PERCUSSIVE NOTES

Vol. 64, No. 2, April 2026

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PERCUSSIVE NOTES

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As I sit down to write this update, the calendar tells me we are very close to it being officially Spring. However, a quick glance out my window tells a different story: it is currently snowing. Whether you are currently digging out of a snowdrift or enjoying the first blooms, that spirit of adaptability is what keeps our society moving forward.

If you have been working with an ensemble, now is the time to capture that hard work. Applications for the **International Percussion Ensemble Competition (IPEC)** are open through April 30. Whether you lead a middle school group or a university/college ensemble, I encourage you to submit; it is a transformative learning experience.

April 30 is also a vital deadline for our students and educators. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, we award thousands of dollars in **educational scholarships**.

For those looking to give back to the profession, our **17 standing committees** are open for applications in April. Joining a committee is one of the most effective ways to build deep connections with colleagues while shaping the future of PAS resources.

Finally, I want to celebrate the energy at our local chapters. From Utah to Tennessee, Connecticut to Arizona, and so many more, our Chapter events and **Days of Percussion** are the heartbeat of this society. Thank you for your resilience and your passion.

Respectfully,
Joshua Simonds
PAS Executive Director
P.S. Mark your calendars: **PASIC Registration** opens May 15!

Editor's Note

By Rick Mattingly

The last page of the April 1996 issue of *Percussive Notes* was titled "From the PAS Museum Collection" and featured the Shelly Manne exhibit that was on display at the original PAS Museum in Lawton, Oklahoma. Ever since then, the last page of *Percussive Notes* has featured an instrument from the PAS collection, with the page being retitled "From the Rhythm! Discovery Center Collection" after the PAS headquarters and museum relocated to Indianapolis. During the past 30 years, that page has featured over 150 rare and historic instruments.

Although PAS maintains one of the largest collections of percussion instruments in the world, many other unique instruments are owned by PAS members, and we are going to start documenting them. On the last page of this issue, we are featuring the E.R. Street Musical Coins from the collection of Nexus percussionist and PAS Hall of Fame member Garry Kvistad.

We would like to hear from PAS members who have interesting or historical percussion instruments in their own collections. If you have something that you feel would be of interest to the PAS community, send a description and photo(s) to PAS Collections Manager Rob Funkhouser at *rfunkhouser@pas.org*. If your instrument is selected for publication, Rob will get back to you with specific instructions for submission. We look forward to discovering our membership's personal collections.

The Global Percussion Movement in 20th-Century North America

Part 2

By Julie Spencer

The term "world music" was perhaps first coined in 1906 by German musicologist Georg Capellen, who wrote, "by joining Orient and Occident we reach a new style of music, World Music." In the 1960s, "world music" meant many things when it was used in the new field of ethnomusicology.

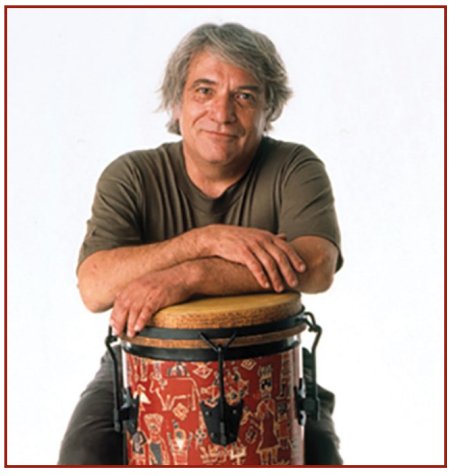
Officially founded in 1955, the Society for Ethnomusicology SEM was the brainchild of scholars within the American Anthropological Association who began planning in 1953 to create a new academic society they believed was necessary to give focus to promoting not only research and study but the performance of music in all historical periods and cultural contexts. One of the founders, Mantle Hood, began the first university program for ethnomusicology at UCLA in 1954. He had spent two years studying in Indonesia, and in 1958 established the first gamelan performance program in the U.S. Within the academic setting in North America, there were different thoughts about terminology between world music and ethnomusicology. Clearly, the beginning of SEM was a breakthrough moment for the study of music from cultures across the globe within the context of North American universities. A wave of people began studying in U.S. universities who could learn about more than one musical heritage while living in one place.

Robert Brown developed the first degree program named as world music in 1961 at Wesleyan University. Brown wanted his students to learn to *play* the music from other countries, not just *study* it. His PhD dissertation was titled *The Mrdanga: A Study of Drumming in South India*. The first visiting artists he invited to teach at Wesleyan University were Balasaraswati from Java and T. Viswanathan and T. Ramanathan from South India.

A few years later, reportedly at a Madison Square Garden concert of the National Dance Ensemble of Ghana in 1968, Brown first heard master drummer Abraham Adzenyah, whom he invited to teach at Wesleyan, beginning a 40-year association that included Adzenyah earning a Master of Arts in Music degree with concentration in ethnomusicology. Brown began a tradition of featuring musicians from many different cultures in university concerts.

1969–70 saw developments across university studies, establishment of multi-cultural bands, recordings of new styles, and the first year of the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), where PAS Hall of Fame inductee John Bergamo helped found the percussion and world music programs. Beginning as a jazz musician, studying with George Russell and PAS Hall of Fame inductee Max Roach, Bergamo then worked with avant-garde composer Gunther Schuller, and he studied North and South Indian drumming in the United States as well as in India. Bergamo played with Frank Zappa and performed and recorded with such bands as Shakti and such artists and composers as Trichy Sankaran, L. Shankar, PAS Hall of Fame inductee and former

John Bergamo



drummer with the Grateful Dead Mickey Hart, composer/performer and PAS Hall of Fame inductee Lou Harrison, and jazz saxophonist Dave Liebman, to name a few. Bergamo also studied composition with PAS Hall of Fame inductee Michael Colgrass, and like many percussionists who became immersed in the sounds and structures of varied world cultures, John was also a composer.

Bergamo first formed the pivotal West Coast percussion collective Repercussion Unit with Larry Stein, Ed Mann, James Hildebrandt, Paul Anceau, Steven "Lucky" Mosko, and tabla and pakhawaj specialist Gregg Johnson, longtime student of Pandit Taranath Rao. Bergamo was the original percussionist in the trio Common Ground with this author and German sitarist Gernot Blume, recording and being featured at a PASIC '94 evening concert with free group improvisations. The last ensemble Bergamo founded was the award-winning hand drumming quartet Hands On'Semble with Andrew Grueschow, Ghanaian drumming specialist and faculty at CalArts; Austin Wrinkle, student of Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri, Poovalur Sriji, Alfred and Kobla Ladzepko, and Houman Pourmehdi; and Randy Gloss, tabla student of Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri and Director of World Percussion at CalArts.

Active in the recording industry as a studio musician for films, Bergamo was known not only for his virtuosic drumming in North and South Indian traditions, but for using the techniques of those drums on other instruments. His regular setup combined Ghanaian drums, congas, and tabla, moving smoothly between the drums with his remarkable tabla and thavil techniques. He studied tabla with Mahaparush Misra, Shankar Gosh, Swapan Chaudhuri, Ustad Alla Rakha, and Pandit Taranath Rao, and South Indian drumming with T.H. Vinayakram, T. Rangnathan, Poovalur Srinivasan, and P.S. Venkatesan, and he studied thavil in Chennai, India.

Near Chicago, at Northern Illinois University in the early '70s, Al O'Connor established the first steel pan ensemble in an American university, and he took the university ensemble on tours in Taiwan, where one of his students, Sarah Barnes (Tsai) later established the first steel pan program at a university in Taiwan. Rich Holly and Robert Chappell continued the program, which also included tours in South Korea, throughout the U.S., and in Trinidad, where the ensemble was awarded second place in the World Steelband Festival competition. Chappell has been teaching at Northern Illinois University for over 40 years, including continuing to teach tabla as professor emeritus, and he was a member of the Paul Winter Consort for a number of years. "Meeting Ron Snider of the Dallas Symphony, cofounder of the cross-cultural drumming ensemble D'Drum, was my first life-changing musical experience," Chappell told me. "Ron introduced me to all the Nonesuch world-music records that were available in 1972. He was a genius in many ways. He could play music from many traditions, including orchestral percussion and Indonesian gender wayan, the two-person gamelan of wayan kulti, for the intricate Shadow Puppet plays of Bali.

"The second event that changed the course of my life was playing with the Paul Winter Consort. Paul had an iconic photo with five Hinger timps surrounded by eight giant surdos suspended above them. It was a visual metaphor of what we were doing musically. There was a tabla tarang of eight to ten different pitched tabla in a circle, and I played and learned tunes on Paul's amadinda, which was made in the style of an Andrew Tracy instrument from Uganda. Both of these instruments were central in my world music studies. I toured for four years with the Winter Consort and returned to the University of North Texas to finish the last semester of my master's degree just before the grace period expired.

"Studying world percussion completely changed my outlook from a Western classical focus as I continued my path with the musical cultures of India and Uganda. Possibly my most important work as a composer is the music that combines these world traditions with western ensembles. When I was just out of the Paul Winter Consort and had finished my first year of college teaching at Indiana State University, I received a grant to do an eight-week summer session at the Ali Akbar College in San Rafael, California, studying with Zakir Hussain. My first tabla teacher had been Bob Becker when we were both with Paul Winter. In the U.S., I did three summer sessions at Ali Akbar, studying also with Swapan Chaudhuri. Grammy-winning percussionist Zakir had started touring with his band, Shakti.

"In India, I studied tabla with Zakir's father, Ustad Alla Rakha. In Trinidad, I spent three months studying steel pan. I tried to arrange studying amadinda in Uganda, but because of prohibitive political issues at the time, it was not possible. The amadinda changed my world when I was playing with the Winter Consort. I've built more than a dozen instruments over the years, beginning by working with Ron Snider. My master's thesis was on the amadinda, and I discovered with Ron that Philippine mahogany has a sweet sound. The most often programmed composition of mine, 'Wood N Steel,' combines amadinda and steel band with full orchestra or wind ensemble in addition to the percussion ensemble. Al O'Connor asked me to compose it for their 1993 tour of Taiwan. Playing my piece for the first time in front of the National Concert Hall of Taiwan was amazing.

"My work as a composer was influenced a lot by my time in the Winter Consort and in my own fusion bands, Rhythmic Union, and Panoramic with renowned steel pan soloist Liam Teague. I found more inspiration in the music of other cultures and improvisational genres like jazz than in lessons with composition faculty working within the parameters of Western classical/contemporary music, which seemed to favor recreating existing sounds and forms. I am grateful to Gerhart Kubrig for his research on traditional Central and Eastern African percussion, and to my Western

classical percussion mentors, PAS Hall of Fame inductee Cloyd Duff, timpanist with the Cleveland Orchestra, Joe Adato, also of the Cleveland Orchestra, and my piano and theory teacher throughout childhood, Mary Jane Nussbaum, at the St. Louis Conservatory."

The first annual CalArts World Music and Dance Festival was held in 1978. Two years later in England, British rock musician Peter Gabriel from the band Genesis co-founded the World of Music, Arts, and Dance, opening the gates of the first annual WOMAD festival in England in 1982. Picked up as a new umbrella category for marketing by the 1980s recording industry, "world music" was loosely understood as including combinations of players, instruments, styles, and influences that originate outside of Western classical music, jazz, American/Western European pop, folk, and rock music.

As record stores stocked more recordings of collaborations between a variety of artists and cultures coming together, it created a bigger market for music sales and intensified interest in young players studying instruments from outside their home base. Early university programs in the U.S. included Wesleyan, UCLA, Wayne State, Indiana University, Columbia, University of Michigan, University of Hawaii, Northern Illinois University, and CalArts. The study of East Asian, Pacific, African, and Indian music in these early programs starting in the 1950s dictated that, to a great extent, the focus was on music styles with percussion at the center. Interdisciplinary programs took shape, combining anthropology, as well as dance and theory with the music — for instance, focusing on a hands-on approach, like at UCLA, which continues today.

There was a growing need for percussion studies at universities to take the new professional landscape seriously and provide opportunities that hadn't previously existed in academia. The new percussionist needed to be better prepared and wanted to explore a bigger world. Programs that invested in building up new instrument collections for student ensembles and bringing teachers to the campus who could direct them had an edge for attracting talented and innovative young players from all over the world.

These ensemble offerings became degree programs, and places known for jazz education, for instance, have continued branching out, creating spaces where percussionists interested in world music can actively incorporate global sounds. And the phraseology "world music" continues to be used in many areas to describe college programs, for instance, or aesthetics in the music, but less as a genre of the music itself.

NEXUS

Two co-founders of the renowned percussion ensemble Nexus, Russell Hartenberger and Bob Becker, both studied at Wesleyan, with Russell earning a PhD in World Music, and Bob continuing tabla studies to become one of the first major soloists not born into Indian society, studying with Sharda Sahai from Benares India, who was a visiting artist over several years at Wesleyan.

Considering the question of naming beautiful moments from his life with particular musicians or teachers, Becker replied: "I often think of John Beck and his refusal to name the 'best students' he's had for a particular instrument. Even when the answer might be obvious, he refused to name anyone, saying it might belittle his many other students. For me, especially regarding something as broad as the experiences I've had learning and performing music outside of my home culture, I feel the same reluctance to choose. A partial list of my non-Western teachers includes Pandit Sharda Sahai (tabla); Ramnad Raghavan (mridangam); Prawotosaputro and Sumarsam (Javanese gamelan); and Abraham Adzenyah, Freeman Donkor, and Gideon Alorwoyie (Ghanaian drumming and dance)."

As an example of the wide influence of the intense studies of percussion of the world that the members of Nexus — including John Wyre, Bill Cahn, Robin Engelman, Michael Craden, and, later, Garry Kvistad — undertook, there is a story from the group's early years. At the invitation of Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu, Nexus went to Tokyo for the Festival of New Music in 1976 to premiere a piece that Takemitsu had commissioned from Japanese composer Jo Kondo specifically for Nexus. The work was largely influenced in timbre and rhythmic style by Indonesian gamelan. After Tokyo, Nexus premiered the piece in Toronto and Lincoln Center in New York City, in a

Nexus (L–R: Robin Engelman, Russell Hartenberger, John Wyre, Bob Becker, Bill Cahn) at Lincoln Center in 1984 prior to performing "Connexus" by Wyre with the New York Philharmonic. A New York Times *review called the piece an example of "pan-cultural fusion" influenced by Balinese gamelan and using percussion instruments from "all over the world," including a steel pan solo. (Photo by Rick Mattingly)*

program that also featured Japanese marimbist Keiko Abe. Becker wrote about the experience in his blog for the Nexus website:

"The linear contours of 'Under the Umbrella' by Jo Kondo are clear with any collection of 25 graduated bells (five per player); however, the specific ones used by a given ensemble will produce melodies not heard in any other versions. The compositional method, called *sen no ongaku* ('linear music') by Kondo, uses the principle of hocket throughout much of the piece, with a dampen-as-you-go method of playing the suspended bells similar to the technique used for certain Balinese and Javanese instruments: one hand strikes with a mallet while the other hand dampens. There were a few Swiss almglocken, but most of the bells were from India, Pakistan, Turkey, and Indonesia. This created a nonhomogeneous assortment with the non-traditional pitch relationships Kondo desired. It's beautiful music, and a unique contribution to percussion repertoire."

Nexus, an award-winning ensemble inducted into the PAS Hall of Fame and the Canadian Musician Hall of Fame, created a platform for new music to experiment with cross-cultural elements. Becker, Hartenberger, Kvistad, and Cahn all recorded on Grammy-winning albums with other composers and ensembles influenced by music of many world traditions. Recording and performing their own compositions and free improvisations within the context of new-music programming, Becker was often featured in extended solos on North Indian tabla with its inherent improvisational structures — for instance, creating elaborate *tihais* — phrases of three identical passages that "land" surprisingly and precisely at the beginning of a cycle after many cycles of complex calculating.

Additionally, they integrated the harmonic and melodic improvisation of the repertoire from the early jazz idiom of American ragtime featuring arrangements by Becker and Cahn from jazz xylophonists in the early 20th century, especially George Hamilton Green, as well as creating a space in contemporary chamber music for the drumming art of Ghana. These accomplishments paved the way for a transnational crossover not only of styles and musical cultures and instruments, but an elegant blurring of lines between categories of music and cultural points of access, including their performances with major symphony orchestras of commissions by leading contemporary composers. Nexus created a new genre of music, popularizing it world-wide, in the professional percussion ensemble. Every successful innovative percussion ensemble since, and there are many, walked onto the world's largest stages through a door that Nexus opened.

Russell Hartenberger said this about his Nexus colleague John Wyre. "John was a visionary who imagined a world where musicians could make music together in harmony. In the summer of 1986, he organized a World Drums Festival at Expo 86 in Vancouver, Canada — an event that set the standard for all drumming festivals that followed. With support from the Canadian government, John travelled to Eastern Europe, Pakistan, Turkey, Egypt, and the Caribbean looking for drummers to participate in the festival. He delegated the African leg of his journey to Bob Becker, who travelled to Senegal, the Ivory Coast, and Kenya. In his book, *Touched by Sound*, John wrote, 'Everywhere I traveled I told people I was looking for the greatest drummers in the world. There were no criteria, except that they move me.'

"Assisted by percussionist Sal Ferreras, John selected 117 drummers comprised of groups from 20 different cultures to perform at Expo 86. They played individually in their home pavilions and came together for three finale concerts at the 1,500 seat Xerox Center. The performers and groups included an Inuit drummer and the Dene Drummers from the Northwest Territories, Los Papines from Cuba, the Harmonites steel band from Antigua, Naqara and Dholak drummers from Pakistan, the Bomas from Kenya, Oreri Georgian Drummers and Dancers, the legendary Doudou Ndiaye Rose and his ensemble from Kenya, Les Compagnons d'Akati from Ivory Coast, a Balinese gamelan, Samul-Nori from Korea, Thembe Tana from South Africa, The Queen's Lancashire Regiment Drum Corps, Abraham Adzenyah from Ghana, Sharda Sahai from North India, Trichy Sankaran from South India, Glen Velez, John Bergamo, Nexus, and, in the middle of the stage, Steve Gadd.

"John Wyre wrote, 'Collaborating with more than 500 artists has provided opportunities to experience first-hand the extraordinary diversity that exists in the art of drumming and to discover those things that link us together along this ancient path called music. There are those who would say we should stay within our own traditions and be consistent and loyal to our own roots and cultural ways. Tradition can be a cruel padlock, and consistency demands that we stay as ignorant today as we were last week. Our roots are in this vast universe that includes, supports, sustains, inspires, and transforms us.' John said his vision for the Expo 86 festival 'was to show the world that many different cultures can work together with great joy. In this sense it was a success beyond my wildest dreams.'"

Bill Cahn recalled the first rehearsal of the opening concert, in which all the players joined together playing unison quarter notes in a long crescendo, which proved to be more difficult than anticipated, as players from different musical cultures often have different relationships to time — some laying back on the beat, some at the front of the beat. But after a little time, they got it. "The overwhelming positive response of the audience," Cahn said, "gave the players an understanding that playing in unison required everyone to listen and compromise in their sense of time. John Wyre's intent had been achieved. The metaphor of the unison quarter notes in a rising crescendo by people from all over the globe was a musical vision of hope for humanity."

JAZZ AND POP

The influence of music and percussionists from outside the United States on the formation of 20th-century American music was profound. American jazz collaborations from the 1930s–60s between Cuban, Brazilian, Puerto Rican, and Argentinian drummers, composers, and multi-instrumentalists with many of the leaders of jazz innovation gathered world-wide attention.

In 1947, Cuban conga virtuoso and composer Chano Pozo joined Dizzy Gillespie's band onstage at Carnegie Hall in an early attempt to fuse syncopated Cuban rhythms with bebop melodic virtuosity. Cuban composer and multi-instrumentalist Maurio Bauzá worked with one of the earliest jazz drumset creators and influential bandleader Chick Webb, and then with Frank "Machito" Grillo. A Cuban-American known for his maraca virtuosity and band-leading, Machito defined the style of Afro-Cuban jazz, as Afro-Cuban rhythms with jazz improvisation arranged for big band. His big band had also included a teenage Jose Mangual Sr. from Puerto Rico on timbales. In 1983 Machito and his Salsa Big Band won the Grammy for Best Latin Recording. Over the years, he recorded with Charlie Parker, Duke Ellington, Bud Powell, Stan Kenton, Cannonball Adderley, and percussionist Tito Puente of Puerto Rico.

Puente, a PAS Hall of Fame inductee, had recorded a seminal album of mostly percussion with bass accompaniment, including Willie Bobo, Mongo Santamaria, Julito Collazo, and Francisco Aguabella. According to Brian Kilgore — one of L.A.'s most prolific studio percussionists with over 500 film and television credits and 600 recordings, and also a specialist in percussion instruments of the world — "Tito Puente's 1956 recording, *Top Percussion*, is to Afro-Cuban percussionists what Charlie Parker is to jazz improvisers."

A landmark album recorded by Miles Davis between 1957–1960 with PAS Hall of Fame inductees Elvin Jones and Jimmy Cobb, and Jose Mangual Sr., *Sketches of Spain*, had music by Spanish composers Manuel de Falla and Joaquin Rodrigo, as well as a Peruvian folk melody and Andalusian flamenco, with Latin polyrhythms and modal jazz in large ensemble arrangements by Gil Evans. The music was labelled Third Stream at the time for its combination of world music, European classical, and jazz.

Brazilian music influenced by jazz harmonies and bossa nova ("new wave" in Portuguese), became internationally popular after the 1964 multiple Grammy-winning album *Getz/Gilberto* by American jazz saxophonist Stan Getz and Brazilian João Gilberto, featuring works by composer Antonio Carlos Jobim, with songs like "Girl From Ipanema" and the pandeiro hand-drum playing of Brazilian percussionist Milton Banana, born Antônio de Souza. Souza's playing is credited in part with the great success of the laid-back bossa nova feel.

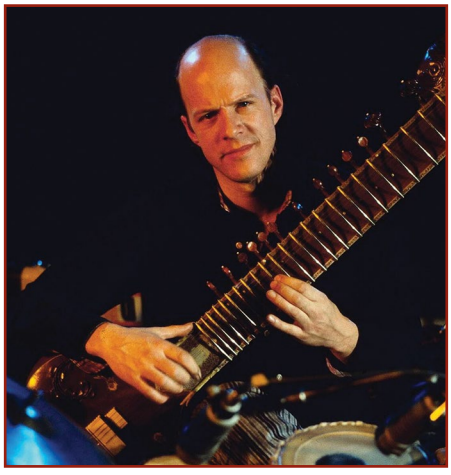
In the late 1960s into 1970 Miles Davis brought together such eclectic jazz musicians as pianist/composers Chick Corea and Keith Jarrett, along with Brazilian percussionist and drummer Airto Moreira. The music of many bands at this time took the name "jazz-fusion," and many were experimenting with electric instruments, foundations of grooves, improvisation, and percussion of the world.

After working with Miles Davis, Airto joined the fusion band Weather Report, which had a long history of many remarkable drummers including Alphonse Mouzon, Chester Thompson, Ndugu Chancler, Omar Hakim, Alex Acuña of Peru, and PAS Hall of Fame inductee Peter Erskine, and percussionists Manolo Badrena from Puerto Rico, Don Alias, Mino Cinélu from France, Frank Colón of Puerto Rican descent, Skip Hadden, Robert Thomas Jr., and Dom Um Romão of Brazil. Airto and his wife, Brazilian singer Flora Purim, then played in the initial lineup of Chick Corea's group Return to Forever, continuing the evolution of jazz-fusion.

Around the same time as Bob Becker began studying tabla, another young musician, Collin Walcott, began studying tabla with Ustad Alla Rakha and sitar with Ali Akbar Khan. Alla Rakha was the leading tabla player for Ravi Shankar's recordings and tours, and Akbar Khan, known as "Khan-sab" had also come to California, like Shankar, to found a school for the music of India. Walcott, equally known as a sitarist and the co-founder of the seminal free jazz and world fusion bands Oregon and Codona, was one of the first major tabla players whose home was not from within Indian culture. One of his colleagues in Codona was Brazilian percussionist, berimbau player, and multiple Grammy winner Naná Vasconcelos, who later played with the Pat Metheny Group. Years later, Trilok Gurtu replaced Walcott in Oregon after Walcott was killed in a traffic accident. The members of Oregon had first played together in the Paul Winter Consort. Walcott had studied percussion at Indiana University with George Gaber and ethnomusicology at UCLA before the Ali Akbar College of Music was founded in 1967. Walcott recorded in 1970 with the Consort and with Miles Davis in 1972.

Stepping back from the specifics of percussion to see the cultural shifts that were taking place, in 1956 American singer Harry Belafonte, who spent part of his youth growing up in Jamaica, released the traditional Jamaican folksong "Banana Boat (Day-O)," which became a huge hit and led to calypso music becoming popular in the U.S. Two years later, the Kingston Trio — who started out performing a smoothed-over version of calypso

Collin Walcott



music, taking their name from Kingston, Jamaica — released a traditional American murder ballad called "Tom Dooley," which reached No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 singles chart. That spawned a "folk music revival," in which listeners discovered such earlier folk and blues singers as Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, and Lead Belly (Huddie William Ledbetter), followed by such new artists as Joan Baez, Peter, Paul and Mary, Bob Dylan, Odetta, Joni Mitchell, and others. In 1960 the Grammy Award for Best Ethnic or Traditional Folk Recording was created. Prior to 1960, music with a basis in traditional folk songs had been listed in the category for Best Country & Western music.

The interest in "authentic" folk music led some listeners to search for traditional music from other countries. In 1960, Babatunde Olatunji, a percussionist from Nigeria, released *Drums of Passion* — the first recording to popularize African music in the West and selling over five million copies. In 1961, an American group called the Tokens had a huge hit with "The Lion Sleeps Tonight." It originated as an African song called "Mbube," which is Zulu for "lion," and was originally written and recorded by South African singer/composer Solomon Linda in 1939. In 1951, Pete Seeger adapted the song for his group The Weavers, changing the title to "Wimoweh," misunderstanding the Zulu word "uyimbube" ("he is a lion)." The Tokens added new lyrics, but kept Seeger's "wimoweh" chorus with the song's original melody.

The popularity of the Beatles can't be overstated in its importance. It invited musicians to rethink the boundaries of genres: If the Beatles could use instruments from India in their iconic pop-song recordings, the doors flew off the hinges for all kinds of artistic collaborations. Practically every recording featured new combinations of styles and instrument groups. The Beatles were reinventing themselves with each album, instead of trying to recapture what made each previous project successful, embracing a larger musical model of continuous creative development without impediment. It set in motion a new paradigm of popular music that was closely tied to improvisational forms.

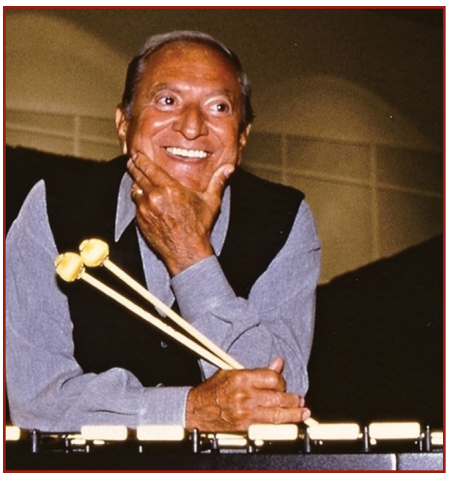
When Miles Davis provocatively turned in the same direction of more freedom, he erased boundaries in collaborations that featured artists who were engaged in innovative musical languages continuing into the 1980s. One artist he began working with was American avant-garde jazz drummer/percussionist Marilyn Mazur.

Mazur, born in New York but raised in Denmark, was also a composer and pianist who worked in the big band of Gil Evans, and she did a world tour with Wayne Shorter, after which she worked with the Miles Davis band. She was known for being autodidactic and bringing instrumental colors from many music traditions into her jazz performances, commonly integrating tall racks of gongs and small percussion into her drumset, opening up the timbral references that the music tapped into. Her work included women's ensembles with mystic and healing themes, and collaborations with many leading international jazz artists such as Jan Garbarek. Mazur had a sensibility for interweaving sound worlds that not only resonated with the spirit of the times but made her a celebrated interdisciplinary artist in Denmark and the world.

Percussionists who were learning the instruments and music traditions of India, West, Central, and East Africa, and Indonesia in particular, began teaching, composing and performing with more odd meters, incorporating a global music aesthetic of rhythmic structures into many other established genres, including jazz, pop, art rock, world beat, and what became known as New Age. The rock band Talking Heads, which pioneered New Wave music, coalesced in 1973 around several design students, including Chris Frantz, who was also a drummer. They were influenced by the Nigerian music genre Afrobeat, pioneered by Fela Kuti, bringing together West African music with funk and jazz. West African polyrhythms came into the music of Talking Heads, together with melodic influences of Arabic music from North Africa. Producer Brian Eno then brought world beat aesthetics into the development of Ambient music, a phrase he coined, and Electronica.

Marilyn Mazur

Emil Richards



FILM AND STUDIO

On the West Coast, from the beginning of the developments in world music in the U.S., there was a strong connection with the music of Asia, inspiring the innovations of PAS Hall of Fame inductees Lou Harrison, Harry Partch, and recording-industry percussionist Emil Richards.

Richards, neé Emilio Radocchia, was a jazz vibist who had toured the world in the 1960s in U.S. Goodwill missions with Frank Sinatra, and he brought back literally tons of instruments on Sinatra's private plane over the course of several years. Emil re-

corded and played with many artists, including Partch, Frank Zappa, L. Subramaniam, George Duke, and George Harrison, to name just a few, and he co-led the Hindustani Jazz Sextet with Don Ellis. For decades Emil was the first-call mallet specialist in the L.A. film studios with virtually every major film composer. Emil began introducing composers to his L.A. warehouse, which contained rows and rows of high-reaching shelves and cabinets of never-before-seen instruments in the United States, many of which he later donated to PAS to begin a percussion museum, which gave him great joy. Walking up and down the aisles of his warehouse was an unforgettable experience of seeing the world of percussion all under one roof. A significant portion of his vast collection was acquired by L.A. Percussion Rental, who worked with him to ensure its continuous availability for the L.A. recording studios and sound stages.

In 1969, film composer Jerry Goldsmith broke open the doors for percussion on the sound stages of Hollywood in a new way with his drum centered score for *Planet of the Apes*, which also gave the percussionists more freedom in the score, and which featured the musical arsenal of Emil's personal collection. Several decades later, representing the musicians in the local L.A. union, Emil won the right for percussionists and wind players to begin earning additional pay for doubles in studio sessions, because the percussionists were being called on to record so many different instruments that required new techniques and musical skills. Emil also won the studio musicians' right for soloists with expertise in unusual instruments to be individually listed in film credits. It was a milestone in the film industry for musicians, and particularly percussionists, because the players with the special skills of featured unusual instruments from different countries often include percussionists. This was a direct result of the growing inclusion of percussion from around the world in major film scores. Movie goers are immersed in sonic worlds influenced by global percussion and instrument innovations without ever seeing the instruments.

Milt Holland, an earlier film studio percussionist, recorded African drums for John Wayne's film *Hatari!* Holland studied tabla from North India and mridangam of South India with Pandit Chatur Lal and Ramnad Easwaran as one of the earliest students at the UCLA program offering instruction in music of the world. Brazilian percussion and various drumming traditions from the African continent were also part of Holland's area of expertise. As a session player, he recorded on multiple gold and platinum albums with such artists as Paul Simon, Frank Sinatra, Quincy Jones, and the Rolling Stones. Richards and Holland began a tradition on the sound stages in Hollywood that has carved out a longstanding and culturally central space for world percussion.

M.B. Gordy is another West Coast player who studied many world percussion traditions and began playing with many musicians from different cultures and genres. Here are some of his developments in the past few years: "I've always been intrigued by sound and varieties of sound, which I think may be what drew me to the drums and never the full world of percussion when I was in undergraduate school. I went to a concert by the Paul Winter Consort and heard the amazing Collin Walcott. That was a life-changing event of the many that I have had, and that was the first time I heard tabla played live, as well as the myriad array of other percussion instruments he played. So that was the impetus for me getting into world percussion. It led me to study with John Bergamo at CalArts as

M.B. Gordy

well as the Ladzepkos (Ghanaian music), Taranath Rao and Amiya Dasgupta (North Indian music), and (I. Nyoman) Wenten (subject of the film *Bali: Beats of Paradise*) and (K.R.T. Wasitodiningrat) Pak Chokro (Javanese music).

"All of the CalArts experiences led me to the world of film music and breaking in and working with Emil Richards, basically the godfather of percussion in the world of film and TV music. The thing about percussion and the world of sounds that it offers is that particularly in film and TV music, it's all about sound and what sounds work for the scene, which is what I truly love experimenting with. Drumset is probably still my first love, but if I only played drumset then I would never have played with Opium Moon, winning a Grammy in 2019. And the fact that I play percussion is what led me to the second Grammy with Matt B, for the best Global Music Album, 2025. I'm grateful to be part of the project for Kitt Wakeley's *Se7en Seasons*, which was nominated for a 2026 Grammy for the Best Classical Compendium Album."

Michael Fisher was one of the most prolific world percussion specialists in the film and recording session scene. Emil's interest in finding percussionists who could play more instruments from his massive collection led him to Fisher, who began his professional career in L.A. in 1979. He studied Persian drumming with Houman Pourmehdi, Middle Eastern hand percussion with Amir Sofi, and Indian drumming with Bengali tabla master Sri Aloke Dutta and American tabla and pakhawaj specialist and instrument innovator Leonice Shinneman. In total, Fisher played for over 200 recording sessions and 722 film dates.

"Probably my very first world drumming experience was in Denver," Fisher recalled, "when I was about 16 years old, learning bongos, congas, and timbales from players in the street, listening and playing together. Then I studied with Bill Smith. I went to L.A. in the '70s, and I was invited to play in the house band of The Flying Jib. Those guys were doing recording sessions by day, and they invited me to come. I studied with Victor Feldman, who had a

big influence on me and taught me everything about preparing a session. Emil started giving me calls for film dates to play a lot of his instruments." Fisher recorded for film tracks for nearly three decades as a first-call hand percussionist with composers Thomas Newman, John Williams, James Horner, Alexander Desplat, James Newton Howard, and many more.

MUSIC AND CULTURE

In 1978 other well-known drummers and percussionists played with Paul Winter for the recording featuring bio-acoustician Roger Payne's ocean recordings of humpback whales. World music was taking on a whole new meaning, not only the world of human cultures on land, but our mammal friends living in the oceans. PAS Hall of Fame inductee Steve Gadd was joined by others including, for instance, Brazilian percussionist Laudir de Oliveira and ethnomusicologist Paul Berliner with water drum, congas, and Ugandan drums.

To understand the cultural impact of what world music was accomplishing at that time in American society and worldwide, think of Leonard Nimoy, who played Spock in the original *Star Trek* television series and numerous films. Nimoy directed and helped write the story for *Star Trek IV, Voyage Home*, which centered on saving humpback whales from extinction in the future in order to save humanity from being inadvertently destroyed by an alien species unsuccessfully trying to communicate with humpbacks. Nimoy was inspired by the recordings of Roger Payne, which Paul Winter had helped publicize through his recording *Common Ground* in 1978. A decade later, Winter invited Nimoy to read poetry for his *Whales Alive* recording, also with Payne's oceanic recordings of humpbacks and free improvisations of music.

A few of the most influential composers who changed the contours of music for percussion with influences from their own international musical cultures or from music that was not in their home culture include PAS Hall of Fame inductees Steve Reich, John Cage, Harry Partch, Lou Harrison, and Philip Glass, along with other 20th-century composers such as Edgard Varèse of France, Carlos Chávez of Mexico, Christos Hatzis of Greece, Colin McPhee of Canada, and Olivier Messiaen of France.

Composers, instrument inventors, and interdisciplinary artists have all had a significant influence on and were also influenced by the increasing awareness of and inspiration from more music cultures being accessible and more people outside of them devoting time to learn not only the instruments and the music but something of the cultures as well. Two of my teachers — Amiya Dasgupta for Indian music theory and singing, and Widaryanto for Javanese gamelan — generously invested time and care to teach me important details of cooking and preparing spices for main dishes in their home countries. A treasured Thanksgiving dinner was prepared by Alfred Ladzepko, introducing us to his peanut turkey dish. As wedding presents, my husband and I received numerous cookbooks as well as volumes of translated poetry and kitchen tools to grind our own spices.

With Taranath Rao, weekly ensemble rehearsals weren't finished until we had all eaten together — delicious meals prepared lovingly by his wife, who spoke little to no English, but was delighted by our gratitude and appetite! It is often incumbent on students to shop for, chauffeur, and do cleaning duties for their teachers, which is an honor because of the close and generous relationships that are often formed with teachers who have come to live in the U.S. in order to share their cultural heritage. Most of the teachers who have invested great amounts of time in all of the students passing on the music, want to give a window into the experience of being at home in the societies where their music comes from. The music is part of a whole. It is not separate from life.

Growing scholarly and artistic awareness of musical cultures from many countries and the possibility of students in different parts of the world learning from master performers was having exponential ripples throughout all parts of the music industry, and percussion in particular, because so many of the world's traditions include some kind of unique and highly developed rhythmic structures.

Pop music and film composers, such as Paul Simon and Hans Zimmer, have also had widely influential careers that included featuring percussion of many world cultures in both written and improvised music forms. PAS Hall of Fame inductee Jamey Haddad, percussionist on three Grammy-winning recordings by Simon, is a long-time colleague of Simon's, and Jamey spends time working with him on forming rhythmic concepts for some of his songs, as well as recording multiple instruments in different styles for his albums. An instrument inventor and consummate improviser, Jamey is in demand by artists in many genres because of what he brings to the creative table.

Jamey shared these thoughts: "In 1992 I was in Morocco as part of an ensemble put together by Richard Horowitz to perform for the World's Fair in Seville, Spain with 10 or so Berber tribes who were invited by the King to participate in this collaboration. All of the ensembles were considered the best that the country had to offer from all these diverse regions of Morocco. We were staying in Marrakech for two weeks playing with different Berber regional groups eight hours a day — a mind-blowing experience. About a week in, after some rehearsals, I was rather frustrated because I was convinced that all of us guest musicians were getting much of it wrong. I did not have the answers, but some of the Berber musicians who sensed my frustration invited me to

Jamey Haddad

their campgrounds, where the government had made an attractive Berber tent city for them to stay in for the purposes of these rehearsals.

"We had spent the entire day working on just one song with this particular Berber ensemble that had invited me to join them for an evening gathering. When I showed up, they were playing the very tune we had spent that past eight hours developing, with a moving harmony behind their modal melody, and they politely tolerated all of our missteps on their perfectly formed music. In all fairness, this was meant to be a collaboration, and we all got that. I joined in as they were way into their thing. I clapped and sang the melody as I heard it, but the beat seemed to fall differently to the melody in this setting. The clapping is an interlocking 12/8 feel of groups of twos that, when done right, is one of the most seductive things on the planet.

"By the time I got out of there that night, the melody seemed completely different, and the beat seemed absolutely different from what we had done earlier that day. The musicians did not even look like the same people to me, but they were. So on my blissful walk back to my five-star hotel, I pondered the concept of what had just happened to me with a music that was not my music. I understood for the first time that their music is not meant to be merely interesting or descriptive; it is meant to be a passport into another dimension. If you get the elements right, everything that seemed to be the same and repetitive is suddenly all new and fresh. You feel refreshed and on another sensory plane!

"So it has been my quest to develop those kinds of musical balances of elements that can bring all of us into a deeper dimension. There are so many ideas and styles and musical requests on players out there, but this point has my interest, and I pray I am being directed to a place where my music can cause that sensation for me first and for whoever wants to come along. Everyone is welcome!

"The people I studied with on drumset were Howard Brush, Bob McKee, Joe Hunt, and Alan Dawson, but of course every recording of all the masters, from the earliest New Orleans recordings to Elvin Jones to Roy Haynes and beyond, were my teachers, too. I studied hand drumming with Dave Morad, Glen Velez, and Michele Merhej on riq and various frame drums; Afro-Caribbean with Paulo Stagnaro; South Indian mridangam with Ramnad Raghavan and Karaikudi R. Mani; South Indian kanjira with V. Nagarajan and G. Harishankar; West African drumming with Weedie Braimah; Gnaoua music tradition with Maleem Hamid El Kasri. I learned Brazilian music and alternate setups with Airto Moreira. And everyone who I ever performed with, who helped me on my journey, either by being kind — or being a drag! — I thank them ALL!"

In the 1970s at the University of Colorado, PAS Hall of Fame inductee Valerie Naranjo studied with ethnomusicologist John Galm, and she was introduced to the West African xylophone of Ghana, the gyil. Soon after, she began regularly studying and performing in Ghana, with master drummers Godwin Agbelli, Kofi Missiso, Ichitey James, and members of Ghana's Arts Council and National Dance Company, and with gyil masters Newiin Baaru, Richard Na-ile, and Kakraba Lobi, with whom she produced 16 transcriptions of gyil music for chromatic marimba, and several works for gyil and orchestra, wind ensemble, string ensemble, and percussion ensemble. Valerie was the first woman permitted by the Dagara Nation of Ghana to play the instrument and to compete in the Kobine Festival of Traditional Music competition, which she won in 1996.

With her family heritage in the Navajo and Southern Ute tribes of North America, Valerie continues to open doors so that more percussion music and instruments are given greater exposure. She arranged the percussion score for the Broadway musical *The Lion King*, which she has brought to the stage for over two decades. Whether performing and recording with the Paul Winter Consort, The Philip Glass Ensemble, David Byrne, Airto Moreira, Tori Amos, the Native American women's group Pura Fe, on the weekly live television broadcasts of *Saturday Night Live* for the past 30 years as the percussionist in the house band, or directing the program of gyil and African percussion music at New York University, Valerie continues to be an ambassador for cultures of the world to come into contact with each other more through music, and to transform the world's music scene along the way.

Valerie had these clarifying thoughts to add to the overview of the global percussion movement: "Music is one of the important *spokespieces* of culture. For me, the reason that West African traditional music resonates at the heart of American popular music is that it speaks from a wonderful humanity that understands the art of sharing and the art of true dialogue."

In the development of the solo art of modern frame drumming, PAS Hall of Fame inductee and four-time Grammy Award winner Glen Velez is regarded as

Valerie Naranjo

Glen Velez

the founding father. Creating a synthesis of styles and learning the overtone singing of Central Asia, which figures prominently in much of his improvisational music, Glen was at the forefront of a movement in world drumming that captured the imagination with a new aesthetic of subtlety.

Glen describes an early experience of seeing one of his teachers for the first time: "Having heard that the tambourine was used in Arabic music, I was excited to hear about an Arabic instrumental trio playing a concert in New York at the Asia Society in 1978. Hanna Mirhige was playing the riq (the Arabic tambourine), and I was immediately charmed by the dynamic range and striking colors that Hanna was able to draw out of the instrument.

"The cymbal articulations intermingled with the high and low drum sounds seemed to mysteriously generate a full spectrum of percussive magic. The small riq, not much bigger than Hanna's hands, was capable of enhancing both the tender lyricism of the music, as well as the powerful dance impulse of the various traditional Arabic compositions. After the concert, feeling inspired, I nervously waited to ask Hanna if he would teach me. Some of my teachers include Hanna Mirhige, Michele Baklluk, Dom Um Romão, Zevulon Avsholamov, Ramnad Rhagavan, and Trichy Sankaran. I do feel blessed to be one of many who nurture acoustic music."

PLAYING WELL WITH OTHERS

What are important questions to ask about being an improvising player with different instruments and styles? When we're looking for people to play with and to work with, what should we be listening for?

"Any musical culture works for me," says Jamey Haddad. "You just have to find the right people playing the music. I am a fan of it all! My family is 100% Lebanese American. My parents were third-generation Americans, but they loved all the musical and culinary traditions. So early on I heard that sound and those grooves and style of melody. That for sure opened the door for me, but beyond that, it was always my curiosity and desire to hear the texture of instruments that really worked hand-in-glove in time-tested musical settings. To my ears, that unmistakable special blend almost always seemed so difficult to obtain in the musical settings I found myself in early on.

"When I would hear Afro-Cuban, Brazilian, North African, or almost any traditional music, everything seemed to fit so well! The bass tones had a real visceral acoustic balance with all the other sound qualities. Everything had its natural place. Great bands in general have that hand-in-glove kind of wisdom of what works for the ensemble. As testament to that thought, you only need to hear the early Nat King Cole television shows where the band played live with three or four microphones recording in mono, not even stereo. The balance was made in real-time adjustments by the players right there, all acoustic.

"The more you play, the more you naturally adjust to make whatever music situation you are in more magical. It has taken me most of my life to feel and understand that I have the freedom and can believe in my own cosmic power to really shape the music. No particular instruments do it for me. It's not about the instrument, but the intention of the player. I have heard people be expressive playing a leaf and make it work in the context of what is going on around them.

"So for me, it is all about being able to shape sound with my hands or with any means in a setting that is conducive to music happening with like-minded people. I do not enjoy playing with people who have patented moves that they perfect in order to demonstrate that they worked hard at mastering something impressive. Of course, we all need chops, but that way of thinking always gets in the way of the moment, in any kind of music, and what might be able to happen in a moment if we're paying attention to what's going on around us with the other musicians, instead of trying to prove a point about our own chops. It is my intention whenever I play to strike a sonic musical balance for what I feel the music needs. It is all about the conversation in the music, and all that chatter that is not in the service of the micro-second orchestration of the music, that we do when we're improvising, I find destructive."

The progressive spirit of cross-cultural influences gained traction in North America across a broad range of music. Music listeners, promoters, university programs, producers, a growing number of venues, students, composers, and professional musicians across all genres were ready and waiting to explore and create a new world of possibilities.

Julie Spencer studied Western classical percussion with Jeff Nearpass, Kristen Shiner McGuire, and John Beck; tabla with Taranath Rao and Swapan Chaudhuri; applications of Indian rhythms with John Bergamo and Emil Richards; Indian theory and singing with Amiya Dasgupta; Ghanaian drumming, singing, and dance with Alfred and Kobla Ladzepko; Afro-Cuban drumming with Jerry Steinholtz; Javanese gamelan with FX Widaryanto; and Balinese gamelan with I. Nyoman Wenten.

Sixty Years of Percussion Ensemble Music in Canada

By Fabrice Marandola

Following the initial sparks ignited by such avant-garde composers as Antheil, Cowell, Roldán, Russell, Varèse, and John Cage and his ensemble, who were the first "that rehearsed regularly,"[1] Paul Price established the first percussion ensemble at the University of Illinois in 1949, and by the late 1950s and early 1960s, percussion ensembles could be found in many universities in the U.S.[2] This evolution led John Beck to declare in the *Music Journal* in 1965: "Although relatively new, the percussion ensemble has now taken its place alongside the brass, woodwind and string ensembles.... A percussion department with no percussion ensemble is incomplete."[3]

While the Percussions de Strasbourg formed the first professional ensemble in Europe in 1962, percussion ensembles developed in Canada at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s, giving rise to a rich and diverse scene across the entire country, as well as to the commissioning and premiering of hundreds of new works for this medium during the past half-century. Canadian percussion ensembles have developed in two phases, with pioneering groups emerging at the very end of the 1960s and flourishing through the 1970s to the early 1990s, and a second wave emerging from the 2000s to current days, with several professional and university ensembles arising during this period.

This article provides an overview of the substantial history of percussion ensembles in Canada, with a brief survey of historical aspects and significant contributions of the various groups that constitute the diverse tapestry of Canadian percussion ensembles.

FIRST WAVE – 1969–2000S

With over 60% of Canada's population concentrated in the central provinces of Ontario and Quebec, it is unsurprising that many significant developments in the percussion domain originated here.

Pierre Béluse (1935–2015) was one of the most prominent figures in the Quebec and Canadian percussion landscape and made a significant contribution to the development of the percussion ensemble both at provincial and national levels. A consummate jazz drummer, he was a member of the Montreal Symphonic Orchestra, the National Arts Centre Orchestra in Ottawa 1982–94, and the Société de musique Contemporaine du Québec.[4] In 1967, Béluse created a percussion class at McGill University and immediately put together the **McGill Percussion Ensemble**, who gave their first performance in 1969 in Montreal, featuring works by John Cage, Carlos Chavez, and Gordon Peters. It is worth noting that following this inaugural concert, the dean of the music faculty asked Béluse what was needed to fully develop a percussion class, which ultimately led to the acquisition of many instruments and the dedication of new spaces for the class, and the foundation of one of the largest percussion programs in the country.[5]

The early 1970s were a period of intense creativity for percussionists in Montreal and Quebec. Several percussion ensembles emerged briefly, including **Polycousmie** (1972–73, percussionists Robert Leroux, Guy Lachapelle, and composer Micheline Coulombe Saint-Marcoux), the brief **Percussions de Montréal**, led by Paul Duplessis, and the sextet **Percussions du Québec** (1972–74) initiated by Louis Charbonneau with percussionists Pierre Béluse, Guy Lachapelle, Robert Leroux, Lanny Levine, Ian Bernard, and Paul Duplessis.[6]

Dissensions within the Percussions du Québec sextet led to the morphing of the McGill Percussion Ensemble into a nine-member professional ensemble that integrated students and alumni, as well as other professional percussionists who did not have a direct relationship with McGill. The ensemble commissioned several important works, including a famously difficult work by Walter Boudreau, "Les sept jours" (1977), which would ultimately lead the group to premiere the largescale work "Tempus ex Machina"[7] by French composer Gérard Grisey, who was present in Montreal for the premiere of Boudreau's work. Impressed by the quality and accuracy of the ensemble, Grisey decided to grant the premiere of his own piece to Béluse's group, which was premiered in November 1980 in Montreal.[8] In the same year, the McGill Percussion Ensemble participated at PASIC in San Jose, Cal. The professional branch of the McGill Percussion Ensemble recorded three albums and was awarded the Grand Prix du Disque-Canada for chamber mu-

sic (Canadian Music Council), for their first opus released in 1979.

During this period (1978–81), the same members started touring with completely different repertoire, based on arrangements of classical music, ragtime, and Quebec popular music, which, according to Leroux (2025), was a natural evolution of the jam sessions that McGill students used to hold every Friday afternoon after the rehearsals of contemporary works by the percussion ensemble. Named **Concept Neuf** ("neuf" meaning both "nine" and "new" in French), the group recorded two albums under this second banner. Also in 1978, the ensemble toured with Jeunesses Musicales du Canada — a Canadian organization that supports music performance for young audiences, including touring opportunities for young professional musicians — playing up to five school concerts in three locations in the same day! The ensemble progressively ceased its activities in the early 1980s, many members becoming increasingly busy with other engagements, winning orchestral and academic positions.

The McGill Percussion Ensemble has remained a student-based ensemble since then, under the direction of Philip D'Arcy Gray, Fabrice Marandola, Aiyun Huang, and Kristie Ibrahim, participating in many festivals in Canada and abroad, and releasing new recordings. With a long-standing student composer-in-residency program, the ensemble has premiered over 70 new works since its creation and has programmed three to four concerts per year over the past 20 years.

In 1974, six enthusiastic percussionists studying at the Quebec City Conservatory formed the group **Répercussion**. In 1978, some of the members moved to Montreal and re-formed the group as a quartet, with Chantal Simard, Michel Drapeau, Robert Lépine, and Aldo Mazza, the two latter musicians also playing with the McGill and Concept Neuf ensembles until 1980, when Répercussion started performing up to 150 shows per year. Their repertoire included regular commissions from such Canadian composers as Vincent Dionne, alcides lanza, and Denys Bouliane, as well as their own compositions. Incorporating music and styles from other cultures, the ensemble was willing to expand the boundaries of musical compositions from classical to jazz, world, and beyond.

A key feature of Répercussion was a fully staged show that went beyond the traditional concert format. Working with choreographer Brian MacDonald, the quartet designed lighting and costumes, and revised their repertoire, stage presence, and scripts. According to Aldo Mazza, "Our whole stage performance — lighting, sound, costumes, everything — [was] choreographed from A to Z."[9] This approach to repertoire and performance brought the group to the stage over 3,000 times, with international tours in Asia, Europe, Central and South America, performances for prestigious events such as Expo '86 (Vancouver) and Expo '92 (Seville), and with renown jazz musicians Oliver Jones, Claude Bolling, and Buddy Rich. After producing five recordings and several performances at PASIC, the group decided to only participate in special projects from that point forward.

Still in Quebec, Robert Leroux, one of the early members of the McGill Percussion Ensemble who was also the assistant timpanist of the Montreal Symphonic Orchestra (1970–84) and the first percussionist of the Société de musique Contemporaine du Québec (1973–89), became the percussion instructor at the francophone Université de Montréal (UdeM) in 1973, where he initiated the **Atelier de Percussion de l'Université de Montréal** in 1975. The Atelier has been active since then, first under his direction, and then followed by Julien Grégoire (1988–2022) and João Catalão (2023–present). The group released an album in 1997 with works by Grégoire, Lemay, and Nishimura, which also features an important Quebec multi-percussion solo, "Exil: Shanghai 45" by Michel Longtin. Composition professor at UdeM, Longtin began a long-term collaboration between the composition department and the percussion ensemble, resulting in many new works performed at the university over the years. Leroux, Grégoire, and Catalão would later participate in the launch of Sixtrum, during the second wave of Quebec professional percussion ensembles.

Although there was little contact between the percussionists of Toronto and Montreal,[10] the 1970s were also a buoyant time for percussion in the neighbouring province of Ontario, with the creation of Nexus and of the University of Toronto Percussion Ensemble.

Toronto-based percussion ensemble **Nexus** was formed in 1971 by six U.S.-born musicians: Robert Becker, William

The McGill Percussion Ensemble in 1970

L-R: Jean Langlois, Owen Clark, Robert Leroux, Pierre Beluse (back to camera), Herb Gillman, Lorne Nehring, Lanny Levine.
The first McGill Percussion Ensemble, directed by Pierre Béluse, performing "First Construction In Metal," Redpath Hall, McGill University, 1970.
Owen Clark Collection. Photo contributed by Pierre Béluse. Photo ID: OC-PB2.

Cahn, Michael Craden, Robin Engelman, Russell Hartenberger, and John Wyre.[11] Their first concert as a sextet took place in Walter Hall at the University of Toronto, a few months after a concert at the Eastman School of Music featuring the duo of Becker and Cahn and a duo formed by Engelman and Wyre, both members of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra at the time. The first performances of the ensemble were improvisation-based, involving many non-Western percussion instruments — mostly Asian metallophones. As Engelman stated in the PAS article dedicated to the induction of Nexus to the PAS Hall of Fame: "Since there was no music composed yet for this specific group of instruments with their specific pitches and pitch relationships, it seemed best for us to simply create our own music through improvisation. After all, we knew the possibilities of our instruments better than anyone else. Following the first concert at Eastman, the plan was simple: Let's do this again sometime soon."[12] The ensemble became a quintet after the passing of Michael Craden in 1982.

With one of the world's longest percussion-ensemble lifespans, second only to the French group Percussions de Strasbourg, Nexus has contributed to many memorable performances and creations, beginning with their first commission from Montreal composer Bruce Mather in 1977, "Clos de Vougeot," to be followed by many others, including works by John Cage, Eric Ewazen, Steve Reich, Toru Takemitsu, and Jo Kondo. Through various interviews and blogposts,[13] Nexus members often refer to their world tour in 1984 as an important period in the ensemble's journey, as well as their long-time collaboration with Japanese composer Takemitsu.

The close connection with Takemitsu came from the association of Engelman and Wyre with the Toronto Symphony and its Music Director, Seiji Ozawa, a champion of Takemitsu's music. Both percussionists were invited by the composer to perform at the Osaka Expo '70, followed by an invitation for Nexus to participate in Takemitsu's Music Today concert series in Tokyo in 1976. Their long-term relationship eventually led to the creation of the concerto for five percussionists and orchestra "From me flows what you call Time," with the Boston Symphony and Seiji Ozawa at a sold-out Carnegie Hall in 1990, as part of the 100th Anniversary celebration of the famous concert hall. Nexus produced many recordings and contributed to the rediscovery of ragtime music with the expert leadership of Bob Becker as solo xylophonist. Their impact on the percussion world was recognized by an induction to the PAS Hall of Fame in 1999, and they are the ensemble with the record for participation at PASIC, with over 15 performances following their debut in 1977.

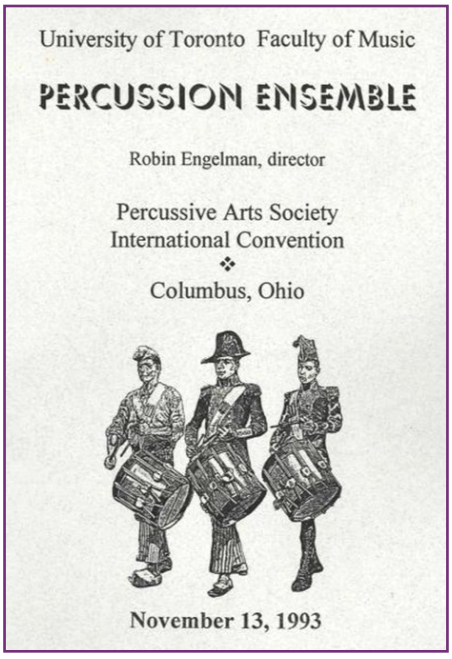
It is significant that Nexus received full support from various levels of government in Canada throughout the years. As mentioned by Hartenberger: "Canada has been unusually generous to Nexus. I don't think we could have survived in the United States for as long as we have in Canada."[14] The support received by Canadian arts organizations at municipal, provincial, and federal levels was a key element that allowed university ensembles to commission works from professional composers in the 1970s and for professional ensembles to develop and thrive in the 2000s.

Parallel to Béluse and the McGill Percussion Ensemble's prime importance in the development of percussion in Montreal and Quebec, Nexus and its members had a long-lasting impact on the evolution of percussion in Toronto and Ontario, with John Wyre, Russell Hartenberger, and Robin Engelman's involvement in the percussion faculty and percussion ensemble of the University of Toronto. The Faculty of Music Percussion Ensemble of the university gave their first concert in April 1970 and became the **University of Toronto Percussion Ensemble** in 1972 under the direction of Wyre, who was the percussion teacher at the time. Hartenberger took over as director from 1974–83, followed by Robin Engelman (1975, 1983–2008), Beverley Johnston (2008–17), Mark Duggan (2012–15) and Aiyun Huang (2017–present), to mention the main directors. Besides Steve Reich and Musicians, the ensemble was the first to perform "Drumming" in February 1976, in which students were joined by Steve Reich and Nexus musicians Becker, Cahn, Engelman, and Hartenberger. Akin to other university ensembles, the group produced several recordings (works by Becker, Beckwith, Cage, Hulick, Kondo, and Ping Yee Ho) and has played one or two new works per year since their creation, many from student composers of the music faculty, resulting in another impressive contribution to Canadian percussion ensemble repertoire. Other highlights in the ensemble's history include Canadian premieres of Kondo and Akiho pieces, world premieres of works by Bhagwati, Brett, Brito, Cahn, Clarke, Jacobs, Pino, Kerr, Wilson, Yu, and Zhang, as well as participation at PASIC in 1993 under the direction of Engelman.

On opposite coasts of the country, several other percussion ensembles appeared during the 1970–2000 period.

The **University of British-Columbia Percussion Ensemble** in Vancouver, British Columbia, was formed in the mid-1970s and has been directed since 2005 by Vern Griffiths. The university ensemble interprets original works from the 20th century, transcriptions of familiar classics, and traditional dance music from Africa and Latin America, and premieres new repertoire for

PASIC '93 Poster of the University of Toronto Percussion Ensemble



percussion ensemble by student composers. The ensemble performs two main concerts per year and makes appearances at other Vancouver events and festivals (e.g., VSO Day of Music, John Cage Festival, Vancouver Bach Choir).

On the opposite coast, the percussion ensemble of Memorial University of Newfoundland was formed under the direction of percussion professor Don Wherry in the late 1980s, leading to a first official concert in 1989. With an average of eight to twelve players including mainly students and alumni of Memorial University, with the occasional community member, the group adopted the name **Scruncheons**, which refers to a traditional delicacy in Newfoundland consisting of fried cubes of salt pork fat! Rob Power took over the artistic direction in 2001, and in 2009 the ensemble recorded the double-album *Journey*, which reflects the focus of the ensemble on composition through improvisation and experimentation. Every year, the members of the group write works for the ensemble, which are workshopped, rehearsed, and performed at the university, and on tours and school tours throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

In another eastern Maritime province, Michel Deschênes has played a major role in the development of percussion in the francophone community of New Brunswick. Having discovered percussion ensemble music in high school when he attended a Répercussion concert, Deschênes decided to study percussion and eventually started the percussion program at the francophone Université de Moncton in 1986. In the same year, he created the **Ensemble de Percussion de l'Université de Moncton**, which has been performing annual concerts since then, and a few years later, he developed in parallel the **Escola de Samba Acadia**, a community-based ensemble performing Brazilian music for percussion. The percussion ensemble was given a full week of production time in a theater before each concert, and the success of these concerts led Deschênes to launch an ensemble that could tour and perform outside of the university. Initially called "Et + Ké 2" (from the French-Canadian way of counting sixteenth notes that would translate into "e-and-a-2" in English), the quartet eventually became **Amérythme** and toured extensively in Eastern Canada and Europe from 1989 to 2000. Their repertoire and performances were in a similar style to Répercussion, with a mix of transcriptions, world music, ragtime, percussion ensemble literature, and a lively stage presence. Their association with Jeunesses Musicales du Canada and their success in Eastern Canada professional showcases helped them achieve up to 250 performances per year, as well as the recognition of Artist of the Year in New-Brunswick in 1988 (ELOIZE award).

Another important figure of Canadian percussion in the Maritimes was James (Jim) Faraday, who taught at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova-Scotia, from the early 1970s to 2008. Percussionist of Symphony Nova-Scotia, he also co-founded NOVA MUSIC (inNOVAtions in MUSIC), a group of composers and performers presenting new and seldom-performed music from 1972–86. He created and directed the **Dalhousie Percussion Ensemble**, which performed twice a year and for large community events until 2008, followed by D'Arcy Philip Gray (who had formerly succeeded Béluse in the direction of the McGill Percussion Ensemble), with Mark Morton (a founding member of Montreal percussion quartet **Architek**) taking the direction of the percussion studio and ensemble in 2023.

In Ontario, the **Percussion Ensemble at Queen's University** (Kinston, Ont.) has been active since its inception in the mid 1970s, when Jim Petercsak started teaching as adjunct professor in 1974, until the end of the 1980s, in parallel to his position at SUNY-Potsdam on the other side of the Saint Lawrence River. A former senior member of the Manhattan Percussion Ensemble, conducted by Paul Price, it was natural to Petercsak to develop the percussion ensemble at Queen's. Gregory Runions took over direction of the ensemble from 1985 to 2023, followed by Jamie Drake (a member of Toronto percussion quartet TorQ) from 2023–25.

In Edmonton (Alberta), Brian Thurgood created an annual event in the 1980s where percussion majors at MacEwan University, most of them drumset players, would put together a full percussion ensemble concert. He kept the tradition going until 2020, and it is now his successor Daniel Akira Stadnicki who perpetuates the tradition of the annual **MacEwan Percussion Ensemble** concert.

In Saskatoon (Saskatchewan), current **U of S Percussion Ensemble** director Darrell Bueckert remembers seeing a few concert posters in the 1960s and '70s, and the ensemble has been active yearly since the mid 1980s. He took over in 1990, and the group is performing at least twice a year, bringing together percussion majors and non-majors as well as members from the community.

SECOND WAVE – 2000–PRESENT

The beginning of the 21st century saw the apparition of a new wave of professional and university percussion ensembles in Canada. Going from west to east, we will look at the professional ensembles first, before pointing out the ensembles that developed in university settings during this period.

Based in Victoria, British-Columbia, **Scrap Arts Music** is a percussion quintet that was formed in 1998 under the direction of instrument maker, composer, and performer Gregory Kozak, along with Justine Murdy, who is involved in project conceptualization, instrument design, and stage direction (costumes, lighting, stage craft). The ensemble is renowned for its unique collection of over 145 instruments built by Gregory Kosak over the years, as well as their athletic performances that have led Scrap Arts Music to many international stages, and to a one-of-a-kind performance for the closing ceremonies of the 2010 Winter Olympics that took place in Vancouver. True to its name, the group's instruments are made from recycled materials (aluminum, steel, and plastic), with creations such as the Humunga and Ziggurat drums (made of marine-grade aluminum and stainless-steel bits), the Xylobe (artil-

lery shells and stainless steel), or Nonette (avionic scraps).

The mission of Scrap Arts Music, creating instruments made of recycled materials, mirrors the activities of Quebec ensemble **TUYO**, which was active from 1987 to the end of the 2000s. Founded by Guy Laramée and later directed by Carol Bergeron, the ensemble's name is a play on the world "pipe" or "tuyau" in French. Contrary to Scrap Arts Music, which performs works composed by its founder Kozak, TUYO collaborated with many Canadian composers to develop their repertoire. The group toured extensively in Canada, Europe, and the U.S. over its 20-year lifespan.

Also in Vancouver, **Fringe Percussion** quartet was formed in 2006, dedicated to contemporary music bridging Western and non-Western repertories, collaborating with local composers and international artists. Fringe Percussion has played a central role in the development of Vancouver's annual Day of Percussion in the 2010s and has performed at numerous festivals of new music and world music. Their CD *Fringe Percussion*, released in 2009, includes works by Canadian composer Joelyn Morlock and John Cage's "Dance Music for Elfrid Ide."

In Ontario, **TorQ Percussion Quartet** was formed by graduates of the University of Toronto in 2004, and has been composed of Richard Burrows, Adam Campbell, Jamie Drake, and Daniel Morphy since 2007. The group has toured across Canada, Germany, and the U.S., and has performed in many international festivals, including PASIC 2015, and they have collaborated with several symphonic orchestras and wind ensembles, premiering three concertos. TorQ has premiered over 80 pieces by Canadian composers including Nicole Lizée, Christos Hatzis, Michael Oesterle, and Dinuk Wijeratne, and the members of the group also contribute with their own compositions and arrangements. TorQ has created three school programs that were presented for more than 130,000 students, with an average of 70 shows per year between 2010 and 2020, as part of the roster of Prologue for the Performing Arts (an Ontario arts education organization that presents accessible performing arts experiences in schools and communities). The quartet can be heard on nine commercial recordings and were nominated for a 2019 Juno award for Classical Composition of the Year (Lizée's "Katana of Choice"). TorQ is the recipient of several awards, including a 2018 Quebec Opus Prize in the category of concerts for young audiences for their collaboration with the Montreal Symphonic Orchestra.

Architek Percussion is a Montreal-based quartet that mirrors to some extent TorQ. Created by four McGill alumni in 2012 (Noam Bierstone, Ben Duinker, Mark Morton, and Alessandro Valiante), the ensemble is equally comfortable performing classic percussion repertoire as they are exploring new terrain through commissions and premieres. Architek regularly performs in Montreal as well as from coast to coast in Canada, and their international tours have taken them across Northern Europe many times, as well as to PASIC 2017. Known for their sense of musical adventure and their willingness to expand the boundaries of the regular percussion instrumentation, they have commissioned and/or premiered over 60 works by such Canadian and international composers as Eliot Britton, Emily Doolittle, Patrick Hart, Gyrid Nordal Kaldestad, John Psathas, Sabrina Schroeder, and Kevin Volans. The ensemble appears on eight commercial recordings, and their latest avant-garde project, *Quigital Corporation Retreat*, is a theatrical percussion-centric performance augmented by technology that critiques the pervasiveness of AI in the corporate world.

In Quebec City, the percussion quartet **EP4** was founded in the same year as Architek (2012) by artistic director Raphaël Guay. Having benefited from a residency at Espace Hypérion for two years at its inception, the group focuses on the presentation and creation of new music for percussion, commissioning primarily Quebec composers. Active in the national capital of the province of Quebec, the group often collaborates with other contemporary music ensembles and participates in performative events based on improvisation.

Sixtrum is the only professional percussion sextet in Canada, based in Montreal. Formed in 2006 by percussion professors or faculty and alumni of the Université de Montréal and McGill University (D'Arcy Philip Gray, Julien Grégoire, Philip Hornsey, Kristie Ibrahim, Robert Leroux, and Fabrice Marandola), the ensemble performed "Pleiades" by Iannis Xenakis in their inaugural concert in 2007 and has since commissioned and premiered over 80 works. Under the leadership of Marandola, Sixtrum has made a reputation of collaborating with other artists and ensembles, including dance and theatre, and for organizing or coordinating or producing large-scale collaborative projects. Highlights of these productions include a collaboration with French group Percussions Claviers de Lyon in 2015 to create "Batèches," a work for 11 percussionists by French composer Patrick Burgan, inspired by poems of Quebecois author Gaston Miron. In 2018, Rythmopolis featured 50 percussionists (including Sixtrum, Architek, TorQ, EP4, Atelier de percussion de l'UdeM, and McGill Percussion Ensemble) premiering eight Canadian new works that were presented over three consecutive nights at the Place des Festivals in Montreal, broadcast live by Radio-Canada. In November 2025, Sixtrum hosted the Canadian premiere and first indoor performance of "Field of Vision" by American composer Michael Gordon. The 36-member ensemble formed for the occasion included Sixtrum, Percussions de Strasbroug, Architek, EP4, Atelier de percussion de l'UdeM, PercUqam, and McGill Percussion Ensemble.

In addition to their regular presence on the national and international stages, Sixtrum devotes a significant part of their creative activities to young audiences, having presented over 600 performances of three original shows in Canada and France. The ensemble is the recipient of Quebec Opus awards (Event of the Year 2018–19 and 2023–24, Concert of the Year 2018–19 and 2021–22), and was recognized with a prestigious Coup de Coeur of French Académie Charles Cros for their recording of Philippe Leroux's works for percussion, *De la percussion*.

On the academic scene, several ensem-

bles were initiated in the 2000s, most of the time under the impulsion of new percussion instructors with the desire to create an opportunity for their students to discover the rich percussion ensemble repertoire, and to develop their chamber-music skills.

In a brief survey, we will start on the Vancouver Island (BC) with the **University of Victoria Percussion Ensemble**, under the direction of Bill Linwood since 2000. Highlights of the ensemble's activities include the Canadian premiere of George Antheil's "Ballet Mécanique" (original version 1924) in 2001.

In Alberta, Adam Mason formed **Global Drums** in 2005 at Lethbridge University. Starting as a group of four, the project now counts over 50 members, comprised of community members and university students. Global Drums is different from many other academic ensembles in that it performs music from around the world, including steel band, Polynesian ensemble, African drumming and dancing, Japanese taiko, Brazilian samba batteria, and classical percussion. Not all members participate in all types of music, but concerts bring everyone together on stage. The group has traveled internationally, with performances in Japan, Trinidad & Tobago, Europe, Hong Kong, Florida, and Hawaii.

The **University of Manitoba Percussion Ensemble** in Winnipeg debuted in 2002 under the direction of Rob Gardner. Jauvon Gilliam and then Jeremy Epp each briefly directed the group between 2006–2010, and the current director, Victoria Sparks, took over in 2010. The ensemble is comprised of percussion majors and community members, and performs two full concerts each year, including one to three new works each year by University of Manitoba student composers, as well as an annual community outreach project in connection with the Winnipeg New Music Festival. Another highlight of the ensemble's activities is their collaboration with the University of Manitoba School of Art students for interactive "Paint and Play" concerts.

The first documented activities of the **University of Windsor Percussion Ensemble** took place in 2004, under the direction of Bryan Malito, who seized the opportunity to form a group when a larger-than-usual number of students enrolled that year. The ensemble, which was not part of credited lessons, has been active ever since and continues to develop under the direction of Nicholas Papador, who took over the direction of the ensemble in 2005. The group has commissioned or premiered works by Ivan Treviño ("Song Books 4.3"), James Romig ("A Circle With Many Centres") and Canadian composer Jordan Nobles ("Kinetics," "Rosetta Stone," and "Still Life"), and released a commercial recording of open scores works by Nobles in 2022.

The 36-member ensemble for the first Canadian performance of "Field of Vision" by M. Gordon included Sixtrum, Percussions de Strasbroug, Architek, EP4, Atelier de percussion de l'UdeM, PercUqam, and McGill Percussion Ensemble. (photo by Lauren Mountain)

The University of Western Ontario established one of the earliest percussion departments in Canada: Ian Turnbull opened the studio in 1964, followed by Bob Hughes and Jill Ball. Since 2024 the **Western University Percussion Ensemble** is under the direction of Richard Burrows and the TorQ Percussion Quartet, which is a unique situation in the country. The percussion ensemble at Western is comprised of percussion majors and performs a variety of styles, with a focus on contemporary percussion literature. The group presents new works by student composers and regularly participates in concerts outside of the music faculty, including at the Ontario Music Educators Association, the London Ontario Live Arts Festival, and the Ontario PAS Day of Percussion.

In Hamilton, Ontario, the **McMaster University Percussion Ensemble** was created in 2009 by Michael Schutz upon his appointment as percussion professor. The ensemble mainly consists of non-percussion-major students, who perform two to three concerts per year in Hamilton and for the Ontario PAS Day of Percussion.

The newest ensemble among Canadian universities can be found in Montreal, at the francophone Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). Founded by percussion professor Gina Ryan, **PercUqam** performed their debut concert in 2023 for the Telematic Earth Day Festival, premiering "Reboisement," a new work composed by Ryan for this performance. Comprised of UQAM students who are not all percussion majors, the ensemble is extracurricular and plays on a project basis. In November 2025, PercUqam hosted the Percussions de Strasbourg and other Montreal professional and student ensembles for the performance of Michael Gordon's "Field of Vision" coordinated by Sixtrum.

Moving to the Maritimes, Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, has had intermittent percussion ensembles across the School of Music's history according to the percussion instructor. A consistent en-

semble began under Ken Shorley around 2000, and Mark Adam formally took over the direction of the **Acadia Percussion Ensemble** from 2005 until the present. The ensemble has premiered many works in collaboration with composers from across Canada.

Besides "classical" percussion ensembles, many Canadian universities offer percussion ensembles that are linked to non-classical Western traditions, as is the case at Lethbridge University with the many cultural traditions taught through Global Drums. Other examples include West African and Korean drumming, and Indonesian gamelan at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, the **West African Rhythm Ensemble** directed by Kathy Armstrong at Carlton University (Ottawa, Ont.), or the **McGill Tabla Ensemble** created by Shawn Mativetsky at McGill in 2005. A special case needs to be made for gamelan ensembles, since there are currently 20 active gamelans in Canada, many being related to academic contexts.[15]

Based in Toronto, the first gamelan, **Evergreen Club Contemporary Gamelan** (ECCG), was founded by Jon Siddal in 1983, inspired by his studies with Lou Harrison, who encouraged him to write for the gamelan.[16] ECCG is unique in their dedication to developing and expanding their repertoire by commissioning new works from Canadian and international composers (including Lou Harrison and John Cage), as well as to presenting new interpretations of traditional and contemporary Indonesian pieces. Over the years, the ensemble has commissioned hundreds of works, toured internationally, and produced a dozen recordings. Blair Mackay became artistic director of ECCG in 1992 and led the ensemble for over 30 years, with Christopher Hull now leading the group.

Gamelan practice developed critically in the country after Expo '86 in Vancouver, where the Indonesian government brought three ensembles, gifting them afterwards to Simon Fraser University (Vancouver) and Université de Montréal. Both universities launched gamelan courses in 1987, and other universities imitated them in the following years. Gamelans can now be found in music faculties in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Montreal, Wolfville (Acadia University), and St-Johns. Several groups have developed independently from academic settings, with, for example, **Gamelan Gita Asmara** in Vancouver, founded in 2001 by Michael Tenzer, or **OMBAK** in Nova Scotia, directed by Ken Shorley.

Finally, this overview would not be complete without mentioning a recent initiative that brings together percussionists from across Canada. Initiated by Michael Schutz and Fabrice Marandola, the **Canadian Percussion Network** (CPN) emerged following the Covid pandemic in 2020, first linking educators through virtual events, and soon developing into a full network with in-person and virtual events, thanks to research grants awarded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The CPN aims to connect percussionists interested in building bridges between percussion research and performance, providing unique occasions for percussionists to meet on a regular basis, despite the constraints of our extreme spread across our large country. Established ensembles such as Architek, TorQ, and Sixtrum are partners of the network and present concerts each in turn at the in-person events, where emerging ensembles and soloists also have the opportunity to perform.

The repeated contact enabled through network events (particularly through the conference series The Space Between) have led to new partnerships, for example, the creation of a new trio, **Triolet** (Kristie Ibrahim, McGill University; Gina Ryan, UQAM; and Victoria Sparks, University of Manitoba), who played at PASIC25. Coordinated by Kristie Ibrahim, mass ensemble performances of the CPN Orchestra have become a tradition at each of The Space Between events, offering opportunities for additional connections between participants and attendees, as students perform alongside educators, military musicians, and international artists.

After nearly 60 years of development of percussion and percussion ensembles in Canada through two phases of evolution, the spike in exchanges and collaborations enhanced by the CPN could be seen, in the near future, as the starting point of an exciting third wave for Canadian percussion.

I would like to thank all the colleagues who took the time to dig into their archives and share information with me, and to Kristie Ibrahim for the revision of the text. Trying to capture in a nutshell 60 years of the evolution

Canadian Percussion Network Orchestra, The Space Between IV, Winnipeg (photo by Matt Duboff)

of percussion ensembles in Canada means is a daunting task, and I encourage readers to visit the websites of the ensembles to learn more about their activities.

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6. Interview with Leroux and Brongo, David (2023), *La multipercussion solo au Québec : de Micheline Coulombe Saint-Marcoux à Patrick Giguère*, Doctoral thesis, McGill University.
7. Commissioned by Metz Festival (France), "Tempus ex Machina" would later be developed to become "Le Noir de l'Étoile" (1990).
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Fabrice Marandola is an Associate Professor of Percussion and Contemporary Music at the Schulich School of Music of McGill University (Montreal) since 2005. Previously, he was a professor of percussion at the conservatories of Angers and Grenoble in France, a pedagogy instructor at the Conservatory of Paris (CNSMDP), and an invited professor at the Crane School of Music (SUNY-Potsdam, N.Y.). A founding member of Canadian percussion ensemble Sixtrum, he has an active career on the New Music scene, commissioning, performing and recording new works for solo and chamber ensembles. Marandola holds a First Prize in percussion from the CNSMD in Paris (1997), a PhD in Ethnomusicology from Paris IV-Sorbonne (2003), and he has conducted in-depth field research in Cameroon. He was the Director of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Music Media and Technology of Montreal (CIRMMT) from 2020–24. As Senior Research Chair at Sorbonne-Universités (2015–16), Marandola led a multidisciplinary research project on Musical Gesture.

Exploring Six-Mallet Marimba Playing in Solo and Chamber Music

By Mei Shyuan Chiou

I began exploring six-mallet technique in 2020, prior to pursuing my DMA in the United States. Due to the scarcity of pedagogical resources and published materials on six-mallet performance, I have largely developed my technique independently.

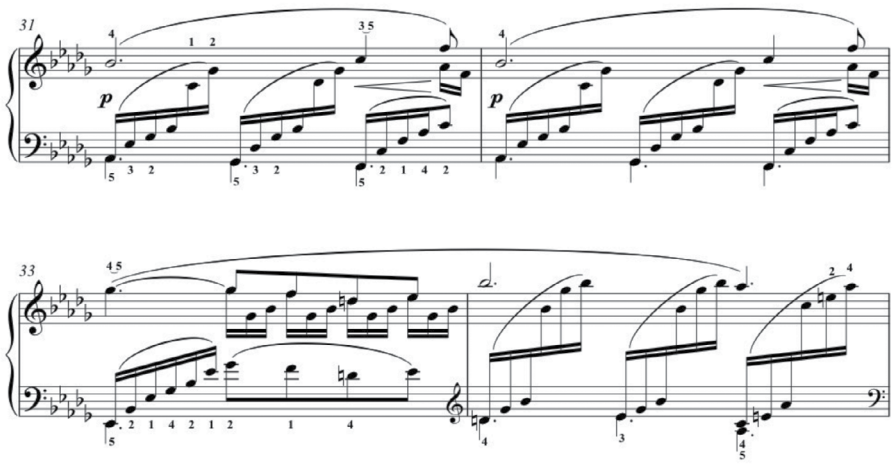
Effective six-mallet playing requires strategies that develop strength while minimizing physical strain, allowing performers to achieve a smooth and natural playing feel with refined control of their hands and fingers. Although six-mallet repertoire is rare and highly specialized, I have found great satisfaction in discovering efficient approaches that integrate muscle coordination, grip mechanics, and full-body alignment.

I am particularly drawn to six-mallet performance for the expanded musical possibilities it offers in performing advanced solo repertoire with greater ease and control. Performing adaptations of piano literature such as études or toccatas, or personal arrangements of music from various musical genres, can significantly enhance musicality and a player's understanding and control of independent voices, and dynamic layering.

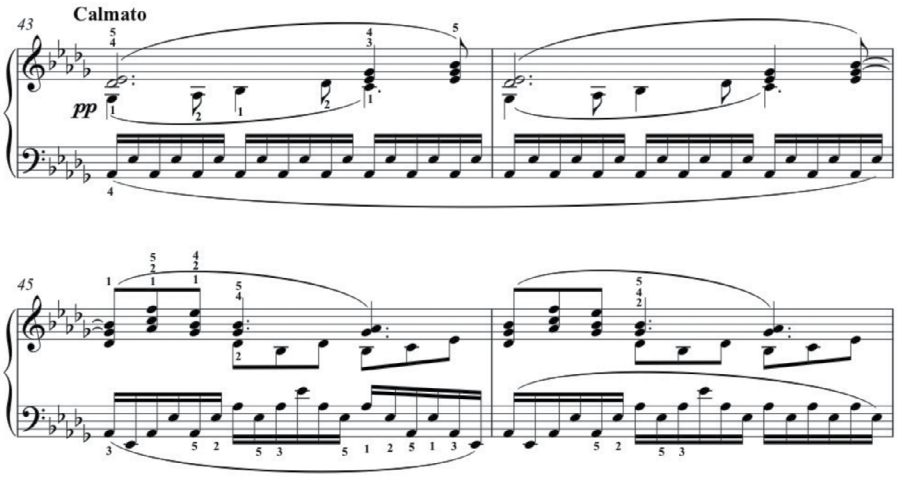
The following two examples by Debussy are especially valuable for exploring chordal balance, octave spacing, independent strokes, and interpretive nuance on marimba. The goal is to achieve a level of smoothness and tonal continuity comparable to that of a pianist. Developing proficiency in independent strokes, whether for single notes, alternating strokes, or connected octaves is essential for rendering homophonic, polyphonic, and contrapuntal textures. (See Example 1.)

Example 1: From "Clair de lune" from Suite bergamasque *for solo piano by Claude Debussy*

Excerpt 1



Excerpt 2

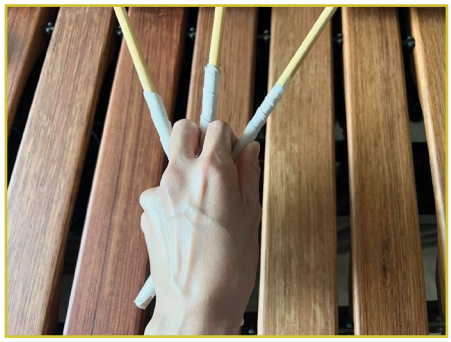


Although six-mallet music may never achieve the same level of popularity as four-mallet repertoire, it represents an important milestone for the percussion field by offering performers a new layer of technical and expressive choice.

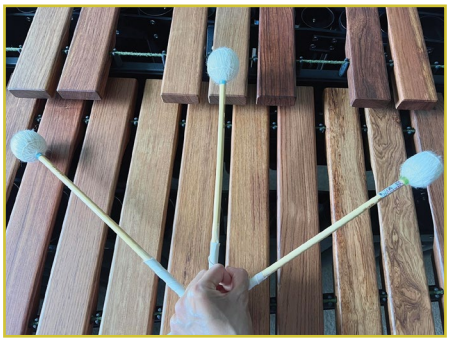
Initially, I studied solo six-mallet repertoire by Keiko Abe and chamber works requiring six-mallet technique by Robert Paterson and Chiung-Ying Chang. It was valuable to study repertoire of varying levels of difficulty to get a picture of the flexibility required. At the end of this article, there are links to my performances of a variety of pieces.

Because of the physical demands of controlling three mallets in each hand, it is essential to engage larger muscle groups first, such as the shoulders and upper arms, before refining control with smaller muscles in the wrists and fingers. It is helpful to stay relaxed as you play. The following two images provide basic views of the six-mallet grip I use.

Normal Grip

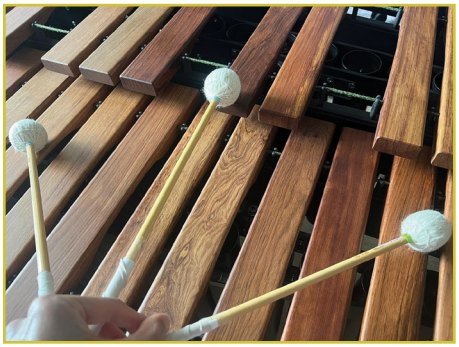


Open Grip



The next two images demonstrate correct striking positions on the bar, as well as proper finger and hand coordination.

I recommend experimenting with different six-mallet grips to determine which is most comfortable and effective for you. See below for links to introductions to six-mallet playing by Robert Paterson and Kai Stensgaard.



To build greater control and flexibility with six-mallet technique, your practice should include alternating double strokes and single independent strokes at a variety of tempos. Here are some practice strategies to approach six-mallet playing with a pianistic concept.

- Consistently engage the wrists and arms to sustain a legato sound in the primary melody while maintaining clear voicing among multiple layers.
- Practice independence and clarity of each musical line at various tempos without interruption to build control and endurance.
- Gradually combine all voicings while maintaining even tone production and relaxed physical coordination.

Along with feeling motivated by the challenge of developing advanced techniques and applying them across a wide range of musical styles, I'm also interested in having a hand in new works and projects. I was, therefore, grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with a composer during a composition course. I advised composer and saxophonist Parker Fritz on his composition "Opposing Notes" (2024) for saxophone and marimba (played with six mallets). Fritz's piece depicts a playful yet tense dialogue between the two instruments. Starting in agreement but diverging over details, they argue and negotiate through the piece, culminating in a passionate, frustrated outburst as they reach a reluctant compromise. I provide a link to a video below.

The piece was featured in six-mallet-centered guest artist recitals we presented nationwide as "Composite Duo" that included a clinic at PASIC50. At this presentation, we discussed how performers and composers can work together to create idiomatic marimba parts and compelling chamber music.

A central topic was how marimba writing can best reflect the physical and sonic realities of the instrument. We emphasized the importance of considering stickings, mallet distribution, register balance, resonance, and natural motion patterns, especially when writing for extended techniques such as six-mallet performance. Idiomatic marimba parts allow performers to focus on musical expression rather than problem-solving technical obstacles. Our initial focus in developing this work was to explore the six-mallet idiom and create a cohesive structure that highlights both the instrument's distinctive qualities and its unique expressive language.

Equally important is how instruments interact within a chamber context. I shared suggestions on combining instruments in ways that highlight contrast and comple-

mentarity, such as balancing articulation, register, sustain, and timbral density. Successful combinations consider not only sonic blend, but also rhythmic interaction and physical coordination between players, allowing each instrument to maintain a clear identity while contributing to a cohesive musical texture.

In some case studies in composition classes, the composer's role is to help performers sound their best. When performers are comfortable, confident, and able to shine, the music itself becomes stronger and more convincing. In observing collaborations between other composers and performers, we have developed several guiding principles:

- It's helpful for composers to take time to understand the performers, including their stylistic preferences and technical abilities.
- Plan carefully but remain flexible and receptive to feedback.
- Write idiomatically, avoiding passages that are physically impractical or unnecessarily complex.
- Treat collaboration as an ongoing dialogue rather than a one-sided process.

We frequently employ a workshop model consisting of three short sessions: reading through an initial sketch, a mid-process workshop, and a near-final rehearsal. Each session is recorded for later review. During these workshops, improvising short fragments and discussing possibilities generates new ideas and solutions that would not emerge through notation alone. This process allows the piece to evolve organically while ensuring that both musical intent and performability remain aligned.

Composite Duo: Mei Shyuan Chiou and Parker Fritz

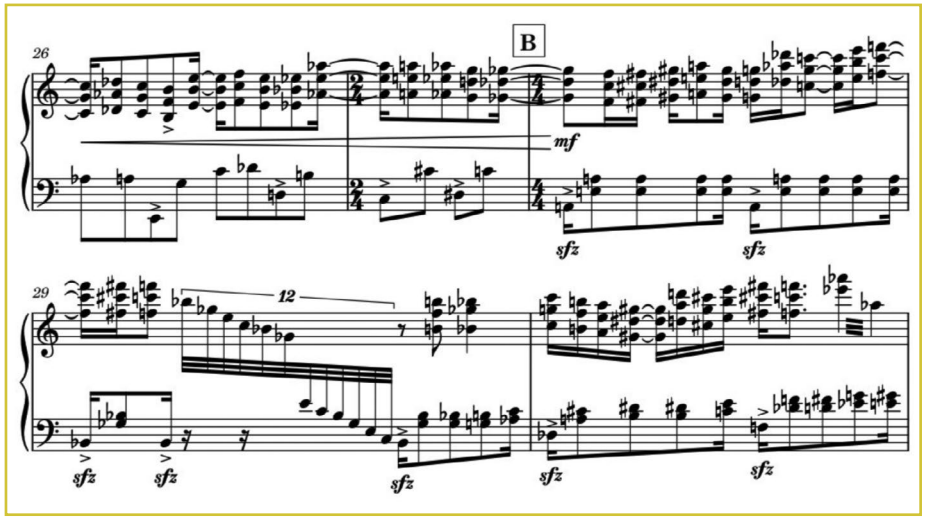
"OPPOSING NOTES" BY PARKER FRITZ (EDITED BY MEI SHYUAN CHIOU)

Here are three examples of a short section of the marimba part from Parker's composition. I provide a link to a performance of the complete work below.

Across three versions, you will see a gradual progression of what we found to be less successful, to more successful, via collaborating together. The Third version is part of the completed work.

In studying each example, please focus on the music at letter B. (See Examples 2, 3, and 4.)

Example 2. ***First version:*** *We attempted to make the six-mallet texture resemble piano writing; however, controlling the mallets in this way proved to be extremely difficult.*



Collaborative experiences have reinforced my belief that strong chamber music emerges from mutual respect, open communication, and a shared commitment to making the music and the performers sound their best. Although six-mallet music may never achieve the same level of popularity as four-mallet repertoire, I believe it represents an important milestone for the percussion field by offering performers a new layer of technical and expressive choice.

Looking ahead, I am particularly interested in developing works that combine

six-mallet marimba with multi-percussion, allowing six-mallet techniques to be freely adapted and explored across other percussion instruments as well.

RECOMMENDED LINKS ON SIX-MALLET PLAYING

An introduction by Robert Paterson:
robertpaterson.com/introduction-to-my-six-mallet-technique

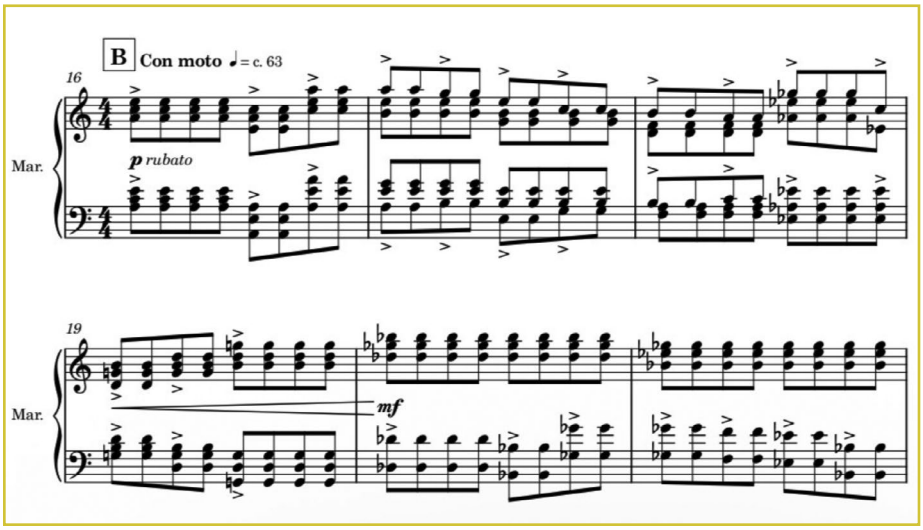
An introduction by Kai Stensgaard:
jwpepper.com/the-six-mallet-grip-11323164/p?utm_source=chatgpt.com

PERFORMANCES BY MEI SHYUAN CHIOU

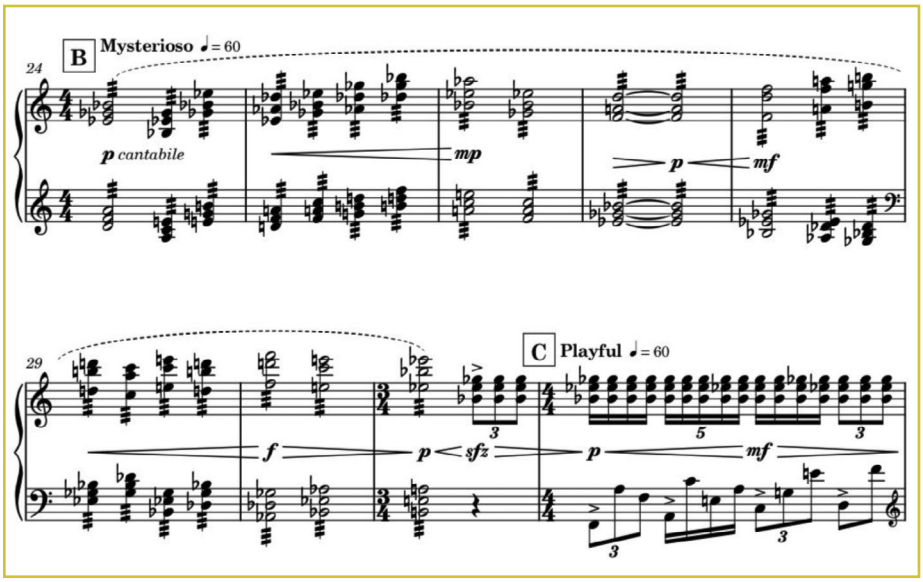
Video of "Opposing Notes" by Parker Fritz, performed by Composite Duo: *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZjnYOc5XbM*

More performance videos at: *https://www.youtube.com/@mei-shyuanchiu8143*

Example 3. ***Second version:*** *We discussed clarifying the tonal structure, chords, and use of space. In other words, we reorganized and grouped similar elements together to create greater structural clarity and consistency in both musical expression and six-mallet technique. (Parts of this version might serve as a beginning six-mallet exercise.)*



Example 4. ***Third version:*** *We found the following version most effective, as the spacing is comfortable for a six-mallet player, and the movement angles enable fluid execution.*



Taiwanese percussionist **Mei Shyuan "Shenny" Chiou** is a distinguished soloist, chamber musician, and orchestral performer, recognized for her innovation, technical mastery, and dedication to expanding the expressive scope of percussion. Chiou won second prize in the inaugural International Classical Marimba Artist League Competition (held in Minnesota), and first place in the "Percussion and Other Instruments" category at the Italy PAS Percussion Competition. She has performed with Michael Dease, Garrett Arney, Sō Percussion, Kevin Bobo, and with various orchestras. Chiou holds a Master of Music degree from Wichita State University, where she studied with Jerry Scholl. She is currently completing work for a Doctor of Musical Arts at Michigan State University, where her principal teachers include Prof. Gwendolyn Dease, Dr. Jon Weber, and composer Prof. Ricardo Lorenz. Chiou is dedicated to introducing the unique artistry of six-mallet chamber music to university audiences across the U.S., and will do so internationally in 2026. She has also arranged music and composed various etudes to support student development. More information at: *https://www.meishyuanchiou.com*.

Vibraphone, Voice, and Contradictions: A conversation with Evi Filippou

By Gloria Yehilevsky

Evi Filippou is a Berlin-based Greek vibraphone player, percussionist, performer, and composer, deeply immersed in the intersection of composition, improvisation, and multicultural expression. With a love for improvised experimental music and traditional folk music from around the world, she channels these passions through various projects. Notably, she created i*nEvitable*, which won the German Jazz Prize for Debut Album of the Year in 2023.

Filippou is also well known for her collaboration with bassist Robert Lucaciu in the Filippou & Lucaciu duet, where they explore the realms of jazz, improvised music, and Balkan traditions. She performs across Europe with a wide range of musicians, often engaging in interdisciplinary performances that combine music with other artistic forms.

This conversation was riveting, and Filippou was extraordinarily charismatic and energetic. Importantly, she consistently made metaphors between personhood and music — how these interplay and interact and reveal one another. From the first question about what appeared to be a small discrepancy across platforms, she instantly revealed complications, depth, and history alongside a consistently forward-and-outward-looking approach. She doesn't stop exploring and questioning and learning, and it shows both in her music and personality. It was a pleasure being in dialogue with her.

Gloria Yehilevsky: I was just checking out your record *inEvitable* — nice play on words there — and you make your Greek background explicit in the album's description. One track has different titles on streaming and on Bandcamp: "Niska Banja Filippou" and "Spa of Niš" respectfully. What's that about?

Evi Filippou: Yes, it's "Spa of Niš." "Niska Banja" simply translates to "Spa of Niš." It's a Serbian folk song. I played snare drum in a brass band for a long time, which influenced me a lot. I may jump off topic; I recently gave an interview where I was asked specific questions about the vibraphone, and it made me

Photo by Leon Maria Plecity

think: I'm just a musician who happens to play percussion and vibraphone. I'm classically trained, but even while studying classical music, I knew that I would not take the orchestral route.

When my career started, I played a lot of contemporary music and music theater in Germany. At the same time, I was making a living playing drums in wedding bands, I practiced drums to get jobs, and I continued playing some marching band stuff. Those marching bands have a communal vibe, are heavy in groove, and people dance; if you don't make them dance, you've failed. Both that and the weddings, also in Serbia and Greece, are about sharing: playing and creating and giving something for the people. Contemporary music is the opposite: focused on the idea or concept.

In my album I wanted to bridge these two disparate things, at least in feeling. How do I get this feeling of "for the people" with musicians who play modern and free jazz? How do I get them to cover folk songs?

Yehilevsky: That's a beautiful approach. I love that.

Filippou: It gets more complicated. Where I live in Germany, things are controversial when it comes to folk and traditional music because much of that was used by the Nazis and is now stigmatized. So, musicians here have completely left out folk. Similarly, they're concerned about culturally appropriating jazz, so they are cautious around swing because that's African-American. But there are elements from these forms of music that are now missing from the scene: human elements. So, I'm always searching and asking: Can we use that? Can we go there? It's an endless piece of research. And I'm finding that across these styles; we actually mean the same thing. I'm just traveling through these various musical expressions rooted in humanity: whatever we are, we're human.

Yehilevsky: You're a composer as well, and looking at your liner notes, there's mention of you connecting to your Greekness, but hearing this point you just made — marrying the contemporary to the folk tradition, negotiating the conceptual versus communal approach — adds even more to the information in those notes. Looking at this track, "Spa of Niš," there's a clear melody, which you're playing on the vibraphone, and you're repeating it while the others are outlining in tandem with some harmonies. There are amazing swells in the horns that would seem quite hard to notate, so how much of it was pre-arranged, how much was notated, how much was determined in person, and how much did you just let them do by ear and/or in the moment?

Filippou: Actually, we rarely get to play because it's very hard to organize. I'm not a composer in the traditional sense. When I have an idea, I notate it as well as I can, but I don't get every detail on paper. I'm very lucky because I play with a lot of people and get to see many different scores, sometimes about half composed, and I'll grab an idea but also select musicians for my band who can play with something like that. They're great readers and great improvisers. When someone's a great reader but not a great improviser, it doesn't work as well because my ideas are not notated with enough detail and the music doesn't come through without the improvised contribution. So, my rehearsals involve a lot of conversation, or sometimes I'll play a recording and ask someone to imitate it. Perhaps some composers can write to such detail, but let's face it, it takes a long time. Perhaps if there was funding for all that time taken to notate. My band's reality is that we meet for three to four days at a time, rehearsing first then playing two or three concerts, then we separate and meet six months later. Funding two weeks of rehearsal is not feasible.

In the past, this was possible. Robin Schulkowsky used to have one gig a month at the radio and would have the entire month to practice and prepare the concert. That was doable at that time; imagine the quality of the music one could make with a month to prepare, alongside with paying your rent and being able to live reasonably. That's not our current reality.

I found that with my band, the more I write, the more confusing it is for them because we don't have enough time to get through the content. I get some of my rehearsing and compositional style from Paul Motian, reducing an idea to one or two lines, then go. There is an element of "not knowing what I'm doing" — always employing trial and error.

Yehilevsky: I love that, I've also gone through an evolution of writing less for each new piece. It took a long time to get there because you feel some pressure as a composer to give instruction, but then I find I don't necessarily get the sounds I want when I notate more, I realize that's not actually what I was picturing; it even loses cohesion.

Filippou: A quote from a music educator I resonate with is, paraphrased: "In order to judge something that you made, you have to make it first." So, when I made my record, I didn't have a clear view of the process: I just made it and released it, and in the process was thinking "What is this?" "Why am I fascinated by this?" There are folk elements, but I never considered myself a folk musician.

Going from there, I started observing and studying different kinds of music. In Ireland I transcribed Irish music. I worked with some Moroccan musicians and got into that. I transcribed some Greek tunes. Over time, I realized that all those traditional musics are fascinated by the same things. It's expressed in a different way, but you see a lot of two-against-three, it's all connected to the overtone series, there are plenty of ornaments in similar places. The way the ornaments work is often similar across distant places that are

near the sea and among those who are not near the sea. Some of those similarities are insane. To me this speaks to how humans are humans.

What do these people who play traditional music have in common? They all know the lines, the song. Sometimes there's some disagreement about the chords or exact rhythm, but there's a line that survived years and years, mouth to mouth. There is a reason for that.

When I have my own ideas and play around with them, I think, what is the essence of this? If it's just one line that I will pass on to someone, it has to be a strong line. It's slightly more complicated: maybe it's a groove that is strong, maybe a line, a melody. Improvising masters always start improvising on this basic idea, then going mental into virtuosic stuff, but the idea is often very basic. So, I think, having such great improvising musicians in my band, when my idea is strong enough and good enough, then they can go really crazy and be free with it. When I play complicated notated music, there's not enough freedom. We don't have time yet to get to the freedom.

Yehilevsky: This makes me think of my supervisor, Hans Koller, who says: "It has to be very tight so it can be loose when it happens," and he means the idea, or composition, or line. Once that's clear, then everyone's secure in it and can be free.

Let's jump to the beginning; tell me your background, chronologically. You grew up in Greece, are now based in Berlin. Did you study in Germany as well?

Filippou: Yes, I studied here: bachelor's and master's in Berlin.

Yehilevsky: What was your training like? What kind of music were you playing in Greece, before university? What got you started in percussion in childhood, and how did you get to classical percussion? Where in all of that did improvising begin, and when did it take the spotlight? It also sounds like there's a compositional focus that emerged, and I'm wondering if that came organically or if you also have formal composition training.

Filippou: I grew up in Volos, Greece. It's a small town by the sea. I went to music school there, earning a certificate equivalent to finishing high school, but specialized in music. At 18, I moved to Berlin and studied for my bachelor's and master's at the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler, a great school for classical playing, where I realized early on that I didn't want to do that. Even before then, since I was 15, through the age of 25, I attended a workshop in Greece every summer in the mountains near my hometown: Agios Lavrentios (Saint Lawrence). There I took part in improvisation and drum workshops, which changed my life in important ways: What can you do with rhythm? How do you approach polyrhythms? How can you do that with melodic instruments?

At the time, I was between worlds: the classical orchestral/soloist route laid to me at Hanns Eisler, and the opportunity for jamming with the summer community and the jazz community in Berlin.

I remember being told when I was 20, and this is nothing unique or new: "You can do whatever you want. You can find your sound. You play beautifully, don't worry, just keep practicing." However, the way this person said it was different and it impacted me. I started playing with him in some bands, and observing the scene evolve in Berlin — this was ten years ago — where there was a lot of notated music with free improvisation. You needed to be able to read well and to improvise freely, not over changes in the jazz idiom. I would just play what I heard and read what they wrote, and I really got in that scene.

Simultaneously, I was struggling at university, both interpersonally and with assignments — not to say I didn't thoroughly enjoy it and its incredible courses, especially studying history and a few composition classes. Then I took some music theater classes, which I loved. So, in these classes, combined with the improvised music scene, I realized for the first time that I felt like I belonged. Belonging is critical for me because it's what runs the world; we're all trying to belong. The feeling of being part of a group, any group, even an extremist one, you still feel like you're part of a group, satisfying that need to belong.

This sense of belonging eased the challenges associated with being a foreigner. I felt like I was able to be myself and be weird — and that's a good thing. That's pretty much how my current career trajectory started. It feels like I've been incredibly lucky, but of course, I always keep working like a crazy person, and somehow between the luck and hard work it happened. I was always taking jobs I wasn't ready for, and in the first five years or so, I just kept saying yes. I was constantly out of my comfort zone, but then I would call friends and ask for help when I needed it: What's this augmented thing? What is a minor sixth? What do they mean by this? Then I was sent books and papers and YouTube videos, and I just stayed in the middle of it, starting to feel like I was really getting into something.

Yehilevsky: Amazing. So what were these projects and courses — like the music theater one — you were doing? Were they residency programs? Or projects with composers? Tell me more about these.

Filippou: Some of it was during my master's. I was studying contemporary music and education then. It was partially to stay at the same school and be able to keep practicing there — because we need instruments as percussionists — and it was a good fit for a lot of reasons, less prescriptive. I started bringing my external life into the university

and organizing my own projects, and professional residencies and my own composing came much later. I feel like external scholarships started arriving years after I needed them: when you're in university you're also struggling for money. But nonetheless they gave me confidence.

Soon I started having my own band to realize my ideas, then COVID arrived. I don't know how it was in other countries, but here, we (artists) got some money. I'm not ashamed to say that it was a great time for me because I had some funding, I knew I could survive for six months, and I was bored. I love being bored, it's like, let's go! I was alone, I went to my studio by bike, and everybody was free. So, I invited people to get together and play my compositions. By then, I had the audacity to ask some extraordinary musicians: Do you want to come play? I'll get you a bottle of wine. And they all came and gave feedback: what was/wasn't working, suggestions to notate things differently, things you need to hear.

From there, I thought, let's do an album. That took a couple of years, and it was a lot more than I anticipated: the number of people you have to hire, and how to produce it…. You need particular codes to master something, but I figured it out as I went. I didn't know what I was doing, but thought "I should do this to see what it is," so I pushed through.

Also, I went to a lot of concerts and listened to a lot of music. You get to observe how people compose and improvise. That was huge for my development.

Looking at where I am now, things still aren't settled. They're not perfect. I still have my toes in so many areas, including education, the various types of playing I'm doing. Even this weekend, I was working on a composition and thought, what is this thing I wrote? Then we workshopped it and played the gigs on our tour, and it reminded me of how we seem to live in a different reality from those we admire. Look at Miles Davis, he played at least 100 gigs a year; that does something to the music. We will likely never do that, especially as vibraphone players. Even trumpet players and bass players, they don't get as many gigs as they used to because the reality has completely changed. So, it takes time for the music to get there.

I remember reading a Ron Carter interview, and he said when they went on tour, the first month would suck. That's like 25 concerts. It took that many tries to look for the music. This inspires me a lot; we can cut ourselves some slack and keep looking and play the gigs we have and look for the music. The first performance is a critical part of the process, and something always has to be adapted after that, no matter how small, but usually it takes more than one performance to iron those changes out.

Yehilevsky: Yes, and that is a different setting from the rehearsal setting.

Filippou: Exactly, and some things might not work at all, which you have to rewrite, and that's okay. I've reduced the pressure about this in recent years, because otherwise I wouldn't get anything done.

Yehilevsky: Did you ever formally train in jazz? It seems you've come from unrestricted improvisation, but there is this ARD recording of you, and there are songs in there with tonal, functional harmony.

Filippou: I did some work on my own, and I took some jazz vibraphone lessons, but very sporadically. I'm actually taking some lessons now with Tim Collins, who is based in Munich, and who plays straight ahead and beautifully. I also learn a lot from my colleagues: my duo partner Robert Lucaciu is an incredible jazz musician, an incredible bass player. He knows so much; I'm learning from him all the time.

I'm also transcribing and listening to a lot of music. I'm starting to realize some things, and when I notice them, I go ask people; I ask so many questions it's sometimes embarrassing. But I'm not ashamed of doing this or about not knowing these things. I'm shameless, asking about chords, scales, notes.

Yehilevsky: I had this experience recently learning a blues that I didn't know was a blues. Then I was playing with a guitarist 10 years younger than me who told me what it was. I didn't mind him teaching it to me.

Filippou: Yes, I've benefitted from a lot of generosity from my peers, and I give back the same when someone asks me. On the other hand, to be brutally honest, who cares what you call it? I like this and I want to play it. That's enough justification.

Yehilevsky: Now that you've transcribed and identified all these patterns, do you hear them in something new that you're listening to?

Filippou: Sometimes I hear it, but I have to tell you something else: when I really love the song, for a very long time, I resist the tendency to understand what it is because, oh, it's so beautiful.

Yehilevsky: Because you love the mystery. I get it. I'm the same.

Filippou: So you get it. When I've listened to it 1,000 times, then I'm ready to find out what it is.

Yehilevsky: I want to ask about your album. We've spoken about your classical training, and I saw you were playing a lot of the canonical percussion repertoire, like pieces by Cangelosi and Aperghis. Do you do any of that anymore?

Filippou: No. Sometimes I get asked to play a contemporary opera, but honestly, I am not missing practicing for that many hours to perform for one hour. I love the process. I also love seeing people in their process; sometimes you go to the concert and it's not done, but it's great.

Yehilevsky: I'm still curious about how and why improvising came into the picture. Your formal training didn't involve this, then you improvised in that summer group, so was it simply an organic development from being in that community and culture, or is there something more about improvisation that makes you want to do it? Is there something more about an improvised practice that attracts you to continue? You touched on the issue of preparation, but what else is holding you there and keeping you going in that direction?

Filippou: Before you really get into it you think it's going to feel differently, but in the end, it just feels like it's music, right? So, it always feels the same. One thing I admire about the communities I engaged with is their ability to simply play a song. I was always thinking, I can play thousands of notes on the marimba, and this is ridiculous: I spent 10 years of my life studying this but I can't sit down at a party and just play a song. That was one of my first motivators, because I knew so many people who could do that so well. I knew I had the skill, but I realized it's a whole different story to be able to do it.

There were a lot of false steps, meaning, I played a lot of shows poorly. I always try to get there. I find that improvising — whether freely, or over changes, or something in between that — is like mapping your unconscious. You're really discovering a space that you can't see.

I'll add to that that I'm not just interested in playing improvised music. I think the world needs different things right now, and I want to be a part of that — not just do it for myself. There are some areas that are dark and unexplored, and that's a space we can access, mainly with improvisation.

I also like, in the improvised space, the freedom that anything can happen, and it is also happening to you. Similar to how we're talking now: there's thousands of things that can cross your mind, and we're constantly stimulated by what's happening in our surroundings, or even in what we feel, I might tell you something beautiful, yet there is some sadness and grief in it anyway. Improvisation is great for capturing those complexities. In the context of the most beautiful song, you can take the most crazy or sad or dark solo, you can be away from harmony, you can be in it, or completely out. For me, that makes perfect sense because it's who and how we are. Some will deny this or are afraid of naming these contradictions inside them.

Improvisation really helped me embrace that you have no clue what's going to happen, because you don't. Nobody does. Sorry. It also has made me a better person; music has done so generally, but improvisation reveals these truths.

And part of it is the practice of playing things that I cannot play. Abbey Lincoln recalled adding lyrics to some Thelonius Monk tunes, and when she performed them for him, he said, "Great job, but you're too perfect." Reflecting on why he said that, she thought he meant you have to reach for the sky, and even if you fall, just go for that crazy thing and fail. That's more interesting than performing perfectly. I mean, how great is that — applying thinking like this in life? I'll add another quote, paraphrased, from an educator: "Music is the process of turning the seemingly impossible into the familiar." Apply this in life, too. It's beautiful, no?

Yehilevsky: It's amazing. You were touching on those contradictions: it's beautiful and it's happy, but it has this grief to it. I think what you're talking about is how improvisation gives us, what I like to talk about as the "lower down" forms of knowing because they are beneath what we can label and describe. There's a lot that happens in our lives that isn't on that level of perception, so it's lower down. It's in the body. We know it because we can move, we can do it, we exist though it. I think it goes even deeper down than emotions, because even with those, even when you don't have the precise word for the emotion, you can describe it, but there's something that happens before you even access that feeling. There's something that happens in your body and in your experience that has years and years of history. So, I feel like improvisation taps into those areas that are lower down that are not quite possible to express in other ways — in explicit ways. You touch on those contradictions and how we often don't even know why we're feeling a certain way.

Filippou: The last piece I'll add to this is about free playing. There's often a challenge around that with "Who's going to listen to this?" and I know those problems well, having curated a lot of concert series, and knowing the challenges and limitations and the audience. But my ongoing research and experiments, making this crazy music that is super melodic, then it's not, then it's super something else; it's like 1,000 ideas at the same time. It's very much me and it's intense, but also it's sweet and it's funny and whatever. I test it all the time with all kinds of audiences, and I'm coming freshly now from a couple of concerts where I really pushed it with the experimental stuff, staying in weird places for a long time and not making any discounts on this. I can tell you that most of the audience were not musicians. And they felt it because they felt the darkness. They know it's there. So, I love it. I feel like I would like to go to a concert like this; I always like to go to concerts where people are not afraid.

Yehilevsky: When people criticize whether there's an audience for the music, they're usually those who just aren't aware of the space. Because there is an audience. There's a whole culture around it, and people are buying these albums and listening to this stuff. There are record labels of just experimental music, and they're really popular. There's lots of people listening to it.

I want to ask about your singing. What's the history there?

Filippou: I love singing. I think it was the first thing that I tried to do to accompany myself on the vibes, just to feel like a real musician — like what I was talking about before: someone who can play songs. It was important for me to be able to do this. But also, I think it's the best instrument ever. You just carry it with you.

At the same time, I hate everything about being a singer. I hate that you have to take care of your voice, get some sleep, you shouldn't drink beer, always be careful. Sometimes, to take care of the instrument is so against my character.

But there's something there for me that expresses something personal. I mean, it's my actual voice. It *is* very personal.

A lot of people have been very patient with me singing out of tune and trying stuff on stage. In recent years I've hired a singer for my band, which relieves that pressure, but also it opens up possibilities. We can sing duo stuff, for example. I'm fascinated by how in so many traditions you have singing mostly by women — old school traditions in Greece, Ireland, and Morocco, focusing on the female voice, which is what I'm interested in hearing. I want that in my music; it means something to me.

I also sing these contradictions and push my voice: I practice these loud things I learn from vocal classes that I never do in performance, or I try singing the opposite of what I am, or maybe it is some part of me, to be quiet, to be controlled, and to be soft.

I can access those poles between the vibes and voice: sometimes on the instrument I can be completely crazy, and when I sing I can be my other part of myself, just sing the song from the beginning to the end and try to be in tune. And that's also a part of me, it's not only about mapping the unknown, but also, "I really like this melody, so here it is for you."

Yehilevsky: The last thing I'll ask about, I saw a trailer for this project you led: "The Rite of Healing Weapons." You spoke earlier about your compositional process, but in this there are live electronics players and ceramicists — or someone expertly dealing with ceramics. I'm curious how much of that you're composing, or perhaps it's what I might call compositional curatorship. Is it a little bit of that?

Filippou: Yes, it mostly started with a wish to do something with Natalia Manta, a visual artist who was always saying to me, "I'm making you instruments; I want you to play them," but we never got around to it. And one of my biggest struggles with the vibraphone is that it's well tempered and you cannot detune it like so many other instruments. So the idea to use tuned percussion with pitched ceramics, where the ceramics are wildly out of tune, gives me the opportunity to play with this tuning dilemma.

I wanted something that sounded contemporary and archaic at the same time, like really ancient in a way. I don't know why. However, in the compositional process, especially because I work mainly with improvisers, I write boxes that contain musical cells, and we workshop around that mostly. There are a few parts where I'll decide, for example, I want a chorale, and I will write it and ask someone to play it.

I also see a lot of the live electronic processing as another aspect of mapping the unknown: it adds to layers. As you probably heard in the record *inEvitable*, I'm obsessed with layers and layering one thing with another. So, using live processing is highlighting the layers of one sound because it opens this one thing, and then suddenly it's 10 things at the same time.

There are two electronics players: one is mostly working with amplification and playing around with what's already there, and the other one builds his own pedals and uses his own sounds.

Yehilevsky: That's quite an important compositional act, how you selected those two electronics players. Each one has a distinct style, so that's part of the composition. And this project was part of a STOP OVER 3 Residency Program. Was that something you applied for?

Filippou: Yes, so the Zentrum under construction [center for improvised music] is an initiative that's trying to convince politicians to fund a state-funded center for improvised music in Berlin. This is something that Cologne has, but Berlin has plenty of jazz clubs with no state-funded entity. So, every year they have an open call for artists, and they give you space to develop work, so I applied and was successful.

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 UK'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.

Chiapan and Guatemalan Marimbas: History and Construction

By Dr. Gabriela Ordonez Villalobos

The Central America marimba is usually called either a Mexican marimba or a Guatemalan marimba. Even though they both have the same roots, and they developed simultaneously, they ended up with several differences in their construction. To understand how the Mexican and Guatemalan marimbas developed into different instruments, it is necessary to go back to the history of the Central American marimba.

EARLY ORIGINS OF THE MARIMBA IN CENTRAL AMERICA

There is evidence of the concept of "grouping wooden pieces" in Africa and Asia before the American Continent conquest in 1492.[1] Musical instruments made of small pieces of wood set up in sequence have been found in such African countries as Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Madagascar.[2] There is no evidence of the concept of "grouping wooden pieces" in Central America before the European conquest. Guatemalan and Mexican historians have tried unsuccessfully to connect the marimba origins to Mayans.[3]

The first documentation of the term "marimba" in the American Continent is in the book *Compendio de Historia del Reino de Goathemala* by Domingo Juarros in 1680. Juarros quotes Diego Felix de Carranza y Cordoba: "Tonight, the audience at the public square looks great… the color guard entered…in the front was a troop with (music) boxes, atabales,[4] clarinets, trumpets, marimbas, and all the Indian instruments."[5]

Knowing that the official date of the arrival of Europeans to the American continent is October 12, 1492, it means the Central America marimba was developed within these 188 years (1492–1680).

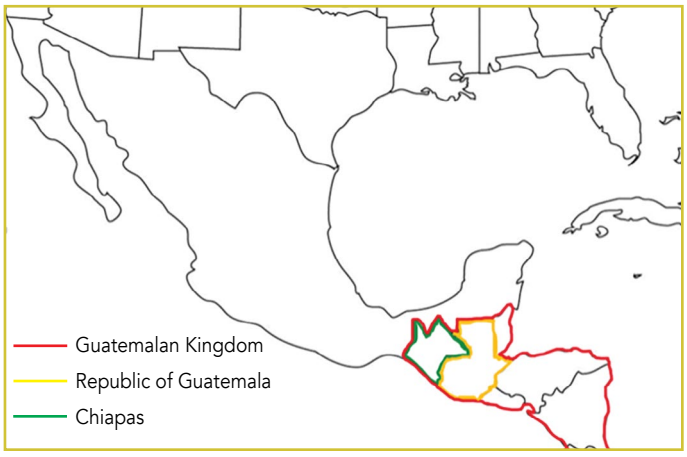
BRIEF HISTORY OF CHIAPAS AND GUATEMALA

Reino de Guatemala (Guatemalan Kingdom) was the name of the Central American area, named and founded by the Spaniard Pedro de Alvarado in 1524, and it is what we know today as Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, El Salvador, and the southernmost Mexican state of Chiapas. Both Chiapas and Guatemala became part of Mexico after their independence from the Spanish empire in 1822. Guatemala won its independence from Mexico in 1823 and became a republic in 1839.[6] This historic and geographical information helps us to understand why Mexican and Guatemalan marimbas both have the same origin but took different directions in their development. This period in history marks the independence of Guatemala from Mexico. Once the border appeared between these two areas, the culture was divided, as was the development of the marimba.

MARIMBA DE TECOMATES OR GOURD MARIMBA

In the Guatemalan Kingdom, the gourd marimba was very popular within the native Central American communities.[7] The gourd marimba is the first version of the Central Ameri-

Figure 1. Map of the former Guatemalan Kingdom and the current Republic of Guatemala and the Mexican State of Chiapas.



can marimba. Using tecomates (gourds) as resonators and *hormigo* wood for the bars, this type of marimba is diatonic (seven pitched notes) and has a range of three octaves.[8] The player sits on the floor and sets the keyboard on his or her lap.[9]

The gourd resonators have a small hole facing the ground. The hole is covered with natural bee's wax and pig intestine membrane to get a buzzing sound when the bar is played.[10] This buzzing sound is a main characteristic of the central American marimba (both Guatemalan and Mexican) that is not part of the modern concert marimba.

The gourd marimba is played by only one person using two, three, or four mallets.[11] The marimba band concept of multiple musicians playing on the same marimba started years later with the *marimba sencilla*.

MARIMBA SENCILLA OR "SIMPLE MARIMBA"[12]

The simple marimba was developed in the Guatemalan Kingdom around the second half of the 18th century and became very popular among *criollos* (European descendants born in the American continent) and *mestizos* (descendants of the mix of European and native American).[13] This led to the marimba being upgraded to a court and church instrument. Lester Godinez, in his book *La marimba guatemalteca,* quotes Jose Saenz Poggio's book originally from 1873: "In the second half of the 18th century was added to the Cathedral's music chapel, a marimba, perfectioned from the Indians…this improvement is attributed to Padilla."[14]

Godinez's hypothesis of "Padilla" is Juan Joseph Padilla, Guatemalan priest, mathematician, and inventor, who could be the inventor of the simple marimba.[15] For this reason, it is possible that the marimba sencilla tunning was closer to the European diatonic scale pattern.[16]

The simple marimba builders substituted cedar wood resonators for the gourd resonators, but they kept the hole with the wax and pig membrane, preserving the characteristic buzz sound. Also, the simple marimba had a frame and legs.[17]

Arguably, the most important development of this type of marimba was the extension from three octaves to four-and-a-half octaves. The extended range added musical benefits and provided the possibility of having more than one player on the same instrument at the same time, leading to the development of the marimba bands.

MARIMBA DOBLE OR DOUBLE MARIMBA: THE SPLIT

By 1823, the Guatemalan Kingdom did not exist anymore, Chiapas was annexed to Mexico, and Guatemala was an independent country. The separation of these two lands triggered a

separate development of the chromatic marimba in these two regions.

During the last third of the 19th century, the necessity of chromatism pushed marimba builders to create new instruments with this possibility. Some of them, according to Jose Saenz Poggio, stuck a little rock to the bar using the same bee's wax as on the resonators to bring the pitch up or down.[18] It was not until the last decade of the 19th century that the double marimba was invented.

GUATEMALA

In 1894 in Quetzaltenango, Guatemala, Sebastian Hurtado built the first chromatic marimba commissioned by Julian Paniagua Martinez after he noticed how much work it took to stick the little rocks to the bars to change pitch. Paniagua Martinez suggested to Hurtado to add a second row of bars to the diatonic bars they were already playing.[19] Hurtado created a second independent part with frame, resonators, and accidental bars, and connected it to the existing naturals to make it chromatic (hence, why it is called double marimba), and in 1899 he played it for President Cabrera, the president of Guatemala.[20]

CHIAPAS

Around the same time — approximately 200 miles from Quetzaltenango, in San Bartolome de los Llanos, Chiapas — a different chromatic marimba was built completely apart from its Guatemalan counterpart. At the time, Chiapas was ruled by Mexico City and not by Guatemala City. For this reason (and the border) there was little communication between the two states. The chromatic Chiapan marimba was created around 1896 by Corazon de Jesus Borraz in the Mexican town of San Bartolome de los Llanos.[21] Borraz's sketch was very similar to Hurtado's. He constructed a slightly higher and independent second frame with resonators and accidental bars and added it to the first one (with the natural bars).

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CHIAPAS AND GUATEMALAN MARIMBAS

Although the Chiapan and Guatemalan double marimbas were developed independently within a few years of one another, they exhibit several notable differences in design and construction. These distinctions reflect regional building traditions, practical considerations for performers, and the isolated evolution of the instrument following the political separation of Chiapas and Guatemala.

One of the most significant differences between the two marimbas is the keyboard layout. The Guatemalan chromatic marimba built by Sebastián Hurtado features accidental bars aligned directly with the natural bars. This configuration resulted from the prominent pegs used to hold the natural bars, which left limited space for the second row of accidentals. While functional, this layout made the instrument particularly difficult to play for foreign musicians, including Chiapan marimba players, due to its departure from the piano-style arrangement.[22]

By contrast, the Chiapan marimba developed by Corazón de Jesús Borraz employs a keyboard layout in which the accidental bars alternate between the natural bars, similar to a piano. This design was made possible by shorter holding pegs, allowing the builder greater flexibility in positioning the second keyboard. As a result, the Chiapan marimba is generally considered more intuitive for performers, especially those trained on Western keyboard instruments.

Structural and decorative elements further distinguish the two marimbas. Both instruments feature a box that encloses the

Figure 2. Hurtado chromatic marimba keyboard layout. The C-sharp is aligned to the D, the D-sharp to the E, etc.

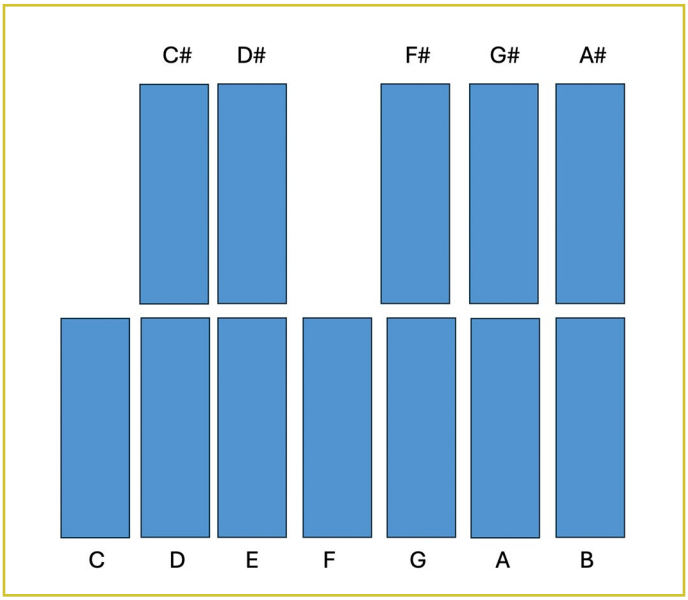
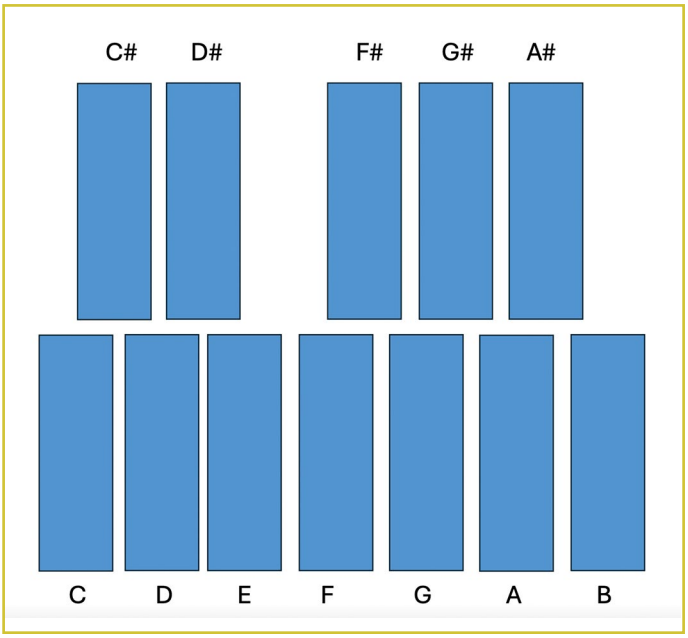


Figure 3. Corazon de Jesus Borraz chromatic marimba keyboard layout. The C-sharp is between the C and D naturals.



bars and resonators; however, the construction and ornamentation of this frame differ significantly. Chiapan marimbas are characterized by geometric patterns created through the inlay of contrasting wooden pieces. In contrast, Guatemalan marimba frames are carved directly into the wood, often displaying names, figures, or decorative motifs. Notably, these decorative approaches are mutually exclusive: Chiapan marimbas are not carved, and Guatemalan marimbas do not feature wooden inlay.

Additional differences can be observed in the legs and resonators of each instrument. Chiapan marimba legs form a 90-degree angle with the bar box, giving the instrument a rectangular profile, while Guatemalan marimba legs are set at approximately an 80-degree angle, creating a trapezoidal shape. Resonator construction also varies between the two traditions. Mexican marimba resonators typically end in a pyramid-shaped point and are attached to the rails with screws. Guatemalan resonators, on the other hand, taper smoothly into a rounded point and are secured to the rails using hemp rope.[23]

Figure 4. Chiapan marimba. Frame and resonators.

CONCLUSION

While differences between Chiapan and Guatemalan marimbas also extend to performance practice, musical interpretation, and terminology, this discussion has focused specifically on historical development and physical construction. Together, these distinctions highlight how regional identity and historical context shaped two closely related yet distinctly different instruments.

Although Chiapan and Guatemalan marimbas share the same historical roots, their divergence illustrates how geography, politics, and craftsmanship can shape the development of a musical instrument. The political separation of Chiapas and Guatemala in the 19th century created cultural boundaries that directly influenced design choices, construction techniques, and performance practices. From keyboard layout and resonator attachment to frame decoration and leg structure, each marimba reflects the identity and priorities of its region. The development of these two distinct instruments demonstrates that even subtle historical shifts — such as the drawing of a national border — can profoundly redirect musical innovation. The marimba stands as a clear example of how socio-political history is not only preserved in archives, but also resonant in sound, structure, and tradition.

ENDNOTES

1. Vida Chenoweth, *The Marimbas of Guatemala* (Lexington, KY: The University of Kentucky Press, 1974), 55–66.

Figure 5. Guatemalan marimba. Frame and resonators.

2. Lester Godinez, *La Marimba Guatemalteca* (Guatemala City: Fondo de Cultura Economica, 2002), 55–71.
3. Ibid., 53.
4. Spanish word for a type of drum similar to a tabor.
5. Godinez, *La Marimba Guatemalteca*, 89.
6. Laurence Kaptain, *The Wood that Sings: The Marimba in Chiapas, Mexico* (Everett, PA: HoneyRock, 1992), 4–5.
7. Davida Vela, *Information on the Marimba*, trans. Vida Chenoweth (Auckland, New Zealand: Institute Press, 1957), 50.
8. Chenoweth, *The Marimbas of Guatemala*, 26–31.
9. Godinez, *La Marimba Guatemalteca*, 109.
10. Ibid., 108.
11. Ibid., 109.
12. Vida Chenoweth uses this translation of the Spanish term in her book *The Marimbas of Guatemala*.
13. Vela, *Information on the Marimba*, 51.
14. Godinez, *La Marimba Guatemalteca*, 114. Jose Saenz Poggio, Historia de la Musica Guatemalteca (Guatemala City: Editorial Cultura, 1997. Reedited from the original published in 1873), 15.
15. Ibid., 114–115.
16. Ibid., 116. Godinez in his book has a chapter about the building of church organs in the Guatemalan Kingdom and the use of the European music system.
17. Godinez, *La Marimba Guatemalteca*.,113.
18. Ibid.,121.
19. Ibid.,123. Godinez quotes the original Julian Paniagua manuscript. This manuscript can be consulted at the Paniagua Sucesores Music Library in Guatemala City.
20. Chenoweth, *The Marimbas of Guatemala*, 76.
21. Kaptain, *The Wood that Sings: The Marimba in Chiapas, Mexico*, 16.
22. Godinez, *La Marimba Guatemalteca*, 138.
23. Ibid., 147.

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Vela, David. *Information on the Marimba*. Auckland, NZ: Institute Press, 1957.

Dr. Gabriela Ordonez Villalobos is a percussionist, educator, and arranger based in Las Vegas, Nevada. Dr. Villalobos has performed as a soloist and in such major orchestras as Chihuahua State Philharmonic Orchestra and Chihuahua Autonomous University Symphony Orchestra (OSUACH), where she served as Principal Timpanist. A graduate of University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Dr. Villalobos's. work includes the DMA dissertation "Adapting Traditional Flamenco Music for the Modern Marimba Artist," an ongoing project that includes performing, composing, and arranging flamenco music for marimba. She is the Arts Coordinator for UNLV College of Fine Arts, and percussion coach for Bishop Gorman High School and Keys Conservatory at Pinecrest Academy. She serves as Principal Timpanist for Desert Winds in Las Vegas. She is also a founding member of the MarimPop project, which blends Spanish pop and rock music with Mexican Marimba style. In 2020, she organized the first International Percussion Festival and Workshop in her hometown of Chihuahua, Mexico. In September of 2024, the UACH International Percussion Festival presented its third consecutive edition.

Groovetaps: From Drumline to Drumset

A rudimental pattern with a Brazilian rhythm

By Jason Lee Bruns

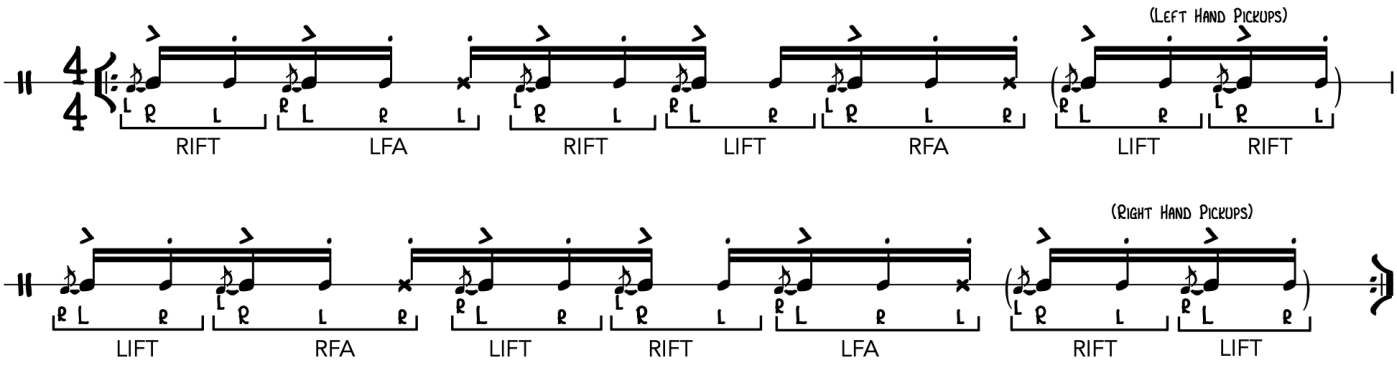
I recently came across an excerpt from a *Groovin' in Memphis* interview featuring drummer Kim Trammell, posted as a Reel in my social media feed. She was playing a captivating drumset groove built primarily on Inverted Flam Taps, which she credited to a cadence from her time on the snare line at the University of Memphis. Although I found the pattern intriguing, I might not have taken the time to fully unpack it were it not for the inspiration sparked by Kim's incredible groove and the exceptional sound of her drums. The full interview (available on the Memphis Drum Shop's YouTube channel) is excellent and dives into some of the particulars of this inspiring rudiment-based groove. In addition, I've recently found this exact same pattern on a Dorothea Taylor post.

Curious for more details — stickings, phrasing clues, etc. — I scoured the comments, wanting to know more, but I found little. Motivated by a desire to contribute something helpful to the comments, I began transcribing the hand pattern and working it out on both a practice pad and a drumset. To my surprise, I stumbled onto a few coincidental discoveries that ended up refining my personal practice routines and teaching methods. And as a 25-year veteran music educator, I'm always looking for new ways — and rediscovering old ones — to better learn and explain musical concepts. Hence, this article.

PART I: ALL IN

The sticking below is what most of the comments on the post were asking for, so I will start there. Other than one extra stroke (see bold letters), the first two strokes of a Flam Accent (lR L **R**, rL R **L**) use the same sticking (see underlined) as an Inverted Flam Tap (lR L, rL R). Because of this, the pattern can be conceptualized in two ways: (1) all Inverted Flam Taps with an occasional added note, or (2) Inverted Flam Taps and Flam Accents. The brackets and labels I've added reflect the organization in the latter. An "x" notehead marks where the extra note extends the Inverted Flam Tap (two-note grouping) into a Flam Accent (three-note grouping). The second measure uses the opposite sticking of the first, making the complete pattern a two-bar phrase.

Example 1



key: **RIFT** = **R**ight **I**nverted **F**lam **T**ap; **LIFT** = **L**eft **I**nverted **F**lam **T**ap; **RFA** = **R**ight **F**lam **A**ccent; **LFA** = **L**eft **F**lam **A**ccent

PART II: SINGLE HANDED

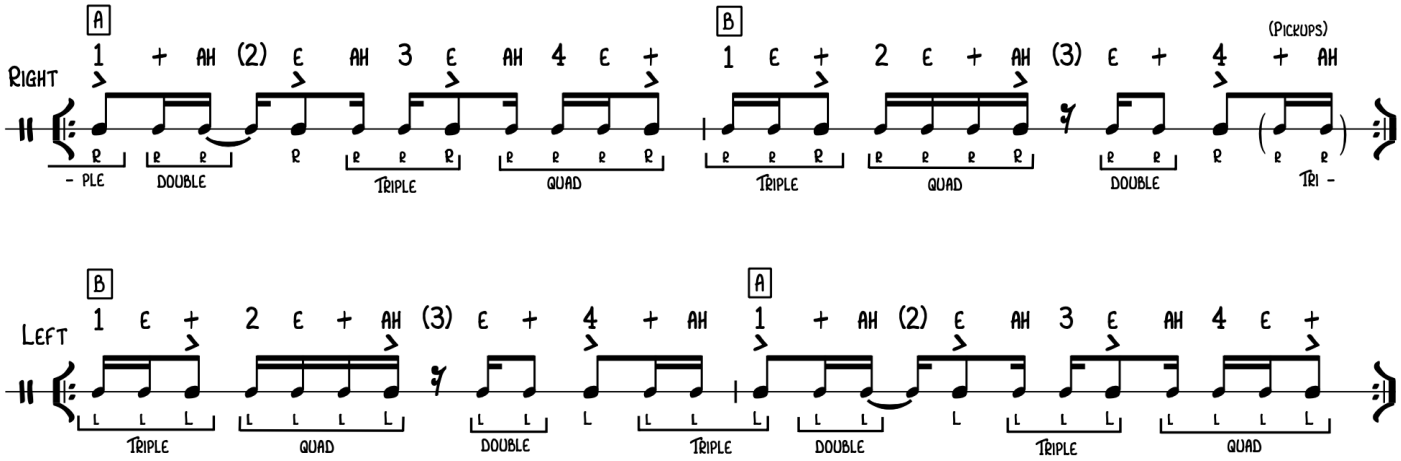
Practicing a rudiment with the hands separated (aka "hands separate") isolates the specific sequence of strokes each hand must perform. This approach distills the individual components — accents, taps, doubles, triples, etc. — revealing opportunities to optimize each stroke and strengthen muscle memory.

The patterns for each hand are identical but begin at different points in the cycle (indicated below as A and B). Practicing them separately in this staggered way allows each hand to develop the motions independently, strengthening control and enhancing fluidity when both hands are joined back together.

In drumset playing (as opposed to drumline), a *free stroke* is generally favored over a strict *wrist stroke*, as it encourages greater looseness and flow behind the kit — qualities that support a more musical and relaxed groove, where razor-sharp precision — like that of a "clean" snare line — isn't the priority.

In Kim's interview, she briefly plays the "hands separate" version for one of the hands, and it goes by quickly. Below is the full notation, with brackets indicating the types of strokes used.

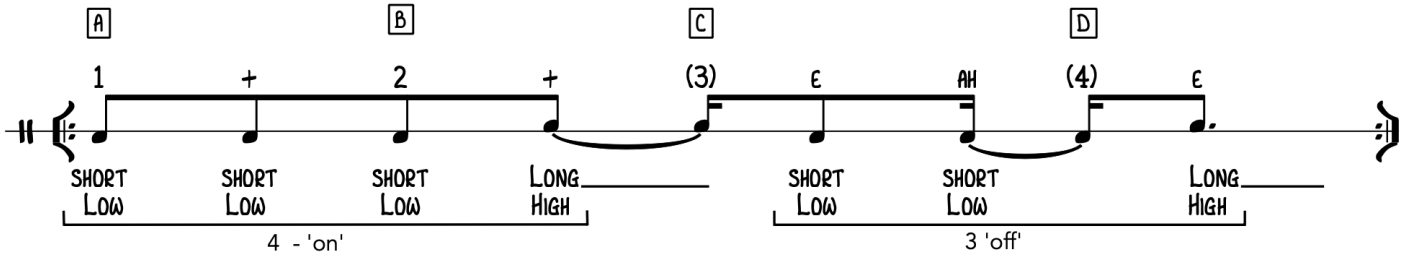
Example 2



PART III: PATTERNS

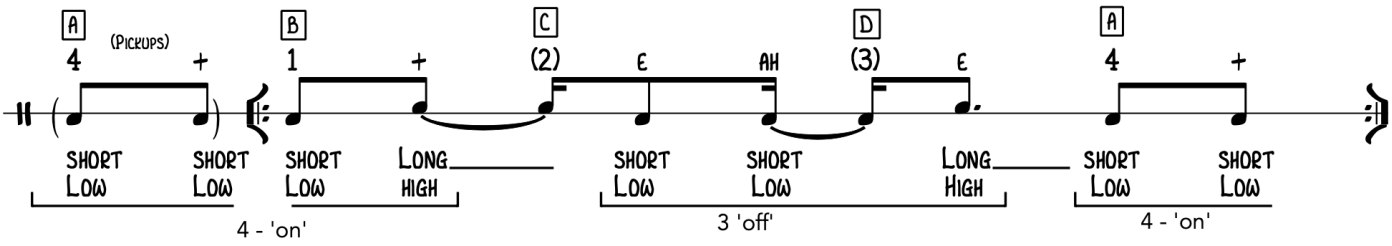
As I listened on repeat — being a lifelong student, player, and teacher of Brazilian drumming style — something about the pattern felt familiar. Then it dawned on me: the accents coincidentally(?) outline the exact phrase of a rhythm found in Brazilian music known as Partido Alto. Partido Alto is essentially a four-beat rhythmic cycle composed of four evenly spaced "on" accents (as three short notes followed by one long), contrasted by three evenly spaced "off" accents (as two short notes followed by one long). This creates a syncopated loop of tension and release, conceptually similar to Clave in Cuban music. However, whereas Clave has two structural "sides" (commonly referred to as the "three-side" and "two-side"), Partido Alto can begin on any of four distinct positions or "sides," labeled here for clarity as A, B, C, and D.

Example 3a



For this pattern, the phrase begins on the "B side" [see Example 3b]. Vocalizing the pattern as a melody of low and high sounds, repeating — "low-high, low-low-high, low-low" — or as durations, repeating — "short-long, short-short-long, short-short" — helps internalize the phrase in a more musical, embodied way. I found that thinking of the sticking as a Partido Alto groove made it much easier to internalize and feel the phrasing, as opposed to relying on traditional counting alone.

Example 3b

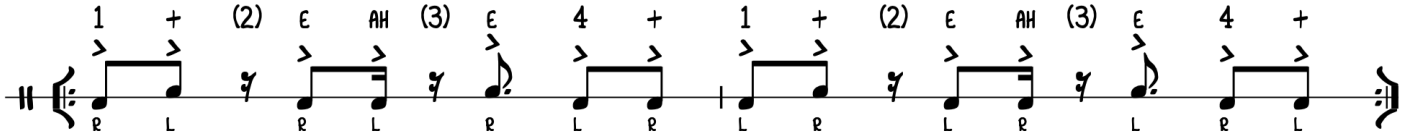


PART IV: LAYERS

Start simple and then work your way up. Remember to vocalize the Partido Alto phrase while doing these steps (in lieu of counting).

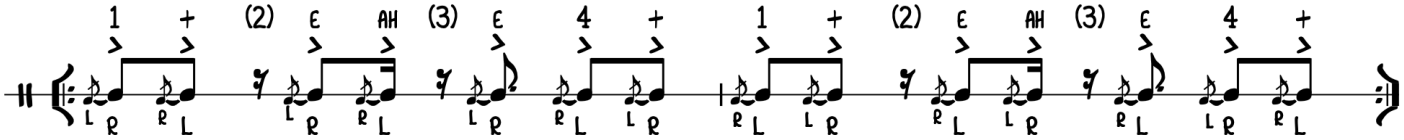
1. Skeleton: Strip the phrase down to its core outline by playing only the accents from the "B side" of the Partido Alto while incorporating the sticking from the original two-bar phrase.

Example 4a



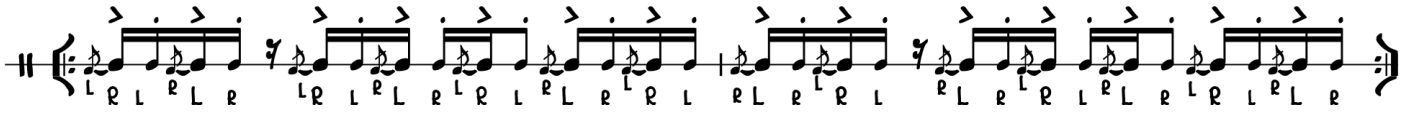
2. Ornamentation: Decorate the core outline by adding the flams to the accents while retaining the sticking from the Skeleton.

Example 4b



3. Filler: After each flam, add a single tap on the opposite hand, creating Inverted FlamTaps. This is the point when the final pattern starts to come together.

Example 4c



4. All In: Add the missing note on each rest (notated with an "x" for clarity) using the next opposite hand, completing a Flam Accent and the pattern at large (see Example 1).

PART V: ON THE SET

When adapting a rudiment for a drumset groove — one hand driving the cymbal, the other handling backbeats and ghost notes on the snare — I've found that the most effective method (both in my own practice and teaching) is to develop the groove in progressive layers:

1. Single Surface: Begin by playing the rudiment with both hands on the snare drum or practice pad. Optionally, add a feet ostinato (as discussed in Part VI) to begin developing full-limb coordination.

2. Two Surfaces: Without interrupting the flow of the pattern, move your dominant hand to the ride cymbal or hi-hat to establish the timekeeping layer. Keep your non-dominant hand on the snare to play accents (backbeats) and taps (ghost notes). The change in sound and coordination can be disorienting at first; return to the single surface as needed to recalibrate and stay grounded.

3. The Feel: To shift from a rudimental exercise to a musical groove, refine your dynamics and touch. Focus on accent placement and ghost-note volume so the pattern breathes naturally and supports the overall pocket and feel. *This step is where your aesthetic becomes most important; make it yours.*

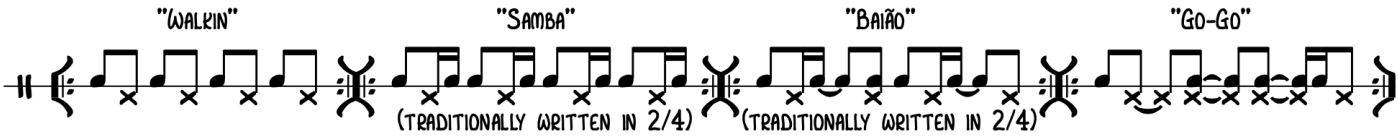
4. Bass Drum: Add a bass drum note on beat 1 to provide a solid foundation. From there, experiment with additional placements — typically in spaces where the snare is not playing an accent — to enhance the groove without clutter. *This step is also guided by your personal aesthetic; there's no single "correct" answer.*

PART VI: GROOVES

1. Ostinato: Playing a repeated pattern in the feet (hi-hat and bass drum) underneath a hand pattern can yield powerful results, both for developing coordination and deepening groove. In the video excerpt, when Kim gives the host (Chris Bounds) a quick lesson, she challenges him to play a samba ostinato with his feet — and he does a remarkable job.

For other options (see Example 5) start with something simpler with what I like to call "walking" feet, then progress to the samba, followed by the baião, and eventually what I call the "Go-Go" inspired by the song "Mister Magic" (shout-out to Stanton Moore for this one!).

Example 5



2. Gridding: This is is a concept that should be familiar to most drumline players; it involves cycling a pattern's accents, drags, flams, etc., through all available subdivision positions. In this drumset context, it is useful to grid the bass drum part.

For example, in a sixteenth-note–based groove, begin with single bass drum hits on the downbeats, then move through the "e's," "ands," and "ah's." Next, explore placing two bass drum notes in a row — such as "1-e," "e-and," "and-ah," or "ah-1." After that, try all eighth-note placements ("1's" and "ands"), then isolate just the upbeats ("e's" and "ah's").

Gridding not only builds independence and precision, but also reveals new phrasing possibilities and expands your creative vocabulary behind the kit. It's a valuable approach that could be applied to every groove you play — whether or not it includes a rudiment-based sticking in the hands.

3. Reading; If you want to take it a step further — as taught in Gary Chester's *The New Breed* — practice reading lines of notated rhythmic figures (what Chester calls "melodies") on the bass drum while maintaining consistent patterns with the other limbs (as he calls "systems"). A great book to have in one's arsenal.

Note: The rudimental phrase featured in this article — primarily Inverted Flam Taps played over two bars of a Partido Alto accent pattern — represents a significant leap in both coordination and rudimental chops, especially if you're new to adapting rudiments into grooves on the drumset. The challenge stems largely from the length of the phrase, its syncopated accents, and the fact that it technically incorporates more than one rudiment.

For that reason, it's a good idea to begin by applying the bass drum methods (outlined above) to a single repeated rudiment. Some great starting points include:

- Single Paradiddle — Ideal for developing comfort with stickings and groove placement.
- Flam Accents — Works well for building a 12/8 or shuffle feel.
- Single Flammed Mill — One of my personal favorites for groove-based applications.

CONCLUSION

Seeing a drumming clip on social media that inspires you — and then taking the time to break it down in a way that makes sense to you (and your students) — can be a deeply rewarding experience. In the process, you may uncover hidden gems and find new (and old) ways to apply what you've learned in different contexts. If the answers you're looking for aren't in the posted comments, put in the effort to discover them yourself and give back. Shout-out to Kim Trammell for dropping a groove that hit so hard it inadvertently sent me down this fun rabbit hole.

Jason Lee Bruns is a Los Angeles–based drummer, producer, and educator. Since 2005, he has served as the founding director of the World Drumming Ensembles, Steel Bands, and Music Production program at Campbell Hall (a K–12 independent school in Studio City, Cal.). He holds a BM in Percussion Performance from Miami University, an MM in Jazz Studies from the University of Southern California, and a Master Certificate in Audio Engineering from Berklee College of Music. He has also conducted extensive field research on folkloric drumming traditions in 12 countries. His 10-piece professional band has toured Japan twice, performed at top L.A. jazz venues, and headlined multiple seasons of Jazz at LACMA (City of L.A. concert series). Bruns has produced two charting jazz albums and a movie soundtrack (*Ballroom*). Bruns shares his work at *brunsbeats.com*, on Instagram *@brunsbeats*, and YouTube *@/brunsbeats*.

Contemplating a Collegiate Freshman Introductory Music Course

An exploratory design to represent a pragmatic content portfolio

By Dr. Steve Hemphill

A number of higher education music studies programs in the U.S. feature some version of a curriculum-required freshman course designed to serve as a comprehensive introduction to collegiate music studies. An inaugural collection of topics to empower students, these courses aim to establish a baseline of musical knowledge and enhance student engagement across academic and performance domains, with intentions to impact every branch of their daily work. Beyond promoting further interest within or outside of curricular coursework, a broad-field introduction could provide an incubation for ideas, synthesis, and pathway choices, while inspiring informal music discourse among peers. A supplemental strategy could promote and advance career development with workforce trends and readiness.

While music faculty of other institutions may covet such a course, this type of offering is far from universal, largely due to credit-hour constraints. In addition, decisions regarding design and content priorities for such a class could lead to disagreement among faculty, especially those from disparate classroom, studio, and ensemble perspectives.

But if not a dedicated semester course, alternative formats might include a multi-week module or a LMS-posted offering (on a learning management system such as Canvas), or even a flexible studio-centered volunteer series (a form of group lesson built by word-of-mouth enthusiasm), all with the objectives remaining the same: student-based groundwork for success and program retention.

COURSE DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

So, what should be in this objective (or subjective) toolbox? Many times, as a university percussion instructor, I would encounter a student with apparent gaps of basic knowledge and wish for the benefits of an introductory freshman course. From a subjective percussion studio perspective, I propose a hypothetical course design with a 270-page unpublished blueprint. Titled "Introduction to Collegiate Musical Studies," content is organized into four overlapping categories (see diagram):

- Personal Development
- Pedagogy-Related
- Professional Development
- Practical Appetizers

Not in a particular order, the *personal development* group includes units of Time Management, Health and Wellness, and Summer Opportunities. The *pedagogy-related* set contains Terminology and Definitions, Practicing, Music History Timeline, and Research Fundamentals and Resources. The *professional development* compilation includes Collaboration and Ensemble Etiquette, Leadership and Entrepreneurship, Business Basics, Careers, and Résumé Building and Networking.

Finally, the *practical appetizers* unit contains Aesthetics and Related Thought, Examining Music-Related Technology, Fundamentals of Acoustics, and Cultural Analysis and Engagement. However, at the center of the four intersecting domains is Musicianship Baseline, conceivably an initial launch-point or hub for all subjects.

Note: traditional music theory is not included, as it typically is covered extensively in multi-semester sequences.

That's a long list — 17 subjects. Is it possible to responsibly cover each topic in such a restricted timetable? Prob-

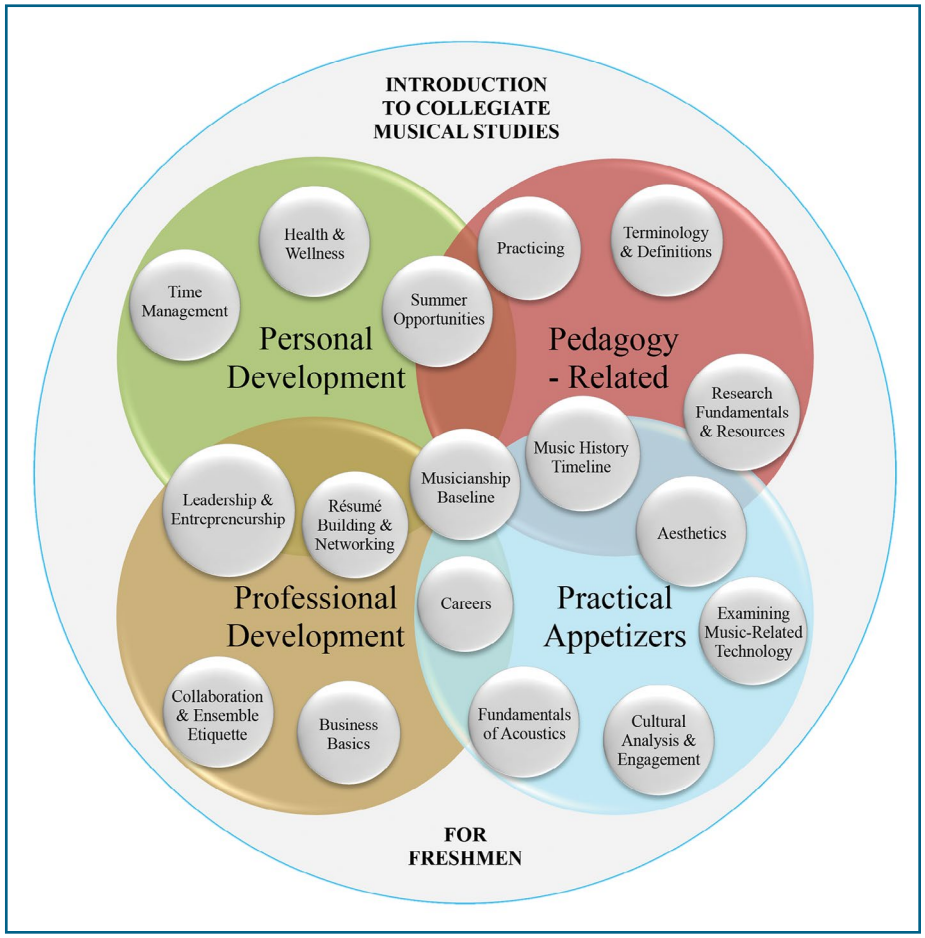
ably not. But the premise is to scratch the surface, induce curiosity, establish content baselines, and provide resources through a one-stop shopping experience. A condensed or compromised alternative might feature a series of rapid-fire presentations ("lightning talks") for each topic, with a timed coverage of the subject, perhaps 10–20 minutes. The strategic outcome is the establishment of a foundation of awareness and intelligence on which to build, promoting the integration of insight and applicable objectives.

Delivery is half of the challenge; specific content is the other half. Every institution, with its unique mission, current curricular offerings, and recruitment populations (from sophisticated, experienced incoming freshmen for elite institutions to entry-level-adjacent recruits for modest programs), will envision distinguishing student-related essentials, differentiating priorities, and distinct value systems. The exact course design must be formulated, with additions and subtractions, by the institution, a curriculum committee, and/or the instructor(s).

COURSE CHAPTERS

A course introduction commences with a few rhetorical questions for the participants (e.g., what does it mean to be an educated musician?), and includes a number of subheadings such as intentions of the course, how to get the most out of the undergraduate experience, studio-centered instructional baselines, prioritized resources (readings; e.g., Rich Holly, *Majoring in Music: All the Stuff You Need to Know*), preserving all things important, building libraries, reverse engineering, "be a sponge," the student storyboard, the *A* student – profile and assessment (how to be a good student), effective communication, hypothetical use of monetary savings, and definitions.

The opening chapter, **Musicianship Baseline**, launches with a working philosophy of musicianship and a topical series: "the importance of…" (listening, self-recording, performing with intention, "artistic license"). Continuing subheadings include what it means to be "fluent" as a musician, three references (Philip Farkas, *The Art of Musicianship*; David Blum, *Casals and the Art of Interpretation*; Gerald Klickstein, *The Musician's Way: A Guide to Practice, Performance and Wellness*), recording-to-recording comparisons, recording-to-score comparisons, personalized editing of the score, vocabulary and language, storytelling and making connections, "pathos" (select works), phrasing essentials, the Tabuteau numbering system, shading and color, how to listen to music, and other resources.



PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Looking at **Time Management**, with its content and discussion points, the list begins with an inspirational premise, then "everything starts with a calendar," failure and before failure (writing out goals, procrastination, back-dating project lists, work ethic, schedules, when to say "no," free time, self-preservation, positive attitude), eight strategies (organize, calendar, priorities, routines, efficiency, techno tools, record activity, awareness), a time-use worksheet, big picture, and examples.

Health & Wellness. For musicians, this is a potentially lengthy encounter that includes self-care, motivation, wellbeing (physical, emotional, social, intellectual, occupational, environmental, spiritual, financial), a student wellness survey, student stress (see diagram), coping strategies, resilience, a resource (Benjamin Irons, *Mindfulness for Musicians: A Practical Guide*), and personality traits and tests. Physical health subheadings comprise anatomy, soft tissue disorders, injury prevention, P.R.I.C.E., sports rehabilitation, another reference (Darin Workman, *The Percussionists' Guide to Injury Treatment and Prevention: The Answer Guide for Drummers in Pain*), hearing health, safety in the workplace, nutrition, sleep, depression and anxiety.

With a topic title of **Opportunities of the Summer Seasons**, there are a variety of directions from which to choose.

Here, a philosophical logic, followed by the need for action (musical development, diversity, credential development, networking), initiates the conversation. Other discussions include "the three questions" (which program to pursue; can I afford it; can I get accepted), planning the pursuit, select examples for orchestra and chamber music, drum corps (DCI), instrument-specific conferences, select summer activity/institutes/festivals, music-related internships and youth camp employment.

PEDAGOGY-RELATED

A **Terminology and Definitions** chapter commences with common terms (*Aesthetics*, *Artistry*, *Creativity*, *Critical Thinking*, *Metaphor*, *Kinesthetic*, *Proprioception*, etc.), followed by foreign language terminology, jazz/commercial music terminology, learning profiles, four angles of arts learning, theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner), problem-solving, 20th-and 21st-century approaches (to music education, learning, movement, and posture).

The unit on **Practicing** (philosophy, strategy, outcome) includes intention, designing goals, intelligent practice, motivation (extrinsic and intrinsic), brain dominance theory, "preparation (potential) minus interference," tools and strategies, habits, sensory learning, materials from *The Musician's Way*, compositional constructs, journaling, schedules, how to practice, refinement, evaluation tools, health awareness, and resources.

A **Music History Baseline**, in this brief setting, directly establishes a why (to discover…), a functioning timeline, salient features of historic eras, landmark composers, Pulitzer Prizes in composition, touch points, making purposeful connections, and technology and online content.

The discussion points for **Research Fundamentals & Resources** (the library) include the why and when, depths of study, fundamentals of research (common steps, components), help, a resource (Cornelia Yarbrough, *An Introduction to Scholarship in Music*), recital program notes, campus library (holdings, study-work-creative spaces, equipment-tools-services-checkout, production, multimedia), and other resources.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

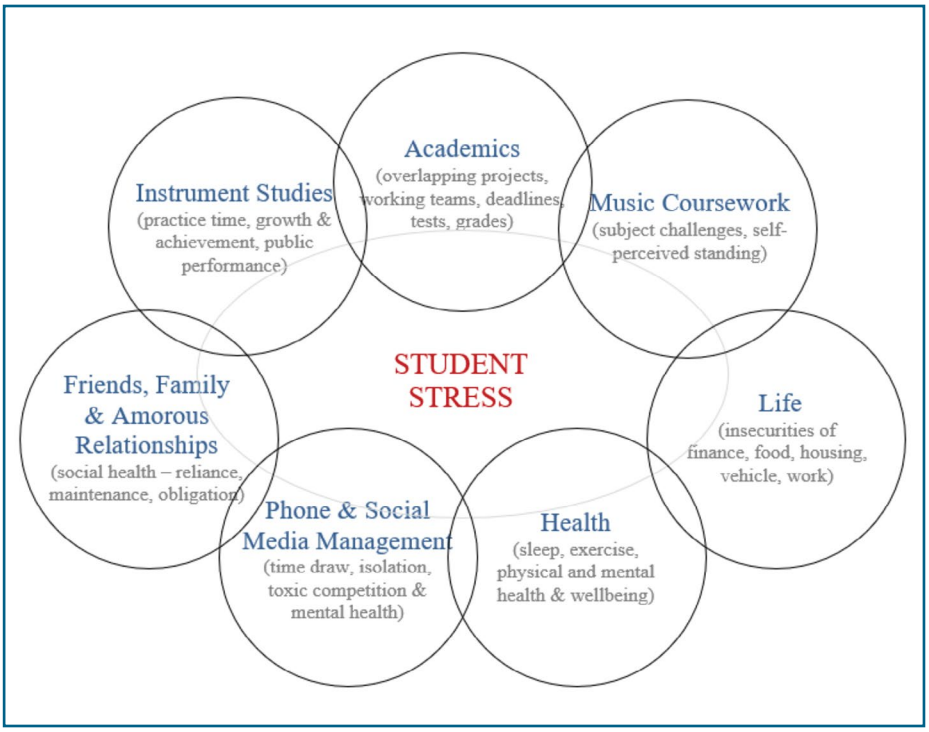
Collaboration & Ensemble Etiquette comprise discussions of philosophies and objectives, ensemble preparation, participation and expectation, what conductors look for, stewardship and the team player, score analysis, strategies for study, ensemble listening, chamber music, the instructor's perspective, marking parts, the dress rehearsal, the studio critique sheet, and auditions.

The contents of a unit titled **Leadership & Entrepreneurship** features "eyes open to the future" with definitions of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs, professionalism (expectations, ethics, awareness), traits and narrative, characteristics of leadership, failure and setback (and resilience), digital competency, outlook for differentiation, "10 Things I Wish I Knew" (John Wittmann: relationships, margins, criticism—tough, character, mastery of words, listening, technology control, embrace change, look inside), public speaking, seeking a mentor, networking, and developing soft skills.

An approach to **Business Basics** includes definitions of "independent contractor" versus "employee," business and the private studio, website development, copyright, licensing and registration marks, the musician's union, business plans, contracts and agreements (informal), online entities and distribution, terms and vocabulary, financial literacy, and taxes for musicians.

The topic of **Careers** contains a couple of simple Venn diagrams (e.g., "sweet spot" careers), everyone is unique, puzzle-piece career structures, selected careers and associated fields (a long list; see Word Cloud), the symphony orchestra, base salaries (orchestra, military, public school teaching, university teaching, private teaching studio), benefit packages, freelance (reference: Josh Gottry, *Freelance: 10 Commonsense Keys to Making Your Music Your Business*), and the three-part gig rule.

Résumé/Bio Building & Networking includes conversations involving the personal bio, résumé formatting, elements regarding action words (words matter), active engagement and connectivity (affiliations), recommendation letters, cover letters, and resources.



PRACTICAL APPETIZERS

Aesthetics and Related Thought, perhaps another lengthy encounter, includes reviews of definitions and parameters, bias, expressive cues, a reference (Nicolas Slonimsky's *Lexicon of Musical Invective: Critical Assaults on Composers...*), listening and discussion, the visual arts, evaluating with AI, selections from verbal addresses (Karl Paulnack, *Welcome Address to Freshmen at the Boston Conservatory*; Eric Booth, *A Wheelbarrow Full of Redefined Words*), and select quotes.

Examining Music-Related Technology encompasses a discussion of definitions and types, common and immediate applications, streaming and distribution, the AI question, iPad (practice and performance), advocating for the big four (1. notation; 2. recording/production/DAW; 3. music reader device/library; 4. live performance production — awareness, understanding, competency), further examples, how to keep up, sampling libraries, video analysis software, recording help, and related cultural advancements.

The components of **Fundamentals of Acoustics** begin with the question, what is sound? Discussion topics include common instrument classification, piano range-frequency-pitch classification, speed of sound, the harmonic series (overtones), sound waves, nodes and anti-nodes, the Doppler Effect, the anechoic chamber, testing ear sensitivity, just intonation versus equal temperament, intonation, tone quality, descriptives in sound, projection-direction-obstacles, decibels (measurement), etiquette in a recording studio, hearing, terms and definitions.

A unit on **Cultural Analysis & Engagement** encompasses definitions and influences, life on campus, inclusive language (LGBTQIA+), memberships-affiliations-clubs/societies, major awards-prizes-recognitions in music, the importance of studying cultural/non-Western/global/world music, the forthcoming endeavors of developing specific personal philosophies (teaching, professional, diversity), and for the educator.

A brief **Wrap-up and Review** entails closing remarks on preparing teaching artists and artist teachers, framing chapters to codify and synthesize baselines, developing perspectives, going forward, final thoughts on deserving topics not covered, and bookshelf/reading lists.

Disregarding the topic sequence imparted above, a more impactful configuration might better serve student priorities. Consider these six topics as starters: Introduction, Musicianship Baseline, Practicing, Time Management, Music History Baseline, and Careers. A mid-section content might encompass Aesthetics, Research Fundamentals and Resources, Terminology and Definitions, Collaboration and Ensemble Etiquette, Leadership and Entrepreneurship, Fundamentals of Acoustics, Business Basics, and Examining Music-Related Technology. Culminating themes could entail Health and Wellness, Cultural Analysis and Engagement, Résumé/Bio Building and Networking, Opportunities of the Summer Seasons, and closing with a Wrap-up and Review segment.

STUDIO-CENTERED INSTRUCTION

The previous facets of curricula should complement a baseline knowledge content for any instrumental collegiate studio, stipulated for student outcomes and generalized professional expectations. For percussion, the challenge is compounded by a multiplicity of instruments. Here are some examples:

- knowledge of technical fundamentals through advanced practices of instrument performance
- comprehension of advanced musicianship competencies, along with requisite interpretive skills

- knowledge of significant solo and concerto repertoire (instrument specific)
- knowledge of major orchestral excerpts (instrument specific)
- knowledge of prominent chamber music works highlighting the studio instrument
- knowledge of representative renowned soloists (studio instrument, contemporary and historic)
- knowledge of representative artists who hold principal positions in major orchestras
- knowledge of legendary teachers of the instrument, nationally or globally (conservatories, etc.)
- knowledge of select contemporary (living) composers of music who feature the studio instrument
- knowledge of instrument's instructional curriculum (sequential content; beginning-college)
- knowledge of the lineage of pedagogy as related to major published methodology
- knowledge of performance-related matters of musician health and wellness
- knowledge of the history and development of the studio instrument
- knowledge of instrument regulation, repair, and related skills (e.g., double-reed making, head replacement, head clearing, mallet wrapping, timpani stick making, etc.)

CONCLUSION

Empowering first-year students with a carefully curated knowledge base can accelerate their success and maximize engagement in all facets of musical study. Identifying intersections and making connections among introductory subjects in support of all studios, classrooms, and ensembles, can help freshmen navigate and optimize their collegiate experience.

Of course, the unique circumstances and capacity of each program must determine the dimension, scope, and priority of content. With no foreseeable opportunity to introduce either a credit-bearing or non-credit introductory class into an existing curricular frame, implementation could be adapted to lessons, studio classes, seminars, or independent learning scenarios.

By bringing together thematic intelligences and affording the "confidence of knowing," student awareness and success can be fortified in this digital age of instantaneous access and communication. A well-designed "Introduction to Collegiate Musical Studies," whether adopted in full or in fragments, just might provide an aspirational blueprint for cultivating the complete musical artist: fostering the spirit of a curator, the curiosity of a scientist, the courage of a performer, the creativity of a novelist, the temperament of an ethnomusicologist, the astuteness of an entrepreneur, the gratitude and conservancy of an historian, the mindfulness of a meditative naturalist, the precision of an architect, and the determination of a triathlete.

All chapters of "Introduction to Collegiate Musical Studies" are available as free downloads on my website "Steve Hemphill Percussion" (*http://www.stevehemphillpercussion.com/*). Additional material, revisions, and new topics may be added from time to time, so I invite you to check back regularly for updates. Supplementing the printable materials, each chapter is accompanied by an AI-generated two-voice podcast (fabricated conversations created by NotebookLM) discussing the content of each document. Other free percussion-related materials are available as well.

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Steve Hemphill is Professor Emeritus of Percussion at Northern Arizona University. He earned Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees from the Eastman School of Music and the Doctor of Music degree from Florida State University. He is a past president and vice-president of the Arizona PAS chapter, and a past president of the Wyoming PAS chapter. Hemphill received the PAS Lifetime Achievement in Education Award in 2024.

Recording Your Ensemble: An Accessible Approach to Archival and Educational Applications

By Derrick Greene

The ability to record musical ensembles — whether wind bands, percussion ensembles, or jazz bands — has become more accessible than ever before, thanks to advancements in technology. While recording might initially bring to mind thoughts of record deals and album sales, it can also serve as an incredibly valuable educational and archival tool for program development. This article comprises a discussion of methods for successfully recording your ensembles in a way that is neither overly difficult nor expensive.

To begin, you will need a few essential pieces of equipment: at least two condenser microphones, at least two 25- to 50-foot microphone cables, two microphone stands (preferably boom stands), an audio interface, and a computer.

SELECTING THE RIGHT MICROPHONES

Microphone selection can be an extensive and costly process, with microphones ranging from $10 to over $10,000. However, selection doesn't have to be difficult. When selecting mics, you first need to know what you are recording and how you plan to record it. For example, if you are recording a full ensemble only from the front of the stage, I suggest at least two condenser microphones so you can capture a stereo image. The stereo image allows for a greater depth of sound in the final product.

In some instances, you may like to use spot mics to capture specific instruments, such as soloists, or for the sake of keeping this discussion percussively focused, drumset or snare drum. In these instances, you should determine the volume output of the instrument. For example, in our most recent percussion ensemble concert, I used a spot mic to record our rendition of John Cage's "Living Room Music." Because this piece is relatively quiet, I placed a condenser microphone directly in front of the performers, to capture each part in high fidelity. Why not use a dynamic microphone? Because dynamic microphones, such as a Shure SM57, are not suited to pick up soft sounds[1] without a significant increase in gain that would need to be adjusted once the volume of the instrument increases. On the other hand, if I were miking a drumset or drums for sound reinforcement through a public address system, I would use dynamic microphones because you can place them close to the source without worrying that they will amplify everything else around them, as a condenser microphone would.

LARGE VS. SMALL DIAPHRAGM CONDENSER MICS

There is much discussion on the differences between large and small diaphragm condenser microphones. However, the general consensus is that small diaphragm microphones are better at picking up high-frequency[2] information and have a cleaner, less colored sound. On the other hand, large diaphragm microphones have a warmer sound that is used on sources such as vocals, horns, and drums. There is no wrong answer as to which style of microphone you should use for your recording: it is mainly based on preference. In order to hear the differences, I encourage potential engineers to listen to some recording samples found on YouTube, as there are multiple videos of "shootouts" comparing multiple microphones. I also encourage engineers to listen to these shootouts using headphones so that they can better hear the differences.

To reiterate, there are many different choices of microphones that you can

choose from when preparing to record your ensemble. I chose the mics listed below for a few reasons. First, they are all condenser microphones, which are engineered to be more sensitive to changes in air pressure levels by the means of an extremely thin diaphragm that turns the vibrations from the pressure waves into electricity.[3] This sensitivity allows the engineer to place as few as one microphone to capture the total ensemble and hear all instruments with good fidelity. Secondly, each of the microphones below feature a pad switch that attenuates the signal by a preselected value from the manufacturer, which is important for capturing loud sounds without distortion.

Following are a few microphones I recommend. The first is the Shure KSM137. This mic is relatively inexpensive compared to many other small-diaphragm condenser microphones but provides a nice, clear recording. It features a pad switch that allows for -15 or -25 decibels (dB) of attenuation. The second switch has three positions (top to bottom). Position one allows for a flat response, which picks up up frequencies from 20 hertz (Hz) to 20,000 Hz.[4] Position two functions as a selective low-cut filter that severely attenuates frequencies beneath 80 Hz. Position three is a low-frequency rolloff that gradually attenuates the low frequencies as they dip below 115 Hz.[5] The latter two settings are useful to mitigate boominess of instruments or the proximity effect, which can occur when the low frequencies of a source are boosted due to close proximity to a directional microphone.

If you prefer large-diaphragm condenser microphones, a budget-friendly option would be a pair of Audio Technica AT2020s or the slightly larger, AT2035. Unlike the AT2020, the AT2035 allows you to shape your signal with an onboard 80 Hz high-pass filter and a 10dB pad.[6]

If your budget allows, a studio-quality version of the previous two microphones is the AT4040, which is more sensitive to air pressure changes than the former two microphones.[7]

Each of the above microphones has a cardioid polar pattern. The accompanying graphic shows a cardioid polar pattern with which microphones receive sound mainly from the front of the mic. Note that there is some sound received from the sides but at a lower level than directly in front of the mic with almost complete rejection at the back of the mic.

Another microphone is the longtime trusted AKG C414, which has been utilized in numerous professional recordings and offers a warm timbre. Also, it provides various options regarding its pickup pattern. The microphone can be switched between omni-directional, which picks up sound from all directions, and bi-directional or figure-8, which picks up sound from the front and back of the microphone while rejecting sound on the sides. There are also three versions of the cardioid polar patterns, including standard cardioid, wide cardioid, which allows for greater sound capture along the sides of the microphone, and hypercardi-

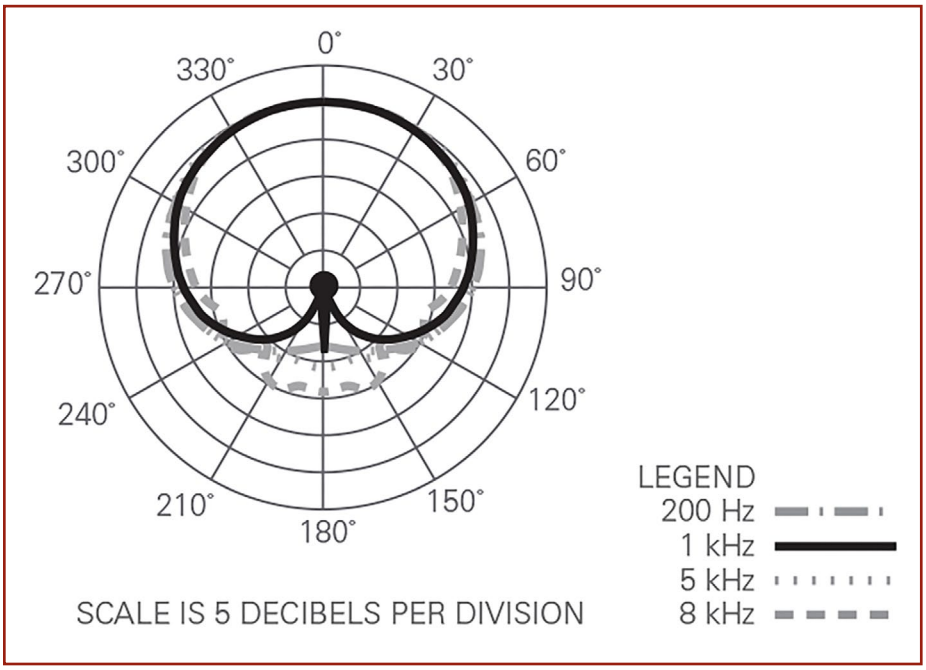
Shure KSM137 condenser microphone

Audio Technica AT2035 condenser microphone

Audio Technica AT2020 condenser microphone

Audio Technica AT4040 condenser microphone

Typical Cardioid Polar Pattern showing the microphone receiving signal from the front and sides



AKG C414

oid, which has a narrow pickup band in the front, with sensitivity behind the mic while rejecting sound on the sides of the mic.

CHOOSING MICROPHONE CABLES

Your microphone cables should be durable and long enough to reach from the capture spot to your recording interface without becoming tangled. I suggest using cables between 20 and 50 feet. These lengths will allow for optimal mic placement without the cable being stretched and/or raised above ground level (causing a potential tripping hazard). For longer cable runs, you can connect multiple microphone cables. However, I caution against linking too many microphone cables because they can begin to pick up ground noise, often heard as a buzz.

An alternative for longer cable needs is a cable snake, which allows for long, consolidated cable runs. Its centralized location for connections can be placed closer to the stage if your interface is in the audience or if you are feeding a front-of-house console. It is wise to invest a bit more money in cables, as more expensive options tend to have better quality than their cheaper alternatives.

MICROPHONE STANDS AND CLIPS

Microphone stands can be the least expensive component of your setup. You can often purchase a pack of stands that will last for years with proper care. A notable difference in microphone stand construction lies in the connections that hold the stand in place and allow it to extend: these may be made of plastic or metal. Some brands, such as DR, offer all-steel stands that are very sturdy, while others are made of lighter aluminum with plastic components. The all-metal stands are preferable, because the plastic components can break if over-tightened. I strongly suggest the use of boom microphone stands, because they allow for added flexibility in vertical and horizontal placement through their telescopic arms. The added height allows for the microphones to be placed overhead to ensure optimal microphone coverage.

Another necessary component of the microphone stand is the mic clip. Typically, when you purchase a microphone, it will include a compatible microphone clip. If for some reason you don't receive one (e.g., if you purchase microphones secondhand), there are a couple of universal clips available. For small condenser microphones such as a RODE M5 or a Shure KSM137, an Audix drum-mic clip often works well. For larger microphones, such as a Shure SM57, the standard size mic clip from any brand will usually fit. It should be noted that while this works for most microphones, some, especially more expensive ones, will have specialized clips that come with the microphones upon purchase.

THE AUDIO INTERFACE

The last component you will need is an audio interface. These can range from a $100 two-channel interface to those costing tens of thousands of dollars. For our purposes, I suggest an interface that has between two and eight channels to provide flexibility when recording different ensembles that might require more microphones, or to offer various options as you continue to learn. Excellent currently available options include two-channel models such as the Focusrite 2i2, Universal Audio Volt, and the PreSonus Audiobox 96.[8] These will allow you to produce a stereo recording of great quality. Interfaces with larger channel counts include the Focusrite Scarlett 18i8 containing six preamps, Focusrite 18i20 containing eight preamps, or the Audient EVO 16 contain-

ing eight preamps.[9] Understandably, the numbers in the titles of these interfaces can be confusing. The important detail to know is the number of preamps, which convert the microphone-level signal into line-level signal before converting it to digital information.[10]

These interfaces, though just a few of many great ones, will allow you to get a high-quality sound into your system. The most important factor in selecting an interface is one that has clean preamps, meaning that there is no unwanted coloration of your sound by factors out of your control. Some preamps can introduce noise to your signal when the gain level is increased. Moreover, it is important that your chosen interface has phantom power capability, often seen at 48V, as your condenser microphones will not operate without them.

Once you have selected your interface, you will need to connect it to a desktop or laptop computer running a Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) using a USB cable. Some DAWs include free software such as Audacity or GarageBand, or paid software such as Pro Tools, Reaper, Logic Pro, or Ableton Live.

Another option for a recording interface is one that does not require a computer to record audio, such as a Zoom recorder or one of the MixPre series field recorders by Sound Devices. Both of these devices utilize internal software to capture audio and record it directly to an SD card, which you can upload to your computer at a later date.

One final option is two-track (stereo) recording through a digital front-of-house-console, such as a Behringer X32. To do this, you will need to enable the recording function on the console and connect a USB thumb drive to begin recording. The console will produce a stereo recording of whatever is coming into it. Should you wish to connect your computer to the console using a USB cable, you will be able to record directly into your DAW and will be able to record each track separately, also known as multi-tracking.

ASSEMBLING COMPONENTS AND RECORDING TECHNIQUES

Once you have all the components of your recording setup, it's time to assemble the components and begin recording. Here are some tips to get you started:

Before you record, decide where you would like your microphones placed. Some engineers utilize a single recording pattern, such as X-Y or ORTF, or a combination, such as ORTF in the center and a spaced pair on the outside of the ensemble. You may use any microphone technique, but there are some guidelines. Most, if not all, stereo techniques have strict measurement guidelines to ensure you pick up sound evenly on both microphones.[11]

The X-Y pattern is likely the simplest, as the capsules of the microphones are placed at a 90-degree angle, one on top of the other as shown in the accompanying photo. This technique gives a tight, center-focused recording, as the capsules are typically pointed at their target.

The ORTF (Office de Radiodiffusion Télévision Française) pattern is a bit more complex, with the capsules being 17 cm apart at a 110-degree angle. This broader microphone angle provides a wider stereo image and makes your ensemble seem a bit more spread.

A tool that can help streamline this microphone deployment process is a stereo bar, which allows you to position two microphones in your chosen pattern using a single microphone stand. Another, easier

Two condenser microphones in an X-Y pattern.

Two condenser microphones in an ORTF pattern.

method of capturing your ensemble is using the spaced pair method, which allows for one mic to be placed on one side of the ensemble and the second mic to be place on the other side. With this technique, you must utilize the 3:1 rule, which states that the distance between the two microphones has to be three times greater than the distance from the source.[12] For example, if your microphones are one foot in front of your ensemble, then they must be at least three feet apart. This is to mitigate phase issues that happen when sound reaches the microphones in a stereo pair at different times. When this happens, you can run into such issues as phase cancelation of the signal when it's played back.

The last piece of advice for deploying your microphones is to get them as close to the ensemble as possible without distorting your signal. Deploying your microphones too far from the ensemble will pick up excessive room noise. If capturing audience sound is your goal, that is perfectly fine, but I would suggest having a main microphone array close to the ensemble and an additional array out in the house, then blending them together to taste.

For larger ensembles I would consider using more than one array as seen in the accompanying photo. In my experience, these multiple arrays allow me to capture the left, right, and center of the ensemble in greater detail and gives me more options in post-production as it pertains to panning.

GAIN STAGING AND CABLE MANAGEMENT

Finally, after connecting your recording components and deploying your microphones, you will need to ensure you are getting a good input signal from the ensemble. This process is called gain staging. According to Avid,[13] the developers of Pro Tools, individual track levels should be between -18 and -12 dB, with the master fader level peaking around -6dB. This will ensure that your audio recordings are not distorted due to excessive volume.

Next, I advise hiding your cables. This can be done by placing your cable runs out of view of audience members by running them under seats, placing a carpet over them, or using some type of premade cable runner. You can also use gaff tape to secure them to the floor to ensure no one trips.

POST-PRODUCTION AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

One factor that plays a huge part in your recording end result is the environment. While recording in an acoustically treated environment is ideal, it is not a reality that most of us find possible. That said, one can mitigate this by choosing a recording location that does not have too many reflective surfaces (concrete floors, cinderblock walls, etc.). If this is not possible, I encourage you to use carpeting to mitigate as many reflections as possible. If recording in a theater, consider using curtains to flank the ensemble with the addition of sound shells, if they are available. If you would like more reverb, I encourage adding reverb in post-production so that you can control how much the effect is present.

Regarding post-production, I strongly encourage adding such effects as EQ and compression after the recording process is finished. My rationale for this is simple: if you add effects in post, and you don't like them, you can always remove them before you publish your project. Conversely, if you add EQ and compression or any other effects before you record, you are usually stuck with those choices. There are exceptions to the rule, but it is usually best to EQ after the recording.

A good question is: "Do I need to add EQ?" To answer that, I will pose another. Are there any problem frequencies? Does your recording sound too bright or too boomy? On the other hand, do you want to boost any frequencies, such as the high end, low-end, or the midrange? If you answered yes to either question, then you need to introduce EQ. There are plenty of guides to frequency ranges and what each of them pertain to, but the main and most important thing is to use your ears! What sounds good is subjective to the listener, but if you are still unsure, listen to some professional recordings and try to emulate them as best you can.

Compression is a bit different as it deals with the dynamic range of the audio. If your recording's loud sounds are super loud, but the soft sounds are super soft, I would introduce compression to shrink the dynamic spectrum a bit so that the loud sounds are a bit softer, but the quiet sounds are a litter louder. Compressors have a few different components that can

Multiple stereo arrays set up to record a concert. Photo by Derrick Greene.

be daunting at first glance. The different components are as follows:

Threshold: This is the decibel level at which you would like the compressor to engage. If your compressor is set at -10dB, the compressor will not engage sounds softer than -10db.

Ratio: This controls how much the sounds are reduced. Ratio settings include 2:1, 4:1, 8:1, or even 30:1. Using 8:1 as an example, these ratios mean that for every eight dBs over the signal, the output signal will only increase by one dB, resulting in a 7dB reduction in volume.

Attack/Release: Measured in milliseconds, these parameters determine how fast the compressor engages and disengages. Faster attack and release times are great for shorter sounds such as drums, while slower attack and release times are good for sustained sounds.

Makeup Gain: This tool is used to add some volume back after the compressor reduces your signal. This is useful because the compressor does not discriminate as to what is reduced in volume, so you may need to add some back in or change your reduction ratio.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Recording your ensemble can be very challenging, but it doesn't have to be. Like everything else in music, frequent practice will boost your confidence and skills. If you are new to recording and have purchased new equipment, record your ensemble before the actual recording date and experiment with different settings in regard to mic techniques, mic distance, post-production settings, and even things like where you deploy your interface and computer or other recording device.

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Dr. Derrick Greene is assistant professor of music and percussion area coordinator at Tennessee State University, where he also serves as an Assistant Director for the Grammy Award-winning Aristocrat of Bands. Under his leadership, the TSU drumline — "The Authority" — has achieved national acclaim, including two appearances at the Tournament of Roses Parade, a performance for the Los Angeles Lakers, and the production of two albums. A versatile clinician and educator, Dr. Greene has presented across the United States and maintains a professional profile as a freelance performer and audio engineer. His orchestral and ensemble experience includes serving as principal percussionist for the Nashville African American Wind Symphony and as drummer and technology director for the award-winning brass band Brassville. Dr. Greene holds Doctor of Musical Arts and Master of Music degrees from the University of Memphis, and a Bachelor of Music degree with a concentration in education from Tennessee State University.

The Percussionist as Administrator

Reflections on artistic leadership in higher education

By Payton MacDonald

When I tell people that I am the chairperson of a collegiate music department, the most frequent reaction I receive — often expressed with a hint of derision — is: "My condolences." Occasionally, someone will ask if I was compelled into the position. When I respond that I accepted the role voluntarily, the reply is one of astonishment, bemusement, and perhaps subtle disappointment. Have I crossed over to the so-called "dark side"? Have I become one of *them* — an administrator removed from creative practice, forever counting beans and hidden away on the other side of campus?

I would like to believe not. Since assuming this role, I have continued to release recordings, compose new pieces, and perform nationally and internationally. My artistic fires are burning as brightly as ever, and I am still working with my colleagues and students daily.

While outcomes vary by institution and individual, it is entirely possible to remain an engaged, vital artist while serving effectively in an administrative capacity. In fact, I would argue that percussionists are uniquely well-prepared for leadership in higher education. The skills honed through years of directing a collegiate percussion studio translate directly into the realm of academic administration.

One key area of overlap lies in personnel management. A distinguishing feature of collegiate percussion programs is the logistical complexity involved in managing student assignments and ensemble needs. Coordinating the placement of students across multiple ensembles requires sustained communication with ensemble directors, an understanding of the institution's curricular demands, and careful attention to each student's pedagogical trajectory. Unlike most instrumental studios, percussionists are responsible for an array of instruments — keyboard, battery, timpani, accessories — and few students demonstrate equal proficiency across all areas. Consequently, ensemble part assignments become a delicate balancing act: one must weigh the needs of the conductor, the capabilities of individual students, and the imperative to foster growth in areas of relative weakness. Assigning the strongest mallet player to every mallet part may guarantee a successful performance, but it may also short-circuit opportunities for others to develop essential skills.

This nuanced process mirrors the human resource functions required for department chairpersons: hiring and supervising adjunct faculty, graduate assistants, student workers, and staff. Effective personnel leadership requires attention to individual strengths and aspirations, while also maintaining alignment with institutional priorities. Retention of high-quality personnel depends not only on administrative efficiency but also on a culture of mutual respect, mentorship, and professional development. The balancing act practiced by collegiate percussion directors of managing competing priorities, making equitable deci-

The very skills that define a successful collegiate percussion director are directly applicable to academic administration.

sions, and fostering long-term growth is an ideal apprenticeship for further higher education leadership.

Another dimension in which percussionists are well-suited for administration is equipment management. Percussion programs involve significant infrastructure. Hundreds of instruments must be inventoried, maintained, transported, and stored. And while a select few collegiate percussion instructors enjoy working in buildings that were designed for these tasks, most do not. This alone represents a complex weekly time commitment that few other instrumental areas face. While other musicians may spend significant time on craft-specific maintenance (reed making, string adjustments, etc.), percussionists are required to engage in large-scale logistical oversight, often in collaboration with numerous stakeholders, working under significant budgetary and facility constraints. The practical, detail-oriented mindset necessary for overseeing percussion equipment translates readily to institutional stewardship of budgets, capital improvements, and long-range planning.

Equally important is the percussionist's immersion in stylistic diversity. Percussionists are expected to be knowledgeable about and perform across an extraordinarily wide range of genres and traditions, often within the same semester or even the same day. Orchestral excerpts, classical marimba literature, jazz vibraphone, Afro-Cuban rhythms, West African drumming, and rock drumset grooves may all co-exist in the same curriculum. This breadth is not merely academic or theoretical; it is embodied through physical performance. Such exposure fosters not only technical adaptability but also cultural empathy and intellectual openness, qualities essential to leadership in today's globalized academic environment.

In an era where music curricula must reflect the multiplicity of musical cultures and practices, administrators must be capable of engaging deeply with a broad spectrum of artistic traditions. While musicology courses may provide important historical and theoretical frameworks, only lived musical experience can cultivate a deep appreciation of stylistic plurality. The percussionist's training offers precisely that: a physical, emotional, and cognitive immersion in the musical "other." For a department chair, such sensitivity is foundational, not peripheral. Collegiate music programs that thrive in the 21st century are led by individuals who embody inclusivity — not just in rhetoric, but in practice. Percussionists are those individuals.

Finally, the ethos of leadership through participation is deeply embedded in the culture of percussion. The communal nature of ensemble setup and teardown cultivates habits of collaboration, humility, and shared responsibility. Faculty and students work side by side to move instruments before and after rehearsals, often arriving hours before the rest of the musicians and not finishing until long after everyone else has gone home. As a policy in most collegiate percussion studios, no one leaves, including faculty, until all equipment is returned to its proper place, no matter how tiring or inconvenient this may be. This norm may seem mundane, but it instills a crucial leadership principle: authority does not exempt one from labor. This willingness to "get in the trenches" builds trust and strengthens institutional culture. It is a form of servant leadership that has myriad applications in higher education arts leadership.

It is worth noting that the personnel dynamics of a given department may be more or less conducive to an enriching experience as a chairperson. I have been lucky that my colleagues in our department are, for the most part, professional, courteous, and focused on the success of the students. I have experienced my share of personal drama (both with faculty and students), some of which has been amplified by social media, but in general my tenure as chairperson has been remarkably free of vicious infighting, petty grievances, immaturity, and poor job performance by my colleagues. I had to fire a few people (a most distasteful experience), but it was in the best interests of the students and success of the institution, and I had the full support of the upper administration.

In hindsight, I am sure that if my situation were the opposite, I would not have agreed to a second term. The relentless psychic stress of managing perpetual toxic personnel disputes would take too great a toll on my mental health and the needed bandwidth for my creative work, and the many rewards of being a chairperson would be overshadowed by the constant negativity. While I recommend administrative work for percussionists looking to expand and enhance their contributions to the academy, I also recommend one consider carefully the personalities with which one will be working.

In sum, the very skills that define a successful collegiate percussion director — logistical acumen, personnel coordination, equipment oversight, stylistic fluency, and embodied leadership — are directly applicable to academic administration. Rather than signaling a departure from artistic life, administrative service can be a meaningful extension of it. To lead a department is not to abandon one's identity as a musician, but to reimagine that identity in service of a broader community. For those of us percussionists trained to listen, adapt, collaborate, and innovate, the transition from percussion studio to chairperson office may be less a rupture than a natural evolution.

The chairperson position has been deeply rewarding, and I'm now in my fourth year. Whether I will continue my journey into higher education arts leadership after that or return to faculty remains to be seen, but I encourage other collegiate percussion directors to eschew the negative rhetoric surrounding chairperson positions or other administrative opportunities at their institution and recognize the potential for significant positive impact with their academic community. Since becoming a chairperson, I have been able to steer our department into expanded curriculum offerings, enhanced community engagement, greater diversity of hiring, expansive diversity of musical aesthetics, and much more. I have done all of this in collaboration with my outstanding colleagues, who are a constant source of inspiration and guidance.

I am still performing, composing, improvising, and recording music, and I am still working with my percussion students daily. (At my institution, chairperson positions are not fully administrative; we still have teaching responsibilities.) While this work is obviously not a good fit for everyone, we percussionists are uniquely qualified for it, and you might be surprised to experience how invigorating it can be.

Payton MacDonald is a composer, percussionist, singer, filmmaker, and administrator. His music has been performed by Alarm Will Sound, JACK Quartet, Bergamot Quartet, Shawn Mativetsky, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and many others. Payton has studied Indian classical music for over 25 years. He also creates ambitious interdisciplinary projects like Sonic Divide, where he biked 2,500 miles along the Continental Divide while performing 30 new pieces, and Sonic Peaks, hiking hundreds of mountains to create music reflecting those experiences. He has released over 100 recordings. He studied at the University of Michigan (BFA) and Eastman School of Music (MM, DMA), where he studied percussion with Michael Udow and John Beck and composition with August Read Thomas, Sydney Hodkinson, and Robert Morris. Payton teaches percussion, improvisation, and new music at William Paterson University in Wayne, New Jersey.

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.

The Bassline: A Destination, Not A Detour

By Chad Murray

For decades, the marching bass drum section has often been viewed as a developmental stopgap — a place for younger players to "cut their teeth" before moving on to the snare or quad lines. While there is some educational value in this traditional approach, it can inadvertently diminish the perceived worth and potential of the bassline. To truly elevate a percussion section to a high level of artistry and precision, we must rethink the role of the bass line: it should be a destination of choice, a section that demands and develops the same high-caliber technical skill, musicality, and artistry as any other line in the ensemble.

NAVIGATING TUNING TECHNIQUE

Achieving a professional bassline sound begins with a systematic, disciplined approach to tuning — one that emphasizes tonal clarity, resonance, and punch. Instead of tuning drums solely to the key of the show, focus on creating consistent intervals between drums to form a melodic "run." For a five-drum set, a common standard involves tuning the bottom three drums in a "power chord" structure — root, perfect fifth, and octave — while the top two drums complete a major or minor triad.

For outdoor applications, a popular tuning scheme for a five-drum set is based off the lowest drum being tuned to a D. From here, the fourth bass drum is tuned to an A, drum three would be tuned to D an octave above the lowest bass drum. Finally, the second drum is tuned to the major third of the key, which is F-sharp, and the top bass drum is tuned a minor third above F-sharp, landing on A, thus completing a major triad in the top three drums, D–A–D–F-sharp–A.

Another common tuning scheme is to take the same intervallic relationship and start a whole step down on C. For indoor bass drum tuning, common tuning schemes start with the lowest bass drum being tuned to an E-flat or E-natural, following the same interval pattern mentioned above. If you are looking for more articulation, you can alter the space between each drum by adjusting the original tuning scheme and tune the drums in perfect fourths. An example of this starting on D is D–G–C–F–B-flat. These tuning approaches ensure the entire bass section sounds unified, almost like a single instrument rather than five disconnected voices. Both heads should be tuned to the same pitch to maximize resonance, ensuring that every note is heard clearly and carries enough fundamental tone to cut through the ensemble, even from the furthest seats.

MUFFLING

Muffling is a vital component in having the bassline produce adequate articulation

and tone. Without proper dampening, open drums tend to produce a "mushy" sound with uncontrolled overtones. Internal muffling — using foam weather stripping or specialized acoustic foam — controls these overtones and accentuates attack, making each note articulate and punchy. External muffling works in a similar fashion and offers similar results in articulation, blend, and balance.

One downfall to external muffling is that this approach requires a new application of foam when changing from an old set of heads to a new set. Due to the nature in which the foam is adhered to the drumhead, this approach can be time-consuming and cost-inefficient if bound to a set budget. Internal muffling allows the performer to muffle the drum once and change heads numerous times, as the foam is adhered to the shell of the drum rather than the drumhead itself.

Internal muffling

External muffling

ACHIEVING SECTIONAL UNITY

Sectional unity in a modern bassline extends beyond playing in time; it's about cultivating a singular "voice" through a unified physical approach. This begins with consistent grip and playing position. Unlike snares, which often utilize a horizontal wrist motion, bassists benefit from maintaining a vertical "French grip" — with thumbs facing upward — and a uniform fulcrum pressure. Typically, this involves a balanced 60/40 split of pressure between the thumb and index finger, with the remaining fingers providing support. This consistency in technique produces a cohesive tone quality across all sizes of drums.

Rehearsal habits are the glue that maintains this unity. Effective bass sections treat unisons with the same meticulous attention as splits. Practice simple eighth- or sixteenth-note patterns on a single drum, focusing on consistent stick height and velocity. Once the section masters these isolated patterns, they can be transferred to the full ensemble. This "one-drum" method fosters a culture of precision, pride, and collective sound, where every member understands that their individual contribution directly influences the section's overall coherence.

DEVELOPING RHYTHMIC CLARITY

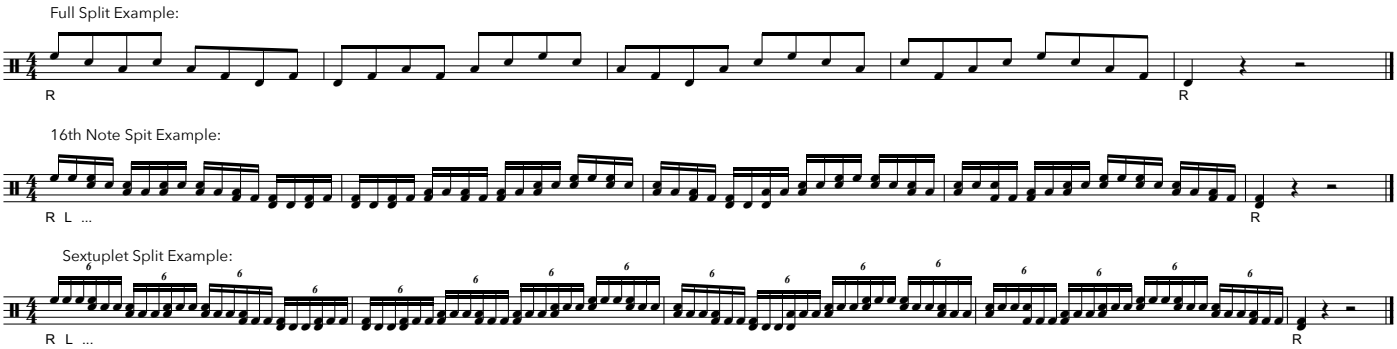
One of the defining traits of an elite bassline is the ability to execute complex splits with the clarity and precision of a soloist. This requires a fundamental shift from purely visual timing cues to internal rhythmic subdivision. Pedagogical tools like the "Taco-Burrito-Enchilada" vocal-

ization method — where students assign syllables to different note groupings — help internalize the math behind rhythmic patterns.

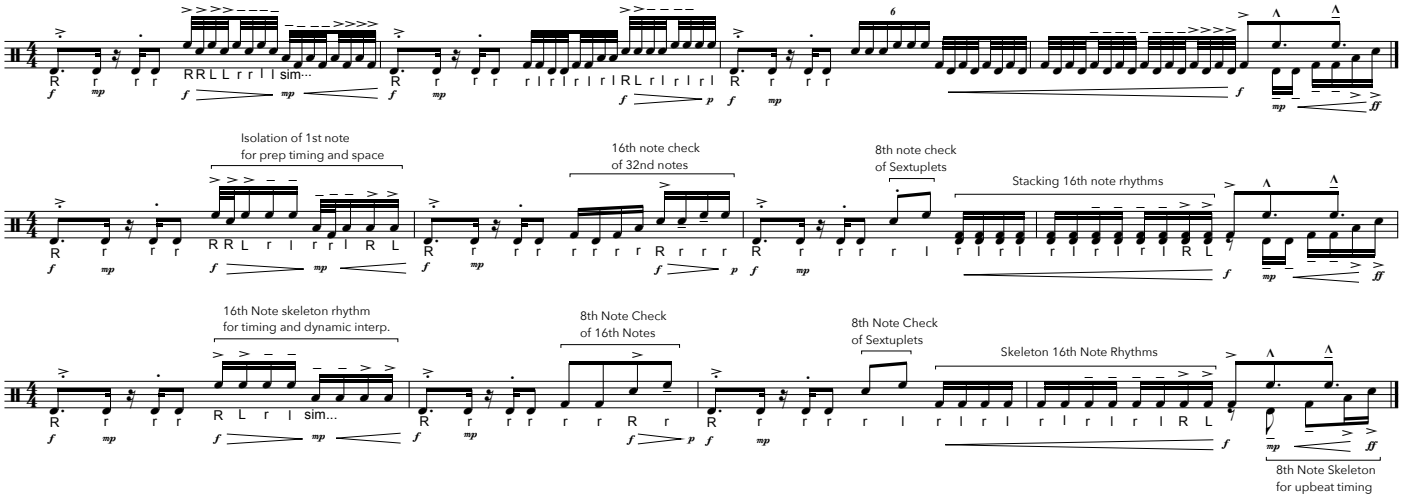
Before playing a split, every member should be able to confidently mark time with a metronome, internalizing the pulse to the point where the feet become the ultimate source of steady timing. To bridge the gap between unison and split execution, exercises that gradually "strip away" notes are invaluable. An example for sixteenth two-note timing is to have each player add an eighth-note release to each of their respective eighth-note partials. Ultimately this gives each player an "anchor" to play to. Building this kinesthetic training allows the performer to understand spacing of the two-note grouping and shows each player exactly how late to delay their entrance, sharpening their internal sense of timing. (See Example 1.)

Consistently using a metronome, especially on offbeats, challenges the section's internal rhythm. This discipline ensures that even the most intricate thirty-second-note runs maintain their integrity during performance — no stretching, no rushing, just pure rhythmic clarity.

Example 1



Example 2



CULTIVATING NUANCE IN CONTEMPORARY BASS DRUM WRITING

Modern bass drum writing has evolved into a musical language rich with nuance and texture. To keep advanced players engaged and to elevate the section's musical contribution, writing must incorporate subtle dynamics, varied textures, and expressive "touch." For example, incorporating rim clicks on the top drum can produce a metallic, high-pitched accent, while muffled notes — played with the hand pressing against the head — simulate a dead, "kick drum" sound.

Adding ghost notes and subtle velocity shifts breathes life into the bassline. Instead of writing every note at the same volume, composers and arrangers should utilize crescendos and decrescendos within runs, creating a dynamic contour that enhances musicality. These nuances not only enrich the texture but also demonstrate mastery over subtlety and touch — traits that elevate the bassline from simple rhythmic support to a vital, expressive musical voice. (See Example 2.)

By approaching the bassline as a melodic, multi-tonal instrument capable of extreme sensitivity, educators can foster a section of percussionists who are not only technically proficient but also artistically expressive. When bass players view their role as a destination rather than a detour, they embody the high standards of the ensemble and contribute to a truly unified, compelling performance.

Through intentional focus on tuning, technique, unity, rhythmic clarity, and musical nuance, we can transform the bassline from a developmental stepping stone into a destination of excellence. By elevating the perception and execution of this section, educators empower all members to see the bassline as an essential, high-caliber component of the marching percussion ensemble — worthy of the same respect and attention as the snare and quad lines.

Chad Murray is Assistant Band Director and Director of Percussion Studies and Ensembles at Granbury High School (Texas), bringing extensive teaching experience from various notable programs across Texas, North Carolina, and Virginia. His background includes educational roles with such elite ensembles as Genesis Drum and Bugle Corps and Vigilantes Indoor Percussion. An alumnus of Old Dominion University (BME) and Texas Tech University (MME), he is an active member of the PAS Marching/Rudimental Committee.

A Survey of Comments Regarding Movement and Posture as Found in Selected Methods for Marimba Commonly Used in Brazil

By Guilherme Misina, Prof. Dr. Eduardo Lopes, and Prof. Stephan Froleyks

This article is an excerpt of an ongoing PhD project that deals with movements and posture related to marimba performance. It describes current methods as well as the possible development of exercises and methods related to these topics for both practice and performance.

Though movement and posture are generally less discussed than other technical and musical aspects of marimba performance, the methods examined in this study, all written by highly skilled and respected musicians, each contain significant information on the topic and should serve as a basis of study for all students. Hopefully, the completed study will deliver comprehensive, complete, and coherent materials that will assist students of all levels in their approaches to the practice and performance of the marimba.

It can be said that playing a musical instrument relies on personal choices with due consideration to many musical aspects, such as dynamics, phrasing, tempi, etc. However, in regard to body movement and posture, the "personal choice" is often limited by the specific physical characteristics of the performer's body, such as height, arm length, and hand size. Each of these, and others, should be taken into consideration when playing or practicing for long periods of time, and adjusted to be as healthy as possible. Methods utilizing this approach to the instrument are discussed in the few selected method books, with a goal of pointing out key aspects that are vital to healthier playing techniques.

A wealth of documented information related to movement and posture has been published regarding the health of musicians. For example, Davidson (2002) talks about how the musicians' gestures can be connected to a piece's tempo, and Pierce (2007) shows how body movement can contribute to the development of rhythmic precision. Wong (2022), Shoebridge et al. (2017), Blanco-Piñeiro (2013), and Pierce (2007) are classical examples of research on how good body posture and attention to specific muscles can help a musician deliver a higher-level performance, as well as what constitutes good posture. Specifically in the percussion field, there are articles or books by Colton (2013), Broughton and Stevens (2009), Broughton (2008), Dahl and Friberg (2007), and Dahl (2000).

Most of the methods chosen for this study were selected due to the authors' experiences as students and what was available to them during their studies in several university settings, which explains why half of the methods mentioned are from Brazil. It should be mentioned that several books are available to purchase or freely downloaded according to the academic access one might have. In addition, it is highly likely that new material is currently being written/composed about this topic. Finally, it is important to state that none of the considerations made are presented with the intention to negatively impact or criticize the works mentioned, but to show how frequently the subject of "body movement" and "posture" is mentioned in known percussion methods and how several authors approach the topics.

Method of Movement
by Leigh Howard Stevens

One of the most important methods ever written for the development of four-mallet technique — and one that holds true not only for marimba but for all percussion keyboards — is Leigh Howard Stevens' *Method of Movement for Marimba* (1990). There is no doubt that this book brings valuable information to the student of percussion. Presented in two parts, the first is introductory and theoretical, wherein he explains permutations of strokes with four mallets, describes the possible techniques of four mallets, and clarifies the movement of the mallets before, during, and after the strokes. The second part, consisting of over 500 short technical exercises, demonstrates the possible permutations of strokes with four mallets.

The first part, which is often skipped, has extremely valuable information designed to help students understand how playing can become an easy and thoughtful task. Stevens eloquently states how players can improve their skills by simply thinking about the amount and kinds of movement implied when, for example, simply playing two distinct notes. One insightful phrase states, "Accuracy and efficiency are reduced by mismanagement of distance and momentum. The mallets should not be moved anywhere that is not directly related to the task of striking the bars from the proper height and recovering to the proper height for the next one" (Stevens, 1990, p. 18).

As the book's title, *Method of Movement for Marimba*, states, Stevens does indeed do a marvelous job with what this first part says.[1] However, Stevens doesn't elaborate or discuss details related to body movement during marimba playing or practicing. He does write about body consciousness regarding the importance of knowing, for example, how players should think about their elbows, shoulders, and fingers.

Manual de Percussão, Vol. II: Barrafones, Livro 1
by Luiz A. Anunciação

Anunciação's method is one of the few percussion methods written in Portuguese by a Brazilian musician, which makes it a valuable resource for beginning students in Brazil and enriches the Brazilian academic nest by adding to the list of easily available materials. The method begins with a theoretical part, which explains how to use his method, how to practice, what to be cautious about, and basic information about positioning and body posture. In regards to body posture, Anunciação writes, "Certify yourself that hand and arms position are natural and relaxed and try to avoid any kind of muscular or postural stiffness that alters the natural state of your physical stature (Anunciação p. 37)."[2] Anunciação even has a similar view as Tarcha (1997) when he writes, "The posture before the instrument should embrace the scope of the musical material to be played. Have your feet slightly further apart from one another and stand the body equally on both legs (ibid, p. 40)."[3]

Continuing through Anunciação's method, one finds a series of exercises called "preliminary," "tonal," or "melodic" exercises. These are well composed for beginners to gradually develop senses of technicality and musicality. As Anunciação continues through the next sections ("cadernos" or "nível"), he often reminds the reader "not to look excessively to the keys of the instrument." This is helpful advice regarding a player's posture as it prevents the student from repeatedly bending the head down from looking at the score, then to the instrument, and then back up to the score. Furthermore, this helps students develop a sense of familiarity with the instrument and hit the correct bars using their peripheral vision. This skill, a useful and important one for a percussionist, can become highly developed by following the steps contained in *Ideo-Kinetics* (2001), by Gordon Stout.

Read this article in Portuguese.

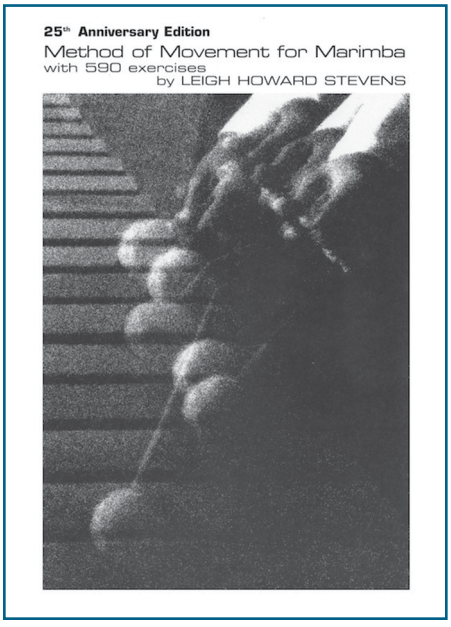
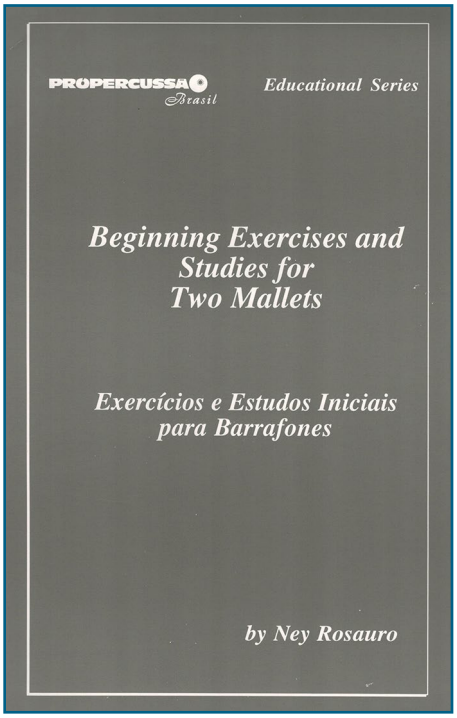


Photo courtesy of Dr. Pedro Sá

Beginning Exercises and Studies for Two Mallets
by Ney Rosauro

Ney Rosauro's book is probably the best known and used beginning marimba method in Brazil due to its availability and the fact that it is written in Portuguese. The instructions are concise and valuable, and the music educational material is lightly and creatively composed. Though only 24 pages in length, and depending on the progress of a student, it can likely be used for some months while the student gathers sufficient musical maturity to fully understand the exercises and etudes contained within the book.

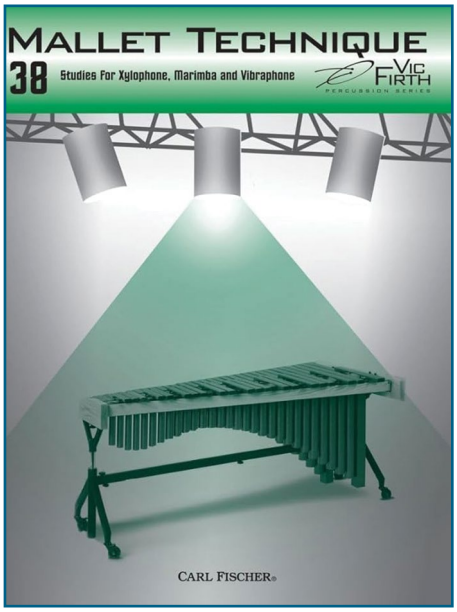
Throughout his method, Rosauro insists that it is vital a student not look at the keyboard, as it helps in "memorizing the distance between notes (kinetic memory) (p. 2)." This follows what Anunciação stated in his method and, considering that Rosauro was a student of Anunciação, one would expect that he would recommend what he was taught from his professor. Besides this and its indirect consequences on posture and movement during the playing of mallet instruments, Rosauro does not explicitly mention anything else involving the importance of one's posture or movement during performance.



Mallet Technique: 38 Studies for Xylophone, Marimba, and Vibraphone
by Vic Firth

Vic Firth's book brings a traditional, technique-expanding series of exercises (or "Studies," as Firth calls them) that definitely help develop ear training and technical execution by working with dominant chords, and major, minor (harmonic and melodic forms), augmented, and diminished scales. In general, the exercises have an ascending or descending melodic idea (often incorporating an arpeggio at the end) or are entirely based on an arpeggio idea. Also, each study has a written explanation regarding what one should look for while practicing. Some of these comments mention body movement and posture.

Although Study No. 18 is the first with a caption to mention physical location, the same idea occurs in Study No. 7. This study consists of a rolled, two-octave, repeated arpeggio beginning on C4, ascending to C6, and descending back to C4. After completing the exercise chromatically up to C7, the study inverts the arpeggio idea, beginning on C7, and descends chromatically until returning to the original starting point of C4. Hence one must cover wide range of the keyboard. Study No. 18 uses the same process, but begins on A, thereby practicing the same arpeggio idea, but now beginning with a minor scale. At the end of both exercises Firth rewrites the exercise, but now students must play only once, and not twice in a roll — i.e., they have less time to stay in the same arpeggio — resulting in a better exercise to develop dexterity.



Before Study No. 7, Firth writes, "In the second part of the study,[4] the mind and the eyes must actually travel ahead of the hands to direct the hands to the correct notes. (Refer to the notes of Study No. 18)." (Firth, 1965, p. 11). The introduction for Study No. 18 states, "It should be noted that the physical location of the player to the instrument is very important, owing to the wide span involved in two-octave arpeggios. An improper position before the instrument will tend to limit the player's facility for speed." (ibid, p. 18). Since both exercises have a two-octave range, as well as the same tempo practicing recommendations, it would be wiser to place this last quotation before Study No. 7, or even in the beginning of the book, as such valuable knowledge, which is important to percussion students, would be a helpful learning process for the entire book.

Studies No. 8 and 9 are also excellent exercises regarding body movement and position at the marimba, due to the fact that one must play ranges of more than two octaves — for example, A3 to C6. Both exercises consist of a 4-measure scale, ascending and descending, the major difference being that Study No. 8 is based on the harmonic minor scale, whereas No. 9 is based on the melodic minor scale. Fortunately, there are comments that describe the studies before the exercises, but unfortunately there are no comments regarding movement and positioning of the body while playing them.

Técnica de Duas Baquetas para Teclados de Percussão: Marimba, Vibrafone, Xilofone e Glockenspiel
by Carlos Tarcha

Although Tarcha's book is dedicated to only two-mallet technique for percussion keyboards, most of the content — not just the aspects concerning body position and movement — can be seen as general

concepts. These apply independently of which technique one is playing, and are even more important when applied toward four-mallet techniques. Of course, some adjustments are needed, which can be clearly demonstrated while playing elementary technical exercises when applying different four-mallet techniques (a four-note block chord, for example). These concepts may influence the position of the arms and forearms differently depending on which four-mallet technique one is using.

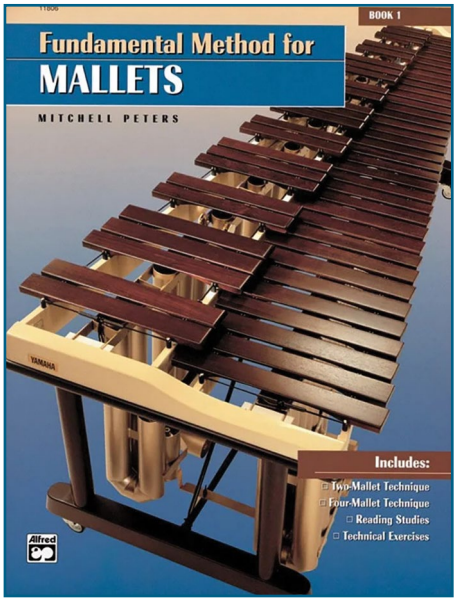
Tarcha's method is divided into two parts; the first one being the description on how to use and study the book, the second being a glossary. In the first part, one can find valuable information about how Tarcha approaches the position of the body while playing and practicing. For example, on the second section of the first part, "how to use it and study," Tarcha mentions that one should concentrate on musical aspects and become aware of physical posture, relaxation, and the specific movements. He also addresses the importance of learning by heart (or memory), stating that by doing so one can better observe not only the position of the mallets and the body, but also listen more clearly to what is being played (p. 5). He also mentions that the same result might be successfully achieved when one takes a few minutes to rest (or take short breaks) while practicing (p. 139).

One of the most useful and important details mentioned by Tarcha regarding posture is foot positioning. Tarcha recommends placing your feet about 40 centimeters apart, with one foot in front of the other (p. 18 and 22), as this provides better stability when moving the torso forwards, backwards, and side to side. Furthermore, at the beginning of his second chapter, Tarcha presents his view on the ideal body position and the height of the instrument in relation to the player. Generally, he states that the best height is one that leaves the arms comfortable and not tense with the range of motion, allowing for full wrist movements. Furthermore, the knees should remain unlocked, that is, slightly bent. Finally, he describes muscle relaxation and body awareness as essential for developing good techniques, always remembering that trunk movements should be used more than the body movement of walking, and that taking breaks between exercises is important in order to check body positioning (p. 17–18). When practicing scales and arpeggios, Tarcha again mentions the importance of these same aspects, including "body positioning: it's best not to walk, simply displace the body by changing the foot that is supporting the body's weight and bending the knees" (p. 110 and 123).

Fundamental Method for Mallets, Vol. 1 by Mitchell Peters

In the Preface to Vol. 1 of his method, Mitchell Peters writes that it initially covers two-mallet technique focusing on scales (major, minor, chromatic, and double-stops) and some basic concepts of four-mallet technique. Many of the initial technical exercises might seem familiar and similar to Firth's method book.[5] Peters also writes a small section about "Playing Position" immediately before the method's introduction on how his method is organized and should be used. This important overview also includes details about other mallet instruments (vibraphone, xylophone, bells (or glockenspiel) and chimes).

In regard to positioning, Peters presents



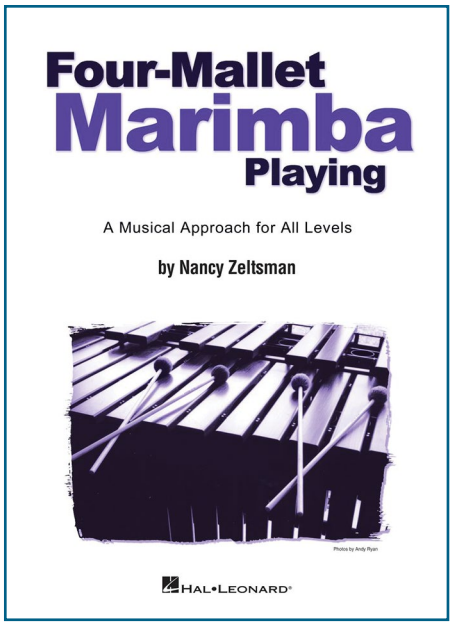
essential information for beginners, such as "try to be natural and comfortable" and "position of the body will vary, depending upon what instrument you are playing, and the range being covered" (p. 14). In contrast to Tarcha, who recommended a distance of 40 centimeters between the feet, Peters writes that one should leave the feet spread apart (in order to find body weight balance) at a distance of 12 inches (around 30 centimeters). Though one is unlikely to observe and comment on an exact measurement, it is important to note how close their suggested distances are, meaning that both agree on the same idea: keep your feet apart, because body weight distribution for mallet playing is an important trait.

Peters' approach agrees with Tarcha's in the sense that both address the importance of the instrument height. Tarcha states that "practicing on an inadequate instrument height may result in vices of posture and technique" (Tarcha, 1997, p. 16), while Peters writes that the forearms should be parallel to the floor, tilted slightly downwards and, to achieve that, if the instrument doesn't have any height adjustment system, one may "place blocks of wood under the wheels in order to raise the instrument to a more comfortable playing height" (Peters, 1995, p. 15).

Four-mallet Marimba Playing: A Musical Approach for All Levels
by Nancy Zeltsman

Nancy Zeltsman's nearly 200-page book is one of the most comprehensive methods for marimba players. At the beginning of the book, she not only manages to mention the most important aspects of musically related concepts (such as mallet choice, beating spots, the basics of good rhythmic phrasing, and rolling), but also includes several original studies that address these issues. They are highly musical, detailed and, pedagogically speaking, admirably written. She also writes "this book is for players of all levels (p. viii)," which makes it a method that can be used for a long period of time covering one's beginning level through college-level studies.

Regarding body posture, Zeltsman writes: "You should have both feet on the floor with your weight distributed evenly between them and be standing up straight…" and that "You want your arms to feel very relaxed and long, extending from your shoulders, with elbows in and relaxed (p. 5)." These are then illustrated by two photos of Zeltsman standing behind the marimba. Zeltsman's description and photos support and agree with what Tarcha and Firth write regarding proper or equal weight distribution when standing as well as having the elbows relaxed and in a slightly downward-bent position. One can therefore conclude that three prominent professionals of the percussion field agree on the same general concepts regarding body position in order to optimize an efficient manner of movement for both practice and performance.



In "Section Three: Refinements," Zeltsman again addresses body positioning by stating that, in some situations, it is better to shift the body a bit to one side in order to make the playing more comfortable, even though it might "compromise all your beating spots slightly, but try to compensate and mitigate this as much as possible." This is an advantageous tip that helps in any repertoire situation that might create awkward body positionings. The not-so-obvious solution that will create a more comfortable (and probably easier manner of executing a certain passage) is actually to move, tilt, or bend one's body in some specific way. By knowing this method, keeping it in mind as one performs, and utilizing it, a player must then just manage the stated possible consequences, such as slightly compromised beating spots.

CONCLUSION

The topics of movement and posture, mentioned at varying amounts and depths in these selected methods for marimba/keyboard percussion, confirm that the topic is of importance to marimba performance by students and teachers. The information that does exist is of high value and should be recommended by all to (1) utilize the available materials in earnest, as they are likely to make one a better performer, keeping one healthier due to better posture, especially when cognizant of this during hours-long practice sessions; and (2) encourage all teachers and students to pay attention to the theoretical information provided within these methods rather than jumping directly to the practice of written musical exercises. Perhaps Leigh Howard Stevens best sums it up with the opening sentence from his *Method of Movement*: "The student should not attempt to play *any* of the exercises in the second half of this book until *all* of the preceding text has been read."

ENDNOTES

1. Which, again, is sad that most people ignore, just to have to listen to professional professors in music festivals or summer camps saying the exact things they could've put some attention to if they had just read the book properly!
2. Original from Portuguese: "Certifique-se de que as posições das mãos e braços são espontâneas e procure evitar qualquer enrijecimento muscular ou postura que altere o estado natural de sua compleição física." About my translation, I would like to make an observation about Anunciação's use of the word "expontâneas" and my translation to "natural and relaxed." If I had translated literally to "spontaneous," that could have led some readers to think "unplanned" or "unrehearsed," like saying "I decided to go for a walk spontaneously." That was not, in my views, the kind of interpretation of the word "spontaneous" that Anunciação would be meaning to say in this sentence; hence the translation of "spontaneous" to "natural and relaxed."
3. Original from Portuguese: "A postura em frente ao instrumento deve mediar o **âmbito** do trecho musical a se executar. Tenha os pés um pouco afastados um do outro e apoie o corpo equitativamente nas duas pernas."
4. He's referring to the part without repetition, i.e., not playing two times in a roll.
5. It is not something to be diminished, though. Two highly skilled percussionists/musicians might write method books that work on the same premises, but having minute details differing on from the other makes the learning process interesting and the teaching also broader, in the sense that students might identify better with one writer rather than another.

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Hand Intrinsics: Part 1

Understanding the musculature of the hand

By Dr. Laurel Black

When I was teaching, I often told my students that there are no muscles in the wrist. There are tendons, ligaments, nerves, bones, and other connective tissues, but no contractile muscle fibers. Our ability to play comes from muscles located in the forearm and hand. The hand is beautifully complicated, full of small oxidative muscles that specialize in endurance work. These are collectively referred to as hand intrinsics, and they provide the nuanced musculature percussionists need for touch, technique, and timbre on our instruments.

Hand intrinsics are muscles that reside fully in the hand. Their tendons do not cross the wrist into the forearm. There aren't many of them, but they each perform highly specialized movements.

This article is the first of a two-part series on the anatomy and physiology of hand intrinsics, organized by region of the hand and innervation (the nerve that activates the muscle). Part 1 will cover the thenar eminence and radial side of the hand (thumb, index, and middle fingers), which are innervated by the median nerve. Part 2 will cover the hypothenar eminence and ulnar side of the hand (pinky and ring fingers), which are innervated by the ulnar nerve.

THENAR EMINENCE

The thenar eminence is the muscular grouping at the base of the thumb, visible and palpable when the tips of the thumb and index finger are pinched together. There are three muscles here, all innervated by the median nerve. We will begin with the muscle nearest the index finger and work our way out.

Flexor pollicis brevis (red in Image 1)

The flexor pollicis brevis (FPb) flexes the thumb toward the center of the palm as needed to create a fulcrum. There are two heads to the FPb, a superficial and a deep. We can easily feel the superficial head of this muscle, which attaches from the first digit of the thumb to the base of the thenar eminence at the trapezium bone and the flexor retinaculum (a large band of connective tissue that goes across the base of the palm). The deep head attaches from the first digit of the thumb to slightly more toward the center of the palm/wrist to the trapezoid and capitate bones. (See Image 2.)

Image 1

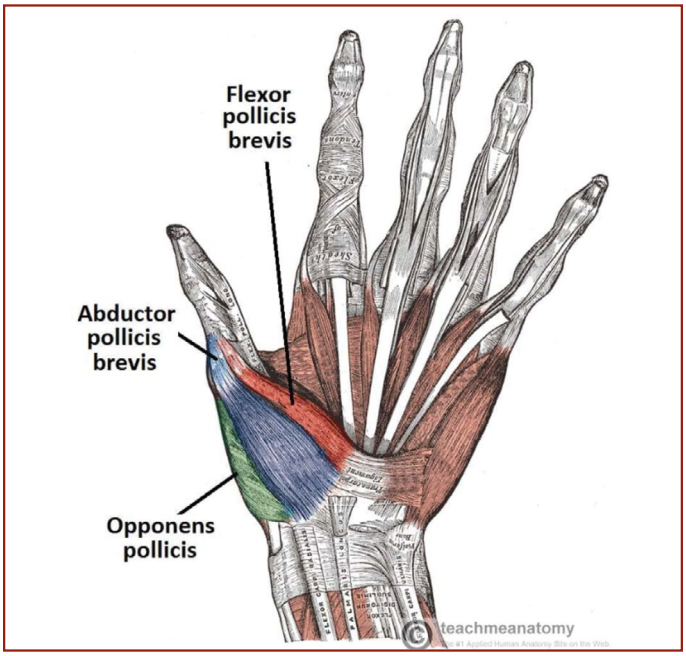
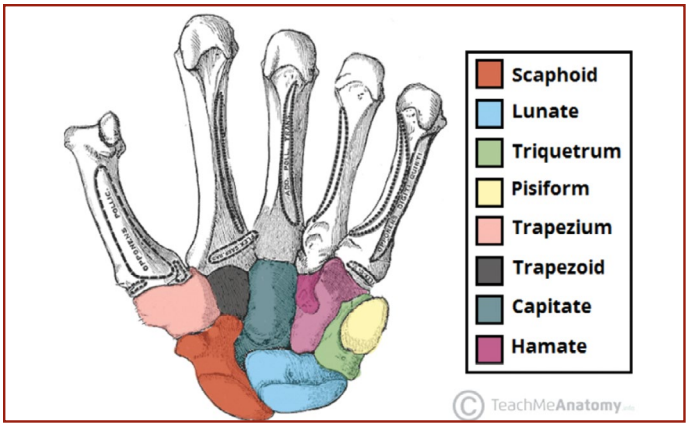


Image 2



Interestingly, not everyone has the deeper muscle head! I would be very curious to know if those who become professional percussionists — nay, musicians! — have a higher incidence rate of having both the superficial and deep FPb heads, given our increased fine motor skills.

Abductor pollicis brevis (blue in Image 1)

The abductor pollicis brevis (APb) moves the thumb out and away from the palm and index finger as needed to make an "L" shape and assists in making a wide interval with two mallets in hand. (See Image 3.) It is innervated by the median nerve. As is seen in the image, it makes up the bulk of the top layer of the thenar eminence. Like the FPb, it attaches to the first digit of the thumb, just more to the outside of it, and extends to attachment sites on the trapezium and scaphoid bones. The scaphoid is the large carpal bone located at the very base of the palm (red in Image 2) and can sometimes be affected by vascular necrosis, or deterioration of bone due to lack of adequate blood flow.

Opponens pollicis (green in Image 1)

Opponens pollicis (OP) is the largest of the three muscles in the thenar eminence and lies underneath the other two. Also innervated by the median nerve, it arises from the length of the first metacarpal of the thumb (see the black outline in Image 2) and attaches to the trapezium bone and flexor retinaculum. Its job is to perform thumb opposition to touch the tips of the other fingers. It is very active in grip control and object manipulation, as needed for nearly all percussion playing. (See Image 4.)

Image 3

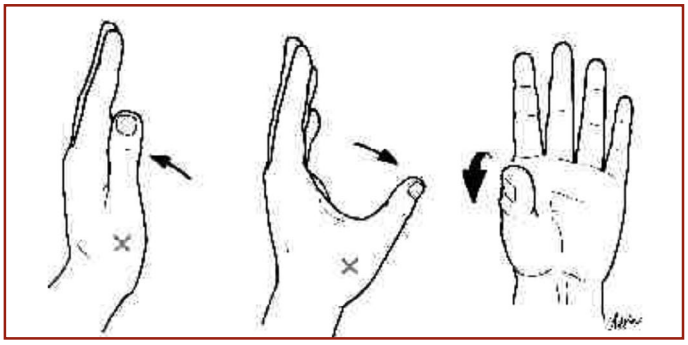
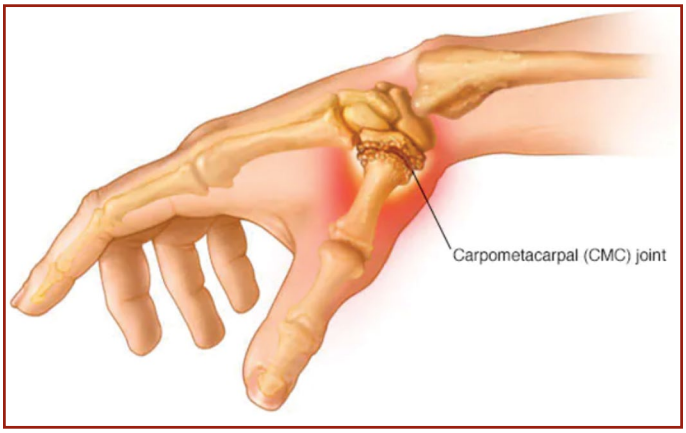


Image 4

The action of thumb opposition occurs at the carpometacarpal joint, or the CMC for short. It is where the trapezium and first metacarpal meet. It is a common location for pain due to arthritic changes to the bone or repetitive overextension of the thumb backwards. Physical therapy can help reduce pain in this location through bracing and strengthening exercises.

Image 5



THE MEDIAN NERVE AND CARPAL TUNNEL

In extreme cases of carpal tunnel syndrome, the thenar eminence will show signs of atrophy, or loss of muscle mass. When muscles are not well-innervated, as occurs when the median nerve is problematically compressed through the carpal tunnel, they are essentially "decommissioned" due to lack of use. Atrophy will occur only after a fairly significant period of pain and weakness; it will not be the first sign of carpal tunnel, but it *is* one of its final and most detrimental effects.

You can avoid atrophy of the thenar eminence by quickly seeking treatment for carpal tunnel symptoms. There have been *Percussive Notes* articles on this topic in the past, and they are listed at the end of this article for reference.

LUMBRICALS – HEADS 1 AND 2

The first and second heads of the lumbricals are innervated by the median nerve in about 60 percent of individuals. There is some variation among the other 40 percent of humans, and just like with the FPb, I wonder if there is a correlation with anatomical variation and the development of highly specialized fine motor skills!

The lumbricals are very small muscles located in the palm. They do contribute to the movement of the fingers, but are weaker movers because they do not attach to bone. Lumbricals attach to tendons! Specifically, they attach to tendons of the flexor digitorum profundus (FDP), the muscle that flexes the fingers into a fist. FDP tendons appear as white cords in Image 6.

Lumbricals play a role in proprioception of the fingers due to their high concentration of muscle spindles, which are sensory organs that help the brain coordinate fine movements at particular joints. (There is also a large concentration of muscle spindles where the skull and cervical spine meet, which helps to balance

our heavy head upright and prevent us from getting dizzy when we play any of our instruments.)

Lumbricals 1 and 2 are associated with the index and middle fingers, respectively. Image 6 shows a left palm with lumbricals colored in blue. Heads 1 and 2 are both unipennate, meaning they attach to only one side of a tendon. Their primary action is to form a lumbrical or "sandwich grip" where the base of the fingers flexes but the fingers themselves remain straight.

Even though small and not primary movers of the fingers, lumbrical muscles can be strained. In such cases, pain is present in the palm. These muscles are commonly injured in rock climbers. Stretching the fingers into extension one at a time, as shown in Image 7, can reduce injury risk.

Part 2 of this article will focus on muscles innervated by the ulnar nerve: the hypothenar eminence, lumbricals 3 and 4, interossei, palmaris brevis, and adductor pollicis.

Image 6

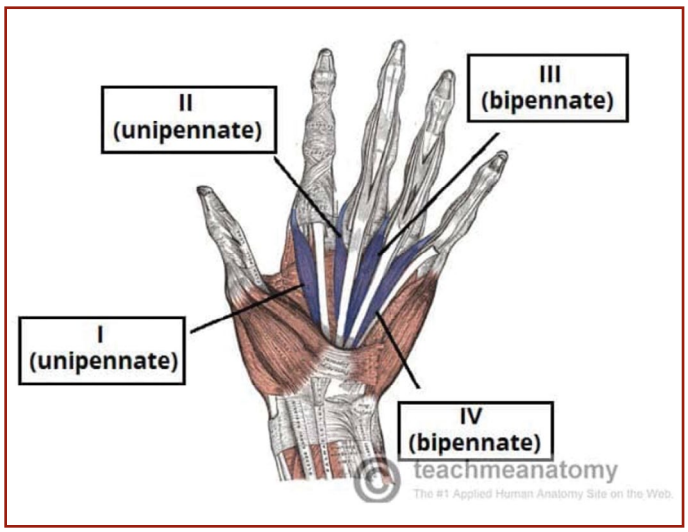
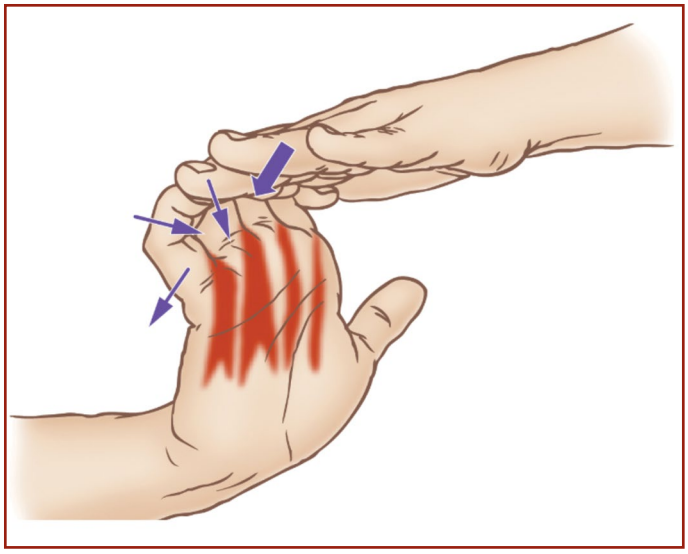


Image 7



FURTHER READING

"Carpal Tunnel Syndrome: ignoring the symptoms can end your career," by Dr. Darin Workman. *Percussive Notes*, June 2003. Volume 41, No. 3

"Median and Ulnar Neuropathies in University Percussionists," by Megan L. Doose and others. *Percussive Notes*, June 2005. Volume 43, No. 3

"Forearm, Wrist, and Hand Pain," by Dr. Stephen Workman. *Percussive Notes*, Sept. 2017. Volume 55, No. 4

Dr. Laurel Black, PT, DPT, Cert-VT, is a physical therapist and faculty member for the Doctor of Physical Therapy program at South College in Knoxville, Tenn. Previously, she enjoyed an active career in classical percussion focused on artistic health, teaching, and chamber music for marimba. She presented and performed at PASIC multiple times, was featured in *Chamber Music* magazine, and published domestically and abroad. Dr. Black is also a Reiki Master and finds that energy medicine regularly informs her work with patients. She holds an MM degree from The Boston Conservatory and a BM degree from The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She is Health & Wellness editor for *Percussive Notes* and previously served on the PAS H&W Committee.

New Percussion Literature and Recordings

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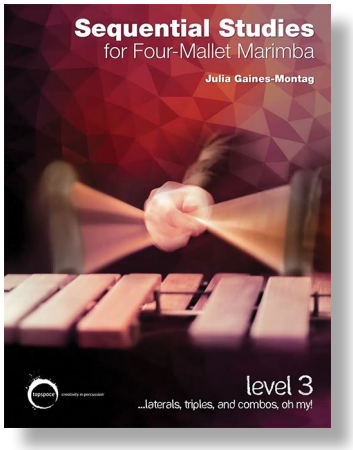
Difficulty Rating Scale

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

KEYBOARD PERCUSSION METHOD



Sequential Studies for Four-Mallet Marimba, Level 3 III–IV
Julia Gaines-Montag
$29.00
Tapspace Publications
Web: *sample pages, audio and video recordings*

While the first book in the *Sequential Studies for Four-Mallet Marimba* focused on the very beginnings of utilizing four-mallet technique with double vertical and single independent strokes, and the second volume focused on rolling and chorale playing, the third volume moves to more advanced techniques utilizing double and triple lateral strokes as well as combinations of the two. The book is organized into three sections (Prelude, Part 1, Part 2) and an appendix containing repertoire suggestions and a glossary.

The Prelude is ripe with information regarding four-mallet playing. Gains-Montag discusses everything from warm-up stretching and the various four-mallet grips to beating spots and various musical considerations before approaching the book's main topics. All of the information is pedagogically sound and is well presented with detailed pictures and a clean layout. The book is spiral bound, which makes using it on a music stand very easy.

Part 1 is broken into ten lessons and four solos, all of which focus on slowly building up double lateral technique. The lessons themselves are well thought out with clear objectives and exercises. Each lesson comes with a progress chart for each exercise along with suggested tempi. The solos are all well written, and each one includes a page of text breaking down technical and musical considerations as well as a short biography of each composer. Part 2 continues these same ideas but with more advanced concepts on the book's main topics. The solos in this section become more advanced technically and in terms of length.

This book is an excellent contribution to mallet pedagogy. The organization of the lessons, number of exercises, and solos appropriate for the level of performer make it a resource that would serve any high school or undergraduate student well.

—Brian Nozny

KEYBOARD PERCUSSION SOLO

Blossom IV+
Joey Eng
€20.00
Edition Svitzer
Instrumentation: 5-octave marimba
Web: *score sample, audio and video recordings*

This beautiful marimba solo is destined to find its way to numerous student recitals. Its tonal stylings are sometimes reminiscent of the music of Ennio Morricone, and there's at least one nod to Keiko Abe. The title, "Blossom," is derived from Eng's mother's Vietnamese name, Hoa.

"Blossom" starts tentatively, gradually picking up momentum to an active *fortissimo* peak before fading out at the end. Standard four-mallet techniques are bountiful, including melodic lines popping out within moving sixteenth notes, a left-hand melody over right-hand ostinato rotation strokes (Abe style), melodies in right-hand octaves, and a piano-like section near the beginning with the melody in the right hand and accompaniment in the left. The notation makes clear what is melody and what is accompaniment, even during faster passages. This work is challenging (but not to an extreme) and lovely, which should make it appealing to many performers.

—Joseph Van Hassel

The Flower of Neglect V
Joey Eng
€25.00
Edition Svitzer
Instrumentation: vibraphone
Web: *score sample*

Created through a consortium led by Matthew Lau, this five-minute work is an exploration of "the vibraphone's ability to create shimmering washes of tonal color" while still managing to communicate clear melodic lines over thick harmonic moments. The piano-like writing (low end/left hand flourishes underscoring simple and clear upper-end melodic moments) translates well to the vibraphone. Joey Eng utilizes the sonic abilities of the instrument in such a way that the finished product delivers a pleasing and musically deep amalgamation of techniques and character styles.

Throughout this work, a general sense of whimsy and uniqueness is highlighted in the opening measures, which features a musically effective rising figure composed of thirty-second notes (at quarter note = 50.) This musical figure serves as the backdrop for melodic material that remains separated from the harmony by about an octave, which adds to the clarity of the two components.

The mood and style of the piece varies from flourishing vibraphone low-end moments to interlocking right-hand/left-hand presentations, with an addition of a quasi-cadenza section featuring a beefy "piano-like" run across the instrument.

While this piece will require more than a basic familiarity with four-mallet vibraphone technique, the efforts during the learning phase will yield big payoffs on the concert stage.

—Joshua D. Smith

KEYBOARD PERCUSSION SOLO WITH ACCOMPANIMENT

Pale Blue Dot (Concertino) **VI**
Alex Stopa
$65.00
Tapspace Publications
Instrumentation (6–9+ players): 5-octave marimba, glockenspiel, vibraphone, 2 timpani, crotales (D5 and B-flat5), suspended cymbal, Mark Tree, 3 toms, kick drum, 2+ violins, 1+ viola, 1+ cello, optional contrabass
Web: *score sample, audio recording*

Alex Stopa's "Pale Blue Dot" concertino is a reworking of the similarly named marimba solo into a semi-modular chamber ensemble work that is satisfying and engaging. The nearly ten-minute piece can be performed by one marimba soloist, three percussionists, and strings (in either a quartet, quintet, or orchestra configuration), or by one marimba soloist, one percussion soloist (covering all percussion parts from the three-person version), and strings. As the composer explains, "When performed by a soloist, the percussion part is significantly more advanced. It becomes more of a feature with a large multi-percussion setup, quick mallet changes, and challenging 'choreography' between instruments." Nevertheless, performers considering this work should be advised that the marimba soloist is the undisputed center of attention throughout the concertino, with almost all soloistic moments generated by that player; even when there are *soli* moments, it is always the marimba accompanied by a solo viola or cello, not the percussion.

The opening marimba material (entering after a short introduction wherein the percussion part offers to define the extraplanetary sound concept using familiar references such as bowed vibraphone and crotales) is reminiscent of Eric Ewazen's concerto for marimba and strings, albeit more postmodern than neoromantic. The soloist is tasked with performing an uninterrupted chain of quick triple laterals for over a minute and a half, and although the harmony changes at a deliberate pace, the accuracy demand remains high throughout. A brief solo cadenza follows, which I appreciate for its stark sparseness on the heels of so much activity, before moving to an expressive *soli* with strings that allows the non-percussive voices to melodically lead for a welcome stretch.

The marimba gradually reinserts itself into the spotlight, confirming its place at the head of the ensemble with a return to the triple lateral material for most of the remainder of the piece. Some texture changes in the rest of the ensemble (including a few brief nods to Ligeti, perhaps?) prevent the solo part from ever feeling too similar or stagnant, and there is a nice climactic moment prior to the coda denouement where the percussionist(s) can improvise some foreground material on drums and cymbals amidst framing ensemble rhythms, but there is never any doubt of the primary thematic material resting squarely in the sextuplets of the marimbist.

All in all, the "Pale Blue Dot" concertino is a wonderful project for advanced college students looking to showcase themselves in a less traditional medium than a concerto or sonata with piano or large ensemble accompaniment. A strong extramusical concept is consistently communicated, and the part is approachable for an advanced undergraduate student while still virtuosic enough to garner sincere applause from any audience.

—Brian Graiser

Square One **V**
Joey Eng
€50.00
Edition Svitzer
Instrumentation (solo marimba and 5 players): 5-octave marimba, 2 vibraphones, glockenspiel, crotales, sizzle cymbal, 3 suspended cymbals, 3 tom-toms, djembe, darbuka, shaker, caxixi
Web: *score sample, audio and video recordings*

Joey Eng is rapidly becoming one of the more-performed percussionist-composers among students and professionals today, with numerous works for solo keyboard percussion and chamber ensemble. Originally written as a solo for marimba, this version of "Square One" has been expanded for percussion quintet accompaniment, adding colorful texture to an already energetic work.

While the solo part is the most demanding overall, each of the percussion parts requires advanced rhythmic and technical command of pitched and non-pitched instruments. The use of metallic keyboards complements the solo line well while providing a distinct timbre. The darbuka and djembe parts are both clearly notated to delineate each of the required sounds, making the learning process smoother for those unfamiliar with these instruments. The solo part is nearly identical to the original version, which allows those who have already learned the piece to perform it with an ensemble.

I love the way the composer reimagined "Square One" for solo marimba and percussion quintet. It is appropriate for advanced high school and collegiate ensembles and works well in a variety of performance environments.

—Danielle Moreau

Tensions **V**
Joey Eng
€30.00
Edition Svitzer
Instrumentation: 5-octave marimba (with 4.3-octave substitutions), tape
Web: *score samples, audio recordings*

Joey Eng has become known for accessible and melodic solo marimba works for the advanced player; "Square One" and "The Narrows" continue to show up on students' most frequently requested pieces to play for recitals. His newest solo with electronic accompaniment, "Tensions," dives heavily into electronic dance music (EDM) genres for the beat and background of the track, as well as many lead lines that also double in the marimba part. The piece maintains a high energy, and for the social media era we live in, the recorded version packs an effective musical punch.

The marimba part was originally written for a 5-octave marimba, but Eng provides ossia lines for anything below a low A to allow for the solo to be played on a 4.3-octave instrument. There are only few moments that travel below the low A, so the piece does not lose much depth if played on a smaller keyboard.

Much of the piece is broken down into three types of compositional or performance techniques: planing, octave right-hand notes with a left-hand fifth in various permutations, and monophonic melodies that double electronic lead lines in the track. Eng's playing techniques use parallel motion in three or four notes, a deceptively challenging tool he uses effectively in other works to move phrases around the instrument with a big sound. His use of pop-style melodies in octaves, which is prevalent in other works, is present here, but can be disguised at times with more nontraditional rhythms. Eng also includes an extended component of the piece using only two mallets as the rhythmic speed increases and the marimba melody rises high up on the instrument to match the synthesizer lead line.

The accompanying tape part is very dense and dynamically limited throughout much of the piece, so balancing this for a live performance to get the impact of EDM while also hearing the marimba through the electronics would be very difficult. That challenge aside, Eng does a great job compositionally to develop transitions naturally in the piece, never landing into a new idea or style without an appropriate evolution, as one would expect in any great EDM style.

—Matthew Geiger

KEYBOARD PERCUSSION DUO

Selected works for marimba duo **V**
Jean Sibelius
Arr. Weichen Lin
€25.00
Edition Svitzer
Instrumentation (2 players): two 5-octave marimbas
Web: *score sample, audio recording*

Dr. Weichen Lin arranged four piano works by Jean Sibelius for marimba duo: "Romance," Op. 24: No. 4, "Romanzetta," Op. 76: No. 6, "Scène Romantiue," Op. 101: No. 5, and "Romance in D-flat major," Op. 24: No. 9. He captures the spirit of the piano beautifully, evidenced by the presence of multiple slurs, note ties, and non-rolled (yet sustained) notes despite being arranged for a more staccato-oriented instrument like the marimba. The highest level of advanced marimba skills will be needed for both parts, as the pieces include numerous five-note arpeggios, four-note chords over a two-note sustained pedal, and multiple passages of very fast notes. Additionally, all of these passages must be played with a great deal of sensitivity,

just as they would be played on a piano.

This collection of Sibelius pieces offers a wide variety of musical exploration and presents unique challenges for marimba enthusiasts. Lin's arrangement of these works is truly exquisite, and marimba players looking to capture the depth of piano works on their instrument will find great satisfaction here.

—Tim Feerst

Valse Romantique V
Claude Debussy
Arr. Weichen Lin
€23.00
Edition Svitzer
Instrumentation (2 players): 5-octave marimba, 4.3-octave marimba
Web: *score sample, audio recording*

Debussy's "Valse Ramantique" was composed for piano in 1890 and has been adapted by Weichen Lin for two players on two marimbas in a transcription that feels almost as idiomatic as the original. The duet comes in at just under four minutes and is a true transcription of the sourced piano score. Both players are required to manage fairly advanced four-mallet technique and function effectively as one player, including through several rubato passages.

Each player is presented with a single staff that at times switches between treble and bass clef. The ranges of the two instruments required are fully utilized, including several jumps larger than an octave. The Marimba 2 part spends a majority of time in the bass-clef register of a 5-octave marimba and functions primarily as the accompaniment voice, but it moves frequently into the treble-clef register and has a section with the melody near the end of the piece. The Marimba 1 part serves primarily as the single-line melodic voice, but it is also responsible for several arpeggiated transition sections that span multiple octaves in a very short period of time and effectively use all four mallets.

Lin chose a Debussy piano piece that lies well and sounds beautiful on marimba. This duet would fit nicely on any university-level recital.

—Josh Gottry

KEYBOARD PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

Orange Valley Road IV
Joey Eng
€35.00
Edition Svitzer
Instrumentation (3 players): one 5-octave marimba
Web: *score sample, audio and video recordings*

"Orange Valley Road" is a quick, fun, energetic piece for three players sharing one 5-octave marimba. The performers trade places and move around each other like drivers on a highway. The composer states, "The title comes from the real Orange Valley Road — where I happened to be driving when the piece's thematic material and concept first came to me."

All three parts are virtuosic in that they contain fast melodic figures that pass throughout the players. Rhythmic and melodic layering allows for lots of discussion about balance and phrasing across the three parts. Determining where the audience's ears should go at any given moment is a great exercise for developing players. It is great for building

musical and spatial trust between players because of all the switching around.

I recommend this piece for an advanced high school, university, or professional ensemble looking for a concert opener that pulls in the audience. It is challenging and fun for the performers and will leave listeners with smiles on their faces!

—Justin Bunting

PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

Beyond Kafala V
Maximilian Wolfgang Schwarz
€30.00
Edition Svitzer
Instrumentation (3 players): 5-octave marimba, bass drum, 2 toms, high and low anvil, 3 Chinese gongs, 3 sound bowls, tambourine, splash cymbal, China cymbal
Web: *score sample, video recording*

This percussion trio was written in response to composer Maximilian Wolfgang Schwarz's invitation to perform at the 2020 World Expo in Dubai. Workers used to build pavilions and structures for the expo were called "guest workers," but fall under the system known as Kafala. In this system, immigrants are brought to a new country where they are able to work off the expenses for their travel; however, many times their passports are taken from them and they become slave labor. This work was written to bring attention to the system that enslaves so many.

The piece is meant to be a "clash of cultures" where strictly constructed serial music is juxtaposed with music from Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. It is constructed with a syncopated rhythmic motif split amongst the players on the metallic instruments. Slowly, marimba notes, some of which are dead strokes, come in and build into a melodic line. As it builds, the fragments begin to sound familiar. People from those areas and scholars of the music will likely recognize the tunes that are interspersed among

the metallic background. The middle section is made of purely marimba, with the players trading different rhythms along the board. The tunes are heard in a more tonal setting, and the piece ends with a return of the metallic cacophony.

This work is very complex rhythmically and requires performers who are adept at performing irregular rhythms and performing with each other. The players should be aware of what they are representing so that they can do so with the respect needed.

"Beyond Kafala" would go well on an advanced undergrad percussion ensemble concert or a graduate level recital. It brings to light an issue many may not be familiar with. Schwartz achieves a beautiful blend of traditional music with modern compositional techniques.

—Josh Armstrong

Captured by Industry IV
Brett William Dietz
$48.00
Tapspace Publications
Instrumentation (16 players): crotales (2 octaves), glockenspiel, chimes, 2 vibraphones, xylophone, 4 marimbas (two 4.3-octave, two 5-octave), 5 suspended cymbals, 4 timpani, triangle, 2 brake drums, hi-hat, high tam-tam, low tam-tam, sizzle cymbal, concert bass drum, 4 concert toms, Mark Tree, piano, seven bows
Web: *score sample, audio recording*

"Captured by Industry" is a minimalist work for large percussion ensemble. Composer Brett William Dietz describes the piece as a statement regarding corporate corruption of 21st-century life in the United States. In the program notes, Dietz says that much of the harmonic structure is derived from film soundtracks, particularly the work of Hans Zimmer, while the melodic content is original. The influence of film was very clear. Both the subject matter and musical material immediately reminded me of *Koyaanisqatsi* and Philip Glass's accompanying soundtrack — one of the more influential experiences of my young adulthood. I found the piece to be beautiful and I thoroughly enjoyed listening.

The work follows a typical minimalist structure, with a majority of the piece incorporating constant repetition punctuated by changes in chord or texture, with the occasional linear melody. The first half maintains a consistent, quasi-meditative feeling before increasing intensity to the end by introducing declamatory solo passages in the timpani and toms.

This piece is not overly difficult and would be appropriate for most collegiate or strong high school programs. The main barrier for programming would be the instrumentation and personnel required, as not every institution has access to four marimbas or 16 players. For ensembles with the necessary equipment and personnel, I highly recommend this work. It can serve as a beautiful and impactful opener to a concert, and I look forward to working on it with my own students.

—Marco Schirripa

En Route V
Rob Waring
$59.00
Edition Svitzer
Instrumentation (7 players): crotales, xylophone, vibraphone, 5-octave marimba, bongos, 3 congas, 2 concert toms, 4 timpani, triangle, suspended cymbal, woodblock

Web: *score sample, audio recording*

Rob Waring's newest percussion ensemble uses inventive instrumentation and lilting meter changes to provide a piece that reflects on the composer's personal life. Inspired by Waring's journey through and emerging from the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, and influenced by his love of Balinese music, "En Route" is a percussion septet that is methodical and well-paced.

"En Route" begins with a systematic adding of players every 28 beats, divided into a reoccurring 3/4, 2/4, 7/8, 2/4 pattern that is repeated throughout the opening section. Aside from the opening, the work maintains a single meter for extended periods of time throughout the remainder of the piece, although this meter shifts from 7/4 to 7/8 with a brief unmetered section. The part writing across instruments is accessible and uses simple yet syncopated textures to create a unique blend of sounds that, while intricate, will flow smoothly for the audience. In addition, Waring pairs interesting sounds within the same part, with Player 2 playing with a brush and stick simultaneously and Player 3 doubling crotales and vibes in counterpoint to introduce the second half of the piece. In addition to the interesting instrument combinations, the piece is visually appealing with multiple players sharing instruments, Player 1 and 2 on xylophone and Player 4 and 5 on marimba.

While the parts are idiomatically written, a few things should be noted when programming this piece. The shared parts are thoughtfully written; however, there are a few measures where the players will be close to one another. Likewise, Players 4 and 5 switch their orientation on the marimba, with Player 5 ending the piece in a higher register than Player 4. Notably, the composer and publisher include additional shared xylophone and marimba parts to alleviate having to move sheet music when changing instruments.

Waring does an excellent job of notating rhythms to clearly show the grouping throughout the opening section of the piece; however, there are a few spots when the grouping shifts and some of the rhythms can be tricky to decipher. Lastly, the timpani part, while a nice complement to the work as whole, poses a few minor issues. The part is playable on four drums with minimal tuning. Given the range and exposed nature of some of the pitch changes, the part is better suited for five drums. To keep the pitches in a good register an extra 23-inch drum provides an interesting option instead of a 20-inch piccolo.

Overall, this is an exciting and welcome addition to the percussion ensemble literature and would work well on a percussion ensemble concert that could use a piece that is virtuosic without being flashy. It is well suited for an advanced high school or university percussion ensemble looking for something challenging and unique with intricate two-mallet keyboard writing.

—Quintin Mallette

Ghlash to Rainbow Bridge **IV**
Rich O'Meara
$94.00
Edition Svitzer
Instrumentation (10 players): glockenspiel, 2 bongos, xylophone, floor tom, medium tom, low tom, vibraphone, hi-hat, chimes, large tam-tam, 5-octave marimba, snare drum, wind gong, doumbek, ankle bells, concert bass drum
Web: *score sample, audio and video recordings*

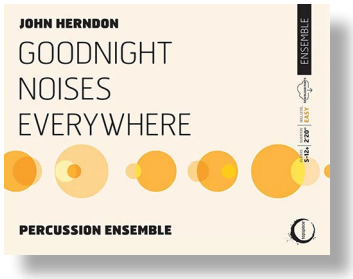
"Ghlash to Rainbow Bridge" is a multi-movement work that integrates live performance with a coordinated visual track. The video element is central to this project, with the ensemble performing alongside a prerecorded, embedded audio track. Rather than requiring a click, the work uses an approach that allows performers to align with the media through visual and musical cues. This design creates a successful balance between the structure of fixed media and the responsiveness of live performance, allowing unique renditions.

The opening movement, "Ghlash," features a sustained electronic soundscape that is then supported by metallic and pitched instruments blended into the atmospheric track, creating a layered, immersive texture. Gradual entrances of hi-hat, snare drum, low drums, and other percussion add rhythmic motion, with each transition introducing additional layers and increasing activity. The result is a continuous build in density and energy, moving from spacious, ambient sonorities to more grounded rhythmic momentum.

Transitioning into "Rainbow Bridge" is seamless, shifting the musical character toward melodic excitement, with keys entering. Rhythms suggest urban energy and motion, with complementary metallic effects reinforcing the sense of movement without becoming chaotic. The ensemble writing emphasizes balance and ensemble interaction, with players contributing to the overall texture rather than featuring extended soloistic material.

This work is particularly effective for programs seeking multimedia integration or contemporary sound design within a chamber percussion setting. Its flexible coordination system, gradual textural development, and emphasis on ensemble blend make it musically engaging and technically accessible for a well-prepared group.

—Cassie Bunting



Goodnight Noises Everywhere **III**
John Herndon
$36.00
Tapspace Publications
Instrumentation (5–12+ players): chimes, glockenspiel, 2 vibraphones, 4-octave marimba, 4.3-octave marimba (both players can share one 4.3-octave instrument), 4 timpani, snare drum, ride cymbal, 4 concert toms, tam-tam, 2 temple blocks, concert bass drum, Mark Tree, hi-hat, hand cymbals, suspended cymbal, sizzle cymbal, triangle
Web: *score sample, audio recording*

This dreamlike and charming work can suit the needs of a beginner ensemble and provide a satisfying listening experience for the audience. Composer John Herndon uses catchy, songlike melodies supported by rhythmic, yet tasteful, accompaniment throughout. All of the keyboard percussion parts use two mallets and rhythms no faster than eighth notes. There is a good amount of rhythmic doubling between the parts, and at least one instrument provides a steady downbeat on each measure. Although set for less-experienced performers, the composer includes a few extended techniques, such as indications to play sets of pitches at random, deadstrokes, and utilizing the shaft of keyboard percussion mallets, which are all easily executed.

One of the most beneficial aspects of this piece is how it can be adapted for various sizes and levels of groups. Specifically, Herndon indicates that it can be performed as a keyboard percussion septet (omitting the non-pitched instruments), as a quintet of non-pitched instruments (omitting the keyboard percussion instruments; yes, the motivic writing is THAT good), or by doubling any of the keyboard percussion and snare drum parts.

This piece would be ideal for a middle school, intermediate high school, or honor band/percussion festival ensemble. Congratulations to John Herndon on making quality music accessible to a wide variety of students.

—Jason Baker

Here We Are **V**
Brian Mueller
$46.00
Tapspace Publications
Instrumentation (9+ players): glockenspiel, xylophone, vibraphone, 4.3-octave marimba, drumset, congas, suspended cymbal, shaker, tambourine, electric piano, electric guitar, electric bass
Web: *score sample, audio and video recordings*

I love this piece! Brian Mueller has managed to seamlessly transplant the life and character of the front ensemble into the percussion ensemble. Built around a symbolic "lot tunes" exiting the coronavirus pandemic, "Here We Are" is perhaps both a literal and figurative declaration of something that feels new.

Mueller's piece is written as a percussion sextet plus rhythm section but can be expanded via doubling to fit the size of your ensemble. The layout and form are easy to follow, and the mallet parts flow comfortably across their respective keyboards in repetitive patterns that, while straightforward to pick up, will challenge the players to maintain energy and attention to detail. The marimba and vibraphone parts require players who are comfortable with four-mallet technique. The remaining keyboard parts are playable with two mallets and have select involved passages, but are accessible for intermediate players.

The rhythm section parts are fully notated and mostly maintain established grooves. The piano part is similar to a synth part, and alongside the guitar and bass parts it includes chord symbols. Notably, there is a guitar solo after the De Capo that can be improvised or played as notated, and a conga part that can be improvised throughout within the groove. While the form is straightforward, the groove section at Rehearsal C changes meter and will require some work to maintain the same relaxed feel developed throughout the beginning of the piece. In the score, the Coda appears to be marked prior to the first ending, although a recording by the Middle Tennessee State University ensemble (where Mueller teaches) delays the coda until right before the second ending. The latter flows smoothly and gives the form a polished feel.

As a self-described pop percussion ensemble, "Here We Are" showcases all the *joie de vivre* of front ensemble playing in a way that celebrates its intricate textures within a catchy form on concert instruments. As such, this would not only work

well as a high-energy piece for a percussion ensemble concert, it could also make an interesting addition to a concert or jazz band concert.

—Quintin Mallette

Musica Boema, Mvt. I Cantabile **V**
Zdeněk Lukáš
Arr. Jeff Moore
$45.00
Tapspace Publications
Instrumentation (14–15+ players): glockenspiel, crotales (2 octaves), xylophone, Mark Tree, 2 vibraphones, 4-octave marimba, 5-octave marimba, 4 timpani, Scottish snare drum (or marching snare drum), snare drum, 5 temple blocks, hi-hat, kick drum, flat ride cymbal, shekere, guiro, claves, wind chimes, sleighbells, triangle, tambourine, suspended cymbal, finger cymbals, bell plate (or cymbal bell), splash cymbal, bass drum, tam-tam
Web: *score sample, audio recording*

Jeff Moore arranged Zdeněk Lukáš's wind ensemble piece "Musica Boema" for percussion ensemble as a tribute to drum corps legend Ralph Hardimon. Moore was inspired to do so after watching the 1984 Santa Clara Vanguard perform the work as its percussion feature, which was arranged by Hardimon. Moore states that he had wished to arrange the work for concert percussion ensemble for nearly 30 years.

Set at a tempo of 84 bpm, the piece is extremely dense rhythmically. With its juxtapositions of triple and duple rhythms, complex syncopated rhythms, and a very advanced solo Scottish snare drum part (although Moore notes Player 2 can cover the instrument if needed), an ensemble of highly advanced players is needed to perform this work. "Musica Boema's" journey is very well thought-out, with Moore giving a detailed walkthrough of the form in the performance notes. While it has moments of musical excitement, numerous moments of lightness and softness are present, making this piece, with its many moments of musical lyricism, way beyond a simple "chop fest."

Moore's arrangement of "Musica Boema" is an exploration of sweet musical moments and rhythmic challenges, as well as a very touching and fitting tribute to a drum corps icon.

—Tim Feerst

Palio Di Siena **V**
Clif Walker
$44.00
Tapspace Publications
Instrumentation (9 players): glockenspiel, xylophone, 2 vibraphones, 4.3-octave marimba, 5-octave marimba, timpani, snare, hi-hat, ride cymbal, castanet machine, granite bocks, 3 woodblocks, splash cymbal, bongos, crotales (high octave)
Web: *score sample, audio recording*

This work is a tribute to an annual horse race of the same name in Italy. It's a wildly interesting, complex, virtuosic piece that has something for all of your top players: multiple meters, extended techniques, and a burning tempo. The keyboard parts (both two-mallet and four-mallet) are especially involved because of the constant endurance needed for those quick, melodic passages. There's also plenty of opportunity to showcase the top-tier ear of your timpanist.

Although the parts are on the advanced side, the piece is only around 90 seconds: the same length of time as the horse race! This could work well if your group's talent level is ready to make the next leap, but you don't have time to completely clean something that's longer, or perhaps if you want to show off your percussion ensemble at your next band concert but don't have much time.

If you're considering adding this piece to your next event to show off the progress of your percussion program, do yourself a favor and check out the original performance video. It sets a standard we can all aspire to.

—Ben Cantrell

Steel Heart **IV**
Mike Nevin
$45.00
Tapspace Publications
Instrumentation (9–12 players): glockenspiel, steelpan (low C tenor or double seconds/double tenor), bass guitar, drumset, 2 medium shakers, shekere, chimes, brake drum. ocean drum, bongos, timbales, cowbell, small crash cymbal, Mark Tree, triangle, suspended cymbal, woodblock, rock tambourine, concert bass drum, tam-tam, surdo (or floor tom)
Web: *score sample, audio recording*

A sound I am becoming fond of is a single steel pan with percussion ensemble. It adds an unmistakable timbre that cannot be replicated. I feel it also works well with other melodic instruments. This work features an array of other Latin percussion and rhythmic instruments such as bongos, timbales, cowbells, surdo, and rock tambourine. I particularly appreciate the nod to the steelband engine room by briefly adding a brake drum.

For larger high school or college groups that do not have the money or time to put together a steel pan ensemble, "Steel Heart" provides a way to play something inspired by the genre. This is meant for a strong percussion ensemble with players who can handle their part. While there is a hierarchy of difficulty among the mallet parts, some technical spots will be a challenge to put together. For example, at Rehearsal Letters D and J, all melodic instruments, except for glockenspiel, have a rhythmic unison section full of syncopation and plenty of notes over a four-measure span. Along these lines, something to consider is that the bass guitar part can mostly be played by a student bass player who has good time, but for those two spots mentioned a more advanced player will be needed. Or as the score suggests, a MalletStation or MalletKat can be used.

A solo section includes a written solo, but chord symbols are provided if there is a member of the ensemble with experience in improvising. This piece can be performed without a steel pan, as the first vibraphone parts doubles the steel pan part throughout. A confident drumset player who can lead the group is needed.

This work starts with a slow melody played by bowed vibraphone accompanied by soft sound effects; it sets a mood that does not evoke the dance-like feel of the rest of the piece, but it uses a subtle crescendo in marimba and shaker to smoothly transition into a soca-inspired groove that does not stop for the next four minutes.

With a very singable melody and fantastic groove, this will be popular among students and audiences alike. Nothing about it is trying too hard to be difficult. The challenging passages fit. Mike Nevin does not try to reinvent anything. He seems to be writing music he loves and is trying to share it with more people.

—Stephen Busath

Volemos **IV+**
Francisco Perez
$45.00
Tapspace Publications
Instrumentation (9 players): glockenspiel, 2 vibraphones, three 4.3-octave marimbas, 5-octave marimba, cajon, mounted kick drum, shaker, sizzle cymbal, ride cymbal, 2 suspended cymbals
Web: *score sample, audio recording*

If you have keyboard players who can effectively bring out a melodic line from within a thicker texture, nine players who all, regardless of instrument, can play syncopated sixteenth-note figures and lock them in with the rest of the ensemble, and a drummer who can play shaker sixteenths in one hand and a pretty hip bass drum groove in the other, then you should definitely check out "Volemos."

The keyboard parts are all playable with two mallets, but they are not easy. All four marimba parts have extensive syncopated ostinato figures that require accented notes to be pulled out of the texture to convey the bass or melodic line. Marimbas 1–3 play primarily in treble clef, and marimba 4 plays primarily in bass clef, but all four players will read a grand staff at times. The glockenspiel is the easiest keyboard part, and the vibraphone parts have less active material than the marimbas, but those parts include extensive double stops, a good amount of syncopated melodic lines or impact moments, and a few figures with grace notes and accents that will require a deft touch to bring out what is most important.

The non-pitched percussion parts consist of one player on cajon (with a suspended cymbal) and one player with a flat bass drum, shaker, and sizzle and ride cymbals. Both add a little punch to the ensemble but don't play any more complicated figures than are found in the keyboard parts.

The piece is approximately 3½ minutes in length, set in 4/4 time at 134 bpm, and has few accidentals outside of the E-minor tonality and a couple of runs up the chromatic scale. Even in spots where Francisco Perez scales back the intensity of the ensemble, accompanying lines are moving along with sixteenth-note figures, and an underlying energy is very much present, which is appropriate for a piece with a title that translates to "let's fly."

Perez has created a groove-forward, medium-sized ensemble work with a keyboard instrument core that would be an excellent selection for intermediate to advanced high school and college percussion ensembles.

—Josh Gottry

TIMPANI SOLO

Tombeau d'Anténor **IV**
Pierre-André Bovey
No price given
Self-Published
Instrumentation: 4 timpani, piano

"Tombeau d'Anténor" ("Tomb of Antenor") was composed in 1975 for timpani and piano by Swiss composer Pierre-André Bovey. It is dedicated to percussionist, historian, and musical archivist Jean-Louis Matthey. The timpani and piano have an equal role, with solo moments for both. The timpani part does not have any tuning changes, making it more accessible and versatile to perform in different situations. The work explores articu-

lation, shifting/crossing, rolls (including moving from drum to drum at a soft dynamic), dampening, double stops, balance among the drums, grace notes, and sticking. There is also a wide variety of dynamic contrast throughout.

Musically, the timpanist states an opening syncopated motive that is used throughout both in timpani and piano. The piano part is chromatic, using bitonality and elements of serialism. The musical character is rather imposing and foreboding, representative of the Tomb of Antenor monument in Padua, created to honor the "ancient hero" Antenor, which Bovey and Matthey visited together.

—Joseph Van Hassel

RECORDINGS

Cyanotypes
Patti Cudd
Neuma Records

Cyanotypes by Minnesota-based performer Patti Cudd features five works for percussion and electronics by women composers. As stated in the liner notes, "Each piece serves as a unique blueprint — a sonic cyanotype — that reimagines the role of percussion." This collection explores a wide range of sonic textures while showcasing Patti's artistry as a percussionist.

It is difficult to choose which of these works resonated with me most, as I found each one compelling in its own way. Written for wine bottle, Kerry Hagan's "This bottle has notions" vividly depicts the evolution of a humble glass object into an increasingly egotistical one. This development is heard through the quirky character of the electronic component and the growing assertiveness of the percussion line. Another fascinating track is "The Meeting Place" by Heather Dea Jennings. Inspired by Yoruba proverbs, the piece combines Brazilian drum traditions with live electronics to create a fresh soundscape.

I was genuinely impressed with Cudd's landmark album, *Cyanotypes*. The liner notes are thoughtfully crafted and offer a concise description of each composer and their work. Cudd's performances are exceptional from beginning to end and highlight her precision, expressivity, and nuanced versatility.

—Danielle Moreau

Dance
The Junkman (Donald Knaack)
Self-Released

Dance is an album that, upon first listen, seems to only concern itself with joyful exploration, but there is an urgency behind the noise that reveals the yearning of purpose. Is it the urgency of capturing one's creative muse? Of sonic evangelism to an audience that has grown artistically complacent? Of seeking continued relevance, or meaning, or acceptance, or direction? I couldn't hazard a guess. But whatever The Junkman's motivations may be, there is a consistent sense throughout the album that his musical explorations of percussion, electronics, and noise are rooted in a *need* of some sort. It is this vaguely oppressive sense of overwhelming purpose that makes the entire album thoroughly compelling and worth dissecting over the course of multiple listenings.

The album is largely a percussive one, albeit with a substantial footprint dedicated to electronica and acoustic noise. There aren't many straightahead groovy drum beats per se, but the groove is prevalent when considered as a product of the composite whole. There are several allusions, which I believe to be intentional, to Cage's "Imaginary Landscapes," as the performer's foreground material often deviates into, or is interrupted by, sudden "channel changes" to material that might easily be manipulated samples from random radio stations, particularly in the first two *Dance* tracks. Interestingly, the track "…For John Cage" is the one that sounds the most like a Stockhausen solo for percussion (with an emphasis on vibraphone), rather than "Imaginary Landscapes" or even "Gesang der Jünglinge" (although I thought I detected references to the latter in the first track of the album).

Most of the tracks on *Dance* are long and patient, with several lasting over 24 minutes. However, my favorites were the relatively short ones that relied more heavily on acoustic percussion to generate sonic explorations, such as "…For John Cage," "Known by Heart," and "Recycled Rhythms." There's even a short little two-minute gem, "Shakers," which might be what a solo for shakers written by Alvin Lucier might sound like.

As a whole, *Dance* is an album that requires time and thought to really understand and enjoy, but the effort is well worth it. This album will be living in my personal playlist, and headspace, for quite a while.

—Brian Graiser

The Drummer of Tedworth
Sean Noonan
Neuma Records

Imagine a Broadway production that combines the whimsical writing of Gershwin and Bernstein, the spoken-word delivery of on-stage narration and the creativity of Hamilton, and a story about a back-of-the-stage percussionist who returns from being banished from the stage as a drumming ghost, set out to haunt all who lend an ear. Take all of that and you have entered the world of *The Drummer of Tedworth*.

There are many narrative twists and turns to the story that unfolds over the 88-minute production, which are peppered with percussive sparkles such as woodblock flourishes, drum and cymbal punctuations, and xylophone lines that will perk up the ears of seasoned percussionists. Fans of musicals will enjoy the percussive journey outlined in this recording, and will also appreciate the professional contributions from the London Symphony Orchestra that serve as the "backing band" to this quirky storyline.

—Joshua D. Smith

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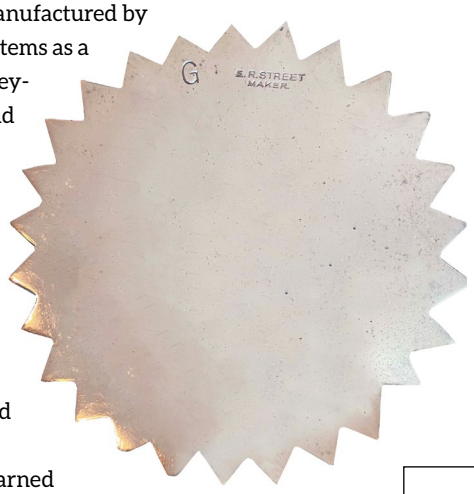
From Garry Kvistad's Instrument Collection

E.R. Street Musical Coins or Disks

Housed in a 7,000-square-foot commercial building, Garry Kvistad's instrument collection consists of several thousand instruments (mostly percussion), many of which are rare or unique. Quite a few were manufactured by the J.C. Deagan company. These include such items as a 4-octave Unafon, a 5-octave Nabimba, many keyboard percussion instruments, Bowed Steel and Wood Marimbaphones, 2-octave chromatic sleighbells, Metal Bamboo (Shaker) Chimes (2⅓ octaves), four-in-one hand bells, NBC dinner bells, Electronic Canto Chimes, and many antique tuning forks and bars. Featured here is a 2-octave set of Musical Coins manufactured by E.R. Street.



Bottom side of a disk showing the bump in the middle

In 1885, Edwin R. Street (1868–1941) established his music instrument manufacturing business in his hometown of Hartford, Conn. He had learned woodworking as an apprentice and partner in his father's carpentry business and briefly studied clock repair. His 1915 catalog lists over 75 musical instruments in the bells, specialties, and novelties categories.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, novelty percussion instruments, such as tuned cowbells, tuned glasses, tuned sleighbells, friction rods, musical juggling acts, and the xylophone or marimbaphone (bowed or struck), were in high demand for vaudeville theater performances. Street excelled in this medium of entertainment as both performer and manufacturer of the instruments used in these acts.

Close-up view of the maker's stamp on a "G" disk, which reads "E. R. STREET / MAKER."

One such novelty act that was sure to "raise the roof" was spinning Musical Coins or Disks. A 1914 newspaper review explains that musical coins are "one of the most difficult [to play] of the rare novelties and is performed by the spinning of specially tuned coins on a marble slab. The right effect is secured only by long and patient practice, the artist requiring a little of the juggler's dexterity as well as a good ear for music." A 1924 article mentions that the coins "consist of ordinary, small buzz saws from which Mr. Howe produced sweet-toned music by spinning them on a marble slab."

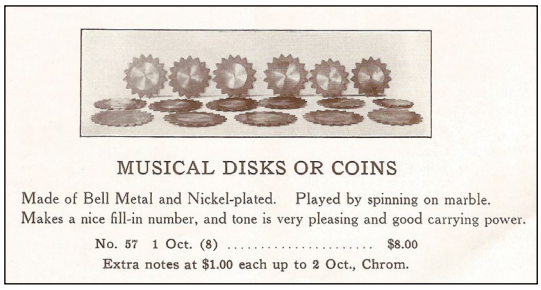

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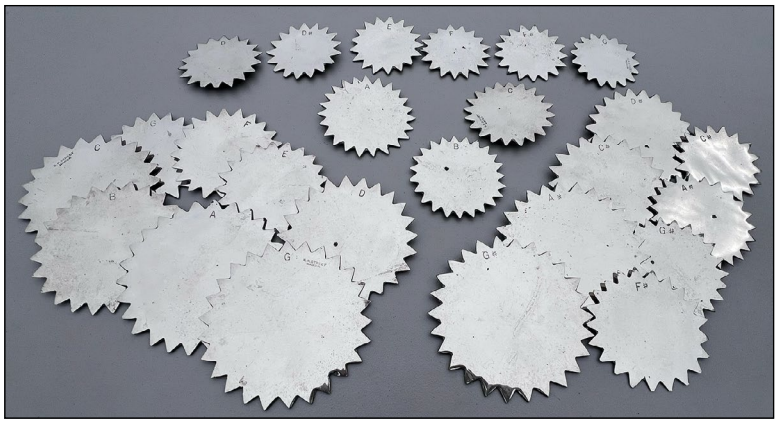
Image of the disks from E. R. Street's 1914 "Catalog of Musical Novelties, Net Price List of Musical Bells and Specialties."

This 2-octave, chromatic set of 25 Musical Coins, which range in pitch and diameter from G5 (5½ inches) to G7 (3½ inches) are made of triple, nickel-plated steel, with serrated edges that tune each disk. A small bump at the center of the bottom of each disk allows the performer to easily pick up the disk in order to spin it. Each disk is stamped with its respective pitch, with four of them also stamped with "E. R. STREET / MAKER." Other than Street, only the J. C. Deagan Company seems to have offered musical coins in their catalogs.



This set of Musical Coins was gifted to Garry Kvistad's instrument collection by PAS Hall of Fame member and Past President James Campbell in 2001.

—Garry Kvistad, PAS Hall of Fame member, and James A. Strain, PAS Historian

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