht — the Academy ensures that students in the beginner courses also gain a clear sense of the cultural context.

In the level-based courses, however, the focus shifts toward a more musical and less Fasnacht-specific cultural path. Basel drumming has long since developed into a multifaceted art form. Nevertheless, maintaining the link to tradition is a key goal: participation in the level courses requires membership in a Fasnacht clique, where the cultural grounding takes place. The Academy's courses then broaden the musical horizon. Students explore more advanced compositions, march repertoire with unusual elements, extended rhythm studies, other percussion instruments, and even playing other types of drums such as the modern marching snare drum. With this level of preparation, some players eventually go on to join renowned drumming ensembles or show formations such as the internationally acclaimed Top Secret Drum Corps or the artists of STICKSTOFF.

PERFORMANCES AND COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

In addition to various concerts and parades, the Swiss Junior Drum Show — held in different cities across Switzerland — serves as an annual highlight. At the Basel edition in autumn, the Academy's groups present their pieces and shows to a large audience. The different BTA groups regularly impress audiences, and project-based formations often emerge across levels. At the 2025 edition, for example, all of the girls enrolled at the Academy performed together as the BTA Girls, creating an entirely new formation. Also making its debut was the newly founded Ancient Rudimental Drumming Juniors, a project that introduces young drummers to the American tradition exemplified by ensembles such as The Ancient Mariners Fife & Drum Corps from Connecticut or The United States Army Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps. Some videos from the 2025 Swiss Junior Drum Show may be seen here: *https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL59HfOp7uxdx82zNMirx3x0Yrmgh_kGbP*.

COMMUNITY AND RESPONSIBILITY — THE BEAT OF THE NEXT GENERATION

At the Basel Drumming Academy, children from many different groups come together and learn the value of collectively working toward a shared musical goal. Teaching is not exclusively limited to instructors: experienced students will often take on a mentoring role, offering advice and coaching their peers. This willingness to assume responsibility forms the foundation on which future drumming talent grows, and through which the distinctive beat of Basel drumming is passed on to the next generation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author gratefully acknowledges the contributions of Kyle Forsthoff, Gregor Meier, Emma Fox, and Scott Mitchell, whose assistance with translation and stylistic editing greatly improved this article. Thank you to Lucien Graf for use of the Swiss Junior Drum Show photo.

BTA Girls, Swiss Junior Drum Show Basel 2025

ENDNOTES

1. See Resources for a selection of articles on Fasnacht and Basel drumming that have appeared in *Percussive Notes*.
2. In a typical Stamm clique, the Stamm maintains an active repertoire of approximately 30–35 marches, about three hours of repertoire. The Alte Garde may perform roughly 25 marches, the Junge Garde around 15–25, and the *Binggis* (the youngest members of the Junge Garde), only 5–10.
3. The examples follow the *Zündstoff* notation system, a Berger-derived system commonly used today. The right hand is above the line, the left hand below, and a flam is indicated by a dash on the notehead. Not all of the implied dynamics and micro-rhythms are evident from the score. Drummers seeking accurate execution and stylistically informed interpretation are encouraged to seek advice from experienced players.

RESOURCES

Adams, Aubrey, and Craig Collison. *"Interview with Alfons Grieder, Swiss Rudimental Drummer, Part I."* *Percussive Notes*, Vol. 30, No. 5, June 1992, 18–25.

Adams, Aubrey, and Craig Collison. *"Interview with Alfons Grieder, Swiss Rudimental Drummer, Part II."* *Percussive Notes*, Vol. 30, No. 6, August 1992, 36–43.

Benson, Allen C. *"An Introduction to the Swiss Rudiments and Their Notation."* *Percussionist*, Vol. 17, No. 3, Spring/Summer 1980, 140–148.

Caron, Lee. *"Baseler Fasnacht – A Swiss Carnival."* *Percussive Notes*, Vol. 48, No. 1, January 2010, 6–9.

Caron, Lee. *"Swiss Drumming."* *Percussive Notes*, Vol. 48, No. 1, January 2010, 10–13.

Klein, Jeff. *"Journey to Basel, A Two-Part Introduction, Part I."* *Percussive Notes*, Vol. 28, No. 4, Summer 1990, 50–54.

Klein, Jeff. *"Journey to Basel, A Two-Part Introduction, Part II."* *Percussive Notes*, Vol. 28, No. 5, August 1990, 35–40.

Moritz Frei was born in Basel and began drumming at the age of six. He is a member of the traditional Basel clique *Olympia 1908*, and serves as the Leading Drummer of *The Pipes and Drums of Basel*. He is also a co-founder, drummer, and musical co-leader of the drumming entertainment ensemble *STICKSTOFF*. Having started teaching as a teenager, he now teaches at various music schools around the city.

South Korea: Percussion, Persistence, and Grit

A glimpse into the country's demanding and disciplined approach to early music education

By Ji Hye Jung

Percussion education holds a significant place in the cultural landscape of South Korea. A strong focus on early music education surged in the middle of the 20th century, shaping the skills and talents of young musicians. This emphasis on early training is not merely a trend but a deeply ingrained practice that has yielded impressive results, particularly in the classical music scene, for which it has produced performers who are considered superstars in their domain, known internationally for their talent and ability. The opportunity to learn instruments from a young age has created a vibrant atmosphere for aspiring musicians and music lovers.

South Korea sets itself apart from other cultural education systems around the world by its intense discipline amid social pressure, which is deeply driven by the widespread dedicated pursuit of elite educational programs and institutions. This singular focus creates competitive environments and intensive private lessons, demanding endless support from parents who seek personal pride and validation in their children's musical and academic success.

Naturally, there are some side effects and downfalls to a system of such high standards, which I experienced growing up there. I am always impressed when I return to Korea and meet impressive young percussionists. And I love performing in Korean concert halls that are filled with young people who love going to classical music concerts. Their passion for music thrives across genres.

As the future of classical music continues to evolve, it is exciting to witness how this commitment to music education shapes the next generation of Korean percussionists and nurtures their talents on national and global stages.

MY BACKGROUND

I've always been a little shy about sharing my childhood in Korea. I used to think my upbringing was completely normal, but after raising my own child in the U.S., I realize just how unusual — and how formative — my early years really were. Studying in Korea was competitive, and expectations were sky-high. I participated in countless competitions from a young age, and I learned the meaning of persistence through years of disappointment. It may sound like a typical "Asian family" story, but one person made my experience quite extraordinary: my teacher, who guided me from age four in a small town called Cheongju.

I began piano and percussion lessons at four years old at an arts-focused preschool and academy called Uri Ye-Neung-Won, directed by the remarkable Young-

Soon Lee. She was a passionate and devoted educator who believed deeply in her students. Under her guidance, we all developed perfect pitch and participated in performances that blended art, music, and theatre. We trained our hearing every morning with Ms. Lee on the piano.

What she truly gave me, though, was grit. She made practicing a life habit — and even a joy. To this day, I find peace in my practice room. I cherish the solitude with my instruments, a gift that came from her relentless training. In fact, I didn't realize she had taught me to have perfect pitch until I went to the Seoul Arts Middle School.

When I was 11 years old, I lived in Seoul with a full-time nanny to attend Seoul Arts Middle School, followed by Seoul Arts High School, and then one year at Seoul National University. I returned home on weekends to visit my parents and Ms. Lee. Even though I was studying with other professors in the city, I missed her energy, which included her yelling and her late-night rehearsals before performances. Her approach and brilliance produced many talented students, including *Eun Hye Kim* (Professor at the Korean National University of Arts), *Semi Hwang* (soloist in Germany), and *Ji Su Jung* (soloist in the U.S. and my cousin), among many others. I am forever grateful to Ms. Lee for showing me not only the way of music but also the essence of being a person.

Now, though I visit Korea only once or twice a year, I still sense the immense societal pressure surrounding education. Students push themselves to get into top universities, often seeking validation through academic achievement. Male students must serve two years in the military at age 19, while female students often feel pressured to enter "good" universities to secure a "proper" spouse.

Korean high school students are among the most disciplined and competitive in the world. Their training in precision and accuracy is remarkable, though sometimes at odds with the freedom and creativity needed in the arts. Perhaps PAS can play a role in helping young musicians worldwide — especially those who feel trapped by expectations — see that true artistry lies not in perfection, but in passion, expression, and connection.

INTERVIEWS

When I was asked to write about Korean education, I hesitated, since I left Korea when I was 18 years old — 23 years ago — and so much has changed since then. To gain a broader perspective, I reached out to three distinguished Korean performers and educators in different fields of percussion for their perspectives. Two follow careers in line with contemporary classical music, and another one champions traditional Korean music. What follows are excerpts from those interviews.

Kim Eun-Hye

Percussionist Kim Eun-Hye was the first student to enter Yewon School as a percussion major. Eun-Hye and I grew up in the same city, CheongJu, and went to the same preschool, Uri Ye-Neung-Won, studying under YoungSoon Lee. I have known Eun-Hye since I was four years old.

While attending Seoul Arts High School, Kim Eun-Hye was admitted to the Korea National University of Arts for gifted students and graduated from CNR de Paris. Since returning from her studies in France, she has crafted an active career in Seoul as a member of Ensemble TIMF (Tongyeong International Music Festival). With *Percussion Duo Moitié*, established in 2012, she has annually presented a variety of percussion music repertoires, including the Asian Composers League (2017), Contemporary Music Society in Seoul (2018), and PAN Music Festival (2019). Kim Eun-Hye is also a recipient of multiple international special prizes in solo and chamber music competitions.

Kim Eun-Hye is currently a faculty member at the Korea National University of Arts.

Ji Hye Jung: At what age did you start learning to play percussion instruments?

Kim Eun-Hye: I started learning marimba and piano at age five.

Ji Hye: Where has your music education taken place? Is it common to travel abroad?

Kim: I studied at the CNR de Paris, France, for six years starting at age 21 after my studies at the Korean National University of Arts, and returned to Korea when I was 27. Among Korean music majors, studying abroad is relatively common. Many students go abroad to gain broader perspectives and deeper musical experiences.

Ji Hye: What is something that you think you were taught particularly well?

Kim: From a young age, I had many opportunities to perform on stage. Through those experiences, I learned firsthand the joy of performing after hard practice, and that joy became a great motivation for me to practice more diligently.

Ji Hye: What is the typical musical experience for a developing musician in Korea?

Kim: These days, the most common way to start percussion in Korea is through elementary school orchestra activities,

where students are first introduced to instruments. If they discover talent or interest, they continue with private lessons, then attend gifted programs or arts middle and high schools for professional training. After that, they enter music colleges or conservatories for formal higher education.

Ji Hye: What repertoire do you perform or teach most often? Who are some of your favorite Korean composers?

Kim: Recently, I have often performed and taught works by Alejandro Viñao. In 2025, my students performed "Stress and Flow" at Tianjin Juilliard in China and "Relative Riffs" at the Korea National University of Arts. Solo marimba works such as "Burritt Variations" and "Khan Variations" are also very popular among my students, so I teach them frequently. I have performed "Estudios de Frontera" and "Book of Grooves" by Alejandro Viñao, and I have studied many of his works in depth. It is my small dream to meet him in person one day and perform his music in front of him!

Korea National University of Arts (KNUA) Percussion Ensemble is constantly growing through new experiments and performances. In 2025, we presented Casey Cangelosi's "Bad Touch," performed by seven players simultaneously with lighting effects, and for Philippe Manoury's "Le Livre des Claviers," the students built the Sixxen instruments themselves.

In terms of Korean composers, a work I particularly enjoyed performing recently is "Gougalon" by Unsuk Chin. It is an ensemble piece that includes two percussionists, and she expresses the color and energy of percussion instruments beautifully.

Ed Choi

Ed Choi is originally from Canada and studied at the University of Toronto, Northwestern University, and Rutgers University. Choi joined the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra in 2004 and became Principal Percussionist in 2007.

As an educator, Choi has held teaching positions at Seoul National University, Hanyang University, Kyunghee University and Sookmyung Women's University. He has taught clinics and masterclasses in Canada, the United States, Australia, Japan, and China. Choi served on the PAS Symphonic Committee and presented an orchestral clinic at PASIC 2014.

Ji Hye Jung: Tell us about your musical training.

Ed Choi: All my school training took place in North America, but I've learned so much in the orchestra here in Seoul. I often encourage students to investigate orchestras abroad because there are often more opportunities in places like Asia, where city populations can be vastly greater than in America. It's a great place to get experience. I came for what I thought would be one year and am now past 20 years here!

Ji Hye: How would you compare the cultures of Korean and North American music education?

Ed: College auditions in Korea are very competitive and do not have freedom of choice of repertoire. I think this is a big problem because creative artistry can be hidden in this format. Having dozens of candidates play the Creston concerto behind a curtain can demonstrate accuracy and some musicianship, but it doesn't allow some players to really show their strengths. In America, personality can really make a difference, which I think is a good thing. The competition to get into one of Korea's top schools does encourage some strong training, but private lessons can be expensive.

In America, there is plenty of room for music education majors since there are many band programs that need teachers. In Korea, there are, unfortunately, very few band programs in high school. I grew up playing in drum corps in Canada and America, but there is essentially no marching scene in Korea, unlike Japan or Thailand, where the marching band scene is thriving.

Students here are very respectful, but sometimes it's hard for them to see a future in music. But, I suppose that's the case anywhere. Many students would like to pursue solo and chamber careers, but without professorship jobs available — there are only two in the country! — it can be tough. There are several orchestras, but like anywhere, there are few job openings. It is possible, however, to get experience as an orchestral freelancer.

Sori Choi

Sori Choi is an active Korean percussionist born in Seoul. Her musical journey began at age six studying *Janggu*, a traditional Korean drum, which led her through the National High School of Korean Music and on to Seoul National University's College of Music. She has performed at various international festivals, including Musica Insieme Panicale (Italy), World Minimal Music Festival (Netherlands), Klangspuren Festival (Austria), Weiwuying Arts Festival (Taiwan), and Tongyoung International Music Festival (Korea). Sori has premiered many works by contemporary composers. To expand interest in Korean percussion, she has given workshops at such international institutions as the National Gugak Center,

The Royal Danish Academy of Music, and Musik Akademie Basel. Currently, she spreads Korean music worldwide through diverse performances, masterclasses, and collaborations with musicians across genres.

Ji Hye Jung: At what age did you start learning to play percussion instruments?

Sori Choi: I began learning percussion when I was six years old with my family. In Korean traditional percussion, there is an ensemble form where four types of instruments are played together. Since there were four members in my family, we naturally formed a quartet and started learning Janggu and other Samulnori instruments together. Later, I joined a larger traditional percussion ensemble at my elementary school. From the age of eight I began performing in a large-scale percussion group. It was quite serious even then. When I was 11, we participated in national competitions and even traveled abroad to perform in the United States — Atlanta, though I can't remember the exact venue.

I decided to major in percussion around middle school, age 14–15. At that stage, I took private lessons from different teachers, each specializing in a branch of Korean percussion such as Jeongak (court music), Minsokak (folk music), and Samulnori. Studying with multiple experts helped me build a strong foundation. In Korea, it's quite common to start learning at an early age, especially in families that value traditional music or in regions where Pungmul (community percussion activities) are active.

Ji Hye: What is something that you think you were taught particularly well?

Sori: When I started to learn Janggu, the Korean drum, my teacher taught me by having me listen to him sing the rhythms and then express those songs through the drum. It helped me develop a deep, intuitive sense of rhythm and timing. These days, we see the written score even for the traditional drummers, but that experience stays with you a very long time. Groove, nuance, the feeling that you can imagine — sometimes it's difficult to write everything down with scores. You just let your hands and body remember them. I think that's what I was taught best.

Ji Hye: What is the typical musical experience for a developing musician in Korea?

Sori: In my opinion, the path to becoming a musician in Korea usually starts with standing out in public school music classes. Children who show musical talent at an early age often begin taking private lessons or attend local music academies to study with professional teachers. From there, many go on to attend specialized arts schools — middle school, high school, and eventually university — where they study with other talented young musicians. They take private lessons, play in ensembles, and gain orchestra experience as part of their training. After graduation, they usually stay connected with the friends and teachers they met along the way, building a network and continuing to perform, collaborate, and grow as musicians.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The three artists I interviewed have crafted careers based on their individual talent, yet they share strikingly similar perspectives of their musical journeys. Each emphasized the value of early music education and the transformative impact of studying abroad, experiences that broadened their artistic horizons and deepened their understanding of their craft.

Beyond their musical achievements, I also know these three remarkable individuals personally. A common thread among them is their exceptional work ethic: they are dedicated, disciplined, and always strive for growth. They are highly creative and approach their art with imagination, curiosity, and a willingness to take risks. Together, their stories reveal how passion and perseverance shape not only successful musicians, but inspirational individuals.

Ji Hye Jung maintains an active, international career as a recording artist, soloist and ensemble member, commissioner of new works, and educator. Recent festival performances include the West Cork Chamber Music Festival in Ireland, The Intimacy of Creativity in Hong Kong, the Grand Teton Music Festival, Germany's Schleswig-Holstein Festival, and Portugal's Percuarts. Jung has presented masterclasses at the Curtis Institute, the Peabody Conservatory, Rice University, Beijing's Central Conservatory, and the Karol Szymanowski Academy of Music in Katowice, Poland. She teaches at the Vanderbilt University Blair School of Music and serves as Artist Director for Chamber Music City and Nashville Marimba Sessions. She holds an MM degree from the Yale School of Music, and a BM degree from Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University.

Norwegian Drum Tunes

Rudimental drumming in Norwegian folk music

By Birger Mistereggen and Carl Haakon Waadeland

Rudimental drumming has played a vital role in Norwegian folk music for several hundred years. In this article we will present a Norwegian folk drum tradition — the performance of *trommeslåtter* (drum tunes) — and we will demonstrate how this tradition of Norwegian drumming is related to a tradition of European military drumming.[1]

FROM MILITARY DRUMMING TO FOLK MUSIC

In 1628, the Danish king Christian IV, who ruled over Denmark and Norway, established a Norwegian military army, and he ordered that every military company should have its own drummer. Many young Norwegian men were given training to play military signals and marches according to a European tradition of military drumming. However, when the drummers did not do military service, they started to show their musical skills and earned money by playing at various social gatherings, incorporating the military drumming technique in their performance. The drum that was used was the cylindrical two-headed rope-tension drum, most often made of wood or brass, with snares (animal guts) attached under the bottom head. In particular, the drummers played at weddings, which was a custom that had already been very popular for some time. The Danish cultural historian Troels-Lund has written about Norwegian wedding ceremonies in the sixteenth century, and we read :

> The music played at the head of the wedding procession. It could probably be done with just one flute player, but people on the west coast had both flutes and drums. The drum was the instrument that ordinary people liked best. In Norway there were therefore many places where they only used drums at weddings.[2]

On the west coast of Norway, the custom of having a drummer to play at weddings was at its most popular around 1850–1880, in the middle of Norwegian national romanticism.[3] Arne Bjørndal, a pioneer in Norwegian folk music research wrote: "a wedding was not considered decent if there was not a drummer present together with a fiddler." According to Bjørndal, in many parts of Western Norway the drum was what first welcomed the guests to the wedding party.[4] On the day of the wedding, when the whole party went to church, the fiddler and drummer took turns playing, and the drummer played various "bryllupsslåtter" (wedding tunes). Moreover, the drummer announced when food was served, and on the second and third day of the wedding he would wake up the guests in the morning. Figure 1 shows a peasant wedding in Hålandsdalen in 1892. Notice the drummer (with a horn) and a fiddler attending the wedding.

A famous iconic national romantic painting from the middle of the 19th century is "Brudeferden i Hardanger" (The

Figure 1. A peasant wedding in Hålandsdalen, 1892. Photo: Thorvald Selmer. University of Bergen Library.

wedding procession in Hardanger) painted by Adolph Tidemand, who painted the people, and Hans Gude, who painted the landscape. Tidemand and Gude made several versions of this painting, most of which included a drummer. One version titled "En brudeferd til vanns" (A wedding procession on water), painted in 1854, is illustrated in Figure 2. Here we see a drummer sitting at the front of the boat where the bride and groom also are sitting.

WHAT DID THE DRUMMERS PLAY?

The tradition of having a drummer play at weddings lasted until around 1940, and knowledge of how this drum tradition was performed might have been lost if Johannes Sundvor (1871–1941) had not gained an interest in these performances (Figure 3). Sundvor learned his first drum tunes in the early 1890s, and some decades thereafter he started collecting and writing down this old drum music. This resulted in a collection of written transcriptions of drum tunes dated from 1915 to 1937 that are still available today. Moreover, in 1937 Sundvor cooperated with the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) to make a recording of several of the drum tunes and marches he had collected. Thereby, the tradition was saved for future generations and for the great pleasure of future drummers!

The most significant aspect of the drum tunes in Sundvor's collection is that they imply a performance of an underlying double-stroke roll as a drone, with rhythmic motifs or themes played as single strokes on top of it. In this way, these drum tunes show their marked difference from drum *marches,* since most marches are performed without an underlying roll. The performance of rolls and motifs in the drum tunes involves an alteration of accented single strokes and unaccented double strokes — i.e., a performance of different rudiments. Thereby, the Norwegian drum tunes show an intimate relationship to the old European military drum tradition originating in Switzerland, as well as traditions of military drumming in the United States.[5] We will demonstrate this more closely in the following paragraphs.

A very important person for the continuation and knowledge of this drum tradition is the grandson of Johannes Sundvor, Eirik Sundvor. Through his father, Olav Sundvor, Eirik inherited several of Johannes Sundvor's drums and drumsticks, had access to Johannes's transcriptions, and learned how to play this drum music. In 1979, Norwegian television broadcasted a program called *Den siste tambur* ("The last tambour"), which portrayed Eirik and the old drum music.[6]

Moreover, in 1991 Carl Haakon Waadeland published a textbook presenting 20 drum tunes from Johannes Sundvor's collection.[7] This book was written from a modern drummer's perspective, and it contributed to many Norwegian drummers learning to play the drum music that Sundvor had transcribed. The old drum tradition thereby gained renewed interest, and drum tunes became part of the repertoire of Norwegian drummers.

Let us now take a closer look at examples of drum tunes belonging to three different categories in Sundvor's collection: (1) Drum tunes in "soft performance," (2) Reksolinks tunes, and (3) Drum tunes with a three-feel. Sundvor's collection also contains other categories, such as drum tunes that involve a combination of time signatures.[8]

Figure 2. Tidemand and Gude: "En brudeferd til vans" (A wedding procession on water) from 1854. Notice the drummer sitting at the front of the nearest boat.

Figure 3. Johannes Sundvor outside the depot barracks, Bergen, around 1918. Photographer unknown. Picture and information received from Olav Sundvor.

DRUM TUNES IN "SOFT PERFORMANCE"

Figure 4 shows Johannes Sundvor's transcription of "Brylluspsslått fra Hålandsdalen" (Wedding tune from Hålandsdalen). Observe that Sundvor notated only the rhythmic motifs of this tune in his transcription. The performance of the underlying double-stroke roll is not given. This is an example of a drum tune in *soft performance* (in Norwegian: *Mjuk utførelse*). A typical feature of drum tunes belonging to this category is that they consist of different variations of the motifs found in the tune in Figure 4, with a performance of sticking as described in the following. In Sundvor's handwritten comments to the tune (see Figure 4), we read: "I learned this drum tune in 1891 (it was one of the very first I learned) from tambour Stein Johannesson Sælsvoll....Stein had learned this tune from Johan Neshovda."

Figure 5 illustrates the performance of this drum tune, with the underlying double-stroke roll as a drone. The upper staves show the rhythmic motifs, whereas the lower staves illustrate how the drum tune is to be performed. Right hand is notated above the line, left hand below. The single strokes should be accented (performing the motifs), whereas the double strokes are performed unaccented, constituting the drone. A video showing a performance of this drum tune by Eirik Sunvor is presented in Mistereggen and Waadeland (2024).[9] Eirik Sundvor's performance of this tune follows the structure: A-A-B-A-A-B-B.

From Figure 5 we observe that the performance of this drum tune basically involves two distinct rudiments: Rudiment 1: The quintuplet figures in bar 1; Rudiment 2: The thirty-second-note figures in bar 3. Both of these rudiments are called "Tagwachtstreiche," belonging to the list of basic Swiss rudiments.[10] Rudiment 1 is denoted "5er gebunden" or "Ra de 5 droite/gauche," whereas Rudiment 2 is called "Einfacher Tagwachtstreich" or "Coup de diane simple."[11] Moreover, both rudiments are performed in the traditional French signal "Le coup de Rigodon."[12] It is also interesting to note that Rudiment 1 is the technical building block of the old American military reveille signal "Three Camps."[13] However, in "Three Camps" this rudiment is most often notated in 6/8 with an accented eighth note followed by four sixteenth notes, instead of as a quin-

Figure 4. Johannes Sundvor's notation of "Brylluppsslått fra Hålandsdalen."

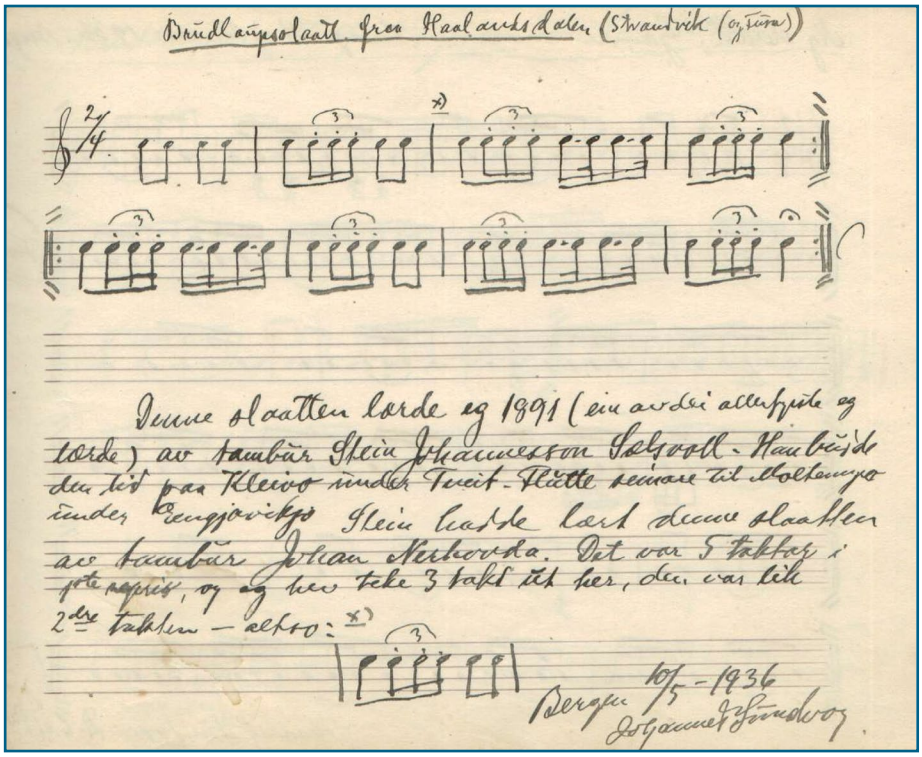
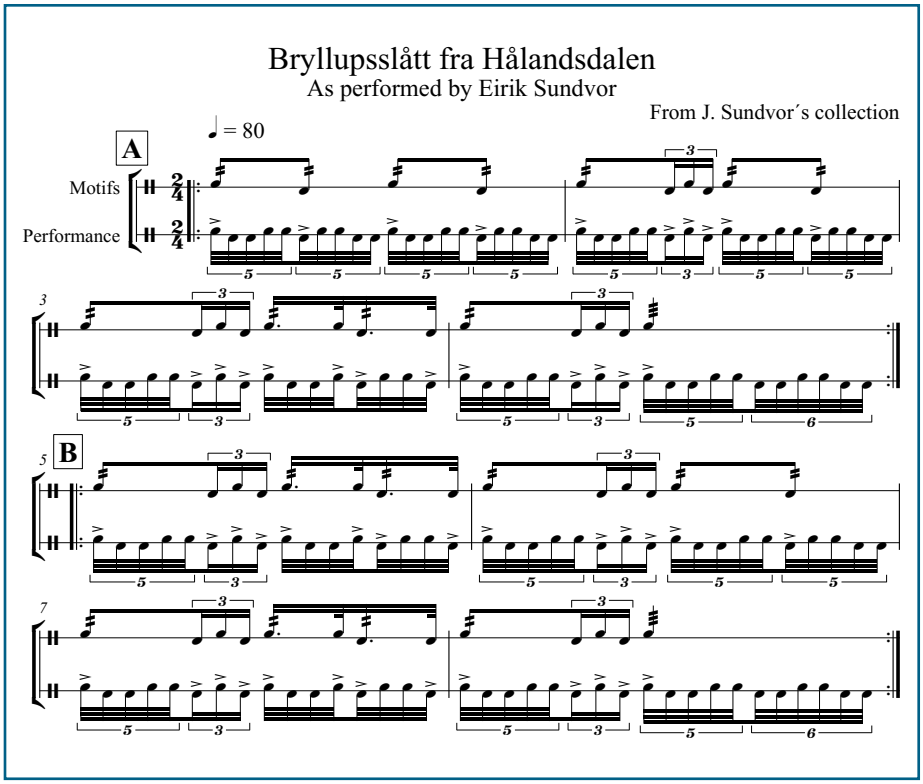


Figure 5. Illustration of a performance of "Brylluppsslått fra Hålandsdalen." Right hand above the line, left hand below.



tuplet, as in Figure 5.[14] In the transcription, we chose a notation in quintuplets because we feel that this is closest to Eirik Sundvor's actual performance of this rudiment.

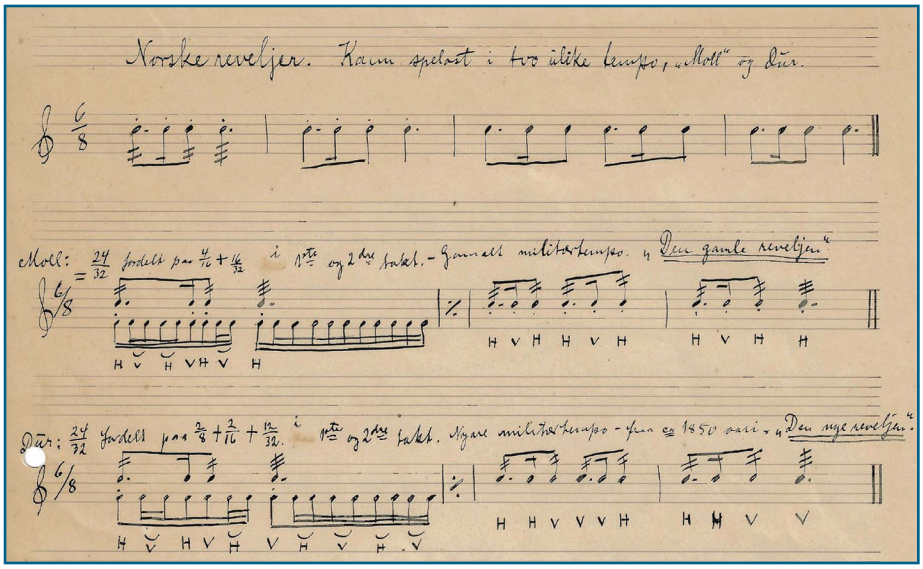
REKSOLINKS TUNES

Figure 6 illustrates Johannes Sundvor's transcription of the European military reveille in two different versions. The upper line shows the motif as we recognize it from the first known written documentation of this signal from 1777.[15] According to Sundvor, the second line demonstrates how to play the signal in *moll* (minor), whereas the third line shows the performance in *dur* (major).

The performance in *dur* is in accordance with the notation of the reveille found in the documentation from 1777, and this is a representation of the performance of the reveille likely developed by the Swiss Basler Trommler Gilden in the 17th century.[16] This performance is also found in French military drumming under the name *Le coup de la Diane*.[17] Note that in *moll* the right hand is leading in the performance of the motif, whereas in *dur* the hands alternate. Many drum tunes in Sundvor's collection build on the reveille performed in *dur*, and since right and left hands alternate in this performance, these tunes are called *Reksolinks* tunes (*Rechts und links* = Right and left).

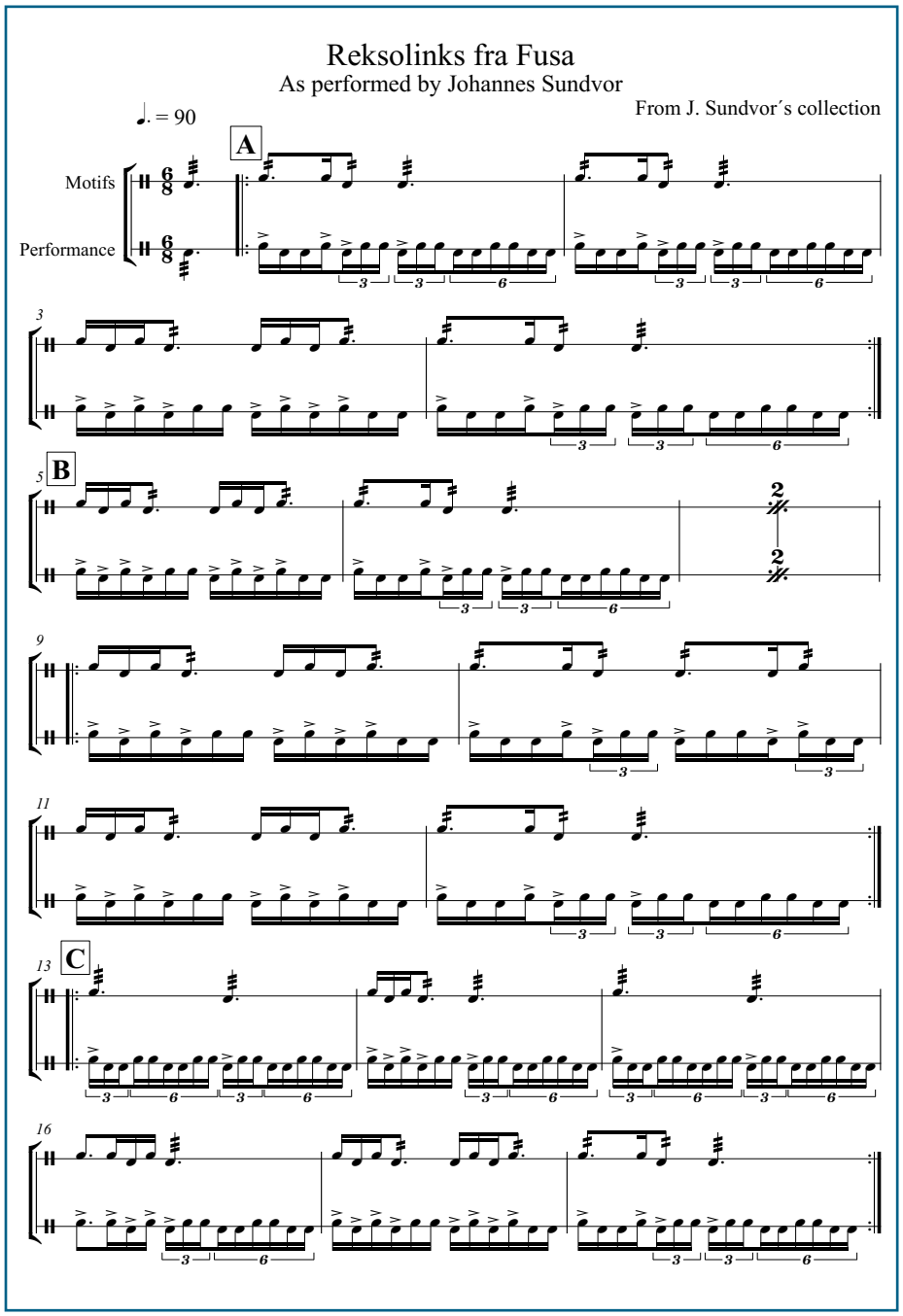
Figure 7 shows a transcription of Jo-

Figure 6. Johannes Sundvor´s notation of "Norske reveljer" (Norwegian reveilles), with an explanation of how this signal should be performed in Moll (minor) and Dur (major). H = Høyre = Right hand, and V = Venstre = Left hand.



hannes Sundvor's performance of "Reksolinks fra Fusa" on the recording made in cooperation with the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation in 1937.[18] Sundvor plays the tune two times. The first time his performance is in accordance with the illustration in Figure 7, whereas he makes some variation the second time.

Figure 7. A transcription of Johannes Sundvor's performance of "Reksolinks fra Fusa." Right hand above the line, left hand below.



DRUM TUNES IN THREE

A typical feature of military signals and marches is that they have a rhythmical two-feel. However, listening to the performances of Johannes and Eirik Sundvor, we experience that some of the drum tunes have a prominent three-feel. The performance of these drum tunes indeed applies a rudimental military drum technique, but the tunes are performed with a non-military feeling, that often strongly "invites" to dance. Related to this, it is interesting to note that the performances of drum tunes with a three-time feel are *not* governed by a unified sticking pattern, as is the case for reksolinks tunes and drum tunes in "soft performance." Performing drum tunes from the two latter categories, the drummer could transform patterns of rudiments and sticking from a vocabulary and rhythmic language of military drumming. However, since ordinary military drumming does not contain signals in three-part time, the drummer had to create *new patterns* of sticking and rudiments in the performance of drum tunes with a three-time feel.

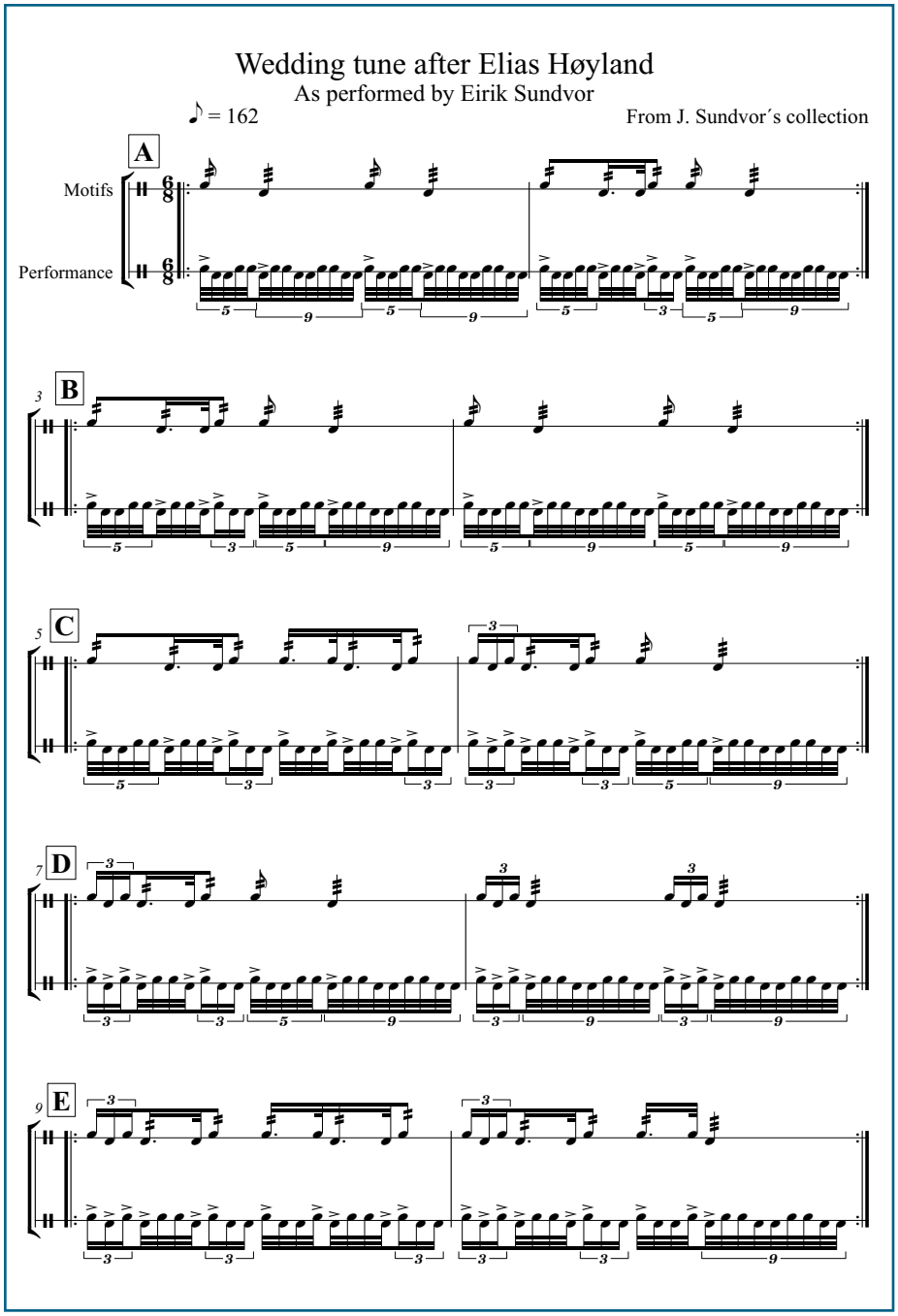
To give an example of a drum tune in three, we point to Figure 8, "Wedding tune after Elias Høyland." Sundvor has written this tune in 6/8. With eighth notes as the counting unit, each 6/8 measure equals two measures with a three-feel in 3/8. Observe that in this drum tune the motifs are developed very dynamically, building all the way towards the end. In his comments to this tune, Sundvor has written: "2 tunes after Elias Høyland, freely written together. Some contributions from other tambours."[19] The transcription in Figure 8 illustrates a performance made by Eirik Sundvor.[20] He plays all the themes and motifs of the tune, but at times changes the order of the motifs compared to the transcription. Listen closely to the "dancing" feel in Eirik Sundvor's performance of this tune.

DRUM TUNES IN NORWAY TODAY

Today, drum tunes have become firmly integrated in the repertoire of Norwegian drummers. Learning to play drum tunes is part of the curriculum in music schools and Norwegian higher education in music. New drum tunes have been made, and several master's theses focusing on drum tunes have been written. There has also been a discussion among Norwegian drummers related to interpretation of Sundvor's transcriptions, and about what is the most "correct" way to notate and perform the drum tunes.[21]

During the last four decades, drum

Figure 8. A transcription of Eirik Sundvor´s performance of "Wedding tune after Elias Høyland."



tunes have been played at a large variety of musical and social settings; at several weddings, but also at other ceremonial occasions, such as public anniversaries, governmental visits, matriculation ceremonies, and exhibition openings. When Norway hosted the Winter Olympics in 1994, drum tunes were part of the music in the Opening Ceremony, and the following year the drummers of His Majesty the King's Guard had drum tunes as part of their repertoire on their international tour. Drum tunes have also been performed for several years at *Landskappleiken*, an annual convention and competition of Norwegian traditional music and dance.

In 2011, "Noregs tamburlaug" (The Norwegian tambour association) was founded with the aim of promoting the Norwegian drum tune tradition. In 2021, the association celebrated its tenth anniversary. The program included several lectures and demonstrations, and a concert where drum tunes were played solo, in arrangements performed by drum ensembles, in musical interplay with the Hardanger fiddle, and for dancing. This demonstrated exciting new ways of performing the drum tunes, based on the tradition from which drum tunes have developed. It also pointed at ways to perform drum tunes within contexts that open new possibilities of musical expression and musical interplay.

To illustrate the link between the past drum tradition and today, we end this presentation of Norwegian drum tunes by pointing at a picture of the authors playing drum tunes to welcome guests at a wedding party at Vinstra, Norway, March 2025. (See Figure 9.)

Figure 9. Carl Haakon Waadeland (left) and Birger Mistereggen. Photo: Tone Steinsbekk.

ENDNOTES

1. For a more comprehensive presentation of Norwegian drum tunes, see Mistereggen and Waadeland, 2024.
2. Troels-Lund, 1939, p. 400.
3. Bjørndal, 1924.
4. 1960, p. 99.
5. Caron, 2010; Grieder, 2007.
6. A television program from 1979, *Den siste tambur* (*The last tambour*) portraying Eirik Sundvor and the old Norwegian folk drum tradition: *https://tv.nrk.no/program/FMUS00002378*
7. Waadeland, 1991.

8. Mistereggen and Waadeland, 2024.
9. Eirik Sundvor´s performance of "Brylupsslått fra Hålandsdalen." See: https://doi.org/10.1017/ytm.2024.10 click "Supplementary materials" and choose "Mistereggen and Waadeland supplementary movie 2."
10. Berger, 1972; Caron, 2015.
11. Caron, 2015, p. 54.
12. Goute, 1993.
13. Bruce and Emmett 1862–1865, p. 28.
14. See Hessler, 2017, p. 30.
15. Anonymous, 1777.
16. Olsson 1985, p. 526.
17. Goute, 1993.
18. Johannes Sundvor's performance of "Reksolinks fra Fusa" on a recording from 1937: https://doi.org/10.1017/ytm.2024.10. Click "Supplementary materials" and choose "Mistereggen and Waadeland supplementary audio 1."
19. Mistereggen and Waadeland, 2024, pp. 94–95.
20. Eirik Sundvor's performance of "Wedding tune after Elias Høyland": https://doi.org/10.1017/ytm.2024.10. Click "Supplementary materials" and choose "Mistereggen and Waadeland supplementary movie 3."
21. Mistereggen and Waadeland, 2024, pp. 48–49.

REFERENCES

Anonymous. (1777). *Kurze Anweisung das Trommel-Spielen auf die leichteste Art zu erlernen, nebst sieben in Noten gesetzte Stücke und Märsche mit Anmerkungen von einem Tonkünstler.* Berlin: Gedruckt bei G.L. Winters wittwe. Image.

Berger, F. R. (1972). *Das Basler Trommeln. Vollständiger Lehrgang.* Basel: Eigentum und Verlag: Musik Hug.

Bjørndal, A. (1924). Gamle Trumbeslaattar i Hordaland. *Hordaland Folkeblad* (19 November).

Bjørndal, A. (1960). Tromma og tambur. *Frå Fjon til Fusa. Årbok for Nord- og Midhordland Sogelag 13*, 98–106.

Bruce, G., & Emmett, D. (1862–1865). *The Drummers´ and Fifers´ Guide.* New York: Pond & Co.

Caron, L. (2010). Swiss Drumming. *Percussive Notes*, 48 (1), 10–13.

Caron, L. (2015). Grundlagen, The Swiss Rudiment List. *Percussive Notes*, 53 (5), 52–55.

Goute, R. (1993). *Le Tambour d´Ordonnance. Volume I. Méthode Nouvelle.* Editions Robert Martin.

Grieder, A. (2007). "The Basel Drum." In J. H. Beck (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Percussion* (2nd ed., pp. 145–149). Routledge.

Hessler, C. (2017). *Camp Duty Update. Snare Drum Rudiments: Bridging the Gap Between Past and Present.* Alfred Music Publishing GmbH.

Mistereggen, B., & Waadeland, C. H. (2024). "This Drum Is Not the Devil´s Instrument: The Development and Performance of Drum Tunes in Norwegian Folk Music." *Yearbook for Traditional Music, 56*(1), 25–55. https://doi.org/10.1017/ytm.2024.10

Olsson, S. (1985). *Kroumata.* Gislaved: Svensk Skolmusik AB.

Troels-Lund, T. (1939). *Trolovelse og bryllup i det sekstende* århundre*: trolovelse, fra festeøl til bryllup, bryllup.* Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, Oslo.

Waadeland, C. H. (1991). *Trommeslåtter – en trommeslagers skattekiste. En presentasjon og videreføring av trommeslåtter fra Johannes Sundvors samlinger.* TIMA Forlag, Trondheim. New publisher 2008: Norsk Musikforlag A/S, Oslo.

Birger Mistereggen is a drummer and percussionist, assistant professor of music performance at UiT, The Arctic University of Norway, and has a master's degree from Norwegian Academy of Music. He has conducted new artistic research on a Norwegian drum tradition and is a musician in a large variety of projects within classical music, jazz/pop/rock, and folk music. Birger has performed on several recordings, has a Grammy nomination with the group Trio Mediaeval, and has broad experience as a pedagogue and lecturer.

Carl Haakon Waadeland is a drummer and percussionist, professor emeritus of music performance at Norwegian University of Science and Technology, and has a PhD in music with a thesis on rhythm performance. Carl published a book and CD presenting the Norwegian folk drum tradition, *trommeslåtter* (drum tunes). He has participated on many recordings and released a CD where drum tunes are used as basis for improvisation. He has also published several articles in international journals related to rhythm performance.

Marching Arts in China

By Yueyang Shi

In mainland China, marching arts have historically been absent from after-school curricula. In southern regions, particularly Shanghai, the 2010s witnessed notable advancements in marching arts. Significant milestones include the Winter Guard International China Invitation in 2019, held in Beijing, and a student marching band performance featuring over 2,000 participants during the 2019 Chinese National Day Celebration. These events led many local instructors to perceive an unprecedented peak in the development of the marching arts industry.

Despite these achievements, significant systemic educational challenges continue to impede the development of marching arts in China. Scheduling rehearsals remains a persistent issue, exacerbated by rapid population growth since the early 2000s, which has led schools to expand class sizes and campus facilities. This expansion has resulted in complex scheduling structures, including multiple academic calendars, campuses, and staggered dismissal times (Guo, 2024). For example, in 2023, one ensemble had students distributed across two campuses separated by over two hours of travel during peak traffic.

The rotation of student groups between campuses and the existence of distinct schedules at each location created substantial logistical challenges, particularly during the summer competition season. Consequently, rehearsal time was limited to two hours per week due to frequent student absences. Inadequate facilities and equipment at remote campuses further hindered effective practice, despite modern infrastructure in many newly constructed schools. Approval for additional rehearsal time, such as a supplementary band camp, was often granted with minimal notice, impeding effective planning. Furthermore, most Chinese schools, including higher education institutions, do not publish annual academic calendars in advance, resulting in frequent, unanticipated scheduling conflicts that reduce available rehearsal hours.

One of the premier high school marching arts programs in Beijing performing on stage.

These management deficiencies have discouraged students and instructors, including those with experience in the United States, from sustained participation. Talented students with the potential to participate in Drum Corps International (DCI) or Winter Guard International (WGI) events are often denied opportunities for further development because of local constraints.

Composing marching percussion and band music for clients in Beijing, including elementary schools and an indoor percussion ensemble, requires integrating local cultural and political elements with stylistic influences from American marching music. Educational authorities mandate many elementary school marching bands and brass corps programs and frequently feature repertoire centered on patriotic and student themes (Communist Youth League of China et al. 2018). A significant proportion of instructors and designers have expressed dissatisfaction with the repetitive use of traditional "red songs," prompting a search for innovative approaches to these politically driven works. This challenge has intensified in recent years as the existing repertoire has been exhausted and few new compositions have emerged. The demand for composers capable of balancing diverse cultural influences has grown, particularly in Beijing.

Under the guidance of several band directors, a recent project involved the complete re-arrangement of traditional pieces, resulting in arrangements that enhanced the promotion of music and

arts education during the performance season. The newly composed battery percussion parts introduced novel musical elements to the Chinese competitive field.

Chinese and American students typically begin elementary school with comparable foundational skills and similar initial challenges in music performance. However, differences in curriculum design and pedagogical methods contribute to divergent outcomes. Although comprehensive music textbooks are published within the Chinese educational system, they are infrequently utilized. In rural areas, music instruction is often supplanted by other academic subjects, and when provided, the quality of information is frequently inadequate. The following list outlines common deficiencies observed among students in Beijing:

- Significantly lacking listening abilities while playing.
- Anything beyond dotted rhythm presents a struggle.
- Not all schools teach five-line staff in their standard curriculum.
- Common behavioral issues, e.g., ADHD, are similar to those in the rest of the world.

Currently, music educators are taking a deep dive into China's existing music education systems to identify the root causes of the problems. One of the wide speculations among educators is that the influence of "TikTok style" music, in addition to the fast and unsettling pace, has led to more students unlearning the real mechanism of music. China doesn't have a strong foundation of orchestral classical music in the public, and it didn't become part of school activities until very recently (Zhu, 2024). The missing slice of the cake is right here. Most students have never attended a band concert, and they're not interested in learning something that might take a lot of time and effort. The percentage of such students was much higher in China than in the United States, which may partially explain the origin of the abnormal music flavor of current students in China.

In local culture, a marching band is often seen as a rural walking band that plays Chinese horns (bugles) and large red drums. These ensembles are primarily used at weddings or funerals in villages. Young students often resist participating in such obsolete village-style ensembles when they can participate in something else that might be more appealing. Parents, on the other hand, usually prevent students from joining marching ensembles, concerned about the health risk and time commitments. All of this led to a negative cycle that could have reduced marching band enrollment in China.

For many ensemble leaders, the inherent conflicts of managing a marching group can be daunting. Yet some younger educators who have returned from overseas have begun to carve a new path through these challenges, building a clear, sustainable model that reflects the real potential of the marching arts in China.

The Beijing Rotary Marching Percussion Ensemble, founded in 2019 as a minor percussion quartet, has since developed into a compact indoor percussion ensemble with just under 20 members. With strategic planning and a strong sense of direction, the group has been experimenting with a hybrid rehearsal model that combines the best practices of both the American and Chinese systems since resuming operations in 2023. Its members have completed three consecutive summer competition seasons, earning national awards each year.

The ensemble identified that scheduling conflicts — one of the most common difficulties in Chinese scholastic music programs — could be minimized when leadership maintained complete control over the group's priorities and calendar. Unlike many school-affiliated ensembles, Rotary operates independently, allowing it to design a rehearsal schedule that prioritizes its artistic goals. Even so, occasional long-term absences still occur when members are called away unexpectedly for college events. Members of the Rotary ensemble have criticized such academic disruptions, describing them as signs of institutional disorganization and poor administrative coordination. Ironically, some note, East Asian culture often emphasizes trust, commitment, and punctuality, while modern educational institutions sometimes fail to uphold these very values.

Each year, the Rotary Marching Ensemble retrains its newly-contracted members in music theory fundamentals, ensuring that all performers have a solid foundation before advancing to technical

Beijing Rotary Indoor Percussion in competition field, Summer 2025; photo by Beijing Rotary Performing Arts, used with permission.

execution. By prioritizing theoretical understanding — rhythmic literacy, interval recognition, and score reading — over rote technique, the ensemble aims to cultivate well-rounded musicians capable of playing, understanding, and expressing music as a language. Our goal has never been to produce playing machines, but to nurture individuals who can communicate through music with intelligence and emotion.

The COVID-19 pandemic severely disrupted this progress, causing a nationwide decline in marching ensembles after 2023. Reduced financial support for public schools and declining student enrollment in band programs further weakened the ecosystem (China Institute for Educational Finance Research 2023). A few ensembles have continued to thrive, benefiting from stronger institutional backing and renewed artistic ambition.

In August 2025, two Beijing schools represented China at the Drum Corps International (DCI) Open Class Championships in the United States — an event reported by CGTN (2025) — marking a milestone for Chinese marching arts on the global stage. Such international cultural exchanges are expected to bring new standards of pedagogy, performance design, and educational philosophy to China. Despite the complexities of global relations, the marching arts in China are steadily finding their own way forward, driven by the passion, discipline, and vision of ensembles like the Beijing Rotary Marching Percussion Ensemble.

REFERENCES

CGTN. 2025. "Chinese High School Marching Band Competes in DCI Championships in U.S. State of Indiana." *CGTN*, August 11, 2025. *https://news.cgtn.com/news/2025-08-11/VHJhbnNjcmlwdDg1OTI1/index.html*.

China Institute for Educational Finance Research (CIEFR), Peking University. 2023. *Zhongguo Jiaoyu Caizheng Baogao* [*China Education Finance Report*]. Beijing: Peking University Press. *https://ciefr.pku.edu.cn/docs/2023-11/248ca90c02e84f1eb7b41d-387fba6b89.pdf*.

Communist Youth League of China, Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, and National Working Committee of the Chinese Young Pioneers. 2018. *Zhongguo Shaonian Xianfeng Dui Zuzhi Gongzuo Tiaoli (Shixing)* [*Chinese Young Pioneers Organization Work Regulations (Trial)*]. Beijing: Central Committee of the Communist Youth League of China. *https://www.gqt.org.cn/documents/zqlf/201801/P020180129611828292897.pdf*.

Guo, Jian. 2024. "Marching Band Education Model in Secondary School Level." *Arts, Culture and Language* Volume 1, no. 1 (Issue 6), December 31, 2024. *https://doi.org/10.61173/x3mx2b61*.

Zhu, Qi, Miguel Ángel Solano-Sánchez, and Oswaldo Lorenzo Quiles. 2024. "Situation of Music Education in Primary School in Wuhan (China): Analysis from the Perspective of Music Teachers." *Frontiers in Education* 9:1480946. *https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2024.1480946*.

Yueyang Shi is a percussionist, composer, and music educator who loves helping students grow as creative, confident musicians. With his conservatory training, he has led music projects and performances across the U.S. and China, fostering a truly global perspective. He is the director of music and arts at Mass Island Corp, a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit corporation based in Massachusetts. He also held the title of Artistic Director for the Beijing Rotary Marching Percussion ensemble. He primarily teaches in the metro-Boston region.

Pink to Red: angela wai nok hui's Cantonese/British artistic practice, unified across mediums

By Gloria Yehilevsky

angela wai nok hui is a multidisciplinary artist from Hong Kong based in London, U.K. I first met her in 2017. We stayed in touch, and her first solo release — a pink cassette — struck me as having a depth of care for every detail far beyond that of being a percussionist. Every work encompasses a continual care for stage presence, design, color, and movement.

Photo by Venetia Jollands

Her playing echoes this in care for every sound, not only audibly but also visually and spatially, then again even beyond those with an approach that observes the sounds in between — natural and human sounds, sounds without fear, then, contradictorily, sounds that encapsulate and transmit fear. She uses sounds that are not meant to be, childhood-like sugarcoating to frame and tell the true story of the living, and sonic elements to bring attention to the phenomena of activism and self-love with a bitter aftertaste.

She has released two solo albums and has created, premiered, and toured additional major solo works involving percussion, sound art, and varied visual artforms. She co-founded a café and experimental art space — "Eat the Sunshine. Down the Sun" in Kennington — and is also a co-founder of Hidden Keileon — a cultural enterprise working with migrant and queer people to imagine futures with freedom and justice for all by dreaming and leading multidisciplinary and life-affirming projects. She is half of the sonic noise duo Understanding of Skinning and plays in the percussion collective Abstrukt. She had a traditional classical percussion training in Hong Kong and the U.K. (Royal College of Music), but now it would be incomplete and inaccurate to call her a percussionist; her artistry is built on confluences of her unique cultural associations and those of her choices of mediums of expression.

Gloria Yehilevsky: This year's focus issue is about international percussion, and you're particularly interesting because I'm not sure whether you even see yourself as a percussionist. You have formal conservatoire percussion training, but in what you're doing now, do you see yourself situated among percussionists?

angela wai nok hui: I question myself all the time whenever I try to tell people what I do. My creative identity is always going back to percussion, because that was my core training and how I started to develop my musical language. So, the answer is yes and no: part of me tries to push away and leave that world behind. That part looks for more language that I could use as sonic language. I use these words to describe my practice most often: "sonic sounds and noise" rather than "music." It has more texture and more color that I could express myself as an artist. I question this all the time when I create a solo set. But I always have to use percussion instruments because those are the instruments I have at home, so I guess I am a percussionist. [*laughs*]

Yehilevsky: Being in this solo interdisciplinary artist realm, do you feel like your circle is percussion-centric in any way, or do you find that the people you're engaging with are outside of that — consequently making you think about the sounds you're making differently and about your own identity differently?

hui: My percussion friends are all from studying in college; we're a very tight-knit group and are still super great friends. In terms of the community and creative people I hang around nowadays, I would definitely say they're more multidisciplinary artists or identify as composers. I have this artist collective, and there is a massive part of myself devoted to that. It's more about community building, social justice, and art creation rather than percussion repertoire.

Yehilevsky: That leads smoothly to this duo with Miko: Understanding of Skinning. He's another trained percussionist, but what you do is not what's going to end up on Vic Firth's YouTube channel; they're not percussion duos written by another composer-performer. What you're doing is totally different and engages multidisciplinary areas: sound art and noise and rolling marbles across the floor. (*https://youtu.be/YilbtHJVj8U?si=L0U4- z5l7483uDcH*) Sure, people occasionally use those ideas as extended techniques in the context of compositions, but there seems to be a containment in those, at least in most modern through-composed works, that you've extended past. So it's interesting that you have this duo, but it's not really a percussion duo.

hui: I don't think we even have the word "percussion" in our description; we always say that we are a sound and noise duo. And improv based, because we don't have enough rehearsal time. [*laughs*] We talk about ideas and then just go. I remember the feeling of just getting into improvising; it was a very freeing and empowering feeling to have. I developed this side of my practice during the pandemic. I really trust boredom as an artist. It's such a luxury for artists, for musicians, to feel bored, and we find another way out sometimes.

Yehilevsky: I remember you telling me that the creative progress you made when the world shut down was pivotal for you, because it was when you started to work on your individual sound. Is it correct to say that before COVID/lockdowns, your identity was more as a freelance percussionist in the contemporary space, and following that period, after having that space to be bored and start making your own sounds, you came out as a solo artist?

hui: Yes and no. I always felt different when I was in college. What inspired me most during my time at RCM was the contemporary module, then I went to Darmstadt in 2018. It ran for three weeks, and it changed everything; my mind was blown, being in this sort of massive intense camp of contemporary composition and multidisciplinary sound-focused art. We did things like use a chair to hit a drum. I remember a piece where we used many different sized dildos; we opened the box with our instruments, and it was full of rainbow-colored dildos. I was like "Okay, I feel seen now. I'm actually not weird." Having said that, I don't think I would have been able to understand what was going on, musically, in that circumstance, without those six years of conservatory training.

Then COVID happened, the world stopped, and more funding became available for freelancers like us. As always, it still was not enough for the entire community, but I had access to a bit more.

Yehilevsky: When was Darmstadt? Were you done studying?

hui: I was done. I had no work, no jobs, and was thinking: "What do I do?" So I texted a friend based in Germany, and that led to Darmstadt. Most of my percussion connections now are from either Darmstadt or another festival called Impuls.

Yehilevsky: Let's jump back and get your chronology. How old were you when you moved to the U.K.?

hui: I was 14; I moved by myself. My family is still in Hong Kong. I went to a boarding school in Brighton for three years then to Manchester, a specialized music high school called Chetham's. Then to London.

Yehilevsky: Up until Royal College, what kind of music were you playing?

hui: In Hong Kong, it was all concert band and ABRSM grades. Nothing to do with orchestra, I didn't know what that even meant. So it came as a shock when I went to Chetham's because I thought percussion was just doing solo pieces. I didn't understand why I needed to practice these, like, four bars.

Yehilevsky: It sounds like you were not thrilled about the orchestral music at that time.

hui: There's more to it. When I was in the first school in Brighton, there was a massive Cantonese community, so we basically only needed English to function. I didn't need to use English to

It's such a luxury for artists to feel bored, and we find another way out sometimes.

express myself, for example. It was also an all-girls school and Chetham's was mixed. Once I got there, I was basically learning two languages. I was learning the musical language and learning how to practice, and I was also trying to understand what an orchestra is and learning to use English to express myself. All whilst being a teenager, so it felt like everything was crashing into me, and I was also trying to rebel against everything. Those two years were horrible; it was incredibly hard, but it was really good for me. So of course, music was keeping me alive.

Yehilevsky: What initially prompted the move?

hui: My parents predicted the future of the political situation in Hong Kong and sent my sister first. I wanted to follow. Funnily, we didn't even go to the same school; at least we were in the same country.

Yehilevsky: That's fascinating, because some of your solo work is directly related to the political status of Hong Kong right now. Can you tell me about how *Let Me Tell You Something* (*https://angelahuiwainok.bandcamp.com/album/let-me-tell-you-something*) was politically focused?

hui: I had really strong feelings when I made that work. I have similarly strong feelings now, but at that time it felt closer. That was when the massive resistance movement had just happened. That was the driving force to create this first solo project: to talk about the resistance, to talk about the memory. Memory fades inside me, which is normal, yet at the same time the less I go back home, the more I see it change. The few things that don't change are the people, and the feeling that the place gives you, but the place itself keeps changing.

Yehilevsky: Are there specific musical gestures you used to express this?

hui: Absolutely, and some of this language extends through my current work. First is the glitchiness of my voice; I always use glitch to manipulate sounds, which is also why I chose the medium for the physical release to be a cassette tape. The sound quality is bad, right? Speaking lightly, I can play a wrong note on the recording, and when the recording quality isn't so great, the wrong note doesn't matter so much. But in seriousness, the cassette is also related to that creative language: its lo-fi-ness and unreliability. You can't even rely on it working, and if you want to skip between tracks you have to do it yourself. It's just like thinking and the memory I mentioned: you can't just up and decide "Oh, I want to think about this person" and then just jump back to them like skipping tracks on streaming platforms; you need to kind of find it. It takes time, and you have to be patient to find the moment you want to listen to.

The other centerpiece of my language is the baby glock — also known as the energy chime or chime bar.

Yehilevsky: The one you have a tattoo of.

hui: Oh my God; I feel so seen! That's a massive symbol: in a sense, my poetic language is the baby glock. I used it in most of the pieces in that album. I moved them around: they can be disconnected, they can be connected, and then they just look like toys as well. That is one of the main aesthetics that I love — just being playful. Then I use that playfulness to communicate the dark side in me.

Yehilevsky: So you're using this playfulness to access more challenging emotions?

hui: Yes, but it's not as clear as that. It's all very abstract; the connection the art has to politics is similar to this overused phrase, but I know most artists would echo it anyway: those works I created are basically for me to stay alive. They are not the prettiest or something that you would put on and listen to in the car on a long drive. [*laughs*]

But returning to the political connection, this topic and conversation happened with every collaborator in that record. I told them how angry I felt, and about the injustice that I felt was stepping on my chest every day. That all coalesces in the glitchiness of the album, and the choice of cassette, and its pinkness: pink is both a fleshy skin color and can be an open wound color. But pink is also toyful and playful, so these things and feelings and ideas represent the core, like a ball that was passed around between collaborators.

Yehilevsky: Speaking of toys reminds me of your newest set: *Just let me die a lil'*. I remember seeing you at Wigmore Hall slamming the bottom of a snare drum, with everyone else on stage blowing on party horns. The toy part of your work is very consistent, but this particular piece also contains an interesting development, as later in your café, you put up a tapestry on which you sewed a red waveform shape, and you said it was from the same series. That's not even a piece of sound, let alone percussion, yet it's still part of this sphere of works that are unified by this red color. Despite the complete contrast in medium, sound, and setting, as an observer they retain a clearly thematic feeling. Can you tell me more about this new work?

hui: I love that work, I'm still in that mindset. *Let Me Tell You*

Something feels further away and small. Not in a negative way. That distance also signals distancing from an identity crisis, which I don't think I have anymore. I feel like I really found myself. I found my voice and I'm not seeking or looking. In *Just let me die a lil'* there's this whole realm of playing with my blood and playing with redness. My entire creative phase now is turning from pink to red. *Let Me Tell You Something* was pink. Now I'm moving into the darker, bloody red, but still glittery.

Yehilevsky: Speaking of glitter, what led you to put a disco ball on your head and play the vibraphone?

hui: The deadline inspired me! I was creating this set for Edinburgh; I had always wanted to bow Styrofoam for the sound. I was sitting at the back of my room, thinking about the mirror reflection of myself, the reflection of the outside world, then thought of the mirror and of a disco ball. Somehow in all of that it just came. That work was called *let's go to disco seventeen*.

hui with disco ball

Yehilevsky: Stepping out to the practical side of things, could you give me a percentage around how much of your professional time is spent developing these solo works, and how much is spent elsewhere?

hui: It's probably about 20%. In terms of income, it might be zero even.

Yehilevsky: As people hear about these creative practitioners putting out solo work, it may seem as if artists have this big public presence, but in reality that is often what they're funneling other funding sources into. Like you said, it's more about keeping you alive than it is about making a living.

hui: It's really quite sad. Using *Just let me die a lil'* as an example, I premiered it at Leigh-on-Sea which only covered travel expenses, but I was a headline artist, and the curator gave me time and support. Then I did a split bill at Hundred Years Gallery, which I curated myself, only receiving ticket sales, which went to my collaborators, so no profit. I did one at The Horse Hospital which was a ticket split, around £60, no other expenses were covered, and I needed to clear out a couple days to get into the mindset before playing it. Then Wigmore Hall, which was paid. Then the sound installations and recording associated with that project: I did one with my collective Hidden Keileon (*https://hiddenkeileon.bandcamp.com/track/plum-crumble*) and another in the basement of my café. Those were no pay. And we use a lot of our time to make things happen, and it's what we want to do, but nothing. The only thing that had some money in it was Wigmore. I'll probably use up anything remaining to get a better disco ball or a better subwoofer.

So to summarize my creative practice: glitchiness, feedback, colorful microphone cables. Those are what I keep going back to when I create stuff.

Yehilevsky: The way you describe colors both visually and sonically, not once do you mention some particular physical property about the resonance of a particular drum. Your entire language is more descriptive than that. You're using percussion to facilitate these things, but there's not a traditional sort of percussive thinking underlying it.

hui: Oh, thank you for translating my crazy.

Gloria Yehilevsky is a London-based composer and improviser who integrates percussion performance with ongoing multimodal enquiry into a fluid cluster of activity. Situated in the U.K.'s jazz, experimental, and contemporary scenes, recent and upcoming appearances include the Vortex, Sands Films, Centrala, Sō Laboratories (N.Y.), Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, and the Southbank Centre as part of Serious' EFG London Jazz Festival. Gloria is currently working on her PhD in Creative Practice at Trinity Laban Conservatoire. She won the PAS/Armand Zildjian award and Italy PAS Vibraphone competition, performed in the San Diego Symphony, World Percussion Group, and alongside the Bang on a Can All-Stars at MASS MoCA, where Steve Reich described her as "an extremely impressive percussionist… with an amazing combination of technical mastery and riveting energy." Her work involves speaker and clinician engagements across disciplines and internationally.

The Light Wall System — The Body As Instrument

Playing sounds in light as one might paint on a canvas with one's hands

By Jean Geoffroy

Several years ago, I realized that during my master classes, I was talking more about the instrument than about the student in front of me, and that posed a problem for me as a teacher. I sometimes found myself a little frustrated at not having been able to go as far as I would have liked in the work of interpretation, as I was instead caught up in the instrument, its constraints, its history, its schools, and its traditions.

I needed a place, a space, a setting that required no knowledge, no expertise — just a *presence:* a listening ear, and an intimate and intuitive connection with sound. I wished for this to be free from all instrumental constraints: a place conducive to encountering sound and oneself. I believe this approach is necessary to rediscover a closeness to sound, breath, movement, and resonance through our instrument.

For many years, I searched for what could most closely resemble a "maieutic" meeting and pedagogic space. That happened in 2003. I was asked to give a recital at the Grame International Biennale Festival in Lyon, France, including premieres by Eryck Abecassis, Bertrand Dubedout, Yoshihisa Taïra, and Thierry de Mey. Thierry is a Belgian composer and filmmaker who has worked with some of the greatest choreographers in the world and whose catalog of films is as influential in the cinema world as in the dance world. We knew each other from afar, and this was the first time we were going to work together.

My concept began to develop at the first rehearsal of his piece "Light Music." In front of me was a narrow wall of light (my playground); behind the wall, a camera facing me was connected to a computer, and I had a sensor on each hand. Very quickly, I realized that we would need to understand each other, find a common vocabulary, and start defining the gestures.

Playing in this light wall, I can control a sound, its appearance, its form, its dynamics, but also the silence that follows it — which is probably the most important thing for a musician, because only in that silence can we talk about musical phrasing, dynamics, contrasts, and interpretation.

Unlike classical instruments, which react mechanically to an expert gesture — whether it be rubbing, blowing, or striking — the software used for "Light Music" integrates other parameters related to the body, space, and time. It's a matter of thinking about the instrument in three dimensions. The performer then becomes a sculptor of sound: able to control its intensity, density, projection, origin, resonance, and end.

The dispositive was conceived by Christophe Lebreton, an incredible computer engineer and luthier. As a musician and engineer, he had an artistic and musical approach in mind, rather than an exclusively technological one. That is why we were able to develop and improve the gesture captation device over the course of the concerts.

Christophe understood this immediately: the camera would capture the performer's movements in the wall of

In Chambery, France, at the festival Oreilles en Bocle

light, transmitting the information to the computer, which would play the sound files composed by Thierry, and I would be able to interpret them in their forms and intensities by leaving the luminous playground. I could control the end, the silence. I had my instrument!

A VOCABULARY — A REPERTOIRE OF GESTURES

From the very first meetings, we had to agree on a common vocabulary and a repertoire. So we worked together on words and feelings that Thierry began to draw in order to create a repertoire of gestures.

The question that arose was not about the score, or even the piece itself, but about the device. I had to make this space my own: its vocabulary, its writing, its control, its sensitivity; I had to learn how to play it.

While one might imagine being totally enslaved to this device, it turned out to be a space of freedom. It was a matter of closing my eyes, letting myself be carried away by the sound and my intuition, (re)discovering myself as a dancer-musician-sculptor, measuring the space, instinctively investing it, and contemplating it with my eyes closed.

It was from this that we decided to create in 2018 the LiSiLoG structure. We started working on an interface that would be lighter and more flexible: a way to move from the framework of pedagogical creation to a pedagogy of creation.

In our daily work, we often place primary importance on the *doing*: making sound, giving it color and timbre, and working on its projection. We are often less concerned with what gives it its full meaning: its end, and its fading away — whether gradual or abrupt. This device therefore had to fulfill the "on-off" functions.

After the world premiere at the international Biennale Grame festival in Lyon (2004), and during the numerous performances of this piece, Christophe continued to develop the system so that I could become increasingly autonomous. He ensured that the entire system could be controlled from a single computer — compared to three that were needed during the creation process. This development was decisive for the interpretation and dissemination of the piece.

Over the years and through repeated performances all over the world, we continued to develop the gestural vocabulary through increasingly embodied work, and we re-recorded the soundtracks — thanks to Grame (National Center of Musical Creation), which supported the continuation of the project from 2004 to 2010. Progressively, this piece has become an international reference and has toured all over the world with more than 200 performances and a film made six years after its premiere.

Interpreting "Light Music" means finding oneself, rediscovering simple gestures by listening to sound, relearning their strength, but also, and above all, their fragility. From "threads" to "infinities," from chaos to "dancing stars rising," there is only one possible ending: "silence must be" [the title of another work by Thierry de Mey] in response to our worries, our doubts. See the video *"Light Music" (2004) by Thierry de May, performed by Jean Geoffroy*.

A NEW TRANSMISSION PLAYGROUND

During the master classes and meetings that were organized during tours with "Light Music," I quickly realized that the piece allowed me to focus on the performer's role and artistic approach without needing to talk about the instrument. I had a narrative, a form, and a framework that allowed me to question interpretation in the most fundamental sense of the term: appropriation and presence. The participants on stage were guided to play the simplest and most open excerpts from the piece. They (re)discovered an intuitive relationship with sound and space, revealing a part of their personality — each person's presence magnified, as with a magnifying glass.

It's by drawing on the performer's intimate relationship with the sound — this fundamental material, which they transform into music — that I would like to share my work as a researcher through the artistic and educational proposals I am developing within the framework of LiSiLoG [*www.lisilog.com*], which I co-founded in 2017 with Christophe Lebreton and which is dedicated to both creation and transmission.

The purpose is that, on stage, it's living a moment, and not just playing it; that's the difference between an interpreter (even a virtuoso) and a musician. It's the difference between envisioning the stage as a representation space or a meeting space: meetings between musicians or artists of all disciplines, but also meetings with the audience.

As an interpreter, it is always possible to "hide ourselves" behind our virtuosity. Here, whether with the Light Wall System or the Interactive Motion Sound System (described below), virtuosity is transformed into listening, presence, conviction, and incarnation precisely because there is no technique, tradition, school, or method. There is also the possibility to invent, to re-invent constantly every time we play or replay a work: rethinking our relationship to the body, to the movement: to carry and to be carried away by the sound that one produces; and to surprise oneself as a result of this renewed listening.

THE LIGHT WALL SYSTEM

An important point is that the Light Wall System (LWS) is not conceived from the perspective of the tool itself, but rather as an artistic and educational project drawing on the experience of "Light Music." The aim was to make the system as "lightweight" and flexible as possible, so that it could adapt to different contexts — but always approached via creative pedagogy: free from preconceived notions.

It is adaptable to all kinds of audiences and generations, with or without musical knowledge; the main thing is to reconnect with oneself, to reconcile with oneself through improvisation and intuitive approach to sound that is manipulated by gesture. Rediscovering a certain "aural

curiosity" through intimate listening to the sound one generates, trying to find oneself within a form, a space, a silence: these are essential steps in appropriating this interface. All of this leads us to be "Hic Et Nunc": "Here and Now."

Thanks to the LWS, it's possible to create new scenic situations in which performers, musicians, dancers, actors, or circus artists find themselves in the middle of luminous spaces, thus creating an instrumental stage, allowing them to develop a new relationship with sound and space. This is thanks to light zones that can come from the sides of the stage as well as from the ceiling, thus allowing for a scenography in depth. The mission is to create new situations that seek to define new artistic concepts and a new relationship with the stage — moving from the idea of the stage as a space for performance and representation, to the idea of a stage as a space for encounter.

A highly flexible interface evolves throughout the creative process. It allows, among other things, the integration of one's own sounds, live recording, modulation, and work on the acoustic/electronic balance, thus offering an experimental and exploratory dimension: a unique tool/instrument for sound and stage research.

The aim is that young children and students can play with this tool without any prerequisites, with only their ears and the innate relationship between body movement and sound as their reference points, and by extension, their relationship to space and the stage — to explore the sensitive boundary between sound-producing gestures and choreographic gestures. It is also to provide a tool adapted to music education teachers who will be able to create situations based on the different approaches to gesture and sound embodied on stage.

LiSiLoG Labo, during a restitution in 2022

The use of the LWS should initially be intuitive, innate, and linked to the pleasure of discovery. It is above all about playing, in the literal sense of the word, with the movements of the arms, hands, and body, in connection with our singular perception of the light and sound that these movements induce. Far from distracting students from their own instruments, the LWS allows them to rediscover these instruments in a different way, and from a movement or sound, to offer a renewed listening experience.

Since implementing this system, which places the performer at the heart of the performance, Christophe Lebreton has developed another system: the Interactive Motion Sound System (iMSS). This system operates with two cameras: one facing the performer, allowing for the manipulation of eight vertical sound zones, and a second camera fixed on the ceiling, which also defines eight sound zones on the floor. This combination allows for an infinite number of possibilities, thus enabling a much more developed interpretive approach.

Initially designed for dance classes, this system is increasingly being used with performers and their instruments, allowing for the exploration of mixed acoustic and electronic pieces where the electronics are entirely controlled by the performer and also using the body. This opens up very interesting perspectives in terms of repertoire and performance. Each residency is aimed at diverse audiences, thereby creating new spaces for interdisciplinary encounters.

These new and interdisciplinary artistic spaces are increasingly sought after by national theatres, musical creative centers and festivals, and this opens up new professional prospects for new generations. It's about relearning simple gestures and their strength, and above all, their fragility. With gestures of the hands, of the body, in a line, a curve, everything is said. A rustle, a breath, and everything falls into place: the "heartbeats."

Jean Geoffroy was solo timpanist of The Ensemble Orchestral de Paris from 1985 to 2000, and a member of the Menuhin Foundation "Music Presence." Geoffroy has appeared as a soloist in more than 40 CDs and DVDs, including six dedicated to Johann Sebastian Bach. Performer of numerous premieres, he plays in prestigious music festivals around the world and has presented master classes and conferences worldwide for more than 40 years. Passionate about teaching, professor at the National Conservatory of Lyon and Paris, he is director of the Creation department of the CNSMD of Lyon (France), author of several educational books, and collection director for the music publishers Lemoine and Alfonce. From 1995 to 2005, he worked in IRCAM's pedagogical department and was involved in the creation of many works for solo percussion and electronics. He's a member of IRCAM's reading committee, was President of the Geneva International Competition in 2009, and Artistic Director of Strasbourg Percussion Group (2015–2017). Geoffroy is a guest conductor of the Ensemble Mesostics. He established research and experimentation laboratories in various universities around the world, particularly in Asia. In 2019, with Christophe Lebreton, he founded LiSiLoG, an association dedicated to artistic innovation and transmission to create new artistic and educational perspectives and interactive tools.

OAcademy: A Global Percussion Community

By Cayenna Ponchione-Bailey

"Many percussionists face barriers, whether it's access to instruments, resources, or opportunities for growth. I hope to see a world where those barriers fade and are replaced by a true network of collaboration. That, to me, is the future of percussion, a community that is as boundary-breaking and dynamic as the instruments we play."
—George Kazianis, OAcademy Fellow (2023)

Originally from Greece, George Kazianis is now based in Germany, where he is working as a freelance percussionist and engrossed in his latest artistic project that blends vibraphone and multi-percussion with electronics to create an immersive experience that transcends traditional concert formats. George is one of dozens of percussionists who have come through OAcademy Music Conservatory's orchestral training program and have gone on to pursue diverse, rewarding careers. It is something I could have only dreamed of as a young percussionist growing up in Fairbanks, Alaska, and it is profoundly heartening to see how technology and the concerted efforts of dedicated individuals are changing the landscape for aspiring young musicians.

In my lifetime, we have gone from working in relative geographic isolation to being more globally connected than ever. For me, this has involved a bit of physical traveling: from Alaska to upstate New York and on to the U.K., where I now live — along the way building friendships and networks of musician colleagues.

But my sense of global connection really expanded when, after a short visit to Afghanistan in 2018, I began to teach online conducting classes to students at the Afghanistan National Institute of Music. These online interactions developed into deep and enduring friendships as well as musical and personal growth for both teacher and pupil. I was hooked on the power of using our emerging technologies to build not just virtual, but real and meaningful musical communities. I was thus delighted when the opportunity arose in February 2025 to join the OAcademy team as their Academic Lead, where my focus is on delivering an industry-oriented curriculum to an international cohort of musicians looking to expand their musical and cultural horizons.

While the World-Wide-Web has been facilitating long-distance interactions for decades — I still remember my surprise when my timpani teacher back in 1996 told me he met his wife on the internet! — it was the COVID-19 pandemic over 20 years later that pushed many of us to create and sustain our communities online. It was inspiring to see the ingenuity and energy that people put into making musical interactions meaningful in these virtual environments. Many wonderful initiatives "zoomed" into existence, only to be forgotten when doors opened up and we were able to make music again in person.

There were some notable exceptions to this, and one of those exceptions is OAcademy, a not-for-profit music conservatory that specializes in breaking down economic and geographic barriers to world-class orchestral training. It stemmed from the Orchestra of the Americas, a training initiative founded in 2002, which provided intensive symphonic experience for emerging orchestral musicians from the Americas through a six-week residency and tour in the summer months. Because of the 2020 restrictions, they quickly pivoted towards online teaching — retaining the crucial connection with international faculty for a series of repertoire sessions and masterclasses.

Today, OAcademy runs a six-month Artist Diploma program combining online performance and professional skills training with residency opportunities across the globe. The program is open to all orchestral instrumentalists with an annual cohort of between 70–80 students. I caught up with a few of the former percussion students to see what they were up to after graduation.

Colombian percussionist and conductor José David Rodríguez Ramírez was the first to write back with a whirl of music-making, ideas, and momentum. His latest milestone is a big one: just this past November he premiered Ludsen Martinus' new "Concierto para marimba y orquesta de cuerdas" with the Medellín Philharmonic at the Teatro Metropolitano. He also recently won a percussion position with the Estudiantinas Regionales, a major initiative of Colombia's Ministry of Culture. When he talks about

what still drives him, he lists influences that span continents and genres: Snarky Puppy, Martha Argerich, Eric Sammut, and Richard Bona. I love that his musical life is this constellation of ideas that don't necessarily run in a straight line, and I imagine that this open-mindedness and curiosity continue to drive him to expand his horizons.

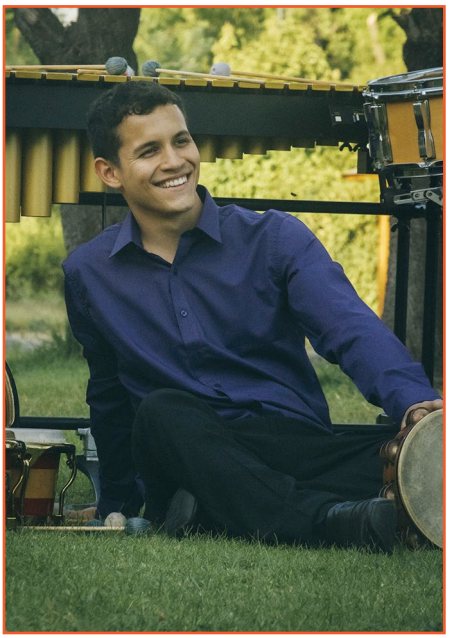
Further east in Europe, George Kazianis is continuing to shape his artistic path with the same imagination and openness he showed during his time at OAcademy. His new project — somewhere between a concert, a sound installation and a dream sequence — brings vibraphone, multi-percussion, electronics, and light into a single atmospheric world. He is simultaneously recording an album of original compositions connected to the project, exploring storytelling through rhythm, space, and emotional contrast. George told me the project has pushed him to think differently about his role as a musician, composer — even as a producer. Perhaps, in a way, his artistic goals are an answer to his own quote above: it's all about expanding what percussion can do and how people can connect through it.

José David Rodríguez Ramírez

George Kazianis

Valéria Prata

Gamaliel Roa Martínez



In Brazil, Valéria Prata has been busy performing with Orquestra Ouro Preto — one of the most dynamic ensembles in her region. She clearly relishes that the orchestra's work is very diverse: from high-level collaborations with renowned national artists to world premieres and operas specially commissioned for the orchestra. It seems her calendar is never predictable in the best possible way. But Valéria also shared something that made me smile: inspired by her experience at OAcademy to broaden her studies and musical horizons, she decided to pursue further study abroad, applied to several universities in the United States, and was accepted to four. She is heading into a master's program soon, ready for the next leap in both performance and academic exploration.

And then there's Gamaliel Roa Martínez, who wrote from Santiago de Chile with a mix of excitement and disbelief — the good kind. He's in the thick of applying to master's programs in performance while balancing invitations to perform with Chile's two major professional orchestras. Between those engagements and smaller recital projects across the city, he's building a musical life that is both grounded in professional experience and pointed toward future study.

These updates from people who are scattered across different countries, different stages of life, and different strands of creativity, was a reminder of why programs like OAcademy matter. They provide that extra fuel that we need as artists to make those next big steps. They also provide an opportunity for the creation of an international community founded on mutual support.

When I asked them, "If you had one wish for an international community of percussionists, what would it be?" their answers clustered around three big ideas: innovation, access, and true community.

Passionate about the future, Valéria wrote that her wish is for the global com-

munity to "never lose the courage to innovate and expand our horizons." She sees percussion as "an infinite section," and every new creative venture as a "unique and beautiful contribution to the world." Her vision is about evolution: a community whose identity grows because its artists keep daring to stretch it.

José articulated his desire for a world in which resources aren't limited by geography or economics — a thread closely tied to George's wish for removing barriers altogether. He wrote of his dream for "a repository of scores for orchestral excerpts, divided by regions and continents" — a global library that gives every player insight into stylistic languages and audition expectations around the world. He wants to see a percussion world that is more connected-up so that no matter where people are on their percussion journey, they could reach out to principals and assistants of percussion sections of world-class orchestras for advice and training.

That sense of a desire for community was echoed by Gamaliel — a passion rooted in his lived experience. He described the percussion group he helped form at his university in Chile: a circle that brought every student together and turned their educational journey into something special and long-lasting. The group continued even after he graduated, and that continuity shaped his dream: to be part of "a great community of professional percussionists where friendship and constant growth through feedback are the bases." His wish is that such a fellowship is foundational to how we understand our percussion community.

Since joining OAcademy, one of the things that has touched me most is watching Fellows genuinely build a sense of community — one rooted in shared values around the impact music can have in people's lives, and in trust for one another. It has been deeply rewarding to see new collaborations emerge, and to hear of Fellows planning visits across borders as they step beyond their geographic boundaries in search of fresh musical and social horizons.

I asked our percussionists what they experienced as the biggest impacts from the program. Their reflections ranged from the positive impact on their professional opportunities through the global connections expressed above, to profound artistic development that changed the way they approach their music-making today.

For José, the program marked a turning point — a moment when the professional world opened up in a way he was clearly craving. High-level masterclasses, feedback from players in major orchestras, the feeling of being taken seriously on an international platform — this was the part of OAcademy that propelled him forward. Similarly, Gamaliel noted the impact of meeting his heroes in such an intimate environment, even if it was online. He said that being able to meet with Dame Evelyn Glennie or Robert van Sice, not just to listen but "being able to speak with them and get comments on my musicianship, felt like a jug of fresh water full of electrolytes to continue my run with full energy."

For Valéria, the in-person residency was the most transformative. It was a pipe dream to travel abroad, and the OAcademy residency made that a reality. The opportunity to collaborate with such luminaries as Yo-Yo Ma and Mexican conductor Carlos Miguel Prieto expanded her way of thinking and gave her "much more courage and confidence to pursue new challenges."

George also reflected on transformation, but of a different kind. His memories were not defined by a single moment, but by a gradual widening of artistic vision. OAcademy, for him, was where music stopped being merely repertoire and became narrative — sound as emotion, performance as encounter. The program didn't just sharpen his playing; it reframed his purpose, leaving a trace visible now in the multidisciplinary worlds he is building.

Taken together, their answers suggest not one impact, but a layered one. OAcademy offered them a global community — a new network of colleagues and mentors — but it also pushed them inward toward new artistic terrain and performance experiences previously out of reach and inward toward deeper self-understanding, confidence, and ambition.

For me, these stories give fuel and hope that we will continue to build communities through music — even in a world where the possibilities for connection abound while feelings of isolation still proliferate. Percussion, with its multicultural foundations, provides a unique vehicle to explore and create these communities and sustain us with the human connections that will make the future a worthwhile place to be.

Dr. Cayenna Ponchione-Bailey is a UK-based orchestral conductor, academic, and advocate. She holds a master's degree in percussion, having studied with Gordon Stout at Ithaca College, and a doctorate in music from the University of Oxford. She is Academic Lead for OAcademy, Director of Performance at St Catherine's College, University of Oxford, and Conducting Fellow of the Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra. Her orchestral projects addressing social justice and environmental issues have been featured in *BBC Music Magazine*, *The Financial Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Times*, and on BBC Radio 3. Her research, focused on the socio-psychological and socio-political dimensions of orchestral music-making, has been published by Oxford University Press, *Music & Science*, and *Nineteenth-Century Music Review*, among others.

Group Percussion Training in Japan

Examples from Basic Education to Club Activities

By Megumi Smith

Percussion education in Japan combines fundamental practice, ensemble training, and cultural traditions, supported by method books and specialized programs. In addition, local instructors make effective use of limited time, introducing creative approaches and original teaching materials that enrich student's learning experiences.

It was only after I went abroad that I realized how remarkable music education in Japan is. Beginning in elementary school, every child is introduced to music: learning how to count rhythms, read notes, sing in the solfège system, and experience the joy of playing together with classmates. Even in kindergartens and preschools, children naturally build a musical foundation through singing and rhythm games. In schools that place special emphasis on music, "Marching Band" (a marching band that uses recorders and harmonicas instead of brass and winds, with snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, and glockenspiels keeping the rhythm) gives children opportunities to participate in competitions and local events, and to gain performance experience from an early age. Because of this foundation, Japanese children can transition smoothly into percussion performance.

In preparing this article, I interviewed five leading percussionists and educators currently active in different parts of Japan, incorporating their perspectives and experiences. I also drew upon my own school experiences in Japan. One point that stood out in my conversations with them was the infrequency of their contact with students. They do their best to deliver highly concentrated instruction in a limited amount of time. This was not simply a technical matter, but a mindset — an ongoing commitment to making each moment of teaching meaningful, which I believe reflects the very essence of education.

I will describe both the common features of Japanese music classes and regional variations in percussion culture and education. At the same time, I hope it will serve as a source of inspiration for the global development of percussion education. Music has the power to connect people across borders. By bringing together Japan's experiences with diverse approaches from around the world, I believe we can open new possibilities for the future of percussion culture.

This article focuses primarily on public schools; however, keep in mind that individual schools may have different approaches and policies. Japan has over 20,000 elementary schools, nearly 10,000 middle/junior-high schools, and over 3,000 high schools. It is challenging to generalize across those numbers. Please read it with that in consideration.

COMMON FEATURES AND IMPORTANCE OF MUSIC EDUCATION IN JAPAN

Across Japan, elementary school music classes follow a shared curriculum. Children discover the joy of making sound through instruments such as the pianica and recorder, and they experience the pleasure of singing together in chorus. Beginning in third grade, they are also introduced to traditional Japanese music — including taiko drums, koto, shakuhachi, and shamisen — which helps nurture an understanding that music serves as a bridge between cultures.

Through these lessons, students naturally acquire the basics of music theory, such as counting rhythms and reading notes. In this way, the shared structure of Japanese music education not only fosters a love of music but also builds a strong foundation that prepares students for a wide range of musical activities as they progress through school. With rhythm and notation already familiar, older students who choose to focus on concert percussion can approach instruments like the snare drum or marimba with confidence and quickly put their skills into practice.

For most music students in Japan, the school-day music curriculum focuses on general music. The classes are taught from pre-K through junior high school. Instrumental music (concert band, orchestra, taiko, etc.) and choirs usually take place after school in club activities (*bukatsu*).

In my personal experience, and based on communication with my colleagues, it is unusual for percussion students to take private lessons. Most students do not have instruments at home, and they practice mainly at school. Access to a teacher would likely be limited to major cities, near universities with a music department, or on the rare chance that an experienced percussionist lives nearby; most percussion coaches travel long distanc-

es to work with students. In some cases, a percussion coach or other adult will suggest that a talented high school junior or senior take lessons, especially if the student expresses an interest in studying music after high school. If a student *is* taking private lessons, it may not be weekly or even on a regular basis.

Following are brief descriptions of percussion culture and training in four regions throughout Japan.

KANTO REGION (TOKYO AND SURROUNDING AREA)

In schools across the Kanto region, students not only receive a foundation in music through regular classes but also have many opportunities to study percussion more seriously through club activities. At the elementary level, in addition to one or two music classes per week, club activities begin in the fourth grade. band clubs often meet once a week for about an hour and a half, with additional three-hour rehearsals on weekends. In recent years, more schools have begun incorporating Japanese taiko drumming into their classes.

In junior high schools, wind ensembles and marching bands take center stage. Students typically practice three times a week after school for two hours, with additional morning rehearsals from 7:30 to 8:15. Weekend practices last about three hours, and once a month, alumni or outside instructors come to provide guidance.

At the high school level, practice becomes even more intensive. Students rehearse four to five times a week after school for three hours, and on weekends they often train from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Full ensemble rehearsals are held once a week, while sectional practices take place four times a week.

The shared structure of Japanese music education fosters a love of music and prepares students for a wide range of musical activities as they progress through school.

In some places, recent alumni — usually junior high school students — return to help with instruction, showing how schools and communities work together to support children. Schools with marching bands may hold practice three times a week for two hours each session, often aiming to compete at the national level.

In junior high schools, students typically practice three to four times a week after school for two hours, with additional three-hour intensive rehearsals on weekends. In winter, six schools may gather for joint workshops, dividing the day into focused sessions — such as snare drum practice in the morning and percussion sectional in the afternoon.

At the high school level, practice becomes even more rigorous, with three to four hours of rehearsal each day and additional time set aside in the evenings for individual practice. On weekends, students often rehearse for three hours in the morning, and in the leadup to competitions, alumni and outside instructors are invited to provide guidance.

At leading schools and private institutions, equal emphasis is placed on both fundamental exercises and competition repertoire. In some junior high schools in Saitama Prefecture, instructors create their own practice sheets, combining daily sectional rehearsals with full ensemble sessions to maximize efficiency. A common routine has developed in which weekends are devoted to practicing assigned pieces, while weekdays focus on strengthening basic skills.

KANSAI REGION (OSAKA, KYOTO, ETC.)

In Kansai, school education is closely connected with local traditions and community culture. At the elementary level, brass

In both music classes and club activities, it is common to combine ensemble rehearsals with sectional practice. Short morning sessions are used effectively to prepare for longer afternoon practices. On weekends, extended rehearsals are held, with intensive preparation aimed at upcoming competitions.

The connection to local culture is especially evident in the famous Danjiri Festival of Kishiwada, where taiko drums play a central role. Through such traditions, children naturally develop a strong sense of rhythm within their community environment.

TOHOKU REGION (NORTHERN HONSHU)

In Tohoku, percussion education is characterized by regional joint practices and workshops. The instructor I interviewed also teaches at a school affiliated with a national university and therefore has a slightly different perspective on how club activities are organized compared to ordinary public schools.

At the elementary level, students have one to two music classes per week, supplemented by club activities and regional group practices held two to three times weekly. In junior high school, practice typically takes place three to four times a week after school for two hours, with additional joint rehearsals (three to four hours) on weekends involving multiple schools. At the high school level, students usually rehearse four to five times a week for three hours, and they participate in intensive joint training sessions one to two times a year.

These regional joint practices and workshops are a defining feature of music education in the Tohoku Region, with multiple schools gathering to combine fundamental training and ensemble work. In Iwate Prefecture, for example, workshops often begin with basic exercises in the morning, followed by joint ensem-

ble rehearsals in the afternoon, creating a system in which the entire community supports student learning.

OKINAWA

In Okinawa, school education is also closely intertwined with local traditions and community culture.

Elementary Schools: In central Okinawa, brass bands are the main focus, while in the Naha area, wind ensembles are more popular. Club activities are held four times a week for two to three hours, and additional rehearsals are scheduled on weekends before major events. Junior High Schools: Club activities are held after school for two hours, four times a week, with regular three-hour practices on weekends. Students work on fundamentals, sectional rehearsals, and full ensemble performances. High Schools: With access to larger instruments, students can engage in more specialized and advanced performances.

In addition to daily school rehearsals, regional workshops and joint practices are frequently utilized, while method books play only a supplementary role. Many students also join local youth associations (*seinenkai*) and children's groups (*kodomokai*), giving them abundant opportunities to play taiko drums, strengthening the bond between school education and community tradition. *Eisa*, a traditional Okinawan drumming and dance, is often performed at school sports festivals. At high schools in Naha City, weekday club activities focus on fundamentals and ensemble practice, while weekends are often spent rehearsing *Eisa* drumming.

ANTICIPATED CHANGES TO THE AFTER-SCHOOL CLUB SYSTEM

The birthrate in Japan has been in steady decline since the mid-1970s, and along with that, enrollment in schools has also shrunk since 1990. As a result, schools have consolidated or closed and fully populating the after-school clubs poses challenges in some places. Japan has long relied on schoolteachers to "volunteer" to organize and run the clubs, leading to burnout and a poor work-life balance among the teaching corps.

The combination of these two factors has motivated the national government to initiate a process of transitioning from school-based, after-school clubs to community-based clubs and organizations. These changes are being implemented in different ways across the country. In addition to removing the burden of the clubs from teachers and schools, some believe this will benefit students by giving them freedom to choose clubs across their communities, not only at their own schools.

For music educators, this shift has raised concerns about restrictions on practice time and space, as well as the widening gap between public and private schools. Percussion in particular poses challenges, since the number of instruments and the cost of maintaining them are significant. If students lose access to school instruments, their practice environment itself may disappear. At the same time, new approaches such as joint bands and community workshops offer hope by providing opportunities for children to continue their musical journey. Looking ahead, a major challenge will be how schools and local communities can work together to ensure that children have an environment where they can keep making music.

PERCUSSION EQUIPMENT FROM ELEMENTARY TO HIGH SCHOOL

Percussion equipment, ranging from older instruments to newer ones, are generally well maintained and widely available. At the elementary level, schools typically provide bass drums, snare drums, cymbals, xylophones or marimbas, glockenspiels, and a variety of small percussion instruments. In junior high schools, these are supplemented with two or four timpani, two to four toms, and vibraphones. At the high school level, some schools also add chimes and tam tams, enabling students to perform a wider range of percussion repertoire.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

These are the essential characteristics of percussion training described in this article in each region:

Kanto: Balancing fundamental exercises with competition repertoire.

Kansai: Making effective use of short morning practices, with intensive sessions in the afternoons and weekends.

Tohoku: Building a cycle of fundamentals and application through regional joint practices.

Okinawa: Creating a complementary relationship between school activities and local cultural traditions.

Although the approaches to practice and the forms of activity differ from region to region, a common focus is placed on how students build their fundamental skills. By combining basic exercises, ensemble rehearsals, and preparation of competition pieces, children steadily develop their abilities while continuing music in an environment that is closely connected to local culture.

In junior high school, I practiced every day — morning rehearsals on weekdays and full-day sessions on weekends — mostly under the guidance of senior students. Performances at school events, competitions, and ensemble contests gave us constant goals, while formal instruction from teachers was rare. High school followed a similar schedule, with weekly ensemble rehearsals, sectional and individual practice, and seasonal training camps. These camps not only improved our musical skills but also deepened friendships, showing how shared effort helps us grow both as musicians and as people. Annual events such as festivals, concerts, and contests kept us motivated throughout the year.

From these experiences, music education in Japan develops steadily from the early years, closely connected to local culture and school life, and provides children with a strong musical foundation. Teachers and students worked creatively to make

the most of limited time, ensuring that practice was both intensive and meaningful.

These practices are valuable not only in Japan but also as a model for percussion education worldwide. While methods differ across countries, the shared goal of "nurturing people through music" is universal. By sharing Japan's experiences, we can connect with other approaches and open new possibilities. Music education is more than learning technical skills; it is a place for human development, a philosophy recognized internationally. Japan's example shows how student initiative and collaboration can thrive even in limited environments, offering fresh perspectives to educators everywhere. I hope this work offers new insights for percussion educators and contributes to the future growth of music culture and education.

Finally, I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to the percussionists and educators who generously contributed their time and insights through interviews. Their cooperation was invaluable to the completion of this study. I am especially grateful to Ms. Akane Okubo (Kanto region), Ms. Keiko Kawasaki (Okinawa), Ms. Ayako Kumagai (Touhoku), Ms. Yumiko Shinotsuka (Kanto), and Mr. Ayumu Takanabe (Kansai).

REPRESENTATIVE METHOD BOOKS USED IN PERCUSSION EDUCATION

Percussion Method Book: Snare Drum and Bass Drum by Yasushi Tsukada
Fundamental Exercises for Snare Drum: Introduction to 26 Basic Patterns by Yasushi Tsukada
100 Pieces for Snare Drum by Tomoyuki Okada
JBC Band Study published by Yamaha Music
Percussion Standard Lessons by Toshiaki Ishiuchi / Pearl Basic ARTs
Singing Rhythm by Teruko Yaginuma
Stick Control for the Snare Drummer by George Lawrence Stone

Megumi Smith, a native of Tokyo, Japan, is an accomplished percussionist and educator. She started studying piano at age three. In 2006, she moved to Southern California, where she earned a master's degree in percussion performance from California State University, Northridge (CSUN). She also holds a Level II certification in Orff Schulwerk. Smith teaches piano and percussion to students of all ages while maintaining an active freelance career as a percussionist in Southern California. Her performance credits include appearances at the Hollywood Bowl with Los Tigres del Norte and participation in the L.A. Phil Neighborhood Concerts series under the baton of Gustavo Dudamel. Smith is on the faculty at Santa Monica College; California State University, Dominguez Hills; and Youth Orchestra Los Angeles at Heart of Los Angeles (YOLA @ HOLA), where she teaches beginning percussion classes, percussion ensemble, music fundamentals, and private lessons. Her teaching experience includes guest faculty positions with the Longy School of Music of Bard College's MAT program, Loyola Marymount University, and Yola National Festival faculty.

The New Cumbia

The Women Drummers of Colombia

By Don Skoog

Roberta Leono pulls an *alegre* drum toward her, picks up a hammer, and tightens the head by hitting the side wedges one by one as she rotates the shell. Every stroke produces a satisfying thwack. As she prepares the drum, she explains that the larger strokes are made on the wedges, but that the smaller, fine-tuning taps are done on the rim.

As a member of La Perla, a trio of women from Bogotá, Leono is one of a new generation of female drummers who are not only preserving the original Afro-Colombian musical traditions, but who are also re-conceiving them for a new era and for a larger audience of both Colombians and foreigners. Her students today are a group of Americans who have come to Bogotá to study cumbia with them, but La Perla also has a large following inside Colombia. And they are not alone.

The emergence of women musicians as soloists and in ensembles is creating a wave that is flowing throughout Colombian society. They represent both a new generation and a fundamental transformation of traditions from the marginalized population of the coasts and forests to a genre of music that is being embraced throughout the country. Based in folkloric rhythms and songs, this new cumbia also embraces funk, hip-hop, rap, samba, and electronica in a sonic alchemy that is revolutionizing the music, representing both a new direction and a continuation of the rich legacy that was handed down to them. While many men are involved in this music as well, women are defining its impact on the country.

This new wave directly confronts issues of feminism, as women move to take their places in society; identity, as queer and gender-fluid people declare their presence and legitimacy; and social consciousness, as Colombia comes to grips with the violence

of its past and the destruction of its environment. This cumbia glows with tattoos, nose rings, statement clothing, dyed hair, and a distinctive culture that directly challenges staid traditions and stereotypes. These artists are determined to be part of the larger cultural and artistic wave that seeks to create a new path for the country and the world. Their goal is to maintain continuity with a past whose musical forms must also continue to evolve if they are to survive.

Colombia is a large and diverse country. Many cultural and artistic traditions, musical and otherwise, form a complex legacy that acts as the foundation for the creation of new art. Cumbia is one of many musical forms that sit near the center of the country's artistic heart. This music reflects its African, indigenous, and Spanish roots, so it is embraced by many as a symbol of Colombia's collective cultural mosaic. It is also a symbol of a new generation's determination to overcome the conflicts that came with such diversity's competing needs.

THE MUSIC

Cumbia is a term for a musical tradition that umbrellas a complex of interrelated musical genres whose roots can be traced back to the indigenous peoples of the mountains, as well as to the African populations from the coast. There are so many different genres and sub-styles that it would require a separate article to simply outline them, and more than one in-depth book to do them social and musical justice. Cumbia is drum, dance, and song that has evolved from African roots while absorbing indigenous, Spanish, and Caribbean influences into its spirit. It has its past in ancient Africa, Native America, and Spain, but its future is in the contemporary world.

The songs are about everyday life, love, work, and pain, but these themes have become metaphors — code first for the lived experience of the freed slaves, then for the sufferings and joys of all the people in the country.

The various dances can be flirty, with a nod to fertility, often performed in pairs with would-be suitors being intercepted and banished from the floor as new ones take their place. It's great fun. Professional dancers can wear colorful costumes that reflect their heritage and place in society, so the dance floor can be a blur of color and motion, but cumbia dancers are just as likely to show up for the party (called a *rueda*) in street clothes.

There are two main genres: *Gaita* refers to both the native flute and the drums of the ensemble built around it. The genre has indigenous roots, but gaita ensembles now perform music from other regions as well. Traditionally, they perform in four rhythmic modes: *gaita corrida, puya, porro,* and *merengue de gaita*.

Bullerengue refers to music that evolved from more African roots of the people from the coast. While these genres are interrelated, this is the music most commonly thought of as cumbia. There are four basic rhythmic modes in this genre: *cumbia, bullerengue sentao, chalupa,* and *fandango de lengua*.

There are other folkloric musical genres, ensembles, and instruments in Colombia — *marimba de chonta, mapalé, chandé, chirimia, pechiche,* and *currulao*, to name just a few — that are beyond the scope of this article.

THE INSTRUMENTS

There are many different drums in Colombian music, but the main ones for cumbia and its relatives are the *alegre*, a single-headed drum that is tuned by wedges driven into a rope net on its sides; the *tambora*, a two-headed cylindrical drum played with sticks on both heads, similar to a small bass drum; the *lla-*

Alegre, llamador, and tambora drums made by Eduardo Garzón.

Maracas made by Orito Cantora

mador, a smaller drum similar to the alegre, that drives the music from the off-beat; and the ever-important maracas, which are played with intricate and astonishing facility. There are other instruments as well, such as the *quijada*, or donkey's jaw; the *guache*, a type of shaker; and the *totumo*, a large, hollowed-out gourd half-shell in which small pieces of ceramic are bounced to mark the beat. All these percussion instruments can be found in both traditional and contemporary groups that can also include bass, piano, horns, electronics, and guitar, as well as other Colombian woodwind and string instruments.

These are the instruments that cumbia musicians play to create the music. How they do it depends on who they are and what influences they bring to the composition process. They come from different backgrounds and places, so their contributions, and the resulting music, presents in a range of styles. It is in this range of knowledge that these musicians bring to new forms, in a new paradigm for society, and in a verdant philosophy for living a more meaningful life, that we find the true spirit of this spiritual and artistic wave. Their histories of struggle and personal pain are journeys that lead to wellsprings of defiance and ultimately hope.

After you read their profiles, scan or click on each QR code and listen to their music. This is essential to understanding who they are. Watch their faces and hear their voices as you absorb their tales. Also, I ask readers to bear with some duplication between profiles that help keep the various narratives intact. Here are their words.

THE ARTISTS

La Perla

La Perla comprises three women from Bogotá: Diana Sanmiguel, Karen Nerak, and Roberta Leono. The present group evolved from a six-member collective that came together in 2014 to participate in the Ovejas Gaita Festival in Sucre. This festival is one of the most important for gaita music, and in 2015 La Perla won first prize, becoming the only group from Bogotá to do so in its 38-year history.

Roberta Leono, Diana Sanmiguel, and Karen Nerak of La Perla

The present, smaller group sings and plays cumbia drums as well as a voice octave pedal and a foot pedal. Their main musical influences are the gaita and bullerengue that originally brought them together, but as Roberta Leono says, "Being from Bogotá, we want our music to have a city feel, reflecting the influences we grew up with, such as rock, punk, hip-hop, salsa, and Dominican merengue — music we danced to at teenage parties, and that remains a part of our lives today."

She continues, "Drum music generally speaks of the environment in which it originates; that is, it speaks of the countryside, of farming, fishing, the sea, the river — the daily life of its practitioners and those who know and create it. In Bogotá, our reality is being surrounded by concrete and buses. It's a hard city that requires strength to live in. Therefore, one of our aims is to capture that everyday landscape and the reality of Colombia, which, sadly, is a harsh one. We have a geographically privileged country, which gives us a great wealth of flora and fauna, but these flora and fauna are also over-exploited. We share the rain forest with Brazil and Peru, but mining has gained a significant position in international business, so our global lung is being devastated and destroyed every day.

"We continue to see farmers displaced from their lands, in the streets, losing what they know and ending up begging in the city. The role of farmers in our daily lives is not recognized as important, even though it is thanks to them that we have food on our tables every day.

"We live in a country where being a social, environmental, and/or community leader can cost you your life, and this is the story of many who fight to defend collective ideals. We recognize diversity and the importance of collective work and unity among peers. We do not accept racism, homophobia, or transphobia. We want to feel safe and recognized within our diversity."

These three musicians are friends of mine, and as I have gotten to know them in the last few years I have been awed by their talent, scope of work, creative vision, and above all, their determination, personally and professionally, to be the change they want to see in the world.

La Perla: "Bruja"

The following video is an example of La Perla performing the traditional gaita music that was so dominated by men in the past, as opposed to the contemporary music created by women in all the other videos in this article. In the past, they would not have been allowed to play this music. Their performance completes

the circle, showing the relationship between the roots of the tradition and the new sounds being brought to it by women today. It demonstrates the depth of knowledge of yesterday's music — knowledge that they bring to expanding the scope of tomorrow's music.

La Perla: "Porro"

Orito Cantora y Jenn del Tambó

Orito Cantora y Jenn del Tambó (Grace Lascano Garrido and Jennifer Meza Mayorga) are a song-and-drum duo from the city of Barranquilla in the North. With over two decades of experience in Afro-Colombian traditional music, they are researchers, producers, feminists, and workshop facilitators who, along with their band, fuse ancestral songs with original compositions. They integrate gaitas, maracas, flutes, percussion, and bass into an experimental and immersive music that celebrates identity, resistance, and social transformation. The project consists of them and a core band of four male musicians who bring strength and a rich timbre to the performance.

Jenn del Tambó describes their style: "Our sound is based on in-depth research and study of traditional Afro-Caribbean percussion instruments from the Colombian Caribbean, which are combined with ancestral chants and original compositions by Orito. Using indigenous instruments such as gaitas, maracas, flutes, and a powerful foundation of traditional percussion — including the alegre drum, gaita and *millo* call drums, tamboras of varying sizes, the *Pechiche* drum, among others, combined with electric bass — we construct an experimental, powerful, and immersive sound. This combination expands upon our roots without losing their essence, becoming a musical language that symbolizes resistance, identity, and social transformation.

"Our influences come from the rituals, festivals, and musical traditions of the Caribbean, the songs of women who carry wisdom, the drums of Afro-Colombian communities, as well as from experiences working with teachers in community, educational, and research processes. We are also inspired by feminist movements and the struggles for the rights of women, LBT women, and gender non-conforming people, which permeate our aesthetics and musical narrative."

They are also the founders and leaders of the Colombian Women Drummers Network, an organization that, under the motto "The only skin that should be beaten is the skin of the drum" promotes gender equality and the rights of women, LGBTQ+ women, and gender dissidents. Since 2016, they have conducted workshops, exchanges, collaborations, and international tours that amplify the cultural impact of their music.

She continues: "We envision music that continues to evolve without losing its roots: new productions, intercultural collaborations, global tours, research into Afro-diasporic sounds, and the strengthening of educational work through the *Red de Tamboreras* [Colombian Women Drummers' Network]. We seek to continue bringing this collective voice to international stages, creating a musical language that remains alive, transformative, and deeply connected to Caribbean and Afro-descendant identity."

Their social and political objectives are rooted in the work they do. Music and community action are not separate endeavors: they are on a single path, each reinforcing the other.

Within the band, every composition, every arrangement, and every performance becomes a space where they reclaim the voices of women and gender non-conforming people within musical traditions that have historically been dominated by men. By proposing a sound built from Afro-Caribbean percussion instruments, gaitas, ancestral chants, and contemporary production, they open artistic possibilities so that new generations of women can see music as a possible, free, and personal territory. Their

Orito Cantora and Jenn del Tambó

Orito Cantora and Jenn del Tambó: "He Venido"

work on stage symbolizes resistance, identity, and the political power of bodies that play, sing, and transform.

At the same time, through the Colombian Women Drummers Network, they develop direct actions with social impact: workshops, training programs, support networks, leadership spaces, and accompaniment for women, LBT women, and gender non-conforming people. Their stance against gender violence reaffirms that the drum is an instrument of life, autonomy, and community healing.

Jenn del Tambó was recognized as Best Drummer at the 2025 National Gaita Festival in Ovejas, Sucre, becoming the first and only woman to receive this award in a space historically dominated by men. This achievement not only marks a personal milestone but also paves the way for new generations of female artists and percussionists to find a leading role in the traditions of the Colombian Caribbean.

Orito Cantora, for her part, is a researcher, composer, member of SAYCO [the Colombian Society of Authors and Composers], a key figure in the world of maracas in the Colombian Caribbean, and a maraca maker, fusing ancestral knowledge with contemporary creation.

Both artists have taken their work to major stages in Colombia and around the world, participating in international festivals, residencies, tours, and cultural exchange programs that strengthen the impact of their efforts. Their global presence has allowed Afro-Caribbean music, drums, maracas, and the voices of women creators to gain global recognition.

Tambor Hembra

"Tambor Hembra" means "female drum," referring to the alegre drum, which is also called *tambor hembra*, which they have repurposed to represent themselves as well.

According to singer María José Gallego, Tambor Hembra was created in 2016 by its director, Juan Manuel Ocampo, an ethnomusicologist and percussionist who has done fieldwork in various areas of Colombia. Ocampo wished to use his knowledge to create and train a group of young women to learn the musical skills needed to play and sing traditional music, but he wanted to create opportunities for its members to study in other disciplines such as biology, social science, and anthropology as well.

The program was created at and is supported by *La Universidad de Caldas* in the city of Manizales, in the mountainous, indigenous, Andean region of Colombia. All the members are Andean as well, but since much of the music comes from various coastal areas, it is through their studies that they have come to learn, love, and respect the power of this Afro-Colombian music. Besides Ocampo and Gallego, the current members of the group are Alejandra Ocampo, Juliana Zuluaga, Paola Quintero, Alejandra Castrillón, Lorena Uzuriaga, and Natalia Osorio.

While Tambor Hembra is based in Manizales, they have performed in many parts of Colombia, as well as in Mexico and Ecuador. Their plans are to continue creating music that not only represents the cumbia tradition, but also manifests their ideas, thoughts, desires, and ideas, while bringing this music to the rest of the world.

Tambor Hembra

Gallego says, "Tambor Hembra is a group that focuses on Colombian Caribbean rhythms that are also sung and danced, like bullerengue sentao, chalupa, fandango de lengua, tambora, cumbia, the music of gaita, and mapalé. All these rhythms originated in Afro-Colombian culture. This music is very beautiful and very deep, containing a worldview filled with symbols and codes that represent identities of and in traditional cultures, so in the songs we encounter life, death, the processes of fertility, the passage from girl to woman (like the arrival of menstruation), love, and the experiences of daily life."

Gallego says that the beauty of the music is that it permits the musicians to explore and fuse the experiences they encounter, or that have that influenced them, and that these fusions allow them to arrive, as human beings, at the true meaning of their folklore.

To learn this music, they started at the beginning, in the traditional rhythms with only the drums, but as they developed more expertise, Tambor Hembra began to add vocal harmonies, because they love to sing, then later piano and bass that create other sonorities while preserving those of the drums.

Gallego continues, "Across the years this music has been a refuge and a place of liberation, an expression of social justice, a way of change and transformation, constructing different realities in how we relate to the world, and with each other with love, respect, and liberty.

"For us, music is a means of expression and communication to manifest our thoughts, emotions, what hurts or affects us, what is important, what passes through us in the processes of our daily lives, and also to celebrate life — everything we are capable of feeling. We are made of many things. We are made of life, but also of death. We are made of the land, lakes, mountains, love, our internal processes, our individual and collective battles, and for us music is, above all, a form of resistance."

The members of Tambor Hembra are concerned about social justice. They strive to create a world where everyone can live in peace, where people do not lose their lands or lives, and where the earth and animals, and the environment, which supports all of us, and of which we are all a part, are protected. Their way of contributing to the struggle is by preserving and nourishing the traditional music and folklore because, as Gallego says, we are all losing our ancestral identities and our origins.

Tambor Hembra "Tu Abrazo"

María José Salgado

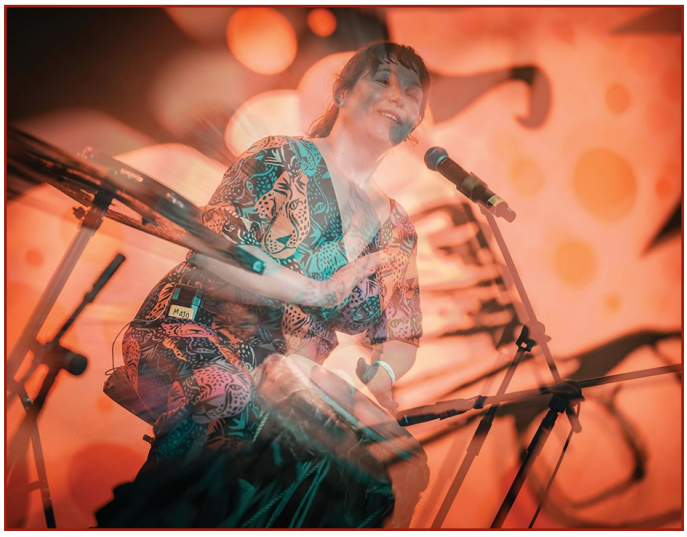
María José Salgado has been practicing, learning, researching, teaching, and creating diverse musical styles for 26 years. Her focus of practice and research has been the music of the Colombian Caribbean and the urban musical hybridizations that engage with it, as well as simultaneous projects combining traditional and experimental music. Her training has come from travel, ethnomusicology, musicology, collective practices, performing on stage, and university teaching since 2009.

She is best known for her work with Curupira, a group founded in 1999 that released seven albums and a book, participated in seminars, programs, and collaborations with local and international musicians, and undertook various national and international tours. The group disbanded in 2023. She now performs with 1280 Almas, a Bogotá-based rock band that she joined at the end of 2021, and she directs a musical space called El Fogón, for the practice, learning, and creation of bullerengue and other orally transmitted music from the Colombian Caribbean.

Salgado is scheduled to do a bullerengue tour in October of 2026 with Emilsen Pacheco, and will continue performing concerts with 1280 Almas, while working on ensembles and research for her master's degree in Colombian Music. Her plans include creating and producing academically, learning, traveling, researching and collaborating, and continuing to develop her musical language on the alegre drum.

As she explains, her style is based on the practice she has developed through listening to and learning from various teachers of orally transmitted music, as well as from the creative workshops she has participated in. For Salgado, the future potential unfolds in the multiple creative possibilities offered by the infinite universe of Colombian percussion, in her own creativity and expression surrounding these developments and languages, in the constant depth, development and productivity of ethnomusicological research, and in active participation as a teacher, manager, and performer.

María José Salgado (photo by Juan Diego Gil)



Her sense of social responsibility is very personal. "I am the daughter of educators and human rights defenders," she writes. "My father was disappeared by the Colombian state in 1992, and my family, primarily women, and I have been searching for him and fighting against impunity for 33 years.

"My social objectives as an artist are to express myself and transform realities. I extend my focus to community practices that are technologies of survival in the face of violence. I seek to contribute to social causes through music, transform the context of violence in which I grew up and live, and strengthen my presence as an artist in the world through research, creation, constant practice, and active participation in music through my drums.

"My political objectives are more aligned with progressivism. I work in the field of education, and I am critical and question the methods of conducting research and collaborations related to orally transmitted music. I believe that conceptually, Colombia is still behind, and academia still revolves around Eurocentric models. I participate as a musician, creator, researcher, community mediator, manager, and teacher — multiple roles that allow me to convey these questions and prototype respectful ways of conducting intercultural exchanges, producing knowledge about our own histories, and about ethical and reciprocal ways of working with communities. I contribute to the development of the enormous work that needs to be done in Colombia regarding the diversity of expressions that characterize us, and through my work, I have opened spaces for women drummers."

In 2017, she completed a master's degree in Musicology at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, and in 2020, she won the Latin Grammy Foundation's Research and Preservation Award, for which she post-produced seven videos from internships conducted by students researching in the field.

Curupira: "La Gaita Fantásica"

Efi Lambuley

Efi Lambuley (Estefanía Lambuley Murcia) plays *alegre* drum in several groups, but since 2014 her main project is called Efilá, an ensemble that fuses Colombian music from the Atlantic and Pacific coasts with other, more-urban genres like rock and pop using loopers and voice processors. This group includes guitarist and composer Andrés Corredor, and bassist and composer Francisco Álvarez. Lambuley also plays in several salsa groups.

She says, "My parents, along with other members of their group, Nueva Cultura, founded a music school that met on Saturdays. I started there when I was very young, since they were the teachers and took me even before I was old enough to formally attend. There I learned to sing and play string and percussion instruments. When I finished high school, I decided to pursue percussion, and that's what I studied at the Universidad Distrital in the ASAB Faculty of Arts."

Her groups have performed at festivals and have won several grants that have allowed them to continue touring. They have recorded an album, an EP, and several singles. Although she has taken a break recently, the next step is to record an album with new compositions. During this break time, she completed a master's degree in composition.

She plays the alegre, congas, cajón, cununos, bongos, and timbales, and uses multi-percussion, electronic percussion pads, looped tracks, and vocal percussion.

Her work has become focused on women's issues. One of the main themes in her master's program was precisely womanhood, viewed from different perspectives: the ideal, femicide, the role of mother, and the role of friend.

Lambuley continues, "I've become increasingly involved as a percussionist, composer, and teacher. This work requires a bit of education about customs, about 'innocent jokes,' and so on. I've also tried, through example, to raise awareness among other women on my social media and in my circles, hoping that more of us will want to support each other. Sometimes, I also stop short when I hear people say, 'What an exaggeration,' about several of these topics. I continue to compose for women, to talk about what we experience, to speak from our lived experiences, and how we experience them. I'm also at a point where I'm trying not only to speak from the perspective of pain, but also from the perspective of being a mother, friend, sister, colleague, student, and so on…

"I experienced abuse as a teenager and didn't talk to anyone about it until a few years ago. My songs address how we are taught to be silent, to even respect our abuser, especially if they are someone close to us. Since I couldn't speak out at the time, I

Efi Lambuley

have written about the longing for that sense of freedom which would allow me to speak."

Lambuley enjoys being a teacher and is moved by seeing how music has also allowed her to become part of other spaces that are understood primarily as male spaces. It is a way of proving to others that it can be done, but she feels that this paves the way so that perhaps the next woman, or the one after her, will not be judged by gender, but by abilities or musical pursuits, which is how it should be. To sow the seeds of change.

Lambuley creatively combines feminine with feminist to shape a powerful, yet intimate body of work. Her command of technique, technology, and vision point her compositions in a direction well worth following.

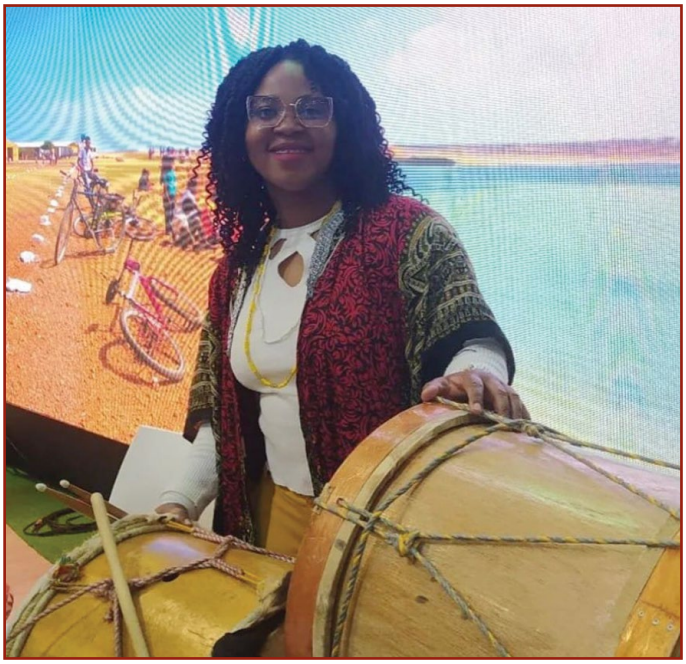
Efilá: "Latido"

María Pacifico

María Pacifico (María Luzmila Barreiro) is a self-taught percussionist. She has been playing the traditional rhythms of the Colombian Pacific coast: *bambuco viejo*, *currulao, juga, bunde, rumba, patacoré,* and *negritos*, among others, since she was 10 years old.

She plays cununos, guasá, congas, tambor alegre, llamador, tambora, djembe, and batá, among others, but she is currently focusing her artistic and professional career on cultural management. Her current musical ensemble is called ACHEMÍ.

María Pacifico



Pacifico writes, "ACHEMÍ is a musical and artistic project born from a deep desire to honor, preserve, and promote the rich cultural heritage of Afro-Colombian communities in the Colombian Pacific and the Greater Caribbean. Under my artistic direction and with musical direction by Jhon Arrechea Mina, ACHEMÍ has established itself as a high-level aesthetic and conceptual project that integrates ancestral knowledge, empirical practices, academic training, and contemporary exploration.

"ACHEMÍ has both traditional and Afro-Latino components: ACHEMÍ Traditional is focused on the visibility, revitalization, and dissemination of traditional music from the Colombian South Pacific, with an emphasis on the rhythms, songs, and musical forms of the Nariño coast. This work stems from a deep respect for the legacy passed down by grandmothers, grandfathers, teachers, and other tradition bearers. It is composed of Afro-descendant artists — many from displaced communities — who, through living memory, embody the knowledge of their territories. ACHEMÍ Traditional is also a laboratory for dialogue between empirical experience and academic knowledge, allowing for the strengthening of musical practice and its presentation on diverse stages without losing its roots.

"ACHEMÍ Afro-Latino is a creative exploration that bridges the gap between traditional and urban music of the Pacific coast with genres such as salsa, timba, funk, rap, and batá drums. With points of connection in Tumaco, Bogotá, Cartagena, Costa Rica, Cuba, and Africa, this line develops a sonic identity that draws from the African diaspora and projects itself as a cutting-edge proposal for Afro-Latin American fusion. ACHEMÍ Afro-Latino's compositions are centered on percussion, evoking the mystique of bodily movement and the spiritual connection with the drum, while also engaging with contemporary urban aesthetics.

"Both approaches coexist under a single purpose: to make music a tool for memory, identity, resistance, and social transformation. ACHEMÍ is not just a group, but a platform for collective creation that champions the power of diversity as an artistic and community driving force, carrying its message to national and international stages with a powerful, authentic, and essential voice."

During the last few years, she has been part of many different music and dance groups and schools. She has also worked as a music and dance teacher in various educational and folkloric institutions in the cities of Tumaco, Nariño, and in Bogotá, and has toured nationally and internationally, participating in festivals in Mexico, New York, Austria, Belgium, Portugal, Spain, Costa Rica, Honduras, and Vietnam. She has just finished a degree in Administrative Management Technology is currently a teacher at a kindergarten called El Mundo de los Oroxás in Bogotá.

I have had the privilege of playing both cumbia and batá with Maria Pacifico, and in my opinion, she embodies both the accumulation and dissemination of knowledge from many Caribbean drumming traditions, and her work shows that she applies this knowledge in the creation of new forms, in order to keep

these traditional rhythms alive and relevant. She is also a great storyteller.

ACHEMÍ "El Yerberito"

Rocío Medina

Rocío Medina (María del Rocío Medina) has been a percussionist for 20 years, and her career has been deeply influenced by traditional Colombian music, bullerengue, tambora, currulao, salsa, jazz improvisation, and experimental music. Throughout these years, she has focused on researching the memories and sonic heritage of the African diaspora, a universe that has guided much of her artistic exploration.

"Drums have been my voice," she says. "Through them, I have been able to express my inner world and build creative bridges with different communities, with nature, and with diverse artistic expressions.

"For the past five years, I have been developing my solo project, based on the exploration of traditional music and world sounds through live looping. I integrate jungle and aquatic soundscapes with urban and digital elements, creating a dialogue between the ancestral and the contemporary. This project was born with the intention of highlighting the role of women who not only play instruments but also compose and sing."

Rocío Medina

Her musical style has been deeply influenced by Caribbean sounds, electronic and experimental music, and her experience as a symphonic percussionist. Her classical conservatory training has left a significant mark on how she listens, performs, and creates, and today she seeks to articulate that journey through her roots in traditional Afro-Colombian music.

Her aesthetic is guided by the search for freedom, community, and cultural belonging that Afro-Colombian music embodies. And, as an independent female artist, she also recognizes that the challenges of balancing a creative life with a professional life is a constant struggle, because sustaining an independent artistic project means navigating spaces and industries that are not always open to women. Music made by women remains an act of resistance and persistence, and her vision for the future is to continue creating from that strength, keeping her voice and sonic explorations alive.

Medina writes, "From there arises my commitment to community justice. Much of the music I perform and in which I have trained belongs to historically excluded and vulnerable communities. This music is imbued with memory, struggle, and resistance, and playing it demands profound sensitivity and a conscious respect for the territories and histories it represents. For me, performing it is a way to honor those voices, support their struggles, and contribute to keeping their cultural heritage alive."

Rocío Medina: "Rayo de Sol"

CONCLUSION

There are many more women drummers active now, as well as earlier musicians, who have laid the foundations for today's players. I could not include more of them for various reasons, but here are a few names for those who want to do further research: Daniela Serna, Bertha Quintero, Anyul Arévalo, and Milenia Blanco. There are many more. You can search for them on YouTube and Facebook, and they are worth the effort.

Also, this article contains the names of musical genres and percussion instruments that may be unfamiliar to many, so it can serve as an introduction to the field for those who wish to know more, but there is simply too much information about the music, its history, and the artists who play it than can be included here. Use it as a point of departure on a long, but fascinating journey through this music and the people who play it.

In closing, I must also mention that there are many male drummers and other musicians (as you can see from the videos) who

are involved in the New Cumbia as well. They are as committed to the development and future of the cumbia, and to the sense of cultural commitment and social consciousness that drives it, as their female counterparts are, but that is a story for another article.

My own journey down the cumbia rabbit hole started after the end of the COVID lock-down. Musicians from all over the world were reaching out, looking for support, ideas, and an alternative sense of community. I was obsessively watching YouTube, and when I found musicians whose work resonated with me, I reached out to them. I came to cumbia through the videos of the great Totó La Momposina, and that led me to La Perla. I contacted Roberta Leono, and we set up last year's cumbia program in Bogotá. This year's program continued its development, growing to include other Colombian musicians, as well as a cultural track for non-musicians who want to know more about the country today. We will continue to expand the program's scope beyond Bogotá by developing new musical trips to more Colombian destinations, so if anyone is interested in these programs, or has more questions about the music and musicians, please feel free to contact me at dskoog@mac.com.

While the artist quotes in this article are from interviews and personal correspondence with me, the translations (and errors) are mine alone.

FURTHER READING

To the best of my knowledge there are no books devoted to Colombian women drummers — yet. While we are waiting, here are some other, less well-known resources that will serve as guides to the larger field, with context about the musicians, artistic movements, and social history of the country. There are also many articles in English online, but in my opinion, most are basic, outdated, or inaccurate. Read with caution.

Estrada Ramírez, Hortensia. *Tradición Oral del Sur del Tolima; Sabedores Indígenas Pijao del Sur del Tolima*. Consejo Regional Indígena del Tolima. This volume is a treasury of information on the music and folklore of Colombia. 2020.

Fernández L'Hoeste, Héctor, and Pablo Vila. Ed. *Cumbia! Scenes of a Migrant Latin American Music Genre*. Duke University Press. Durham. 2013.

Monsalve Buriticá, Jaime Andrés. *En Surcos de Colores; Una Historia de la Música Colombiana en 150 Discos*. Rey Naranjo Editores. Colombia. 2024. This is a fine introduction to the musicians of Colombia, both folkloric and popular, and to their recordings.

Salgado Jiménez, María José. *Cancionero poético-musical de Urabá-Chocó de fray Severino de Santa Teresa (O.C.D) 1930-1939, juegos y alabados para velorio de angelito*. Master's thesis. Universidad Nacional de Colombia. 2017. This paper has a wealth of information for scholars looking to learn more about Afro-Colombian history and tradition.

Triana, Gloria. *Memoria Popular; Un Reconocimiento a las Culturas Populares Colombianas*. Bogotá. Editorial Planeta Colombiana. 2022. This autobiography of the anthropologist contains detailed information and context for both the history and traditions of Colombian folkloric music.

Wade, Peter. *Música, Raza y Nación; Música Tropical en Colombia*. 2nd edition. Bogotá. Tandem Coediciones. 2023. This classic is the introduction to Colombian culture, anthropology, and history as seen through the lens of its traditional music. Also, published in English as *Music, Race and Nation*. 2000. Chicago. The University of Chicago Press.

Don Skoog is an independent composer, writer, speaker, percussionist, and multimedia artist who performs on Latin-American and Arabic percussion instruments, marimba, vibraphone, drumset, and flamenco cajón. He is Executive Director of The Dickinson Ensemble, a chamber group that creates and performs music based on the poetry of Emily Dickinson. His compositions include *Emily Sings*, a chamber suite for soprano, flute, cello, and piano; three of his marimba trio works, "Attendance to Ritual," "Art Song," and "Mozambique" have been republished in 2023 by Mostly Marimba, Inc.; "La Cantilena de las Luces" for percussion ensemble, published by CMP Press; and his composition "Water and Fire" for solo marimba, also published by Mostly Marimba, Inc.

He has written books and magazine articles in English and Arabic, authoring *Batá Drumming; The Instruments, the Rhythms, and the People Who Play Them*, published by CMP Press. He has given talks, demonstrations, and clinics at many colleges and universities, as well as hundreds of presentations in grade schools and high schools through Classical Music Chicago, and has led many library shows on jazz, flamenco, Latin, and Arabic music. He was lead artist for the Gallery 37 Latin Big Band from 1993 to 2002. He has taught percussion at the American Conservatory of Music, Sherwood Music School, and the Contemporary Music Project, which he founded in 1982, and has conducted many educational tours to Cuba, Puerto Rico, Morocco, Mexico, and Colombia.

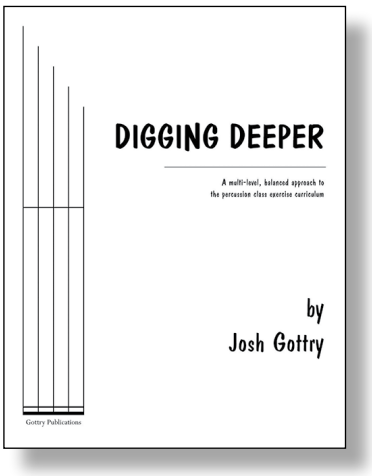
New Percussion Literature and Recordings

Publishers who are PAS Corporate Members and individual PAS members who self-publish are invited to submit materials to *Percussive Notes* to be considered for review. Selection of reviewers is the sole responsibility of the Review Editor of *Percussive Notes*. Comments about the works do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Percussive Arts Society. Prior to submitting material for review, please read the submission guidelines at www.pas.org under Publications. Follow the appropriate procedures to ensure your material will be considered for review.

Difficulty Rating Scale

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

GENERAL METHOD BOOKS



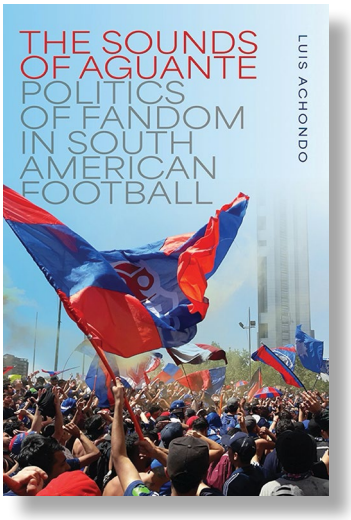
Digging Deeper
Josh Gottry
$10.00 digital individual use/
$40.00 digital class use
Gottry Publications
Web: *sample pages, audio recordings*

Percussionist Josh Gottry is a well-traveled educator, and he brings his experience and perspectives to the fore in *Digging Deeper*, his recent method book specifically tailored to teaching beginner percussion in a class format. *Digging Deeper* is unequivocally practical and rooted in considered thought about how to maximize the efficacy of teaching concepts and exercise material.

Gottry's book joins the ranks of other beginner methods that allow teachers to introduce snare drum and keyboard percussion at the same time, although it is certainly possible to address them one at a time if desired. In both areas, the book's core premise remains consistent: a technique or concept is introduced with an initial "surface" level exercise, followed by a "shallow" level variation on that exercise that lightly expands upon the original beyond its textbook definition, and then finally followed by a "deep" level variation on the exercise that fully applies the concept in a musical context that reflects the kind of material one might encounter while performing actual literature. For example, keyboard double stops are first introduced at the octave, with one hand moving stepwise and the other remaining constant; then the "surface" level exercise has one hand outlining triads and the other hand occasionally moving by step; then the "deep" level exercise has both hands moving in parallel and in contrary motion.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of this method book is contingent upon how well the teacher delivers and expands upon the ink that students see on their page, but of course the same can be said for any pedagogical resource. Fortunately for educators, the author provides introductions and teaching tips that allow them to make the most of these lessons with confidence and success. I encourage teachers looking for a beginner percussion resource to give this book some serious consideration.

—Brian Graiser



GENERAL REFERENCE

The Sounds of Aguante: Politics of Fandom in South American Football
Luis Achondo
$25.95
Wesleyan University Press

This book dives into the sonic and political world of Augunte, or the fandom that surrounds football, or soccer, in the southern cone of South America. After spending years in the field interviewing hinchas, or supporters of these teams, Luis Achondo gives us a glimpse into the political influence, violence, and the music surrounding these intense fans.

Music is often seen as peaceful; however, in the world of Aguante, music is used too often to antagonize rival teams. The music used stems from some Carnival traditions and more traditional means of changing lyrics to popular songs. These tunes can often lead to violence after or even during a football match.

The internet has allowed the music of these groups to reach a wider audience. Achondo includes transcriptions of the drumming used, as well as translations of popular lyrics. An online companion is included that provides audio-visual examples of pieces throughout the book.

This book would be excellent for anyone interested in the music and culture surrounding soccer. The influence of the political landscape, the violence that can occur, and how it leads to the creativity of these groups is truly eye-opening. Achondo does an excellent job of explaining a language that is foreign to many of us, making it easy to understand how each person is involved with these groups and how they are influenced by them. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in ethnomusicology, in the music of the soccer world, or in both.

—Josh Armstrong

KEYBOARD PERCUSSION METHOD

At First Sight II–IV
Tyler Cameron Bragg
$22.00
Tapspace Publications
Web: *sample pages*

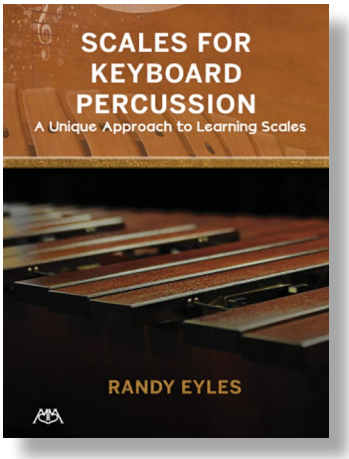
At First Sight is a technique building collection for unaccompanied 4.3-octave marimba that provides 240 short melodies designed to develop sightreading skills for the intermediate two-mallet performer. Tyler Cameron Bragg has composed 10 melodies in each major key, then 10 melodies in each relative minor, arranged according to the circle of fifths.

In his prefatory remarks, Bragg writes, "These melodies are not meant to be learned, or used for performance… Developing the skill of sight-reading is the focus here. Ideally, regular use of this book should be incorporated into a player's practice sessions by reading a variety of melodies from day to day." Furthermore, "as the melodies progress within each set, they also progress in difficulty." If a player is unsure where to start in the book, begin with easier melodies (numbers 1–5) in a simpler key, then move to more difficult ones (6–10). Recordings of each melody are included with this book's associated website for reference.

Bragg has provided six insightful principles for the optimal process of sight-reading: 1. Place the music in the middle of a melody's range, 2. Scan the melody before attempting to play it, 3. Prioritize rhythm above all else, 4. Do not look down at the keyboard; developing spatial awareness is essential to being a proficient sight-reader, 5. Keep your eyes ahead of your hands, 6. If you make a mistake, keep going.

This book can be a valuable resource for two-mallet marimbists. It is very practical and provides a logical process into the development of sight-reading.

—Jim Lambert



Scales for Keyboard Percussion II–IV
Randy Eyles
$16.95
Meredith Music Publications
Web: *sample pages*

While many texts introduce scales, few are organized in a way that reflects teaching philosophy so clearly. Randy Eyles and Meredith Music Publications have developed a short text that is fun, focused, and an incredible resource for educators, especially those looking to introduce scales in one-on-one or group settings.

Scales for Keyboard Percussion truly stands out as a method book due to the great deal of thought in the ordering of material presented in the first section, as well as the organization of the text into two larger sections. Rather than err on the side of exhaustive exercises, in Section One, Eyles introduces the building blocks of each scale followed by the scales themselves, each with two to three repeated exercises transposed to each key area. Eyles achieves this through beginning with the G-flat major and E-flat minor pentatonic scales to introduce melody and improvisation, followed by the whole tone and chromatic scales to teach the distinction between half and whole steps. He follows these scales with a systematic study of major key areas beginning with the tetrachords they contain and immediately followed by their corresponding major scale (e.g., when put together, the C–F tetrachord and G–C tetrachord form the C major scale). Each scale is presented as a scale map consisting of an image of a percussion keyboard with the notes in the scale dotted. This structure is patient and unique enough to be useful for beginning students in a group setting, or as a review for advanced students beginning music theory.

Section Two moves much more quickly and introduces several alterations to the major scale. These include the natural minor scale with its harmonic and melodic alterations, followed by scales commonly used for improvisation, including the blues scale; dominant-7 scale; dominant, major, and minor bebop scales; and the diminished scale. Unlike the major scales, these are only presented as scale maps and notated scales in four different keys and do not have corresponding exercises. Eyles does include tips for each scale family as well as an additional set of small dots over the chord for each of the altered scales.

While this may seem like a dry structure, Eyles keeps the deep dive in Section One light, age appropriate, and engaging with exercises that are based on "Joy the World," *The Sound of Music*, and a melody presented in double stops reminiscent of "Jamaica Farewell." While many of the melodies may be new to beginning students, they are short and attainable.

The text is framed in a way that would be useful for undergraduate students to review scales with terms they will encounter in music theory as well as exposing them to the scope of scale study beyond major and minor orderings. Congrats to Randy Eyles for this unique and interesting approach to learning and practicing scales.

—Quintin Mallette

PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

Cubazilian Dances III
John R. Hearnes and Chris Crockarell
$40.00
Row-Loff Productions
Instrumentation (5+ players): bells, vibra-

phone, xylophone, 4-octave marimba, bongos, shaker, 2 toms, suspended cymbal, vibraslap, claves, cowbell, repinique, caixa, surdo, woodblock, high and low congas

Web: *score sample, audio recording*

Cubazilian Dances is a collection of three percussion ensemble pieces with Cuban and Brazilian influence. The pieces are "Samba Hill" and "Yambú" by John R. Hearnes, and "Ellie's Bossa" by Chris Crockarell. Each piece is scored for metal (bells, vibraphone) and wood (marimba, xylophone) keyboards, plus a variety of indefinitely pitched percussion instruments. The number of players is flexible, with five being the minimum.

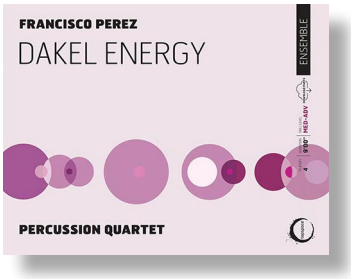
"Ellie's Bossa" is dedicated to the composer's granddaughter and is based on 2:3 clave. As the title indicates, it is in a quasi-bossa style. The metal keyboards have the melody, and the accompaniment/bassline is in the wood keyboards. There is a percussion break in the middle where the mallet players rest, and there are moments for brief solos from the bongo and tom players. The rhythmic material is mostly straightforward, with a few moments of syncopation.

"Samba Hill" is a Brazilian samba arranged for less experienced performers and dedicated to Dr. Julie Hill. Although composed for Brazilian instruments (including the repinique, caixa, and surdo), Hearnes provides instrument substitutions to make the piece more accessible. "Samba Hill" features call-and-response and steady groove sections, and it includes room for an improvised repinique solo. The mallet players also perform on handheld percussion instruments. There are two endings for this piece — one that ends definitively and melodically, and one that has the performers marching off stage playing their samba parts.

"Yambú" is inspired by the traditional Cuban style of the same name and dedicated to the composer's teacher, Lali. The two conga parts occur throughout, and may prove challenging for inexperienced performers, as a variety of sounds are required (open, bass, mute, heel/toe). There is also room for an improvised conga solo, of which Hearnes provides useful suggestions in the performance notes.

In all three pieces the mallet parts incorporate rolls, double stops, arpeggios, and scale passages. They are quite simple and accessible for inexperienced mallet players. *Cubazilian Dances* is a great introduction/entryway into Brazilian and Cuban music and dance, and I recommend it for percussionists early in their development.

—Joseph Van Hassel



Dakel Energy **IV**
Francisco Perez
$40.00
Tapspace Publications
Instrumentation (4 players): vibraphone, 4.3-octave marimba, 5-octave marimba, mounted kick drum, 2 toms, bongos, 2 large drums, 2 suspended cymbals
Web: *score sample, audio and video recordings*

"Dakel Energy" is dedicated to Dakel Percusión from Chile. The music is energetic, intense, and richly rhythmic. This quartet calls for three keyboard players (two of which also play a large drum) and a percussion player on bongos, toms, mounted kick drum, and cymbals.

The character of the piece is reminiscent of a song. There is a main theme or hook, a drum soli, a bridge, and a return to the main theme. The main theme has a driving, groovy feel that is led by a repetitive harmonic structure and sizzling bongo accents. The drum soli features the multiple-percussion player while two of the keyboard players add accents on large drums. About five minutes into the piece, there is a more lyrical, reflective section during which the vibraphone is most prominent. Finally, after a transition of building intensity, the main theme returns and culminates in an epic conclusion.

I recommend this piece for a university percussion ensemble looking for an engaging and challenging work. Strong rhythmic sense is required, but the payoff is a rewarding experience both for performers and audience.

—Justin Bunting

Glide Path **II**
Dan Hostetler
$40.00
Row-Loff Productions
Instrumentation (8 players): bells, xylophone, 2 vibraphones, two 3.5-octave marimbas, 5-octave marimba, crotales, suspended cymbal, sizzle cymbal, triangle, Mark Tree
Web: *score sample, audio recording*

"Glide Path" is a three-minute ensemble work. Classified as medium difficulty by the publisher, it is appropriate for upper-level

middle school or first-year high school students. The piece predominantly features keyboard percussion, with only one of the eight parts being exclusively for non-pitched instruments. Students should feel confident in their melodic comprehension, as the piece requires numerous leaps and quick scalar passages. Despite the melodic emphasis, each part is quite "drummy" in nature. This makes it a great choice for players who prefer more rhythmic part writing.

It is important to note the need for multiple marimbas, including one 5-octave instrument, as well as one set of lower octave crotales. While substitutions or octave changes could be made, it would noticeably alter the piece and may not be an option for every band program. That said, "Glide Path" is a short and energetic work with plenty of educational value.

—Danielle Moreau

Growing Aggression **IV**
Robert Clayson
$30.00
Row-Loff Productions
Instrumentation (3 players): 7 concert toms
Web: *audio and video recordings*

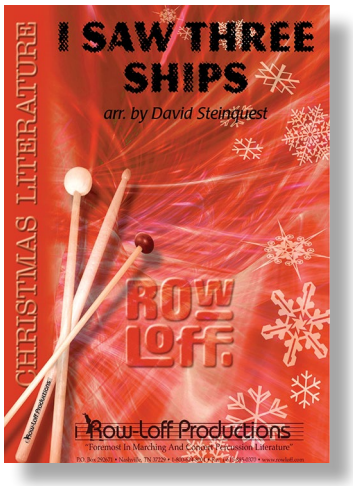
Timing out at about 2½ minutes and scored for three players on seven graduated concert toms, "Growing Aggression" is a medium difficulty, drummy ensemble for percussion trio. The bulk of the rhythms are common sixteenth-note figures along with two sextuplets per player, an occasional measure with triplets, and a 16-measure phrase in 12/8 with dotted-quarter, quarter, and eighth-note rhythms. Accent/tap figures are used regularly and most often appear aligned within all three parts. Each player has a four-bar, ad-lib solo opportunity over an ostinato marked *piano* in the other two parts. The remainder of the dynamic markings are typically *forte* or *fortissimo*, with softer dynamics most often occurring as a sudden change followed by a crescendo back up to a louder dynamic level.

The texture varies little, with all three musicians playing throughout 75% of the measures, and a single measure with a layered ostinato appears frequently throughout the piece. There are no rolls or grace notes, and

the only appearance of sounds other than those from the drumheads are in the 12/8 section in which each part includes notes to be played on the rim or shell of the drum.

"Growing Aggression" would be a suitable work for intermediate high school players who are looking for a loud, drummy work with limited instrumentation and an accessible rhythmic vocabulary.

—Josh Gottry



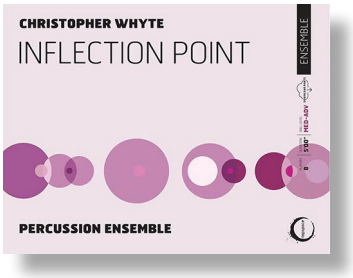
I Saw Three Ships II
Arr. David Steinquest
$40.00
Row-Loff Productions
Instrumentation (10 players): glockenspiel, chimes, vibes, 3.5-octave marimba, 5-octave marimba, snare drum, crash cymbals, concert bass drum, impact bass drum, triangle, tambourine, suspended cymbal, sleighbells, ratchet
Web: *score sample, audio recording*

"I Saw Three Ships" is an arrangement of the Christmas carol of the same name for ten percussionists. Following the introduction and opening statement of the verse, the musical material is developed in several ways, including a section in canon and an exciting polyrhythmic retransition to the recap. Several key changes bring additional interest to the listener; this does not sound like your run-of-the-mill strophic carol!

The individual parts are straightforward and playable by middle school or strong elementary students, depending on experience. The piece carries more difficulty from an ensemble perspective, however, with multiple key changes and an extended section of 2:3 polyrhythm for the keyboard players during the piece's climax. Fortunately, even during the imitative sections, there are very few times when a musical line is not doubled, meaning the musicians will be reinforced in both sound and confidence. The snare drummer must be solid, though, as that player carries the rhythm through the entire work.

Overall, this is an exciting new seasonal arrangement, appropriate for a school's winter concert or a quick addition to a university or professional performance.

—Marco Schirripa



Inflection Point IV+
Christopher Whyte
$42.00
Tapspace Publications
Instrumentation (8 players): crotales (2 octaves), glockenspiel, 2 vibraphones, 4-octave marimba, 5-octave marimba, 5 impact drums, 3 graduated drums, 3 graduated wood sounds
Web: *score samples, audio recording*

The definition of "inflection point" is "a moment of turning or transformation, like a point in a curve at which a change in the direction of curvature occurs." The percussion ensemble piece "Inflection Point" is a five-minute journey through a wide array of very cool sounds that will require performers to have a strong sense of pulse, subdivision, and tasteful musical nuance.

The primary architecture of this work is based on beds of sounds that are produced by drum plus rim phrases, and melodic environments based on the F Mixolydian and Dorian modes. While there are no melodic hooks to latch onto the listener's memory, a lot of familiarity sustains throughout the work, which comes in the form of active sixteenth-note based activity juxtaposed with subtle rhythmic punctuations. These compositional relationships occur between a variety of different voices, whether it is active marimbas matched with drums, or vibraphones complemented by bell sounds peppered with woodblocks. Trying to describe this work is a lot like trying to pinpoint what background environment sounds at a Cirque du Soleil show sound like; the textures, rhythmic relationships, and intelligent use of instruments are captivating while not standing out, present and deliberate while conveying a sense of being organic and natural.

This is an impressive work that is melodically and rhythmically active and equally impressive in its subtlety — like a quality written thought in poetry that has depth while existing within parenthesis, as opposed to finishing with an exclamation point.

—Joshua D. Smith

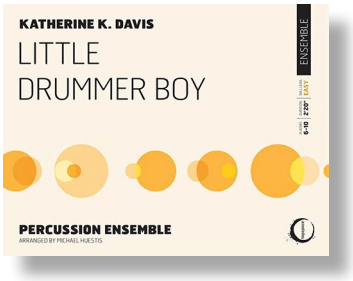
Juicy Beans II
Lalo Davila
$35.00
Row-Loff Productions
Instrumentation (12 players): bells, xylophone, vibraphone, two 4-octave marimbas, 3 timpani, shaker, bongos, congas, timbales, Jam Block, cowbell, hi-hat, impact bass drum

Web: *score sample, audio recording*

"Juicy Beans" is a fun and easy Latin percussion ensemble piece. The first third of the piece is built on two-bar repeated phrases that create a composite groove balanced by melodic and non-melodic instruments. The next section features tutti rhythms with fills on the bongos/congas and timbales in between, followed by an incorporation of vocals, such as "Hey!" and "Wooo!" A D.S. al Coda brings the piece to an exciting end.

The piece is most definitely approachable for intermediate percussion students, as the parts are straightforward in terms of vocabulary and demand. It can also be used as a platform for teaching technique on non-Western percussion instruments without having to deal with overly complicated rhythms. If you are looking for a fun piece for students and audiences alike that dives into world percussion instruments, then look no further.

—Tim Feerst



Little Drummer Boy II
Katherine K. Davis
Arr. Michael Huestis
$34.00
Tapspace Publications
Instrumentation (6–10 players): glockenspiel, xylophone, vibraphone, 4.3-octave marimba, 4 timpani, snare drum, bass drum, tambourine, crash cymbals
Web: *score sample, audio recording*

Michael Huestis's arrangement of "Little Drummer Boy" is ideal for a holiday concert, as it can quickly be put together by experienced performers or serve as a project for young students. The parts are all straightforward: scalar passages, rolls, and double stops in the keyboard percussion, no timpani tuning

changes, and a simple ostinato in the snare drum, bass drum, tambourine, and crash cymbal parts. There are no rolls on any of the non-pitched instruments or timpani. In my opinion, the most challenging part is the crash cymbals, as it requires control at a variety of dynamics, including soft.

"Little Drummer Boy" offers flexibility regarding which parts and instruments are used. Huestis includes clear instructions on how the piece can be scored. I like that the arrangement includes what Huestis refers to as "intuitive dynamics," allowing the ensemble to work on shaping phrases. Although this review is too late for the 2025 holiday season, I will definitely have it on my short list for 2026 programming.

—Joseph Van Hassel

Nuestro Canto **III**
Michael Huestis
$39.00
Tapspace Publications
Instrumentation (8–12 players): glockenspiel, xylophone, vibraphone, 4.3-octave marimba, bass guitar, kick drum, snare, 2 rack toms, floor tom, ride cymbal, hi-hat, 2 crash cymbals, triangle, large cowbell, 2 congas, shaker, brake drum
Web: *score sample, audio recording*

"Nuestro Canto" is a medium-level percussion ensemble work that is flexible, accessible, and genuinely fun. The instrumentation is fairly standard, yet it allows for optional instruments and clear solutions for doubling or sharing parts, making it workable for a variety of programs. The notation is clear and supported by helpful guides at the beginning of the score. Educators will agree, I'm sure, that anything to help us save time and assist with planning is more than welcome!

One engaging aspect of this piece is the inclusion of singing while playing, a practice that has become increasingly common in our percussion repertoire. Here, it is used naturally and effectively. The lyrics are in Spanish but are short and not difficult to learn for those who aren't familiar with the language. The piece also serves as an accessible introduction to calypso style, offering students an opportunity to explore a new musical language in an approachable way. There is also a version for steel drum ensemble (reviewed elsewhere in this issue), and the two versions may be performed together if desired. This provides a perfect opportunity to program the two ensembles in the same concert.

Overall, "Nuestro Canto" has a lighthearted sound that students are likely to enjoy performing. It is fun to direct, enjoyable to listen to, and stands as a wonderful tribute to Lalo and Julie Davila. This piece would be a perfect addition to the repertoire for school and community percussion ensembles alike.

—Cassie Bunting

Parhelion Dream **III–IV**
John R. Hearnes
$40.00
Row-Loff Publications
Instrumentation (10 player): bells, xylophone, vibraphone, 4.3- or 3.5-octave marimba, snare drum, tambourine, high tom, low tom, concert bass drum, ocean drum, suspended cymbal, tam tam, Mark Tree, shaker, China cymbal, drumset
Web: *score samples, audio recording*

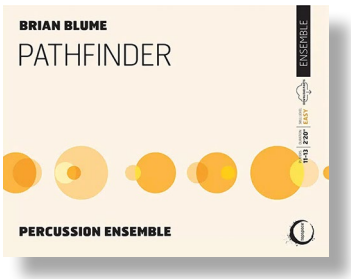
What a cool piece for percussion ensemble! This fun and adventurous work can help bring your students to the next level and have a blast doing it. "Parhelion Dream" is at an easy/medium level with a duration of 3:45 minutes. It's obvious that the composer is experienced in not only composing but teaching for this level in a classroom setting. The parts are designed to be accessible to a wide array of talent levels — something you may certainly find in many middle school and high school percussion ensembles. There's opportunity for students who are more advanced with keyboard, snare drum, and drumset, as well as opportunity for less experienced students to play cymbals or auxiliary instruments and have plenty of time to change instruments.

Educationally, this could be a great piece with which to work on changing meters. There are a few moments of 5/4 and one stretch where there's one measure each of 4/4, then 3/4, then 2/4. There are plenty of solo moments for most of the instruments so that regardless of level, most of the players will get their moment to shine. Perhaps the smartest thing about the piece is the tempo. At 160–172 bpm, the piece is quite the adventure — a real spike of adrenaline.

This work is quick, fun, and groovin'. It's a smart piece written in a smart way, both for teacher and student. Do yourself a favor and add this to your collection!

—Ben Cantrell

Pathfinder **II**
Brian Blume
$36.00
Tapspace Publications
Instrumentation (11–13 players): glockenspiel, xylophone, vibraphone, 4.3-octave marimba, 3 or 4 timpani, tambourine, crash cymbals,



suspended cymbal, snare drum, 3 toms, bass drum, optional triangle, 2 woodblocks
Web: *score sample, audio recording*

Scored for 11 or more players with the option to double keyboard parts for larger ensembles or percussion classes, "Pathfinder" is an easy percussion ensemble that would be an excellent introduction to the genre for middle-school students.

This work is structured in five sections: an opening with little melodic activity that establishes the pulse and gradually builds in texture, the primary theme with a mostly-stepwise melody and repetitive non-pitched percussion parts, a bridge section with a thinner texture and melodic lines that are more arpeggiated, a brief non-percussion interlude, and a final return to the primary theme at a louder volume. The most difficult rhythm of the piece is an eighth rest followed by two sixteenth notes, the dynamics are almost exclusively ensemble-wide, all the keyboard parts require two mallets only, each voice stays largely in the staff, and there are only two appearances of accidentals. The second marimba part is written in bass clef, which might be the only notable challenge for younger keyboard players.

Given its simplicity, Brian Blume still manages to create a piece that explores different textures, has pleasant melodic and harmonic content, and would be engaging for beginning percussion ensembles and parental audiences. This piece certainly warrants a look by those introducing younger students to percussion ensemble.

—Josh Gottry

Ragin' Creek Run **IV**
David England
$45.00
Row-Loff Productions
Instrumentation (9–11 players): bells, xylophone, vibraphone, two 4-octave marimbas, 4.5-octave marimba, 4 timpani, brake drum, bongos, Jam Block, shaker, mounted tambourine, splash cymbal, suspended cymbal, drumset
Web: *score sample, audio recording*

Ensemble directors looking for an energetic large ensemble piece should give "Ragin' Creek Run" a look. As a piece that leans into more pop-music sensibilities (and I say that as someone who predominantly listens to pop music), the piece has catchy melodies, infectious riffs, and a driving drumset part throughout.

The first thing that strikes me is how

catchy the piece is. Well-crafted melodies and riffs occur throughout. The energy of the music accurately achieves its goal of trying to capture "the excitement of all the adventures we had down by the creek growing up." This is reinforced by the double-time feel on the drumset for most of the work. The drumset part is one of the more unique features of this piece: The composer has provided both a drumset part and two additional parts that split the drumset part between two players in case a drumset player isn't available. This offers a lot more accessibility for a variety of ensembles. The composer has also provided instructions for doubling parts, allowing for more players to join the ensemble.

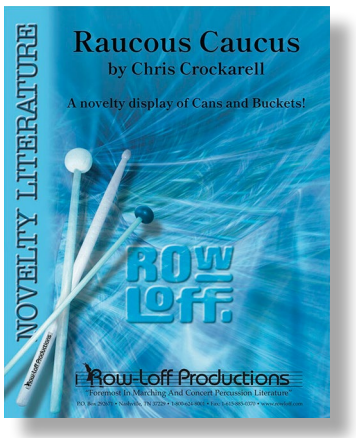
From a technical standpoint the piece requires only two-mallet technique, and all of the parts are idiomatic to the instruments. Rhythmically, the piece is a bit more challenging with several syncopated passages that will require a solid sense of pulse from each player. Along those lines, the melodic lines use beamed dotted-eighth notes throughout the piece. This seems to be a notation trend within the last five years, but I'm not sure I would call it standard practice yet, so some directors might need to familiarize their students with this. Also, the timpani part requires some tuning changes as well as the same comfort with syncopated passages.

"Ragin' Creek Run" achieves its goal of providing the high-energy adventure of the outdoors in percussion ensemble form. With catchy melodies and rhythmic motives, an energetic feel throughout, and adaptable parts that allow for a lot of flexibility, this piece would be a great addition to any high school program and would work perfectly for events like honors percussion ensembles.

—Brian Nozny

Raucous Caucus III
Chris Crockarell
$35.00
Row-Loff Productions
Instrumentation (6 players): 6 metal trash cans, 7 concert toms, 2 suspended cymbals
Web: *score sample, video recording*

Adding a twist visually and audibly with toms to the novelty of trash cans, Chris Crockarell has created a unique piece to this growing genre. In a straight line, side-to-side, one tom each is set between two players, with a tom added at both ends. Due to this setup, each player shares two toms and has their own trash can. This creates many possibilities visually. Each performer has specific instructions, with a key for where and what they are supposed to strike. They are asked to play the top of the can, the right and left sides of the can, the rim, the toms to the right and left, and do stick clicks. The outer players are also given instruction to crash the suspended cymbal. The notation is very clear, but it will take preparation from the performers to acclimate. Other instructions include dead sticks, high sticks, cross-overs, shouting, and trading places with other players.



A work like this can become musically monotonous, but Crockarell intelligently breaks it up into sections. The first section, while it has some trading between the two halves of the group, is sonically unison. After the opening, the texture changes with a section for written-out solos (five of the six players have two-measure solos). There is then a simple metric modulation from 4/4 to 12/8. This 12/8 section also features a moment of splitting eighth notes utilizing the graduated pitches of the toms. This creates a moment of melodic contrast to the rest of the piece up to that point. Crockarell brings it back to 4/4 with energy by applying unison sixteenth notes before splitting rhythms on the toms again to keep textural interest. There is then an optional accelerando going into the finale, which begins to incorporate the players trading places before everyone is back in place for the big, building finish. At the length of 3:20 and with a good compositional pace, there is no time for an audience member to lose interest.

Meant to be enjoyed by audiences and performers alike, this is a great piece for opening or closing a concert. It is perfect for a high school group to show an audience how much fun percussion can be, or a college group looking for something to "let their hair out." This work is also great for teaching students how to perform, as it leaves room for comedic or individualized moments. Described as "medium" by the publisher, this is an appropriate rating due to some of the technical challenges of double sticking, the time it will take to learn the notation, and for the visual requirements.

—Stephen Busath

STEEL PAN ENSEMBLE

Nuestro Canto III
Michael Huestis
$35.00
Tapspace Publications
Instrumentation (12+ players): lead, double tenor, double second, triple guitar, bass pan, bass guitar, drumset, triangle, cowbell, congas, shaker, brake drum
Web: *score sample and audio recording*

"Nuestro Canto" is a new steel band work dedicated to Lalo and Julie Davila, driven by the nonstop motor of the Calypso groove in the engine room. Composer Michael Huestis also arranged this piece for concert percussion ensemble (reviewed elsewhere in this issue), allowing for easy collaborations for larger groups mixing steel drums and keyboard instruments together. In a true Davila homage, the piece not only features a festive feel throughout, but also includes an opportunity for the ensemble to sing and play together.

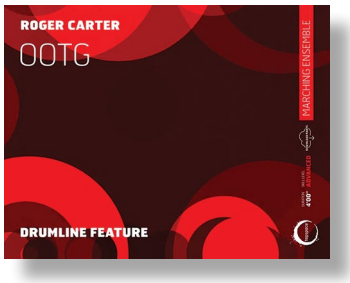
The form of the tune is straightforward, repeating rhythmic motives, melodies, and harmonies often to ease the learning load on students. The piece works well for an ensemble with diverse skill levels. The engine room parts — excluding a slightly more advanced drumset part suitable for an intermediate to advanced high school drummer — are extremely repetitive and simple. The bass and cello parts repeat themselves often, although there are a few tricky scalar runs that might take some time to learn. The lead, double tenor, and double second parts carry the most melodic significance and motion. The strongest players need to be put on those parts; however, since the song stays in F major, the parts are all very manageable for younger ensembles. The singing component is only one small phrase in the piece, so that should not scare away potential performers.

At its core, "Nuestro Canto" is a simple, fun Calypso that is suitable for intermediate steel bands. With the option of incorporating concert keyboard instruments with the separate percussion ensemble version, "Nuestro Canto" would be an excellent way to close out a semester concert combining students from several schools, leaving audiences and performers smiling.

—Matthew Geiger

MARCHING PERCUSSION

ootG V
Roger Carter
$30.00
Tapspace Publications
Instrumentation: marching snare drums, 6 marching tenors, 5 marching bass drums
Web: *score sample, audio recording*



"ootG" (pronounced OOT-jee) is a high-octane and mind-bending marching battery feature, written for and performed by the Bluecoats drumline in their 2025 season warmups. The work is based on the tune "Out of the Grid" by jazz pianist Tigran Hamasyan, and contains all of the rhythmic twists and turns one comes to expect from his music.

This piece is not for the casual drumline player, just as the music of Hamasyan is not for the casual music listener. This is a world-class collection of flams, drags, tuplets, syncopated punctuations, and grooves that epitomize the impressive sounds that are expected from the Bluecoats drumline under the direction of Roger Carter. Over the course of four minutes, each set of instruments has multiple moments in the spotlight, including offbeat emphasis from the bass drums, displaced accents from the tenors, and rapid-fire diddles from the snares, all within a framework made up of constantly changing time signatures.

—Joshua D. Smith

TIMPANI SOLO

The Mentor Symphony Timpani Concerto VI+
Richard Kashanski
Free digital download by contacting the composer
Self-Published
Instrumentation: 7 timpani (32-inch 29-inch, two 26-inch, 23-inch, and two 20-inch; a Roto-Tom can be substituted for one of the 20-inch drums

"The Mentor" is a concerto for solo timpani as both a "solo melodic as well as a bass line 'groove' establishing rhythmic instrument." It is an advanced-level concerto that creatively and compositionally surpasses the timpani works of Carlos Chaves and Elliot Carter. Richard Kashanski states, "In this Concerto, the solo timpani have two very melodic drumsong cadenzas wherein is featured two-, three-, and four-part harmony in support of these very melodic drumsong melodies. There is also a third solo quartet featuring the solo clarinet, written in the style of jazz clarinetist giant Benny Goodman, with the solo timpani being played with hands only. This jazz style quartet is made complete with a cajon drum, orchestral cello, or band bass on accompaniment."

The work features extensive performance and program notes by the composer as well as 215-page companion PROEM titled "A Synthesis of Realistic Spiritual Philosophies, New Scientific Theory, and New Contemporary Music Composition." The concerto is in three movements, and it is arranged both for orchestra and band. The timpani part itself is extremely technical featuring quarter tones, various stroke types, playing positions, roll types, and more. The level of detail in the composition and engraving is very dense (which is a good thing in this case). The performer is left with no questions about how a given passage is meant to be performed.

It is an absolutely towering work that is totally unique in the timpani repertoire — and any repertoire, for that matter. Commissioned by the Friends and Students of Vic Firth and dedicated to the late timpanist, this is a must for all serious timpanists looking for the next great work to learn. As the composer writes "Don't just practice your art, but FORCE your way into its secrets…"

—Joe Millea

MULTIPLE PERCUSSION SOLO

Canyon Suite IV–V
Jason Nicholson
$20.00
C. Alan Publications
Instrumentation: concert snare drum, drumset snare drum, mounted bass drum, splash cymbal or metal object
Web: *score sample, audio recording*

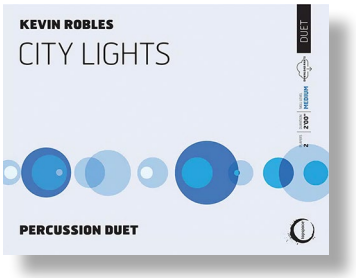
As stated by the composer, "Canyon Suite" is inspired by hiking trips in Logan Canyon, Utah. Written for a small setup, this medium-advanced solo consists of three short movements and is appropriate for upper-level undergraduate students.

Though none of the movements are titled, it is evident each is evoking a specific character. The first movement is written for one concert snare drum with snares off and utilizes thirty-second-note figures, mixed-meter passages, and changing roll densities. The second movement, which uses both concert and drumset snare drums, requires the performer to scrape snare wires with fingertips and incorporates syncopated quintuplet and septuplet groupings. The final movement is very groovy, finally adding in the mounted bass drum. There is also an extended improvisation section that allows the player the opportunity to explore their own melodic ideas.

"Canyon Suite" is an excellent addition to the unaccompanied snare drum repertoire and presents numerous challenges for any player. At just over eight minutes in length, it can work well in a number of performance settings or as part of a degree recital.

—Danielle Moreau

MULTIPLE PERCUSSION DUET



City Lights III
Kevin Robles
$25.00
Tapspace Publications
Instrumentation: 2 bongos, 4 graduated toms, 2 woodblocks, brake drum, kick drum
Web: *score sample, audio and video recordings*

Inspired by the hustle of contemporary urban life, "City Lights" is a percussion duet that highlights groovy themes using the industrial sounds of woods, metals, and skins. It takes a straightforward approach to percussion writing, making it approachable by most intermediate-level players, and will be enjoyed by all audiences.

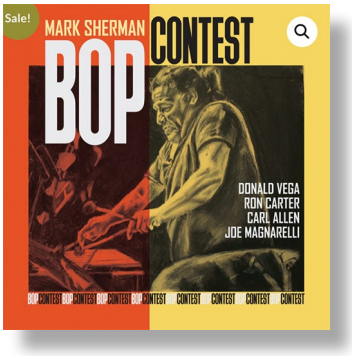
For a multi-percussion duet, the instrumentation is quite manageable, several of the components being available from a single drumset. The form is a simple ternary ending with a coda, with the A sections being a fun half-time groove with the brake drum providing the backbeat, and the B section trading features of both players on their unique instrumentation. The rhythms are uncomplicated, comprising mostly duple patterns with an occasional triplet. The only technical challenge is the need to play individual buzz strokes that last an eighth note in length.

The composer has done a wonderful job writing a work that is easy to grasp and fun to play. Rather than using heavy rhythmic interplay, he makes the relationship between the parts either rhythmic unison or "melodic

line vs. accompaniment." This makes "City Lights" a wonderful piece for teaching how parts work together to support each other without overcomplicating things with split rhythmic material. At only two minutes in length, it is great for a pair of high schoolers to work on together, or for a more seasoned percussion duo to throw together quickly for an exciting opener or encore piece.

—Kyle Cherwinski

RECORDINGS



Bop Contest
Mark Sherman
Miles High Records

Vibraphonist Mark Sherman set out to create an album in a genre not prominently featured on his previous 21 albums: bebop. To ensure the project would swing, he assembled a stellar ensemble featuring pianist Donald Vega, drummer Carl Allen, and legendary bassist Ron Carter. Trumpeter Joe Magnarelli joins the group on two of the album's seven tracks.

The pace of the album is set with Oliver Nelson's lesser-known composition "111-44." The tune begins with a lively rhythmic motif in a two-feel before shifting into a driving four-feel for the solos. Sherman, Vega, and Allen solo, remaining true to the style while allowing their personalities to shine through. Next up is Sherman's mellow composition "Love Always Always Love," which showcases Magnarelli and Carter. Cedar Walton's "Bremond's Blues" features Sherman, Vega, and Allen, with Carter propelling the tune.

The immortal standard "My One and Only Love" is reimagined here as a bossa-nova. The ensemble's simplicity and musicality can easily bring a smile to the listener's face. The title track (and Sherman's own composition) "Bop Contest" is a fast-paced, swinging tune that pays tribute to the style without sounding like an imitation of any bebop predecessors. "Skylark" ends the album in the gentlest way, serving as Sherman's feature and showcasing his instinct to play exactly what the tune requires.

The ensemble performs with cohesion and clarity throughout the recording. Even in the busiest moments, the musicians listen closely and communicate effectively. Sherman and Vega shine as soloists while Allen and Carter form a solid foundation. Allen's soloistic abilities are on full display throughout this recording as well. Although Magnarelli appears on just two tracks, his influence on the album is profound. Why did it take this long for Sherman to finally produce a bebop album? Maybe good things really do come to those who wait!

—Jeff W. Johnson

Live in St. Louis, Senegal
Raphaël Pannier Quartet/Khadim Niang & Sabar Group
Miel Music

French drummer-composer Raphaël Pannier's jazz quartet joined Senegalese sabar master Khadim Niang and his percussion ensemble at the 2024 Saint Louis Jazz Festival in Senegal. This was the first-ever live recording in the history of the festival, allowing this performance to be appreciated by listeners everywhere.

The album opens with Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman," set in a 6/8 feel with saxophonist Yosvany Terry and pianist Thomas Enhco soloing over the relentless rhythmic base. In a reimagining of Dave Brubeck's "Take Five," the percussion ensemble establishes the 5/4 ostinato even before the piano enters. The jazz quartet and percussion ensemble work together to establish the rhythmic feel, setting the stage for Pannier's solo, which hints at Joe Morello's phrasing from the original recording.

In "Xalat Bou Set," the percussion ensemble holds down a steady groove, reminiscent of percussion parts in contemporary music. The jazz quartet lightly plays over the rhythmic framework. The John Coltrane ballad "Naima" is played by the jazz quartet, while the percussion ensemble creates an almost divergent, march-like effect in the background. At times, the percussion takes the foreground, energetic and explosive; it's not what one might expect of this jazz standard. This rendition stretches the boundaries of jazz while challenging the listener.

"Hommage to Doudou N'Diaye Rose" pays tribute to the Senegalese master drummer, featuring the Khadim Niang and Sabar Group alongside bassist François Moutin. "Sine Saloum" interweaves rhythms, at times drawing on traditional African patterns and at others evoking backbeat-style grooves. The aforementioned members of the quartet worked seamlessly with Khadim Niang and his Sabar Group, whose members include Mouhamed Niang, Abdou Salam Sy, Papa Madiodio Niang, Yoro Niang, Bathie Gueye, Fallou Gueye, and Cheikh Ndiaye Baba. In today's world where so much interaction happens virtually, this recording is a vivid reminder of the magic that can happen when people connect in person.

—Jeff W. Johnson

Memories of Tomorrow
Mika Stoltzman
Parma Recordings

Mika Stoltzman's *Memories of Tomorrow* is a diverse album featuring a wide variety of genres, from jazz to classical to pop, creating a beautiful mix of music with incredible performances from all-star players. It is sure to have something for everyone.

Opening with Keith Jarrett's "Memories of Tomorrow," arranged by Takeshi Fuse as a bossa-nova, the album follows with Juan Tizol's "Caravan" with its alternating 6/8 Afro-Cuban feel and straight-ahead swing. This track features an outstanding bass solo by Eddie Gomez to open the solo section of the piece. The group then tackles rock with their rendition of Eric Clapton's "Layla," which works perfectly for the ensemble, followed by "Ragtime Drummer" by Stoltzman's former teacher and Nexus member Bill Cahn. Another of Stolzman's former teachers, vibraphonist Mike Mainieri, is featured on a second Keith Jarrett tune, "My Song." In addition to being a performer and the producer on the album, Steve Gadd is featured as a composer with his song "The Duke." Gadd's playing throughout the album is tasteful, musical, and exactly what each tune needs. The Sting classic "Englishman in New York" comes next, followed by Chick Corea's "Pixieland Rag," which some might also recognize as his "Children's Song No. 9." The album closes out with "Past Life Lullaby" by Geoffrey Keezer.

All of the performances are exemplary throughout the album, and everyone has their moment to shine. One striking thing about the album is that it never once feels like notes are being played just for notes' sake. Every solo feels like each note is meticulously placed. There are no licks, just beautiful melodies constructed in the moment that support the essence of each individual song.

With such a wide variety of genres, a great selection of songs, and an amazing group of performers exhibiting what they do best, Mika Stoltzman and crew have created a wonderful contribution to music with *Memories of Tomorrow*.

—Brian Nozny

Time's Arc
Ensemble Duniya
Self-Released

Time's Arc, the debut album of works performed by Ensemble Duniya, contains three pieces that feature a non-Western percussion soloist accompanied by a Western percussion ensemble, as well as "Duniya," which was written by the members of the ensemble: Anthony Di Sanza, Shawn Mativetsky, Neeraj Mehta, Jonathan Ovalle, and Dan Piccolo.

The performances are staggeringly good. The opening work, "Duniya," features solos from all members on non-traditional instruments. To say this performance is "in the pocket" does not do it justice. Everything is so tight from groove to solo, through metric modulations, one can't help but marvel at how in their own element the players are.

The slow opening of "Time's Arc: Second Concerto for Darabukka," written by Di Sanza, features a haunting and beautiful slide-whistle melody. I was completely drawn in. Di Sanza's darabukka performance is masterful and one I will listen to again and again. The third track, "4th Concerto for Tabla and Percussion Quartet," by Payton MacDonald, is a mesmerizing performance by both the soloist and ensemble. Throughout its 10½-minute duration the piece builds to an explosive conclusion that features the skill and expertise of soloist Mativetsky. The final work is "Ritual (I. ritual, II. prayer, III. celebration)" by Jonathan Ovalle, featuring an explosive performance by Mehta on congas and bata. The composition itself reminds me of the works of Christopher Rouse or even Dave Hollinden. The energy Mehta puts into the solo part is as good (if not better than) any recorded master conga player, and the bata playing is a treat to hear in this context.

Time's Arc is a triumph. I cannot imagine the performance being of any higher quality. In a time where Artificial Intelligence floods our lives with inhuman slop, this album represents the antithesis of that. It is exciting, it is creative, and it is human.

—Joe Millea

PUBLISHERS

Contact information for publishers whose products are reviewed in this issue.

C. Alan Publications
P.O. Box 29323
Greensboro NC 27429-9323
Phone: (336) 272-3920
Email: *contact@c-alanpublications.com*
Web: *c-alanpublications.com*

Ensemble Duniya
Web: *ensembleduniya.bandcamp.com/album/times-arc*

Gottry Publications
Email: *josh@gottrypercussion.com*
Web: *gottrypercussion.com*

Meredith Music Publications / GIA Publications, Inc.
7404 South Mason Avenue
Chicago, IL 60638
(800) GIA-1358 (442-1358)
Email: *garwood@meredithmusic.com*
Web: *giamusic.com/store/meredith-music*

Miel Music
Web: *music.apple.com/ca/album/live-in-saint-louis-senegal-feat-khadim-niang-sabar/1831793753*

Miles High Records
Web: *mileshighrecords.com*

Parma Recordings
223 Lafayette Rd
North Hampton, NH 03862
Phone: (603) 758-1718
Email: *info@parmarecordings.com*
Web: *parmarecordings.com*

Richard Kashanski
Email: *hiirichard@hotmail.com*

Row-Loff Productions
P.O. Box 292671
Nashville TN 37229
Phone: (800) 624-8001
Email: *info@rowloff.com*
Web: *rowloff.com*

Tapspace Publications
P.O. Box 55753
Portland OR 97238-5753
Phone: (503) 288-6080
Email: *info@tapspace.com*
Web: *tapspace.com*

Wesleyan University Press
215 Long Lane
Middletown, CT 06459
Web: *weslpress.org*

CALL FOR ARTICLES

Percussive Notes welcomes articles of interest to percussionists and drummers involved in all genres of music. We are interested in articles that inform and educate percussionists and drummers in the areas of drumset, health and wellness, marching percussion, world percussion, keyboard percussion, and orchestral/symphonic percussion. We also welcome percussion-related articles on education and technology. Individual articles can deal with technique, scholarly research, and/or historical information.

PAS General Fund

January 1, 2025 - December 31, 2025

+ denotes donor for three or more consecutive years
**** denotes PAS Past President***

$24,999 – $10,000
Joe H. Cochran
David & Colette Wood +

$9,999 – $5,000
Jim Petercsak *

$4,999 – $2,500
Joshua Simonds

$2,499 – $1,000
Aubrey Adams +
–In Honor of Dr. Robert Schietroma & Dr. Robert A. Winslow
Don Baker +
–In Honor of Gary Olmstead & Thomas Siwe
Michael & Judith Balter +
Raynor Carroll
Michael Gould
Christopher S. Lamb
Larry Lawless +
–In Memory of Chris Brooks
Michael Rosen +
Sarah & Nathan Smith
–In Memory of Jimmy Talley
Samuel Solomon
Karolyn Stonefelt +
Mark & Carrie Swearingen +
She-e Wu +

$999 – $500
Kathy Ahearn +
Tim & Sandy Anderson
Robert M. Campbell +
Xiusheng Chen
Diane Downs +
Chris Fryar
Richard Gillam
Robert M. McCormick +
–In Memory of Stuart Smith
Jason McGerr +
Jeffrey Moore +
Mickey Price +
David Simonds +
Sarah Tenney +
–In Honor of the Wells-Rapp Center

$499 – $250
Amelia J. Amore
Emily Annette Amore +
Oliver Amore +
Brad Anderson
Thad Anderson +
Deb & Len Birnbaum +
John H. Beck + *
John R. Beck + *
John Beckford +
Gary Bolinger
Douglass Bratt +
James Campbell + *
Robert M. Campbell +
–In Memory of Morris "Arnie" Lang
Robert Cirillo +
Gary Cook +
Stephen Crawford +
David P. Eyler
Richard Farvour +
Mark Ford + *
Ray Fransen +
Kris & Charlie Franzen
John Joseph Glozek
Jim Guglielmo +
Katherine Hall
Chris Hanning + *
Scott Harris +
Eric Henriksen
Jay Kennedy
Boston Lee Hill +
Braylen Hill +
Rev. George A. Hill III +
George Aldrich Hill IV +
Julie Hill + *
–In Memory of Nancy A. Mathesen
Steve Houghton + *
Douglas & Dana Howard
John Joseph Immerso
Andrea Lalka
Johnny Lee Lane +
Ben Miller +
Derek Moore +
Michael Moorin
Marcia & Keith Neel +
Charles Nevins +
Gary J. Olmstead + *
Ralph Pace Jr.
Douglas Perkins +
Dr. Lisa Rogers + *
Frederick Taylor +
Lauren Vogel Weiss +
Nancy Zeltsman

$249 – $100
Peter Albrecht + *–In Memory of Thomas L. Davis*
Kevin Andrews
Terry L. Applebaum +
Megan Arns
Mark Austill
Chris Banta
Paul Berns +
Joel Bluestone +
Paul Buyer +
Ruth Cahn +
Dr. Ben Cantrell
Capital Music Gear
Jim Casella
Bruce Chapman +
Jason Clinton +
James Corcoran
John Cordiano
Matthew Darling +
Julie & Lalo Davila + *
Dr. Elizabeth DeLamater
Karl Dustman +
Cedric Easton
Randall Eyles +
Pedro Javier Fernandez
Carlos E. Figueiras +
Mark Goodenberger +
Brooks Gornto +
Cynthia Guerra
Terry G. Hanson +
A. Kenneth Harper +
Blair Helsing
Jim Holland
Richard Holly + *
Bunny Hoover +
Michael Huestis
Gene Koshinski
Glenn Kotche +
Richard Thomas Kvistad
James Lane
Lamon Lawhorn +
Galen Lemmon
Dennis H. Lester
Arthur Lipner
Mike Maegly +

Thomas Maloy
Adam Mason
Brian Mason +
Choppy Massimo
Tony McCutchen
Grace McIntosh
Darryl J. Mika +
Michael Miller
–In Memory of of Salvador Anthony Rabbio
William Moersch +
Brenda Myers +
Christopher Norton +
Richard Pantaleo +
Frank & Amy Rabbio *–In Memory of Salvatore A. Rabbio*
Valerie Radetzky, Anita
Lee & JoAnne Searle
–In Memory of Al Goldson
Willis Rapp +
Scott Reder +
Dr. Patrick Roulet +
Chris Rouse
Sherry Rubins +
Izzy Russo
Kirk Rustman +
George Sandler
Ron F. Schermerhorn III
Benjamin Scholle
Joan N. Schopf
David G. Shephard
William Sherrill +
Ruth Simonds +
Sala & Ira Simonds +
Annie Stevens +
Rich & Shana Stitzel
DrumMantra LLC
Shinichi Sugimoto
Brian Teed
Saturnino Halili Tiamson Jr. +
Leandro Valenzuela +
Brian West +
Garwood Whaley *
William G. Wiggins +
Angela Ellen Yarbough +
Glenn Zeinemann +
Christine Zetzl
Anonymous (1)

$99 – $50

Joel Stephen Alleyne
Anders Åstrand +
John Baldwin +
Albe J. Bonacci
James F. Bond-Harris +
Michael Combs
Patrick Cremins
John B. Damberg
Peter DeSalvo, DMA
Rob Eggleton
Lisa A. Esperson +
I-Jen Fang
Matthew Fowler
Edward Freytag
Mark Hartinger +
Eric C. Hughes +
Katherine Jobe
Christopher Karow +
Frederic Macarez
Patricia L. McKenzie +
Gaylord Messick +
David Montgomery
Peter Rice
Jeff Spanos
Julie Spencer
Randall S. Sutin +
Susan Tariq
Juels Thomas
Richard Troll
Gregory W. White
Sean Womack +
Laurel Wulfekotte
Anonymous (2)

$49 – $20

Mark Armstrong
Renaud Beaudoin
Cathy Alice Bishop-Thielke
Joseph Bonville +
Matthew Bratton
Kim Brower
Glen A. Bush
Erik Charlston
Andrea Chavers
Joe J. Chila
Joe Cloutier
Danny Comins
Jonathan Cooley
Nick Costa +
Mark Crawford Enslin
Sean Daniels
Alessandro Di Giulio
Marc Dicciani
Gene Fambrough
Bruno Louis Giulini +
Anya & Arthur Gordon *–In Honor of Rich Holly*
Bob Green
Wes Griffin
Jvontai Hanserd
Scott D. Hesler
Tom Hirschauer, Jr.
John M. Hughes +
Jack Kerness
Tatiana Koleva
Tom Kontos
Claire Kreger-Boaz
Rick Kurasz +
Riley Liao
Luke Jozsua Danneil Lumunon
Raymond Francis Lussier
Will Marinelli
Stephen W. Maxwell +
Kevin Meyer
Nicholaus Meyers +
Zach Miller
Jim Mola
Jerod Dale Nunley
Trey O'Toole
James Ogden
Ian Palmer
Eric Pancer
Chris Perna
Mary E. Polsgrove +
Mark Powers +
C. William Rice II
Allan Randall Riggs
Harrison Royce
Anat Sadan
David Schneider
Jonathan Schneider
Paul Skalak
Bob Snider
John Stolfe
Victor Thomas
Brian Tychinski
Robert Villanova +
Bubalou Wilcox
Steve Yu
Brian Zator + *
Anonymous (8)

We also thank 48 donors for their contributions of $1 to $19.

Advertiser Index

PAS Endowed Funds

January 1, 2025 - December 31, 2025

Educational Scholarships

John E. Grimes Timpani Scholarship
$49 – $20
Frank Shaffer Jr. +

PAS/Hudson Music Neil Peart Drum Set Scholarship
$999 – $500
Hudson Music

Armand Zildjian Percussion Scholarship
Fred Hoey Memorial Scholarship
Freddie Gruber Scholarship
Jim Chapin Memorial Teacher Scholarship
Larrie Londin Memorial Scholarship

Other PAS Funds

Past Presidents Fund
$499 – $250
John H. Beck + *
$249 – $100
John R. Beck + *
Julie Davila + *
Gary J. Olmstead + *
Thomas Siwe + *
Garwood Whaley *

Ralph Pace Museum Fund
$999 – $500
Kent T. Hillman +

PAS Endowment

PASIC Scholarships

Bill Platt Memorial Scholarship
$249 – $100
Garwood Whaley *

PASIC International Scholarship
$249 – $100
John H. Beck + *

Thomas Siwe Scholarship
$4,999 – $1,000
Don Baker +

Thomas Siwe Scholarship
$499 – $250
Anonymous (1)

Arthur Press Scholarship
Avedis Zildjian Co. Scholarship
Cloyd Duff Memorial Scholarship
George P. Contreras, Jr. Memorial Scholarship
Jack H. McKenzie Memorial Scholarship
James A. Sewrey Scholarship
Jim Coffin Scholarship
Live From My Drum Room Scholarship
Ludwig Industries Scholarship
Remo, Inc. Scholarship
Remo, Inc. / California Chapter Scholarship
Steve Ettleson Memorial Scholarship
Texas Chapter Scholarship
Val and Venus Eddy Scholarship
William F. Ludwig, Jr. Memorial Scholarship

If you have questions about donating to an existing fund or starting a new endowed fund, please contact Joshua Simonds, PAS Executive Director, at jsimonds@pas.org.

Benefactors

Patrons

Partners

Supporter

Adams Musical Instruments
Alternate Mode
Artesia Pro Inc.
Artifact Percussion
Black Swamp Percussion
Clevelander * Attack * Wuhan
Coe Percussion, LLC
Cooperman Company
Corps Design
DownBeat Magazine
Drum Set Simplified - A New Method Book
Drumroom
DS Drum
Dynasty USA/Titan Field Frames
Edition Svitzer I/S
Frank Epstein Percussion
Freer Percussion LLC
GM Designs
Griffith Percussion
Grover Pro Percussion
Hal Leonard Corporation
Harlan Percussion
Haru's Garage / Koide Cymbals
Independent Drum Lab, LLC
Istanbul Mehmet Cymbals
Kolberg Percussion GmbH
Latin Percussion
LIVE EDGE DRUM COMPANY
Living Sound Triangles
Lot Riot
Ludwig - Musser
Luft
MalletWorks Music
Massimo Mallets
Matt Nolan Custom
Motion-Pro Drum Thrones
Pacific Drums & Percussion
Percussion Source
Performance Carts
Permus Publications
Persona Medical
RamPad
RAWI Percussion Publications
Ron Vaughn, Inc.
Row-Loff Productions
Royal Cymbals
Rustic Percussion
SABIAN Ltd.
Schlagkraft Mallets and More
Slingerland
St. Louis Music
Stanley Leonard Percussion Music
Steve Weiss Music
Third Floor Bazaar, Inc.
Toca Percussion
Vic Firth Company
Virada Drums
Welch Tuning Systems, Inc.

Strategic Partners

Foundation and Government Support

From the PAS Collection

Firchie TM1 Model Snare Drum

Gift of Joe and Lin Cochran, 2026.1.1

The rotary-tuned Time Machine One (TM1) snare drum was first designed by Ivan Firchie in 1983. After further development in 1991, it was introduced to the public at the 1992 NAMM show in Anaheim, Cal.

The TM1 has several innovative ideas, the most unique being its rotary-tuning system whereby both heads are quickly and easily simultaneously tensioned. This is done by using the same principal as the Remo Roto-Tom — that is, by rotating the entire drum on a fixed base when mounted on a snare stand.

The free-floating, one-piece, spun-aluminum shell features a parabolic shape with the top having a smaller diameter than the bottom, and measures 3½ x 14 inches. The 14-inch diecast batter-head counterhoop (rim) has a trademarked Quick-Rim QR design utilizing eight slots, one for each tension rod, allowing for quick head change by simply releasing all tension on the head.

The drum also features two snare strainers, rather than a single strainer and a butt-plate, which provide three settings. (Note that the donor of this drum replaced the two snare strainers with a single Inde strainer and butt plate using Puresound wire snares.) All hardware is stainless steel, but like the shell, is available in a variety of powder-coated colors.

The drum measures 19.5 inches in overall height and 16 inches in overall width, with 14-inch heads and 13-inch wire snares. It is mounted with an Aquarian Medium Modern Vintage batter head and a clear Remo Diplomat snare head. It has a white, powder-coated shell and black, powder-coated hardware and rims. The brass and black enamel badge reads NEW YORK NY, U.S.A. / FIRCHIE DRUMS™ / SER. NO. / E00163.

—James A. Strain, PAS Historian

Close up of the badge showing the New York location, company name, and serial number.

Detail of the top, black powder-coated rim. Note the Quick Rim slotted opening with the tension rod inserted.

Bottom view of drum showing the 3-spoked base and internal 8-spoke frameworks that function as 1. the bottom rim and 2. control the rotary-tension process on the center, threaded bolt.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

PERCUSSION SPECIALIST ACADEMY

JUNE 22-27, 2026 | BALL STATE UNIVERSITY, MUNCIE, IN

CAMP.MUSICFORALL.ORG/DIRECTORS

> "This camp is a very fun opportunity where you meet a lot of new people and learn a lot about the craft of being a percussionist."
> –Percussion Specialist

> "The director academy one-on-one sessions were awesome! Having the opportunity to go to a session and then meet one-on-one with that faculty member gave me more perspective on the presentation and I was able to ask about how I could apply it to my current job."
> –Instructor

> "You were not kidding about life-changing! I can't wait to come back next year."
> –Young Director

> "This camp provided invaluable reflection and insights to better serve my band next year."
> –Band Director

Sweetwater

BANDS OF AMERICA

DIRECTOR ACADEMY

AT THE BANDS OF AMERICA SUMMER CAMP
PRESENTED BY YAMAHA

REGISTRATION OPEN TO ALL:

- **Percussion Specialists**
- **Band Directors**
- **College Music Education Majors**

2026 WORLD-CLASS FACULTY INCLUDES:

- **Matt Black, Coordinator** - Rhythm X, Carmel H.S. (Carmel, IN)
- **John Mapes** - Co-Owner of Box Six, Pulse Percussion, Chino Hills H.S.
- **Clif Walker** - Carolina Crown, Composer, Arranger, Educator, Judge
- **Dr. Ashley Summerlin** - The Cavaliers, Rhythm X, Avon M.S. West (Avon, IN)
- **Dr. Lane Summerlin** - The Cavaliers, Rhythm X, Carmel H.S. (Carmel, IN)
- **Tony Lymon** - Composer, Arranger, Educator, Judge, Designer
- **Cristian Good** - Carolina Crown, Designer, Sweetwater

SESSION CONTENT INCLUDES:

- Developing a culture for success in your program
- Instrument and implement selection for sound quality and durability
- Exercise routines for both music and visual
- Show design and percussion arrangement feedback
- Percussion, uniform, visual, and audio design masterclasses
- Audio engineering for beginners through professionals
- Wiring, power, and cart setups
- Mainstage, Logic, Ableton, and VST masterclasses
- Sound design and implementation of soundscapes
- Micing of percussion and soloists for the best sound quality
- Ins-and-outs of wireless audio
- PLUS: roundtables and 1-on- 1 sessions where faculty members answer your burning questions

VIEW WEBSITE FOR DETAILS ON DISCOUNTS FOR DIRECTORS & INSTRUCTORS WHO BRING THEIR STUDENTS.

DIRECTORS & INSTRUCTORS

SWEET DEAL!!!

Use the code **SWEETDEAL5** at registration for best price.

YAMAHA · Sweetwater · FJM · MUSIC TRAVEL · PopWear · BALL STATE UNIVERSITY · VISIT Indy


SAVE
PASIC THE
DATE
2026
NOVEMBER 11-14, 2026
INDIANAPOLIS, IN
pas.org/pasic