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The Multi-Percussionist: Practice Strategies and Performance Considerations

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**THE MULTI-PERCUSSIONIST: PRACTICE STRATEGIES AND PERFORMANCE
CONSIDERATIONS**

by

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B.M., Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music, 2019
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A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
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Camila M. Bermúdez Ortiz, for the Master of Music degree in Music, presented on April 2nd 2021, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: THE MULTI-PERCUSSIONIST: PRACTICE STRATEGIES AND PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATIONS

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Christopher Butler

The purpose of this research paper is to present historical information and practice strategies for eight selected pieces that feature marimba, timpani, snare drum, vibraphone, and multi-percussion set. The compositions range from solo repertoire to accompanied works, that include a duo, two chamber ensembles, and electronic accompaniment. The pieces discussed are *Triptych Boom* by Chad Floyd, *Grit* by J.W. Moore III, *Bell Plates* by Scott Lindroth, *Ameline* by Eric Sammut, *Quartet for clarinet, horn, cello and side drum* by Bohuslav Martinů, *Impressions I* by Nicolas Martynciow, *La fille aux cheveux de lin* by Claude Debussy, arranged by Renee Keller, and *Tango Suite I* by Astor Piazzolla, arranged by Kevin Super.

These pieces will be performed at a recital on May 4th, 2021.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research paper is to demonstrate and present the variety of instruments, sonorities, techniques, and musical genres present in the percussionists' repertoire, that can be programmed into a 60-minute recital. Each piece was chosen carefully, taking into consideration aspects such as stamina, preparatory time, instrumentation, and programming. After each piece was chosen and bought, an extensive research of the composers and compositions were made through journal articles, web content, interviews, and audio and video recordings.

The end result is a diverse program that showcases a large portion of the focal percussion instruments used throughout a variation of musical genres and settings.

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CHAPTER 1

TRIPTYCH BOOM, FOR SOLO SNARE DRUM AND PERCUSSION TRIO (2013), CHAD FLOYD

Dr. Chad Floyd, born in 1977, is a percussionist, educator, and composer. Dr. Floyd is currently an Associate Professor of Percussion at Campbellsville University where he gives applied percussion lessons and directs the percussion ensemble, steel band, and drumline. He also serves as President for the Kentucky Chapter of the Percussive Arts Society and as a member of the PAS Education Committee. Dr. Floyd holds degrees from University of Kentucky (DMA), Belmont University (MM), Eastern Kentucky University (MAED), and Campbellsville University (BME). He has studied under the tutelage of James Campbell, David A. Johnson, and Todd London. Dr. Floyd is a proud endorser and clinician for Grover Pro Percussion, Humes and Berg Co., Innovative Percussion, Pearl Drums, Adams Musical Instruments, and Remo.¹

Dr. Floyd has a diverse performance background in a variety of musical settings. He has performed multiple international tours throughout the United States, Brazil, China, Ecuador, Japan, South Korea, and Trinidad, and has served as drummer for groups such as Almedia Duo, Stoik Oak and Sojourn Fare. He has also performed with the Birdsong Steel Orchestra at Panorama in Trinidad, and with the Lexington Philharmonic Orchestra, Orchestra Kentucky, Sacred Winds Ensemble and Bowling Green Chamber Orchestra.² As a composer, Chad's original compositions and arrangements for percussion are published by notable companies like Bachovich Publications, C-Alan Publications, Row-Loff Productions, and TapSpace Publications.

¹ “Bio,” Chad Floyd, accessed March 15, 2021, <http://www.chadfloyd.com/bio>. No space between citations

² “Bio,” Chad Floyd.

He is a contributing author to *Percussive Notes*, *Bluegrass Music News*, and *Tempo*.

Composed in 2013, *Triptych Boom* is a work for solo snare drum and percussion trio.

According to Dr. Floyd, “the inspiration of the piece stems from the composer’s exploration of the different ways in which the snare drum can be performed while conforming to a motivic device that identifies the work.”³ The piece is approximately 5 minutes and is suggested to be performed by intermediate to advanced level percussionists. This work can be especially difficult to put together due to the sharing of instruments by the accompanying percussion trio. In addition, all players must demonstrate a high level of touch and nuance by playing various instruments with different mallets and techniques. For the soloist, they must explore a number of creative techniques to play the snare drum with an ever-changing combination of sticks, brushes, and hands.⁴

Figure 1.1 Snare Drum Notation Key presented on the *Triptych Boom* score

Snare Drum Notation Key



Similar to the soloist, the percussion trio also explores a variety of creative techniques to their instruments as well.

As stated in the program notes, “*Triptych Boom* was built primarily around the concept of utilizing groupings of three. The snare drum soloist presents the concept throughout the work by performing rhythmic patterns in groups of three successively and also by performing at multiple

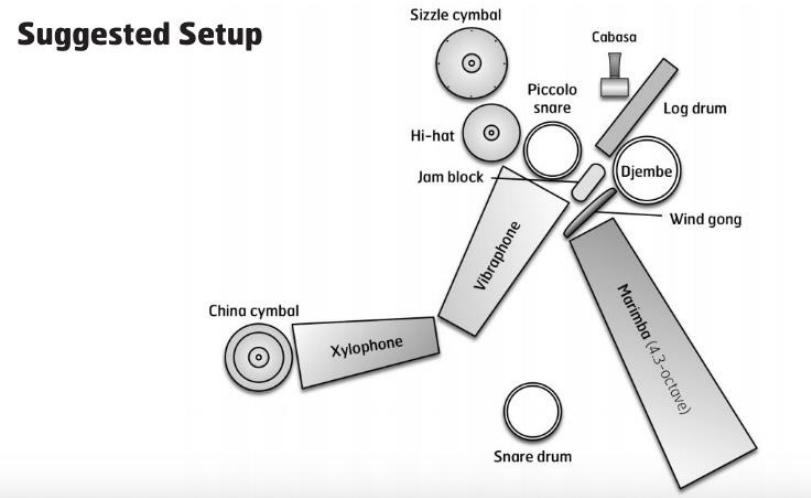
³ Chad Floyd, *Triptych Boom* (Portland: Tapspace, 2013).

⁴ “*Triptych Boom*,” accessed March 15, 2021, <https://www.tapspace.com/percussion-ensemble/triptych-boom>.

places on the drum (oftentimes being three different areas, such as the center, edge, and rim)".⁵

Triptych Boom requires the following instrumentation: concert snare drum, xylophone, vibraphone, a 4.3 octave marimba, djembe, piccolo snare drum, a log drum with two pitches, cabasa, wind gong, china cymbal, low jam block, sizzle cymbal, and hi-hat.

Figure 1.2 Suggested setup for ensemble presented on the *Triptych Boom* score



A unique component for this work includes an alternative version for soloist and playback. In this version, the percussion trio arrangement is found within different synthesized and sampled sounds created by the composer. This innovative decision allows the soloist the flexibility to perform the same work in a multitude of different venues and performance situations. It should be noted that each version has the exact same solo snare drum part, however, the electroacoustic version is much more spatial and less active than the trio version.

Dr. Floyd's piece presents elements of a "composed solo" while also sounding improvisatory and spontaneous. These characteristics can be heard throughout the piece,

⁵ Chad Floyd, *Triptych Boom* (Portland: Tapspace, 2013).

especially in rehearsal letter G, where the soloist turns the snares off of the drum and switches to bundlz⁶ and performs in a way that resembles a timbale solo. For the piece to be effective, the mirroring of this sound should be incorporated into the soloists playing, phrasing, and movement. This composed solo should sound easy, with no apparent struggle or hesitation. Although a simple concept, this is one of the primary challenges in performing *Triptych Boom* due to the fast-moving changes between sticks, fingers, and rhythmic figures. Practicing tricky musical transitions is key to mastering this illusion of “easiness”.

The connection and synchronicity between the ensemble and soloist is another factor that should be considered for the piece to be effective. No percussion part is as singular as it may look. To make this interaction apparent and smooth, it is important to know each other’s part, as well as to constantly be tuned in to the ensemble during rehearsal and performance. Floyd’s writing is very specific and each sound must match the notation key provided in the score. In short, if anything is out of place or not played with the correct sound, it will be noticeable.

In conclusion, *Triptych Boom* is a fun, energetic, and groovy piece for percussion trio and soloist that sounds like a spontaneous improvisation while also requiring an extreme attention to detail in sound production and touch. The inclusion of an electroacoustic accompaniment, in lieu of a live percussion trio, is extremely innovative and rarely seen.

⁶ Bundlz are a collection of wooden dowels that are combined to create more of an articulate and hollow sound on the snare drum. This specific implement is manufactured by Innovative Percussion.

CHAPTER 2

GRIT (2019), JOE W. MOORE III

Joe W. Moore III is an active soloist, chamber musician, teacher, and composer. He received his Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Central Florida, his Master of Music from the University of South Carolina, and his Doctor of Musical Arts with a minor in composition from Louisiana State University. His primary percussion teachers include Jeff Moore, Kirk Gay, Scott Herring, Jim Hall, Brett Dietz, and Troy Davis, and his composition teachers include Jay Batzner, Brett Dietz, and Dinos Constantinides. Dr. Moore performs as a member of the Omojo Percussion Duo, the Ninkasi Percussion Group, and Dead Resonance. His most recent performances include the Sugarmill Music Festival, the UTRGV Marimba Festival, the National Conference on Percussion Pedagogy, and the 2018 Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC).⁷

As a composer, Dr. Moore's work has been performed and heard across the United States at state music educator conferences, percussion pedagogy conferences, and PASIC. C. Alan Publications, Alea Publishing and Recording, Percussion Music Europe, and Innovative Percussion Publications publish Moore's music. He also self-publishes many of his own manuscripts.⁸ Dr. Moore is sponsored by Pearl Drums/Adams Musical Instruments, REMO Drumheads, SABIAN Cymbals, Black Swamp Percussion, and Vic Firth sticks and mallets. He currently serves as Assistant Professor of Percussion at Benedict College in Columbia, SC..

Grit, for solo timpani, is one of Dr. Moore's newest pieces for percussion. Published in

⁷ Joe W. Moore III, "Biography," accessed March 24, 2021,
<http://joewmooreiii.net/biography.html>.

⁸ Joe W. Moore III, "Biography."

2019, *Grit* was written for Dr. William Shaltis, who is Assistant Professor of Percussion at the University of Memphis and Principal Timpanist of the Boise Philharmonic Orchestra. As Dr. Moore states on his website: “inspired by one of Bill’s solo timpani performances at the National Conference on Percussion Pedagogy, I decided to compose a piece for him. I wanted to tie in the city of Memphis in some way, so I titled the work ‘Grit’ after the Grit and Grind Memphis Grizzlies”.⁹ It uses a standard set of timpani (4), and 4 single crotale pitches (F#, C, A, and E) to be placed on the drums. The duration of this piece can be anywhere from 7-8 minutes. It also requires a pair of wooden mallets, hard felt mallets, and soft felt mallets.

As a percussionist, Dr. Moore’s writing is very specific and detailed, making it very clear piece for all performers, in terms of understanding and deciphering the piece. Every new section or significant change that happens along the piece has an explanation on what mallets should be used, when should they be changed, playing areas, tuning, and instructions on when and where to place, or remove, the crotales. *Grit* is full of extreme dynamic changes from beginning to end, ranging from *piano*, *fortissimo*, *sforzandos*, *forte pianos*, all while delivering *crescendos* and *decrescendos* around the timpani. Articulation, such as accents and *tenuto*’s, are also non-stop across the score which, accompanied by rhythmic displacements, play “mind games” on the performer and audience. The piece is riddled with almost every type of rhythmic pattern: whole notes, half notes, quarter notes, eighth notes, sixteenth notes, triplets, quarter note triplets, quarter note quintuplets, and a combination of all of these, whether it involves ties around the notes or amalgamation, which result in patterns with 5 against 4 bars.

⁹ Joe W. Moore III, “Grit, for solo timpani,” accessed March 24, 2021.
http://joewmooreiii.net/store/p78/%27Grit%27_for_solo_timpani.html.

The first step for performing this piece is analyzing the score. Determine and mark sections that could be difficult. An example of this can be the crotales section, which starts on m. 102. This section requires an almost automatic-moving right hand, while the left hand moves and handles the crotales and mallet change. This section could also be challenging rhythmically, because of the 5 against 4 with the crotales on the left hand, and timpano (singular drum) on right hand, and the constant meter changes.

Figure 2.1 Excerpt of mm. 102-112 showing 5 against 4 in *Grit*

*place crotales face down in center of each timpano (F# on 32"- high octave crotale, C on 29"-top of low end crotale set, A on 26"- low octave crotale)
 **pick up wooden mallet in LH

102

x = strike crotales

106

p sf p mf p sf p mf p sf p

Another section that requires attention to detail is letter D. First, instant meter change from the back-to-back 4/4 and 5/4 to 9/8, triple meter. Second, it's full of sixteenth, dotted sixteenths, and combinations of these while varying playing areas, from crotales to timpani. It also presents *glissandi*, which change the tuning of the timpani, and if not addressed thoroughly could result in tuning issues for the rest of the piece.

Figure 2.2 Example of glissandi incorporating crotales in *Grit*

D Strike crotales while resting face down on drums, glissandi on 23" only
 121 continue glissandi on 23"
 normal

mf

Even though tuning is one of the basics of every timpanist, when multitasking, your feet have to work on autopilot.

Figure 2.3 Second section of D, showcasing intense rhythmic motion along the timpani



Grit is an excellent presentation of all, but not limited to, the capabilities of the timpani. It presents rhythm, as a percussive instrument, and lyricism, as a pitched percussion instrument. This piece also shows the capabilities of the timpanist as a multitasker. It works with many technical and auxiliary problems such as mallet placements, tuning, transitions within the piece and motion around the drums. Control and precision are two words that come to mind when working on this piece to bring into the performance, like the piece's name, strength and character.

CHAPTER 3

BELL PLATES, FOR PERCUSSION AND ELECTRONIC SOUNDS (2002), SCOTT LINDROTH

Scott Allen Lindroth is an American composer and teacher based near Durham, North Carolina. He has been a faculty member at Duke since the Fall of 1990 and has earned degrees in music composition from Eastman School of Music (BM), and Yale School of Music.¹⁰ He is currently teaching undergraduate seminars in electronic music, music theory, and graduate seminars on composition-related topics.¹¹ Lindroth also presents the concert series *Encounters with the Music of Our Time*, which feature music by distinguished visiting composers, faculty artists, and visiting performers. His works as a composer have centered around instrumental and vocal music, as well as interactive computer music, better known as “electronics.”

His commissions are quite diverse, ranging from music for dance, theater, and video, to prestigious orchestral institutions such as the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Netherlands Wind Ensemble, and the Ciompi Quartet.¹² Recordings of his works are available on CRI, Equilibrium, and the Centaur labels. Recent works include *Cadences*, commissioned by the Electric Earth Concert Series, and *Piano Roll Prosody*, which was premiered by pianist Donald Berman. Current projects include a piano trio, a solo cello composition for cellist Ashley Bathgate, and a work for soprano saxophone and string quartet.¹³

¹⁰ Duke, “Scott Lindroth.” <https://music.duke.edu/people/scott-lindroth>.

¹¹ Scott Lindroth, “Bio.” <http://people.duke.edu/~scott1/bio.html>.

¹² Scott Lindroth, “Bio.”

¹³ Duke, “Scott Lindroth.”

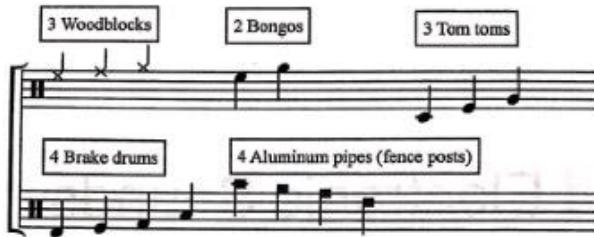
Published in 2002, *Bell Plates* is a piece for multi-percussion and electronic sound commissioned by the North Carolina Music Teachers Association. This piece is dedicated to Paul Lansky, American composer, most famously known for his 2005-piece *Threads*. The pre-recorded audio (electronics) consists of a mix of synthesized and acoustic percussion sounds, consisting of samples of various drums, cymbals, and gongs. These are heard at the beginning of the piece in their original form and are later processed in Csound¹⁴ to resemble a variety of gongs and bells. The piece is approximately 9 minutes long. It is recommended for college or professional players.

The piece is scored for multiple instruments and sonorities. Lindroth includes detailed program notes on instrument selection, tuning, options, and acquisition, which alleviate the performer when addressing issues of interpretation and correct use of instruments and equipment for the piece. Depending on the instrumentation chosen, the set up will vary between performers. The instrumentation for this piece is the following: three wood blocks, a pair of bongos, three tom-toms pitched low to high, four brake drums, and four aluminum pipes. The brake drums are the substitution for bell plates, if no bell plates are available for the player. The four aluminum pipes can be substituted with chimes, if construction of fence post for aluminum pipes is inconvenient for the time and space. While no mallet is ideal for each instrument, the best compromise is a pair of medium rubber mallets.¹⁵ Changing mallets is not a possibility due to the fast tempo of the piece and no rest for the player.

¹⁴ Csound is a domain-specific computer programming language for audio programming.

¹⁵ Scott Lindroth, *Bell Plates*, (Ajir Music, 2013).

Bell Plates Percussion Map



Also: 2-3 suspended cymbals of different sizes

Figure 3.1 Bell Plates Percussion Map

The beaming of combined rhythms do not pertain to a specific downbeat, making it difficult to read if not familiarized with this type characteristic found in various contemporary pieces. Listening to other interpretations of the piece can help to decipher this aspect in the music. Writing slashes and counts can also aid in reading the piece more effectively. Looking at the complete score, which has the electronics written down, can also help in placing certain sections.

Independence and technical skills are an important part of this solo. Most of the time, your hands will be playing two independent parts, which mean that your control over singles, doubles, and triples with one hand are a priority. Memorization of movement, and transitions between sections of the multi-set up are also encouraged. The piece, at 135 the quarter note, moves very fast, and there's little to no time to think of how you're going to move to each instrument. Practicing and/or writing transitions in your daily practice is recommended. The piece starts by playing only the main theme/variation on wood block; eight notes accented on 1 and 2, which are displaced by a 3/4 pattern that returns to the 4/4 pattern that is displaced once

again by a 3/4 bar, this time incorporating triplet sixteenth notes that culminate in a 3/8 bar and resolve to the 4/4 bar to recapitulate the theme. This 8-bar phrase, but specifically the first and last bar of the phrase, are the foundation of the whole piece. Later sections with heavier instrumentation use the same idea and develop a variation that mix intertwines with the electronics.

Figure 3.2 Opening bars of the theme of *Bell Plates*

This work for multi-percussion and electronic does not us a cue or click track, making alignment challenging. The solo includes two practice tracks, one with a click track, and one without, both at a significant slow tempo, which help when facing the piece for the first few times. Even after deciphering each section of the solo, the practice tracks are excellent for everyday introspection of certain sections, transitions, writing cues, and familiarizing oneself with the tape before facing the “performance version”. For the performance, it is recommended by the composer the following sound equipment: digital audio playback device, mixing board, high quality P.A. system, and monitors or earbuds for the soloist.¹⁶ On the performance notes, Lindroth says that:

¹⁶ Scott Lindroth, *Bell Plates*, (Ajir Music, 2013).

The audio file plays continuously during the performance. It is important for the electronics sounds to be sufficiently loud to provide a full-bodied setting for the solo percussionist. It should be difficult to distinguish between the soloist and the electronic sounds during the performance. Depending on the hall, it may be necessary to damp the tom toms or substitute another instrument to gain a ‘tighter’ sound.

In the end, this piece shows the mastery of the performer’s technical abilities maneuvering a variety of different instruments, demonstrating their internal pulse and rhythm, spatial awareness, rudimentary control, and precision.

CHAPTER 4

AMELINE (2010), ERIC SAMMUT

Eric Sammut was born in 1968 in Toulouse, France. As a teenager, Sammut was fascinated with blues, fusion, bop, and jazz harmony after hearing the band *Weather Report*, which led him to start his early musical studies on piano at the Conservatoire National de Région de Toulouse.¹⁷ Two years later, he continued his studies in percussion at the Conservatoire National de Musique de Lyon under the tutelage of François Dupin and Georges Van Gucht, two leading figures in French percussion pedagogy. He graduated from the conservatory in 1989 with the highest honor, Premier Prix, and became the principal percussionist of the Orchestre de l'Opéra National de Lyon.¹⁸

Between 1989 and 1994, all of his focus and dedication was on the Opera, which led him into a “marimba hiatus”.¹⁹ After his teacher passed away, Sammut saw a poster of the Leigh Howard Stevens International Marimba Competition, which was being dedicated to two “great marimba lovers”: Per Melsaeter, and François Dupin. This caught his attention, but not his full consideration to participate in the competition. He started experimenting with improvisation, initially on the vibraphone,²⁰ and changed to marimba because he wanted to improvise more with bass, chords, and melody. Over the next several months, his autonomy and technique on the instrument became masterful, and this newfound confidence would lead him to prepare for the

¹⁷ Brian S. Mueller, “The Improvisational Technique of Éric Sammut” (DMA diss., Indiana University, 2016), 14.

¹⁸ Ming-Jen Suen, “An Analysis and Comparison of *Four Rotations Pour Marimba*, a Solo Marimba Suite, by Eric Sammut” (DMA diss., University of North Texas, 2011), 15.

¹⁹ Mueller, “The Improvisational Technique of Éric Sammut,” 15.

²⁰ Mueller, 15.

competition, and compose his first two publications, *Rotation I* and *Rotation II*. Sixty-one performers from twenty-two different countries participated in this historic event – the first-ever international solo marimba competition, and Eric Sammut was declared the undisputed winner of the competition. Sammut’s win brought him the opportunity to perform a showcase concert at PASIC in 1996, and then a tour around the United States performing concerts and presenting clinics, kickstarting his career as a solo marimbaist.²¹

As of now, Eric Sammut is one of the premier composers and performers of marimba and percussion music in the 20th and 21st century. Most of his compositions are regarded as standards in the marimba repertoire for any percussionist, student or professional, garnering hundreds of performances throughout the years. He is currently principal percussionist of the Orchestre de Paris and teaches at the Royal Academy of Music in London and Glasgow.

Eric Sammut’s *Ameline* is a four-mallet unaccompanied solo scored for 5 octave marimba. This piece is full of split, syncopated rhythms that are divided between the left and right hand, while working with constant time signature changes between 7/8 and 4/4. ²² The right hand, specifically mallet 4, carries the melody of the piece, while left hand carries the bass and harmony. Like many of Sammut’s pieces, *Ameline* is a perfect example of a variation on a theme, primarily because of its basis around improvisation.

Sammut composed this piece in one day, the fastest he has ever composed. ²³ For this reason, *Ameline* comes closest to capturing his improvisational method of composing. In the

²¹ Mueller, “The Improvisational Technique of Éric Sammut,” 16-19.

²² “Ameline by Eric Sammut,” Lonestar Percussion

²³ Mueller, “The Improvisational Technique of Éric Sammut,” 106.

beginning, the left hand is kept relatively stable so the right hand can vary and explore the different possibilities in melody before complicating and expanding the left-hand movement with embellishments. This type of writing calls to attention the practice and development of reflexes on the marimba – acquiring a sense of autopilot while playing the left-hand, so the focus can be on the structure, and interpretation of the music, rather than on the independence and technique needed to play.

The meter presents us with the first challenge. Singing the piece would be the most efficient way to internalize it. This exercise allows the performer to focus on smaller two to four bar phrases instead of larger sections. Separating the left- and right-hand parts, and learning each rotation individually, rather than together, also help in the learning process. These permutations vary throughout the piece in register and the melody's starting note, but the intervals stay the same, making it a successive movement for the performer. In this, approximately, 5-minute solo, *Ameline* packs beautiful, rich harmonic progressions, a clear nostalgic and infectious melody that could move anyone's heart and ears, while presenting the technical independence and performative, interpretive abilities of the marimbaist.

CHAPTER 5

QUARTET FOR CLARINET, HORN, CELLO AND SIDE DRUM (1924), BOHUSLAV MARTINU

Bohuslav Jan Martinů was born in Polička at the tower of the St. Jakub Church, on December 8, 1890 in the Czech Republic. His father was a shoemaker, who worked as the church sexton and a town fire watchman. Neither of Martinů's parents had any strong musical influences upon him. However, his father belonged to the amateur dramatic society, the Polička Players, and when not consumed with his work, participated in several productions. When Bohuslav became older, his father would take him to rehearsals and performances. This would eventually spark a life-long enthusiasm in him that contributed to his later interest in opera, ballet, and other music with a dramatic setting.²⁴

From a very young age, Martinů didn't do particularly well in school. In fact, he was rated below average in drawing and arithmetic. But it was during this time that his father decided to buy him a three-quarter-size violin at the annual fair and enrolled his son in music lessons with the local tailor, Josef Cernovsky.²⁵ Cernovsky was an all-around musician, and taught Martinů not only the fundamentals of violin playing, but introduced him to overtures from classical opera, French opera, and other works from the beginning of the 19th century. This jumpstarted Martinů's whole future. At the age of 16, Bohuslav was taken to Prague to be introduced to professional musicians.²⁶ With him, he carried his violin and his first string quartet.

²⁴ Brian Large, "Bohuslav Martinů," The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians.

²⁵ Brian Large, "Bohuslav Martinů."

²⁶ "Bohuslav Martinů," Universal Edition.

During his interview, the director of the conservatory was as much or more impressed with his composition as he was with his violin playing and was admitted into the Prague Conservatory. But things didn't go well for Martinů.

He lacked discipline, and by the end of his second year he was failing his examinations. He left the conservatory to continue his studies on his own. "He read, studied scores, attended concerts, and composed daily.²⁷ It was with such intense personal discipline and hard work that Martinů was able to grow into the composer of 384 works, including works for orchestra, concerti, compositions for piano, stage, film music, and chamber music. Even though experts view Martinů's most important works as his operas and symphonies, it's his chamber music that demonstrates his ability to produce quality work in an intimate musical setting.

Premiered in Paris in 1924, the *Quartet for clarinet, horn, cello, and side drum* is one of the works that represent quality in an intimate musical setting. Martinů had written several chamber compositions before he arrived in Paris, but none of them included winds or percussion. As a violinist, he was more comfortable writing for strings, but Stravinsky's *L'histoire du soldat*, inspired Martinů into creating this quartet²⁸, and choosing this very particular instrumentation. The quartet is in three movements: I. Allegro Moderato, II. Poco andante, III. Allegro non troppo. This quartet is dominated by rhythm, which is also inspired by Stravinsky. Rhythmic displacements, whether it's in the players own part or within the chamber group, are present in the whole piece. Phrases move from one person to the next in a blink of an eye and fun, little

²⁷ "Bohuslav Martinů," Universal Edition.

²⁸ Robert L. Walzel Jr., "'Bohuslav Martinů: An Examination of Selected Chamber Music Involving the Clarinet, with Three Recitals of Selected Works by Rossini, Sutermeister, Castelnuovo-Tedesco, Weiner, Bowen, Beethoven, Brahms, and Other.'" (DMA diss., University of North Texas, 1997), 16.

duets form with the most unlikely pairings you can imagine in an, already, oddly instrumented quartet. Meter changes are consistent throughout as well, presenting the group to a variety of odd meters ranging from 5/4, 10/8, 6/4, and 3/4 in the first movement, to 4/8, 6/8, 3/8, 6/16, and 7/16 in the third movement. The most “stable” movement, in terms of meter, is the second movement, but its use of long half notes and ties in the cello solo make it one of the hardest movements to count and follow.

This quartet should only be played by advanced level performers and/or professionals. The players should have a strong background playing in chamber or small ensemble groups, and should be familiar or fairly acquainted with each other, and each other’s playing, because of the complexities that entail this piece. During rehearsals, it is important to communicate and make suggestions. Target each movement individually, focus on small details, on how each part interacts within the piece, unisons, duos, and solos. Afterwards, focus on general details like dynamics, balance, and choosing ideal tempos for each section. A first run-through of the piece or movement, to spot immediate problems is encouraged. Incorporating a metronome during the first rehearsals is an essential tool for alignment between parts and sections. The eight-note subdivision on the metronome is suggested, because it stays constant throughout all the meter changes.

Martinů’s *Quartet for clarinet, horn, cello, and side drum* is a very important piece in chamber group music, and history, and having the opportunity to play it is an achievement on its own, as it is rarely programmed, because of its deceptive, laborious, and strenuous challenges for the group that, after the fact, become a playful, danceable and uplifting piece to perform.

CHAPTER 6

IMPRESSIONS, POUR CAISSE CLAIRE ET DEUX TOMS (1999), NICOLAS MARTYNCIOW

Nicolas Martynciow, born in Saint-Etienne, France, is one of the most internationally renowned French percussionist, drummer, composer, and teacher. Martynciow began studying music at the conservatory of his hometown with Claude Giot and Philippe Boisson, and then with Francis Brana at the Conservatoire de Créteil.²⁹ In 1990, he graduated with the 1st Prize of both Percussion and Chamber Music at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris in the class of Jacques Delécluse, writer of the famous *Méthode de Caisse-Claire* and *Douze Etudes pour Caisse-Claire*, which are some of the standard concert snare drum technique books used around the world. He has been part of the Orchestre de Paris since 1995 and has played under the direction of prestigious conductors such as Pierre Boulez, Christoph Eschenbach, Valery Gergiev, Paavo Järvi, Carlo Maria Giulini, Bernard Haitink, Lorin Maazel, and Sir Georg Solti.³⁰ From 2012 to 2018, he was a professor of orchestral percussion at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris. As a chamber musician, he regularly performs with Carpe Diem, adONF, Sirbaoctet, and fellow French musicians Eric Picard, Vincent Lucas, Eric Sammut, and Marc Trénel.³¹

As a composer, he directs a collection at Editions Gérard Billaudot. His compositions are played all around the world. Martynciow's compositions for percussion ensemble, "Sweat Swaff", "La Festa per Due" and "Zoo" have been performed in Paris at the Opéra Garnier, Opéra

²⁹ "Biography," Nicolas Martynciow, Wordpress, <https://nicolasmartynciow.com/a-propos-nicolas-martynciow-percussions/>.

³⁰ "Biography," Nicolas Martynciow.

³¹ "Biography," Nicolas Martynciow.

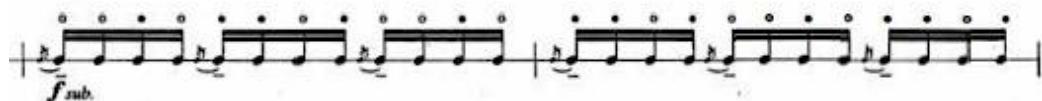
Comique, Salle Pleyel, Théâtre de l'Athénée and at the Maison de Radio France. His pieces for snare drum “Impressions” and “Tchik” are played in the biggest international competitions worldwide and have become a staple in recitals and performances not only for students but for professionals.³²

Impressions, a work for side drum and two tom-toms, is a three-piece movement, each of which can be performed individually. The whole work is approximately eight minutes, making it one of the longest pieces ever written for the side drum. The last work of comparable dimensions was *The Same is the Same* by Klaus Huber.³³

Impressions demands a very competent technique, and attempts to explore new avenues, since side drum compositions, with a few exceptions, have developed relatively little; hence the use of brooms and playing techniques based on bouncing sticks. The piece is further enhanced by the high and low tom-toms which accompany the side drum.³⁴

Its unrelenting fast tempos, meter changes, and radical dynamic variations throughout require total control over the drum. The piece has a very specific guideline of the instrumentation, the dimensions of each instrument, placement, iconography, and even stickings written and recommended by Martynciow himself.

Figure 6.1 Example of sticking recommendations that Martynciow writes on the snare solo

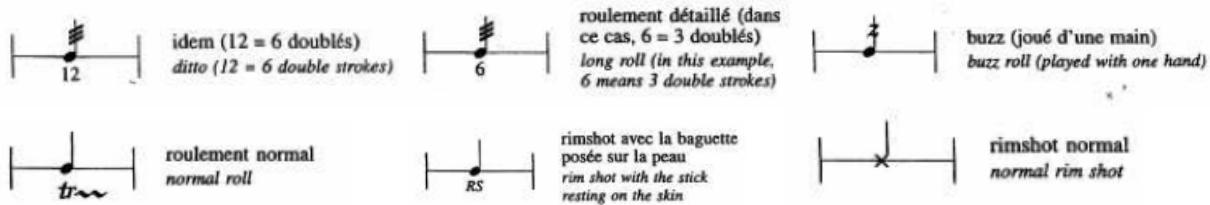


³² “Biography,” Nicolas Martynciow.

³³ “Martynciow-Impressions P,” Steve Weiss Music, <https://www.steveweissmusic.com/product/31193/multi-percussion-solo#full-description>.

³⁴ “Martynciow-Impressions P,” Steve Weiss Music.

Figure 6.2 Examples of the notation specifications on the score of *Impressions*



The first movement of *Impressions* is based off of the theme from Maurice Ravel's *Bolero*. The first two measures are identical in both pieces, but Martynciow changes and builds each phrase with subtle accents and increased rhythmic figures that transform the original theme into a technical exercise for the performer for the first half of the first page.

Figure 6.3 Comparison between *Bolero* (left) and *Impressions* (right)

It incorporates basic rudiments such as drags, single stroke fours, five-stroke rolls, paradiddles, closed rolls, open rolls, quintuplets, and hybrid rudiments like swiss army triplets and cheese's, all while dealing with abrupt dynamic changes. The *Bolero* theme disappears for the rest of the piece, and doesn't appear until the very last page, in the last 9/8 section, where the accents on the fast 16th notes delineate the theme, as well as the *p* buzz rolls in the very last line.

Martynciow's piece expresses and represents Jacques Delécluse's influence on him. It resembles a combination of Delécluse's technique and writing of his various études, even up to the point of form – choosing a theme, developing it, and recapitulating. Delécluse is known for incorporating famous orchestral percussion excerpts, like *Capriccio Espagnol* and *Scheherazade*, into his études, and Martynciow did this as well with *Impressions*.

CHAPTER 7

LA FILLE AUX CHEVEUX DE LIN (1909), CLAUDE DEBUSSY ARR. RENEE KELLER (2017)

Claude Debussy, born in 1862 in Sant-Germain-en-Laye, France, was one of the seminal French composers of the 20th century. Even though he did not describe himself or his music as “impressionistic”,³⁵ his works developed a highly original system of harmony and musical structure that expressed many of the ideals of impressionist and symbolist painters and writers of his time. Debussy demonstrated a gift for the piano early in his life. He was encouraged by Madame Mauté de Fleurville, Frédéric Chopin’s associate, and entered the Paris Conservatory at the age of 10 where he studied piano and composition for 11 years.

Debussy’s early life was filled with turbulence. At the same time, he was living with his parents in a poverty-stricken suburb, he was under the patronage of Russian millionairess who engaged him to play with their children and gave him the experience of traveling and performing around Europe. In Paris, during this time, he fell in love with a singer, Blanche Vasnier, who would later become the inspiration of many of his early works, like one of his most illustrious and best-known compositions, *Clair de lune*.³⁶

“Debussy’s music marks the first of a series of attacks on the traditional language of the 19th century. He did not believe in the stereotyped harmonic procedures of the 19th century, and indeed it becomes clear from a study of mid-20th-century music that the earlier harmonic methods were being followed in an arbitrary, academic manner.”³⁷ Using his formulation of the

³⁵ “Claude Debussy,” Brittanica.

³⁶ “Claude Debussy,” Brittanica.

³⁷ “Claude Debussy,” Brittanica.

“21-note scale”, he challenged and drowned the sense of tonality to acquire a much more symbolic and ethereal design of sound. Debussy’s works also challenged the traditional orchestral usage of instruments, applying many different techniques like pizzicatos on strings to convey the color of rising storms on *La Mer*, and treating wind and brass instruments as soloists throughout his pieces. This exploratory dynamic can be heard and expanded in his piano work, where notes on the page are a mere guide towards expressing the color and illusionist manner of the pieces.³⁸

La fille aux cheveux de lin (The Girl with the Flaxen Hair) is the eighth piece of twelve from Debussy’s first book of *Préludes*, written between 1909 and late 1910. Inspired by a poem of the same name in the collection *Poèmes: Antiques – Chansons Ecossaises* by Liconte de Lisle, this prelude is perhaps one of the most lyrically written by this composer.³⁹ The piece is dedicated to Marie-Blanche Vasnier, whom he had an affair with at the time. It is 39 measures long and takes approximately two and a half minutes to play, but it is not subjected to this length either.⁴⁰

Interpretation and imagery are everything in Debussy’s music. The first edition included the title in brackets at the end of the music, so the pianists could interpret the music for themselves without being influenced by the title. This piece is considered a depictive sketch; it portrays, delineates a mood, in this case, the poems mood and characteristics. “The mood of the music is graceful, youthful and sometimes gay. The structure is very simple, as is the young and

³⁸ “Claude Debussy,” Britannica.

³⁹ “*La fille aux cheveux de lin*,” Wikipedia.

⁴⁰ “*La fille aux cheveux de lin*,” Wikipedia.

naïve maiden.”⁴¹ The opening bars may be looked at as a tune she (the girl with the flaxen hair) is softly humming.

Figure 7 First three measures of *La fille aux cheveux de lin*



His use of pentatonic scales throughout the piece, and blending of diatonic chords and modal cadences, gives the piece a “folk-like tune” sound. This prelude contains the most plagal leading tones than any other piece composed by Debussy, because of its pentatonic nature.⁴² The use of familiar, spatial, recurring, and warm sounds that are produced by the harmonization and infectious melody, the piece is known for its musical simplicity, a divergence from Debussy’s style at the time, even within the 12 works in the first book of *Préludes*.⁴³ Still, the piece can convey many different ways to challenge each player, even if it’s technical or harmonic traits do not. It is one of Debussy’s most recorded pieces, both in its original version and in various arrangements.

Dr. Renee Keller is a percussionist, soloist, instructor and lecturer. She is the Principal Timpanist/Percussionist of the ProMusica Chamber Orchestra in Columbus, and has held positions in the Milwaukee Ballet Orchestra, Fort Wayne Philharmonic and Civic Orchestra of

⁴¹ Mary N. Hudgins, “A Descriptive Analysis of the Preludes (Book I) of Claude Debussy” (master’s theses, North Texas State College, 1956), 43.

⁴² “*La fille aux cheveux de lin*,” Wikipedia.

⁴³ “*La fille aux cheveux de lin*,” Wikipedia.

Chicago.⁴⁴ She has also performed regularly with orchestras around the country including, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Kansas City Orchestra, Dayton Philharmonic and the Toledo Symphony. She holds a Bachelor of Music from the University of Michigan, Master of Music from Temple University, and a doctorate from Northwestern University. Her focus, besides performing, is in continuing her research into areas of percussion history, performance practices and diversity and acceptance in this department.⁴⁵

In 2017, Dr. Keller published an arrangement, “Debussy on the Vibraphone, Vol 1”, that contains two out of the twenty-four preludes – *La fille aux cheveux de lin* and *Des pas sur la neige*. As a pianist and percussionist with extensive experience, her mastery of the instrument and knowledge on the piece can be perceived in this arrangement of the famous piano work.⁴⁶ She was able to adapt this piano prelude into a 4-mallet vibraphone solo without sacrificing any of the original thematic or harmonic material, reproducing Debussy’s instructions and articulations religiously. This piece requires an advanced level vibraphonist that knows the original work by Debussy for this matter. The mastery of the pedal is crucial as well. The pedal shouldn’t be heard hitting the floor or creaking. It shatters the illusion and the tale that’s being told in the piece. Control over when and when not to pedal is part of the practice and interpretative portion of the performance. The performer moves through all of the vibraphone’s range, and it needs to be heard effortlessly. To have this effect, practicing with the same

⁴⁴ “About,” Renee Keller, <https://www.reneekellerpercussion.com/about>.

⁴⁵ “About,” Renee Keller.

⁴⁶ Claude Debussy, arr. Renee Keller, *Debussy on the Vibraphone Volume 1: "La Fille Aux Cheveux De Lin" and "Des Pas Sur La Neige,"* (Arizona: Pocket Publications, 2017).

methodology as the Sammut will give great results; work phrase by phrase or every two to four bars to catch every dynamic, every note, whether it's sustained or dampened, every sustained harmony, and balance between both hands, having a clear perspective on when to bring out melody, accompaniment, or both.

CHAPTER 8

TANGO SUITE I (1985), ASTOR PIAZZOLLA ARR. KEVIN SUPER

Astor Pantaleón Piazzolla, born in Mar de Plata, Argentina, in 1921, was an Argentine tango composer, bandoneón player, and arranger. He was the foremost ambassador of tango music and carried the sound of Argentina to clubs and concert halls around the world. He lived in New York for 13 years, where he turned into the jazz scene and bandleaders such as Duke Ellington and Cab Calloway. At age 12, he received his first bandoneón, a type of button accordion, and the principal voice in tango, and began playing all kinds of music from the classical repertoire. When he returned to Argentina with his family, he joined the popular tango orchestra of Aníbal Troilo, and established himself as a talented bandoneón player and arranger, while he was still a teenager.⁴⁷

In Argentina, Piazzolla continued to study classical music with Alberto Ginastera, one of the leading 20th century Latin-American composers, known for his use of local and national musical idioms in his compositions⁴⁸, and pieces such as *Danzas Argentinas* and *Estancias Suite*. In 1954, Piazzolla's piece "Buenos Aires" won him a scholarship to study in Paris with Nadia Boulanger, one of the most influential French teachers of musical composition of the 20th century.⁴⁹ She told him to "find his voice by tapping into his passion for tango"⁵⁰, and he did. Back in Argentina, in the late 1950s, Piazzolla layed down what is now called *tango nuevo* (new tango), which incorporates elements like fugue, extreme chromaticism, dissonance, and

⁴⁷ "Ástor Piazzolla," Program Notes, accessed March 18, 2021.

⁴⁸ "Alberto Ginastera," Britannica.

⁴⁹ "Nadia Boulanger," Britannica.

⁵⁰ "Ástor Piazzolla," Program Notes, accessed March 18, 2021.

expanded instrumentation⁵¹. He formed his group, Quinteto Tango Nuevo, in 1960, which featured bandoneón, violin, guitar, piano, and bass.⁵²

In the following years, Piazzolla's music used dissonances, metric shifts, counterpoint, and other techniques, increasingly, being inspired by modern classical compositions and jazz orchestras. Even though these advances and innovations were amazing for the time and period, tango is a source of national pride and identity in Argentina, and tango purists were appalled by the “radical departures from tradition”.⁵³ Even the Argentine military government in the late 1960s criticized Piazzolla and called his works “too avant-garde”.⁵⁴ However, these critiques never affected Piazzolla’s intentions, and he continued composing, and performing, leaving behind a huge body of work of more than 3,000 works. By the 1980s, he was widely accepted as the savoir of tango.⁵⁵ *Tango Suite* No. 1 exemplifies the traits of Piazzolla’s *nuevo tango*.

Tango Suite was written originally for the Assad Brothers Guitar Duo and published in 1985. In the arrangement by Kevin Super, published in 1992, the original score is maintained, besides transposing it a perfect fourth, due to capabilities of the instrument. Other than this, it does not add or subtract any elements or passages to it that diminish or sacrifice the piece. The sonority and range of the 5-octave marimba makes it the perfect canvas for cello, guitar, and piano arrangements.

⁵¹ Nathan Shew, “Expanded Program Notes,” 4.

⁵² “Ástor Piazzolla,” Program Notes, accessed March 18, 2021.

⁵³ “Ástor Piazzolla,” Program Notes.

⁵⁴ “Ástor Piazzolla,” Program Notes.

⁵⁵ "Piazzolla, Astor," Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online, accessed March 12, 2021.

Figure 8.1 Comparison between the original guitar duo and marimba duo of *Tango Suite*

The musical score consists of two staves. The top staff is for the marimba, indicated by a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The bottom staff is for the guitar, indicated by a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. Both staves are in 2/4 time. The tempo is Allegro (♩ = 120). The first measure of the marimba part starts with a dynamic 'f' followed by 'energico'. The second measure starts with 'bongos' and 'libero'. A box labeled 'A' encloses the first four measures of the marimba part. The guitar part follows the same pattern with a dynamic 'f' and 'energico'.

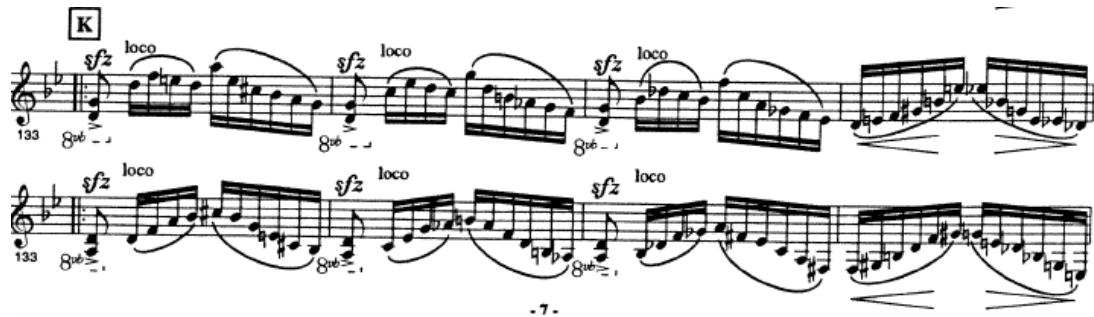
The first movement is the most widely performed out of the three movements. “The Latin-American melodies and harmonies are extremely catchy, and the interplay between the two performers works is orchestrated pristinely”.⁵⁶ Super’s arrangement requires a high level of four mallet technique. On the Steve Weiss Website⁵⁷, it is programmed for advanced players, either college music students at a high level or professionals. *Tango No. 1* begins with an allegro section with the first player on bongos and the second player on marimba presenting the theme. Player one can opt for substituting the bongos with a cajón or clapping their hands, just like the effect of slapping the guitar on the original score. “The main theme is presented in both instruments and has a 3-2-2 accent pattern that can be found throughout the movement. The

⁵⁶ Lonestar Percussion, “Tango Suite Mvt. I by Astor Piazzolla Arr. Kevin Super.”

⁵⁷ Steve Weiss, “Piazzolla-Tango Suite First Movement (SP)-2M-arr. Super.”

movement features chromatic sequencing and dissonance throughout, but especially in the last section, rehearsal K”.⁵⁸

Figure 8.2 Chromaticism and dissonance in letter K



“The parts are doubled at the octave and incorporate a run of sixteenth notes utilizing ten different pitches at the end of each four-measure phrase. This movement varies from traditional tangos in the use of meter and rhythm, as it switches from 4/4 to 6/8 many times, near the beginning and the end”.⁵⁹

“Keeping the energy up and maintaining cleanliness between the two parts (especially the last lick) can be challenging.”⁶⁰ Knowing the piece, understanding the structure and how each other’s parts intertwine within it, is one of the most important parts of building and performing the *Tango Suite*. It’s not enough to only know one’s part to make this piece work and sound. No part is simpler or harder than the other, both are equally challenging in their own way, and it’s mostly in part because of the connection and security that the performer has to have with the piece and their duet partner to sound as one.

⁵⁸ Nathan Shew, “Expanded Program Notes,” 5.

⁵⁹ Nathan Shew, “Expanded Program Notes,” 5.

⁶⁰ Lonestar Percussion, “Tango Suite Mvt. I by Astor Piazzolla Arr. Kevin Super.”

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