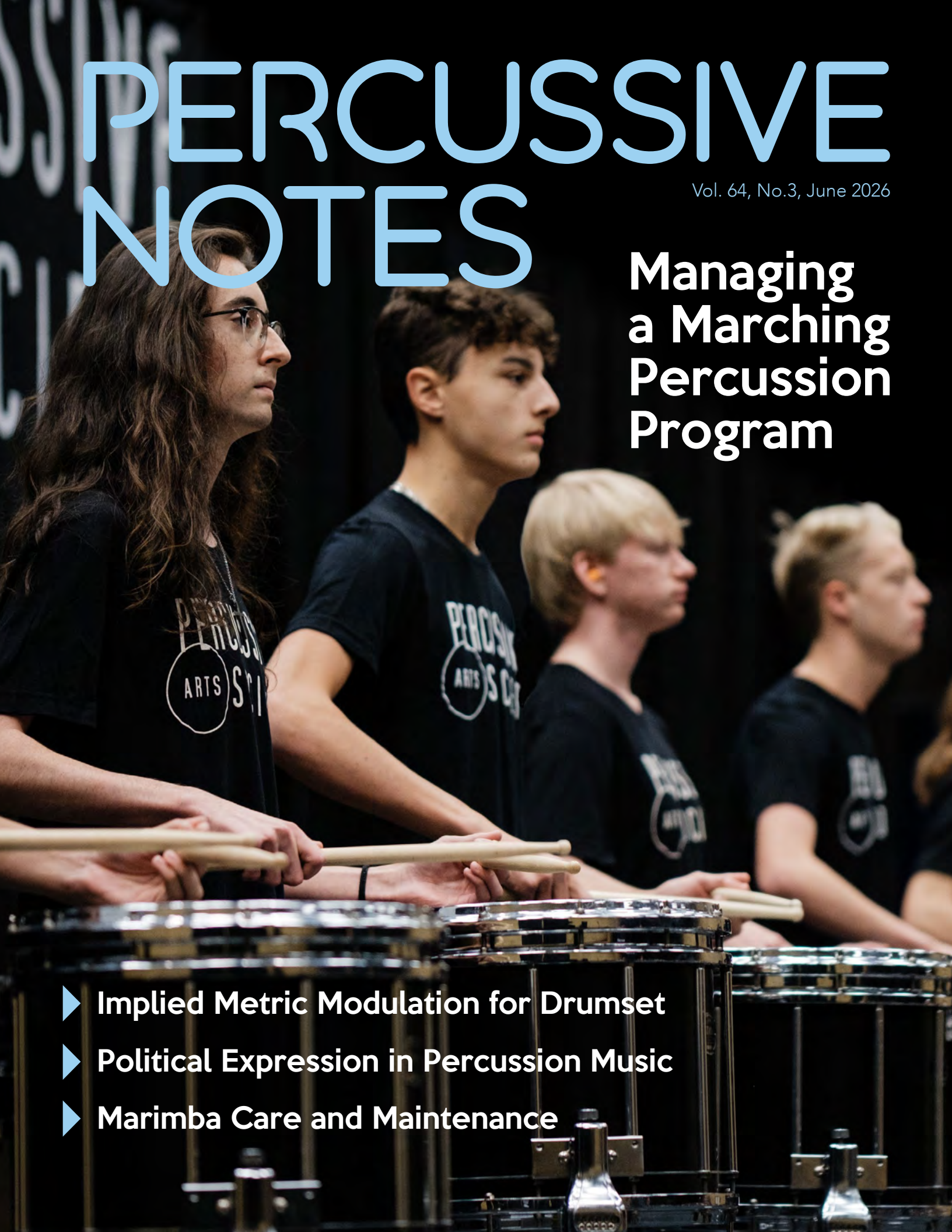


# PERCUSSIVE NOTES

Vol. 64, No.3, June 2026

## Managing a Marching Percussion Program

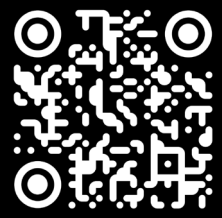
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- ▶ Implied Metric Modulation for Drumset
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Following the historic energy of our 50th PASIC, it would be easy to look back and simply marvel at how far we have come. Yet, as I reflect on the conversations and performances that have filled the months since our last gathering, it is clear that the Percussive Arts Society is not just celebrating its history, we are actively composing its next great chapter. The momentum we have built together is a powerful reminder that our community is at its best when we are looking forward, driven by a shared curiosity and a commitment to the evolution of our art form.

This spirit of excellence is perfectly captured in the announcement of our 2026 PAS Hall of Fame inductees. This year, we recognize a group of visionaries whose collective impact spans the entire spectrum of percussion. Please join me in celebrating Michael Burritt, Tom Gauger, Giovanni Hidalgo, Steve Smith, and the duo of Sylvia Smith and Stuart Saunders Smith (posthumously). These honorees have each spent a lifetime pushing the boundaries of our craft and inspiring the global percussion community through their unique contributions. Their induction is a testament to the fact that while our instruments are diverse, our dedication to mastery and mentorship is a universal language.

While we honor those who have reached the pinnacle of our profession, it is equally inspiring to witness the vibrant energy at the grassroots level. This spring, our Percussion Ensemble Competition and Festival (PECAF) events showcased the incredible talent and dedication of our youngest members. With eleven events between February and May spanning the country from Oregon to Florida, thousands of students took the stage to share their music. The PECAF events

have truly become a cornerstone of the spring season for percussion communities across the country, fostering a spirit of camaraderie and excellence that is foundational to our mission. Seeing these students and educators connect through performance is a powerful reminder that the future of the percussive arts is in very capable hands.

As we move into the summer months, our focus turns toward the horizon and our upcoming gathering this November. PASIC 2026 is shaping up to be an incredible experience, building on the foundations of our past while introducing fresh voices and perspectives that will define the future of percussion. The convention remains our most vital “anchor” – a place where the digital connections we make throughout the year finally become tangible through shared handshakes, late-night hangs, and the incomparable feeling of being in a room filled with thousands of people who “get it.” I encourage you to begin making plans now to join us in Indianapolis for what promises to be an unforgettable week.

Of course, the strength of PAS extends far beyond the four days of the convention. It lives in the daily work of our committees and the vibrant activity of our global chapters. These groups are the engines of our organization, providing the resources, advocacy, and local connections that keep our community thriving year-round. Whether you are a student preparing for your first competition or a seasoned professional looking to give back through mentorship, there is a place for you to contribute. Our collective voice is louder and more impactful when every member finds a way to engage and share their unique expertise.

In late May, the PAS Board of Directors met to continue our work on the strategic



initiatives that guide this society. I remain deeply inspired by the dedication of our leadership and the tireless efforts of Joshua Simonds, the entire PAS staff, and all of the members of the Board of Directors. We are navigating a dynamic time for the arts, and I am confident that our organization is positioned to support and elevate percussionists across the globe more effectively than ever before.

Let's carry this energy forward into the second half of the year. Whatever you are working on this summer – in your studios, on stages, or within your local chapters – know that it matters. Our community is a living testament to the power of collaboration and the remarkable things that happen when people share a common passion. Thank you for being part of this journey.

Warm regards,  
Thad Anderson  
President, Percussive Arts Society

# The Global Percussion Movement in 20th-Century North America

## Part 3

By Julie Spencer

Playing percussion is a way of looking at life like an open door. We find things, and we're looking for deeper connections – with our instruments, inside the music, and to each other. Riding the tectonic shifts of the 20th century, including cascading scientific and technological developments, milestones in civil rights, two world wars, and nuclear weapons, the global percussion movement was expanding with many concurrent developments. It was becoming part of a growing understanding of interconnectedness on a global scale.

Tracing new meanings of words like “global,” “world,” and “international” is like following a string of breadcrumbs through 20th-century music. Before then, *global* meant that something had a spherical shape. Today it's at the heart of a new paradigm: our shared future. As one example: Morse code, perfected by a multi-instrumentalist to have a groove-oriented rhythmic basis, became the language of what is said to be the first formally organized and permanent international organization in the world, which became the International Telecommunication Union and finally a special agency in the United Nations. Its stated mission

today: “Connecting the world and beyond.” That sounds like something the Percussive Arts Society might say about itself. In our field, composers, scholars, inventors, and players have been connecting to that world beyond through a system of shared ideals of respecting and treasuring people and their cultures through the bonding language of music, specifically percussion, for globally positive impacts. Thinking of ourselves internationally is part of the crucial influence that the global percussion movement continues to have.

It's all about connection – that fundamental feel that drummers call “the pocket,” when all the moving parts connect. In a broader meaning today, if we don't have internet access somewhere, we say there's no connection. Connection means global access. My world is no longer just mine: It's *ours*. And not just humanity's, thinking of ecosystems as well as societies. When the phrase *global village* became popular in the 1960s, it was an acknowledgment of how central the word “global” had become to many of our identities. It can refer to everything from climate concerns and military conflicts to music and percussion, to Instagram trends, and markets. Not the outdoor

gathering of farmers and artisans where goods are bartered and sold, but *the* market: *global* trade. Global is the definer of our time. And in the world of percussion, global percussion, there is a shared dynamic of promoting humanitarian values. This is the *hopecore* of what PAS can represent, and what each of us can contribute through the percussive arts in our own worlds, and world-wide.

### INFLUENCERS

#### Kathy Armstrong

Talking about the global percussion movement in the 20th century doesn't mean that it was the first time that players had ever learned styles outside their own communities. Whenever people



have travelled to other lands, musicians have learned to play each other's music. It's one of the ways so many instruments find a place in distant societies. The influence in North American culture and music of West African drumming is particularly inspiring through the eyes of Canadian percussionist Kathy Armstrong, as she tells her life changing story of discovering West African drumming at the University of Toronto beginning in 1984:

"My undergraduate studies coincided with a growing interest in global musics. As a percussion and music education major at the University of Toronto, I attended the weekly African Drumming class for percussionists, led by Russell Hartenberger, a founding member of Nexus, and a student of one of the earliest Ghanaian drummers to teach in North America, Abraham Adzenyah, who was based at Wesleyan University. Our class met in the basement of the Royal Conservatory of Music, where Nexus kept a large practice studio full of Western and non-Western percussion instruments – a magnificent and invaluable resource for those of us who were fortunate enough to study at the university.

"I loved the sound and feel of the Ghanaian drums, but the rhythms were complex and puzzling. With my Western classical percussion background, I found it difficult at first to decipher the individual sounds, let alone remember them from week to week. Over time, I began to notice a physical presence of the rhythms in my body and paid closer attention to that, as it helped me to make sense of the rhythms and organize them into recognizable patterns. This 'felt-sense' developed into an awareness of the music that was exciting and transformative, providing a bodily understanding of the music that I still feel today. I participated in several other global music ensembles at the University of Toronto, coordinated by ethnomusicologist Tim Rice and later James Kippen. However, feeling an affinity for the Ghanaian rhythms, I joined a community-based drum and dance ensemble founded by another Nexus

member, Bob Becker, which came to be known as Flaming Dono. Group members were from several artistic disciplines and included many African and Caribbean Canadians. Flaming Dono performed at WOMAD, the world music festival founded by Peter Gabriel, which was brought to Toronto in 1988 for the festival's first edition outside Britain.

"Through my early connection with this music and the people involved in playing it, I could see the potential for its use in schools and other educational settings. I had a strong conviction that this was something that I wanted to develop, so in 1990, after six years of participation in the art form, I traveled to Ghana to study and immerse myself in the culture and acquire my first set of drums. Ethnomusicologist David Locke facilitated my first introduction to Frederick Kwasi Dunyo, who became my primary Ghanaian teacher, through the lineage of Locke's own teacher, Godwin Agbeli, with whom I studied subsequently. Kwasi Dunyo initiated me into the apprenticeship style of teaching and studying, working on drumming, dancing, and singing with me four to six hours a day for four months, and overseeing all other aspects of my stay in Ghana, including learning about local food, culture, language, and customs. In 1992 I brought Kwasi Dunyo to Canada through a grant from the Canadian government's Foreign Affairs department, and after several annual visits, he obtained his Canadian citizenship and began teaching at the University of Toronto and York University, enabling him to better support his family at home.

"My career in global music education has been unexpected, rich with intercultural connections and interesting opportunities to collaborate with many others in various settings throughout the world. In addition to my freelance career, I founded Baobab Tree Drum Dance Community in Ottawa, Canada, bringing Ghanaian artists and culture to students of all ages. As part of that program, I took many groups to study in Ghana, contributing to economic, artistic, and infrastructure

projects in Kwasi Dunyo's village of Dagbamete. The reciprocal nature of that connection has been very important to me. I am currently a full-time music faculty member at Carleton University, in Ottawa, where I founded The West African Rhythm Ensemble. Navigating this work as a white, female percussionist has at times been challenging, but my long-time relationship with, and support from the Ghanaian community have enabled meaningful conversations and important growth in my approaches. Current work on decolonizing music programs across North America is widespread, and I have explored this in my recent research project 'Reimagining the Global Music Ensemble'"

### **Black American Contributions**

Musical innovations of Black Americans in the early 20th century began to take the world by storm with the rhythmic swing feel, an outgrowth of interactive and improvisational vocal music and advanced rhythmic traditions primarily from West African and Caribbean cultures. Drummers became a point of synthesis for the new kind of music, after several hundred years missing the empowering energy of drums, forbidden to enslaved populations before the end of the American Civil War. Rhythm was the cornerstone of the first global music in North America: jazz. Why global? Because Black American culture has never been monolithic. From the beginning of human enslavement on the continent and in the Caribbean, many rich histories, including Latin American and Creole cultures, were part of its foundation. And since then, percussionists have remained a visible axis for musical and cultural change.

Alfred Ladzekpo told me in Los Angeles in the 1990s that he found it unacceptable for audience members to grumble to him after one of our CalArts African Ensemble performances, saying the ensemble was too "White." Alfred believed authenticity is conferred by the teacher and shouldn't be questioned by someone who

hasn't learned the tradition and doesn't play the drums, but makes assumptions because of a player's appearance. Alfred's position was simple: if he asks you to play, the question of authenticity has already been answered.

### Cultural Potpourri

There have always been conflicting perceptions and assessments of the music of other cultures, and descriptions and names we give to the music that occurs in the substrates of different combinations. A brief lexicon of cross-cultural projects: Ethno-Jazz, a sub-genre of world music and jazz, in the 1950s and '60s, before World-Jazz, it was marketed mainly in the U.S. and Europe until the 1990s, when it had a growing presence in Southeast Asia and China. Names for crossover music have included Roots, World Beat, Crossover World Music, International Fusion, Jazz Fusion, East-West Fusion, Global Music, New Age World Music, and Experimental Music. Jazz-Rock Fusion and Jazz-Funk Fusion developed in the late 1960s-early '70s integrating funk, soul, electronic instruments, and R&B music with jazz. German jazz author and producer Joachim Ernst Berendt often talked about the concept of jazz meeting the world as being a longstanding 20th-century theme.

Momentum for learning music from many cultures was bolstered in 1957 and '58 by a series of international concert tours sponsored by The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, UNESCO. Its journal said, "an effort must be made to eliminate prejudices...There can be no substitute for direct contacts between human beings... only that can bring about...a 'new spirit' in relations between the peoples," written by French philosopher Jacques Havet, co-director of the ten-year East-West Major Project. Launching with an international tour featuring Dancers of Bali, accompanied by gamelan instruments, the timing coincided with UCLA procuring the first full gamelan of a North American university, followed by Wesleyan Universi-

ty and the University of Michigan in the 1960s. The winds of change were blowing.

University platforms for the study of global music within music degree programs and curricula have developed in percussion adjacent to jazz departments or improvised music programs, sometimes connected with dance studies or in conjunction with electronic music, film studies, theater, humanities, or visual art programs. Examples of performing ensembles currently offered by a cross section of universities in the U.S.: South Indian Cross-Cultural music, ensembles of traditional Chinese, Balinese Gamelan, Brazilian samba, and Afro-Brazilian berimbau, Afro-Cuban, and Ashanti and Ghanaian music of central and West Africa, ensembles for Steel Pan, Afro-Pop, African Dance, folk traditions of South America, Contemporary Middle Eastern Music, Javanese Gamelan, Indian Hindustani music, Latin American music ensembles, cross-cultural music projects with improvisation including Western classical and contemporary, jazz, rap, reggae, found objects, Mixed World Ensemble, and Global Jazz Institute ensembles.

### Jazz and Avant-Garde Influences

Within the genres of jazz and avant-garde, here are a few pivotal moments from the 1940s to 1970s: 1958, Nigerian drummer Babatunde Olatunji performs with the Radio City Music Hall orchestra in New York and signs with Columbia Records; 1960s, Airto Moreira becomes the first percussionist from Brazil to record with American jazz artists; 1968, Alla Rakha and Buddy Rich record *Rich à la Rakha* with their own compositions featuring Alla Rakha on tabla, Rich on drumset and two-headed barrel-shaped drums of India, Paul Horn on flute, Shamim Ahmed Khan on sitar, Nodu C. Mullick on tamboura and manjeera, with Ravi Shankar credited as ensemble conductor and composer, and liner notes by Collin Walcott; 1970-71, Steve Reich composes "Drumming" for percussion ensemble, after studying Ewe drumming with Gideon

Alorwoyie in Ghana, establishing what would later be called the first masterpiece of the new musical genre Minimalism; 1971, Naná Vasconcelos from Brazil begins playing with American and European acoustic and electronic jazz musicians; 1972, Jimmy Cliff collaborates on Paul Simon's self-titled second solo album, on the reggae-inspired hit song, "Mother and Child Reunion," recording the backing instruments and vocals with other artists in Kingston Jamaica.

In his long collaboration with Simon, one of the foremost American hand percussionists, Jamey Haddad, describes listening and trying things together as the main creative flow in developing new songs using improvisation to discover things. With over 200 studio and movie soundtrack recordings, Haddad has taught many years at the Berklee College of Music, Cleveland Institute of Music, and currently is professor of performance, improvisation, and percussion at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. Haddad shared his thoughts about what it means to be teaching improvisation with different instruments and styles. These are some of his ideas about sharing improvisational music with people who are new to it all:

"Finding out what is magical in the other players' distinctive approach is what I am going for. Teaching has taught me not to judge and what it really means to acknowledge the weakest player in the room and find what is beautiful about what they are doing. Having a bit more experience in many situations I find myself in, I can sometimes eat up the difference between myself and the musical wanderer. When that person feels your hand on their heart, they become so much more part of the conversation, but it takes development!

"Different traditions, just like different people, all have a distinctive gait or walk, a different approach to time, and a million things all at once. But you will never know what they are really feeling if they do not feel they are in a safe space. When you all have an investment in keeping

that glass ball suspended in the air with all the players keeping one finger on that fragile balance, it really exposes the musical trust thing, and people really start to tell their musical story and find their way into the mix of things. Once that trust is felt, the game begins!”

In the Recording Academy, Grammy Award categories have a history of many name changes: World Music, Contemporary World Music, Traditional World Music, Global Music. Thirty years after The Best World Music Album category was created in 1992, it was renamed Best Global Music Album in 2021. In 2021 the best World Music album category was changed to Best Global Music Album. In 2022 the Best Global Music Performance category was added. There was the Best New Age Album, and the Best New Age/Ambient/Chant Album. The range of percussionists, in addition to those mentioned earlier in parts 1 and 2 of these articles, includes Mickey Hart, Gordon Gottlieb, Sammy Figueroa, Glen Velez, Armenian percussionist/singer Arto Tuncboyacıyan, Chris Berry on Mbira, Native American percussionist John-Carlos Perea, and Koji Nakamura on Japanese taiko drum.

### **Jerry Fields**

American drummer and percussionist Jerry Fields, talks about giving ourselves permission to follow the music. He describes a feeling of gratitude for continuing to learn and share, and what it’s like when we discover that we are more of who we feel we are, after de-centering



the things around us that belong to our environment, but don’t belong to us.

“As a teenager in the 1960s I was playing in jazz and R&B clubs, and was exposed to music outside the usual teenage fare, associating with musical elders. The college radio stations played everything from John Cage to free jazz. I was already playing Greek and Turkish music in high school, because I had been recruited by the wonderful Greek bouzouki player Anastasios ‘Tasso’ Dimoglou. The club we performed in brought professional belly dancers from Turkey, Lebanon, and other Middle Eastern countries. I learned how to accompany them through a baptism by fire. I learned all of the traditional Greek dances to help me embody the music as well. I also played with Chico and the Matadors, with Rudolpho ‘Rudy’ Espinoza on bongos from Puerto Rico, which was my first exposure to Afro-Cuban and Caribbean music. Later, I formed Vecinos del Mundo, ‘Neighbors of the World,’ which was an Afro-Cuban jazz ensemble. As a percussionist, I delved into traditional African music and began my collection of Smithsonian Folkways records while later augmenting that collection with other traditional non-western genres.

“In 1967, when I was 17, I heard my first Ravi Shankar album with Alla Rakha on tabla. While I initially couldn’t appreciate classical Indian music, I returned to that Shankar album again after I had begun practicing yoga in 1968. I guess my inner voice had subsided a bit. As a result, I was able to hear a very slow time cycle of 14 beats. My appreciation began to grow from there when I was blessed to hear Raviji with Alla Rakha live several times, and my tabla journey began. [Author’s note: “Raviji refers to Ravi Shankar. In India adding “ji” to a name denotes a hierarchy of respect and friendship.]

“The integration of music and dance into daily life is what appeals to me the most about the music of non-Western cultures. From birth to death there is a musical component that celebrates or recognizes an event or season. Music is not just viewed as an abstract art. It is integral to the identity

and survival of the community. The different variances of language, music, dress, food, and dances between regions within different countries and continents resonate deeply within me, particularly with regard to African, Afro-Cuban, Caribbean, and Middle Eastern music. What appeals to me most regarding classical Hindustani and Carnatic music is the concept of ‘Nada Brahma,’ which means that creation, or God, manifests as sound or vibration. To strike, touch, or rub a piece of wood or metal or membrane and cause it to vibrate is an act of creation, a sacred charge, and a great responsibility.

“One fateful night playing with a Greek band at a club, an older patron dropped dead on the dance floor. As it was about 20 minutes before closing time, after the ambulance had left, and everyone had come back inside, I began packing up. But the bouzouki player said, ‘We will keep playing. He died doing what he loved.’ Everyone danced and celebrated his life! Another memorable experience was with my Afro-Cuban jazz group, during a steady Thursday night gig we had for over four years. One night a young student from Nigeria was in attendance. We did my arrangement of the Mongo Santamaria classic ‘Afro Blue.’ The young student gave me a dollar bill. One side was in Yoruba and the other in English. She said that she felt at home. That dollar is still pinned to my bulletin board as a reminder to serve the music, learn about the culture of origin – not just the music, and don’t just collect instruments. Looking over my shoulder on a sold-out weekend and seeing three alumni of the Tito Puente Orchestra, Mongo Santamaria, and Ray Barreto groups on stage under my direction also reinforced this approach to the music.

“I remember with great affection at PASIC in Atlanta in 1994, Trichy Sankaran and I were roommates. I brought a dholak down for him to check out that a young student from India had presented to me. Rather than wailing on it right away with some nonchalant display of virtuosity, he held it in his lap and gently rotated it while tapping lightly to find its sweet spot or voice. That reverential approach to an instrument

has stuck with me to this day. My tabla teachers have been Collin Walcott, Badal Roy, Pt. Radheshyam Sharma, Pt. Shankar Ghosh, Pt. Yogesh Samsi, and currently Pt. Ramdas Palsule and Pt. Gourishankar Kar-makar.”

### Layne Redmond

One percussionist who was especially driven by a desire to create new paths of connection was PAS Hall of Fame inductee Layne Redmond. A colleague and fellow musical traveler with Redmond, Glen Velez, also a PAS Hall of Fame inductee, spoke emphatically about the lasting importance of her work. He explained that years after her passing, “Layne still has a big presence in this scene.”

What Velez did for the new art of solo frame drumming, Redmond did for tambourines from different cultures, branching out after several years of touring and recording with Velez and in their trio with Steve Gorn on bansuri. Some of Redmond’s accomplishments were a Signature Series of tambourines by Remo, Inc., numerous instructional DVDs, and several books, including *When the Drummers Were Women*, based on her research of frame drum history in religious and cultural rituals.

She made many award-winning CD recordings, including some related to chanting and chakras, as well as music videos and short films. Redmond developed therapeutic rhythmic techniques, presenting lectures at international conferences for music therapy, sound healing and health and spirituality. An accomplished art student and dancer before discovering her

gift as a percussionist, Redmond’s frame drumming and the contexts she successfully offered it into have developed lasting influence in the field of world percussion. Equally importantly, Redmond brought the art and power of frame drumming, and the awareness of its 5,000-year-old history, into a wider field of participants and recipients, in particular empowering women to become drummers.

In Redmond’s Backstory on her website, she wrote, “Remo Belli decides to create a line of frame drums. This will change everything for frame drummers in the U.S.!” Layne was correct. Cultural experiences, and artists that Redmond collaborated with, in addition to her hand drumming studies with Velez, became her learning field. Making performance art with early rappers like Cool Supreme and Easy Gee and the Guerilla Girls in New York City, and world travels with Velez in Haiti, where she made her “first serious plunge into the African diaspora cultures outside of the U.S.,” as well as in Morocco, where they collected many bendirs, and traveling throughout Brazil, Redmond was creating the foundation for her own art form, in conjunction with Velez at the beginning, but headed toward a unique direction that expanded the movement of hand drumming within the global percussion movement to have a broader cultural as well as musical impact.

### CONCLUSION

Writing about the need for a new “cultural-world-view,” 1952 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Albert Schweitzer, a musicologist among other things, pointed out that we need to have what he called the *will* for culture. The new world view is part of the desire for a new culture of ethics that has reverence for life. Percussionists, natural explorers and outliers, have been some of first people in the field of music to embrace global perspectives, global cultures. Stepping outside the comfort zone, we embrace change in our own lives, and what psychologist Carol Dweck calls having a growth mindset. This makes it possible to see our interconnectedness for what it is: more im-

portant than what separates us, within our own cultures and between cultures.

Why do we play percussion? Of the myriad ways we can answer that for ourselves, one thing is nearly universal: It changes our lives for the better. We are all part of a remarkable world-wide percussion culture that is a living treasure for all the world.

### APPENDIX

Additional Percussionists Not Featured in Parts 1–3

**Acuña, Alex.** Peruvian-born percussionist; Latin Grammy Trustees Award; recorded hundreds of film scores; taught at Berklee College of Music, UCLA; performed with Paul McCartney, U2, Weather Report, Elvis Presley, Diana Ross, Ella Fitzgerald, Michael Jackson, Christina Aguilera.

**Addy, Obo.** Ghanaian master drummer, composer, one of first to collaborate in fusion worldbeat ensembles in Europe and the Pacific Northwest in the 1970s; taught at Lewis & Clark College; played in Highlife bands in Accra; commissioned by Kronos String Quartet for their *Pieces of Africa* recording, 1992; performed traditional Ga music for Arts Council of Ghana at Munich Summer Olympics, 1972; founded an African Arts and Cultures organization in Oregon, today the Obo Addy Legacy Project; National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellow, 1996; father of Alex Addy, Ghanaian drumming teacher, Lewis & Clark College.

**Adzenyah, Abraham.** Master drummer from Ghana; taught 46 years at Wesleyan University beginning in 1969; collaborated with Steve Reich, Anthony Braxton, Ed Blackwell, Nexus; taught at the Institute of African Studies at the U. of Ghana; performed with Ghana’s National Dance Ensemble in Mexico Summer Olympics, 1968; world-wide university residencies and performances; master’s degree in music from Wesleyan; authored “The Role of Music in Ghana,” *Percussive Notes* April 1995; over a dozen African drum



and dance ensembles at colleges and universities in North America have been founded and led by his former students.

**Agbeli, Godwin Kwasi.** Master drummer from Kopeyia, Ghana; founder Dagbe Institute and Arts Centre, Ghana; taught at Berklee College of Music; Arts Council of Ghana's National Folkloric Company member; Director traditional Ghanaian West African music, dance, history, Pomona College; recorded with Valerie Naranjo and Barry Olsen; father of Nani Agbeli, Director Ghanaian Drumming and Dancing Ensemble "Kinkaviwo" at Lawrence University.

**Aguabella, Francisco.** Cuban conguero; came to U.S. in 1950s performing and recording with Frank Sinatra, Carlos Santana, Dizzy Gillespie, Lalo Schiffrin; recorded on Tito Puente's seminal LP *Top Percussion* including Willie Bobo, Mongo Santamaria, Julito Collazo.

**Alexis, Clifford.** Steel pan player, educator, tuner, composer/arranger, builder; developer of modern steel drums; PAS Hall of Fame; Trinidad Chaconia Silver Medal and award recipient World Steelband Music Festival in Madison Square Garden commemorating his innovations; National Steelband Orchestra of Trinidad and Tobago world tour; Expo '67 World's Fair, Montreal; taught Northern Illinois University Steel Band with his arrangements and compositions; co-authored papers on acoustical quality of steel pans.

**Alvarez, Rubén P.** American percussionist, film/TV studio musician; performed with Junior Wells, John Mayall, Arturo Sandoval, Eddie Palmieri, Anita Baker, The Commodores, Mongo Santamaria, Sonos de Mexico Ensemble, Chévere De Chicago, Chuchito Valdés, Seattle Philharmonic Orchestra, Chicago Sinfonietta, the Chicago Jazz Philharmonic, Jon Faddis and the Chicago Jazz Ensemble; faculty of Northwestern University, Jazz Institute of Chicago, Roosevelt University; founded Astro Latino Productions; Board of Directors Jazz Education Network; Board of Gov-

ernors Chicago Chapter of the Recording Academy.

**Barnes-Tsai, Sarah.** First Taiwan-based steelpan instructor/professor since 1989, after her U. Northern Illinois professors, Cliff Alexis and Al O'Connor, built and established the country's first steel pan ensemble; teaching steelpan and percussion for 38 years, Taipei National University of the Arts.

**Becker, Judith.** Renowned ethnomusicologist, established one of earliest U.S. university programs with gamelan 1967, University of Michigan, and directed until 2002; award-winning Prof. Emeritus; authority on the music of Southeast Asia; author of works including *Gamelan Stories*, *Deep Listeners*, from in-depth, on-site ethnography including Javanese gamelan, Burmese harp, sang gauk, and intersections of neuroscience, music, and emotion.

**Berliner, Paul.** Percussionist, ethnomusicologist, award-winning author *The Soul of Mbira: Music and Traditions of the Shona People of Zimbabwe* and *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*; recorded and performed with the Paul Winter Consort; Shona mbira and African drumming specialist; studied at Wesleyan University; Prof. of Ethnomusicology, Duke University, Northwestern University.

**Braimah, Weedie.** Ghanaian/American djembe master, drummer of many traditions; preservationist of African culture; son of master drummer and composer Oscar Sulley Braimah and jazz drummer Ann Morris; Assoc. Prof, Oberlin Conservatory, founder and director Djembe Orchestra, assists West African Dance classes; founder Weedie Braimah & The Hands of Time, increases recognition of folkloric West African music as the essential root of jazz, funk, fusion, global music, and hip-hop; studied with Mamady Keita, Famadou Konate, Abdoul Doumbia, and Fadouba Oulare.

**Brundage, Kirk.** Percussionist, author *Afro-Brazilian Percussion Guide*; recorded *Tribute—An Homage to Master Drum-*

*mers and Teachers in Salvador Bahia, Brazil*; performed at Latin Grammys with Daniela Mercury; studied in Brazil and performed with Olodum; studies in Cuba with Los Muñequitos de Matanzas and Roberto Vizcaino and in the U.S. with Malik Sow of Senegal and Bernard Woma; MFA degree CalArts; taught at UCLA; member of Maelstrom Percussion Ensemble, which was co-founded at State University of New York, Buffalo 1981, and first directed by Marc Wooldridge which also included among others, world percussion performers and educators Tiffany Nicely, Gary Rutkowski, and Executive Director 1990–2007, composer/multi-instrumentalist Robert Accurso.

**Bryant, John.** Drummer, percussionist, music producer, composer; member Paul Winter Consort; hundreds of music and film sessions; toured and recorded with Ray Charles; teaches Drumset Studies and Music Production, Southern Methodist University; co-founder world music ensemble, D'Drum, producer of documentary film about Stewart Copeland's concerto "Gamelan D'Drum"; produced feature documentary *Dare To Drum*.

**Chancler, Leon Ndugu.** Drummer, percussionist, composer, educator, author; PAS Hall of Fame; played with Miles Davis Willie Bobo, Hugh Masekele, Santana; recorded for films, the band Weather Report, and with leading artists such as Tina Turner, James Brown, Patrice Rushen, and Michael Jackson on the multiple Grammy-winning album *Thriller*; a founding instructor at U.S. Percussion camp, founded by PAS Hall of Fame and Life Achievement in Education recipient Johnny Lane; taught at University of Southern California.

**Chaudhuri, Pandit Swapan.** North Indian tabla master, composer, educator; recipient many international awards, including India's highest classical music award, Sangeet Natak Academy Award and the American Academy of Artists Award; honorary Doctorate of Letters,

Rabindra Bharathi University, master's degrees in music and economics, Kolkata; Director North Indian Percussion Studies, California Institute of the Arts, and since 1981 Director of Percussion Ali Akbar College, San Rafael, and later, Basel Switzerland; world tours with Ravi Shankar, Ali Akbar Khan, Vilayat Khan, and international collaborations including Stevie Wonder, John Handy, Hands On/Semble, and artists from Serbia, Persia, and West Africa.

**Chatterjee, Samir.** Acclaimed Indian tabla player, recording artist, composer; played with Vilayat Khan, Ravi Shankar, fusion collaborations including Glen Velez, Bobby Santabria, Yoko Ono, Joshua Bell, Jerry Garcia, Ravi Coltrane, Dance Theater of Harlem, Boston Philharmonic; master's degrees in history and English; author *A Study of Tabla*; faculty Manhattan School of Music, New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music.

**Cinelu, Mino.** Percussionist, multi-instrumentalist, composer; a Knight in the Ordre des Arts et Lettres, France; scored films, documentaries, and commercials; studied percussion in Senegal, Japan, the Middle East, and the Caribbean, birthplace of his father; created with Kevin Eubanks and Dave Holland the World Trio; worked with Peter Gabriel, Pat Metheny, Sadao Watanabe, Elton John, George Duke, Gil Evans, Earth, Wind & Fire, Tori Amos, Laurie Anderson, Dizzy Gillespie, Herbie Hancock, Antonio Carlos Jobim, Salif Keita, Michel Portal, Bonnie Raitt, Wayne Shorter, Bruce Springsteen, Sting, and many others.

**Cokro, K.R.T. Wasitodiningrat Pak.** A revered Javanese gamelan master and award-winning composer; pioneered 1930s live radio gamelan performances in Java; wrote gamelan music with social, political, and environmental themes; gamelan master National Dance Academy, Yogyakarta; Director of Javanese Court Gamelan, Pakualaman Palace, with a recording chosen by Carl Sagan for the Voyager Space-

craft documenting human civilization on Earth; toured Europe, Asia, North America, USSR with cultural exchange concerts of Indonesian government; performed with musicians and dancers of Java and Bali of the Budaya Troupe with lectures and concerts in 35 universities across U.S. in 1969; immigrated to U.S. and began teaching at California Institute of the Arts, 1971-92; recipient highest Arts award, Anugerah Seni by President of Indonesia; honored to have a newly discovered star named after him.

**Colgrass, Michael.** Pulitzer Prize-winning composer, PAS Hall of Fame, author, jazz drummer, with commissions from major symphony orchestras and chamber ensembles, including Nexus; played original *West Side Story* production, crossover percussionist with New York Philharmonic, Modern Jazz Quartet; exposed to gamelan while living in Bali and wrote music inspired by gamelan and also for steel pan for Liam Teague and for Wind Band; became a therapist in Neuro Linguistic programming.

**Copeland, Stewart.** Drummer/cofounder British band Police; recipient of seven Grammy Awards; film composer of motion picture scores, operas, and world percussion concerto "Gamelan D'Drum"; contributing co-author of chapter of Oxford University Press book *Performing Time: Synchrony and Temporal Flow in Music and Dance*.

**O'Connor, Allan.** Percussionist, composer, educator; founder of first steelband in North America, 1973, Northern Illinois University; PAS Lifetime Achievement in Education Award; Directed the first steelband performance at PASIC 1977; created a steelpan major field of study in the NIU School of Music and was Assoc. Dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts; founded steelband program at Birch Creek Music Center, Wis. and helped found steelband ensembles at numerous U.S. universities; 25 compositions and over 70 arrangements for steelband.

**Conte, Luis.** Cuban/American percussion-

ist, studio musician; from the heritage of Patato Valdez, Francisco Aguabella, Mongo Santa Maria, and others; four time Percussionist of the Year by *Modern Drummer*; performed/recorded in numerous bands including Cristina Aguilera, Yellowjackets, Elton John, Eric Clapton, Carlos Santana, Sergio Mendez, Madonna, Phil Collins, Rod Stewart, Al Dimeola, Boyz 2 Men, Ray Charles, James Taylor, Arturo Sandoval, Chaka Kahn, Ricky Martin, and Shakira.

**Dunyo, Kwasi.** Master drummer from Ghana, lead drummer Sankofa Dance Theatre from 1977-81 under tutelage of Godwin Agbeli; faculty member York University, University of Toronto, Royal Conservatory of Music; member Society of Ethnomusicology of North America.

**Damm, Robert.** Percussionist, Prof. Mississippi State U.; Ph.D. Music Education, University of North Texas; studied music and culture in Ghana, Mali, Cuba; author of articles on the udu of Nigeria, the bamboula rhythm of New Orleans, and positive effects of drumming on children with autism; musical traditions of the African diaspora; directs Jembe Den ensemble; former World Percussion Assoc. Editor *Percussive Notes*.

**Das, Kalani.** Percussionist, music therapist, author, educator/trainer; created Developmental Community Music approach; YouTube channels World Drum Club and Kalani Music; toured and recorded with Yanni; performed with Barry Manilow, Kenny Loggins, Rod Stewart, Dr. John, and others and for film and media productions; founding member Music Therapy Drumming curriculum for music therapists; group drumming leader.

**Dutz, Brad.** American percussionist, recording artist, and composer with nearly 40 albums as bandleader; studio musician for many films, specializing in hand percussion and mallets, including percussion from many cultures, berimbau, bata, bodhran, pandiero, tabla,

kanjira, riq; recorded with over 270 artists in various genres including Alanis Morissette and Willie Nelson; studied at Berklee College of Music and North Texas State; taught at Cal State Long Beach; author of educational books and videos.

**El Din, Hamza.** Tar frame drum, vocalist, oud master, composer, and engineer from the Nubian region of Egypt and Sudan; studied at King Fouad Institute for Middle Eastern Music, Cairo University, and Western classical music in Rome; collector of folkloric music from the Nubian Kingdom; pioneer of world music first in Egypt, creating fusion of Nubian rhythms and songs with classical Arabic elements, then Japan and the U.S.; taught at Mills College; recorded many solo albums in addition to collaborations with Kronos Quartet, Mickey Hart, taiko drummers in Japan, and The Grateful Dead.

**England, Nicholas.** Ethnomusicologist, composer, performer, author; interim president California Institute of the Arts, dean of CalArts School of Music, founding director CalArts World Music Performance Program; helped establish the Center for Ethnomusicology at Columbia University 1967 and its doctoral program; composition student of Paul Hindemith and Walter Piston; university studies at Yale and Harvard; field work, recordings and studies in Senegal, Angola, Nigeria, Togo, particularly the Ewe music of Ghana; author of articles including "Fieldwork in the Kalahari" among others.

**Escovedo Jr., Pete.** American Latin percussionist of the Escovedo Bros Latin Jazz Sextet; played in Santana; broke barriers between Latin jazz, salsa, smooth jazz, and contemporary music; co-founder with brother Coke Escovedo of Azteca ensemble.

**Escovedo, Sheila (Sheila E).** American percussionist, drummer, singer, songwriter in Latin pop, salsa, jazz, R&B and funk; Grammy award Best Global Music Performance 2025, Latin Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award; star

on the Hollywood Walk of Fame; PAS Hall of Fame; performed and/or recorded with George Duke Band, Beyoncé, Ringo Starr, Michael Jackson, Herbie Hancock, Marvin Gaye, Gloria Estefan, Phil Collins, Prince, Poncho Sanchez, Kelly Clarkson, Christine Aguilera, and on the U.S.A. For Africa song "We Are the World"; recorded numerous Grammy-nominated solo albums and collaborated on two albums with her father, Pete Escovedo Jr.; first female musical director in television; has worked in the film studios as a drummer; first female drummer and percussionist in mainstream pop music.

**Figueroa, Sammy.** American jazz fusion percussionist; grew up in Puerto Rico; played Latin percussion in rock, pop, soul, jazz recordings and collaborations with the Mahavishnu Orchestra, Miles Davis, the Brecker Brothers, Yoko Ono, Mick Jagger, Quincy Jones, Celine Dion, James Taylor, Paquito D'Rivera.

**Forman, Steve.** American session percussionist, sound designer, orchestral composer, entrepreneur and member of Scottish Traditional Music Hall of Fame; one of earliest percussionists to play a wide collection of Indian, Afro-Cuban, Brazilian, and African percussion for film scores, including found objects and alternate techniques, such as hubcaps augmented with springs and large steel metal sheets with harmonics from rubber balls; became known later as a bodhrán soloist and builder; recorded for such artists as John Lennon, David Bowie, Pink Floyd, Fleetwood Mac, The Beach Boys, Sergio Mendez, and in the American Bluegrass and Celtic music traditions; researched multi-dimensional polyrhythmic systems and non-standard instrumentation for his PhD in composition at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland; taught courses in his Pulse Relational Rhythm Theory at Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

**Galm, John.** Percussionist, ethnomusicologist, author, jazz drummer; created the World Musics Program, U. of Colorado; studied with master musicians in India,

Indonesia, West Africa, Turkey, Morocco and Ireland; played with the Boston Pops, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

**Garcia, Christopher.** Percussionist, composer, educator, drumset and marimba artist, member The Grand Mothers featuring original members of Frank Zappa's Mothers of Invention; educational website on Indigenous Instruments of Mexico/Mesoamerica; studied world music at CalArts including with John Bergamo, and the music of India with Pandit Taranath Rao, Leonice Shine-mann, and Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri.

**Gloss, Randy.** American hand drummer, composer, and tabla specialist; studied with John Bergamo and Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri; Grammy winner; performed with Ziggy Marley, L. Shankar, Glen Velez, Jamey Haddad, Mark Nauseef, Vashti; co-founder international percussion group Hands On'Semble; Director of the World Music Performance Program and the MFA World Percussion Program at CalArts; also taught at UCLA; studied with Houman Pourmehdi, Poovalur Sriji, Rajeev Taranth, Alfred Ladzekpo, Carlos Stasi, Edson Ganesi, I Nyoman Wenten, Victor Rendeon David Johnson, Michael Lipsey, Arthur Lipner, Warren Odze, and others.

**Ghosh, Pandit Shankar.** Renowned Indian tabla player and composer of much contemporary tabla repertoire; toured with Ravi Shankar, Vilayat Khan, Ali Akbar Kahn, and Nikhil Banerjee; collaborated in fusion projects with artists including Greg Ellis and John Bergamo; taught in Kolkata, Paris, Bonn, and ten years at the Ali Akbar College of Music, California; recipient of highest Indian recognition for practicing arts, Sangeet Natak Academy Award.

**Gottlieb, Gordon.** American percussionist, actively involved with the New York Philharmonic for many decades; taught at Yale and the Juilliard School of Music; recording artist in classical, pop, jazz, R&B, folk, and world music, recorded/performed with artists including Michael Jackson, Miles Da-

vis, Aretha Franklin, Stevie Wonder, Whitney Houston, Ravi Shankar, Paul Winter, Sting, Hermeto Pascoal, Pete Seeger, Quincy Jones, Chick Corea, Wy-claf Jean, Queen Latifa, Marc Anthony; multiple Grammy Award winner; re-corded scores for over 180 feature films and more than 50 record companies.

**Gurtu, Trilok.** Renowned percussionist and tabla player known for blending Indian classical music with jazz fusion and world music; collaborated with many luminaries in world music fusion including Joe Zawinul, Jan Garbarek, John McLaughlin, and Zakir Hussain; known for his inclusion of tabla within the drumset; mother was famed singer Shoba Gurtu.

**Hadden, Skip.** Percussionist, educator, author; studied with Ramnad Raghavan; professor at Berklee College of Music since 1982; has worked with Weather Report, Bill Frisell, Jesus Santandreu, Eddie Gomez, John Abercrombie, Ximo Tebar and others; author “World Fusion Drumming” and “The Beat, the Body, and the Brain II.”

**Hardy, Christopher.** American cross-genre percussionist, drummer, and composer based in Japan since 1989; studied Arabic drumming with Hamza El Din; performs and records in multiple genres and styles that are influenced by jazz, rock, pop, with a focus on Middle Eastern, North and West African, Brazilian and Latin percussion; world music group Tatopani; performed with Sting, Kazuya Yoshii, El Zafete; music for film and theater.

**Hidalgo, Giovanni.** Grammy-winning conguero from Puerto Rico; developed rudiments for the conga; fused Afro-Caribbean traditions with jazz, funk, and global rhythms; was member of United Nation Orchestra; worked with Tito Puente, Zakir Hussain, Carlos Santana, Dizzy Gillespie, Mickey Hart, D’Angelo; taught at Berklee College of Music; Honorary Doctorate from Berklee.

**Hirano, Taku.** Born in Japan, raised in the U.S.; percussionist, first to graduate from

Berklee College of Music as a hand per-cussion principal having studied with Giovanni Hidalgo; performed Black American, Afro-Cuban, Afro-Brazilian, West African, Indian, and Japanese traditions; toured/recorded with Fleet-wood Mac, Whitney Houston, LeAnn Rimes, Lady Gaga, Aretha Franklin, Ariana Grande, Cynthia Erivo, Snoop Dogg, Ed Sheeran, Usher, Pharrell Wil-liams, Garth Brooks, John Legend, An-drea Bocelli, Ziggy Marley, and record-ed as soloist on Indian and Japanese percussion for Academy Award-win-ning Bollywood composer A.R. Rah-man; performed multiple times for South African President Nelson Man-dela and U.S. President Barak Obama; Berklee Alumni Achievement Award; Prof of Practice in Music Industry Stud-ies and the Strategy, Leadership, Ana-lytics Minor, Tulane University; artist in residence at University of Texas at Austin, Carnegie Mellon School of Mu-sic, Berklee College of Music; currently touring with country pop artist LeAnn Rimes.

**Holly, Rich.** Drummer, orchestral and global percussionist, composer, author, Arts administrator and consultant; PAS Lifetime Achievement in Educa-tion Award, past PAS president; stud-ied Brazilian percussion with Manoel Monteiro, Afro-Cuban drumming with Frank Malabe, West African drum-ming with Abraham Adzenyah and Fa-moudou Konate; Executive Dir. For the Arts, North Carolina State University; professor and Dean of College of Visual and Performing Arts, Northern Illinois University; Board Member Music Ther-apy of the Rockies; Dir. Percussion and Jazz Western Colorado University; ac-tive clinician; co-founder Abraxas Per-cussion Group; articles in many major music journals; former Assoc. Editor PAS *Percussive Notes*.

**Howard, Doug.** Principal percussionist, Assoc. principal timpanist Dallas Sym-phony Orchestra 43 years; 41 years percussionist Aspen Music Festival; PAS Lifetime Achievement in Educa-

tion Award; founding member D’Drum ensemble, with concerto performances of “Gamelan D’Drum” by Stewart Co-peland with numerous American or-chestras; 42 years head of percussion, Southern Methodist University.

**Hull, Arthur.** Considered the father of the modern drum circle movement of facilitated drum circles world-wide, non-culturally specific drumming in Village Music Circles events world-wide, facilitated by Hull and students who have trained with him, incorporat-ing drum designs inspired by djembe, ashiko, and ngoma style instruments, produced as a signature series by Remo for use by non-trained percussion par-ticipants; studied with percussionists Michael Pluznick, Hamza El Din, Baba-tunde Olatunji, and Mickey Hart.

**Hussain, Ustad Zakir.** Renowned Indi-an drummer, innovator, composer, influential in contemporary world music movement; five-time Grammy Award recipient for Global Music Per-formance, Classical Crossover Album, Contemporary Instrumental Album, Contemporary World Music Album, and Instrumental Composition; a main collaborator between pop, jazz, rock, Western classical, many world musical cultures and Indian classical; co-found-er Global Drum Project with Mickey Hart, Planet Drum, and work with Kodo drummers, Airto Moreira, George Harrison, Yo-Yo Ma, Alonzo King, Billy Cobham and more; National Heritage Fellowship, U.S.; Kyoto Prize; Angeet Natak Akademi Award, India.

**Johnson, Gregg.** Percussionist, composer, award-winning sound designer; one of the main American tabla and pakhawaj disciples of Pandit Taranath Rao; bach-elor’s and master’s degrees, CalArts; co-founder Repercussion Unit; associ-ate producer National Young Audienc-es Arts-In-Education Institute, featured artist-in-residence with Instant En-semble program for Music Center Ed-ucation Division; Managing Producer, Interactive Media for Arts for Learning.

**Kaptain, Lawrence.** Grammy Award-

winning percussionist, author, American cimbalom soloist with Hungarian heritage; leading researcher of the musical traditions of Mexican marimba in Chiapas, Mexico; performed with many orchestras including New York Philharmonic and with varied artists such as Yo-Yo Ma and Elvis Costello; founder of first folkloric marimba ensemble in United States, now referred to as Marimba Sol de Chiapas; studied cimbalom in Budapest and marimba with Zeferino Nandayapa and members of his family, Al O'Connor, Charles Owen, Michael Udow, Erwin Mueller, James Ross, Duane Thamm, and George McNabney.

**Kilgore, Brian.** Multiple Grammy-winning American percussionist in myriad styles and genres including Afro-Cuban, rap, rock, pop, jazz fusion, and orchestral; session player on over 600 albums and first-call film studio percussionist on over 400 films, known for an extensive global percussion instrument collection, and playing drums and percussion from Hawaii, Tahiti, West Africa, including one of first uses of sabars in film, Nigeria, China, and unusual blends of many world percussion traditions in numerous films; played timbales in the band of conguero Francisco Aguabella; studied with Alex Acuña, Jerry Steinholtz, and Luis Conte; performed/recorded widely with diverse artists and bands, including Barbra Streisand, Daft Punk, Elton John, Aerosmith, Dr. Dre, Coldplay, Ricky Martin, Teena Marie.

**Korpela, Pete.** Studio and touring percussionist in orchestral, Latin, jazz, world, rock, and pop; orchestral and hand percussion in film score recordings; studied world music/percussion in Helsinki and L.A.; hand percussion instrument innovator; studied with Michito Sanchez, Lenny Castro, Joe Porcaro, Luis Conte, Michael Fisher, John Bergamo, Jerry Steinholtz, Emil Richards, and Glen Velez.

**Koskoff, Ellen.** Renowned ethnomusicologist; Prof. at Eastman School of Music

40 years, from 1980, beginning with Indonesian bamboo angklung instruments, later helped establish and directed the Balinese Gamelan; award-winning author, including seminal work, *Music in Lubavitcher Life*; establishing feminist ethnomusicology, also known for research in Jewish music, gender and music, and music cognition; former president Society for Ethnomusicology; widely published and editor of many scholarly publications.

**Kvistad, Garry.** Percussionist, author, instrument builder, philanthropist; Grammy winner, PAS Hall of Fame; founder Woodstock Percussion, Inc., inspired by ancient tunings and scales to make instruments with meditative qualities; created Woodstock Chimes Foundation; founding member of one of the first professional percussion ensembles, Blackearth Percussion Group, with Michael Udow, brother Rick Kvistad, Allen Otte; member of Nexus, and four decades with Steve Reich and Musicians.

**Kvistad, Rick.** Former Principal Percussionist and Assoc. Timpanist San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Principal Percussionist with Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra; co-founder Blackearth Percussion Group; studied the music of Bali, Java, and India at the Center for World Music in Berkeley.

**Ladzekpo, Alfred.** Ghanaian master drummer of Anlo-Ewe music, composer and playwright; co-founder music and dance troupe Lashibi Agahu; drummer for the Gbeho Research Society, Uhuru Dance Company, and National Dance Company in Accra; performed in multi-media events organized by Morton Subotnick in 1968 in New York; studied at Columbia University and taught African music and dance before becoming founding co-director African Music & Dance for the CalArts World Music Performance Program for 41 years; wrote multiple plays and musicals, including *FeFe: Don't Say It Doesn't Concern You*.

**Ladzekpo, Kobla.** Ghanaian master drum-

mer of Anlo-Ewe music, author; taught and studied at Columbia University before becoming founding co-director African Music & Dance at the CalArts World Music Performance Program nearly 40 years; founder and director of Zdonu African Music and Dance Company, with collaborations and performances across the U.S. and internationally; founder of recording label Zdonu Records, documenting Ewe drumming and dance suites, and contributions to the soundtrack for the motion picture *Mississippi Masala*; taught at University of Ghana, Columbia, and UCLA; gave workshops fusing African polyrhythms with American jazz and contemporary music elements; working with Babatunde Olatunji's ensemble helped develop an ethnomusicology program New Paltz State University College, N.Y., presented workshops for Society for Ethnomusicology alongside David Locke for pedagogical approaches; collaborated with Ghana National Dance Ensemble alumni at Pan-American gatherings inspired by Ghana's first post-colonial president, Kwami Nkrumah promoting All-African Peoples Conference to popularize West African traditions alongside Black arts and civil rights movements; collaborated with ethnomusicologist Hewitt Pantaleoni for seminal 1970 publication *Takada Drumming* with transcription and analysis of Ewe drumming from Ghana's Volta Region.

**Ladzekpo, C.K.** Ghanaian master drummer of Anlo-Ewe music; brother of Kobla and Alfred; composer, recipient of awards and fellowships as a choreographer, author; 50 years with U.C. Berkeley African music program beginning 1973, serving as Director; lead drummer and instructor Ghana National Dance Ensemble touring across U.S., Canada, and Europe; Artistic Director Mandeleo Institute in Oakland, and University of Ghana's Institute of African Studies, and Arts Council of Ghana; member faculty council of the East Bay Center for Performing Arts.

**Lal, Pandit Chatur.** Pioneering tabla master, one of first players to introduce tabla to Western audiences in the 1950s touring with Ravi Shankar and Ali Akbar Khan.

**Leake, Jerry.** Percussionist, composer, author of numerous books, videos, and *Percussive Notes* articles; Assoc. Prof., Berklee College of Music, New England Conservatory; studied tabla with Rajiv Devasthali, Todd Nardin, and Koashal Anand, mridangam T.K. Ramakrishnan, Northern Ghanaian drumming Dolsi-Naa Abubakari Luna, Southern Ghanaian drumming with Godwin Agbeli and David Locke, balafon/djembe with Coulibaly family in Burkina Faso.

**Lipner, Arthur.** Vibes/marimba specialist, composer, educator, active in Brazilian, Caribbean world jazz, and pop fusion musics; founder MalletWorks Music; subject of documentary *Talking Sticks*; played on over 60 recordings internationally.

**Locke, David.** Ethnomusicologist, performer, founder and director of Agbekor Drum and Dance Society 1979; Prof. Emeritus, Tufts University; BA and Ph.D. Wesleyan University; author *Drum Gahu: The Rhythms of West Africa*.

**Mannette, Elliot "Ellie."** Father of the modern steel drum; Trinidad-born musical instrument maker, author and educator; PAS Hall of Fame; National Heritage Fellowship Award from National Endowment of the Arts, Silver Medal from Minister of Culture, Trinidad; Trinidad All-Star Percussion Orchestra tour in Great Britain and Paris; tuned pans for Murray Narell New York City and work with inner city youth; while artist-in-residence at West Virginia University, founded Mannette Steel Drums Ltd.; helped develop U.S. Navy Steel Band program; invented the Double Seconds, Triple Cellos, Tenor Bases, and Double Guitars; his steel drums have been displayed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in NYC and the Smithsonian Institute.

**Mazza, Aldo.** Italian-born Canadian

drummer/percussionist, composer, producer, co-founder 1974 Répercussion ensemble with Luc Langlois, Robert Lépine, Chantal Simard, active for nearly 50 years; extensive drumming studies in Cuba; graduate studies in ethnomusicology; founded the world music education academy KoSA in Montreal, with annual camps and workshops in U.S., Canada, China, Italy; founder KoSA Cuba Festival Camp; co-founder of Fiesta del Tambor, Havana; contributed to over 100 recordings with artists including Celine Dion, James Brown, Chris DeBurgh; such festivals as Hong Kong Arts Festival, Montreal Jazz Festival.

**McDermott, Vincent.** Ethnomusicologist, award-winning composer; student of Karlheinz Stockhausen, Darius Milhaud, Rahayu Supanggah, and others at the Academi in Surakarta, Central Java, and with Midiyanto and the renowned Pak Cokro in the U.S.; Prof. ethnomusicology Lewis & Clark College beginning 1977, founding the Javanese Gamelan with the help of Supanggah, as part of the new World Music Program in 1980, including Ghanaian drum master Obo Addy, and Nisha Joshi in Indian music performance; helped establish gamelan programs at College of William & Mary and University of Puget Sound; composed works for gamelan, including with Western instruments, encouraged by Lou Harrison and his concept of American Gamelan, with non-traditional instruments included in the ensemble; conducted gamelan workshops in Japan and Malaysia.

**Mercier, Mel.** Irish bodhrán soloist, Tony-nominated composer, sound designer; founder and director of first full Javanese gamelan orchestra in Ireland 1994, the Irish Gamelan Orchestra, Cork; inaugural chairperson of Performing Arts, Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick; studied World Music at CalArts; worked with John Cage; interdisciplinary projects in dance, theater, and with his father, Peadar Mercier, co-founder

renowned traditional Irish ensemble, the Chieftains.

**Meza, Fernando.** Percussionist, educator; Grammy-winning original-cast recording *The Lion King* on Broadway; director Marimba 2010 Intl Festival and Conference; created percussion program University of Costa Rica and visiting groups to the University of Minnesota; Grupo Clave percussion quintet for music of Latin America and the Caribbean; St Paul Chamber Orchestra, Youth Orchestra of the Americas, and Youth Philharmonic of Colombia; Assoc. Prof. University of Minnesota.

**Mahapurush, Pandit Mishrah.** Tabla master; toured with Ali Akbar Khan; first tabla teacher at the Ali Akbar College of Music in California in 1967; recorded with George Harrison and the Beatles; one of the first prominent musicians from India to teach in the United States.

**Midiyanto, Ki.** Renowned Central Javanese gamelan and puppet master; co-founded Javanese gamelan ensemble Dept of Music, University of California, Berkeley, 1988; Master of Arts at Lewis & Clark College, where he also directed the gamelan; artist in residence at the Smithsonian Institute; directed the gamelan for a Shadow Music of Java recording; taught in Singapore, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada.

**Moreira, Aírto.** Brazilian percussionist, composer, drummer; multiple Grammy Award winner; responsible for introducing Afro-Brazilian percussion instruments into jazz; played with Miles Davis, Weather Report, Chick Corea's Return to Forever, Cannonball Adderley, George Duke, Keith Jarrett, John McLaughlin; husband of Brazilian singer Flora Purim.

**Narrell, Andy.** Steel pan artist, jazz improviser, and composer; PAS Hall of Fame and Grammy Award winner; student of Ellie Mannette; first foreigner to compose for Panorama steel band competition in Trinidad; Caribbean Jazz Project with Dave Samuels, Paquito D'Rivera; with his brother, professional steelpan player Jeff Narrell, he collabo-

rated with Kwami Ryan and Bordeaux Symphony; worked with Tito Puente, Flora Purim and Airto, Béla Fleck, Etienne Mbappe, Jimmy Dlugdu, Aretha Franklin, Kronos String Quartet; producer on many recordings; artist in residence in universities across the U.S. and internationally.

**Nauseef, Mark.** American drummer and percussionist, author; played in rock bands Thin Lizzy, The Velvet Underground, the Ian Gillan Band; studied Javanese and Balinese gamelan with I Nyomen Wenten and K.R.T. Wasitodiningrat, Pandit Taranath Rao, Kobla and Alfred Ladzekpo, John Bergamo, Amiya Dasgupta, dance with Dzidzorgbe Lawluvi; studied frame drumming of the Middle East, India, and the Caucasus with Glen Velez; played/recorded with artists including Rabih Abou-Khalil, Hamza El Din, Trilok Gurtu, Hamza El Din, Markus Stockhausen, Thelma Houston, David Torn, Lou Harrison, Balkan guitarist and composer Miroslav Tadic; produced award-winning recordings of Javanese and Balinese gamelans in Indonesia for CMP records; authored chapter in *The Drum and Percussion Cookbook: Creative Recipes for Players and Teachers*; articles for *Percussive Notes* including "Music Practice as Meditation" with Indian rhythmic concepts applied to Western percussion practice for meditative focus and adapting gamelan and Indian drumming styles to contemporary contexts.

**Nettl, Bruno.** One of the earliest ethnomusicologists; studied with George Herzog at Indiana University; authored first doctoral dissertation in ethnomusicology on the music of the Native American Blackfeet people; fieldwork included studies in Iran and Southern India, as well as Slavic music, and a focus on musical improvisation in different cultures; recipient of several honorary doctorates and prizes; President Society for Ethnomusicology 1969-71; one of the field's most prolific writers, authoring over 36 books and 137 arti-

cles; son of musicologist and Beethoven scholar Paul Nettl, who founded Dept. of Ethnomusicology, 1964, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

**Olatunji, Babatunde.** Nigerian master drummer; Grammy Award winner; PAS Hall of Fame; gave first African music and dance performance in U.S. 1953; performed with Radio City Music Hall Orchestra; 1959 recording *Drums of Passion* sold millions of copies; played with John Coltraine, Dizzy Gillespie, Mickey Hart's Planet Drum; recorded with Max Roach and Abbey Lincoln, Airto Moreira, and Carlos Santana; played 1964 New York World's Fair; Founded Olatunji Center for African Culture, Harlem NYC for teaching children and concerts; combined Nigerian, Ghanaian, and Afro Caribbean rhythms; recorded on soundtrack for Spike Lee film; taught workshops at many universities world-wide; social justice activism.

**Otis, Jon.** Swiss percussionist on first Grammy-winning New Age album featuring world music influences in the music of German harpist and composer Andreas Vollenweider.

**Pourmehdi, Houman.** Persian master percussionist, composer, educator; studied Tonbak with Master Morteza; studied Daf with Haj Agha Sadeghi, Mirza Agha Ghosi and Darvish Karim; studied Persian flute Ney with Mohammad Ali Kianey-Nejad; designed tunable Dayereh for the Cooperman's Artist Innovation Series; founded Society for the Advancement and Preservation of Traditional Persian Music, Chicago 1988; has worked and recorded with Wadada Leo Smith, John Bergamo, Rajeeve Taranath, and Hands On'Semble; CalArts Director of Persian Percussion and Music.

**Rakha, Ustad Alla.** Renowned tabla player with significant contributions to Hindustani classical music; composer for films in Bombay (now Mumbai) under pseudonym A.R. Qureshi; performed with Buddy Rich and was a longtime associate of Ravi Shankar

and Ali Akbar Khan; introduced Indian classical music to Western audiences; founder of Alla Rakha Institute of Music in Bombay; father of Ustad Zakir Hussain, Taufiq and Fazal Qureshi.

**Rao, Harihar.** Indian-born American tabla and sitar artist; Fulbright Scholar UCLA; co-founded fusion band Hindustani Jazz Sextet; authored article for *Jazz Magazine* with jazz trumpeter Don Ellis "An Introduction to Indian Music for the Jazz Musician" 1965, and in 1967 the book *Introduction to Sitar*; student of Ravi Shankar; taught at California Institute of the Arts; co-founded organization Music Circle with Shankar and served as artistic director to promote Indian classical music.

**Rao Hattiangadi, Pandit Taranath Tam.** Distinguished tabla, pakhawaj, mridangam teacher and player; older brother of Harihar Rao, California Institute of the Arts; known for his knowledge of rare talas and old compositions; collaborated with Ravi Shankar and Ali Akbar Khan; studied with Shamsuddin Khan, Vishnu Goakar, and Fayaz Khan of Kanpur; radio programs in Mumbai on rhythmic structures in North and South Indian classical music; collaborated with Nikhil Ghosh for his *Encyclopedia of Music and Dance in India*; gave specialty training in unusual rhythms to Chatur Lal; performed with Ravi Shankar in the Court of Maharaja of Mysore and with Ali Akbar Khan in the court of Maharaja of Jodhpur in the 1950s; taught over 2,000 students including Ravi Bellare, Jef Feldman, Peter Fagiola, Omkar Gulvady, Vijay Kangutkar; taught in L.A. at Ravi Shankar's Kinarra School of Music, before CalArts.

**Roach, Max.** Drummer, percussionist, composer; MacArthur Foundation grant and PAS Hall of Fame; founder the percussion ensemble, M'Boom 1970 bringing together African, Latin, and global rhythms; subject of PBS documentary *The Drum Also Waltzes*; performed/recorded with Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis; developed

bebop style and avant-garde free jazz improvisation style with Cecil Taylor and Anthony Braxton; founded Max Roach Double Quartet with improvising string players; composed for films, plays, dance; political activist with lyricist Oscar Brown, Jr., *We Insist! Freedom Now Suite*.

**Remy, Jeannine.** Steelpan composer/arranger, historian, author, pianist; student of Cliff Alexis and Al O'Connor, Northern Illinois U., and Ellie Manette; Senior Lecturer in Music in Department of Creative and Festival Arts, University of the West Indies.

**Reyes Sr., Walfredo de los.** Cuban drummer and percussionist, recipient of Sabian and Gon Bops Artist Lifetime Achievement Awards; father of percussionists Walfredo Reyes Jr. and Daniel de los Reyes; pioneered playing hand percussion instruments from Cuba with drumset simultaneously; performed with Frank Sinatra, Tito Puente, Cachao, Chico O'Farrill, Sammy Davis Jr., Rita Moreno, Ben Vereen, Dionne Warwick, Tony Bennett, and many others; bridged Cuban popular music and American big band sound in the 1930s.

**Richeson, Dane.** Percussionist, educator; PAS Lifetime Achievement in Education Award; studied Ewe music and dance in Ghana; Afro-Cuban drumming in Matanzas, Cuba; drumming traditions from Bahia in Sao Paulo and Salvador, Brazil; studied in the U.S. with Linda Pimentel, Jamey Haddad; founded award-winning ensembles including Ghanaian, Brazilian, and Afro-Cuban, teaching at Lawrence University Conservatory of Music; has performed with Bobby McFerrin, Danilo Perez, Lyle Mays, the NDR Big Band of Germany, among others.

**Rudolph, Adam.** American percussionist and jazz composer, visual artists, post-bop world fusion; co-founded The Mandingo Griot Society 1978 with Gambian kora virtuoso Foday Musa Suso; tabla study with Pandit Taranath Rao at CalArts, studied in Ghana; re-

corded with Yusef Lateef including appearances with Cologne, Atlanta, and Detroit symphony orchestras; collaborated with such artists as Don Cherry, Sam Rivers, Pharoah Sanders, L. Shankar and Muhal Richard Abrams; artistic director/composer for Vashti International Percussion Ensemble; author of *Music and Mysticism* edited by John Zorn, method book *Pure Rhythm*, numerous articles; taught at Creative Music Studio N.Y. and Istanbul, CalArts, Danish Federation Summer Institute; commissions from Rockefeller Foundation, Chamber Music America, Meet the Composer, National Endowment for the Arts.

**Sahai, Pandit Sharda.** Renowned Indian tabla soloist, descendent of the founder of the Benares tabla gharana from the 1700s; accompanied every major artist of North Indian music; Artist in Residence for five years beginning 1970 at the World Music Program at Wesleyan University and was a visiting Artist at the Berklee College of Music and Brown University in the U.S.; taught summer programs in Canada and U.S.; held positions at Dartington College, Leeds University, and Oxford in Great Britain; in fusion ensembles with musicians from other musical styles; collaborated with John Cage, many renowned musicians of South India, Nexus, and with the World Drum Ensemble of over 100 musicians for the Commonwealth Drum Festival in England.

**Sanchez, Michito.** American-born Cuban percussionist; student of Cuban bongoceros Rolito Soto; worked with John Denver, Crosby, Stills & Nash, Herbie Hancock, Shiela E., Mike Fisher, Lenny Castro, Kenny Loggins, Chucho Valdez, Caetano Veloso, John Mayer, Stevie Wonder, Poncho Sanchez, Arturo Sandoval, Tito Puente, Airto Moreira, and Giovanni Hidalgo; director Michito Sanchez Salsa Orchestra

**Sankaran, Trichy.** Renowned mrdangam soloist, Indian music scholar and composer; collaborated with Peter Erskine, Giovanni Hidalgo, Steve Smith; has giv-

en extensive workshops worldwide; founding director of Indian music studies at York University, Toronto Canada, Prof. Emeritus after 40 years; performed with Nexus, African, gamelan, jazz, and electronic music ensembles; pioneer of the Thyagaraja Festival in Toronto; honorary Doctorate of Music from University of Victoria in British Columbia; Madras Music Academy's Sangeetha Kalanidhi and Tiruchirapalli Carnatic Musicians' Lifetime Achievement Award, the All India Radio gold medal, and the President of India award; mridangam student of maestro Palani Subramaniam Pillai; author *The Rhythmic Principles & Practice of South Indian Drumming* and *The Art of Konnakkol* on the spoken rhythmic art of solkattu.

**Serfaty, Aarón.** Venezuelan-born drummer, percussionist, educator; sessions work and touring as teenager in Caracas; studied at CalArts and with Juan Oliva, Peter Erskine, Jeff Hamilton, and Jerry Steinholz; worked extensively with Arturo Sandoval; taught at CalArts, Los Angeles College of Music, and is on faculty at the University of Southern California, where he also conducts the Latin Jazz Ensemble.

**Shinneman, Leonice.** American tabla and pakhawaj disciple of Taranath Rao, and tabla studies with Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri, Ustad Alla Rakha, T.R. Harihara Sarma, T.R. Ragamani, and Ravi Bellare, and ghatam with T.H. Subash Chandran; performed with Amiya Dasgupta, L. Shankar, Ganasaraswathy, Zakir Hussain, John Bergamo; taught at CalArts.

**Smith, Ed.** Jazz vibraphonist and percussionist; studied in Bali with Ketut Madri, I. Nyoman Wenten, and Wayan Sudirana; teaches vibraphone and directs U. North Texas gamelan Bwana Kumala; also teaches at Southern Methodist University and Cedar Valley College; founding member D'Drum ensemble, with concerto performances of "Gamelan D'Drum" by Stewart Copeland with numerous American orches-

tras; performed with Hands On/Semble, Glen Velez, John Cage, Louie Bellson, Trichy Sankaran, Nyoman Wenten.

**Snider, Ron.** Percussionist, inventor, assistant principal percussionist Dallas Symphony 51 years; founder D'Drum with Ed Smith, John Bryant, Doug Howard, and Jamal Mohamed; recorded music for an Emmy-winning National Geographic film; commission from Dallas Symphony for Stewart Copeland to write "Gamelan D'Drum" concerto for world percussion; studied tabla with Pandit Mahapurush Mishra and gamelan in Bali with Ketut Madri, I. Nyoman Wenten, and Wayan Sudirana; cimbalom soloist with the orchestras of Cleveland, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and others; instrument inventor, Woodstock Garden Bells and Woodstock Fountain Bells; session percussionist for hundreds of films and recordings.

**Spiro, Michael.** American percussionist, producer and author; Tony Award for Broadway production of *BLAST!* and Lifetime Achievement Award in Percussion, Monterey Jazz Festival; performed with Carlos Santana, David Byrne, Cachao, Bobby McFerrin, Andy Narell, McCoy Tyner, John Santos and Grupo Folklorico Kindembo, Wayne Wallace Latin Jazz Quintet, Gilberto Gil, Machete Ensemble, Caribbean Jazz Project, Eddie Palmieri, Giovanni Hidalgo, Clark Terry, Bobby Hutcherson, and many others; developed curriculum for Latin music and culture in percussion and jazz departments of Indiana University; mentors Regino Jimenez, Esteban Vega Bacallao "Cha-Chá"; author *Conga Drummers Guidebook*.

**Sriji, Poovalur.** South Indian classical percussionist, composer; son of P.A. Venkataraman; performed with leading artists from South and North Indian traditions; taught at San Diego State University and CalArts, and teaches U. of North Texas College of Music; performed and recorded with Sir Yehudi Menuhin, Béla Fleck, V.M Bhatt, J.P. Chen, John Bergamo, Glen Velez

and others; founded and directed the South Indian Cross-Cultural Ensemble at CalArts; teaches mridangam and directs the multi-cultural ensemble The Bridge.

**Steinholtz, Jerry.** Session percussionist with extensive recording for Motown Records; taught Latin and Brazilian hand percussion at California State University, Northridge; started percussion program at Dick Grove School of Music in Van Nuys, Cal.; product development and design for Remo, Toca, and Calato percussion; played/recorded with Harvey Mason, Emil Richards, Peter Erskine, Joe Porcaro, Steve Schaeffer, Ralph Humphrey, Louie Bellson, Chester Thompson, Buddy Rich, Mel Lewis; toured/recorded with Diana Ross, Gladys Knight, The Carpenters, Steve Lawrence, and many others; recorded *The Essence of Playing Congas* instructional video with Julie Spencer; studied with Chino Ponzó.

**Teague, Liam.** International steelpan artist and arranger from Trinidad; director steelpan studies, Northern Illinois U.; undergraduate and graduate degrees at NIU; large number of works commissioned for steel pan; father of award-winning steelpan soloist Jaden Teague-Núñez.

**Teasley, Tom.** Percussionist/composer and creator of the program *The Drum: Ancient Traditions Today*, a solo performance and video tracing percussion through hand drums, traditional music forms and electronics; studied with Glen Velez, Trichy Sankaran, Yacub Addy, and Frank Malabe; composes for film and television soundtracks.

**Thornton, Tracy.** Steel pan soloist, writer/arranger, producer, founder of Pan Rocks steelpan orchestra specializing in rock, reggae, punk, fusion arrangements; worked with Trinidadian pannists Ken "Professor" Philmore, Len "Boogsie" Sharpe, and Robert Greenidge.

**Tjader, Cal.** Swedish-American jazz vibraphonist and drummer; Grammy winner; fusion pioneer for the music of Lat-

in America with artists Vince Guaraldi, Willie Bobo, and Mongo Santamaria.

**Vasconcelos, Naná.** Brazilian-born percussionist, singer, and berimbau specialist; eight Grammy Awards, nine-time Percussionist of the Year by *Downbeat* magazine; recorded with Milton Nascimento, Pat Metheny, Jan Garbarek, Paul Motion, Codona, B.B. King, Laurie Anderson, Trilok Gurtu, Chaka Kahn.

**Walton, Susan Pratt.** Ethnomusicologist, former director University of Michigan gamelan; represented the U.S. in the 2014 celebration of Indonesian Independence; began studying gamelan in 1968 in Indonesia and the U.S.; recipient of numerous awards and grants including the Mellon Foundation and the Luce Foundation; performed with gamelans in Indonesia, England, Australia, and New Zealand; author of *Mode in Javanese Music*.

**Wenten, I. Nyoman.** Award-winning Balinese gamelan director, dancer, composer; PhD in ethnomusicology; member of Indonesian Presidential Cultural Exchange international tours in 1960s; works with his wife, Balinese dancer and teacher Nanik Wenten, daughter of Pak Cokro; doctoral studies and taught at UCLA; graduate studies and taught at CalArts; taught, performed, and recorded extensively in the U.S. and Asia, and with more than 35 gamelan orchestras in Indonesia; subject of a documentary *Bali: Beats of Paradise* highlighting 45 years of bringing Balinese culture to the world.

**Widaryanto, FX.** Javanese gamelan master, dancer; doctorate in ethnomusicology; taught at University of Michigan and Indonesian Institute of Arts and Culture, Bandung, West Java, Indonesia; author of autobiography *Catatan Tiada Henti (Endless Notes)*.

**Williams, B. Michael.** Percussionist, educator, author, composer; former World Percussion Assoc. Editor *Percussive Notes*; Dir. Perc. Studies, Winthrop University, South Carolina and World Percussion Ensemble; winner of PAS Inter-

national World Percussion Ensemble Competition; student of Glen Velez; mbira specialist.

**Wimberly, Michael.** American percussionist, drummer, pianist, composer, in funk R&B, Afrobeat, neo-soul; worked as music director for the Urban Bush Women dance company in Mozambique, where he studied the Chopi xylophone timbila, then the balafon of Mali and the gyil of Ghana and the djembe; first learned traditional Yoruba songs and chants and djembe as an undergrad student at Baldwin Wallace College; developed rhythmic fusion of drums of the African continent with traditional music of Mozambique; has worked with Alvin Ailey and at the Martha Graham school and with African dance companies and avant-garde jazz musicians; recorded album *Afro-futurism*; recorded with kora master Foday Musa Suso and balafon virtuoso of Guinea Famoro Dioubate; teaches at Bennington College in Vermont.

**Woma, Bernard.** Ghanaian master of the gyil xylophone, ethnomusicologist, composer; lead drummer of the National Dance Company of Ghana; PAS Hall of Fame; founder and artistic director of Saakumu Dance Troupe with many international students; founded Dagara Music and Arts Center in Accra, Ghana, and the Bernard Woma Ensemble with Mark Stone and Kofi Amayaw with master dancers; has recorded with Valerie Naranjo and Barry Olson; earned undergraduate degree in international studies, State University of New York; two master's degrees in African Studies and Ethnomusicology at Indiana University; extensive touring; wrote and performed his concerto for gyil in Carnegie Hall; helped shape the African drumming program at State University N.Y. Fredonia.



**Julie Spencer** is an American composer, percussionist, and artist, and is a member of the PAS Board of Advisors. Her composition career includes commissioned works and grants in Europe, Asia, and the U.S., including from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Japan Society for Percussion, for orchestras, chamber ensembles, and soloists in jazz, avant-garde, rap, pop, and world music genres. Her music is published by Norsk Musikforlag in Oslo and is recorded on over 30 CDs. The innovator of the One Mallet Roll and the Spencer Technique for Marimba, she has given workshops, masterclasses and been on juries for competitions in percussion and composition. Performing at international festivals and in concert series, including clinics and concerts at many PASICs, Spencer has lived in Germany with her family since 2003.

# Marlon Brando's Conga Tuning Attachment

By Dr. Gabriela Ordonez Villalobos

**M**arlon Brando is a renowned American actor famous for his acclaimed roles in such movies as *The Godfather*, *On the Waterfront*, and *Last Tango in Paris*. He was nominated for awards multiple times for his work, including the Oscars.

Probably the least known side of Marlon Brando is his interest as an inventor. One of his most famous inventions, the "Pool Shoes," was designed to increase friction on the bottom of the pool for a better workout.<sup>1</sup> In the area of percussion, Brando contributed one invention that became quite popular: the Conga Tuning Attachment.<sup>2</sup>

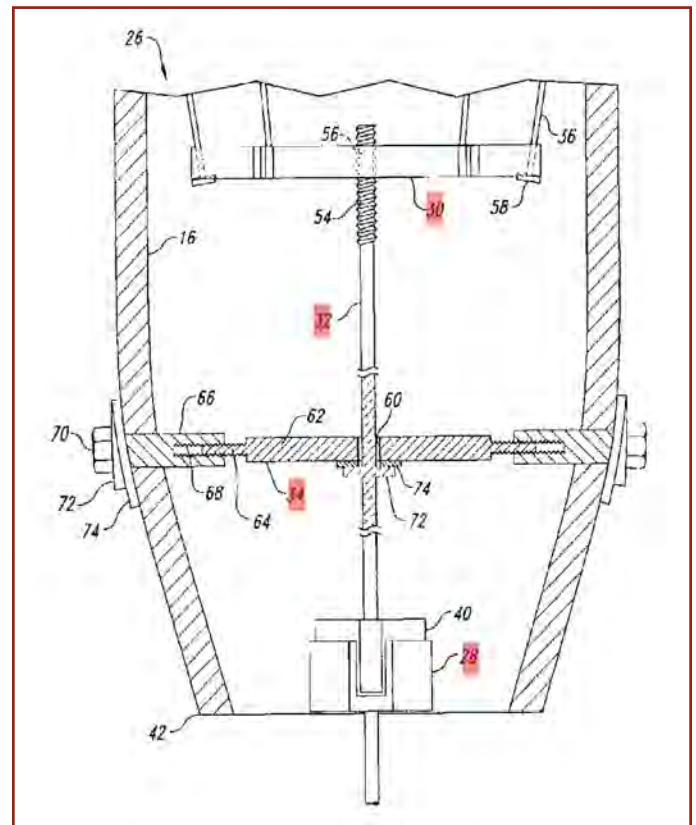
Brando was a self-taught conga player who played a set of congas he designed himself with his name inscribed on them.<sup>3</sup>

He used to sit in with Latin jazz vibraphonist Cal Tjader at the MClub (East L.A.) in the 1960s and played bongos alongside Cal. In time, Tjader would introduce *conguero* Poncho Sanchez to Marlon Brando, who later helped attorney Kevin Costanza patent the conga attachment.<sup>4</sup>

## CONGA TUNING ATTACHMENT

Brando invented the conga tuning attachment because he wanted to make tuning easier and more efficient. The conga tuning attachment is a mechanism placed inside the drum and fixed to the shell. The adjustment assembly that activates the tuning is a set of parts in the center of the drum close to the

Figure 1. The adjustment assembly.



bottom and fixed to the shell through a retaining member and bolts.

The adjusting assembly has four main parts. The horizontal bar (34) is called the retaining member, and it is positioned across the drum to support the other three pieces. The threaded rod (32) is a vertical stick that goes through the retaining member and attaches to the next two parts: the spider mechanism (30) on the top, and through an actuator (28) to a motorized tuning system on the bottom. The actuator is the bottom part that moves the rest of the adjusting assembly through a manual key or a motor. The spider member is the top part with elongated arms connected to the tuning cables. The spider mechanism tensions and releases the cables with an axial movement, very similar to the modern timpani tuning mechanism.

The tuning cables (36) are linked to the top part of the attachment through holes (38) on the conga shell. The number of cables depends on the number of tension rods on the tuning ring (Brando's conga had six). The tuning ring works the same way as a regular conga rim, adding tension to the drumhead surrounded with six tension rods. In this case, the rods are not tensioned manually but through a mechanism of horizontal rotative rods (50) and an elongated hook that is curved downwards (46). The hooks are fixed to the ring, and each one has a horizontal tension rod. The cables coming from the spider mechanism are wrapped around the horizontal rod, causing tension increase or decrease when activated.

The motorized tuning system (MTS) is placed on the bottom part of the conga, below the adjusting assembly. The MTS consists of a motor with a drive shaft connected to the rest of the tuning attachment. The motor (403) is touch-sensitive to vibrations, temperature, or resistivity. It can collect these sensations through a microphone, in the case of vibrations, or a laser in the case of temperature and resistivity. These two optional adjusters are enlisted in the patent without specifying which one Brando was using or which one ended up as the best option.

The motor sends the electric signal with three operating states: clockwise rotation, counterclockwise rotation, and no rotation. These signals are sent to the drive shaft attached to the actuator. The electric signal activates the rest of the tuning attachment. The two top parts of the attachment can work without the motorized tuning system by manually rotating the adjusting assembly bottom screw.

Poncho Sanchez used to receive many calls from Brando to talk about congas and the conga tuning invention, but Sanchez never got to see the attachment while Brando was alive. Sanchez only experimented with the invention after it was found by Kevin Constanza in a storage room along with some of Brando's other personal belongings. Sanchez played the congas and experimented with the tuning system, concluding that it was too heavy and too expensive to be a marketable product.<sup>5</sup>

In November 2004, four months after Brando passed, Costanza officially registered the patent for the conga tuning attach-

ment. The actor never got to see the patent of his own invention because it was still in process when he passed. The full patent also explains different options to make the tuning attachment work.

According to Brando, the conga tuning attachment was made for conga players to convert a drum into one that could be easily and quickly tuned. This is an advantage that most percussionists would appreciate, especially when touring or moving around venues with different weather conditions. Also, it could

Figure 2. The tuning ring.

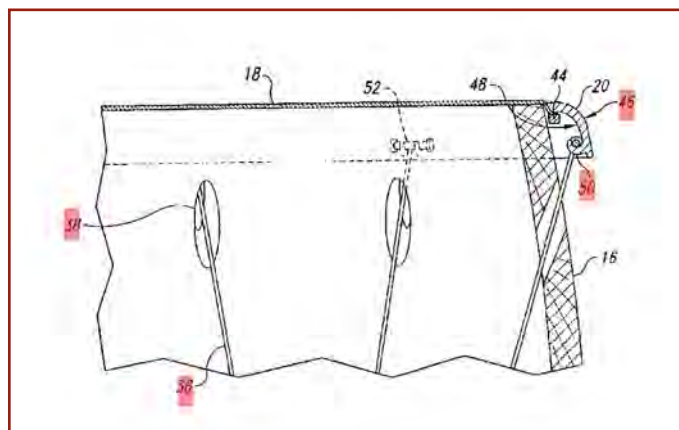
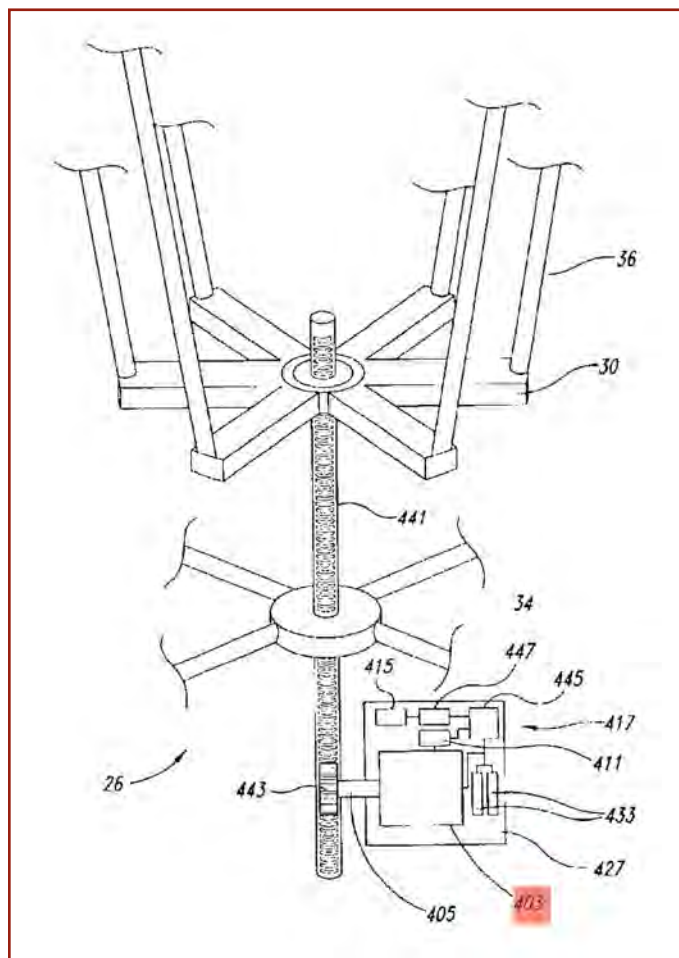


Figure 3. The motorized tuning system.



be very useful when different styles of music are required on the same gig because the percussionist would be able to tune the instrument according to demands of music. They would not need extra gear, time to switch instruments, or even extra space to set up the additional instruments. The downside of this attachment, along with what Sanchez mentioned about it being heavy and expensive, is that the bulky mechanism could interfere with the solid resonating chamber. The holes on the shell would also let the sound escape, which would make the conga sound dry and muted.

Marlon Brando's conga tuning attachment is back in the storage room for now and there are no plans for release to the public. However, it might be a predecessor for new ideas, not only for conga tuning, but for a variety of drums.

## ENDNOTES

1. Xan Brooks, "Marlon Brando: Godfather of invention." *The Guardian*, July 6, 2008.
2. Erik Gregersen, "7 Celebrities You Didn't Know Were Inventors." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, January 26, 2015.
3. Sean J. O'Connell, "Marlon Brando Rocked the Conga drums: In fact, he invented one." *LA Weekly*, February 16, 2012.
4. Felix Contreras, "Marlon Brando's Lost Musical Innovation." *NPR*, July 2, 2011.
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**Dr. Gabriela Ordóñez Villalobos** is a percussionist, educator, and arranger based in Las Vegas, Nev. A graduate of University of Nevada, Las Vegas Dr. Ordóñez 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. At the college level, she taught Percussion Ensemble, History of Rock, and Steel Band courses at UNLV. She has been part of the percussion section for UNLV Wind Orchestra, Henderson Symphony Orchestra, and currently serves as Principal Timpanist for Desert Winds in Las Vegas. She is a founding member of the MarimPop project, which blends Spanish pop and rock music with Mexican marimba style.

# Pedagogical Priorities in Composing

By Josh Gottry

The majority of my music is composed with a pedagogical mindset. Whether writing for myself, a colleague, or students (my own or those of others), one consistent factor for consideration has been the value to the performer studying and performing one of my works. This certainly isn't to suggest that the pedagogical or academic intent outweighs musical value in a piece, that every composition or arrangement I have published is equally pedagogical, or that the pedagogical design is even readily apparent to audiences or the performer. Rather, it is just that, as a longtime percussion educator who came to composition through my studies as a percussionist, my compositions consistently demonstrate an underlying pedagogical intent.

My compositions have always been an extension of my teaching, frequently emerging in response to what I notice as gaps in available percussion literature. While a few colleagues have expressed to me that elevating a pedagogical intent to the forefront of the composition process is unappealing or difficult for them, I find it helps make my voice and output distinctive in their value to students and educators.

Given that inclination, accompanied with a conviction that a canon of pedagogically minded compositions is valuable to our percussion community, I hope to advocate for and educate towards expanding that body of literature and those who contribute to it.

## FAR FROM ALONE

My pedagogical approach to composition is far from unique. As an educator, I am extremely grateful for the dozens of percussion composers who have written ensemble works that have proven exceptionally suited for performance while also being academically valuable. Specifically, I think of "Again" by John Herndon, selections from "Beyond Basic Percussion" by Ralph Hicks and Eric Rath, "Prism Schism" by Nathan Daughtrey, "Sweet Bread" by Joe Moore, and "Lattes on the House" by Chris

Roode. These are just a few of the selections that I have enjoyed programming with school ensembles whose members have been able to advance their musicianship through the rehearsal and performance process.

Thankfully, new works are being published that further enhance the catalog of pedagogical percussion compositions. But we are still decades, if not centuries, behind other instrumental areas. Consider either Schumann or Tchaikovsky's *Album for the Young*, Bartok's *For Children*, or *Notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach* as one set of examples. The more choices, the more voices – and the more unique perspectives that contribute to the canon, the better.

For those aspiring to write for students in this manner, there are a few key things to consider as you get started.

## KNOW THE EXISTING LITERATURE

Before writing percussion music, one must be at least reasonably familiar with the literature that already exists. This is much more challenging than it used to be, as the percussion community has many more quality solos and ensembles available now than we did 30 years ago – something for which we can all be grateful!

With the increase in percussion-specific publishers, as well as the growing popularity of self-publishing, the number of works written for percussion has increased drastically in recent decades. However, you can effectively broaden your exposure to the mainstream canon of educational percussion literature by subscribing to a handful of publisher newsletters, reading *Percussive Notes* new literature reviews, and spending time on YouTube journeying through the rabbit hole of percussion videos.

The first step in finding opportunities to contribute includes being aware of what is popular, what is unique, and what is well-conceived for an educational application. A natural next step is to identify where your personal ideas and compositional voice might fill a void.

## KNOW THE PEDAGOGY

Identifying a pedagogical or stylistic opening *and* writing effectively to address it requires the personal knowledge and experience of a quality educator. Said another way, writing pedagogically requires a personal confidence in your own pedagogy. Revisiting how you came to understand a given musical or technical concept, exploring method books and etudes that teach that concept, and working individually with students on developing that specific skill set or understanding will greatly impact one's ability to incorporate a pedagogical design in a composition.

A good measure of your grasp on pedagogy is to ask "why?" and make sure you can confidently provide an explanation — whether that be why the middle finger is so important to a quality buzz stroke, why we typically identify four basic stroke types in four-mallet performance, or why tuning timpani by interval relationship is better than simply associating each drum with a specific pitch. Creating short exercises that illustrate or reinforce a technical or musical concept can be helpful in understanding how the pedagogy potentially transfers to a musical composition. This could be very nuanced, or as simple as limiting the rhythmic vocabulary of a non-pitched percussion ensemble to figures present in a standard sixteenth-note permutation exercise, as shown in Example 1.

## WRITE WITH INTENT

As you compose, it is critically important to keep the technical and/or musical purpose in mind. One of the greatest challenges of writing pedagogically is working to ensure the objective is consistently present, appropriately reinforced, and not clouded by complicating contexts. The musical and technical requirements outside of the targeted focus of the composition need to be well within the performer's abilities such that the student and instructor can give appropriate attention where intended. As an example, my published collection of six works for solo timpani and fixed media, "Pauken Pairings," incorporates a few notable timpani excerpts in a very performer-friendly format, but maintains the focus on developmental timpani technique with short works, limited tuning changes, and using only two drums.

*Example 1: Excerpt from "Chipboard" for percussion quartet by Josh Gottry.*

The musical score for "Chipboard" is written for a percussion quartet. It consists of four staves, each representing a different wood instrument: High Wood, Mid-High Wood, Mid-Low Wood, and Low Wood. The time signature is 3/4. The music is a rhythmic exercise featuring sixteenth-note patterns. The first five measures are identical for all instruments, with the High Wood part playing a continuous sixteenth-note stream. The sixth measure is a variation where the High Wood part continues with the sixteenth-note stream, while the other three instruments play a single eighth note followed by a quarter rest.

## WRITE QUALITY MUSICAL WORKS

Regardless of how pedagogically beneficial, anything composed for performance must still be worthy of being performed. As you write with intent to meet a technical or musical objective, you must wrap that seamlessly in a work that is musically engaging for performers and audience members. Repetition needs to be carefully balanced with variety in the form of new contexts, chord progressions, or melodic themes. Textures must be allowed to vary, as should dynamics and rhythmic vocabulary. While the pedagogical purpose must remain at the forefront for the composer, it should ideally be concealed to the listener and possibly even to the instructor or performer, outside of relevant program and performances notes. The arduous editing process requires time spent sculpting the musical content and a separate review for crafting, clarifying, and reinforcing the pedagogical essence.

## A CONTINUING NEED

Composing pedagogically is not for everyone, but there is demand for this type of composition. Our percussion community benefits greatly from those individuals who find their voice in this area and are willing to create exceptionally creative works that advance the musicianship of developing percussionists.

**Josh Gottry** is an educator, percussionist, and composer who has been working with and creating music for the next generation of percussionists for over 30 years. He has served on the music faculties on college and university campuses around the Phoenix metropolitan area, works regularly with ensembles and students at all grade levels as a clinician and within his private lesson studio, and his performance record includes professional orchestras, musical theater, worship teams, jazz combos, community and chamber ensembles, and solo performances and recitals. Gottry is an award-winning composer with over 100 published works that have been performed internationally at universities, junior high and high schools, and multiple national conferences.

# Mallet Keyboard Memorization Techniques

By Payton MacDonald

**W**e've all been there. Whether you're just getting started on your journey in mallet percussion or you are a world-famous performer who has made multiple laps around the globe, you have most likely suffered a memory slip when performing non-improvised music. It's a terrible feeling: the lines are flowing, music is being made, and then suddenly everything drops out and you are standing on the precipice of embarrassment and failure. For many performers this becomes self-fulfilling. The more times they have memory slips, the more it becomes expected and normalized; their apprehension grows, which creates a self-reinforcing loop of anxiety and fearfulness, thus exacerbating the problem.

Fortunately, there are techniques one can employ that will make a huge difference in avoiding memory slips and help performers restore their confidence. In my 25 years of experience as a full-time director of collegiate percussion studios, I have had many students struggle with memory slips. When my students have followed the following recommendations, they have, without exception, made great strides towards consistently performing free from memory slips.

*The most important concept to grasp is that one must make a fundamental shift in how one allocates one's practice time. Most developing mallet percussionists spend almost all their time practicing pieces behind the instrument. However, professional-level players only spend part of their time behind the instrument, and usually only after extensive work studying the pieces and getting them firmly lodged in their minds. Indeed, in a recent conversation with the great marimbist Pius Cheung I learned that when he is learning a new piece by Johann Sebastian Bach, he does not attempt to play it on the marimba until he already has it 100% memorized. Another example: I spent a month touring Japan with the legendary marimbist Keiko Abe with the Galaxy Percussion Ensemble, under the direction of Dr Michael Udow. I was honored to have the opportunity to travel directly next to Ms. Abe on several long bus rides. She would often sit quietly for*

long periods of time with her eyes closed, deep in concentration. Occasionally she would pull out a score, look at the music, make some notes, then put it away and close her eyes again. When I asked her what she was doing she said she was working on the pieces in her mind. She explained that she was visualizing herself playing them correctly and was strengthening her memory, particularly of challenging passages. She told me it was by far the most effective way to practice large, difficult, non-improvised music.

We also have precedence for this with other instruments. Classical concert pianists, cellists, violinists, and others are under enormous pressure to perform works from the standard repertory without suffering memory slips, and thus they spend a great deal of time doing mental work to ensure that memory slips do not occur. This is especially important for instruments like violin where there are no visual aids such as one finds on a keyboard.

So how exactly does one structure one's practicing? One needs to create a platform with at least four strong pillars:

1. Visualization
2. Structural/Theoretical
3. Kinesthetic
4. Aural

**Visualization** is the practice of seeing yourself performing the piece successfully. Some people see the keyboard in their mind and the notes light up; others might see their mallets striking the bars. However one visualizes the piece, the important point is to visualize playing the music *correctly*. One must see themselves striking all the correct notes with the correct physical positioning, dynamics, phrasing, and other musical nuances. This kind of practicing literally burns pathways in one's neural network; thus, one cannot allow mistakes or inattention, or the activity becomes counterproductive. If one's mind wanders or one cannot remember exactly which note they should be playing, it is best to stop, take a break, and then look over the sheet music for further study and reflection.

## Professional-level players only spend part of their time behind the instrument, usually only after extensive work studying the pieces.

The **structural and theoretical** work includes spending time developing a map in one's mind of the structure of the piece and any useful music theoretical elements. For works that are in common practice tonal language (e.g., Bach), this might mean doing a general tonal analysis and memorizing the various modulations, tonicizations, etc. For modal or post-tonal music, the performer will need to employ other theoretical techniques. (This is also a good opportunity to do some research on the composer and the historical or social conditions that inspired the piece.) It is also useful to have a general roadmap of the piece, illuminating the major music events marked for consciousness. Sometimes composers make this obvious with double barlines, rehearsal letters, and other indications of major structural points, but sometimes performers will need to figure out their own way to organize large sections of music into structural coherence.

For this work I often employ poetic labels. This was particularly useful for me when I learned Charles Wuorinen's "Marimba Variations" in preparation for a high-pressure performance on a PASIC showcase concert. Post-tonal analysis didn't prove to be useful in that situation, but labeling distinct sections poetically helped me make sense of the piece and strengthened my memory of the sequence of events. But whatever the context, the goal is to be able to talk through the piece and tell the story of how the work unfolds. This is much like reciting a long monologue from a play. It can be revealing and useful to do this in front of a mirror.

The **kinesthetic** work is developing the muscle memory associated with playing the piece. This is essential to consistent high-quality performances, but unfortunately it is the least reliable of the four pillars. Any deviations from the typical practice room environment will quickly undermine kinesthetic work unless one purposely anticipates this and practices as such, and even then, muscle memory can be fickle. If the instrument is at the wrong height, the lights are too bright, the instrument has different spacing, dinner isn't sitting very well, etc., kinesthetic memory is often the first to go. However, for most developing keyboard percussionists this constitutes about 98% of their practice time. A better ratio would be 50% at most. The other 50% should be spent on the first two pillars.

The last pillar is having a firm grasp in one's ear of the **sound of the piece**. For standard repertoire this is easy to do because most of it has been recorded and is readily available. If one is learning a newly commissioned piece, this is more difficult, though sometimes composers can assist by offering a MIDI realization. However, one must be careful not to spend so much time listen-

ing to previous interpretations of a work that those interpretations become deeply ingrained in one's mind and one forgets to engage in the joyful process of finding their own interpretation of a piece of music.

Whenever I am preparing memorized, non-improvised music, I use these four pillars as a mechanism for organizing my practice sessions. I spend at least 50% of my time on the first two. I find the visualization and structural memory work tedious and exhausting, but consistently effective. Even short spurts of concentrated mental work pay high dividends. Like most keyboard percussionists, I prefer to spend my time playing the instrument, as I love the physical sensation of moving my body and creating sounds. However, I force myself to do the hard mental work so I can walk on stage and tell the story of my musical program with confident, informed musicianship.

**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.

# Arranging Classical Repertoire for TrioColores

By Luca Staffelbach

**T**rioColores is Fabian Ziegler, Matthias Kessler, and myself, performing a broad spectrum of contemporary and historic literature. I write most of the arrangements for the group, although we make decisions collaboratively. We met studying in Zurich, Switzerland, and started playing together in 2018. The first concert we played was at the Migros-Kulturprozent Chamber Music Competition, which we were honored to have won and which helped kickstart our career. They offered us support in building a website (<http://www.triocolores.ch/>), arranging a pho-

toshoot, and their concert agency connected us with presenters, which helped secure and financially support our initial bookings. More recently, we were honored to win a 2025 Opus Klassik in the Classic Without Limits category for our debut album, *En Couleur*.

We started adapting and arranging repertoire of our trio that was originally written for other ensemble sizes, like "Catching Shadows" by Ivan Trevino, which has versions for sextet or duo. We also wished to arrange music that we don't have as much access to as percussionists, that which was written by

composers who didn't have the chance to write for standalone percussion as we know it today.

Arranging, for us, adds another dimension to performing because we are not just playing and interpreting a set piece, but we are involved in decisions about color, timbre, texture, etc. We have the opportunity to make a variety of artistic choices, which results in a different relationship to the music we are playing.

Our process is collaborative and interactive. I usually take a first pass at the arrangement and bring it to the rehearsal. We try that out and look at what is or



isn't working, or what we prefer to hear as a group in terms of line, color, etc., and then I make another version and we continue these tryouts, perhaps continuing to change things. It becomes more difficult to make a change after you have practiced and rehearsed something for a long time. Meeting and playing together from the start is an important part of the process for us to find a version we all like and to agree on what we are aiming for musically.

Our first arrangement was the two piano Arabesques by Debussy. For "Arabesque No. 1," we started with an existing percussion arrangement of the piano piece; however, it was quickly obvious that we would naturally make different choices in our own arrangements. We continued by making our own rearrangement, and from there realized that if we already have different wishes and ideas, then making our own arrangements would allow us to realize our own intentions.

Piano music is quite easy to transfer to

percussion. Considering its mechanics: it produces a sound by a hammer striking its strings, and we produce sounds on mallet instruments by striking the bars with mallets.

A simple thing to do is just to play it on two marimbas; for example, if the range doesn't extend past five octaves, it works quite well. The Arabesque would work great like this, and it generally works technically because you rarely have chords that are thicker than four notes in either hand of the piano. On the other hand, adding the vibraphone allows one to make color decisions on top of what is simply working technically on the instrument.

The main contrast from the piano is the finger legato; we have vibraphone bar dampening, but this takes some extra effort to achieve, and it still has a different effect than the finger legato. However, there are many things we can do that the piano cannot. We can bring new colors by combining sounds – playing unison on the marimba and vibraphone. We can

play a legato line on a different layer with marimba rolls, or we can refine dynamics even more precisely with three players rather than one person playing everything. That gives us more control over separate lines, which might be impossible when playing everything alone, adding additional attacks layered with rolls, etc. The trio formation brings possibilities that the solo doesn't have.

To zoom into a specific example, below are side-by-side excerpts of our arrangement of Ravel's "Le Tombeau de Couperin, VI. Toccata" beside the original piano score. I decided to place the melodic line in the vibraphone, which has a different color to the marimbas, and because it has the resonance from its sustain, which the marimbas don't have. The pedal allows for this horizontal feeling, which wouldn't have the same effect if this repeated-tone melody were placed on marimbas. However, I also added vibraphone notes in the Marimba 1 part; our setup contains a second vibraphone for one of the marimba players facing the back of the stage or

Example 1: Ravel, "Le Tombeau de Couperin, VI. Toccata" (excerpt). Original piano version.



away from the audience. Not only does this allow us to imitate the resonance and articulation from the original, but it also provides a different color within our ensemble because those additional vibraphone chords are played with marimba mallets, blending differently in the texture, and there is a spatial effect with the vibraphone facing the other way. Spatially, it is de-emphasised for live audiences as there is a player between the instrument and the audience (rather than behind the instrument), and this is also re-

flected in our choices in panning, mixing, and microphone placement in recordings. The second vibraphone projects less due to all these factors. (See Examples 1 and 2.)

Our arrangement can be heard on YouTube. This excerpt begins at 1:20: <https://youtu.be/LA29OvqUrxM?si=qW6RdZfP-OpF0qVSR>.

In arranging anything for mallet percussion, I take care to think in the idiom of the original instrument. Unlike the piano, many instruments cannot be arranged one-to-one to percussion when consid-

ering the musical meaning in the writing for them. I try to consider the intention of the composer and think that way when transferring textures or lines to our instruments. I consider the effect the line has on me when listening to it, and I select instrumentation to get that effect or sound color, or get as close as we can with the instruments we play.

I don't stick to any hard rules; however, I usually connect flutes to the vibraphone and solo violin and pizzicato strings to marimba. But, on the other hand, other

Example 2: Ravel, "Le Tombeau de Couperin, VI. Toccata" (excerpt). TrioColores arrangement.

combinations make more sense in a personal, subjective way. You can have different articulations on the instruments – *con* or *senza* pedal on vibraphone, for example, or the many tone combinations I already mentioned.

I start by focusing on the overall structure of a piece, and how the composer structured the colors throughout it. To me, this seems to be far more important than what the colors themselves are. Every choice I make in arranging is about serving the music as it progresses. For example, when the composer makes the choice to repeat a line on a different instrument, or vary the combinations

of sounds that comprise the accompaniment, these are the musical features I try to capture as the structure. When considering this structure, it may be the case that the first melody is on solo flute and the second instance of it on pizzicato violin, but because of how this structure is developing, I might place the former on the marimba and the latter on the vibraphone. So this structure is a priority over any rules or defaults regarding timbral choices.

In arranging “Danse Macabre” by Saint-Saëns, I place the initial 12 bell hits on the vibraphone, and although we cannot exactly imitate the scordatura creating the

devil’s interval on the violin, I used a spatial effect instead to capture this intensity in a different way. I placed those two open-string violin dyads on the different marimbas, which gives it a different kind of energy. This creates a left-to-right spatial effect, which is different, but allows us to project in a striking way, similarly to how the open strings project in their unique way. This can be seen in bars 25–31 on the excerpt in Example 3.

Our arrangement can be heard at this link: <https://youtu.be/Tyf8lzGLqeA?si=Rg-brKnfES1CHz4Qj>

To complete the circuit, arranging becomes an integral part of our identity as

Example 3: Saint-Saëns, “Danse Macabre” (excerpt). TrioColores arrangement.

**Mouvement modéré de Valse**

The musical score is titled "Mouvement modéré de Valse" and is in 3/4 time with a key signature of one flat. It features three staves: Vibraphone, Marimbaphone 1, and Marimbaphone 2. The Vibraphone part starts with a series of quarter notes marked *f*. The Marimbaphone 1 and 2 parts feature bell hits, with Marimbaphone 1 playing a melody and Marimbaphone 2 playing a bass line. Dynamic markings include *ppp* and *pp*. The score is divided into three systems, with bar numbers 12, 22, and 32 indicated.

an ensemble, even in unexpected ways. We commissioned a new work from Swiss composer Fabian Künzli and asked him for something that interacts with our existing program. He listened to our recordings and was particularly inspired by the instrumental techniques we employ. The resulting piece, rather than imitating our sound world, was a contrast to it. He employed different extended techniques that we had not used in our arrangements. This brought another sound quality, new musical material, and created sound connections to different kinds of musical styles, yet remained reflective of the arrangements we made. This piece is intentionally a contrast to our program yet paradoxically connects to the idea of the program and to the music itself.

Ultimately, these arrangements and these contrasts — all our programming — is about connecting to the music in a deep and unique way. We are proud that our arrangements are original, because this has a musical result with which we identify ourselves and our own and collective musicality. Similarly, our commissions and contemporary repertoire continually reflect historic practices and our unique ensemble sound.

What is key in arranging is considering the composer's intent, the structure of

the music, as well as taking the opportunity to explore colors on our instruments that may not have occurred or even been possible in the original works. I hope that readers of this article have found this useful for developing their own arranging style and preferences — as none of these are set in stone!

Luca Staffelbach completed his bachelor's and master's degrees at the Zürcher Hochschule der Künste, graduating with distinction in classical percussion under Raphael Christen, Benjamin Forster, Martin Grubinger, Klaus Schwärzler, and Rainer Seegers, before continuing his compositional studies with Dieter Ammann and Francesca Verunelli at the Hochschule Luzern. As a soloist, chamber musician, and orchestral performer, he has appeared in such renowned concert halls as the Berlin Philharmonie, the KKL Lucerne, and the Seoul Arts Center. He is a founding member of TrioColores, which captivates audiences with its uniquely conceived programs and compelling musicality. His compositions have been performed at such festivals as the Swiss Chamber Music Festival, Musik Sommer am Zürichsee, and the New Music Days in Lucerne, as well as at international concerts. Ensembles that have performed his works include the TrioColores, Lugano Percussion Ensemble, the Dissolution Ensemble, the Moser String Quartet, and the Duo Sax&Perc.

L to R: Fabian Ziegler, Luca Staffelbach, Matthias Kessler



# Marimba Care and Maintenance

By Dr. Matthew Jordan

**F**or many percussion studios, our five-octave marimbas are some of the flagship instruments of our collections. These beautiful instruments are played on constantly by students, yet many of them develop issues over time due to oversights in maintenance and care. This article is intended to be a guide to cover these common issues.

## BAR CARE

Your marimba bars are the heart of your instrument; keeping them in great condition is key.

### Tuning

Most modern rosewood or padouk marimbas come from the manufacturer tuned to A-442. As the instrument acclimates to its new environment, this tuning will start to drift. The first retuning for rosewood or padouk mallet instruments should happen around two years after purchase and then every three to four years afterwards because the bars will continue to dry out.

Many instrument manufacturers offer a free tuning within the first two years. This lets the instrument acclimate to your environment and find equilibrium with temperature and humidity before retuning. Storing your instrument at around 72 degrees Fahrenheit and around 50-percent humidity is ideal, but

not always realistic for many programs. However, if your building has humidity control (often used for grand pianos and concert halls), it's worth asking whether the percussion rooms can have the same 45-55% humidity range often recommended for pianos.

In addition to the instrument manufacturers, there are also other companies that offer bar retuning and repair services; see list at end of article.

### Bar Cord

The type of bar cord that's used on your instrument makes a big difference in the sound. A soft cotton cord, recommended for rosewood and padouk, offers durability and rattle-free sound. Parachute cord is used by many schools but often causes a noticeable rattling. You can purchase pre-made kits from many instrument manufacturers or dealers that contain both bar cord and springs. I also recommend buying a pack of heat-shrink tubing and a lighter at your home improvement store. Applying this to the end of the cord before stringing the bars makes for a much less frustrating experience.

## CLEANING YOUR INSTRUMENT

Most modern marimba manufacturers lacquer their rosewood and padouk bars at the factory. To clean these lacquered

bars, it is recommended to use a soft, lint-free cloth. If the bars are particularly dirty, the cloth can be very slightly moistened. Do not use oil or wax-based polish that can add moisture to the bar. Never use any type of thinner, benzene, or glass cleaner to clean the bar, as it can remove the lacquer finish.

For older, vintage instruments, or instruments without lacquer, a light coat of lemon oil can be applied to the bars to protect the surface. This is not necessary or recommended on modern lacquered instruments, as lacquer is a sealed finish that does not absorb oil.

Cleaning the frame and resonators can be done with a soft cloth and a mild all-purpose cleaner in most cases. There are exceptions; if the resonators are brass/chrome/nickel-plated, follow the manufacturer's recommendation. Additionally, don't neglect to pull all the gross hair and threads out of the wheels, which will make the wheels roll much better.

## HOW DO INSTRUMENTS GET DAMAGED?

There are two main situations that damage instruments: moving the instruments and practicing/performing on the instruments. Each has specific strategies we can take to avoid this damage.

### Damage while moving

Moving instruments (often between

practice rooms and rehearsal rooms) exposes them to many hazards.

- Hitting bars against door frames is a common reason for bent or broken suspension bar posts. Removing the bars from the low octave of the instrument will typically allow it to go through a door frame without damage.

- When rolling instruments over door frames or thresholds, the instrument should always be lifted. Most marimba frames are not designed to be pushed over bumps, and this will slowly degrade the frame's structural integrity.

- If moving an instrument on a truck, always take off the bars. It reduces strain on the rails and keeps the instrument from being top-heavy and potentially flipping over. Additionally, dust covers are not adequate for use when moving; they're not thick enough to protect the frame. Use high-quality packing blankets to protect the frame and resonators.

### Damage while practicing/performing

Cracked bars are generally caused by mallets that are too hard, playing with too much velocity into the bar, or playing on a very thin part of a bar. Occasionally, a knot or other defect in the wood will cause the bar to crack under normal conditions. (These imperfections in the bar are often impossible to see during manufacturing.)

Replacement bars can be purchased from the manufacturer of the instrument or the third-party companies that service and retune instruments.

Some cracked bars can be repaired with glue and a bit of handiwork. The earlier the crack is found and repaired, the higher the likelihood of that repair being successful.

It is also imperative that teachers help guide students to understand the limits of the instruments and the appropriate mallets. Most students won't know what it takes to break a bar until they do — an expensive lesson to learn! In general, the thinner the bar, the easier that bar is to crack.

## GENERAL FRAME/RESONATOR REPAIR TIPS

A few common repairs are needed on most instruments in schools. Some suggested repairs are below.

**Bent bar-suspension posts:** If you're careful, bent bar-suspension posts can be bent back with an adjustable wrench.

**Broken off bar-suspension posts:** If the suspension post has broken off or fallen out, drilling out the broken piece and replacing the post with a new one is usually the only option.

**Sagging rails:** Many instruments have screws on the inside faces of their rails at the hinge to account for this "droop" over time of the rails flexing due to the weight of the bars. Loosening these screws so the screwheads touch will replace the common "penny" trick.

**Rattles in frame/resonators:** Over time, instruments can develop squeaks or rattles in the frame and resonators. There's not a single solution to this. Having a colleague play while you localize the rattle can help diagnose the issue. Sometimes it can be solved by lubricating a part (common on vibraphone), tightening a bolt, or even using dental floss to act as a spacer for rivets on resonators.

**Tuneable resonators out of tune:** For instruments with tuneable resonators, ensure that the resonators are set to the correct pitch. This can be done by blowing across the tube with your mouth and then adjusting the cap up or down to roughly match the pitch of the bar.

**Missing wingnuts/wingscrews/bolts:** A thread gauge set (standard and metric) and a metric/standard ruler are very helpful for replacing wingnuts or bolts on the instrument without needing to purchase from the original manufacturer. McMaster-Carr or Grainger are great options for these.

## PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE

Here is an additional list of preventative maintenance items that can help your instruments last longer.

- Keep covers on instruments when exposed to sunlight or in public areas.

(Covers on in practice rooms can sometimes be less effective, as dirt from floors can scratch bars more easily. If you use covers, their insides that will touch the bars should not come in contact with floors.)

- Correct mallet choice is key. Having students practice with a softer mallet in their left-most position (especially while learning notes) will help issues of accidental overplaying and cracking bars in the low octave.

- Do not use the instrument as a table — even for your mallet bags! This can scratch the bars, bend suspension posts, break bar cord, and cause rails to sag.

- Don't touch bars with bare hands. Oils get on bars and can eat away the finish.

- When the instrument is taken apart for cleaning or transport, turn the resonators upside down and blow them out with compressed air or a vacuum.

- A few dabs of white lithium grease on any threaded pieces (wingscrews/nuts/etc.) will make the frames work much smoother.

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## COMPANIES THAT OFFER BAR RETUNING

Century Mallet Instrument Service: <https://centurymallet.com>

Salazar Fine Tuning: [www.salazarfinetuning.com/pricing.php](http://www.salazarfinetuning.com/pricing.php)

RePercussion: <https://repercussionshop.com/pricing>

Fall Creek Marimbas: <https://marimbas.com/tuning>

Coe Percussion: [www.coepercussion.com/services/](http://www.coepercussion.com/services/)

DeMorrow Instruments: [www.demorrowinstruments.com/services-1](http://www.demorrowinstruments.com/services-1)

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## 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.



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## Terms Used in Percussion

# “Sinfonia India” Revisited

By Michael Rosen

In the January 1985 issue of *Percussive Notes*, I answered a question about the percussion instruments in Carlos Chávez’s *Second Symphony*, “*Sinfonia India*,” written in 1935–36. The piece was written during a period that has been called the Mexican-Renaissance in composition. Since the article appeared I have done more research and can now answer the question in greater detail.

Before I go into detail about the instruments, I would like to refer you to the [January 1985 article](#), where I suggest substitutions. The article can be found in the *Percussive Notes* archives on the PAS website. Of course, if you have the original instruments, use them.

“*Sinfonia India*” is written in one movement with three sections. Chavez chose instruments using thematic material originating from Native-American tribes of Northern Mexico – either Yaqui or Seri. The instruments Chavez called for were so difficult to find outside of Mexico when the piece was written in 1935 that he indicated substitute instruments in the score. However, now that percussionists are more attuned to authentic and what might be called “world” instruments in all genres, it is possible to find the original instruments and use them in the symphony.

A problem with using the original instruments, however, is one of volume. As you can imagine, the sound of butterfly cocoons doesn’t carry very well in a big auditorium with a large orchestra, espe-

cially since the instrumentation is rather dense and at times loud. I suggest using microphones to amplify the instruments. A talented sound engineer at the mixing board could make the instruments heard well without distortion. In this way, the original percussion sound concept that Chavez had for his symphony can be realized. Another solution would be to put the percussion instruments and players in the front of the orchestra.

Now we get to the problem of what instruments to use. My suggestions for substitutions are in [square brackets].

The following note, written by the publisher, appears on the percussion parts with substitutions:

“The Percussion Section was in great part written originally by the composer for a group of primitive Indian instruments; they have been replaced by their equivalents in common use or by easily obtainable replicas. However, if the original Indian instruments should happen to be available, they are as follows:

Percussion I: Yaqui drum for Indian drum [A small frame drum with two heads of the type made by Remo would be a good substitute]; Clay rattle for maraca [small pellets in a clay pot with a lid or soft maracas]; Yaqui metal rattle for ordinary metal rattle [metal maracas].

Percussion II: Water gourd for tenor drum; Tenabari (a string of butterfly cocoons) for soft rattle; 2 Teponaxtles for xylophone. [Log drums with two pitches would be a better choice for substitution.]

Percussion III: Grijutian (a string of deer hooves) for rattling string.

Percussion IV: Tlapanhuehuetl [a large huehuetl, see below] for bass drum; raspador for rasping stick [large guiro].

Here is how the distribution of the percussion instruments appears on each part without the Indian names of the instruments. (See above for Indian instrument names):

Percussion I: Indian drum; maraca (just one), metal rattle, suspended cymbal.

Percussion II: tenor drum, snares off; soft rattle made from a thin pasteboard; claves; xylophone.

Percussion III: snare drum, snares off; rattling string [a string of hard wooden beads, played on a wooden board for resonance]; guiro.

Percussion IV: bass drum; rasping stick.

Here are a few additional terms that appear on the percussion parts. Although most of the terms are in English, these are in Italian:

*Cortissimo*: very short.

*Un poco prominente*: This part should stand out a little.

*Tornando gradualmente sino al Allegro*: Gradually returning to Allegro.

*Un Pochettino più allegro che la I volta*: A little faster than the first time.

*Vivo come prima*: Fast as before.

After the first article appeared in 1985, I received a detailed letter from William Schneiderman, who had been timpanist with the Pittsburgh Symphony from the 1940s to the mid-1950s under the baton

of Fritz Reiner. Bill told me had played several concerts of "Sinfonia India" at the Museum of Modern Art with Chavez conducting, and he had first-hand knowledge of what Chavez wanted. He included several photos and a detailed program describing the music and the instruments from the concert.

Photo 1 was taken at the Museum of Modern Art in 1940 during an exhibition titled "Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art." Concerts ran for two weeks, featuring music by Blas Galindo, Vicente Mendoza, Don José Aldana, Gerónimo Baquero Fóster, Luis Sandi and Carlos Chavez. Several of the instruments displayed came from the Mexico City Museum of Archaeology. Authenticity was important to Chavez for these performances. The music, like the accompanying art exhibit, exemplified Mexican music from the Aztec period to the present, including Yaqui music and examples of music from many regions of Mexico.

In another letter from Bill, he mentioned that "when I played 'Sinfonia India' again with Chavez in Mexico City in 1947, the section played some of the same instruments that were used in the original concerts in 1940 at the Museum of Modern Art. I even played a notched human

legbone, which was played like a guiro!"

Here are the authentic instruments listed in Sinfonia India:

*Jicara de agua*: half gourd suspended over a basin of water, struck with a stick covered with dried corn leaves. [This represents the heartbeat of the deer.]

*Jicara de agua*



*Tenabari*: string of butterfly cocoons. [This represents the sound of insects.]

*Tenabari*



*Yaqui drum*: This drum is often played by a musician playing a flute at the same

time. The flute is called a *coosia* and the player is called the *tampaleo*. This practice is like the playing technique of the tambourin Provençale and similar European drums. Schneiderman: "The Yaqui drum supplied for the concerts was a one-headed frame drum, high pitched, similar to a Hopi drum." (see Photo 1 with Bill holding the drum that was used in the concert)

*Yaqui drum with flute*



*Cascabeles*: pellet rattle

*Teponáztle*: A cylindrical piece of wood, elaborately carved and hollowed out to produce two different notes. Schneiderman: "Two instruments were used in the concert. Each was about 4½ feet long and about 12 inches wide. They created two clear pitches a minor third

*Teponáztle*



*Photo 1: Museum of Modern Art, New York City, 1940. L-R: Bill Schneiderman holding Yaqui drum; Chauncey Morehouse holding large guiro; Henry Deneke Jr. holding timpani sticks; Ed Rubsan at the marimba; Carlos Chavez with leg on podium demonstrating how to play the raspador firmly planted on a gourd placed on a chair. When the stick is placed on the gourd it acts as a resonator creating a loud rasping sound similar to a large guiro. Note the two rectangular shaped log drums in the front that were substitutes for the teponaxtle. Also note the Chinese tom-tom with a guiro on top in the background to the left. My guess is that it might have been used in place of one of the Indian drums. Some of the performers seen on the right were members of the Mexico City Philharmonic who came to New York for the performances.*



apart. They were played with mallets with large rubber balls for heads. In place of the original instrument, a xylophone played in the lowest register with soft mallets might substitute.”

**Tlapanhuéhuatl:** Deep drum elaborately carved, same as a *hueheutl* but larger [similar to a small bass drum sound because it has a skin head on the top].

*Tlapanhuéhuatl*



**Grujutian:** string of deer hooves. Schneiderman: “The deer hooves that were supplied for the concerts were surprisingly small individually and comprised

*Dancer with grujutian (deer hooves on his waist) and tenabari (cocoon rattles) on his legs*



about 50 to a string. They must have been dried antelope hooves. The resulting sound was a ‘high pitched clatter.’ [To honor the deer, the dancer wears deer hooves in a belt around his waist and is called *Saila Maaso*, brother deer.]

**Raspador:** Notched stick that is rubbed with a wooden stick while held firmly on an inverted gourd for resonance (see Photo 1 in which Chavez demonstrates how to play). [The group of players with the raspadores are called *Hirukiam* and represent the breathing of the deer.]

*Raspador*



## VIDEOS

I highly recommend a visit to the Yaqui exhibit at Arizona state Museum in Tucson. Here is a list of YouTube videos that show all the instruments mentioned above as well as the music associated with the El Venado (Deer Dance):

1. Yaqui drum with flute: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=XaQBgtG0H-4&list=PLCApmr6U-4reYKihmoO2wlVyaYNGkcAqrW&index=7](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XaQBgtG0H-4&list=PLCApmr6U-4reYKihmoO2wlVyaYNGkcAqrW&index=7)
2. Yaqui Deer dance showing cocoon rattles, gourd maracas, Yaqui drum with flute, raspador, water drum: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=eghZreYRNPU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eghZreYRNPU)
3. Good view of deer hooves on the waist of the dancer and cocoon rattles attached to legs; good view of raspadores and water guard drum, Yaqui drum players with flute: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7HdbjQ6Wjo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7HdbjQ6Wjo)
4. Yaqui Deer Dance (Laura Bolton): To hear the original sound (from *Indian Music of Mexico*, An Album by Laura C. Bolton (RCA Victor Division, Camden, N.J., 1941). Victor Record 153-A. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcJJxqr-gUTw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcJJxqr-gUTw)
5. Yaqui drum with flute (Victor 154-B): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ltl4iW6UMo>

6. Yaqui water drums: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=VfMV0swUrh8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VfMV0swUrh8)
7. “Sinfonia India” performed twice by the UCLA Orchestra, once with substitute Western instruments and then with authentic instruments: <https://christophergarciamusic.weebly.com/Sinfonia-India-ucla.html>
8. Photo of raspador and water drum with music: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-MofGSc5PnY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-MofGSc5PnY) at 4:21
9. It should be noted that the Yaqui instruments listed are associated with the deer dance. See [www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7HdbjQ6Wjo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7HdbjQ6Wjo) for excellent views of the Yaqui drum (played with flute), raspador, jicara de aqua and large gourd maracas.

*I hope the information in these articles will help performers choose the appropriate instruments when they perform. I invite readers to send me questions about “Terms Used in Percussion” and any other subject of importance. I will answer you directly and then print your questions for the benefit of readers of Percussive Notes. You can e-mail your question to me at [mrosen@oberlin.edu](mailto:mrosen@oberlin.edu).*

**Michael Rosen** is Emeritus Professor of Percussion at Oberlin Conservatory of Music where he founded the Oberlin Percussion Group. He was elected to the PAS Hall of Fame in 2019. He was Principal Percussionist with the Milwaukee Symphony from 1966–72 and has performed with the Grand Teton Music Festival, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, and the Concertgebouw Orchestra. He was a member of the PAS Board of Directors and is an Associate Editor of *Percussive Notes*. He has recorded for Opus One, Bayerische Rundfunk, Albany, Lumina, and CRI labels and is a sought-after clinician for marimba and cymbals.

# Political Expression in Percussion Music

## A brief history and annotated bibliography

By Hunter Gross

**F**or over a century, percussion's unique reliance on noise over melody has made it a potent vehicle for political expression. While its impact is perhaps most visible in public protests, percussion has also played a significant role throughout the evolution of classical music and across global cultures. In exploring percussion music that embodies this kind of expression, I encountered a surprising obstacle: even within the research archives of the Percussive Arts Society, there appears to be a notable gap in the documentation of politically expressive percussion works. At present, several online databases and scholarly publications offer comprehensive catalogs of percussive works, spanning diverse compositional approaches and thematic explorations.

Percussion itself has had a significant role in general protest music, and I'd like to provide a concrete source for educators to draw from for concert programming and education. This project critically examines that role by conducting archival research and creating a comprehensive annotated bibliography of musical works — across all percussive instrumentations — that strategically incorporate percussion to articulate themes of politics, protest, anti-war, and much more.

### BRIEF HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF POLITICAL EXPRESSION THROUGH PERCUSSION

Throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, percussive traditions have functioned as vehicles for political expression and community resilience. Afro-Puerto Rican Bomba exemplifies this phenomenon, employing repurposed barrels (*barril*) alongside maracas and wooden sticks (*cuá*) to create an effective rhythmic foundation that supports both dance and vocal commentary. Its descendant, Plena, adapts this tradition through frame drums (*panderetas*), which historically served as vehicles for news dissemination and as a response to oppressive colonialism and cultural erasure. Similarly, Brazilian capoeira integrated conga-like

drums (*atabaque*) and the berimbau stringed instrument to establish rhythmic structures that facilitated a martial art practice developed by enslaved people as a form of resistance.

In cities today, these historical practices inform contemporary protest movements, where portable percussion instruments create powerful sonic spaces that simultaneously forge collective identity through synchronized rhythms, maintain participant energy, enable communication across large gatherings, and establish physical zones resistant to dispersal — effectively transforming urban soundscapes into territories of contestation that authorities struggle to control.

These musical gatherings and the playing of these instruments were often outlawed by colonial and authoritarian regimes, yet traditions such as those previously mentioned have not only survived but continue to thrive globally, now finding expression in academic institutions and formal ensembles. This transformation from instruments of resistance to vehicles of cultural preservation demonstrates how percussive traditions maintain their political potency even as they evolve, with other cultures similarly adopting found and repurposed instruments such as the steel drum as responses to societal oppression, ensuring that the legacy of rhythm as resistance endures across generations and geographical boundaries.

The trajectory of percussion instruments in Western art music reveals their transformation from martial instruments to vehicles of sophisticated political expression. In Handel's "Music for the Royal Fireworks," timpani and side drums functioned primarily as ceremonial markers, reflecting their martial spirit while celebrating through triumphant rhythmic declarations. Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture" advanced this martial association by incorporating actual cannons and expanded percussion sections to dramatize Russian resistance to Napoleonic invasion, elevating percussion from mere accompaniment to symbolic national defiance. The early twentieth century witnessed a pivotal

shift with Stravinsky's "L'Histoire du Soldat," which positioned the percussion role as an essential narrative element rather than a supportive texture, using percussion to articulate the chaos and fragmentation of "a devil" in post-World War I society. This expressive evolution culminated in Shostakovich's "Symphony No. 7" and "Symphony No. 11," where expanded percussion sections function as explicit metaphors for political oppression under Stalin's regime, with relentless snare drum ostinati and thunderous percussion climaxes representing both the mechanized horror of totalitarianism and the resilient human spirit struggling against it.

Globally, the sonic effects of percussion instruments have aided activists, composers, and individuals in the evocation of their messaging or movement. This communicative power of percussion continues to resonate in contemporary composition, where modern composers harness its direct emotional impact and cultural associations to articulate political perspectives and social critiques that resonate across diverse audience.

## REASONING AND METHODOLOGY

After viewing percussion databases including the PAS Diversity Alliance Diverse Composer Meta Database, Percussion Ensemble Works by Women-Identifying Composers, and the Boston Conservatory Percussion Database, I am striving to create an updated database of protest works for any percussive setting. To spearhead this project, I've compiled a list of selected works of varying political expression.

In my pursuit of these works, I've followed guidelines for selecting works for the annotated bibliography. All works need to meet certain criteria. First, the work must be written for some type of percussion instrumentation (e.g., solo, chamber). Second, the work must focus on or mention some type of expression or commentary on a social issue. Third, the work must be easily accessible and able to be performed today. There is great pedagogical opportunity for these works in various settings.

All 25 works are organized according to their instrumentation and listed alphabetically by the composer's last name. The difficulty of each work is modeled on the PAS levels of difficulty in their reviews of percussion repertoire. My goal for the following bibliography is to provide educators and students with a list of works that can hopefully inspire continued thought and research on social expression in percussive art.

## SELECTED ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

### 25 Protest Works for Percussion

#### PERCUSSION SOLO

##### 1. Feldman, Morton

###### "King of Denmark"

Edition Peters, 1964

This landmark multiple-percussion solo by Morton Feldman — a pivotal figure in 20th-century avant-garde composition — de-

serves recognition alongside the foundational works of early solo percussion repertoire. Featuring an open instrumentation with minimal sonic guidelines, this subtle percussion solo requires the performer to execute all music as softly as possible.

Inspired by the actions and daily rides on horseback through Copenhagen during World War II, King Christian X became a symbol of solidarity for the Danish people. "King of Denmark" serves as an excellent introduction to graphic notation and is particularly well-suited for undergraduate percussionists who are comfortable navigating large, multi-instrument setups.

Percussion Instrumentation: bell-like sounds, skin instruments, cymbal, gong, timpani, triangle, and open instrumentation.

Difficulty: IV+

##### 2. Macbride, David

###### "Staying the Course"

Intermedia Press, 2008

Inspired by Rzewski's "Coming Together," this work for solo percussion personifies the death of American soldiers in the Iraq War through literal means as each sixteenth note represents one death of a man, woman, or American soldier — totaling to 3,354. The composer asks that any additional notes may be added to represent the current number of deceased from this conflict.

"Staying the Course" is written for a multiple-percussion setup that includes five drums (low to high with tight heads that sound like gunshots), a low sound (e.g., free choice, different than drums), and a high sound (e.g., free choice, different than drums). A powerful tribute to the memory of those who were lost in the Iraq war, this multiple-percussion solo is an excellent recital work with a duration of around seven minutes.

Percussion Instrumentation: five drums and low and high sounds.

Difficulty: V

##### 3. Moore, Joe W. III

###### "Being Black"

Self-published, 2020

"Being Black" is a five-movement multiple-percussion solo. The piece was written as a memorial of the Black lives that have been lost to police brutality and other senseless killings. The rhythmic content, use of repetition, and all other musical choices were made based on the dates and details of several cases including Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, John Crawford, and George Floyd.

This work exhibits a variety of percussion techniques such as drums played with hands, multiple percussive implements, and coordination of the feet and hands to demonstrate feelings felt by victims of police brutality. "Being Black" would be a great piece for any advanced high school or undergraduate percussionist.

Percussion Instrumentation: kick drum, snare drum, concert tom, bongos, two mounted flowerpots, and one Thai gong.

Difficulty: III

#### 4. Pickering, Caleb

##### “An Assembly of Outrage”

Self-published, 2020

This solo for snare drum and fixed media portrays public outrage with modern-day media. The fixed media is comprised of audio excerpts of various news reports on gun violence and tragedy juxtaposed against clips of other dramatic news sources. This work serves as a commentary on the unfortunate state of our modern news reporting, politics, and major issues that divide our communities. It should be noted that this work contains real audio excerpts of news reports, some profanity, and may be disturbing to some listeners.

“An Assembly of Outrage” is around five minutes in length, features very difficult and dense rhythmic passages, and asks the performer to exhibit extended techniques such as one-handed rim rolls on the snare drum. This work puts the fixed media in the spotlight and, as a result, creates a sonic space that is both captivating and anxious.

Percussion Instrumentation: snare drum with fixed media.

Difficulty: IV

#### 5. Pickering, Caleb

##### “Non-Prophets”

Self-published, 2020

“Non-Prophets” is a solo for snare drum and fixed media that

critiques televangelism and the hypocrisy of profit-driven religious leaders. Much like “An Assembly of Outrage,” this work pairs audio clips of televangelists and other religious leaders with complex rhythms and snare drum techniques.

Technically, this solo may be more achievable than “An Assembly of Outrage,” but makes up for it in its extended duration of eight minutes. I’d recommend this work to an undergraduate or advanced high school percussionist.

Percussion Instrumentation: snare drum with fixed media.

Difficulty: IV

#### 6. Rzewski, Frederic

##### “Lost and Found”

Self-published, 1985

This solo theatrical piece, commissioned by percussionist Jan Williams, requires only a minimal setup of a chair and a table sturdy enough to support the performer’s weight. Directly inspired by a text from Lieutenant Marion Lee (Sandy) Kempner on the New York State Vietnam Memorial, the performer recites the quote verbatim while executing a series of actions, including slaps, gestures, emotional expressions, and ultimately, the dramatic throwing of the table and chair. Lasting 10 to 15 minutes, this solo offers the performer an opportunity to embody text and push beyond the traditional boundaries of classical performance.

Performing “Lost and Found” demands a high level of emotion-

The graphic is a chalkboard with a wooden frame. At the top left, the text "EDUCATIONAL DOWNLOADS!" is written in large, white, hand-drawn letters, with a musical note icon below it. To the right, there are two hand-drawn icons: a glowing lightbulb and an apple with a musical note below it. Below the main title, there are six small rectangular images arranged in two rows of three. The top row shows three portraits of individuals with their names and titles: Rochelle Mapes (Choreography for Drumline), Kevin Shah (A Perfect Marriage: Orchestration and Sound Design), and Paul Weber (Success with Basic Skills). The bottom row shows three images of a wooden floor with the titles "Warm Up", "Across the Floor", and "Technique Class". To the right of these images, there are two sections of text: "WGICON EDUCATION SERIES" with a short paragraph about getting a first-class seat to sessions, and "MOVEMENT SERIES" with a short paragraph about developing a movement program. At the bottom left, there is a logo for "WGI EDUCATION" with a graduation cap icon. At the bottom center, there is a box containing the URL "WGI.ORG/DOWNLOADS". At the bottom right, there are two pieces of white chalk.

al maturity and commitment. The piece asks the performer to be nearly or fully naked and involves intense physical actions including slapping, striking oneself, simulated vomiting, and, at one point, running into a wall. While contemporary interpretations have tended to soften these original performance elements, I believe they can be thoughtfully adapted to suit the specific context of a performance setting.

Percussion Instrumentation: body percussion, table (able to hold weight of the performer), and chair with performance space to throw said objects.

Difficulty: IV+

**7. Rzewski, Frederic**  
**“The Fall of the Empire”**  
**Self-published, 2007**

This half-hour work for the multiple-percussion and solo speaking percussionist features a prologue and seven short acts that all feature a unique spoken text and a different solo or multiple-percussion setup. These acts are all divided and represented by unique characters and text that the percussion soloist must bring to life. The texts in “The Fall of the Empire” are about the fall of a great empire as it disintegrates from within. From Rzewski’s point of view, they clearly allude to the breakdown of the current American democratic, capitalistic, political, and foreign relations systems (e.g., the war in Iraq).

Perfect for a graduate percussion recital, “The Fall of the Empire” offers the performer the opportunity to showcase musicianship and theatrical performance, beyond the drums themselves, at high levels.

Percussion Instrumentation: solo speaking percussionist and open multi-instrumentation chosen by the performer.

Difficulty: VI+

**8. Rzewski, Frederic**  
**“To the Earth”**  
**Self-published, 1985**

Another work commissioned by Jan Williams, this work for the solo speaking percussionist and flowerpots brings to light our imprint on this planet, or “mother earth.” The spoken text is taken directly from a 7th-century BCE Homeric hymn and is rhythmically spoken alongside the written flowerpot notation.

Compared to “Lost and Found,” this eight- to nine-minute piece is less confrontational in its performance demands. With a minimal setup and achievable rhythmic content, it is well-suited for advanced high school or undergraduate percussionists.

Percussion Instrumentation: solo speaking percussionist and four flowerpots that are struck with knitting needles or light sticks.

Difficulty: III+

**9. Spencer, Julie**  
**“DJ Dog Democracy”**  
**Norsk Musikforlag, 2019**

“DJ Dog Democracy” is a rhythmic and energetic composition for marimba that blends rock and funk musical styles with technically difficult passages. The title contains wordplay, with “Democracy” intentionally misspelled to critique political leaders who undermine democratic principles. The “DJ” in the title is a coded reference to Donald J. Trump.

This composition uniquely features two other arrangements: with optional drumset (duo), as well as a trio arrangement with drumset and bass. At a nine-minute duration, this work requires stamina and advanced control of large intervals with four mallets. I’d recommend this work to the high intermediate to advanced percussionist.

Percussion Instrumentation: solo marimba with optional drumset (duo) or optional drumset and bass (trio).

Difficulty: V

**10. Spencer, Julie**  
**“Everybody Talk About Freedom”**  
**Norsk Musikforlag, 2011**

This work for solo marimba with rap song is dedicated to the freedom of speech and sacrificial spirit of courageous men, women, and children. “Everybody Talk About Freedom” highlights the sonic capabilities of the marimba through extended techniques such as dead strokes and aluminum-foil preparation. At times, these textures blend with percussive vocalizations and text of the rap song. Optionally, this work can be performed as a duo if the performer does not wish to vocalize. An excellent challenge for the intermediate marimbist.

Percussion Instrumentation: solo marimba with optional rap song.

Difficulty: III+

**11. Steve, Tony**  
**“You Are My Agenda”**  
**Self-published, 2014**

This solo for multiple percussion, video, and soundscape is inspired by the state and evolution of government surveillance for the past 70 years. It also serves as a tribute to the composer’s father, a Greek-Italian immigrant shaped by the Great Depression and his World War II service in the Pacific (1942–1945). His father’s worldview was realistic rather than optimistic, and he frequently warned that “someone is always looking over your shoulder,” a perspective the composer now acknowledges as accurate.

Written for separate collections of pitches on an open instrumentation, this seven-minute work is an excellent addition for an undergraduate or graduate percussionist.

Percussion Instrumentation: solo multiple percussion utilizing open instrumentation with two pitch cells (e.g., D, E-flat, G, A-flat,

and C, C-sharp, F, F-sharp, G), film, and soundscape.

Difficulty: IV

## 12. Stout, Gordon

### “Elegy for Ukraine”

Full Circle Publications, 2022

This work for solo marimba is a direct tribute to the men and women of Ukraine. Stout has a previous work dedicated to the citizens of Ukraine, “Prayer for Ukraine,” but he felt that he had more to say about this conflict emotionally.

Much of this solo is made up of weaving eighth-note and triplet melodies with contrasting chorale-like moments creating a sonic space of reflection and sorrow. This work is not extremely difficult; however, with a duration of almost 13 minutes, I’d recommend this work to the intermediate-advanced marimbist.

Percussion Instrumentation: solo marimba.

Difficulty: IV

## PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

## 13. Barudin, Jeffrey

### “So We Go Forward”

C. Alan Publications, 2020

This ensemble for nine percussionists was inspired by a direct quote from Chukwuemeka (“Emeka”) Odumegwu Ojukwu, an important figure in the Nigerian/Biafran Civil War in the 1960s. The quote speaks on the brutality of war on the frontlines: “If we go forward, we die. If we go backward, we die. So we go forward.”

The composer blends classical and contemporary percussion instruments with unique sounds such as bullroarers and bird-clappers to create a vivid sonic space. At nine minutes in duration, this ensemble isn’t technically challenging, and with a conductor it is highly achievable for an advanced high school percussion ensemble.

Percussion Instrumentation (9 players): xylophone, marimba (4-octave), marimba (5-octave), shekere, shaker (×2), three bullroarers, 5 timpani, 3 toms, 3 congas, bongos, concert bass drum, impact drum, suspended cymbals (×3), tam tam, China cymbal, shell rattle, brush swish (×2), lion’s roar, bird flappers, sleighbells, cowbells, sandpaper blocks, and a two-pitch log drum.

Difficulty: III+

## 14. Erickson, Kevin

### “At the Dawn of War”

C. Alan Publications, 2005

Composition of this work for percussion ensemble began in 2000 and was intended to focus on the different episodes of soldiers throughout a day at war. After the attacks on September 11, 2001, the composer felt inspired to finish the work and change its dedication.

Written for 12 percussionists, this percussion orchestra combines classical percussion instruments with uncommon instruments such as a Garden Weasel and anchor chains. With an

11-minute duration, I’d recommend this work for the intermediate to advanced undergraduate percussion ensemble.

Percussion Instrumentation (12 players): glockenspiel, xylophone, 4-octave crotales, 2 vibraphones (3-octave), 2 marimbas (4.3-octave), 2 marimbas (5-octave), 4 timpani, doumbek, 2 snare drums, bass drum, 4 concert toms, tam tam, bongos, claves, Mark Tree, 2 sets of finger cymbals, splash cymbal, 4 suspended cymbals, crash cymbals, 3 Chinese cymbals, 2 brake drums, bell tree, chimes, anchor chains, metal scraper, triangle (×2), temple blocks, ribbon crasher, tambourine, ceramic wind chimes, and a Garden Weasel.

Difficulty: IV+

## 15. Husa, Karel

### “III. Interlude” from “Music for Prague”

Associated Music Publishers, 1968

This iconic piece for a concert band is a classic and impactful work still performed around the world. This work is written as a direct response to the 1968 Warsaw Pact Invasion of Czechoslovakia.

The third movement, “Interlude,” is entirely written for the percussion section – four players including the timpanist. This movement functions entirely as a percussion ensemble piece and is sonically mature and rhythmically complex. “Interlude” would be great to include on any advanced high school or undergraduate percussion concert program.

Percussion Instrumentation (4 players): timpani, snare drum, vibraphone, triangles (small, medium, large), suspended cymbals (small, medium, large), tam tams (small, medium, large), antique cymbals (small, medium, large), and xylophone.

Difficulty: IV+

## 16. Jarvis, David

### “Fanfare: Beijing 1989”

Southern Music Company, 1991

This percussion quintet is in tribute to the bravery and devastation of the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989. Through Jarvis’ intentional instrumentation, this work aims to replicate the fear and courage of the civilians and victims in 1989 Beijing.

This challenging composition stands as a masterful example of percussion literature that demands intermediate to advanced technical skills, offering an intensity and complexity that remains relevant and compelling for modern ensembles.

Percussion Instrumentation (5 players): bells, tenor drum, 3 kitchen pans, vibraphone, large woodblock, tam tam, chimes, bass drum, 3 suspended cymbals, woodblock, triangle, snare drum, 4.3-octave marimba, timpani, and xylophone.

Difficulty: IV+

## 17. Tenney, James

### “Pika-Don”

Frog Peak Music, 1991

This 14-minute percussion quartet features a four-track tape that reads text reflecting on the construction and effects of the nuclear bomb, specifically on Hiroshima.

The score is in a graphic notation that is musically divided by 15-second intervals. Percussionists are asked to perform an array of resonant percussion instruments at indeterminate times. They are also asked to start and stop the four-track, which I believe could be adapted to modern audio technology. The rhythmic material is dense at times and requires a high level of dynamic control and musical virtuosity for performative achievement. I'd recommend this ensemble to the advanced or graduate percussion ensemble.

Percussion Instrumentation (4 players): maracas, slapstick, triangle, sleighbells, claves, temple blocks, wind chimes (2 sets, one clay and one bamboo), tam tam, vibraphone (sometimes arco), a large pedal timpano (tuned first to low F, later to low D-flat), and a trapset with woodblock, small drum, tambourine, hi-hat, 2 suspended cymbals, snare drum, large tom-tom, and pedal bass drum, with four-track tape.

Difficulty: V-VI

## 18. Trevino, Ivan

### “Hands Up”

Self-published, 2015

This work for percussion ensemble was written in response to the 2014 protests in Ferguson, Missouri. The employment of hashtags, statements, and interviews from these protests occur throughout the work and highlight the feelings of protest felt during this time. Trevino focuses on the non-violent methods of protest, and this work serves as a direct example.

The work features standard percussion instruments as well as tools of protest including megaphones, amplified voices, and drumset.

Percussion Instrumentation: drumset soloist and percussion ensemble (10 players) including four percussionists who rhythmically vocalize text via amplification/megaphones, 2 marimbas, piano, xylophone, and crotales.

Difficulty: IV-V

## PERCUSSION DUO

## 19. Blackburn, Phillip

### “Over Again”

Self-published, 2020

“Over Again” is a ritualistic and theatrical soundscape that blends spoken word, percussion, and historical narrative to honor First Lieutenant Warren Ward, a World War II glider pilot. Reimagining a lost 1945 composition by experimental pioneer Harry Partch, the work fuses archival speech, fixed media, and live performance using repurposed military instruments through two

percussionists to create a powerful homage to heroism, memory, and music history.

With a duration of around 11 minutes, this percussion duo is an excellent opportunity to exhibit musicianship and performance. I'd recommend this work to upper undergraduate to graduate percussionists.

Percussion Instrumentation: bullroarers, ammo cans, bowed gongs, handrail bracket chimes, and bomb kato – two-channel fixed media.

Difficulty: V

## 20. Gottry, Josh

### “Thanks for Listening”

C. Alan Publications, 2020

This percussion duo emerged as Gottry's musical response to societal communication breakdowns. The piece expresses both personal commitment and public encouragement to practice intentional listening, especially to those with different perspectives and experiences. In a culture prioritizing self-expression and social-media declarations, the composer believes attentive listening proves more valuable than constant speaking.

As an intermediate and short percussion duo, this work offers younger percussionists an opportunity to perform meaningful music that is approachable on the marimba and vibraphone. “Thanks for Listening” only requires the performers to use two or four mallets, and it is perfect for the high school or younger undergraduate percussionist.

Percussion Instrumentation: marimba and vibraphone.

Difficulty: III

## 21. Lane, John and Otte, Allen

### “The Innocents”

2018

This project from renowned percussionists Alan Otte and John Lane was written and inspired by Taryn Simon's photographs of individuals who had been wrongfully convicted of violent crimes. This work's powerful focus on wrongful imprisonment is expressed through 17 tableau pieces that combine spoken text, improvisation, electronic soundscapes, and a large instrumentation of found and homemade objects.

“The Innocents” is a one-hour dramatic soundscape that would be great for two graduate-level percussionists to perform. Given the long duration, I would recommend programming a selection of the pieces, which would work great for both undergraduate and graduate percussionists. Currently unpublished, visit [www.the-innocents.com](http://www.the-innocents.com) for further information.

Percussion Instrumentation: found and homemade percussion instruments and objects, spoken text, and electronic soundscapes.

Difficulty: V-VI

## 22. Rzewski, Frederic

### “Bring them Home!”

Self-published, 2004

This piece for two pianists and two percussionists is Rzewski’s response to the Iraq War and serves as a tribute, through its title, to Code Pink, an organization originally formed by mothers of soldiers serving in Iraq.

Based on a 17th-century Irish anti-war song and a previous piano composition of Rzewski’s, “Bring them Home!” is a lengthy 35-minute concert work that is reflective in its instrumentation of Bartok’s “Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion.” The work asks the pianists and percussionists to perform a variety of extended techniques such as whistling, scraping with fingernails, and rhythmic stomping. This difficult work is effective in its orchestration and would be an excellent challenge for graduate or professional percussionists and pianists.

Percussion Instrumentation: two boxes, xylophone, foot stomping, whistling, flexatone, concert snare drum, marimba, vibraphone, glockenspiel, metal drum, bullroarer, concert bass drum, paper, and peace bell.

Difficulty: VI+

## 23. Schwartz, Eric

### “We the People”

Self-published, 2002

This duo for piano and percussion was written as a response to the 9/11 attacks in 2001.

Featuring a quasi-drumset instrumentation, this work blends funky piano grooves with unique percussion instruments such as a five-gallon bucket and conga. Technically balanced between the instruments, I would recommend this percussion duo for the undergraduate percussionist and pianist. Currently unavailable for public purchase, contact the composer for further information: [schwartzmuzak@yahoo.com](mailto:schwartzmuzak@yahoo.com).

Percussion Instrumentation: five-gallon bucket, hi-hat, cymbal, and conga.

Difficulty: III+

## OPEN INSTRUMENTATION

## 24. Andriessen, Louis

### “Workers Union”

Muziekgroep, 1975

This long standing, “minimalist,” work has long since captured the feelings and spirit of political turmoil in the 1970s.

With its open instrumentation, this work offers the performer, particularly percussionists, an opportunity to experiment with timbre and resonance in an environment of rhythmic unison. Not explicitly written for percussion, I believe this work has incredible historical significance that can be realized by a percussion ensemble. This work offers performers a unique challenge to “stay in step” by striving for perfect rhythmic unison, somewhat reflecting its political message of challenging the status quo.

“Workers Union” offers an advanced-level percussion ensemble an opportunity to perform 15 to 20 minutes of music that is highly effective while pushing the boundaries of performance art.

Open Instrumentation: any loud-sounding instruments.

Difficulty: V

## 25. Rzewski, Frederic

### “Coming Together”

Self-published, 1972

Rzewski’s voice of expression is championed in this work for eight to ten instrumentalists and vocalist (sung or not sung). At a duration of 25 to 30 minutes, this work offers performers timbral, technical, and expressive challenges throughout. “Coming Together” consists of two parts. The first part only notates the bass line, which is realized by one or two performers, while the second notates the melody. Throughout the work, a multitude of improvisational directions correspond to rehearsal letters, guiding the rest of the performers’ interpretation. In a percussion ensemble setting, I would suggest a combination of resonant melodic sounds such as marimba, vibraphone, glockenspiel, metal pipes, piano, or crotales. Perfect for the intermediate to advanced collegiate percussion ensemble, this work offers the performer a chance to perform impactful contemporary music.

Open Instrumentation: vocalist and eight to ten instrumentalists.

Difficulty: VI

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**Hunter Gross** is a member of the Heartland Marimba Quartet (HMQ) and maintains an active performance and touring schedule while pursuing doctoral studies at the University of North Texas. Gross has performed internationally, including a tour with the World Percussion Group, featuring showcase concerts at the Royal College of Music in London and Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. Gross's performance accolades include First Place in the Keyboard Division of the 2020 PASIC Solo Competition. He has appeared on recent recordings including *Digital Dances: Marimba Music of Marco Schirripa* (2023) with the Heartland Marimba Quartet and Von Hansen's debut album *Mortal Coil* (2025).

His commitment to expanding percussion repertoire continues through commissions with contemporary composers including Brian Mark, Molly Joyce, and Steven Snowden. With the Heartland Marimba Quartet, he has performed at PASIC, recorded at Kent State University, and presented concerts across the United States, Canada, and China. Gross has presented master classes across the United States and internationally on topics ranging from French rudimental drumming to keyboard technique and entrepreneurship. Prior to his doctoral studies, he served as Adjunct Professor of Percussion and Music Education at East Central University in Ada, Oklahoma. Gross holds degrees from the University of North Florida, University of Oklahoma, and has been published in the PAS's *Rhythm! Scene*.

# 2025 PAS Composition Competition

**T**he category for the 2025 PAS Composition Competition was Percussion Trio. Here are reviews of the winners and honorable mentions.

## FIRST PRIZE

**San-Lou Wei**

### “Moon Blocks: A Divination Ritual”

This work for percussion trio is in two movements. It is scored for three players surrounding a 32- or 29-inch timpani. Players 1 and 3 both require a tuned gong, and player 2 requires a suspended cymbal prepared with aluminum foil. Two trap tables contain the rest of the instruments shared by the players, including traditional Chinese divination blocks, tambourine, ratchet, singing bowls, maracas, triangle, small plastic pipe, hand fan, can filled with BBs, Flexatone, stone and coaster, keys, pins, foil, and a variety of implements. The score largely relies on



graphic notation, with glyphs indicating instrument selection, and a variety of shapes to indicate timpani glissandi, maraca shakes, and so on.

The first movement, “Laughing Block,” opens with timeline-style notation, where the players must follow the entire score to navigate interplay between the three parts. It progresses to a more rhythmic section, where players 1 and 3 weave together rhythms to create a single line.

The second movement, “Sacred Block,” is similar in structure to the first movement, opening with a sparse timeline of events. This soon gives way to a rhythmic section, where all three players trade rhythms to create a composite line. Much of this movement explores the various timbres achieved from extended techniques on one timpani: placing a ringing triangle on the timpani head, rubbing the head of the timpani with a Superball mallet, and scratching the timpani head with a mallet.

“Moon Blocks: A Divination Ritual” can serve as an introduction to graphic notation for undergraduate students, as no advanced techniques are required, and the interplay between parts presents an opportunity to work on chamber skills. In the context of a noisy percussion ensemble concert, it could provide the audience and performers a much needed quiet, meditative break. —Ben Charles

**San-Lou Wei** is a Taiwanese percussionist currently pursuing the Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (CCM).

She earned her Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Taipei in 2022 and her Master of Music degree from CCM in 2024. She has appeared as a concerto soloist with the CCM Wind Symphony and as a timpanist in *30 Years of Stephen Flaherty* at Carnegie Hall. She has also performed with Taiwan’s National Symphony Orchestra. Wei is also active in contemporary percussion composition. Her work reflects a continual search for new percussive colors and innovative approaches to sound production. For more info, visit [www.sanlouwei.com](http://www.sanlouwei.com).

## SECOND PRIZE

**John Zachary Miller**

### “Contra Omnes”

This advanced work for percussion trio is scored for two marimba players and multiple percussion. Each marimbist also plays a mounted tamborim, and the multiple percussion part contains a pair of



bongos, three congas, foot cabasa, small shaker, glockenspiel, and cajon. The score provides suggestions on mallet selection and setup, with the composer indicating that these are only recommendations.

The piece opens with fast marimba lines punctuated by the groovy multiple percussion part. Both marimba players must have advanced technique to tackle the runs, octaves, and large jumps required in the parts. All three players must have a mastery of mixed time signatures, as the piece rapidly moves through odd meters.

The middle section is more sparse, with the marimbists performing hocketed lines on the mounted tambourims while maintaining melodic content on the marimbas. The multiple percussion part is also less dense, primarily playing a groove on the shaker.

The piece maintains its sparse character, with the two marimba players returning to marimba only, and the multiple percussionist playing a few passages on glockenspiel. After this, the opening aggressive character of the piece returns and progresses to a fiery ending.

“Contra Omnes” would make an exciting addition to an advanced recital or percussion ensemble concert. It could serve as a captivating opener or thrilling closer for a concert. Despite two five-octave marimbas, the equipment demands are highly accessible for rehearsal or concert setup. —Ben Charles

**John Zachary Miller** is Assistant Percussion Director for Tomball High School in Tomball, Texas. He completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Kentucky and his graduate studies at the University of North Florida. Zach has performed at Carnegie Hall and with the Bang on A Can All-Stars, won the Kappa Kappa Psi Biennial Solo Competition and Great Plains International Marimba Competition Composition Contest, and performed with his flute and percussion duo at numerous festivals. His pieces have been performed abroad and by universities across the United States. He has

recently had a piece premiered by the Escape Ten Duo.

## HONORABLE MENTIONS

### Samuel Thompson

#### “Concret(ex) Jungles”

“Concret(ex) Jungles” is a 6½-minute piece that exponentially expands on the concept of urban sprawl through use of a percussion trio. The medium-advanced ensemble employs a plethora of tintinnabulation surrounding an ensemble setup anchored by a vibraphone, a five-octave marimba, and a multiple percussion setup. The various sounds — including glass bottles, tuned metal pipes, and resonant woods — serves as a source of rhythmic drive throughout the work and provides a conceptual element of expanding industry.

The piece unfolds in three sections. The first opens with a lyrical quasi-cadenza played by the vibraphone player with the other two players bowing and pitch bending the upper octave of the same vibraphone. This foreboding material effectively sets the emotional tone and harmonic language throughout the rest of the piece.

The following section represents a further and accelerated descent into industrialization through use of the aforementioned metallic sounds combined with the harmonic language. This section eventually spirals out of control with creative and effective interplay between

the keyboards and auxiliary percussion, which demands an advanced musical responsibility for each player while still being moderately accessible and engaging. As the composer states in the program notes, “The virtuosic, technical, and ever-changing nature of the keyboard writing evokes relentless and reckless momentum, similar to that of irreversible and irresponsible urban development.”

The piece ends with a convincing callback to the opening material and mood: foreboding and introspectively ominous, and it leaves the listener asking, “How much is too much?” —Mat Campbell

**Samuel Thompson** is a composer, percussionist, and music educator from the greater Chicago area, currently pursuing a bachelor’s degree in Music Composition at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. Thompson’s music blends contemporary jazz influenced harmonic practices, complex rhythmic language, and common explorations of tonal ambiguity. His experience as a percussionist shapes his compositional voice, particularly in his approach to texture and structural design. Notable performers of Thompson’s work include Blue Door Percussion, the Indiana University Percussion Ensemble, and Munster High School Choirs. In 2025, Thompson won the IMTA Opus Composition Competition with his found percussion quartet Tailgate Graveyard. For more info, contact Thompson through Instagram [@sthomps\\_music](#), or email him at [sam.clifford.thompson@gmail.com](mailto:sam.clifford.thompson@gmail.com).



### Yutong Xie

#### “Rendered•water”

This four-minute percussion trio incorporates fixed media to create an immersive sound world depicting the concept of water erosion. The percussion trio uses a combination of vibraphone, five-octave marimba, and a multi-percussion setup of glockenspiel, cabasa, snare drum, and slapstick.

An electronic track serves as a fourth player and uses such sounds as a synth, underwater acoustic samplings, rever-

beration and noise, particle effects, and hi-hat and kick drum. The amalgamation of the acoustic and electronic instruments creates a sound world that feels cohesive through use of clever and effective orchestration. The notation of the electronic part successfully incorporates both traditional and graphic notation on the score.

The piece is in two sections: “The Murmur of the River” (slow) and “The Dance of the Spirit in the Stone” (fast). The murmur is exactly that – a section that starts with underwater acoustic sampling and synth pads that color the musical material in the bowed vibraphone, rolled marimba, and glockenspiel parts. The second section, which starts about halfway through the piece, is effective in its use of ostinati in the marimba, cabasa, and electronic parts, and it creates a driving vehicle for the vibraphone player to bring out melodic material.

For nearly the rest of the piece, the driving rhythms in the auxiliary percussion part and fixed media provide a bed for fun interplay between the vibraphone and marimba parts. The entire effect is loosely inspired by drum’n’bass music, but it feels intuitive and organic. This activity lasts for a significant part of this section, up until a short codetta to close out the piece.

“Rendered•water” would fit exceptionally well in a percussion ensemble concert or recital in between either solo

or large ensemble works. Note that this piece would be performed most successfully with a click track for the players and considerations should be made for the electronic implementations and concert programming. —Mat Campbell

**Yutong Xie** is majoring in Music Design and Production at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. Xie’s compositions have won awards at home and abroad. “Wedge of Yin and Yang” for Chinese percussion and electronic music won the second prize in the 11th International Music Competition in Stockholm, Sweden in 2024; her composition “Chasing light and shadow in the mountains and waters” for orchestras, Chinese traditional musical instruments, and electronic music won the third prize in the Original Group of the 2024 IEMC International Electronic Music Competition (Spatial Audio Category), and was selected as the official designated track for the Remix Category of this event in 2025. Yutong Xie also participates in performances as a percussionist and pianist in symphony orchestras and choirs.

#### **Jason Sivert**

##### **“All(oy)”**

“All(oy)” presents the listener with a dizzying but engaging tapestry of music for tenor, double second, and triple guitar steel pans over the course of 4½ minutes. The piece largely exists in one section of

equal parts hocketed arpeggios, funky bass lines, and relentless (but sensible) time-signature changes. The harmonic material captures the listener and provides a worthy invitation from the opening statement. The variations throughout the work provide nominal contrast but are just different enough that the listener feels a slight but discernible progression of musical ideas from start to finish. The final chord serves as a brilliant and convincing way for the audience to know the piece has come to a close.

This piece requires players who are proficient in steel pan performance and advanced players who can fulfill individual musical responsibilities with mental stamina at an advanced level. (This comment is more about the relentless lines rather than the long duration of the piece.) Additionally, consideration should be given to musical moments where two players break off to play complementary parts (such as hocketed material) while the other plays a contrasting musical line.

This combination of individual and duet-type musical moments calls for an advanced trio of players who can perform demanding and quickly changing musical roles at a successful level. The overall effect of the piece lends itself as an apt opener or encore to a solo or chamber percussion recital. —Mat Campbell

**Jason Sivert** is a steelpan performer, composer, arranger, and music educator based in Wheeling, West Virginia. He holds a master’s degree in Music Performance from Appalachian State University and was first-place winner of the 2024 International Steelpan Bursary competition. He was Operations & Education Coordinator for the Wheeling Symphony Orchestra from 2023–26. Sivert performs internationally as a soloist and with professional ensembles, sharing his original works and leading outreach clinics in schools and community settings. His work blends artistic excellence with thoughtful planning to connect people to music both on and off the stage. **PN**



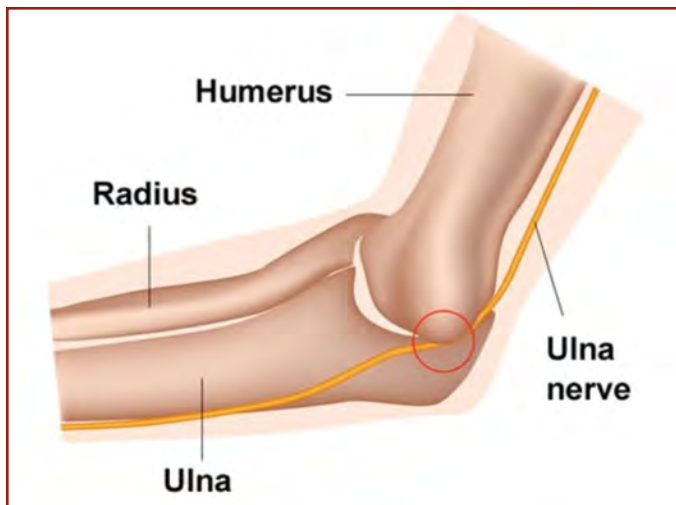
# Hand Intrinsic: Part 2

## Understanding the musculature of the hand

By Dr. Laurel Black

In part one of “Hand Intrinsic” we discussed the anatomy involved on the thumb (radial) side of the hand and innervated by the median nerve. Now, we will discuss the pinky (ulnar) side, innervated by the ulnar nerve. The ulnar nerve arises from the C8 and T1 spinal segments at the base of the neck and travels down the length of the arm into the hand. It lives superficially in the cubital tunnel at the inside of the elbow and is compressed anytime you “hit your funny bone.”

Image 1: Ulnar nerve path



### HYPOTHENAR EMINENCE

The hypothenar eminence is the muscular grouping at the base of the little finger extending to the ulnar edge of the palm. It is composed of three muscles: abductor digiti minimi, flexor digiti minimi brevis, and opponens digiti minimi.

#### Abductor digiti minimi

It is easy to feel the abductor digiti minimi working if you reach your fingers out as far away from each other as you can, like you’re playing an octave on a piano. The fleshy bump you feel on the ulnar edge of the palm is the muscle belly of the ab-

ductor digiti minimi. Its primary function is to move the fifth finger outwards away from the fourth finger. If you’ve ever played a marimba piece with many octaves in the left hand, then you have definitely felt this muscle working!

It extends from the pisiform bone and the tendon of the flexor carpi ulnaris to the base of the proximal phalanx of the fifth

Image 2: Left palm featuring hypothenar eminence

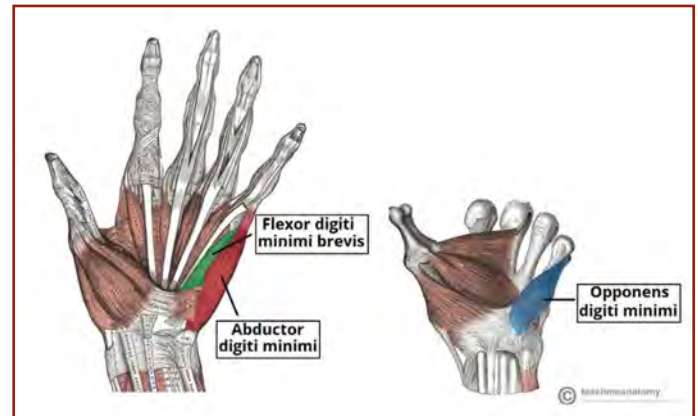
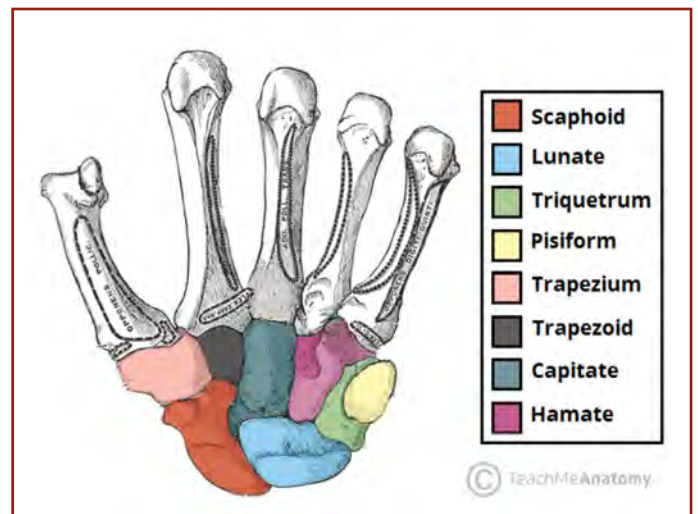


Image 3: Carpal bones (left-palm view)



finger. It follows the same direction as the fifth metacarpal, seen here coming off the distal end of the hamate.

As shown in the image, a metacarpal corresponds to each finger. You can easily feel these bones in the palm and back of the hand. Tendons also run along the metacarpals before attaching to bones in the fingers.

### Flexor digiti minimi brevis

The flexor digiti minimi brevis is active when we curl our fifth finger toward the palm, and is palpable along the same line as the fifth metacarpal. It originates at the hook of hamate (the dark purple boot shape in Image 3) and the transverse carpal ligament, extending to the first phalanx of the fifth finger at the other end. It flexes only the first third of the fifth finger; a different muscle, the flexor digiti minimi longus, flexes the more distal two-thirds, and is a longer muscle that attaches all the way at the end of the finger. Hence the names brevis and longus! Note: flexor digiti minimi longus originates in the forearm and is not intrinsic to the hand.

### Opponens digiti minimi

The opponens digiti minimi lies beneath the other muscles of the hypothenar eminence and is more difficult to palpate through the skin. It attaches at the hook of hamate and the transverse carpal ligament on one end, and the outer distal border of the fifth metacarpal on the other.

The function of this muscle is most clear when touching the tips of the thumb and pinky finger together. Similarly, this muscle works to form a hollow palm shape as used in hand drumming. If you've ever wielded an axe or a Mahler hammer, then your opponens digiti minimi has worked hard for you to keep a strong grip.

## FASCIA AND CONTRACTURES

### Palmar aponeurosis and Dupuytren contracture

This triangular fascia protects and contracts according to the demands we place on our hands. Typically, it maintains a level of mobility unique to the individual, with some of us being able to bend fingers backwards frightfully far and others hardly able to extend their fingers backward at all. The fascia can lose its mobility and form deep, rigid cords, which cause contractures in the hand, known as Dupuytren contracture.

Dupuytren contracture occurs when the tight cords force fingers into a bent position, most commonly affecting the ring and pinky fingers. It is most common in Caucasian men over the age of 50 who smoke and live with diabetes, though it can happen to anyone. Treatment ranges from a conservative approach with physical therapy, to injections, to surgery. If you think you may be developing knots in your palm, it is worth getting checked out by a Certified Hand Therapist or orthopaedic doctor, as conservative treatment is most effective early on!

Note: If you are wondering if the palmar aponeurosis is like the plantar fascia of the foot, the answer is yes! And if you have ever had plantar fasciitis, you know how painful it can be. Both conditions can be reasonably prevented with stretching and tendon glide interventions. (And shoes that aren't too small!)

Image 4: Dupuytren contracture



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## OTHER MUSCULATURE

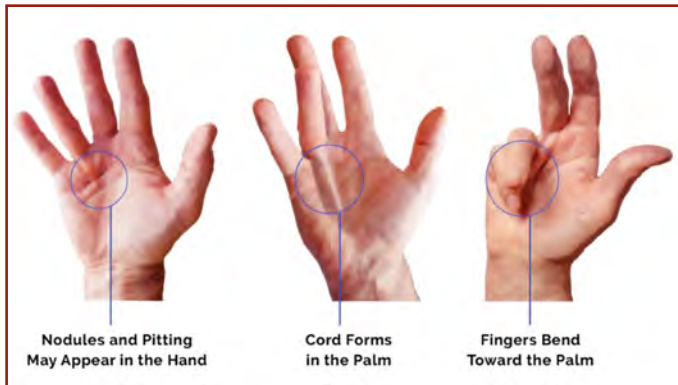
### Palmaris brevis (97% of the population)

There is a fourth muscle at the hypothenar eminence called palmaris brevis, though it is estimated that about 3% of the population are missing it. Anatomy experts argue about whether the palmaris brevis is part of the hypothenar eminence, but regardless, it qualifies as one of our hand intrinsic muscles. It is the most superficial muscle in the region and, accordingly, attaches to soft tissue structures rather than bones in the hand. It lies superficial to the hypothenar eminence musculature and deep to the skin of the palm.

Palmaris brevis attaches to the palmar aponeurosis (thick, triangular, fibrous tissue in the palm), transverse carpal ligament, and deep layers of dermis at the hypothenar eminence. It assists with grip strength as it tightens the palmar aponeurosis to form a hollow grip around an object.

Palmaris brevis is an involuntary muscle, meaning that for the 97% of us who have it, we cannot control its contraction. It either assists with grip strength or it doesn't. In rare cases, it can

*Image 5: Palmaris brevis (right-palm view) wrapping around abductor digiti minimi*



*Image 6: Adductor pollicis (right-palm view)*

*Image 7: Lumbricals (right-palm view)*



go into spasm in a condition known as Palmaris Brevis Spasm Syndrome, resulting in painful dimpling of the edge of the hypothenar eminence.

### Adductor pollicis

The adductor pollicis is the outlier muscle of this article, as it is innervated by the ulnar nerve but controls movement of the thumb, which is on the radial side of the hand. It lies deep to the thenar eminence but is not considered part of it.

Adductor pollicis consists of two heads that originate from the third metacarpal and capitate respectively, then insert on the proximal phalanx of the thumb. The function of this muscle is to move the base of the thumb towards the center of the palm at the carpometacarpal joint. For percussionists, this muscle is active anytime you create a fulcrum with sticks or mallets in your hand.

### Lumbricals - Heads 3 and 4

The lumbricals are very small muscles located in the palm. They contribute to the movement of the fingers, but they are weak movers because they do not attach to bone. Lumbricals facilitate 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.

Lumbrical heads 3 and 4, classified as bipennate muscles, are twice as wide as heads 1 and 2, as shown in Image 7. Heads 3 and 4 originate at tendons of the flexor digitorum profundus in the palm and insert at the extensor expansion in the fourth and fifth fingers. Their function is to flex the base of the fingers toward the palm while keeping the fingers themselves straight. Injuries are not common, but there is a high occurrence of injury among rock climbers.

### Interossei

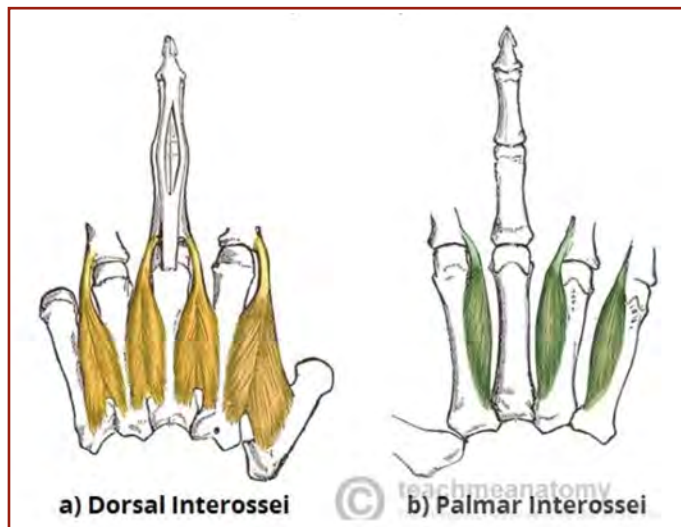
Interossei muscles exist on both the palm and the back of the hand, known as palmar and dorsal interossei, respectively.

The three palmar interossei are unipennate, attach to a metacarpal, and extend to the proximal phalanx of the second, fourth, and fifth fingers. They function to adduct the fingers, meaning to move them towards one another while keeping them straight. The dorsal interossei are bipennate, attach to a metacarpal, and extend to the bases of the proximal phalanx of fingers two through five. At the second and third fingers, the dorsal interossei attach to the radial side of the phalanx, while at fingers four and five, they attach to the ulnar side. They function to abduct the fingers away from each other while assisting with finger flexion and extension in different ways.

The interossei are constantly active in Stevens, Burton, and Traditional four-mallet grips. Every change of interval requires involvement of the interossei. It is a good thing they are oxidative muscles meant for endurance use!

If you are a *Star Trek* fan, you may enjoy knowing that the

Image 8: Interossei (left-hand view)



interossei facilitate the Vulcan salute performed many times by Mr. Spock.

Live long. Be healthy. Play long. And prosper.

### FURTHER READING IN *PERCUSSIVE NOTES*

*“Hand Intrinsic: Understanding the musculature of the hand,”* by Dr. Laurel Black. April 2026. Volume 64, No. 2

*“Forearm, Wrist, and Hand Pain,”* by Dr. Stephen Workman. September 2017. Volume 55, No. 4

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

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

Image 9: Mr. Spock



Dr. Laurel Black, PT, DPT, Cert-VT is a licensed physical therapist and faculty member for the national South College Doctor of Physical Therapy program. 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. DPT: South College; MM: The Boston Conservatory; BM: The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She serves as Editor for the Health & Wellness column of *Percussive Notes* and previously served on the PAS H&W Committee.

## Spotlight: Percussionists Who Are Women Stories of Success and Overcoming Challenges

# Mackenna Tolfa

From an interview with Julie Spencer

In 2017 I was in high school, going through a really rough time my senior year. I was on the verge of not going into music at all, only weeks away from my college auditions. I wanted to give up because I didn't believe in myself. My parents have always been the two biggest cheerleaders for me growing up, always encouraging me to follow my dreams. My father, in a last effort, had this random idea to write a letter to the Broadway show *Hamilton* in its residency in Chicago. He wrote, "My daughter's really interested in going into music.

She's kind of hit a wall and isn't sure if she's going to keep going. Do you have any words of wisdom for her?"

His letter opened a door we never saw coming: an invitation from the Music Director of the show, Colin Welford. He had held the keyboard chair as well as conducting and directing things. I got to "pit sit" with him, have a backstage tour, meet the actors, and ask him all the questions I wanted! I remember walking out and thinking, "Wow! I really want to do this! In fact, I need to do this for a career!" It was an amazing experience that I took with me into college.

I studied with Fernando Meza at the University of Minnesota. I was very interested in his involvement with *The Lion King* as one of the original percussionists of Disney's Broadway production and original-cast recording. I really wanted to do pit orchestra work, and what he had accomplished was so great that I wanted to learn from him. During my freshman year, the very first concert I ever did at the university was a combined concert with visiting percussion students from the University of Costa Rica. I fell in love with the students and their music almost immediately.

I remember feeling an immense amount of ignorance. It felt like there's so much world out there that I'd never seen; I started searching for it through other experiences. I had an amazing two weeks with them and learned how to salsa. We played music until the wee hours of the morning and just spent time together. The experience really stuck with me. After that, I fell in love with a show on Broadway that reminded me of that interaction with them. It was called *The Band's Visit* — a Tony-winning production based on a film about an Egyptian music ensemble visiting an isolated desert community in Israel.

The entire premise was about this small little town where these two countries, under immense political pressure at the time, were coming together, using music to bond. Two of the characters fall in love. It really reminded me of my experience with the UCA students in the fact that music was the glue of the



relationship that I built with those students. With a lot of them, we didn't speak the same language, but it didn't matter.

I wanted to know as much about *The Band's Visit* as I possibly could. I was trying to sink my teeth into it a little bit. That's when I revisited my dad's idea to write to the show. So I wrote to the actual Broadway show in New York City. I found the address on the Broadway website and wrote a handwritten letter addressed to their drum chair, Phil Mayer, saying, "I'm a student. I really want to learn more about what you do. I want to learn about the show." And the same thing happened with *The Band's Visit* as with *Hamilton*. Phil emailed me back and invited me to pit-sit.

I followed through, went to New York and pit-sat with Phil Mayer. With the help of Fernando, I also did some networking with *Lion King*, too, and pit-sat with Rolando Morales-Matos, one of the percussionists. After New York, Phil and I kept up with each other on the internet. He followed posts I was putting out, and he saw virtual projects I was doing with the university students in Costa Rica during Covid.

About three years later, I was on vacation in southern Spain, just as things were beginning to open up again after several years of pandemic. Phil messaged me on Facebook: "I have a buddy here who works for *Blue Man Group*, and they're looking to open a new world tour with a featured female character. They're looking for recommendations. I'd like to put you forward for it, if you would like." I was like, "Wow, I never played for him in person!" So he took a huge chance on me and for his reputation as well. I thought, "I have to give this my best shot!" because he was personally recommending me as a good candidate.

The opportunity for me to make a video for a virtual audition, on the same day as the invitation, was because of Covid. It was honestly a gift out of a horrible situation. The music director and drummer sent a video tape, and I was given about a six-hour window to send them my finished audition video.

When Phil contacted me in Spain, I was in a nature reserve, with very small towns and not great internet connection. I had nothing; I didn't even have sticks. I looked up the closest drum shop, drove three hours through desert country, and remember very vividly that that day was record-breaking heat, about 115 degrees fahrenheit. This drum shop had no AC. It was a dire drumset situation, with some broken bottom heads. But it was a drumset, and it still worked! So I was in a small back room of the shop, drenched in sweat, trying to record this video for *Blue Man*.

I wouldn't have gotten through that first audition without the help of Dave Anania. Dave is a former Fernando student I met when Fernando invited him to give a virtual session as a visiting artist at the university during Covid. Dave was a *Blue Man* drummer in Berlin for 18 years, up until 2022. He was a direct point of contact during that audition process to ask questions. I told him the situation, and even though he was super busy, he

said, "Yeah, give me a call. I'll help you out through this." It was amazing. I FaceTimed him in Berlin from Spain, and he watched what I was doing and gave me feedback before I sent in the video. He has been a tremendous mentor.

It's such a right place, right time kind of thing: finding a drum shop in that remote region; that the shop was open during those specific few hours; that there was space to make the video; that it was possible to reach Dave, and that he had time. So many pieces fit together to make it all happen.

I sent in the video and heard back pretty quickly that I'd advanced to the next round. Round two was an interview, and I told my audition story, because it was so crazy. They needed to hear what had had to happen in order for that video to get done, because it wasn't easy! It was really nice to start getting to know people in the company on a personal level through the interview process. I realized how invested *Blue Man* is in their people, besides who they are as professionals. They want to make sure that you're also a good fit for the company dynamic. I advanced to the final round after the interview. It started feeling easier because of being comfortable with the people, which brought down the nerves a bit.

The last round of callbacks was in October of 2021. I and ten other candidates were flown in for live auditions in a two-day process. Each of us had an hour-long audition in a room with six people. I did a lot of what I was doing in the first round. However, this time I was learning different sections of the show that eventually get strung together. You shift through them depending on what's happening on stage. By the end of that audition the goal was to go through one of the hardest pieces with actual blocking — hitting your mark on the stage for positions determined by the director, synchronized with something else going on — playing with *Blue Man* in real time. It was so much fun! I felt like, "When am I ever going to get to do this again?!" A lot of the people in that room were not only *Blue Man* directors, but they had been with *Blue Man* from the early days of its history, which began in 1987. It was an honor just getting to play and talk with them.

The goal I set for myself that day was to enjoy it and not focus so much on getting the job. The success for me was what I was going to get out of that amazing audition experience! I thought, "I want to walk out of this and feel that, 1. I've learned something, and 2. that I've lived every moment — been present for and experienced and enjoyed every moment." I feel like that almost placebo affected me a little bit into having zero nerves for the audition!

After the second callback, I got a call. I was sitting near the Brooklyn Bridge and they told me I got the job. I was completely beside myself in disbelief. I went into that entire process just embracing that this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I treated it like that, and was willing to do crazy things that I had never done before, trying things out, and being vulnerable with these people. Right after I got the job was almost a moment of dread, thinking, "Oh my God, I'm about to represent this absolutely amazing company that has such a high standard for drumming!" I had huge shoes to fill,

and I was going to be the first person to do this role: the Rock Star. It was a lot of pressure and I hadn't even finished my final year of school before I left on the first tour. I was simultaneously finishing my degree, doing work remotely, while opening the show on tour with *Blue Man*!

One of my favorite things about working with this group is after every single show, every day, the departments get together, performers included, and we give notes to each other. You have to learn how to communicate well, how to take criticism, how to collaborate. It's a bit of a dance, too. When you first start, you meet people and have to figure out how people best receive information.

I can't speak highly enough about company culture at *Blue Man*. It's predominantly still a male company in the performer side of things, but there are a lot of women in high leadership roles. To have created a performance culture like this is so cool, where you have the opportunity to have moments where people are talking with one another and able to give criticism in a way that does not ever feel demoralizing or patronizing. Of course, we all make mistakes and say things in a way that we don't mean, or realize afterward we could've said differently. But it's an environment where, when that happens, people take responsibility for it. And we feel like, "Let's figure out how to make this show the absolute best that it can be every day!"

This is what the whole world needs right now, this kind of interaction, with a willingness to see criticism in the context of being a team. It's a skill that many people don't have the chance to learn. I also think it's good because of the purpose of this article: to talk about how important it is as a young person, and a woman, going into this career, learning to have those interactions with mostly men in the room.

Working with *Blue Man* truly inspires me. I was on tour with them for almost three years, including the time training, starting in October 2021. We opened at the top of 2022 in Japan and closed November 2024 in Paris. They have set the bar really high going forward for me of what I am willing to accept and not accept, in professional work environments, which has been very helpful.

After that *Blue Man* World Tour I stepped away from *Blue Man* and was fortunate to have two back-to-back national Broadway tours with *Mean Girls* and *The Book of Mormon*. Finally fulfilling that dream was amazing! It's very humbling, too, especially now because the drums are almost completely remote — played in a separate space with a video monitor and headphones, instead of in the pit with an orchestra in front of the stage. It can feel very isolating. It's a much different feeling than being on stage, but I loved it!

My experience with *Blue Man* has taught me so much about how it feels to be nurtured and valued. I realize how incredibly lucky I've been to have *Blue Man* be the trend-setter of my career. I've been able to use that experience in times where I have been underestimated, patronized, and belittled. I'm sure many players have experienced those things. Unfortunately, that does exist, but so does the other side of things as well, with community, collaboration, and communication! You are not alone!

Saying "No, thank you!" to opportunities that arise that may ask you to put yourself down for a gig is no small feat. I've had to do it. I'm sure there are so many people out there who can relate. Your time is precious and better yet, YOU are precious! You bring something to this world that no one else will ever be able to replicate. I am a firm believer that being mistreated on the outset of a gig will only be a road to dimming the heartbeat of what we carry into each job as artists — our passion for it. Passion doesn't have a resume attached to it and is more important than anything. It's what gets our foot into the door of the music industry; it represents our dedication to our craft, the hours we spend practicing, a small piece of who we are. It's what motivates change, community, and what inspires others. Protect it at all costs and trust me: "burning that bridge" will be SO worth it. If you know something isn't sitting well with you, you are not making a bad decision by turning it down. Trust your gut.

Respect for people's artistry, for their time, what they bring to the table, despite whatever label might or might not be next to their name, means a lot. I came into this work with a huge job and no experience! And I was never treated less, like the underdog. *Blue Man* respected what I had to offer, and it didn't have anything to do with, "Oh, look, she's been working professionally for 15 years." I walked in, getting a lot of respect that I hadn't earned by years of professional experience. I felt really nurtured. I think if I had been treated any differently than that, I might not have had the same confidence to become the Rock Star in the show the way I did.

I would wish everybody that kind of experience before they have a resume to prove it, because I wouldn't be here without it. The first chunk of my professional career I've been surrounded and supported by absolutely stellar, male leadership, teachers, directors, and mentors. People trusting my abilities, respecting and believing in me. It has been really special.

The thing I've struggled with for a lot of my life is trying to not be afraid to let people see me fully. This character, named the Rock Star, makes me feel safe in this environment to do that. What I've been able to see as a result of that, because of my willingness to be more open, has been people, "little me's!" in the audience, feeling inspired by that show and that character. I feel extremely lucky to be able to share that with them every day. I struggled for so long in school with performance anxiety. The Rock Star has brought something out of me that I didn't know I had, in a very healing way. Finding inner strength and being willing to share that with people has been one of the most beautiful parts of the entire process. And having a platform as a woman to do that and be empowered by it, is amazing. I feel almost like a warrior every time I go on stage!

Preparing for my second *Blue Man* tour (North American Tour 2026), I wanted to rebrand my approach to the Rock Star character and bring the first few years of my experience into my portrayal of her. Coming back into this show, this was my goal-setting for the tour. I wrote a character analysis, who the Rock Star is to me, personally, and I'd like to share it here for the first time.

"I hope instead of leaving her on stage, I can take her to every space in my life and fill a room with the joy she brings me. The Rock

Star I play is more than a representation of music. She carries the strength of *Blue Man* and she protects their innocence from the judgment of the world. She strives to pass on and empower all that are feeling lost or 'other'; her humanness allows her to see the other side of things. This time I want to focus outward and utilize the beauty of the room with hundreds or even thousands of different stories and make everyone feel their own strength through her. The Rock Star is the glue that binds our two universes together, blue men and human. The audience is able to relate because of her human-like appearance. The light she emits is her paint, her sticks, her paintbrush. Everything she does is intentional; every step, every note should be there with purpose. Her warrior-like appearance should inspire those around us to find the strength within themselves to know anything and all is possible. For every person in the theater that has felt alone, abandoned, or mistreated, I dedicate this tour to them."

I think, for me, she also is a representation of my story as a queer person in addition to being a woman. I grew up feeling very afraid to be myself. It means a lot to me doing this job. I can't describe how grateful I am, and for people taking that chance on me and seeing something that for a really long time I couldn't see within myself. I wouldn't be here without everybody that I've ever looked up to.

For a long time, I've been trying to find my footing as a queer person who, full disclosure, believed very different things growing up. Sometimes that has meant walking through moments completely alone. With *Blue Man* and being so far away from home for the first time, I was in a bit of survival mode at first, trying to figure out who I was outside of my experiences growing up. So much of the character represents what that discovery was for me. I'm so fortunate. It means so much to me to do this.

Making discoveries about myself, like being queer, came with

a lot of shame and hiding for a long time, to not let anybody see the truth. It took my taking a step back, realizing that my negative thoughts about myself were not true and deciding to be brave enough to break outside of those ideas, going alone in what felt like a wilderness. It took time to refine what the truth really was. And the Rock Star role gave that to me. She was me, realizing that the things I'd been telling myself about who I was were not true. She made me realize I could be okay, trusting myself fully, instead of the opinions of others.

I'd never done that before, and there I was, on those opening dates of the tour, experiencing all of that for the first time, in Tokyo, Japan, on opening night! The Rock Star felt like the premiere of myself. It was more than just this character. It was like this is a new version of me where I'm fully me, with a lot of freedom. It's nice to be myself finally. It's not easy. But it's worth all of the hardship, everything that comes with it. I wouldn't trade it for anything.

In addition to performing, I've been extremely lucky to begin working as an arranger and orchestrator, as part of the building process of a new musical, *The Dust Bowl Radio Hour*. The project has fed a starving part of my creativity that loves to express itself through writing. The creators, Sean McGee and Kasey Dillon, two extraordinary musicians and brilliant human beings, have taken me under their wing and trusted me to help bring their show to life. The story follows a boy named Jack on his journey to find his mother. She goes missing during the height of the Dust Bowl crisis in Oklahoma. Over the radio, Jack tells stories that become larger than life, to find his mother and bring her home. Sean and Kasey have created something really special, and the whole team's love for the story gives me confidence it will go places. I have loved every aspect of helping develop this show, and am excited for the world to experience it.

With an overarching view, what I would love to say to any woman reading this – and to anybody who has questioned their own value, because this goes beyond gender – believing in your value and *knowing* it, holding on to that, and *leading*, is so important! Walking into the industry, networking, communicating with people, expressing all your creativity, and knowing what you're worth when it comes to anything is so important!

*The Spotlight series of interviews was created by Julie Spencer in order for percussionists who are women to tell behind-the-scenes stories of their lives and careers. Spencer's hope is that by learning what many of us have gone through, with insights from unique perspectives, all of us in the PAS community can be better supported and inspired by each other!*

Julie Spencer is an American percussionist, composer, and artist living in Germany. A graduate of the Eastman School of Music and the California Institute of the Arts, where she studied world music and jazz, Spencer has more than 30 CD recordings of her music in numerous countries, and is a member of the PAS Board of Advisors.



# Implied Metric Modulation

## A “multiverse” of groove

By Jason Lee Bruns

The concept I like to call *Implied Metric Modulation* (maybe somebody else has coined this term already?) is basically a groove at a different pace within a groove. This is not a metric modulation in the traditional sense because there is no complete transition to the implied groove since a reference to the original groove is simultaneously maintained. It’s fun to think of this as a rhythmic metaphor for the sci-fi paradigm of a “multiverse” or “parallel universe.” The harmonic equivalent of this could be implying other keys via mode mixture and secondary dominant chords without actually modulating to the implied key, or playing “outside” for a melodic soloist.

Metric modulations are commonly (but not only) implemented using a hemiola-type rhythm that oftentimes, when continued, do not round out after one measure and go over the barline. A good example is a repeated dotted eighth-note morphing into the new quarter-note pulse (indicated as “dotted-eighth = quarter”). Many other examples are just as effective, but for the sake of efficiency and eventually getting to the larger point of the method, let’s move on.

My intrigue with Implied Metric Modulation is in the realm of triplet-based grooves such as shuffles, swings, and 12/8 Afro-Cuban feels. Because of this I have spent time thinking about ways to imply modulations in these feels using the half-note-triplet, which, as will hopefully be demonstrated, is a very useful and effective subdivision for creating this effect.

It is important to note that, when experimenting with these, do not do so at the expense of the music; especially if you are playing with a band and/or doing session work. However, for your own practice room indulgence, and maybe your advanced students, this can be an intriguing exploration. At the least, side benefits could include a stronger sense of rhythmic understanding, better time-keeping, and new creative tools.

Speaking of students, I’d like to first give a shout-out to my students who inspired me to develop a method for teaching this concept (you know who you are!), and to all of the teachers who put in extra care and preparations for making things more accessible for their students to grasp.

### PREREQUISITE

To begin, it is helpful (but not required) to understand the three-over-four (3:4) polyrhythm, as this will be the basis for the following type of Implied Metric Modulation. Below is this polyrhythm written in a triple-based feel (eighth triplets) in 4/4. The ride part is in “four” and the kick drum part is in “three.”

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time. Above the staff, there are four groups of eighth-note triplets, each spanning two measures. Below the staff, the counts for the kick drum part are: 1 (AH) (DA) 2 AH (DA) 3 (AH) DA 4 (AH) (DA) 1 (AH) (DA) 2 AH (DA) 3 (AH) DA 4 (AH) (DA).

Now we will extract the kick drum part (the “three side”) from the above polyrhythm as the framework for the implied modulation by alternating these resulting half-note-triplets between kick/snare – effectively creating an implied backbeat groove. The counts above show where the beats line up in this implied modulation. As a reference point to the original feel, the ride will play quarter-notes (the “four side”). It will take four measures for the pattern to resolve (or three measures of the implied groove).

Note: To help visually account for every single triplet, I've purposefully written the patterns out using only eighth-note notation instead of grouping values together into larger subdivisions.

The above modulation effectively creates the illusion of this simple “backbeat” pattern:

**PATTERN 1 (simple “rock” groove)**

To make the backbeat groove more persuasive we can add a simple variation to one of the strong beats of the implied groove as follows. For now, the ride pattern will remain as before (on the downbeats of the un-modulated time feel).

The above modulation effectively creates the illusion of this simple “rock” pattern:

In triplet-based grooves, the following are transcriptions of the composite rhythm that this particular implied “rock” pattern reveals within the shuffle, swing, and Afro-Cuban ride (bell) feels.

Application 1: “Shuffle” ride pattern

Application 2: “Swing” ride pattern

Application 3: 12/8 Afro-Cuban (or “Bembe”) ride (bell) pattern. (I purposely did not write this application in 12/8 to keep consistent with any learning connections that are hopefully being made from the prior applications.)

Variations to the kick drum pattern (or snare, for that matter) can be as simple as thinking of each eighth-note triplet from the implied groove as sixteenth notes from what would be the modulated groove. To make this clearer, I have written the counts from what would be sixteenth notes in each variation underneath the implied eighth-note triplet groove. (If this doesn't make sense right away don't worry.)

Musical notation for a drum pattern. The first staff shows a sequence of eighth notes with triplet markings above groups of three notes. The rhythm is: (1 E + A 2 E + A 3 E + A 4 E + A) (1 E + A 2 E + A. The second staff continues the pattern: 3 E + A 4 E + A) (1 E + A 2 E + A 3 E + A 4 E + A).

The above modulation effectively creates the illusion of this more funky “rock” pattern:

Musical notation for a “rock” pattern. It features a triplet-based groove with a sequence of notes: 1, 2, A, 3, +, 4. The notes are marked with accents and a triplet bracket over the first three notes.

Instead of writing out the composite rhythms for these variations (as I have done with applications 1, 2, and 3 previously shown) I instead suggest it is *much* easier to play the ride/hi-hat foot patterns of the triplet-based groove applications (e.g., shuffle, swing, Afro-Cuban ride patterns) while reading the notated variations on the kick/snare. This would be similar to how playing various grooves while reading lines from Ted Reed’s book *Syncopation* is accomplished. (If you have not done this yet, I suggest pausing this article and getting that book.) And similarly to how Gary Chester’s innovative book, *The New Breed*, does with his “melody/system” method. (Get this book too while you’re at it.)

#### Variation 2

Musical notation for Variation 2. The first staff shows a sequence of eighth notes with triplet markings above groups of three notes. The rhythm is: (1 E + A 2 E + A 3 E + A 4 E + A) (1 E + A 2 E + A. The second staff continues the pattern: 3 E + A 4 E + A) (1 E + A 2 E + A 3 E + A 4 E + A). Below the notation is a diagram showing the triplet-based groove with notes: 1, 2, E, 3, 4. The notes are marked with accents and a triplet bracket over the first three notes.

### Variation 3

The image displays three staves of musical notation for Variation 3. The first two staves are in 4/4 time and feature a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with triplets. The first staff has a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. The second staff continues the pattern. The third staff is a separate line of notation, possibly for a different instrument or a simplified version, showing a sequence of notes with triplets and accents. Below the first two staves, there are rhythmic patterns in parentheses: (1 E + A 2 E + A 3 E + A 4 E + A) and (1 E + A 2 E + A 3 E + A 4 E + A). The third staff has a key signature of one flat and a common time signature, with notes and triplets.

### CONCLUSION

I hope you found this method of Implied Metric Modulation and its application examples useful and inspiring – and perhaps with a challenging dose of frustration and musical growth as well. I know it was a fun challenge for me to explain. Happy rhythmic exploring!

**Jason Lee Bruns** is an established drummer/educator based out of Los Angeles, Cal. He has taught privately for 25 years and is the founder/director of the World Drumming, Steel Band, and Recording Arts & Production programs at Campbell Hall (a private K-12 school in Studio City, Cal.). He holds a bachelor degree in Percussion Performance from Miami University (Ohio), a master's degree in Jazz Studies from University of Southern California, and a master's degree in Audio Engineering from Berklee College of Music. He has studied folkloric drumming traditions firsthand in over 12 influential drumming regions. As founder/bandleader of ten-piece retro-soul band Bruns & Baché [pronounced "Ba-SHAY"], he's toured Japan twice, played the top jazz venues in the greater Los Angeles area, and headlined three times for *Jazz at LACMA* at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Find out more at [BrunsBeats.com](http://BrunsBeats.com) and find Jason's instagram account at [@BrunsBeats](https://www.instagram.com/BrunsBeats).

# Riding Solo: Strategies for Managing a Marching Percussion Program by Yourself

By David Grimsley

I believe it is not a stretch to say that most percussion instructors dream about having their own program. Whether as a salaried percussion director, a percussion technician paid by band boosters, or a percussion professor, having a group of percussionists you can lead and mold is the dream of a lot of people in this profession.

However, percussion instructors often direct programs where they must teach entirely by themselves. You might be a college student teaching at a local high school, and you are the only percussion teacher they can hire. Maybe you are a newly hired percussion director with no marching technician staff, no assistants, and no private-lesson teachers. What do you do first? What do you not know that you don't know? Most importantly, how are you going to teach every student all by yourself with no help?

I have learned things in my experiences teaching percussion as a solo educator that have brought great growth and stability to many programs. Some ideas in this article may seem redundant, but a wise man once told me that redundancy only ensures that everybody is on the

same page. My hope is that you can take some pointers from this article to help you stabilize your program, foster some confidence in yourself, and give you a jumping point as a solo educator.

## GETTING YOUR TO-DO LIST IN ORDER

Before the season starts, you have to take some time to get your "To-Do" list in order. Maybe you already know what your plans are for the beginning of the season, but I have found that writing down my goals helps keep me accountable and helps remind me of my tasks. Here are some things to put on your list before band camp:

- What are my rehearsal spaces?
- What are the band director's goals for band camp?
- Do the students have music?
- How many cadences do you have?
- Do you have enough metronomes and speakers?
- Who are the section leaders/co-section leaders/assistant captains?
- What is your warm-up packet?
- What is your instrumentation?

- What is your front ensemble setup?
- Are you going to be working with electronics?
- How is your gear? Sticks, mallets, heads, stick/mallet bags, etc.?

While this is not a definitive list, I find that these questions are a great place to start to build structure for your students. As you are going to be their only instructor, putting in some extra time at the front end of the season is going to set the students up for success, because there is a drastically smaller margin of logistics that is possible for you to miss. While we are all not perfect, and we will inevitably forget to do something, writing this list down puts you in a position to be your own manager. Structure doesn't come from the rehearsal process alone, it also comes from logistics.

## THE PACKET: WARM UP AS A WHOLE SECTION

If you are the only percussion instructor, you more than likely do not have the privilege of having sectionals at a rate than you would like to. While teaching your student leaders to be self-sufficient is ultimately a great goal, a lot of your time

is going to be spent teaching the drumline and the front ensemble at the same time, so you must be realistic and versatile with your warm-up packet.

Here are some objectives I complete with my personal packet; feel free to implement these ideas into your own warm-up! I am certainly not the arbiter of what

everybody should do, but this helps me. I adapted this exercise flow through my mentor, former boss, and master educator Heath Dillard. I will include a couple of examples of the snare music and the front ensemble music.

To avoid confusion with each section, be sure to name the specific skill set each

exercise works on. For example, for number 1, I would call out “Eights and Octave Eights,” referring to what each section will play.

**1. Eights/Octave Eights**

For me, “1” is the legatos/scales work. While the drumline does eight on a hand with crescendos, decrescendos, and dou-

Example 1: Front Ensemble, Double Verticals

Play with BOTH HANDS!

Example 2: Snares, Accent Tap

**Stock**

**Paradiddles**

R R L L R R L L | R R R L L L R R | L L R R L L R R | L L L R R R L L

R L R R L R L L | R L R R L R L L | R L R L R R L R L L | R L R L R R L R L L

L R L L R L R R | L R L L R L R R | L R L R L L R L L R L R R L R L L



battery will play a version of double/triple beat, while the front ensemble plays Green scales.

### 5. Accent-Tap/Double Verticals

Number “5” tunes into accent-tap exercises, including paradiddle variations, with the battery. During this, the front ensemble gets to play a simple and catchy four-mallet progression that challenges their body positioning with simple rhythms. See Examples 1 and 2.

### 6. Duple Rolls/Devi8

This dives into diddles with the battery, with one height and a duple meter, keeping a simple diddle isolation to short-short-long progression. During this, the front ensemble plays a simple single independent stroke exercise.

### 7. Triplet Rolls/Inside 2's

This is the culmination of our skill sets, requiring the battery to play triplet rolls

in two variations (one height for one variation, and seven-stroke rolls with two heights and flams for the other variation). Meanwhile, the front ensemble gets to practice their inside two-mallet chops by playing simple scale patterns with the inside two mallets, as well as an arpeggio variation that challenges their ability to play large intervals with the inside two mallets. See Examples 3 and 4.

You can experiment with many possibilities when you make your own packet. A lot of percussion educators have multiple schools of thought on what skill sets are most important. I have found that using this progression not only helps challenge the students’ skill sets in a cumulative fashion, but it also addresses each section’s specific needs while being manageable for one person to teach.

## UTILIZING STUDENT LEADERS

There will be a time when you have to decide when it is appropriate to split the percussion section into sectionals, or “subs,” so each section can work on their specific needs. This is when you give your student leaders *very specific* instructions on what to achieve in their sectionals. You may trust your student leaders with your entire heart, but you have to realize that you are the professional, not them. They may not know how to teach on your level, or know your exact expectations if you just give them a generic goal. Give your student leaders time limits on how long to work on a specific goal, opportunities for everybody to play solo, a guideline and limitations on what to practice, skill sets and pitfalls to look out for, and exercises to play if they cannot achieve on a certain level.

Example 4: Snares, Triplet Rolls

The musical notation is for a snare drum in 12/8 time. It is divided into two main sections: "Stock" and "Seven Strokes".

**Stock Section (Measures 4-10):** This section consists of six measures of music. Each measure contains a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a quarter note, and then another triplet of eighth notes. The pattern repeats every two measures.

**Seven Strokes Section (Measures 13-19):** This section consists of seven measures of music. Each measure contains a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a quarter note, and then another triplet of eighth notes. The pattern repeats every two measures.

The notation includes a snare drum symbol, a 12/8 time signature, and a "Stock" label above the first measure. The "Seven Strokes" label is placed above the first measure of the second section. The notation uses eighth notes, quarter notes, and triplet markings to indicate the specific rhythmic patterns.

For example, let's say that I want the bass line to work on a segment that we'll call D to F. This is what I would write down and give my bass drum section leader:

- Your goal is to work on D-F, at 108 BPM.

- 10:30-10:50 A.M., break down measure 84, beat by beat. Play the check, the composite rhythm, then play the split. Make sure everybody has their pencil, write in the counts of the rhythms if members do not understand it.

- 10:50-11:10 A.M., focus on measures 90-95, work on sixteenth-note interpretation. Look out for even rhythms and a clear eighth-note grid. Turn on the eighth note on the metronome.

- 11:10-11:30 A.M., attempt four full runs of D-F. Give time for silent reflection and sharing thoughts between each rep.

This scratches the surface on all of the specifics you can give your student leaders. More than anything, they need direction and structure. The more specific, the better. Of course, use your discretion to make sure you are not overloading them with information. Give them very specific but minimal objectives to maximize their efficiency.

Another way to utilize your student leaders effectively is to give them specific guidelines on how to act during rehearsal. Just naming them section leader and expecting them to be perfect 100% of the time is not going to work. Your student leaders need guidance and training to get to a point of being self-sufficient. Have a conversation with your student leaders that discusses the following while giving your expectations on how to achieve these goals:

- Goals for the upcoming season, and ideas to achieve them.

- How to handle talking during rehearsal.

- How to set an example on the field and off the field.

- Specific directions and flow of consequences to give for discipline.

- How to rehearse and address the band director staff.

- Making sure everybody in their section has their needs met.

- When to address certain skill sets and when to hold off for a more appropriate time.

- How to foster a culture of excellence and unity.

- Decisions on section shirts, gigging opportunities, etc.

## REHEARSAL FLOW

Additionally, you must train your student leaders to run the percussion ensemble all the time, every single rep. This includes stand-by, set, what happens between each rep (e.g., eight or sixteen beats in between each rep), sticks in, sticks out, mark time, relax, etc. The more early work you spend polishing the entire ensemble's processes, the more automatic and efficient rehearsals will be toward the latter half of the season.

When your student leaders are achieving their processes and rehearsal flow at a high level, this leaves room for you as the only percussion teacher to give reps and instruction at higher levels of efficiency. More times than not, it's not what you rehearse, it's how you rehearse that leads your program to success. Here are some pointers to think about while planning your rehearsals:

- Is warm-up/percussion rehearsal consistent every day? Clearly state your goals to the entire percussion ensemble before every rehearsal. Develop their trust in you by letting them know what to expect and keeping a goal for every rep.

- What are the stages of rehearsal? I use this flow: Warm-up packet > Show music > Front ensemble move to the field and practice while the battery stays with me and tracks > Move to the field with the full band. Familiarity will build confidence in your students if they know what to expect every single day.

- What does cleaning and teaching look like in your full percussion rehearsals? If a member or section is having trouble with a rhythm or skill set, use that opportunity

to teach that skill set to everybody in the section. You do not have to do this all of the time; everybody knows the power of individual work and the skills being under a spotlight brings. However, in early stages, you can use this opportunity to cover a musical concept and give everybody a chance to learn or refine skills.

- How often or how long do you talk?

We are all passionate about what we do. And when you find yourself in front of a huge group, it is easy to spend a lot of time talking about a specific topic. However, if you are only one person talking to an entire section, you can be at risk of losing the attention of your students. This is one of those "unspoken" skills that percussion educators often find themselves constantly having to refine the longer they are in the profession. Personally, I try to give myself less than 15 seconds to give information on a skill set, and I keep it very general. I do not have the luxury of diving deep into a concept, because I do not have a technician staff to support my lessons. I have to keep it short, concise, and get to playing as fast as possible.

- How do you run music chunks? AVOID running entire movements just to run them until it gets closer to show dates. You don't have time to just run music without problem solving. You're the only adult in the room. Of course, repetition is extremely important and is beneficial to students. However, the students need to know the purpose. I like to refer to chunks as "diagnostic chunks," so the students can have a mindset of playing to their best ability while observing and self-assessing points of error.

I have adapted a specific system after running music chunks under another master of education, Dr. Brian Tinkel, which I call the "+1" method. Give the specific chunk to the students. Let them know how many times you will rep that chunk. Give specific instructions for each chunk. Let them know how many beats from the metronome they get between each rep. Culminate the reps into a representation of the uninterrupted attempts of the music. I will list an example below

of how I would facilitate this to my students. The setting is percussion ensemble rehearsal, where the battery is marching while the front ensemble is on the front sideline.

- “The chunk is D-F. We will do 4+1.”
- “You will get 16 clicks from the metronome in between each rep.”
- “The battery will mark time in place at D for four reps.”
- “During the first rep, the front ensemble will air and sing their parts while listening to the center snare. Only the center snare will play on their drum, the rest of the drumline will play on the rim.”
- “Second rep, we will add the center marimba, xylophone, drumset, rack, electronics, and the entire battery. The rest of the front ensemble still airs and sings their part.”
- “Third rep and fourth rep, everybody plays.”
- “The +1 rep will be **ON THE MOVE** for the battery, and everybody in the front ensemble plays.”

Eventually, the goal would be to just give the chunk and 4+1 direction without having to explain how to navigate that process every time. It will take some training, but with enough time and repetition, you can use this vehicle for assessment. It also provides continuous chances for students to achieve, a flow of listening points, and problem-solving vertical alignment issues in real time.

On the other hand, you also have to think about how you facilitate instruction during a full band rehearsal. During this time, I encourage you to think about your role as one of support: supporting the needs of the band directors, supporting the needs of the students, and supporting the needs of the entire band. I am of the mindset that, in the early season, you're on the field more. Later in the season, you spend more time up in the stands or in the press box. Here are some more points to consider while you are in a full band rehearsal:

- Among the list of your priorities, vertical alignment and rehearsal etiquette need to be near the top.

- Rehearsal etiquette. Again, train your section leaders on how to solve specific etiquette issues by being stern yet approachable. While you are on the field, give your whole attention to the band directors while they are talking. Collaborate with your band director on when your time to teach and talk is. Avoid the fear of being redundant, and make 100% sure you and the band director staff are on the same exact page.

- To troubleshoot vertical alignment, try following this mental checklist: Is the center snare playing with the metronome? Is the upper battery listening towards the center and playing with the metronome? Is the bass line playing with the metronome? Are the feet of the battery in time? (Take this opportunity to plan for tracking chunks.) Are the drum major and center snare together? Is the center of the front ensemble playing with the battery? Is the front ensemble looking and listening towards the center of the ensemble? For front ensemble-only chunks, are the center of the front ensemble and the drum major together?

In these situations where you have time to teach between full band reps, here are some things to look out for and ideas on how to start the process of cleaning:

- Cleaning the drumline. First, **ALWAYS** mirror what the feet do. This will take some extra learning time on your part, but it will pay off in dividends. The more you can mirror rehearsal etiquette, foot timing, and skillsets, the more chances you give your students to take in that information on the go without having to put everything to a halt. It's always a good idea to be an active participant giving energy and motivation.

Draw attention to unison rhythms in the battery, which are big rhythms that the entire section shares. How do these passages line up with the feet?

If you need to play, move the battery away from the band and try to take less than five minutes to get as many reps as possible. Don't be frantic, just move with purpose.

- Rolls checklist: hand speed; pressure;

energy; balance and blend. Get to where you can just say one of these words and the problem fixes itself.

- Bass unisons checklist: Less of the top 2 basses, more of the bottom 2 basses. Blend to the lowest sound. Soft hands, big velocity at all heights.

- Tenor around-pattern checklist: zones; hand shape; turn the wrist.

When you problem-solve, be quick and deliberate. Talk less than 15 seconds. When you are done, turn your body towards the box and show what good rehearsal etiquette is. Is your battery at stand-by or relaxed?

In the event you have to work on balance, to save time, default to “lower the heights, listen inside the section, balance to the bottom bass.” Or develop your own short hitlist of information you can give that refers back to all of the work you spend in warm-up and percussion rehearsal. The students are smart, they want to rise to the occasion. Sometimes, that short sentence will be all they need to contextualize their instruction.

- Cleaning the front ensemble. Take advantage of the covers. After establishing what the covers should look like across the section, encourage them to fold them up to a thickness that allows them to play on it. You can use this method to address one-on-one rhythm fixing, chops, or stroke types.

Train your front ensemble to play a certain way for each rep. For example, you can start by airing and singing. Then add only the drumset, xylo, and center marimba. Then add the rack and electronics. Then everybody else. If the number of reps are allowed during a specific chunk in the full band setting, your front ensemble can problem solve on-the-go.

If you need to fix incorrect notes, allow that individual to play with the backs of their mallets or their fingers to correct their mistake until it is fixed.

If you have a drumset player, encourage them to learn certain sections of the battery music to solidify the front-to-back relationship.

Lastly, do **NOT** forget to check on the

needs of the band director staff! It is so easy to be caught up in all of the fires you are trying to put out. But remember, you are part of a team. Getting feedback and objectives from the band director staff gives you clear goals, if you all communicate.

## OTHER ITEMS TO NOTE

It is never a bad idea to implement pass-offs to make your job as the only percussion instructor easier! If you have the opportunity, use pass-offs to ensure each student is staying accountable with the music. You are only one person, so you have to find a way to keep them all accountable at the same time. You can use Google Classroom or any other video submission alternative to gather data. Collaborate with the band directors on consequences for late/no submission (e.g., not playing a Friday-night game).

Additionally, it is always a good idea to train your students on how to maintain and repair equipment! Set up a day where the students can watch you and learn how to tune drums. This is not only your opportunity to tune the drums, but you are also training your students to maintain equipment and tune to a given scheme.

## CONCLUSION

We all know that teaching percussion requires a lot of time, effort, and energy. This can include many hours of work and planning that most people don't realize or may ever appreciate. That is why it is so important to balance your work and life. If you use what was given to you in this article as a starting point, you probably have a lot of planning to do. It is okay to take breaks, find hobbies, and chip away at your hitlist one point at a time.

This article is just one of many diving boards you can choose from. I just happened to find operative success in this specific process. Whatever you choose, remember to reach out to friends for advice and make some time for yourself. Without a support staff, it is very difficult to avoid our echo chamber of self-critique.

Don't be afraid to start hard conversations with your friends and mentors.

Speaking of mentors, I highly encourage anybody in this field, especially somebody doing it by themselves, to find a mentor. I was lucky enough to find my mentor through work, but other people probably don't have that advantage. I recommend using your state PAS chapter to find mentors and develop a support system. There are plenty of social media pages that would also do the trick.

Before I leave you with a list of possible resources, I want to wish you good luck on wherever the path of solo teaching leads you. It is not easy without the resources of lesson staff, marching staff, and salaried assistants. This takes a ton of time and will often be extremely difficult. But if you build towards developing a self-sufficient machine, and dive into this with confidence and a plan, half the battle is already won.

## RESOURCES

Here is a fabulous list of resources I recommend for anybody attempting to teach a percussion section by themselves. Good luck!

*Drumline Gold* by Paul Buyer.

*Rehearsing the Concert and Marching Ensemble* by James Campbell.

*The Inner Game of Tennis* by W. Timothy Gallwey.

*Marching Band and Drum Corps Ensemble Technique*, YouTube video by Bill Bachman.

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# The Transformative Role of Recording in Percussion Practice

By Darci Wright

**T**his article examines the transformative role of recording in percussion practice, highlighting its impact on self-assessment, creativity, and professional growth. The purpose is to show how recording one's own playing promotes objectivity and continuous improvement by allowing musicians to hear and see their work from an audience perspective. The scope includes personal development, pedagogical value, and the expanding role of recording in modern music careers.

The art of recording, an essential tool for all musicians, is particularly transformative for percussionists. Capturing one's practice sessions, lessons, mock auditions, and performances leads to greater self-awareness and musical growth, offering immediate objective feedback, revealing subtleties that could otherwise go unnoticed or unacknowledged. Recordings also serve as a supplemental practice journal, cataloging progress and challenges over time. Additionally, the process fosters technical skills in audio editing, expanding a percussionist's artistic toolkit. Social media platforms, where musicians often share their recorded performances, offer avenues for connection with peers and audiences alike – not to mention entrepreneurship and marketing.

Technology doesn't lie. Calculators provide results based upon numbers entered,

a metronome maintains a steady tempo, and a camera captures exactly what the lens "sees." The tools are unbiased. Now, think about the times you've been in a practice room, working on a phrase or passage that didn't feel or sound the way you'd like, and thought, "I can't do this. I sound awful. I'm terrible at [insert instrument technique here]." These are emotional reactions, not facts; they're rarely 100% accurate. Recording yourself provides an objective view of your rendition and clearer understanding of your progress. Are these the sounds I want? Is this musical idea coming through clearly? How does it sound to the audience versus from my "player" perspective? Recording removes the guesswork, allowing accurate self-assessment and objective feedback, both crucial for growth.

Keeping a traditional practice journal encourages consistency, discipline, aids in setting goals, and tracks progress; recording adds several layers of honesty, humility, and objectivity. Video and audio recordings expose desirable and undesirable aspects of performing, with video illuminating physical actions contributing to both. For example, if your snare drum rolls sound uneven, in addition to recording audio, try recording slow-motion video of your hands to discover correlation and/or causation. Experimenting with different camera angles – from the front,

side, overhead, and even behind – can provide a comprehensive look at posture, stick heights, facial expressions, and technical issues, in addition to musical feedback.

These insights are often difficult to self-diagnose while playing and may reveal hard truths. On a positive note, this powerful form of journaling – both digital (recording) and analog (writing) – allows musicians to track their progress and overall growth, not just for a single piece of music, but comprehensively. While we often focus on what is "wrong," video recordings also confirm what is "right," instilling confidence to set and achieve short-term and long-term goals with clarity.

I have found one important additional benefit to regular recording of one's playing. Most of us tend to self-evaluate our playing *as we are playing*. That internal process is a distraction from focusing on the music *still to be played*. Both sides of the coin are problematic: "Great! I've never played that passage so cleanly at this tempo!" and "That sounded horrible, I never miss those low D's" are NOT thoughts about the notes we still need to play. How can students train themselves to let go of self-criticism while they are playing, instead reserving that for when they are done? Recording yourself allows you to "switch off" that internal critic, knowing

you have an objective recording to view and/or listen to right away. Remaining mindfully in the moment is essential for confident performing, especially solos and recitals.

It is such a privilege to play instruments with near-endless possibilities; it just takes imagination. If a particular implement on the vibraphone doesn't produce the desired effect, a creative percussionist might opt to substitute something completely outlandish that could work beautifully. If a passage with an ensemble only requires a suspended cymbal, try two or three – alone or in combination, depending upon how you want to “paint” the passage. Recording provides an invaluable tool for evaluating and exploring sound combinations, balance, blend, execution, which illuminates options for color and signature sounds, no matter the medium – solo playing, chamber music, or with an orchestra. Further, recording opens opportunities for collaboration, whether working with a composer on a new commission or recording a duo album with a long-distance colleague. The potential for creativity and innovation is incredibly exciting; how can you know whether an approach is effective unless you're aware of your options?

As David Cutler discusses in his book *The Savvy Musician*, being a professional rarely means focusing solely on performance, teaching, composing, manufacturing, or coordinating; instead, most musicians make a living through a combination of these roles. In this context, recording can significantly expand a musician's creative toolkit, offering entrepreneurial opportunities to engage in broader artistic practices beyond merely playing an instrument. For instance, students who consistently record their practice sessions might find themselves drawn to prosumer or professional audio engineering, mixing, editing, or mastering or producing the visual component, especially as most content consumed on social media is video-based. Imagine how many music students need prescreening recordings for college, graduate school, music festivals,

scholarships, drum corps or WGI, student recitals, professional auditions – and most of those students are still recording videos on their phones. Imagine the potential earnings and growth from applying your practice skills to performance, and then capturing and delivering that level of documentation for others! Ultimately, recording encourages musicians to explore the full spectrum of their creative potential.

Building a social-media footprint is a developing skill and interest of many percussionists. One of the positive aspects of recording for social-media purposes includes personal accountability, increasing the reach and impact of percussion pedagogy, performance, and, in many cases, inspiration. Many musicians are now building both their personal and professional brands by sharing regular recordings, forging their artistic identities. Gaining recognition on such platforms as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook opens the door to networking and community-building opportunities, allowing musicians to connect with peers, collaborators, and audiences. Each interaction – whether a “like,” “share,” “comment,” or “save” – increases the visibility of posts, potentially driving more views and exposure.

Social media also offers valuable avenues for positive (and sometimes negative) feedback, enabling musicians to receive advice and engage in meaningful dialogue with followers. This information often extends beyond the music and performance itself, providing opportunities for growth in video/audio quality, innovation, and presentation. The distinction between a “good” video and a “bad” one is clear; high-quality thumbnails, catchy captions, and creative editing tend to attract more attention and interaction than posts that lack these elements, not to mention the quality of the audio and video, providing musicians with a powerful tool for expanding their reach, refining their craft, and building professional networks.

Truly, recording oneself and others is transformative, offering musicians an invaluable opportunity for self-assessment, creativity, and professional development.

In the digital age, where creative boundaries are constantly pushed, incorporating recording into a percussionist's routine is essential not just for improving technical skill, but for expanding the scope of their creative and professional possibilities.

In short, get out there, ask some questions, and hit that red button as often as you can! Most importantly, along with your teachers and peers, allow *yourself* to teach you how to improve, and know that plenty of people in our community are more than happy to lend you a hand.

Darci Wright is a recent graduate from Florida State University, where she earned her DM in Percussion Performance with a Certificate of Specialized Studies Program in College Teaching. She also received her MM in Percussion Performance at FSU in 2023. At FSU, her experience included assistant-coaching the internationally recognized FSU Percussion Ensemble, teaching percussion methods to non-percussion education majors, and overseeing percussion instrument logistics, maintenance, and acquisition. Darci has appeared with the FSU Symphony Orchestra, Wind Orchestra, Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra, Sinfonia Gulf Coast, Bay Area Coral Society, and regional chamber groups. She has taught at FSU Summer Music Camps and the TriState Band Festival, while maintaining a private applied studio with students earning All-County and Florida All-State opportunities. Darci recently made her clinician debut at the 2026 Florida Music Education Association's convention, where she presented her clinic *Crash Cymbal Crash Course: A Step-by-Step Guide for the Young Percussionist*. An advocate for music technology, she also serves as audio editor for *The Percussion Pedagogy Podcast* and associate producer for the rehearsal strategy podcast *Again, But Better*.

# The Art of the Unexpected: Preparing for Electronic Failure in Solo Percussion with Electronics

By Jonathan Sharp

**F**or solo percussionists performing with electronics, technical glitches aren't hypothetical: they're inevitable. Whether using live processing, looping, or just fixed media, the integration of technology introduces new, expressive possibilities alongside new vulnerabilities. Timing discrepancies, software instability, and unpredictable hardware failures are part of the terrain. This article explores how performers can prepare not just for success, but for the unexpected.

## SETUP FLUENCY THROUGH EXPLORATION

To reduce the risk of technical issues, performers must develop deep familiarity with their electronic setups. This includes understanding the behavior of effects processors, anticipating latency, and rehearsing with the full electronic rig — not just in ideal conditions, but also in varied environments. Practice unplugging, moving, and reassembling your tech setup.

This kind of familiarity is best developed through regular experimentation and exploration — what some might call “noodling around” with one's own equipment. Spending time tweaking settings,

testing signal paths, and discovering how each component behaves under different conditions builds the kind of intuitive knowledge that no manual or tutorial can fully provide. It's not always about having the flashiest gear; it's about knowing your setup so well that you can troubleshoot and adapt in real time.

Equally important is the ability to adjust on the fly: knowing how to bypass a malfunctioning module, switch to a backup patch, or continue acoustically if electronics fail entirely.

Electronic failure and human error can take many forms: your DAW freezes mid-set, forcing a restart and creating dead air; a MIDI controller stops responding; a cable snags and disconnects your in-ear monitors. Simulating these failures in the practice room — and rehearsing calm, efficient recoveries — builds the reflexes needed to stay composed and keep the performance on track while on stage.

## REDUNDANCY SAFEGUARDS

One possible scenario that can disrupt a performance is the unexpected failure of in-ear monitors on stage. A reliable safeguard for in-ear monitor failure during solo percussion performance could be to

have a secondary monitoring system in place, such as a small wedge monitor on stage that mirrors the in-ear mix. This allows the performer to continue receiving cues or click tracks even if the in-ear system fails. The performer could use a splitter to route the monitor mix simultaneously to both the in-ear system and a backup output, such as a wedge monitor or secondary headphones. Ensuring the mix is accessible via a tablet or mixer allows quick switching between outputs.

In addition to hardware redundancy, performers should rehearse sections of their repertoire without monitors to build confidence in timing and transitions. This kind of preparation ensures that if the monitors cut out mid-performance, the percussionist can rely on internal pulse, visual cues, or acoustic feedback to stay on track. Visual metronomes or cue lights can also be integrated into the setup as a non-audio fallback. Ultimately, the key is to anticipate failure and rehearse responses to it, so that the performance remains seamless and expressive regardless of technical setbacks.

Another critical aspect of maintaining a reliable setup is keeping the audio signal clean. Performance spaces can introduce

# Electronic failure is not a matter of if, but when.

ground loops or interference, which may compromise sound quality. Percussionists should understand how to mitigate these issues, often by using a ground lift direct inject (DI) box properly within their electronic rig. Knowing when and how to lift a ground or isolate signals can make the difference between a flawless performance and one plagued by distracting hums or buzzes.

## BACKUP STRATEGIES

A practical extension of this mindset is the preparation of an emergency kit. One of the simplest yet most effective ways to prepare for electronic failure is to maintain a bag of essential tools and backup components. This kit should travel with the performer and be tailored to each specific setup. At a minimum, it should include:

- Extra audio and MIDI cables
- Power adapters and extension cords
- Spare batteries (for wireless systems, pedals, or sensors)
- USB hubs and dongles
- A small toolkit (screwdrivers, gaffer tape, cable ties)
- Backup headphones or earbuds
- A printed signal-flow diagram of the setup

Having these items on hand can turn a potential disaster into a minor inconvenience. More importantly, it allows performers to remain calm and focused, knowing they have the resources to troubleshoot quickly.

## DESIGNING FOR RESILIENCE

Performing with electronics is no longer a new idea; it has become a well-established part of contemporary percussion practice. With increasingly powerful and flexible technologies available, percussionists and composers have more tools than ever to create compelling new works. However, as we expand the repertoire, it is essential to consider not only the artistic product but also the design of

the performance setup itself.

Designing for failure means building systems that are resilient and responsive. This includes incorporating modular software environments, intuitive interfaces, and redundant signal paths. It also means structuring pieces to allow for flexibility: if a trigger fails, the performer should have alternative ways to proceed. Composers should collaborate with performers to ensure that the technical demands of a piece are realistic and that the setup includes built-in backups, safeguards, or alternative pathways to keep the performance moving forward.

Imagine a composer writing a solo percussion piece that uses live looping and real-time effects processing in Ableton Live, MainStage, or something similar. The composer could collaborate with the performer to design a simplified digital setup with a fail-safe, using a modular environment that has a manual bypass switch for each effect and/or a fallback acoustic version of key sections. This way, if an effect crashes or a loop misfires, the performer can seamlessly switch to the backup plan, via MIDI pedal or quick single-key command, without significantly interrupting the musical flow.

## NOT IF, BUT WHEN: EMBRACE IT

Failure can be aesthetic. A missed cue or glitch can become part of the performance's texture, especially in improvisational or experimental contexts. Embracing this possibility requires a shift in mindset. We often aim to control every outcome, but when a sudden issue arises, we can treat the system not only as a tool but also as a collaborator. The moment itself can become expressive — an opportunity for musicality rather than just a disruption.

Electronic failure is not a matter of if, but when. For solo percussionists, being prepared means more than knowing how the technology works. It means know-

ing how to respond when it doesn't. This preparation begins long before the performance itself. It includes cultivating adaptability, rehearsing contingency plans, and embracing the aesthetic potential of failure. It also means establishing dedicated rehearsal spaces equipped with full electronic setups — spaces where performers can experiment and refine their troubleshooting techniques in stable conditions. These environments foster confidence and fluency, allowing percussionists to develop the kind of intuitive control that makes recovery seamless and performance resilient.

Electronic troubles on stage are not a sign of failure; they're part of the reality of performing with technology. Seasoned performers know this, and experienced audiences understand it. What matters most are two things: how you prepare and how you respond. With thoughtful practice and a flexible mindset, you can turn setbacks into moments of clarity and creativity. When things go wrong, your ability to stay present, adapt, and continue making music is what truly defines your artistry.

Dr. Jonathan Sharp is Associate Professor of Percussion at Iowa State University, where he teaches applied percussion, methods, and directs the percussion ensemble. A versatile performer and educator, he has held faculty positions at Morehead State University and Centre College, and has performed with ensembles including the Des Moines Symphony, Lexington Philharmonic, Boston Pops, and the Campaign Urbana Symphony. An advocate of electroacoustic music, he has presented and performed new works for percussion and electronics at various national and international music conferences.

# Teaching Ubuntu in Percussion

By Paul Buyer

**U** buntu is a South African philosophy that teaches the values of teamwork, collaboration, cooperation, equality, helpfulness, appreciation, trust, and respect. After reading *Ubuntu!* by Stephen Lundin and Bob Nelson, I was inspired to share this philosophy with my students and discovered it relates especially well to teaching percussion.

In South Africa, Ubuntu is not only a philosophy, but a way of life. It is literally woven into the fabric of their culture. Ubuntu is about family, community, and brotherhood. It teaches unselfishness, empathy, gratitude, and caring. It is about valuing everyone's contribution and making each person feel important. It is about human relationships, connecting with others, and creating a common bond. According to Lundin and Nelson on the spirit of Ubuntu, "If you have work to do...in order for our team to be successful, then I have work to do, too." In other words, "I am, because we are."

Ubuntu puts the success of the group ahead of the individual. It is based on unconditional respect for the value of each person. In business, Lundin and Nelson emphasize, "You trust and respect every employee for who they *are*, not for what they have done or not done." They also insist that, "You can't just *do* Ubuntu. You have to *be* Ubuntu." Archbishop Desmond Tutu explained, "Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness...We think of ourselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected and what you do affects the whole world." Former South Africa President Nelson Mandela stated, "Ubuntu [means] if we are to accomplish anything in the world, it will in equal measure be due to the work and achievements of others."

## TEACHING TODAY

As an educator, I started to wonder if this South African philosophy was something we can — and should — apply to our own situations as percussionists. Over the past few years I have noticed what seems to be a *lack* of Ubuntu in our schools and society in general. Rather than teamwork and gratitude, there is selfishness and entitlement. Rather than kindness and community, there is coldness and isolation. Rather than encouragement and trust, there is pessimism and dishonesty.

What does any of this have to do with playing "Merlin" or "Ionization"? I have always believed that my job is not just to teach percussion, but to teach *people*. To do that effectively, I make a conscious effort every day to teach my students life lessons that, hopefully, they will apply to their lives as they prepare for their careers. I teach them Ubuntu.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK OURSELVES

So what does Ubuntu look like? Answer these nine questions to get an "Ubuntu snapshot" of your percussion studio.

1. Do your students treat others with respect?
2. Do they care about each other?
3. Do they put the success of the group ahead of themselves?
4. Do they reach out and help each other?
5. Are they unselfish?
6. Do they have an attitude of gratitude?
7. Do they support one another?
8. Are they humble and teachable?
9. Do they live Ubuntu?

Admittedly, saying *yes* consistently to these questions might sound too good to be true. Human beings are flawed, whether they are from South Africa or South Carolina. So what happens when a team member fails to live Ubuntu? "That's a huge part of the Ubuntu tradition," says Lundin and Nelson. "When someone in the village is acting in a way that threatens the harmony and unity of

the community, the elders take action. Ubuntu is a compassionate philosophy, but it is not soft."

## UBUNTU IN CULTURE

Distilled to its essence, Ubuntu is about culture. Some define culture as, "The way we do business around here." Ethnomusicologist Dorothea Hast says culture is "a group's shared ways of experiencing, participating in, and making sense out of their world. Culture accounts for why these people over here think and act differently from those people over there." But a culture of Ubuntu goes much deeper.

In my book *Marching Bands and Drumlines* I identify culture as one of the factors influencing excellence in a marching band or drumline. For example, the degree to which a band's culture is based on Ubuntu values is one of the main reasons why, I believe, college bands and drumlines achieve excellence or fall short of it.

In the business world, Zappos.com CEO Tony Hsieh has taken culture to another level by publishing a "Culture Book." Based on Zappos' ten core values, the Culture Book is a compilation of employees' ideas and thoughts about the company culture. According to Hsieh, "Every edition of our culture book includes both the good and the bad so that people reading the book [like prospective employees] can get a real sense of what our culture is like." Today, Zappos is ranked #15 on *Fortune's* 100 Best Companies to Work For. "We didn't know it at the time," states Hsieh, "but all the hard work and investments we made into customer service and company culture would pave the way for us to hit our goal of \$1 billion." Page after page, the Culture Book is packed with Zappos employees talking about core values that reflect the Ubuntu philosophy, such as, "Build Open and Honest Relationships with Communication,"

“Build a Positive Team and Family Spirit,” and “Be Humble.” According to Lundin and Nelson, “When we talk about making a difference with Ubuntu, we are implying a change inside the culture.”

## UBUNTU IN PAS

The Percussive Arts Society is a wonderful example of the Ubuntu philosophy. PAS radiates a spirit of fraternity, commitment, and collaboration among percussionists from around the world who share a common bond. PAS members are brought together by a sense of community, connection, and passion for percussion through the PAS website, Days of Percussion, and PASIC. Listen to these quotes from well-known PAS members and notice the common Ubuntu theme:

- “Since its founding, PAS has been...a support group...” —Bob Becker
- “Whether online or in person at PASIC, you can easily connect with others who share your interests. And with PAS, you are joining a...community.” —Ndugu Chancler
- “Performers, educators, students, and professionals alike have the opportunity to...share their art through the Society. When you’re ready, we’ll be here.” —Evelyn Glennie
- “Regardless of your specialty, you can join other leaders in your field and make a contribution that will shape the future of percussion.” —Mark Ford

## UBUNTU IN THE PERCUSSION STUDIO

Have you ever had a student come up to you and say, “I won’t be able to make it to practice today, but don’t worry — I know my part”? This is an example of someone who is not living Ubuntu. Having respect for your fellow ensemble members is Ubuntu. Valuing all parts as equally important is Ubuntu. Understanding how your part contributes to the music is Ubuntu. And not wanting to let each other down is Ubuntu.

What other examples of Ubuntu can we find in a healthy, high functioning percussion studio? For starters, how are your freshmen treated by upperclassmen? Are they looked down upon and ridiculed or are they mentored and developed? How about the front ensemble and cymbal line in your marching percussion ensemble? How are these students treated — with high regard as important contributors to the team or a dumping ground for weak players? Does a hierarchy exist in your

drumline with snares as superstars and cymbals as bench warmers, or is there a true spirit of pride, empowerment, and togetherness? Do your students demonstrate cooperation and helpfulness in rehearsal when setting-up and tearing down? When loading and unloading the truck? Without question, one of the secrets of success to achieving excellence in any organization is the presence of Ubuntu. And it is my belief that individuals and teams that exhibit the values of Ubuntu will consistently outperform those that do not.

## UBUNTU IN DRUM CIRCLES

Drum circles teach many values that are in alignment with the Ubuntu philosophy. According to renowned world percussionist Kalani, “Drum circles serve as a metaphor that can be used to illustrate the importance of teamwork, cooperation, and diversity in creating a healthy and productive community.” He goes on to say, “In most cases, a drum circle is about anything but drumming. If you look around the circle and you see people and expressions, you are seeing the process and the spirit that drives it.” A lack of Ubuntu can also be found in drum circles that are not well led. Says Kalani, “If the facilitator is not intentionally creating settings in which the participants feel a sense of inclusion, community, and the ability to shape their experience as a group, members can leave feeling disenfranchised and unimportant.”

Drum circles and Ubuntu share other common ground as well. According to *Percussive Notes* editor and author Rick Mattingly, “A circle can always expand and there’s room for everybody...It’s a matter of wanting to make the circle work and becoming part of a larger whole...It doesn’t matter if you have a \$1,000 conga drum or a Coke can filled with rocks. You are just as important in that circle as any master drummer there.”

## CONCLUSION

In June 2010, legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden passed away at the age of 99. Despite his incredible success winning ten NCAA national championships and being voted the Greatest Coach of All Time by *Sporting News* in 2009, Wooden always considered himself a teacher rather than a coach. According to former player Bill Walton, “John Wooden was hired at UCLA to coach basketball, but what he really taught during his 27 years in Westwood was life.”

We can all learn something from Coach Wooden, as many of his values and philosophies are also found in Ubuntu: team spirit, cooperation, respect, unselfishness, caring, and trust, to name just a few. Political activist Steve Biko said, “The special contribution to the world by Africa will be in the field of human relationship.” And as Coach Wooden reminds us, “You can’t live a perfect day without doing something for someone who will never be able to repay you.” *I am, because we are.*

*This article was originally published in the January 2011 edition of Percussive Notes.*

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**Paul Buyer** is an author, speaker, and professor of music at Clemson University. Dr. Buyer is the author of *Working Toward Excellence* (1e and 2e), *World Music, Drumline Gold*, *Marching Bands and Drumlines*, and co-author of *The Art of Vibraphone Playing*. His articles have appeared in *American Music Teacher*, *Teaching Music*, *Jazz Education Network*, *Percussive Notes*, and *The PAS Educators’ Companion*. Dr. Buyer is a recipient of the PAS Outstanding Service Award, served as PAS Second Vice President, and is Co-Editorial Director for *Percussive Notes*. His website is [www.paulbuyer.com](http://www.paulbuyer.com).

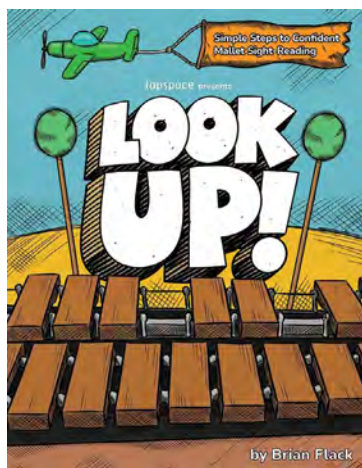
# New Percussion Literature and Recordings

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

## Difficulty Rating Scale

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

## KEYBOARD PERCUSSION METHOD



### Look Up! I-III

Brian Flack  
\$20.00

Tapspace Publications

Web: [sample pages](#)

Mallet players are notoriously terrified of sight-reading. It is easy to understand why: un-

like every other instrument, we aren't physically attached to our instrument when we play. This is why when we started playing, we tried to learn the notes and look exclusively at the bars, which is not reading, it's memorizing. The first step of learning to sight-read on our instruments is to get used to the proximity of the bars and trust that you know where the notes are when you throw the mallet. Brian Flack has written an exercise book that helps with these skills.

*Look Up!* is a series of page-long melodic etudes that utilize between two and five pitches each. This makes it easy for beginning readers to focus on the page, since they will only have two pitches to work with at first. As one progresses through the book, the number of pitches increases, and the rhythms gradually become more challenging. The most advanced examples include triplets and dotted-eighth/sixteenth combinations, all only utilizing a handful of pitches.

Along with reading pitches and rhythms, Flack includes other important challenges to develop better readers. While most of the pages are in common time, several etudes are in compound meter and a few have complex meters. Additionally, a large portion of the book goes through examples in all 12 key signatures. Everything you need to build your confidence as a reader is contained in this book.

This is an incredible resource for percussion instructors and band directors to use with students. It will also have good longevity; with over 100 etudes, there are plenty of exercises to turn to after one has been completed. While we will always continue looking for materials to help us and our students get better at reading, *Look Up!* is a must-have for everyone who plays keyboard percussion instruments.

—Kyle Cherwinski

## KEYBOARD PERCUSSION SOLO

### Autumn Morning III

Christian Kilgore  
\$17.00

Tapspace Publications

Instrumentation: vibraphone

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

This vibraphone solo offers a light, engaging musical experience, with a clear and approachable style that makes it accessible to a wide range of performers. From the outset, the piece establishes a steady, upbeat character, supported by a



consistent ostinato with a clearly defined melody layered above. The result is a charming, song-like structure that feels both familiar and inviting.

The writing provides an opportunity to explore swing style, making it especially useful both in educational and performance settings. A contrasting middle section introduces brief harmonic variety before returning to the opening material, creating a simple but effective sense of form. As the piece progresses, there is a subtle increase in complexity, particularly in maintaining stylistic consistency, dynamic control, and overall musical character. These elements make it a strong choice for developing performers, while also offering more advanced players an opportunity to refine nuance and expressive detail.

I especially appreciate the inclusion of an optional written solo and an improvisation chart. These materials provide guidance for performers who may be new to improvisation, while allowing flexibility for more experienced players to explore their own ideas. This kind of support can be especially valuable for younger musicians, offering a structured entry point into improvisation while reinforcing stylistic understanding.

The score includes helpful program and performance notes that provide insight into the composer's intent and support a more informed performance. Overall, this is a pleasant and effective work that offers musical and educational value across a variety of settings.

—Cassie Bunting

### Endless Imitation IV

Zane Papek  
\$16.00

Tapspace Publications

Instrumentation: 5-octave marimba

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

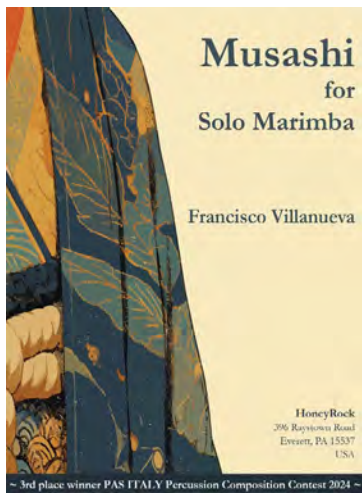
"Endless Imitation" is based on Zane Papek's personal journey growing up gay in a rural town. Papek writes, "Through seven years I went

through a cycle of awareness, questioning, and repression before finally coming out and accepting myself." The piece reflects the emotions – specifically anger – associated with those years. Thus, the notation allows performers to craft their own interpretation and emotion through *accelerando*, *ritardando*, and variable-beamed figures.

Papek treats tempo markings as suggestions, allowing performers to shape phrases. This contributes to a sense of evolving musical narrative. Musical ideas recur in altered forms, creating a sense of continuity without exact repetition. This gives the piece a feeling of introspection, as if musical thoughts are being revisited and reinterpreted over time. Technically, the piece is challenging, though not overly demanding. Sixteenth-note figures make up much of the work, but they lay well in the hands without any awkward stickings or accommodations needed.

I recommend this piece for a university student or professional looking for an emotionally powerful, musically expressive work. There's a certain magic in a performer conveying raw emotion that pulls an audience forward in their seats. This piece has that potential.

—Justin Bunting



### Musashi V-VI

Francisco Villanueva  
\$18.95

**HoneyRock**

**Instrumentation:** 5-octave marimba

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

This work for solo 5-octave marimba, which won 3rd place at the 2024 PAS Italy Composition Contest, clocks in around 10 minutes and is definitely for an advanced player. The title refers to a 16th-century swordsman from Japan. It's not meant to tell a story, exactly, but more relate the chapters of his life and the moods that they bring.

Technically, there is a lot of demand both in technique and musicality. The texture is constantly changing, twisting along with the time signature, mood, and tempo. It also presents an inter-

esting juxtaposition between the subject material in this historical context being presented through a very contemporary instrument and sound.

Some of the extended techniques include muting bars with your body and adding a vocal component for the "cry of suffering" at the end of the first movement, which can be very impactful. There is also a great deal of potential here for exploring your ability to create different feels and moods through the different chapters of the piece (labeled throughout the work). If you're looking to "wow" everyone and you're up for an extreme marimba challenge, this piece is waiting for you.

—Ben Cantrell



### Valse Op. 64 No. 2 V

Frédéric Chopin  
Arr. Pablo Blanco Cordero  
\$18.95

**HoneyRock**

**Instrumentation:** 5-octave marimba

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

Pablo Blanco Cordero has created a thoughtful arrangement of Frédéric Chopin's "Valse Op. 64 No. 2." Strikingly similar to the original, this new arrangement strikes the perfect balance of virtuosity and lyricism, altering only what is necessary to remain idiomatic to the marimba.

While this arrangement is wonderful, a few things might be helpful to the performer. As a waltz, this piece requires confidence executing left-hand pianistic accompaniments as well as rapid and persistent single independent strokes in the upper mallet. The numbering system identifies the lowest mallet as 4 and the highest mallet as 1. As the solo provides a few sticking suggestions, this could be a point of confusion for some players.

Cordero's arrangement remains in C-sharp minor and requires a 5-octave marimba. Less common to pianistic-style marimba solos, Cordero keeps both hands in front of the body throughout most of the piece. As an expressive solo, Cordero avoids writing dynamics for much of the piece,

opting instead for phrasing marks, hairpins, tempo fluctuations, and other expressive text.

At approximately 4½ minutes, this arrangement is sure to please audiences in a variety of settings.

—Quintin Mallette

## PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE



### The Convergence IV

Walter Mertens  
\$50.00

**WM-Music**

**Instrumentation (14 players):** 5-octave marimba, 4.3-octave marimba, 2 vibraphones, glockenspiel, chimes, crotales, electric bass, 4 timpani, concert toms, bass drum, floor tom, snare drum, tam-tam, additional accessories

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

I first programmed a piece by Belgian composer Walter Mertens a few years back. His chamber pieces are heavily groove-based, with clear melodies and syncopated layers of rhythmic elements driving the musical interest and development. "The Convergence," Mertens' newest large-ensemble work, moves away from his normal compositional aesthetic in favor of a more traditional percussion ensemble color, similar to Tom Gauger's works like "Portico" or "Past Midnight." The result is a more densely orchestrated piece that aims for impact and dynamics over groove.

Unlike a standard percussion orchestra work, Mertens only incorporates two vibraphones and two marimbas, making this a more useful ensemble for a high school that may have limited access to numerous marimbas. The two marimba parts rarely use four-mallet technique, and when it is used, it is mostly double vertical techniques requiring little advanced knowledge. The vibraphone parts carry much of the melody and most of the challenge for the ensemble, al-

though the glockenspiel part has several unison sixteenth-note runs with the rest of the ensemble that requires a strong player. The timpani part incorporates some stepwise tuning, but Mertens does a great job of notating that to make it easy to learn and play with some practice. The snare and tom parts complement each other, so they require a similar level of competent drummers who can handle flams, rolls, sextuplets, and other slightly tricky concepts. An ensemble of 14 players would need at least six strong mallet players and two strong drummers to play this piece well.

"The Convergence" (inspired by the 12-foot Jackson Pollock painting by the same name) seeks to embody the powerful colors and capricious lines of Pollock's masterpiece through thick textures and shifting styles and themes. The resulting seven-minute journey winds between various contemplative musical moments before ending with a recapitulation and a joyous, triumphant coda.

—Matthew Geiger



### The Darkness Around Us **V**

Ben Kressbach

\$48.00

**Tapspace Publications**

**Instrumentation (4 players):** 4.5-octave marimba, 5-octave marimba, vibraphone, xylophone, 2 octaves of crotales, 3 toms, bass drum

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

This is an inventive percussion quartet for advanced performers and an excellent vehicle for uncondacted chamber music. It joins the "multiple players around a drum" genre, with the addition of mallet instruments and toms expanding out from the central bass drum. The aerial view of the suggested setup in the score looks like helicopter blades. Although not explicitly programmatic, Ben Kressbach takes inspiration from the concept of a ritual and William E. Stafford's poem "A Ritual to Read to Each Other." The idea of percussion quartet as ritual is an interesting idea that Kressbach explores throughout the work.

"The Darkness Around Us" consists of several sections. It starts soft and eerie, with vibraphone pitch bends and a ritualistic tom ostinato moving between 4/4 and 7/8. The marimba part requires four mallets and contains one-handed rolls in the right hand with changing intervals. Eventually, the toms take over with interlocking parts among the players, followed by the bass drum section, which utilizes more tricky meter changes and has solo spots for each performer. Furthermore, syncopated rhythms and quintuplets will challenge the chamber-music skills of the ensemble. The piece continues with sections involving virtuosic two-mallet playing (particularly in the xylophone part). There are many rhythmic challenges with fast interlocking parts in the mallets and drums. At the end, all four players are on mallet instru-

ments and drums simultaneously, giving the illusion of an octet. At various points there are sixteenth-note-based time signatures (11/16, 7/16, etc.), a solid syncopated 4/4 groove, and even a spot with foil on the vibraphone!

This piece packs a lot of material into its ten minutes. I encourage ensemble directors and performers to check out the video on Tapspace's website; it's definitely worthy of serious consideration for advanced percussionists.

—Joseph Van Hassel



### El Rio Noneco **II**

Gregory D.V. Holmes

\$38.00

**Tapspace Publications**

**Instrumentation (9-13+ players):** glockenspiel, xylophone, vibraphone, 4-octave marimba, snare drum, suspended cymbal, claves, guiro, cowbell, bongos, congas, piano, bass guitar

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

Inspired by a gentle river on the outskirts of the Panamanian countryside, "El Rio Noneco" is a short piece for percussion ensemble. Using minimally syncopated eighth-note figures and complementary part writing, it is appropriate for middle school students. While utilizing standard instrumentation such as keyboard percussion, snare drum, and suspended cymbal, Gregory D.V. Holmes includes optional piano and bass guitar parts as well as such Latin instruments as guiro, claves, and congas. Holmes states that any of the keyboard parts may be doubled, including the bass guitar, which may be substituted for by a synth, malletSTATION, or similar instrument. These additions allow for a more expanded color palette and varied personnel if desired.

There are numerous educational benefits to programming "El Rio Noneco." The use of Latin percussion makes this piece a great introduction to these instruments. The syncopated figures and overall style of the piece encourage students to listen to one another, providing an interactive chamber experience. It would serve as a fresh sound to many percussion ensemble or wind band concert programs.

—Danielle Moreau

### Empress of the Pagodas **III**

Maurice Ravel

Arr. Christopher Retschulte

\$39.00

**Tapspace Publications**

**Instrumentation (11 players):** glockenspiel, crotales, chimes, 2 vibraphones, xylophone, 4.3-octave marimba, 5-octave marimba, 4 timpani, bass drum, various percussion accessories

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

Scored for percussion orchestra, Christopher Retschulte's arrangement of "Empress of the Pagodas" is a charming piece that does a great job

transferring the character of Ravel's orchestral work to a large percussion-ensemble format. The arranger closely follows the original work while successfully adapting it for percussion orchestra.

The work is arranged for eight keyboard players, timpani, and two percussion. Retschulte does a great job with the orchestration, with idiomatic parts that are notated with precision to illustrate the shaping and phrasing desired. His percussion parts are supportive of the mallet lines, with additions like granite block parts that help to emphasize the Asian themes of the work. Performers will only need two-mallet experience, and no note values go beyond a sixteenth note.

The arranger provides diligent program and performance notes. The performance notes in particular are valuable as Retschulte provides several great suggestions regarding instrument choice, phrasing, stickings, and other insights into a successful performance. He also has scored in such a way that while three marimbas might be ideal, programs with only two marimbas (a 4.3- and 5-octave) can still perform this by sharing the 4.3-octave instrument.

"Empress of the Pagodas" would work well for any high school or college program looking to enhance a concert with a large work that represents the original work well while also making it highly idiomatic for the percussion ensemble.

—Brian Nozny

### Flat Circle **III**

John Kosch

\$36.00

**Tapspace Publications**

**Instrumentation (4-5 players):** 4.3-octave marimba, optional drumset

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

"Flat Circle" for marimba quartet and optional drumset is a programmatic work inspired by the saying "Time is a flat circle." According to the composer, the piece depicts various states of consciousness that often accompany existential thought such as mindfulness and madness. Written for four players on one shared marimba, it is appropriate for younger percussionists who are beginning to learn four-mallet technique.

The four marimba parts are equal in difficulty, allowing all players to gain the same technical experience. Much of the piece is written using double vertical strokes at an interval of a fourth or a fifth. The most challenging passages involve a repetitive permutation that is consistent from player to player. There is plenty of dynamic nuance and rhythmic independence throughout, allowing younger players to work on their chamber playing. Though simple, the optional drumset part serves as a great introduction to the instrument and standardized notation practices.

Several works have been written for marimba quartet on a shared marimba, but not many for students new to four-mallet playing. "Flat Circle" is educationally effective and enjoyable for audiences and percussionists.

—Danielle Moreau

### Glow **IV**

Earl Yowell

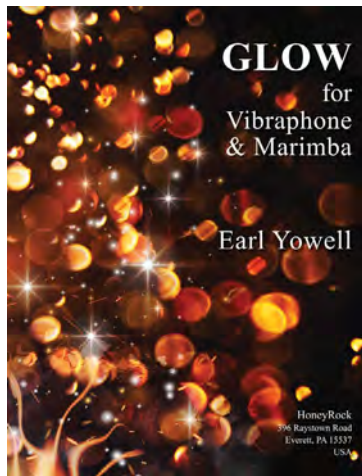
\$22.95

**HoneyRock**

**Instrumentation (2 players):** vibraphone, 5-octave marimba, cowbell

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

This is a short and challenging duo for vibra-



phone and marimba. The vibraphonist also uses a cowbell, adding to the groove at times. The composer suggests that each section represents a different type of “glow” emitted by flames, each drawing from the perceived “glow” of the opening material.

The piece begins with an introductory theme followed by the establishment of two repeating groove ideas: one in 4/4 and one primarily in 5/8. This opening section is punctuated by the entrance of cowbell before moving to a new section where the performers trade four-measure composed solos. This culminates in an impactful, extended run of unison figures leading to a fermata and a slower, expressive middle section in 3/4. Finally, the opening theme returns us to a shortened recap and succinct ending.

This work is pleasant to listen to, and it is largely idiomatic throughout. It would be appropriate for undergraduate performers and up.

—Marco Schirripa

### Inngangur II

Walter Mertens  
€18.87

#### Golden River Music

**Instrumentation (7–8 players):** tubular bells, glockenspiel, vibraphone and tom-tom, xylophone and tom-tom, 4-octave marimba and tom-tom, piano (optional), timpani and woodblock, 3 concert toms and triangle, concert bass drum, cymbals, tam-tam

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

According to the program notes, “Inngangur” aims to showcase the extensive range of percussion sounds with a limited number of players by combining rhythmic instruments with melodic percussion. Each part has its own solo moment, and ensemble playing is a key element throughout the piece.”

Marked at a “Maestoso a la marcia” tempo of 104 bpm, the piece has a strong melody in the keyboard instruments with accompanied ostinatos from the timpani and non-pitched percussion. The melody is tutti overall with occasional interplay between instruments. At the same time, the pitched and unpitched instruments are treated equally. There are as many moments where instruments like the concert toms are the main musical focus as there are with the keyboard instruments.

The vibraphone, xylophone (which can be substituted for by the top range of the marimba), and the marimba parts all include a tom, allowing

great training for younger students to experience moving from a mallet instrument to a drum and vice versa. The optional piano part harmonically supports the percussion parts; including the piano could help “round out” the overall ensemble sound, should that be needed.

Marketed as an easy-level piece and clocked at a duration of about 3½ minutes, “Inngangur” is a great “full-sound” work for younger players looking for opportunities to expand their experience on percussion instruments and grow musically within a melodically and harmonically engaging piece.

—Tim Feerst



### Kitchen Riots III

Walter Mertens  
\$21.78

#### Golden River Music

**Instrumentation (3 players):** 5 concert toms, crash cymbal, China cymbal, small bass drum, 2 opera gongs

At just under 70 measures and approximately four minutes in length, “Kitchen Riots” relies extensively on repetition, making the performance duration more substantial than the amount of material to learn. For the three players, each with one, two, or three drums and a cymbal or pair of opera gongs, it is worth noting that several of the phrases within the piece are in ensemble unison, making this work very accessible for intermediate players.

The initial tempo indication specifies “Groovy with a lot of power.” The power element, given the orchestration and frequent *forte* or *fortissimo* dynamics, is certainly front and center, but the extensive repetition and compartmentalized nature of the phrases doesn’t deliver as something that would likely be received as “groovy.” The rhythmic content for the first 80% of the piece is mostly eighth-note figures and groups of four sixteenth notes. In contrast, the final page of the score introduces and moves exclusively to constant eighth-note triplets. Time signatures include cut-time, 3/4, and 5/4, with the quarter-note value constant throughout at 112–120 bpm. Players are instructed to frequently yell “HA!” during the last third of the piece.

As a small chamber ensemble work with a lot of sound that would be relatively easily prepared, this may fit a need for some performers. However, the piece lacks contrast or direction that would effectively engage an audience, has some sloppy

engraving that might confuse players, and doesn’t notably bring anything to the percussion ensemble canon that suggests it should be a priority for programming.

—Josh Gottry

### Painted Sky V

David Nelson  
\$45.00

#### Tapspace Publications

**Instrumentation (11 players):** chimes, glockenspiel, xylophone, two vibraphones, 4.3-octave marimba, 4.5-octave marimba, 5 timpani, piano, crotales (2 octaves), hi-hat, 2 Mark Trees (or Mark Tree and metallic wind chimes), 4 triangles, 2 suspended cymbals, snare drum, ride cymbal, sizzle cymbal, finger cymbal, 5 temple blocks, China cymbal, bass drum, crash cymbals

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

“Painted Sky” is a pleasant hike through a sequence of short, colorful episodes that convey the composer’s impressions of picturesque sunrises and sunsets, and “the quiet moments of beauty that bookend a day often filled with chaos.” At just under six minutes, “Painted Sky” is musically economical, never lingering too long in any one place as the metaphorical wheel in the sky continues to turn. Several virtuosic passages in the marimba and vibraphone parts will be a fun challenge for advanced high school students, and four-mallet technique is required in those parts.

This piece is clearly influenced by marching band and front ensemble arranging, in terms of orchestration and the division of labor and musical responsibility between the various parts. The piece calls for a pianist, but that part is simple enough (akin to a front-ensemble synthesizer part) that it can be covered without advanced piano technique. The snare drum part is not especially rudimentary, but it is challenging and will require solid technical and musical proficiency.

I recommend “Painted Sky” to directors of advanced high school percussion ensembles looking for a colorful, exciting showstopper. There are many layers of rhythmic sophistication in this audience-friendly piece, including several polyrhythmic figures and metric changes, and the performers are likely to enjoy the experience as much as the audience.

—Brian Graiser

### Preludes Revisited V

Mark Saya  
\$20.00

#### Media Press Music

**Instrumentation (3 players):** xylophone, vibraphone, orchestral bells, crotales, tam-tam, small metal and wooden wind chimes, slapstick, 4 timpani (or tom toms), 5-octave marimba, snare drum, large bamboo wind chimes, suspended cymbal, piano

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

This is a collection of pieces inspired by different Frederic Chopin Op. 28 preludes. Calling the method a “transformation,” Mark Saya describes it as follows: “eliminate much of the original prelude, then manipulate the remaining material in a variety of ways with one important restriction: each chosen note remains in the same rhythmic place as it was in the original.” Saya draws parallels of this method to “the music of John Cage, the graphic analyses of Heinrich Schenker, the paintings of Mark Tansey, and the writings of Tom Phillips.”

The *Preludes Revisited* collection contains eight

Chopin preludes, each written for two percussion and one piano (with additional percussion instruments written in the piano part). The works are very much mixed instrumental trios with three equal parts. Overall, the rhythmic content is extremely complex. The layout of the notes is designed to act as one singular melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic entity; therefore, successful performances of these preludes require extremely proficient chamber music skills.

This collection is a unique take on Chopin's preludes, but it is not accurate to call them transcriptions or even arrangements. They are more so original compositions that take inspiration from Chopin's source material. In that regard, *Preludes Revisited* is a compositionally deep collection of works that are rewarding to perform and will scratch the musical itch found in pieces like Bartok's "Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion."

—Tim Feerst



### Rolling Thunder IV

Henry Fillmore

Arr. Joe Hobbs

\$34.00

**Tapspace Publications**

**Instrumentation (3 players):** one 4.3-octave or 5-octave marimba

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

Adapted from Henry Fillmore's 1916 composition for wind band, this two-minute arrangement captures the circus-like playfulness and excitement of the original piece, and is bubbling over with intricate sixteenth-note runs, flourishes, pulsing bass line, and a melodic offering that is as pleasant as it is entertaining.

While each part can be performed with two mallets, plenty of challenges exist for percussionists. This is written in a quick march style (half note = 160-172), which leaves little room for relaxation. All three performers need to be comfortable with nuanced dynamic shifts, both individually and as an ensemble. While there is no choreographed switching of marimba registers, there is plenty of "athleticism" involved when it comes to how the mallets dance around the scales and leaps.

Performers and audience members tend to enjoy wind-band march tunes from the turn of the 20th century, and this piece is absolutely worth the effort to learn, perform, and entertain.

—Joshua D. Smith

### Shark Week! III

Joe Hobbs

\$39.00

**Tapspace Publications**

**Instrumentation (7 players):** snare drum, bongos, 2 congas, 4 concert toms, impact drum, concert bass drum, 4 timpani, vibraslap, flexatone, triangle, hi-hat, cowbell

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

"Shark Week!" was composed for the Canyon Ridge Middle School percussion ensemble for their performance at the 2025 Midwest Clinic. The shark is the official mascot of the Canyon Ridge band and served as an inspiration for this spirited work. The piece is just over 2½ minutes in length, opens at 136 bpm, and accelerates to 152 bpm near the end for a recap of the opening theme. Rhythmically, the piece features standard eighth- and sixteenth-note figures in 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, and 7/8, with a few quarter-, eighth-, and sixteenth-note triplet rhythms sprinkled in about halfway through the work.

The opening theme alternates between 4/4 and 3/4, and features a repeated unison, aggressive rhythmic figure from the snare, bongos and congas, concert toms, and timpani, while the three other players gradually thicken the texture with increasingly active patterns. The first half of the piece alternates frequently between 2/4 and 3/4 and incorporates a variety of rhythmic ostinatos, brief soloistic moments or rhythmic dialog between players, and a few ensemble impact moments. The 7/8 section that follows features timpani and snare drum solos and closes with an aggressive ensemble unison in 4/4 before dialing things back into a mellow half-time feel that includes exposed moments for vibraslap and flexatone. A series of crescendos and a short accelerando bring the piece to the up-tempo repeat of the opening theme to close out the work.

The texture is dense, the energy high, and the tempo fairly unrelenting, so players who can play confidently in time and know when to play out and when to sit back into the groove in a supportive role are required. This is a quality option for advanced middle school or early high school ensembles.

—Josh Gottry

### Sin Fronteras IV

Rick Dior

\$45.00

**Tapspace Publications**

**Instrumentation (6-8+ players):** glockenspiel, vibraphone, 4-octave marimba, 4.3-octave marimba, 5-octave marimba, drumset, bongos, cajon, shaker, wooden wind chimes

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

"Sin Fronteras" is an exciting percussion ensemble work in a fusion style that explores odd meters and Latin rhythms to create an entertaining piece that is as much fun for listeners as for performers. It was written for the University of North Carolina at Charlotte Percussion Ensemble.

The opening phrases emphasize the needs of the ensemble to have command over odd meters. In the first 11 bars alone players are asked to navigate between 4/4, 7/16, 2/8, 12/16, and 2/4. All of the meter changes make sense and add up to interesting changes in pulse that keep listeners on edge in the best way.

The vibraphone and marimba 2 players will need to be comfortable with four-mallet technique, while the rest can survive with two mallets. The drumset player will need to be solid to not only assist with navigating the changing meters, but also for the various written solo breaks. That player will also need to be well versed in a number of different Afro-Cuban rhythms and styles.

A nice quality of this piece is how adaptable it is. Rick Dior provides multiple configurations in terms of instrumentation that can be used to

shape the piece to your group. He also notes that the percussion solo section at Rehearsal J (as well as numerous other solo percussion breaks in the piece) can be altered based on the needs of the group. This could allow one to adapt the piece to be a drumset feature (or any other drum for that matter). There is also a section where the vibraphone is called to improvise over relatively simple chords, providing for another feature section for one of the performers.

"Sin Fronteras" is an engaging piece. With its rhythmic drive, moments for performer features, and adaptability, it would make a great addition to any advanced high school or college's percussion ensemble program.

—Brian Nozny

### Songs for Black Swans IV

Brett William Dietz

\$45.00

**Tapspace Publications**

**Instrumentation (4 players):** 2 octaves of crotales, tuned steel pipes (F3-C5, chromatic), vibraphone, xylophone, orchestra bells, 5-octave marimba, 2 congas, ankle shaker, 4 wrist shakers, cabasa, small woodblock, Zil-Bel, hi-hat

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

According to Brett William Dietz, a "black swan" event is defined as seemingly unpredictable and improbable when it happens, but in hindsight is considered by some to be obvious or inevitable. Dietz wrote "Songs for Black Swans" to reflect the "mysterious yet relatable nature of these pivotal occurrences." Each of the four movements is titled after "The Rumsfeld Matrix," dividing information into known knowns, known unknowns, unknown knowns, and unknown unknowns. (I recommend looking up The Rumsfeld Matrix for more information and context.)

The first movement consists of a vibraphone ostinato with a slow-moving tuned pipes melody, bowed crotales, and low marimba chords. It's eerily pretty. Movement two starts with a conga pattern that subverts one's sense of pulse and where count "one" is — a very cool effect! Another player jams along on a small multiple-percussion setup, while the mallet players perform Philip Glass-inspired music while wearing wrist shakers. There is also some interlocking clapping music. The third movement is a delicate and haunting mallet quartet, also with a Philip Glass sound. The vibraphone has left-hand eighth notes with bowed right-hand long tones. The movement builds additively in layers, with the orchestra bells playing threes against the vibraphone and marimba fours. The tuned pipes return with a scalar moving line. The fourth movement follows a similar format to the previous movements while contrasting movement three with its rhythmic energy, including a fun cabasa part played with fingers on the beads. The piece ends in an optimistic A major. What I find especially appealing about "Songs for Black Swans" is that there is a darkness hovering over everything, even in more tonal or groove-based moments.

"Songs for Black Swans" is a substantial (approximately 15-minute) work that is well worth pursuing. It's not incredibly technically challenging, but it requires mature performers. The tuned pipes may be an accessibility issue, but as enough quality pieces require them, it might be worth the serious percussion program acquiring some.

—Joseph Van Hassel

### Suite in One III

Walter Mertens

\$28.97

#### WM-Music

**Instrumentation (13 players):** glockenspiel, 2 vibraphones, xylophone, marimba, electric piano, bass or malletKAT, timpani, drumset, tubular bells, 2 suspended cymbals, cabasa, temple blocks, tam tam, wind chimes, cowbell, bongos, triangle

This suite in one movement is an excellent introduction to “larger scale” music for younger students. The piece is 4½ minutes long and uses a large variety of instruments. The first section is slow, and the second section is fast. The keyboards supply the melody and harmonic accompaniment while the accessories offer support and emphasis. The electric piano and bass parts are optional; however, the bass really helps the low end and would be missed. One vibraphone player requires three mallets for a short passage in the beginning. The rhythms are straight forward and should not be a problem for most students in eighth grade and above. The piece is also very tonal, making it a good listen for the performers and audience alike.

“Suite in One” would go well on a middle school/high school concert. For those with larger percussion methods courses, this could be used to teach percussion ensemble playing.

—Josh Armstrong

### Triptichon III

Walter Mertens

€42.45

#### Golden River Music

**Instrumentation (11–13 players):** orchestra bells, 2 vibraphones, xylophone, 4.3-octave marimba, chimes, 4 timpani, drumset, 3 triangles, 4 concert toms, 3 suspended cymbals, tam tam, 2 congas, 2 bongos, 5 temple blocks, bar chimes, crash cymbals, shaker, concert bass drum, piano, electric or keyboard bass

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

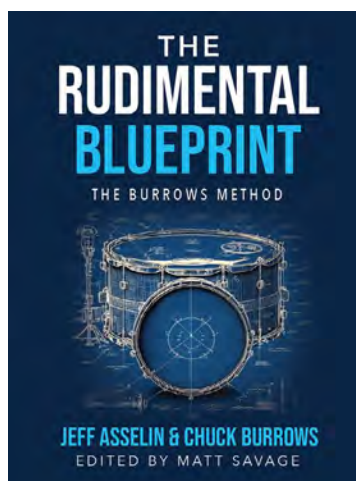
“Triptichon” reminds me of pedagogical works for percussion ensemble by such composers as Jared Spears and Lynn Glassock. The piece is written in three sections, the first using melodic material reminiscent of old Nintendo games – perhaps Mario marching to victory after defeating Bowser. The second section is free sounding and sparse, although for the most part still strictly notated. The final section presents a quasi-samba groove with a syncopated melody and some fun drum breaks.

The mallet parts are approximately equal in difficulty, each requiring two mallets (although some marimba passages might be more idiomatic with four) and a variety of techniques. There’s not necessarily a hierarchy of parts, although the piano part is listed as optional, and the percussion parts can be divided in different ways (hence the 11–13 players designation). The timpani part has some tuning changes and exposed solo moments, and the percussion parts all have challenging and soloistic elements.

“Triptichon” was a winner of the Vlamco Composition Contest and will likely also be a winner for the performers and audience, as it is quite pleasant and would work nicely for a pops concert or high school ensemble. Check out the full recording on SoundCloud.

—Joseph Van Hassel

## SNARE DRUM SOLO



### The Rudimental Blueprint III–V

Jeff Asselin and Chuck Burrows

\$34.99

#### Self-Published

Organized in difficulty from beginning to intermediate and advanced, this spiral-bound 111-page rudimental snare drum method book provides students with in-depth, progressive rudimental study. The design of this approach enables students to have comprehensive skill development throughout the book. Jeff Asselin and Chuck Burrows provide summary remarks that are relevant to the purposes of this book: “Rudimental skill is not just limited to the snare drum or the 76 solos in this book.”

Some duets are included, which amplifies the usefulness of this book. One can perform the duets with a drum teacher, practice them with another rudimental enthusiast, or use the QR at the top of each solo to access the play-along video playlist.

—Jim Lambert



### Throwback Thursday for Snare Drum & Pedal Cowbell V+

Johannes Steinbauer

\$18.99

#### HoneyRock

Johannes Steinbauer pushes beyond the now-commonplace practice of drawing multiple sounds from the snare drum with the addition of a pedal-

operated cowbell. The result is a composition that is both creative and demanding, presenting the soloist with a wide range of technical and musical challenges.

The piece requires frequent implement changes, with the performer moving fluidly between sticks, brushes, and even a Superball at various points! The solo progresses through multiple musical ideas. At times it is polyrhythmic with a three-against-four rhythm between the hands and foot. At other times it is rudimental, with open rolls, accents, and flams. The work later takes on a more rubato character, including Superball glissandos (created in a manner similar to thumb rolls on a tambourine).

The performer must be comfortable navigating intricate rhythms and an extended range of time signatures, including 1/4, 3/4, 4/4, 5/4, 6/4, 5/8, 7/8, 7/16, and 9/16. It does not require a fast foot, but the cowbell hits must be placed accurately to align with the snare rhythms. While stickings are included for some of the rhythms, they are mainly left up to the discretion of the performer. This solo will require much effort and practice, but the resulting performance will surely engage the audience!

—Jeff W. Johnson

## SNARE DRUM SOLO WITH ACCOMPANIMENT

### Kibo (band version) III

Andrea Venet

\$70.00

#### Tapspace Publications

**Instrumentation:** solo snare drum, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bassoon, soprano sax, 2 alto saxes, tenor sax, baritone sax, 2 trumpets, 2 F horns, 3 trombones, 2 euphoniums, tuba, crotales (2 octaves), vibraphone, 4.3-octave marimba, suspended cymbal

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

I was thrilled to see this piece. I have long been a fan of “Kibo” as a snare drum solo with percussion quartet, having programmed it for my ensemble. Adapting the piece for snare drum solo and wind ensemble is a great decision. “Kibo” is inspired by the song “Africa” by Toto. Andrea Venet states that the piece is a fusion of the influences of Becker, Pratt, and Tompkins.

As with the percussion ensemble version, the marimba part contains constant sixteenth notes throughout much of the piece. This contributes to the rhythmic drive established by the solo snare part, which is also nearly constant from beginning to end. The solo part uses accents, tenuto, a large dynamic range, quintuplets, and snares on and off to create a palette for the performer to be as expressive as possible. The wind parts, much like the vibraphone parts in the percussion ensemble version, are characterized by long, legato melodies and phrases. The band parts are manageable for a wide range of ability levels.

I recommend this piece for a student or professional who wants to perform with a wind ensemble. The difficulty is accessible for the soloist and ensemble, and the music itself is a crowd-pleaser. I will be playing this one soon!

—Justin Bunting

## TIMPANI SOLO



### Urban Impressions V

Walter Mertens

No price given

WM-Music

**Instrumentation:** 5 timpani with audio track

**Web:** [Video recording](#)

What an incredible journey through the city! A little over nine minutes in length, this is an incredible work for solo timpani and audio. It is inspired by spending a day in a city from the morning lull, through the busy streets, up to the late evening where the city goes to sleep.

This solo is advanced, with numerous changes in phrasing and time signatures. Even with the backing track, the timpani stay very busy almost the entire time. The audio is very interesting but does not get in the way of hearing the solo instrument, giving the timpani space and time to shine. There are plenty of moments with nice, contoured melody, especially in the third movement. The fourth movement requires holding multiple mallets as accompaniment for the melody.

The number of pedal changes makes the piece a challenge. However, the composer goes to great lengths writing in the pitch changes and exactly when to switch; I wish everyone did this! The basic rhythms of the click track are notated underneath the staff so that the performer can be sure to stay in time through the time-signature changes.

I suggest checking out the composer's website for his other compositions for solo timpani, drumset, keyboard, percussion ensemble, etc. It's definitely worth your time to deep dive.

—Ben Cantrell

### 4 Recital Pieces for Timpani III-IV

Walter Mertens

\$17.25

Golden River Music

**Instrumentation:** 4 timpani with suspended cymbal, tambourine, tam tam, bar chimes, piano

*4 Recital Pieces for Timpani and Piano* pairs four vignettes featuring timpani and piano. Though the title suggests parity between the instruments, these are much more timpani solos with piano accompaniment. Running between one-and-a-half to two minutes in length, these brief works offer a variety of styles such that the solos could complement each other nicely as a suite.

Throughout this collection Walter Mertens orchestrates solos for two, three, and four drums. While there is a range of demand, the solos are not presented pedagogically in order of difficulty. Where the timpani writing in Solo IV is reminiscent of Handel's *Messiah*, the writing in Solo V calls for the most daring orchestration of the bunch with the timpani part including suspended cymbals, bar chimes, or tam tam.

While the melodic characteristics of the timpani writing is interesting, some of the written ranges may prove challenging on certain instruments, particularly Ludwig balanced-action drums, which struggled to reach C-sharp and D on the 29-inch drum. Pitch scheme aside, the timpani and piano parts feature idiomatic writing that would be a lot of fun to put together.

Overall, this work offers a much-needed pairing of piano and timpani, a combination that allows the timpanist to phrase within a larger musical context. These short solos would be great for a juried performance or as a suite for a recital.

—Quintin Mallette

## MULTIPLE PERCUSSION SOLO

### Psalm 149 VI

Isaac Pyatt

\$20.00

Media Press Music

**Instrumentation:** bass drum, 2 toms, conga, 2 bongos, tambourine, ceramic plate, tam tam, 2 gongs (pitched C4 and D4), wood slat, woodblock, glass bottle, 4 almglocken (pitched F4, G4, A4, B-flat 4)

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

"Psalm 149" for solo percussion is a six-movement artistic response to the text of the titular Psalm, and is roughly 26 minutes in length. The composer uses the large scope of the piece to grapple with his conflicting thoughts and feelings surrounding the original text, and that conflict is evident from the opening movement, which is surprisingly martial and process-oriented. Indeed, there is a sense that the creation of this piece was therapeutic, or perhaps cathartic, for the composer, and his motivation in writing the piece must also include a wish to provide a similar experience for the performer and audience, assuming they share his sensibilities on the subject.

Each movement reveals its own distinctive musical ecosystem, including a dance-like second movement and a gently lyrical song without words in the final movement. The through-composed recitative with spoken text in the third movement is ostensibly a simple setting of the Psalm text, but the fluid asymmetrical meter, frequently-changing rhythmic subdivisions, and angular percussion accompaniment communicate an anxiousness and unease with the source material that seems better suited for modern geopolitical discourse than earnest religious worship; why else would the movements begin with markings such as "Simply, Raw," "Oppressively Disjunct," and "With Fury"?

The piece sounds like something Xenakis might have written upon hearing a lecture by Rzewski. There are many impressive moments of virtuosity and emotion, and by the end the audience will be left with no doubt as to the composer's point of view. Indeed, the piece is lengthy enough that some performers may wish to only play selected

movements. I would recommend this work to college- or professional-level performers seeking a large-scale, virtuosic solo that is relevant to Middle East politics, although I urge potential performers to visit the provided link and watch the video first to ensure that the unabashedly provocative politics of the piece are in line with their own artistic and personal sensibilities.

—Brian Graiser

## MIXED INSTRUMENTATION

### C'est La Vie V

Jacob Ottmer

\$30.00

Media Press Music

**Instrumentation (3 players):** vibraphone, cello, piano

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

This is a gorgeous use of piano, cello, and vibraphone. Focusing more on sound than technique, it is musically mature. This will require a student or professional to have complete focus, as one must listen for balance, timing, and clarity. Rated as advanced due to this and more advanced music reading, such as following everyone's part in the score and aleatoric boxes (a set of notes in a box played to the performer's discretion). There is also a particularly tricky section toward the end.

Hauntingly beautiful, one can hear the emotion while listening. The first movement sets the tone at *lento*. It calls for at least two of the performers to be in unison almost the entire movement, while taking turns with interjections and melodic moments. The double-dotted-eighth/thirty-second notes are a prevailing rhythm throughout with slow offbeat, rising melodic lines to contrast. The second movement is freer. It uses aleatoric boxes and avoids unison except for occasional moments that must line up. The notes say it "is more of a sequence of events..." One listening may notice the performers take their time, but it still moves forward. Movement three is more upbeat but not in a hurry. Jacob Ottmer gives an instruction of "haunting, distant" in measure 15, which could be applied to most of this movement. He plays with rhythm by indicating occasional swung eighth notes, which gives a feeling of lightness, but the harmonies do not give that feeling. It is a fantastic juxtaposition. To add to this, the main theme always starts somewhat hauntingly, but ends with straight eighth notes outlining a major chord. The program notes mention the use of other composers' material. I am sure I missed a few, but there are some clear references. This is a great piece to play, and it would be a fun study, with many moments that could be analyzed.

The vibraphone part calls for normal vibraphone technique as well as bowed vibraphone and harmonics. It goes back and forth between accompaniment and melody. The third movement will particularly garner attention in the practice room. It is a very cool part that would be worth learning for a student or a professional.

Several clear performance notes are given in the publication, which comes with three complete sets of scores. I really like this piece. It is for a more art-centered or academic audience, but there are plenty of moments of repeated motifs and melodies to give any focused listener a chance to grasp.

—Stephen Busath

## Easy Duets for Multi Percussion & Piano II

Walter Mertens

No Price Given

WM-Music

**Instrumentation (3 players):** tam-tam, suspended cymbal, two woodblocks, triangle, timpani, bar chimes, crotales, bongos, drumset, tubular bells, snare drum, bass drum, piano

Appropriate for middle-school players, this collection of three short percussion duets with piano accompaniment can serve as a student's first venture into multi-percussion setups, chamber playing, and interacting with a pianist.

Not all of the instruments listed above are needed for each piece. "Lucitka" is written for tam-tam, suspended cymbal, two woodblocks, triangle, and two timpani. At 76 bpm, the piece explores the contrast between sustained and shorter sounds. "Kirseppa," the most rhythmically challenging in the collection, uses suspended cymbal, bar chimes, crotales or glockenspiel, bongos, and drumset. Several unison and soloistic moments allow players the opportunity to listen and interact. "Limatsan" is written in a march style and uses tubular bells, suspended cymbal, snare drum, timpani, and a small bass drum.

This collection is great for educators looking to expand their beginning-level chamber library. The pieces utilize instruments commonly found in middle school programs, and they offer alternatives if needed. At approximately two minutes each, these works explore such concepts as varied styles, dynamic contrast, and collaborative interaction, and provide significant pedagogical benefits outside the standard band experience.

—Danielle Moreau

## From the Planets to Earth III

Walter Mertens

€18.87

Golden River Music

**Instrumentation (3-4 players):** tubular bells, glockenspiel, vibraphone, concert bass drum, Ice Bell, 4.3-octave marimba, timpani, suspended cymbal, tam tam, triangle, piano

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

Made up of five short movements, this piece can be described as a journey that flows with texture and mood changes to delineate the different planets the movements represent. Starting with Uranus, the composer uses bells, chimes, and timpani with legato piano in a minor mode. After a large crescendo and short pause, the piece drops to *pianissimo* to begin Saturnus with more rhythmic movement in vibraphone and piano signified by meter changes (including 5/8) and syncopation. An attacca takes the listener to Jupiter, which is represented by a triumphant vibraphone melody above an ever-present eighth-note buildup in the marimba. Mars, the shortest movement, is eerie, with interjections from all players including melodic lines from marimba. This seamlessly moves to Earth's building quarter-note pulse in the piano, which builds to a grand ending with vibraphone, piano, and timpani.

The medium difficulty rating for this piece is appropriate, though I would put the quartet version on the lower end of medium. Part of what makes it more difficult in the trio version is the multiple instruments that are needed. The marimba part utilizes four-mallet technique, the vibraphone requires three mallets, and player four is required to do a suspended cymbal roll

while playing another instrument. Nothing is overwhelmingly difficult, but there are a few polyrhythmic moments and, as noted, meter changes. This is a great piece to introduce a trio or quartet of students to small chamber playing.

While written to be played by a quartet (trio plus piano) or a trio (duo plus piano), knowing what to play for each part is confusing at first glance. It appears players one and two can ignore their "percussion" parts if being played as a quartet. But as a trio the Player 4 parts are split between them. Also, if played as a trio, sometimes the player must follow the symbols above the part to know which instrument to play. For example, in the first few measures, player one sees a "Tubular Bells" symbol on the glockenspiel part, then it switches to glockenspiel. In the quartet version, that player would just play glockenspiel. In the score there are some clarity issues where the instrument at the beginning of the line does not match the instrument being played; along with this, the score order does not match the part order. These confusions can be resolved with a little bit of score study.

—Stephen Busath



## Water Planet VI

Fumihiko Ono

\$25.95

HoneyRock

**Instrumentation (2 players):** 5-octave marimba, flute, electronics

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

Japanese composer Fumihiko Ono's newest work, "Water Planet" for flute and marimba duo, brings a great new piece to the community. This highly demanding and intricate work integrates electronics, creating a soundscape that eloquently and effectively develops the composer's themes of memory and the relationship of past and future.

From a technical perspective, the marimba part frequently uses idiomatic techniques but requires a mature and controlled performer to achieve success aligning fast rhythmic passages with the flute. Double lateral permutations, alternating notes, and rapid two-mallet scalar sixteenth notes permeate the work. Although the piece requires a 5-octave marimba for a few notes that are doubled down the octave, the majority of the part could be played on a low-F marimba by omitting the low notes of the double stops. For the flute and marimba, the work requires performers who can play with each other in perfect, fast unison and also perform passages in completely distinct tempi to create various moods and effects.

Time and space are core elements of Ono's music, and the electronic component to "Water Planet" brings a multidimensional element to the duet, enhancing the impact of both the independent tempo structures as well as the evolving space between ideas that encompass the

piece. Through the electronics, the marimbist and flautist often fill the space in their own speeds, then return together in tempo with the track to create rhythmic consonance against the previous dissonance.

At around eight minutes in length, "Water Planet" is an intriguing sonic exploration between three voices that cleverly journeys between abstract, disparate textures and unified, intense lines to create an effective narrative.

—Matthew Geiger



## Wildflowers V

Paul Millette

\$32.00

Tapspace Publications

**Instrumentation (2 players):** flute, 5-octave marimba

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

Inspired by flowers and foliage found in Texas, this seven-minute duet progresses like a through-composed tour through a unique and captivating garden. Starting with "Rain Lillies," both performers set the sonic stage by tiptoeing into the creative space with delicate marimba rolls and flute "sighs" and long tones. After this sweet introduction, a marimba groove ushers listeners into "Purple Coneflowers," which showcases each instrument with equal footing: marimba grooving with sextuplet flourishes paired with melodic flute figures that match and complement flawlessly, at times in unison, and other times serving as a counterpart to the marimba.

"Eryngos" shifts melodic and narrative weight more towards the flute, while the marimba still showcases with harmonic contributions. "Prickly Pear Cacti" is the first instance with moments of sparseness and reflection, as well as a healthy dose of harmonic shifting and rhythmic acrobatics. Finally, the music downshifts to the "Bluebonnets" section, which highlights marimba rolling chords (imagining rolling fields of swaying bluebonnet flowers) with a soaring flute melody overhead.

To say this piece is charming would be an understatement. The flute and the four-mallet marimba part are both written in such a tastefully idiomatic fashion, one cannot help but be captivated by the sounds coming from each instrument. That, in addition to the perfect complement the instruments are to each other, make for a piece that you do not want to overlook as a player, and don't want to miss as a listener.

—Joshua D. Smith

## DRUMSET

### Face V

David Macbride

\$20.00

Media Press Music

Instrumentation (2 players): 2 drumsets

Web: [score sample](#)

This duet for two drumsets includes triangles as well as various types of cymbals. While written for the drumset, the piece is more representative of a multiple-percussion work, meaning, the piece is not based around grooves, or what one might typically think of when they see a drumset in the instrument list. The piece is meant to symbolize a person looking into the mirror and into themselves. The physical performance is just as important as the musical performance, and the composer says “visual possibilities are plentiful; explore them and use good taste.”

The work is in the 20th-century aleatoric school. Repetitions are to be determined beforehand, and some even during the rehearsal. In some sections the performer is given the rhythm, but not the drums, and in others it's vice-versa. The piece relies heavily on improvisatory skills and an ability to converse back and forth as players. It also uses a variety of striking implements including triangle beaters, drumsticks, and timpani mallets.

Overall, this would be a great piece for a graduate-level or professional recital. The work would benefit students who need to work on making musical choices and performing with another player. Through the improvisatory nature, the performers would gain experience in communicating with each other, and the audience, through the drums. David Macbride has taken the drumset, an instrument typically associated with jazz and groove-based work, and used it in a more concert setting, helping young drummers explore music further.

—Josh Armstrong

### It's All About the Ride: The Ride Cymbal & Snare Drum Book IV+

Thomas E. Taylor Jr.

\$19.95

Jamey Aebersold Jazz

The great jazz drummers developed their own unique voice on the instrument, with much of their individuality rooted in the ride cymbal. However, the ride cymbal is only part of one's sound. The interplay between the snare drum and ride cymbal allows for countless possibilities, greatly expanding the drummer's vocabulary. Through this book (and listening to the drumming greats), readers should begin to develop their own voice.

The book applies single strokes, buzzes, and numbered bounces to the snare drum while maintaining a ride cymbal pattern. Although the bounces are notated using slashes through the note stems, they are not interpreted in the standard manner. Instead, the author uses one slash to represent three bounces, two slashes to represent four bounces, and three slashes to represent five bounces. The snare drum rhythms are first played against a quarter-note ride cymbal pattern, then against the traditional jazz pattern. The book concludes with eight, page-long solos applying the concepts from the book.

The real challenge is not playing the snare drum patterns against the ride cymbal, but switching between the numbered bounces, buzzed notes,

and single strokes. In many cases, the drummer must transition immediately from one type of rebound to another without any rests. It is recommended to start as slow as 40 bpm while working through the examples. Drummers may not utilize these concepts exactly as notated in the book; however, those who complete the book will develop the facility to play what they hear in their mind's ear.

—Jeff W. Johnson

## RECORDINGS



### A Time and a Place

Rob Power

Self-Released

Canadian percussionist and composer Rob Power's recent album is a showcase of his newest works featuring percussion. Each track on *A Time and a Place: Music of Rob Power* is dedicated to those who helped inspire his musical growth and identity. With five unique pieces – from style to ensemble size and instrumentation – the album provides a thought-provoking perspective into Power's compositional aesthetic while also exhibiting musical prowess from Power as a performer, along with his percussion and choral pals.

All five works feature a unique combination of instrumentation, starting with a full choir alongside a percussion chamber group and ending with Power's solo multi-percussion performance of “Fearless.” As a vibraphone aficionado, I was first drawn to the middle track, “Mahone Bay” – a vibe solo with the addition of a few extra metals. The piece avoids the traditional trappings as a simple melody and harmony instrument; instead, it shapes the keyboard into a choral voice by introducing and closing the solo with long tremolo phrases. “Ballyhack” – the second track and most energetic of the album – provides a strong glimpse into Power's percussion language on the widest range of instruments. The ensemble piece starts with strong drumming that shifts eventually to a mallet-focused ensemble and then back and forth as a way to provide contrast throughout the work. Rather than focusing on rhythmic complexity and interlocking rhythms, Power focuses on the raw dominance of unison patterns with shifting and changing accents that drive the phrases forward.

Overall, *A Time and a Place* provides a portrait of Power's voice through chamber works, solos, and collaborations. The pleasant harmonies and accessible rhythmic language instill a sense of joy and excitement in each track. Whether it's the heavy drumming of toms and bass drums, or

the surprising colors of percussion ensemble with choir in “A Time and a Place,” this album captures a wide variety within the percussion spectrum and provides an engaging and entertaining experience for the listener.

—Matthew Geiger



### Lasting Impression

Brandon Sanders

Savant Records

Brandon Sanders takes on the role of drummer, bandleader, and composer in his third offering from Savant Records. He assembled an outstanding ensemble: pianist Eric Scott Reed, bassist Eric Wheeler, tenor saxophonist Stacy Dillard, and vibraphonist Warren Wolf. Vocalist Jazzmeia Horn is featured on two selections, while bassist Ameen Saleem and pianist Tyler Bullock each make a guest appearance.

Bobby Hutcherson's up-tempo “8/4 Beat” opens the album as a showcase for Wolf, and he rises to the occasion with a blazing, yet extremely musical solo. The rhythm section simmers beneath him while Dillard and Reed also take turns soloing. Sanders then stretches out over a vamp before the melody returns. Next up is “Lasting Impression,” a Sanders original with a bouncing swing feel and memorable melodic head. Also penned by Sanders is “Tales of Mississippi,” a jazz waltz propelled by a Latin-tinged drum beat. While “No BS for B.S.” was written by Reed for Sanders, the leader lets Dillard, Wolf, and Reed shine. Wheeler's bass is prominent here, driving the tune. Reed's mellow “Shadoboxing” and Mal Waldron's tender “Soul Eyes” both showcase the ensemble's sensitivity. Vocalist Horn shows that she's just as comfortable with the jazz classic “Our Love is Here to Stay” as with the R&B favorite “Until You Come Back to Me (That's What I'm Gonna Do).”

The album was produced by drummer Willie Jones III. The overall sound is contemporary, while being firmly rooted in the jazz tradition. Wolf and Sanders work especially well together. While it's an album from a drummer and produced by a drummer, it's not just an album for drummers. It's an album for anyone who appreciates good music!

—Jeff W. Johnson

### Multidirectional

Billy Hart

Smoke Sessions Records

Jazz legend Billy Hart and his stellar quartet of over 20 years (saxophonist Mark Turner, pianist Ethan Iverson, and bassist Ben Street) have produced their first and only live album. Hart is an icon in the jazz community, having played with some of the biggest names in the genre throughout his 60-plus years of professional



drumming. This album is worth a listen purely to hear the amazing 83-year-old Hart still at it, with delicate touch on the drums and clever dialogue at every turn. There are few flashy moments from the drums, but primarily a steady stream of intricate interlocking patterns and ideas connect with the other artists through the five tracks in various, engaging ways.

*Multidirectional* is a major nod to John Coltrane and his concept of freeform feel and the exiting of conventional structures. Each tune has various layers to this approach, with Hart's compositions lending the most to these rhythmic instabilities and apparent chaos. Both "Song for Balkis" and "Amethyst" begin with short drum solos, but eventually turn unrecognizable as the quartet explores their own pathways. Other tunes are more straightforward and help provide contrast and balance, but also deliver another glimpse into Hart's excellent brushwork and tasteful comping in Coltrane's "Giant Steps," Mark Turner's "Sonnet for Stevie," and Iverson's "Showdown." Turner's piece is the most traditional of the album and one of my favorites to hear Hart's steady grounding pulse and interactions while demonstrating great color and rhythmic interest.

Having listened to much of Hart's playing over the years, I was surprised by the freedom and exploration in this live album, especially in Hart's own compositions. I expected a more traditional swing album, but the result is a more interesting and nuanced approach to the individuality and unity that coexist within the Billy Hart Quartet.

—Matthew Geiger

### Murmuration

Percussia

### Neuma Records

Percussia, a musical group based in Queens, New York, has brought us a new album of chamber music from their unique instrumentation of flute, harp, percussion, and viola/fadolin (six-string fiddle). *Murmuration* brings together compositions that give hints of minimalism, classical, contemporary, and Indonesian inspiration over the six pieces that make up this collection.

The album opens with "Moiré" by Bill Clark: a three-movement duet for harp and keyboard percussionist. Each movement blends simple melodic material between the two players in a way that creates a seemingly more complex pattern and gesture. It gives hints of Steve Reich that will keep the fans of minimalism engaged while creating a beautiful soundscape. "Espejismos" by Carlo Nicolau was originally written as a concerto with string orchestra, but Percussia has done a wonderful job translating

this work to their instrumentation, and Margaret Lancaster gives a masterful display of her flute playing.

The album's title composition is a three-movement work by Alexis Lamb. "Murmuration" is a tapestry of interweaving rhythmic and melodic gestures between the players. Ingrid Gordon and Frank Cassara on vibraphone and marimba provide much of the forward motion, playing ostinato patterns and harmonic blockings under the tapestry of melodies happening around them.

"On the Street Where I Live" is by the ensemble's violist, Ljova. This is a four-movement, programmatic work inspired by the sights and sounds of New York City during the pandemic. The group does a spectacular job using their instrumentation to imitate the sound of distant sirens in "The Never-ending Ambulances," leaving listeners with the unease we all felt during those days in 2020. The final movement, "Desperate Measures," is a dance of ambiguous cultural background, including the use of darbuka and jingle instruments (possibly a sistrum or a riq) to add to the extra-cultural nature of NYC and of the music.

The last two works are "Variasi Ombak" by Matthew Welch and "Starfish at Pescadero" by Dennis Tobenski. Welch expresses his passion for Indonesian gamelan music in his four-movement work, with intertwining melodic materials and percussive instruments that have a natural tremolo quality, like the vibraphone or crotales. Tobenski's work is a six-movement song set featuring soprano Melissa Foggerty. The ensemble presents a brilliant accompaniment for all of the darkness, emotion, and vaudevillian fun (including trap set) that this piece presents.

*Murmuration* showcases not only the artistic abilities of Percussia and their collaborators but is an example of good chamber music. Not confining themselves to one or two styles of music but rather incorporating as many of them together as they can, playing what they want to bring to the world. This album can be enjoyed by many a music lover and should be owned by all aspiring chamber musicians.

—Kyle Cherwinski

### My Latin Heart

Roger Glenn

### Patois Records

This CD features multifaceted jazz vibraphone soloist Roger Glenn, who also doubles on jazz flute, alto flute, alto saxophone, and Latin percussion (congas), performing his own original Afro-Caribbean music.

The eight tracks are titled "Zambo's Mambo," "Cal's Guajira," "Brother Marshall," "A Night of Love," "Energizer," "Congo Square," "Angola," and "Samba De Carnaval." Each track has its own backstory and unique style.

In a celebration of his 80th birthday, Glenn provides a panoramic display of his versatility, reflecting his composite musicianship as a composer who skillfully presents his music as a masterful jazz improviser — particularly on vibraphone and flute. Backup musicians include pianist David K. Mathews (known for his association with Santana), guitarist Ray Ohiedo, bassist David BeLove, the late drumset player Paul van Wageningen, and conga performers Derek Rolando and John Santos.

—Jim Lambert

### Patterns & Form

Portland Percussion Group

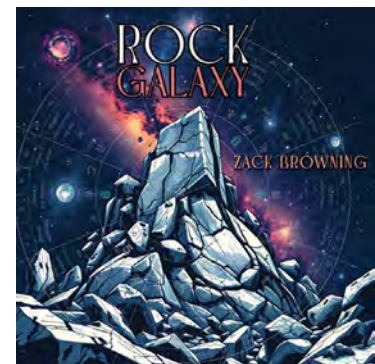
### New Focus Recordings

This recording brings together three distinct works that highlight a range of compositional approaches within contemporary percussion ensemble repertoire. The album is thoughtfully organized, with the most substantial work placed at the beginning.

Alejandro Viñao's "Patterns & Form" opens the album with rhythmically intricate, layered textures that require precise coordination and continuous awareness as an ensemble. Interlocking patterns and shifting pulse relationships drive the work forward, creating a strong sense of momentum across all three movements that lives within the driving harmonic atmosphere. Mendel Lee's "The Spaces Between" offers a clear contrast in texture and pacing. This work features sustained sounds and resonance, allowing the ensemble to function almost as a single instrument. I appreciate how this piece is placed within the album, as it provides a necessary sense of space and reflection after the intensity of the opening work. Daniel Webbon's "Whatever was lost never therefore mattered" closes the album with engaging timbral choices and a renewed sense of rhythmic energy. The focus on non-pitched percussion and the driving character of the writing create a strong and effective conclusion to the recording.

Taken as a whole, this release demonstrates the versatility of the Portland Percussion Group and highlights the strength of contemporary percussion ensemble writing. These works are best suited for advanced ensembles, requiring strong ensemble awareness, textural agreement, and a high level of rhythmic precision.

—Cassie Bunting



### Rock Galaxy

Zack Browning

### Neuma Records

This album is a diverse mix of styles and instrumentations that keep you guessing upon first listen. For this collection, composer Zack Browning set out to develop a compositional system that would make it possible to blend his experience in pop music and art music. All eight tracks apply the Flying Star System of *feng shui* and planetary magic squares to the birth dates of those who commissioned them, or significant political or historical events.

Tracks particularly of note include "Rock Galaxy" (commissioned by William Moersch) and "Moon Venus" (commissioned by Jeremy Brunk and the Millikin University Percussion Ensemble). "Rock Galaxy" is scored for marimba and string

quartet. Along with using magic squares to provide structure, various refrains are based on the first four notes of the finale of Mozart's "Symphony No. 41 in C Major, K. 551 (Jupiter)." "Moon Venus" was brought to life through applying *feng shui* to the birthdates of the commissioner and James Brown. It was additionally influenced by the music of other Browns: jazz trumpeter Clifford and reggae musician Dennis. The result is music that is engaging, rhythmically complex, and challenging for the performers.

I recommend this album to anyone wanting to experience a unique take on the genre. The music is phenomenal, liner notes are informative, and the recording and performance qualities are top-notch.

—Justin Bunting

### SafarNameh

Ziya Tabassian

### Neuma Records

*SafarNameh* spotlights Ziya Tabassian on all percussion as well as shruti box and vocals, with strings provided by Sareh Borna on kamancheh. All of the works are composed or arranged by Tabassian and showcase his percussive talents, particularly on the tombak, daf, and naqureh.

The album's title comes from the term for "travelogue" in Persian, and as Tabassian states "was born from years of exploration and practice, nurtured by my journeys through India and Thailand." Tabassian connects this traveling theme to the music by rooting each piece in a 16-beat cycle, but opening each work on a different rhythmic subdivision "like countless windows revealing new horizons." He uses the other percussion instruments to emphasize and stretch the idea of time as each piece develops.

The performance on this recording is quite impressive. Tabassian displays his command of rhythmic ideas and structures from a variety of cultures, and his execution on the multitude of instruments he plays is brilliantly done. The only other musician on the recording, Sareh Borna on a Persian string instrument called the kamancheh, also gets moments to sigh, like in the track "HarbiNameh," which features them extensively.

*SafarNameh* is a beautiful recording. The sound quality is impeccable, with a clear, detailed sound that showcases the subtle aspects of each instrument. The performances are stellar, with works that showcase each performer's individual talents. Tabassian and Borna have created a fantastic new contribution to percussion recordings.

—Brian Nozny

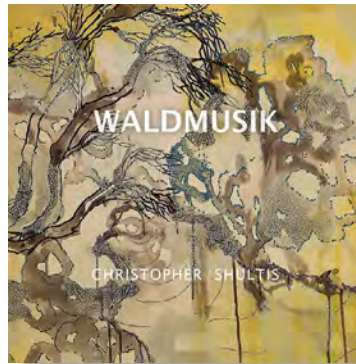
### Waldmusik

Christopher Shultis

### Neuma Records

*Waldmusik* consists of music written between 2002 and 2016 by experimental music composer and percussionist (and Professor Emeritus at University of New Mexico) Christopher Shultis. *Waldmusik* ("woods music") is a collection of works inspired by the composer's walks in different areas of the world, including Germany, New Mexico, South Korea, and Pennsylvania. These walks were partially inspired by the writings of Thoreau. Each work includes detailed liner notes regarding the composition and how it fits into *Waldmusik*.

The album starts with "Circlings" for video, gayageums (traditional Korean plucked string



instruments), and electronics. The work was composed for and recorded by the Gyeonggi Gayageum Ensemble from Korea. Shultis draws from field recordings of his travels in South Korea and his study of Korean music. The piece uses space as a prominent compositional feature; the spaces between notes are as important as the notes themselves.

"Wissahickon, Pulpit Rock, French Creek" for piano and percussion was composed for The Hoffmann-Goldstein Duo, and here performed by Ashley Oakley (piano) and Douglas Nottingham (percussion). The title lists three places in Pennsylvania where Shultis walks, and the piece uses field recordings from each location. "Wissahickon" is in seven and uses repetition and low pedaled piano sounds as primary features. "Pulpit Rock" is calmer and consists mainly (if not exclusively) of piano sounds. "French Creek" features piano clusters and the percussionist playing a sledgehammer on a board; there is also a recording of a siren. This movement is incessant and brutal, sounding somewhat like Peter Garland's music.

Shultis follows with two works for solo piano. "Devisadero" consists of six preludes written for and performed by Curt Cacioppo. The work was inspired by walks on a trail near Taos, New Mexico, and the music often sounds minimalistic and modal. I was reminded of the music of Harold Budd in its use of space, repetition, and ambience.

The second piano solo is "World's End Preludes," written for Emanuele Arciuli and performed here by Cacioppo. A companion piece to "Devisadero," it was inspired by woods walks in Pennsylvania. "World's End Preludes" reflects on the Lenape Gnadenhütten massacre of 1782, most obviously through the use of Moravian hymn fragments and the use of a Lenape rattle. The music also contains piano interior playing and utilizes repetition and space.

The final work is "One Far Noise" for tam tam and electronics, written for and performed by Simone Mancuso. Inspired by walks in Odenwald near Heidelberg, Germany, this piece explores different tam tam sounds and implements in a free, improvisatory context. The peak of the tam tam crescendo leads to bird sounds recorded by Shultis in Germany.

Check this album out! A great deal of musical substance and creativity rewards repeated listens.

—Joseph Van Hassel

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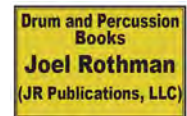
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# From the Eugene Novotney Vintage Percussion Collection

## Leedy 1920s Black Onyx Trap Kit with Rollaway Trap Console

During the 1920s and 1930s, “trap” sets were all the rage for live theater, hotel dance floors, and radio and recording bands and orchestras. The accoutrements and sound effects were extremely popular for a wide variety of entertainment styles, often making the drummer a focal point when on stage or in the pit.

This Leedy trap kit, featuring 18 instruments, each with appropriate mounting hardware, was a “top-line” kit during the late 1920s. Featured on the cover of Leedy’s 1930 catalog, the drums are covered in Black Onyx pearl with Nobby Gold plating on the hardware. An integral part of this set is the Leedy “Rollaway Trap Console” with all trap arms and clamps, including a mounted swing-out snare drum stand.

The components include: a 14 x 28 Leedy Spartan bass drum, a 5 x 14 Leedy Broadway Standard floating-head snare drum with solid wood shell and Speedway snare throw-off with a clamp-on tone control, a Leedy “Rollaway Trap Console,” the Leedy Professional pedal with cymbal clangor attachment, five Korean temple blocks with Leedy block clamp holders, a Chee Foo 10 x 4 Genuine Chinese tom-tom with “Stayon” tom-tom holder, a 13 x 9 Leedy tunable tom-tom with tacked bottom head on a folding, adjustable tom-tom cradle stand, a 10-inch solid wood-shell tambourine with nickel silver jingles and “Stayon” tambourine holder, a 10-inch nickel Realtone triangle with “Non-Swing” triangle holder, a 7¼ x 2 Chee Foo Chinese rosewood woodblock with “Stayon” woodblock holder, two Leedy (Blum) cowbells (6¼ and 4¾ inches) with cowbell clamps, ¾-inch Egyptian cymbal with holder, a 12-inch Chee Foo Chinese gong, a 12-inch Leedy foot clangor cymbal (thick), a 12-inch Leedy sizzle cymbal, a 12-inch Zenjian cymbal (thick), and a 13-inch Zenjian cymbal (thin).

The most striking features for many trap kits from this era are the hand-painted bass drum heads. This kit features the “Dancing Girl” design, which was advertised in the 1926 Leedy catalog.

The Novotney Collection is centered around vintage snare drums and full trap kits from the 1920s and ‘30s with a special focus on Ludwig & Ludwig and Leedy drums. To date, the collection includes over 40 snare drums and over 15 complete trap kits, most of which feature the rarest finishings made.

—Eugene Novotney and James A. Strain, PAS Historian



Closeup of the snare showing the Black Onyx wrap and Nobby Gold throw-off and hardware. Note the Leedy logo pressed into the top counterhoop.



A Korean block with holder, both showing the Leedy logo.



Detail of the Leedy sizzle cymbal with logo having a rivet struck through it.



Performer's view of the trap kit.

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