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PERCUSSION THEATER: SCHOLARLY PROGRAM NOTES FOR THE GRADUATE
RECITAL OF EMMANUEL SCOTT

by

Emmanuel Scott

B.S., Tennessee State University, 2018

A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Music

Department of Music
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
May 2020

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Approved by:

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CHAPTER 1

BOB BECKER: *GIRLFRIENDS MEDLEY*

Bob Becker is a Pennsylvania-born percussionist who received both his Bachelor's and Master's degree from the Eastman School of Music in New York.¹ He is a founding member of the percussion group "NEXUS," who perform his arrangement of *Girlfriends Medley* on their 2003 album *Drumtalker*.² Currently Becker performs frequently with NEXUS while also performing as a soloist and is called upon to be a clinician for various events throughout the world. He is considered "one of the world's premier virtuosos on xylophone and marimba" and his arrangements and compositions are being played worldwide to this day.

Created in 1987, *Girlfriends Medley* is an arrangement of three 1920s hit songs, *Margie*, *Jean*, and *Dinah*.³ Becker wrote this piece as an homage to Sammy Herman. Herman was a virtuoso xylophone player who performed during the "Golden Age" of both xylophone and radio.⁴ Becker names Herman as "one of the greatest virtuosos of this [1920s] era."⁵

The first girlfriend of Becker's piece is "Margie." *Margie* is a piece by Con Conrad and J. R. Robinson.⁶ The song depicts a love affair between Margie and the singer who is fawning over

¹ Nis Gron, "Bob Becker Bio," Nexus, accessed February 18, 2019, <https://www.nexuspercussion.com/members/bob-becker/>.

² Nexus Percussion, "Girlfriends Medley," on *Drumtalker*, Nexus 10713, 2003, CD.

³ Bob Becker, email message to author, February 18, 2019.

⁴ Dana Kimbe and James A. Strain, "Sammy Herman," Percussive Arts Society Hall of Fame, <http://www.pas.org/about/hall-of-fame/sammy-herman>.

⁵ Becker, email.

⁶ Tim Gracyk, "'Margie' sung by Fred Douglas, lyrics here CLASSIC SONG Con Conrad (1920)," YouTube video, June 18, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qisg34mVQcU>.

how much he loves her. The first sixteen measures are played by the percussion ensemble setting up the story. They echo the beginning portion of the song where the lyrics describe the love affair. Before the down beat of the chorus at m. 37, the xylophone player has an extended and flashy cadenza featuring flying thirty-second notes and many chromatic passages. The cadenza is written out, but the performer can make some solo improvisation decisions without losing the music's integrity. After the caesura at m. 35, a cluster of notes lead into the big downbeat of m. 37 where the entire ensemble plays a variation of the chorus. The xylophone part in this section has a relaxed feel with minimal solo interjections like that of the triplets from mm. 55-57. The piece then begins to build slightly until there is a change in feel at m. 101, which introduces the second girlfriend "Jean."

Jean was written by Canadian composer Shelton Brooks.⁷ Being a piece originally for winds, the instrumentalists had more freedom to solo and show individuality. This can be heard in the Harry Raderman's Jazz orchestra recording of *Jean*.⁸ Based on the style of the original song, Becker wrote two soloistic sections in his *Jean* portion of this medley. Two of the solo sections are mm.115-124 which features triplets, and mm.133-146 which includes fast moving sixteenth notes. Not only does this section give the audience something different to hear, it gives the performer a chance to really display the virtuosic playing that has not been heard since the beginning of the piece.

After the blazing solo portion that is Jean, the piece turns to its third and final girlfriend,

⁷ Becker, email.

⁸ Troy Carlyle, "Jean- Harry Raderman's Jazz Orchestra 1920s," YouTube video, April 15, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2f2UdhCmrto>.

“Dinah.” *Dinah* is a Harry Akhst song that speaks on the beauty of the title girl.⁹ Becker’s arrangement of *Dinah* includes both a songlike melody like *Margie* and a soloistic flare of *Jean*. At m. 205, Becker arranges a “shout section” where the dynamic is *fortissimo*, and the entire ensemble plays with exciting energy until the *subito piano* at m. 221. From that point on, the ensemble pushes until the end where the soloist ad libs and the entire ensemble ends on the dominant chord.

Girlfriend Medley is a powerful piece meant to be played for its virtuosic flair and easy audience appeal. Performing this piece not only shows off the skills of the performer, it gives the audience a toe tapping piece to listen too. Some audience members may even know the words of the different melodies and sing along bringing a greater experience to the performance.

⁹ Valvelive, “DINAH (Harry Akst) Joe Daniels and His Hot Shots in ‘Drumnasticks,’” YouTube video, December 29, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MnvL2ML7By8>.

CHAPTER 2

ROBERT OETOMO: *SOAR* CONCERTO NO. 1

Robert Oetomo (b.1988) is an Indonesian born, Australian percussionist, composer, and educator. Arguably his most popular composition among percussionist, to date, is his arrangement of “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” from the *Wizard of OZ*. *Soar* Concerto No. 1 is Oetomo’s first concerto composition written for string ensemble and marimba with optional piano. It is written in three movements that follow a fast-slow-fast order. There is also a written cadenza that functions as a segue between the first and second movements. This piece was created by combining Oetomo’s piano and drum set skills while using elements of rock and roll and western classical music.¹⁰

The first movement of the concerto is written in standard sonata form. The largest inspiration for this movement rhythmically is Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*. Oetomo states, “Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring* played a prominent role in influencing the driving quaver figures that use accent displacement to create syncopation. This can be heard in the opening and closing of this movement played by the marimba and lower strings.”¹¹ The second movement is written for the sudden passing of Oetomo’s aunt. As the only titled movement of the concerto, this movement is the most sentimental of the three movements. “Rainbow’s Lament” is named after the café that his aunt owned named Depot Pelangi, which translates to Rainbow Café. The final movement combines techniques and musical motives from the previous movements to create a grand and satisfying finale.

¹⁰ Robert Oetomo, “Robert Oetomo,” *Marimba One*, accessed March 3, 2020, <https://www.marimbaone.com/community/marimbaoneartists/robert-oetomo>.

¹¹ Robert Oetomo, “Description,” *Edition Svitzer*, accessed March 3, 2020, <https://www.editionsvitzer.com/catalog/soar/c-23/p-327>.

When performing this kind of piece, the marimba player must have efficient knowledge in four mallet playing techniques like independent strokes, lateral strokes, and rolls. The player must also have the stamina to perform this demanding piece. Without these Oetomo's concerto presents a challenge.

The independent stroke is a deceptively hard technique in four mallet marimba playing. Percussionist and mallet percussion extraordinaire Leigh Howard Stevens describes playing this technique like screwing and unscrewing a light bulb.¹² When executing the independent stroke, one mallet strikes the instrument while the other mallets remains in place. The difficulty when performing this technique is controlling the mallets. When playing, the unused mallet may tend to play with the other mallet or have uncontrollable movements that may interfere with playing. To combat this, the player must have a solid grasp on the other mallet while the playing mallet strikes the instrument. Without it, the quick passages presented in the first and third movement would be immensely difficult.

The double lateral stroke is used throughout this piece. A more advanced technique, this technique is described in *Method of Movement for Marimba* as "single motions that produce two successive pitches."¹³ The motion of this technique can be likened to that of a quick turning of a doorknob. The entire concerto uses this technique frequently, but its most notable on the fast-moving sextuplets sections, e.g., at m. 40. This technique is challenging because rotating the mallets and changing notes quickly is difficult. A player learning this piece would have to spend a significant amount of time on the double lateral stroke alone before attempting to perform it in

¹² Leigh Howard Stevens, *Method of Movement for Marimba*, (New Jersey: Keyboard Percussion Publications 2005), 26.

¹³ Stevens, *Method of Movement for Marimba*, 35.

context.

The last and biggest challenge for this Concerto is the amount of stamina needed to complete this piece. Percussion is a physical performance field and playing a twenty-minute concerto is taxing. Twenty minutes of turning doorknobs for double laterals strokes combined with screwing lightbulbs for independent strokes can take a toll on the wrist. When percussionist start to tire, they may try to compensate by tensing up or squeezing mallets. This is not healthy for the wrist. The unnecessary tension can cause soreness in the muscles and in worst case scenarios lead to carpal tunnel syndrome or tendinitis. The player must spend the time of repetition and work on these techniques and on the piece itself to perform it well and relaxed.

Soar Concerto No. 1 is a piece that is well worth performing. The sense of accomplishment felt by the player after they first perform this piece should be that of triumph and amazement. The technical requirements of this piece alone provide a challenge to perform well. Despite that fact, playing these difficult techniques while maintaining musicality is truly an amazing feat to perform.

CHAPTER 3

ANDREW BEALL: “ROSE OF SHARON” FROM *SONG OF ALMAH*

Andrew Beall is a New York based percussionist and composer. He received degrees from the Manhattan School of Music and New York University. Beall has written many successful compositions for orchestra like his piece *Affirmation*, which was recorded by the Siberian Symphony Orchestra. He also is credited for composing and performing the first ever marimba symphony, *Testament: Symphony for Marimba and Orchestra* which premiered in 2004 with the Tower Philharmonic.¹⁴ Beall later created *Song of Solomon*, a musical about the love life of King Solomon and his main lover Almah. This musical was nominated for the “Best Musical” award at the Thespis New York Festival.¹⁵

Song of Almah is a three movement marimba and soprano duet. The inspiration for this piece was the love story of Solomon and his most important lover. “Rose of Sharon” is the first movement of the piece and portrays the intense love that the beloved (Almah) has for Solomon. This duet later served as the inspiration for Beall’s musical *Song of Solomon*, with “Rose of Sharon” would becoming the staple song for the female lead.

In “Rose of Sharon” the marimba and soprano work together to establish the feeling of love in the piece. It begins with the marimba playing an E-flat chord before the soprano starts to sing describing herself as the “dark yet lovely” Almah. From mm. 1-17, the marimba provides a soft and mysterious background to Almah’s description. This continues until m. 18 where a crescendo by the marimba is followed by Almah exclaiming that she is a “Rose of Sharon, a lily

¹⁴ Innovative Percussion, “Andrew Beall,” Innovative Percussion, accessed April 7, 2020. https://www.innovativepercussion.com/artists/andrew_beall.

¹⁵ Andrew Beal, “Composer Bio,” *Andrew Beall*, accessed December 19, 2019, <http://www.andrewbeall.com/biography.php>.

of the valley.” Beall describes these lyrics as Almah explaining that she is a common girl like a common flower.¹⁶ Despite that fact, the crescendo and sudden change in musical feel depicts how Almah’s life changed when she fell in love with Solomon.

After Almah’s exclamation, the marimba plays an upbeat accompaniment while Almah begins to sing about her lover Solomon. Almah happily describes how connected her and Solomon are from mm. 20-75 while the marimba plays an accompaniment driving the piece forward and keeping the happy mood. This mood begins to change beginning at m. 75 when the marimba has an extended solo without the soprano. This solo begins happy and upbeat, but it soon takes on a more rubato and somber feel at m. 83. This may be because Solomon was a busy man. Though Almah was his “only beloved,” he had over 700 marriages and 300 maid servant relationships.¹⁷ On top of that he was a king. Therefore, he could not spend all his time with Almah and often had to leave. The music of the marimba reflects the sadness of Almah as she realizes that Solomon is leaving. This is reflected in her final words in the music “take me away with you.” After those words, she laments while the marimba plays a more somber version of material that was presented earlier in the piece. The piece concludes with the marimba playing a quieter version of the upbeat happy melody, symbolizing Almah’s hope that her love would return to her again.

According to Beall portrays “loves intensity.”¹⁸ Beall jokingly warned in an email that the singing of *Song of Almah* could lead to marriage.¹⁹ The beautiful feeling of love that came

¹⁶ Andrew Beall, “Rose of Sharon,” in *Song of Almah for Marimba and Soprano*, (New York: Bachovich Music Publications, 2006).

¹⁷ Beall, “Rose of Sharon.”

¹⁸ Beall, “Rose of Sharon.”

¹⁹ Andrew Beall, email message to the author, February 19, 2019.

from the bible put to music by two of the oldest instruments in history, makes his statement believable.

Rose of Sharon

Dark am I yet Lovely
O daughters of Jerusalem
Dark like the tents of Kedar
Like the tent curtains of Solomon
Do not stare at me because I'm dark
Darkened by the sun
I am a rose of Sharon
A lily of the valleys
My lover is mine and I am his
Like an apple tree in the forest
Is my lover among men
And his fruit is sweet
His left arm is under my head
And his right are embraces me
I belong to my lover
And his desire is for me
How handsome you are my lover!
You
Take me away with you²⁰

²⁰ Beall, "Rose of Sharon."

CHAPTER 4

JARRYD ELIAS: *HERO'S JOURNEY*

Detroit native Jarryd Elias is a percussionist, composer, and orchestrator. He received his Bachelor of Music in Percussion Performance degree from the Eastman School of Music. He later went on to complete his Master's in Film Scoring from the Pacific Northwest Film Scoring Program. From his efforts as an Orchestrator, he has worked on films like *Deadpool 2*, *Timeless*, and the recent *Shaft*. Jarryd's piece *Hero's Journey* is a popular choice in Italy's Percussive Art Society timpani competition.²¹

Hero's Journey is a Timpani and electronic arrangement piece meant to mimic the musical materials of popular superhero films. Two film scores on the composer's radar for writing this piece, were that of *The Dark Knight* (batman), and of *The Amazing Spiderman 2*.²² Looking at these two soundtracks in comparison to *Hero's Journey* draws interesting parallels into their influences that inspired this piece.

In 2017 Hans Zimmer decided to step away from superhero film scoring. His decision came from composing the score to actor Ben Affleck's portrayal of Batman in *Batman versus Superman* which was vastly different from the *Dark Knight* Batman played by Christian Bale.²³ He believed that he was "betraying" the *Dark Knight* Batman for a completely different Batman character with a different character type. Because of this concept, superhero film scoring is

²¹ Jarryd Elias Music, "Jarryd Elias. Bio," Jarryd Elias, accessed February 25, 2020, <https://www.jarrydeliasmusic.com/bio>.

²² Elias, Jarryd, email message to author, January 22, 2020.

²³ Ben Kaye, "Hans Zimmer Says Scoring Ben Affleck's Batman Led Him to Quit Superhero Movies," *Consequence of Sound*, May 17, 2017, <https://consequenceofsound.net/2017/03/hans-zimmer-says-scoring-ben-afflecks-batman-led-him-to-quit-superhero-movies/>.

created to reflect the character type of the heroes. In *The Dark Knight*, Zimmer uses music that is dark, serious, and minimalistic.²⁴ This is aligned with the dark and lonely character of Batman. Spiderman on the other hand, is a misunderstood teenager and a hero known for being snarky and naïve. Therefore, the soundscape for Zimmer's *The Amazing Spiderman 2*, is upbeat and happier. The music is infused with the youthful and energetic feel of the Spider Man character while not losing any of the heroic feel it's supposed to have. Elias mixed the two personalities of Batman and Spiderman to create the soundscape for *Hero's Journey*. The piece possesses some of the darker minimalistic qualities from the Dark Knight, while also keeping the youthful energy of Spiderman. The influence of both heroes is supported in the soundscape and create the "Journey" of the hero. The plight facing this new hero is a decision to either become a dark hero, or an energetic, eccentric one.

A common motive in Zimmer's soundtracks, is the use of a sixteenth note motor rhythm is the driving force of the piece. This can be heard in "Bank Robbery," from the *Dark Knight* soundtrack at the beginning.²⁵ Motor rhythms can also be heard in "There he is," from the *Amazing Spiderman 2*.²⁶ Elias establishes the motor rhythm at the very beginning of his soundscape for *Hero's Journey* and it continues throughout the piece. They serve as an underlying force to build tension before the main melody. This is completely synonymous with Hans Zimmer's use and function of motor rhythms in both the Dark Knight and Spiderman

²⁴ Ben Kaye, "Hans Zimmer."

²⁵ Hans Zimmer- Topic, "Bank Robbery (Prologue)," YouTube video, July 15, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ypmrU7QfiDc>.

²⁶ Ignacio Gonzalez, "There He Is," YouTube video, April 10, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30Tc8G6kd3g&list=PLPcJQ7ZTmCE4U806-ETp4fAgyD6ZmqIn&index=3&t=65s>.

soundtracks.

The biggest similarities between Elias' and Zimmer's scores are their use of percussion. In both the *Dark Knight* and *The Amazing Spiderman 2* soundtracks, the percussion parts are typically loud and soloistic to add to the heroic soundscapes of the Zimmer compositions. Elias' decision to use the Timpani for *Hero's Journey*, mirrors the soloistic aspects of Zimmer's composition. Throughout the piece along with the solo timpani, many percussive moments are intertwined with the soundscape. A more notable instance is the "footstep" sounding percussion hits played in the soundtrack with mm 8-48 of the music. These hits can be heard again at m. 69 where they take on a more soloistic role and briefly become the only sound heard in the soundscape. Both instances are indicative of the Zimmer soundscapes for his superhero film scores and the role that the percussion parts play.

Elias created a soundscape for *Hero's Journey* that has both the driving motor rhythm and heavy percussion indicative of Zimmer's scores. He also combined the dark and serious aspects of the *Dark Knight* soundtrack with the upbeat and happy soundtrack of *The Amazing Spiderman 2* to create the "journey" of the piece. With the popularity of superhero films in today's time, this piece is sure to be a favorite amongst percussionist and audience members alike.

CHAPTER 5

CASEY CANGLEOSI: *BAD TOUCH*

Casey Cangelosi's *Bad Touch* is a piece for solo performer and playback that tells a story. The meaning of the story, however, is left up to interpretation: directions on how the piece should be performed, particular titles for different sections of the piece, cues for the words being spoken on the playback track, and the reasoning behind using the recording of Johann Sebastian Bach's C Major Prelude at the end of the piece, along with images.²⁷ The rest of the score includes directions on how to correctly perform the piece which includes stick tricks and how to draw the zodiac constellations with LED lights. The score also states that this piece should be performed in complete darkness and the only light should be from a foot controlled overhead lamp or stand light. From the directions in the score and soundscape of the playback track, one can infer two things, the presence of an "entity" taking over someone and/or a sense of fear.

In the A section of the piece, "The Touched," the words are spoken from the playback track in total darkness. The first voice heard is that of a girl from a tape recording describing how something seems to be in the room with her that only she can see. Her voice is accompanied by a soft ambient noise. Then her voice echoes on the question "Can you feel it?" and a male voice is heard speaking about a separate entity. After this voice, the girl's voice comes in again still talking about the thing that only she can see, but this time she says that it "passed right through" and she is a part of it. This is written in the score in the same font as when her words first started. Her voice again fades out saying "it's here" and "Can you feel it?" As the girl voice keeps echoing, her voice is heard describing the feeling of being controlled by an entity. Then her voice segues into a man describing how he killed someone who was trying to kill him. He makes a

²⁷ Casey Cangelosi, *Bad Touch*, (n.p.: www.caseycangelosi.com, 2013).

joke about how the guy who tried to kill him failed and then laughs (figure 1). As he laughs, the performer begins to flicker the lamp light in synchronization with the laughs of the man. The lamp light is then switched on as the last laugh of the man fades away. The girls voice appears again claiming that she cannot tell you about the entity and if you cannot see it then you will never know. This transitions into section B, “The Antenna.” From section B on, though words are spoken throughout the performance, no words are written in the score, only directions for the performer.

Figure 1. Cangelosi, *Bad Touch*, [pg. 1], Section A “The Touched.”

1:00	1:05	1:18				1:24
You know it went through me? It passed right through me! I'm part of it, I... Can't you see it?		It's here...		Your mind expands beyond these moral characteristics and... your concepts of right and wrong. It's like I was caught in something that I had no control over, I had absolutely no say-so as to what was happening.		
1:41						1:50
...the thing is that, the guy I killed intended to kill me, so I killed him before he managed to kill me. He tried but he failed, miserably. Obviously, he's dead (LAUGHS)						
		LAUGHS	LAUGHS	LAUGHS	LAUGHS	LAUGHS
		1	2	3	4	5
			flicker light	flicker light	flicker light	flicker light
						6 light on
2:02						2:07

Section B, “The Antenna,” and Section C, “The Mixed Self,” are performed with no break time in between. They both have spoken words throughout that are both a repetition of things already said and new words that give the audience and performer new things to think about. Section B has the performer rock a stick back and forth between his hands in synchronization with the play back sounds. The angle of the stick as it is being passed looks like an “antenna” that used to be on televisions (figure 2). While rocking the stick back and forth, the performer occasionally spins the stick and strikes the air with their right hand. While this is

happening, the ambient noise is heard louder than in section A. At the fermata, in m. 9 of the B section, the ambient noise stops and only the voice of the girl is heard. Then the noise continues while the player continues the same pantomiming structure as before until the end of section B. At the end of section B, the stick comes to a halt in both hands of the performer and a male voice says, “When you view the world from someone else’s eyes, it’s far, far weirder than you think.”²⁸

Figure 2. Cangelosi, *Bad Touch*, [pg. 2], Section B “The Antenna.”

B
The Antenna

rock the stick from right to left rock the stick from left to right strike the air with empty hand (right hand) spin the stick

pantomime the gestures in sequence with the playback

Section C begins a series of different stick flourishes and pantomime gestures congruent with playback sounds (figure 3). Among the gestures performed, aside from stick flourishes, are stabbing, twisting, hammering, swing drumming, and striking. While these gestures are being performed, the ambient noise on the playback track steadily increases in volume while the

²⁸ Cangelosi, *Bad Touch*.

darkness coupled with words of people being taken over by entities, and killing people, gives the entire room a sense of fear. A CNN article written by Daniella Emanuel, discusses the fear of darkness and the color black. The article states that “We fear what we cannot see” and goes on to describe different scenarios where one may become afraid by being in the dark while also describing why one may be afraid.³⁰ The source even states that people are afraid because their sense of vision vanishes in the dark. With the loss of one sense, the other senses may enhance to give the audience members a very uneasy experience. In the article “Super Powers for the Deaf and Blind,” Mary Bates discusses how research shows that when one sense is lost, the brain enhances the other senses, especially of those who may be deaf or blind.³¹ Though the audience members may for the most part be neither deaf or blind, temporarily taking away their line of vision may enhance their other senses, like that of sound. With that fact in mind, Cangelosi requests that the beginning of the playback be played in total darkness, which enhances their other senses by taking away sight. This also exposes the sense of fear in the dark like Emanuel explains in her article. The sudden light flashing on stage may set a more horror like mood to the stage because the shadows and movements of the performer can create an illusion of something that may not be there. With the mention of entities and being taken over, this may be the effect that Cangelosi by implementing lighting in his piece.

Cangelosi also uses sound design to help him set the mood for his piece. This is an advantage of using a playback track because things can be heard without the performer having to

³⁰ Daniella Emanuel, “Colorscope: The Psychology of Black and Why We’re Scared of the Dark,” CNN, last modified September 1, 2017, <https://www.cnn.com/2017/09/01/health/colorscope-black-fear-of-darkness/index.html>.

³¹ Mary Bates, “Superpowers for the Blind and Deaf,” *Scientific American*, Springer Nature America Inc., September 18, 2012, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/superpowers-for-the-blind-and-deaf/>.

produce the sound themselves. When talking about Sci-Fi Horror films, “The Sound of Horror” discusses how the ambiance of the confined space creates the uneasy feeling along with the loud quick sounds associated with horror films.³² Instead of using loud sounds, Cangelosi uses the ambience noise to create the feeling of uneasiness. When sections B and C are being performed, the pantomime noises stay at one volume while the ambient noise increases. This can create a sense of uneasiness because in many horror films, the ambience noise gets louder before a sharp noise introduces the appearance of “the monster.” The increase in the ambient space noise coupled with the added intensity of the moment by the performer, may put the entire audience in edge because they may be waiting for the “monster” to appear. However, instead of having an entity appear at the end of the climax, Cangelosi has the words “it passed right through” echo in the darkness and fades away.

The use of soundscape and lighting create this theatrical percussion piece. It brings an experience that is different from many performances by forcing the audience to be a part of the music as opposed to simply listening.

³² Nis Gron, “The Sound of Horror: Silence and Sound Contrasts in Sci-Fi Horror Movies,” Academia, https://www.academia.edu/11176208/The_Sound_of_Horror_-_Silence_and_Sound_Contrasts_in_Sci-Fi_Horror_Movies.

CHAPTER 6

MATTHIEU BENIGNO, ALEXANDRE ESPERET, AND ANTOINE NOYER: *CECI*

N'EST PAS UNE BALL

Ceci n'est pas une balle, “This is not a ball,” is a piece composed by Matthieu Benigno, Alexandre Esperet, and Antoine Noyer. It is an excerpt from a percussion theater work entitled *Black Box*.³³ It is performed with a playback track, and a ball. The performer must also use his/her body to produce the sounds required for this piece. Throughout *Ceci n'est pas une balle*, the performer is meant to pretend as if they are playing with an imaginary ball. The performer throws, bounces, kicks, and even dances, with the ball. While playing with the ball, the percussionist performs written and improvised rhythms in the spaces between throwing and catching the ball. After a climatic buildup the piece concludes with an actual ball appearing out of nowhere.

In the notes section of the score, the composers write the following directions for the performer:

Follow the ball with your gaze in the most consistent and fluid manner. It is often your gaze (and most of the time the position of your head that gives the ball consistency from the audience's point of view. Be as consistent as possible with all of the movements and gestures. For example, if you catch the ball coming from the air above you your hand should be turned palm facing the sky, not the palm down as if it came from the ground. As always take liberty with the movements and embellish the choreography, always being aware not to alter the public comprehension of the gesture.³⁴

These notes suggest that the performer should take great consideration on making the audience

³³ Matthieu Benigno, Alexandre Esperet, and Antoine Noyer, *Ceci n'est pas une balle*, (Clermont-Ferrand, France: Alfonse Production, 2014).

³⁴ Benigno, Esperet, and Noyer, *Ceci n'est pas une ball*, 4.

believe that a ball exists throughout the performance. Making the audience believe a performance is a part of the Stanislavsky “System of Acting.”

Konstantin Stanislavsky was a Russian born actor who created a set of techniques to help actors portray emotions on stage by putting themselves in the place of the character.³⁵ Doing so allows the actor induces the “suspension of disbelief” from the audience, making the actors portrayal of the character more believable.³⁶ In his book *An Actor Prepares*, Stanislavsky explains a statement that his director Tortsov said that would lay the foundation for system,

“The great actor should be full of feeling, and especially he should feel the thing e is portraying... The important thing is that you play truly means to be right, logical, coherent, to think, strive, feel, and act in unison with your roll. If you take all these internal processes, and adapt them to the spiritual and physical life of the person you are representing, we call that living the part.”³⁷

In order to achieve this goal, the Stanislavsky system uses seven questions that the actor should ask in order to create a believable character: Who am I?; Where am I?; When is it?; What do I want?; Why do I want it?; How will I get it?; and What do I need to Overcome?³⁸ This method acting system can be used in performing *Ceci n'est pas une balle* to create the realistic illusion of a person playing with a ball during the performance.

The questions: who am I?; where am I?; and when is it?, can all be answered by using the CD and the beginning of the score as a reference. In the beginning, the sound of a plane flying

³⁵ Drama Classes, “The Stanislavski System, Stanislavski Method Acting and Exercises,” Drama Classes.biz, accessed February 25, 2019, <https://www.dramaclases.biz/the-stanislavski-system>.

³⁶ MercatorInfo, “Stanislavsky Acting Methodology,” September 28, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WaanuRvpfFU&t=85s>.

³⁷ Konstantin Stanislavski, *An Actor Prepares*, (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1917), 13-14.

³⁸ Drama Classes, “The Stanislavski System.”

across the sky and then the sounds of a ball bouncing. The score calls this portion the “arrival of the ball’ and instructs the performer to follow the ball with their head and then get it and present it to the audience.³⁹ This gives the performer the idea that he or she is a regular person on an outdoor afternoon stroll, when suddenly a ball appears in and the performer has the urge to play with it. This can also be inferred by the multiple score directions which suggest how one may play with a ball such as bouncing it, kicking it, and juggling it. The performer could think of the ball from a perspective of wanting to play with the ball either because they are bored or because they want to impress the audience with all the tricks they can do with the ball.

The questions of “how can I get it? and what do I need to overcome?” can be answered by the performance of the piece itself. While performing, the musician must play different rhythms on his or her body while creating an illusion of throwing and catching a ball. Later the performer is even asked to perform gestures like frying an egg and dancing with the ball. Not only can these be a “how” in getting to play with the ball, all of these gestures can be seen as obstacles that the performer needs to overcome in order to get to the primary goal of the piece which is the climax where an actual ball appears in the performers hand on the very last note.⁴⁰

The Stanislavsky Method is the most important element in performing *Ceci n’est pas une balle*. Answering the questions and applying them to the performance create a convincing performance. The full commitment of these questions to the act of performing this piece will make the difference of whether this piece is a professional production, or an amateur talent show.

³⁹ Benigno, Esperet, and Noyer, *Ceci n’est pas une balle*, 17.

⁴⁰ Benigno, Esperet, and Noyer, *Ceci n’est pas une balle*, 15.

CHAPTER 7

EMMANUEL SCOTT: *HANDS FEET AND DRUMS*

Emmanuel Scott (b. 1994) is a rising percussionist from Lithonia, Georgia. He is a current graduate student at Southern Illinois University and did his undergraduate years at Tennessee State University. While at Tennessee State University, he participated in the marching band and was a drum major. He also was a member of Phi Mu Alpha and became the step master of their step team. From those two experiences Scott's love of rhythm and dancing began. In a trip to New York in 2019, Scott saw the hit rhythm and dance show *Stomp*. Seeing the show inspired him to combine rhythm and dance, live electronics, and percussion, to create *Hands Feet and Drums*.

Hands Feet and Drums, is a percussion and Ableton Live piece that includes creating rhythmic patterns, recording them, and playing them back in real time by a process called live looping. Looping is a section of a piece of music cut in such a way that it can be seamlessly repeated indefinitely by technical means.⁴¹ Live looping is a playing technique based on loops which are recorded during the performance in order to compose in real time.⁴² Scott suggests using a combination of at least three instruments and body percussion, but the instrumentation is left up to the performer. The performer will also need a sound system, a computer, audio interface, microphones, mic stands, and a midi system to execute the electronic components. The piece includes the rhythmic notation for the foundational body percussion part, but the rest of the

⁴¹ Media Music now, "What is a Loop?," accessed April 5, 2020, <https://www.mediamusicnow.co.uk/information/glossary-of-music-production-terms/what-is-a-loop.aspx>.

⁴² Live Looping, "Definitions," Accessed April 5, 2020, http://www.liveloooping.org/history_concepts/definitions/.

music is also at the performer's discretion.

Hands Feet and Drums begins with the performer creating and recording rhythmic patterns into Ableton Live which is then played back for the audience. The performer uses different instruments and rhythms to create a rhythmic soundscape in real time that will serve as the backdrop for the body percussion portion of the piece. The body percussion derives from the "Hands and Feet" number in the show *Stomp* and begins in a very similar way.⁴³ The player begins with clapping and stomping a simple rhythm and it gets more complex as time passes. While this is happening, Ableton Live triggers a prerecorded track that coincides with the stomping and clapping. Then there is a large climax where the live looping soundscape stops, and the prerecorded track takes over and is in complete unison with the performer before the performer improvises outside of that track. At the conclusion of the climax, the live looping soundscape plays again, and the performer solicits audience participation via call and response stomping and clapping until the soundscape fades away. The piece includes with the two-clap call and response ending from *Stomp*'s "Hands and Feet."⁴⁴

When composing this piece, Scott decided to challenge himself by creating a piece with live looping and an extensive body percussion section. For software, Scott chose to use Ableton Live, a digital audio workstation (DAW) that is a "fast, fluid, and flexible software for music creation and performance."⁴⁵ This was primarily because of a Computers and Music class he had taken at Southern Illinois University. Through that class, he learned how to use Ableton Live for

⁴³ TEDx Talks, "Hands and Feet | STOMP | TEDxWhitehallWomen," YouTube video, June 5, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02nzFHmgPGk>.

⁴⁴ TEDx Talks, "Hands and Feet."

⁴⁵ Ableton, "What is Live?," accessed March 1, 2020, <https://www.ableton.com/en/live/what-is-live/>.

live performances and experimented with it for this piece which was also his final exam assignment. He used the *Stomp* dance number “Hands and Feet” as a foundation for the main body percussion part, and decided that the performer should also improvise around that foundation.

Body percussion can be difficult for many percussionists to perform, because they have no instruments to hide behind. Steven Schick describes this concept in his book, *The Percussionist's Art: Same Bed, Different dreams* by stating:

The instrument as an external object is simply not there: there is nothing to adjust, tune, or muffle between entrances. There are no pages to turn or sticks to change. There is nothing to express distance between the played and the instrument—no moments where you play a note and the stand back to admire it as it resonates. There is no moment of appraisal at the end of a piece where the sound decays and the performers remain. In short, the comforting barrier of instruments is gone.⁴⁶

Schick's point is that the level of vulnerability in performing without instruments may produce a sense of fear in the performer. However, if a performer is willing to conquer their fear and vulnerability by playing *Hands Feet and Drums*, they may find themselves becoming better performers overall. The performer can gain a sense of confidence as a musician that is able to transfer over to when they again perform on instruments.

Outside of the physical playing of the piece, when preparing to perform *Hands Feet and Drums*, there are a couple of key elements to consider. One of these is efficiency with the Ableton Live. Another is the amount of equipment needed and equipment location. Lastly, the ability of the performer to accurately perform in time with the electronics is integral to this piece.

The difficulty with using Ableton Live is learning how everything works. Most of the elements in this piece are recorded into Ableton and played back through a speaker. The different

⁴⁶ Steven Schick, *The Percussionist's Art: Same Bed, Different Dreams*. (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 166.

parts of this piece must also be designated and triggered electronically in order to get into the physical playing of the instruments. The player of this piece would have to understand minimum concepts of Ableton including what tracks are, how to record into the DAW, how to trigger different scenes in the software, and how to create music in the workstation. The composer provides detailed guidelines, but the act of putting the concepts to work takes time and practice. Once the performer becomes familiar with Ableton live and how it functions, creating and performing becomes easier and more manageable.

For this piece to be played well, the performer must be able to play in good timing with the music they are creating. This can be accomplished by utilizing something like an audible metronome or an in-ear metronome for timing. Another suggestion would be to play the piece without a metronome and set the piece by the players establishment of tempo. Both have their pros and cons. Playing with a metronome causes a better chance of playing in time while also making out of time music more noticeable. Playing without the metronome allows for free tempo choice but leaves more room for error.

Despite the difficulties of performing this piece, it should be played by many percussionists to combat performance anxiety and learn about digital audio workstations like Ableton. Overcoming the vulnerability allows the performer to become a better musician and learning Ableton makes them more marketable. The world is becoming more technologically advanced and the music world is updated with these trends as well. Programs like Ableton are used in many live performances and learning to use it efficiently can significantly increase the chance of being hired and getting paid more money. Ableton and any other DAWs will only become more used in work for performances learning to use them will prove a great benefit in these technological times.

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