

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: A REVISIONIST HISTORY OF  
INDEPENDENT CLASSICAL PERCUSSION  
SOLOISTS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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This dissertation examines the marimbists, multi-percussionists, and solo-percussionists who were independent classical soloists in the twentieth century. Traditionally, scholarship has seen the histories of these percussion soloists as separate from one another. By proposing new frameworks and contexts, this revisionist history shows how marimbists, multi-percussionists, and solo-percussionists form a continuum.

These frameworks mark pivotal shifts in history and include percussion practices, eras of percussion soloists, and generations. The “percussion practices” framework shows how composers have used percussion in classical music. The “eras of percussion soloists” framework shows what percussionists did and what percussion instruments they performed on. The “generations” framework shows how each particular solo art form evolved.



A REVISIONIST HISTORY OF INDEPENDENT CLASSICAL PERCUSSION SOLOISTS  
OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

by

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## Preface

The spirit of this dissertation is to bring further understanding to, and celebrate a facet of, classical percussion history.

A “multi-percussionist” refers to a percussionist who plays multiple percussion instruments in one setup. A “solo-percussionist” refers to a percussionist who combined the prior marimbist and multi-percussionist art forms. These terms will be discussed throughout the paper. The term “independent soloist” refers to a musician who does not perform as a member of a chamber ensemble, orchestra, or band. An independent soloist therefore typically performs unaccompanied solo repertoire, accompanied solo repertoire, and concerti. These definitions notwithstanding, many classical musicians enjoy multi-faceted careers combining solo, orchestral, band, and chamber music performance.

I recognize that there are other classical percussion soloist histories that do not appear in this dissertation and that percussionists have been soloists before the twentieth century. The scope of this dissertation only discusses the marimbists, multi-percussionists, and solo-percussionists for sake of concision and clarity of narrative. Due to limitations of time, I am focusing on a select few artists who hold prominent places in percussion scholarship or through my own research.

Finally, for purposes of concision, I will heretofore use “classical” instead of “western classical” to refer to the genre of music whose history started in Europe.

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# Table of Contents

Preface.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of Contents .....	iv
Chapter 1: First Era – Early Twentieth Century Non-Classical Inspirations.....	1
Section 1: Percussion’s History in Western Classical Music – An Alternative View .....	1
Section 2: Marimbist Inspirations.....	9
Section 3: Multi-Percussionist Inspirations .....	17
Chapter 2: Second Era – 1950’s: Independent Classical Percussionists Soloists - Two Factions.....	24
Section 1: The Marimbists .....	24
Section 2: The Multi-Percussionists .....	32
Section 3: Why Two Factions?.....	41
Chapter 3: Third Era - 1980’s: The Two Factions Merge .....	46
Section 1: Solo-Percussionists .....	46
Section 2: Added Instrument Group: The Vibraphone .....	56
Section 3: Added Instrument Group: The Snare Drum .....	60
Section 4: Conclusion .....	66
Bibliography .....	69

# Chapter 1: First Era – Early Twentieth Century Non-Classical Inspirations

## Section 1: Percussion's History in Western Classical Music – An Alternative View

To provide context for how the marimbists, multi-percussionists, and solo-percussionists became independent classical percussion soloists in the twentieth century, the “percussion practices” framework will be implemented. Through the lens of percussion practices, one can understand why the twentieth century was the right time for these three solo art forms to take off.

The term “percussion practice” is a framework I have adapted from musicologist Robert Cogan. In Cogan’s article “Music History: An Alternative View”, Cogan examined how Claudio Monteverdi first used the term “second practice” to describe how his approach to composition fundamentally changed compared to composers of the “first practice”.<sup>1</sup> Monteverdi’s definition of “first practice” is characterized by European composers primarily using Gregorian chant in various contrapuntal combinations of chant-like melodies.<sup>2</sup> Monteverdi’s definition of the “second practice” is characterized by composers utilizing the twin foundations of basso continuo and the aesthetics of oppositions that appeared in the new media of opera and ballet.<sup>3</sup> Instead of merely saying that classical music “shifted from the Renaissance to the Baroque era”, using “shifted from the first to the second practice” illuminates *how* composers were fundamentally changing their approach to composition. Cogan’s article provided additional practices, on top of Monteverdi’s two practices, to account for *how* composers approached writing classical music up through the twentieth century. Therefore, the “percussion practices” will characterize *how*

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Cogan, “Music History: An Alternative View,” *Sonus* 24, no. 2 (2004): 9.

<sup>2</sup> Cogan, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Cogan, 11.



composers approached writing classical music only for percussionists, and how it has changed over the course of classical music history.

“Percussion’s first practice” starts in the Baroque era and goes into the Romantic era. Percussion’s first practice can be characterized by composers utilizing percussion as a means for maintaining pulse, doubling rhythms of other instruments, and creating musical punctuations. During percussion’s first practice, percussionists primarily performed in an orchestral medium (such as orchestra, opera, ballet, etc.). During the Baroque era, Europe was infatuated with the majesty of Ottoman military bands, and the first instruments to get adopted into European compositions were the Janissary instruments (timpani, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, crescent) typical of Ottoman military bands.

The timpani was the primary percussion instrument composed for throughout the Baroque era. Prominent Baroque era composers writing for the timpani include Jean-Baptiste Lully, Henry Purcell, J.S. Bach, and Georg Friedrich Handel. Percussion scholar and authority James Blades, amongst others, credit the introduction of the timpani into the orchestra by Jean-Baptiste Lully in his opera *Thésée* (1675).<sup>4</sup> Thanks to Franz Joseph Haydn, a skilled and trained timpanist himself, the timpani received skillful use and notoriety through his compositions. Haydn’s influence helped garner the timpani a permanent position in the classical orchestra.<sup>5</sup>

The remaining Janissary instruments were eventually utilized during percussion’s first practice, but primarily in the Classical era. Christoph von Gluck is regarded as one of the first composers to write for the cymbals, bass drum, triangle, and tambourine in his operas such as *Le Cadi Dupe* (1761), *Iphigenie en Touride* (1779), and *Echo et Narcissus* (1779).<sup>6</sup> Percussion

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<sup>4</sup> James Blades, *Percussion Instruments and Their History* (London: Kahn & Averill, 2021), 236.

<sup>5</sup> Blades, 259.

<sup>6</sup> Blades, 261.

instruments, apart from timpani, finally became regular members of the classical orchestra in the Romantic era and permanent positions were also made for percussionists in orchestras during this time.

Percussion's second practice starts in the Romantic era and goes to the twentieth century. Percussion's second practice can be characterized by composers utilizing percussion as a source of orchestral color. During percussion's second practice, percussion was utilized as a metaphorical spice cabinet giving compositions a distinct flavor. During percussion's second practice, percussionists still primarily performed in an orchestral medium (such as orchestra, opera, ballet, etc.).

It is important to note that newer percussion practices do not replace the prior ones. Rather, the newer practice marks a new utility for composers in addition to the utility of the prior practices. Cogan explains this in his aforementioned article:

Importantly, he [Monteverdi] did not advocate simply replacing the *first practice* by the *second practice*. Rather, the two practices were to coexist, indeed, the opposition between the two formed one more of the available oppositions.<sup>7</sup>

Percussion's second practice can be attributed to both Hector Berlioz's *Treatise on Instrumentation* and the nineteenth century European Industrial Revolution. In Berlioz's *Treatise on Instrumentation*, he urged composers to utilize more percussion instruments in their compositions and explained how to use percussion instruments with increased nuance and color. He further discussed how percussion instruments are capable of creating countless timbres and can enhance an orchestral texture, how various mallets and playing techniques yield the best

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<sup>7</sup> Cogan, 9.

sounds out of percussion instruments, and proved that percussion instruments are not one-dimensional.

For example: Berlioz explained how cymbals do not always need to be attached to a bass drum, which orchestral instruments benefit from being paired with cymbals, how cymbals should be notated, how to play cymbals with various sticks and mallets, and commended composers like Christoph von Gluck on his masterful use of cymbals in his opera *Iphigénie en Tauride* (1779).<sup>8</sup> Being one of the most influential composers of the Romantic era, Berlioz's public endorsement of the aesthetic value of percussion, and its ability to enhance the timbral palette of an orchestra, forever changed *how* percussion was used in classical music.

The engineering advances in Europe's Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century allowed for percussion artisans to design world-class percussion instruments, whose designs are still largely utilized today. Using the timpani as an example, during the period between 1810-1880: timpani bowl sizes started to become standardized, using more than two drums became common, and manufacturing timpani to change pitch via a pedal and fine tuner opposed to individual thumb screws, were amongst innovations that vastly increased the expressive range of timpani.<sup>9</sup>

Further instrumental design advancements continued with the other percussion instruments which allowed orchestral percussionists to keep up with the increasing demands of percussion's second practice. Remarkable pieces of percussion's second practice include Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* (1830), Richard Wagner's operas, Gustav Mahler's

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<sup>8</sup> Hector Berlioz and Richard Strauss, *Treatise on Instrumentation* (New York: Dover, 1991), 392-395.

<sup>9</sup> Edmund A. Bowles, "Nineteenth-Century Innovations in the Use and Construction of the Timpani," *Percussionist* 19, no. 2 (1982): 7-9.

symphonies, Pyotr Tchaikovsky's orchestral works and ballets, and the works of Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov and the Russian Mighty Handful.

Percussion's third practice can be characterized by composers being influenced by non-western music. Percussion's third practice coincides with classical music's shift away from the Romantic era starting around the 1890's in favor of the Impressionists and Erik Satie in France, Igor Stravinsky and Alexander Scriabin in Russia, Charles Ives in the U.S., and most importantly Arnold Schoenberg in Vienna. Aesthetically, classical music's shift is summarized by the emancipation of dissonance, as Schoenberg coined in his 1911 *Theory of Harmony*, as well as the emancipation from the triad.<sup>10</sup> Cogan further characterizes this time as when classical music became enriched and influenced from abroad, not just from Western and Central Europe.<sup>11</sup>

Cogan recognizes the influence of non-western percussion traditions on classical music as a whole during this time:

Percussion in the above-named composers [Howard Hanson and Elliott Carter], brought to an unmistakable early apex by Varèse, became as important as it had always been in the cultures of Africa, Asia, and the Early Americas. Mixed and superimposed meters, complex ratios, polyrhythms, composed accelerations and decelerations, open time fields (graph time), all of these became part of the temporal face of the time... Composers such as Olivier Messiaen in France and the Americans Elliott Carter and John Cage continued to expand its rhythmic possibilities.<sup>12</sup>

During percussion's third practice, composers not only adopted *how* non-western cultures were utilizing percussion, but they also added the percussion instruments of non-western cultures into the ever-increasing percussive sound palette of orchestras. A few examples of non-western

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<sup>10</sup> Cogan, 21-22.

<sup>11</sup> Cogan, 22.

<sup>12</sup> Cogan, 23.

percussion instruments that were added into the classical orchestra are: a variety of gongs and cymbals from Asia, percussion instruments from the United States, and drums and accessory percussion instruments from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa.

Percussion's third practice can be further characterized by the beginning of composers frequently utilizing percussion outside of an orchestral medium. During percussion's third practice, percussionists started to regularly perform not only as orchestral musicians, but also as chamber musicians and independent soloists not tied to any ensemble. Instrumentalists, such as pianists, violinists, clarinetists, and cellists, have enjoyed these three avenues for more than a hundred years before classical percussionists in the twentieth century.

One can infer that the influence of non-western percussion traditions may have made classical composers realize that they were underutilizing percussion by primarily limiting percussionists to an orchestral medium. Non-western percussion cultures utilized percussionists to play melodies, harmonies, musical lines and phrases just like every other instrument. Even non-melodic percussion instruments had solo roles in non-western musical cultures. For example: the tabla and other percussion instruments hold solo roles in Indian classical music, percussion is the driving musical force of many Afro-Caribbean and African musical cultures, and Indonesia's gamelan music and Trinidad and Tobago's steelpan traditions are percussion ensembles. Even in the western world, the African American artforms of ragtime, blues, and jazz feature a solo status for percussion.

Like before, features from percussion's first and second practices did not disappear during the start of percussion's third practice. Notably, characteristics of percussion's second practice continue to flourish into percussion's third practice. To name a few examples of this: Claude Debussy wrote incredible colors and timbres for the cymbals in *La Mer (1905)* and Igor

Stravinsky's first three ballets used an incredibly wide timbral palette throughout the entire percussion section.

A groundbreaking moment in percussion's third practice came when Igor Stravinsky composed *L'Histoire du Soldat* (1918). Not only was this the first use of percussion in chamber music, but one percussionist was playing multiple percussion instruments in one setup.

An often under-recognized composer of percussion's third practice is Darius Milhaud. With his love for jazz, Milhaud quickly took note of jazz drummers and their role in jazz ensembles. His 15-minute ballet *La Creation du Monde* (1923) was written a year after he visited the United States and heard jazz for the first time. Not only does this piece have prominent solo roles for percussion, but one percussionist plays a trap set (a precursor to jazz's drumset - more later). Milhaud later wrote the first percussion concerto *Concerto pour Batterie et Petite Orchestre* (1929) where one percussionist plays all the instruments of an orchestral percussion section at once. In a similar vein to Milhaud's percussion concerto, Béla Bartók's *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion* (1937) features two percussionists playing all the standard orchestral percussion instruments.

Important to the early history of percussion's third practice was the creation of the classical percussion ensemble and Edgard Varèse's *Ionisation* (1931). While not the first piece written for percussion ensemble, this piece for 13 percussionists playing 40 non-pitched percussion instruments was a legitimizing statement that percussion, by itself, was capable of creating works of art.

After *Ionisation*, percussion's third practice received a large boost in California by composers Henry Cowell, Lou Harrison, and most importantly John Cage. If Cage's teacher Arnold Schoenberg transitioned classical music away from the Romantic era by emancipating

dissonance and liberating pitch from the triad, Cage used percussion music as “a way to liberate noise from its subordination to pitched sound.”<sup>13</sup> Through this lens, percussionists could not find a more ardent supporter and advocate for percussion. Cage’s early works such as *Quartet* (1935), *Trio* (1936), the three *Constructions*, and *Living Room Music* (1940) added to the percussion cannon. Of note, he contributed repertoire to the now popular percussion chamber configuration of percussion quartet and percussion trio.

During 1930-1950, despite presenting at international conferences, writing scholarship, and composing a large output of percussion repertoire, John Cage could not convince any classically-trained percussionists to play his music.<sup>14</sup> Most classically-trained percussionists of this time only focused on orchestral performance. An orchestral percussionist needs to master timpani, snare drum, bass drum, triangle, cymbals, gongs, tambourine, other accessory instruments, xylophone, glockenspiel, and more. That list has only expanded since the dawn of percussion’s third practice. One can understand why an orchestral percussionist of this period could not devote time to learning new percussion instruments and non-orchestral repertoire when they are preoccupied with orchestral percussion.

Therefore, without any classically-trained percussionists to perform his works, John Cage famously performed his percussion chamber works with Lou Harrison, Merce Cunningham, and dance students from local universities during this period.<sup>15</sup> In order to ensure amateurs could perform his early works at a high level, Cage intentionally composed his works so they were devoid of advanced percussion techniques.

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<sup>13</sup> David Revill, “1982 Hall of Fame: John Cage,” *Percussive Notes* 20, no. 2 (1982): 2.

<sup>14</sup> David Revill, *The Roaring Silence, John Cage: A Life* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1992), 60.

<sup>15</sup> David Revill, *The Roaring Silence, John Cage: A Life* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1992), 66.

Cage and his percussion ensemble of amateur percussionists were a temporary solution until he could find trained percussionists to perform his works, but Cage continued to have no luck. This issue highlights the importance of the symbiotic relationship between composer and performer for an independent solo art form to take off. Without repertoire written by a composer, a performer has no classical music to perform. Without a performer, a composer does not have an interpreter to realize their music.

Through percussion's first and second practice, having a symbiotic relationship between composer and performer was not necessary because an orchestra always had percussionists in the percussion section who would perform whatever a composer wrote. The groundbreaking classical percussion works of percussion's third practice, that were previously mentioned, were one-off stints. Therefore, those premieres did not utilize professional independent percussionists – a notion that was rare at the time.

In order to convince percussionists in western society to become independent classical percussion soloists, they needed western role models. Sure, there was awareness of percussion happening in other cultures, but western percussionists needed role models from their own culture with whom they could identify and in whom they could see themselves. This inspiration came from early twentieth century non-classical percussion soloists.

### *Section 2: Marimbist Inspirations*

The framework of percussion practices provided context for what events made the twentieth century a ripe time for the first independent classical percussion soloists within the



scope of this dissertation. It is now important to discuss the “eras of percussion soloists” or just the “eras” framework, which shows what percussionists did and what percussion instruments they performed on.

The subject of this chapter includes the first era of early twentieth century non-classical percussion soloists. These first era soloists were the inspirations of the second era independent classical percussion soloists who played the marimba and multi-percussion. Due to the second era being in two factions of marimbists and multi-percussionists (a phenomenon that will be covered in chapter 2, section 3), each second era faction has a corresponding and unique set of first era inspirations. This section will cover the first era xylophonists and Central American marimbists who inspired the marimbists of the second era.

Before the western marimba was even invented, the keyboard instrument of choice was the xylophone. The xylophone made its appearance in percussion’s second practice notably in Camille Saint-Saëns’s *Dance Macabre* (1874)<sup>16</sup>. While xylophones of various designs have existed inside and outside Europe well before the nineteenth century, Michal Guzikow attracted the attention of European composers via his virtuosic xylophone playing performing on a Strohfiedel (straw fiddle).<sup>17</sup> The Strohfiedel arranges its wooden bars in a configuration akin to a cimbalom, and the bars are rested on top of a pile of straw. Performing Jewish folk music, his own compositions, and transcriptions such as Paganini’s *La Campanella*, Guzikow grabbed the attention of Mendelssohn, Chopin, and Liszt. In a letter to his mother in 1836, Mendelssohn wrote that Gusikow “is inferior to no player on earth either in style or executions, and delights

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<sup>16</sup> Blades, 309.

<sup>17</sup> Rebecca Kite, “*Keiko Abe, A Virtuoso Life: Her Musical Career and the Evolution of the Concert Marimba*,” (Leesburg: GP Percussion, 2007), 129.

me more on his odd instrument than many do on their pianos, just because it is so thankless... I have not enjoyed a concert so much for a long time.”<sup>18</sup>

Thanks to Guzikow’s legacy of elevating the xylophone to a “serious” percussion instrument in the western world’s view, virtuosic xylophone playing took off, but this time in the United States. The United States became home to the finest xylophone manufacturer in the world, the J.C. Deagan Company. Still to this day, owning a Deagan instrument is akin to owning a Stradivarius or Guarneri violin. Starting in the late nineteenth century, Deagan created the first professional xylophones, bells, and glockenspiels. Deagan standardized the design of these instruments, moving away from the Strophfiedl configuration that Gusikow performed on, and arranged the bars like a piano keyboard and used aluminum resonators to enhance the tone of the instrument. Furthermore, J.C. Deagan was a world-renowned acoustician. Through his influence, Deagan advocated that every orchestra and band adopt the A 440 tuning. While the whole world did not subscribe to his urgings, the United States did.<sup>19</sup>

With professional quality instruments available and the Vaudeville circuit being a high-visibility venue for catching a big break, the first xylophonists took off.<sup>20</sup> The xylophone was commonly performed in ragtime acts during 1900-1930, but its popularity did not stop there. The xylophone was also popular in the growing American military band culture (the xylophonist was a featured soloist in John Philip Sousa’s Band<sup>21</sup>), American musical theater, and the burgeoning recording industry and broadcast orchestras. Artists such as George Hamilton Green, Harry

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<sup>18</sup> Sebastian Hensel, *The Mendelssohn Family, 1729-1847, From Letters and Journals* (Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington: London, 1881), 4.

<sup>19</sup> Hal Trommer, “John Calhoun Deagan,” *Percussive Notes* 34, no. 1 (1996): 84.

<sup>20</sup> David Eyster, “Early Development of the Xylophone in Western Music,” *Percussive Notes* 41, no. 6 (2003): 43-44.

<sup>21</sup> Kite, 144.

Bruer, Teddy Brown, and Yoichi Hiraoka were regarded as the world's foremost xylophonists and garnered international popularity for mallet percussion as a virtuosic solo instrument.

George Hamilton Green was known as a phenomenal performer, improviser, and pedagogue. He performed with his musical family and even recorded the first three movies for Walt Disney. Harry Bruer had a famous career from 1920-1960's performing with all the major Hollywood studios, Radio City Music Hall Orchestra, and the NBC Staff orchestra. He was a talented arranger and composer. Teddy Brown brought xylophone technique to new heights with his unparalleled smooth, fast, and musical playing. He also played percussion in the New York Philharmonic. Finally, Yoichi Hiraoka's xylophone playing was heard every morning on NBC radio broadcasts in the 1930's. He was a phenomenal performer and primarily played classical transcriptions from the violin repertoire.<sup>22</sup> While these xylophonists were not performing in the classical music realm, they were on the international stage bringing visibility to virtuosic keyboard percussion playing.

The xylophone blazed the trail for the marimba to run on. The marimba used in classical music today is of American design, and the first American marimbas were designed in the 1910's.<sup>23</sup> The American marimba took inspiration from the Central American marimba tradition, and the Central American marimba took inspiration from African marimbas which were brought into Central American culture via the slave trade in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The name marimba comes from the Bantu language in Africa.<sup>24</sup>

The marimba underwent design changes in each of the three regions. The African marimba is largely a pentatonic instrument with natural gourds as resonators and a distinct

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<sup>22</sup> Kite, 152-156.

<sup>23</sup> Frank MacCallum, *The Book of the Marimba*, (New York: Carlton Press, 1969), 31.

<sup>24</sup> Kite, 131.

buzzing sound when striking the bars. Modern Orff instruments are modeled after African marimbas. In Central America, the bars were arranged in a diatonic fashion in the same layout of a piano. Gourds were still used as resonators in the Central American design, but the buzzing sound wasn't as prominent. In the 1910's, J.C Deagan designed the first American marimbas where they maintained the Central American piano layout of the bars, applied their tuning techniques to bars, and replaced the gourds with their famous metal resonator design from their xylophones.<sup>25</sup> The first marimbas were called marimba-xylophones or xylo-rimbas. These initial names for the marimbas were devised as a marketing strategy to the western world who was familiar with xylophones at this point, but not marimbas.

How did the marimba enter the United States from Central America? This can be credited to famous marimba families from Central America. Primarily from Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras, musical families that specialized on the marimba performed in family marimba bands that would tour and perform at all sorts of functions from religious ceremonies, secular dances, public celebrations, and festivities.<sup>26</sup> Renowned families of the late nineteenth century included the Ovalles, Barrios, Bethancourts, and Hurtados. By 1894, the Guatemalan marimba design had become standardized in the region by Sebastián Hurtado, Mariano Valverde, Rosendo Barrios, and Corazon Borres and these prominent family marimba bands began touring throughout Central America.<sup>27</sup> These marimbas were five to six octaves in range and had up to four people playing on one instrument at the same time.

The most prominent marimba family of the early twentieth century were the Hurtados.<sup>28</sup> By 1896 Sebastián Hurtado and his sons toured Guatemala performing a mixture of folk music

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<sup>25</sup> Linda Pimentel, "Aristocracy of Manufactured Marimbas," *Percussive Notes* 21, no. 1 (1982): 61-62.

<sup>26</sup> David Eyler, "The Hurtado Brothers' Royal Marimba Band of Guatemala," *Percussive Notes* 31, no. 3 (1993): 48.

<sup>27</sup> MacCallum, 16-17.

<sup>28</sup> Eyler, 48.

and classical music with the family marimba band. After picking up lots of traction in Central America, the marimba band began a U.S. tour. Intending to tour for only 6 months, their success extended their tour to two years. Following their success in the U.S., the Hurtado family marimba band went on a European tour. Their crowning moment of success was their regular performance at the 1915 San Francisco World's Fair where the Guatemalan Government selected the Hurtado Brothers' Royal Marimba Band (their new name) to officially represent Guatemala. They were so successful that they performed twice a day for nine months straight.<sup>29</sup>

After these events, the marimba had caught the eye of J.C. Deagan, and he soon created the American version of the marimba. In relation to the then popular xylophone, Deagan marketed the American-made marimba as the mellower cousin to the marimba which possessed polyphonic soloistic capabilities thanks to four-mallet playing and the comparatively extended range of the marimba.

Taking off in the 1930's, American percussionists adopted the marimba into their own practice. Inspired by the Central American marimba bands, American marimba pioneer and virtuoso Clair Omar Musser created and conducted his own American marimba orchestras primarily performing arrangements of symphonic works for marimba orchestra. Musser's marimba orchestra famously toured the world between the 1930's and 1950's.<sup>30</sup>

There were two marimba orchestras organized and conducted by Musser that brought global fascination and acceptance of the western marimba as a serious concert instrument: the 'Century of Progress Marimba Orchestra' which was featured at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair and the 'International Marimba Symphony Orchestra' that toured the world in 1935. Each of

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<sup>29</sup> Eyer, 49.

<sup>30</sup> Marg Holmgren, "Clair Omar Musser and the Marimba Symphony Orchestra," *Percussive Notes* 16, no. 3 (1978): 20.

these marimba orchestras contained 100 players who played on their own custom-built marimbas for each occasion.<sup>31</sup> After these events, the marimba began to overshadow the xylophone as the solo keyboard percussion instrument of choice.

To further solidify the marimba's prominence, Musser became the first lecturer of marimba at Northwestern University from 1946-1950. No conservatory or university school of music had ever created a position like this in the entire world. Musser's students at Northwestern would become the first professional classical marimbists. Musser continued the American marimbist tradition by creating his own instrument manufacturing company after his own name, just as the J.C. Deagan and Leedy companies were slowing down production.

It must not be omitted the prevalence that the vibraphone had on inspiring the second era marimbists. Purely a product of American ingenuity, J.C Deagan and the Leedy Drum Company created the vibraphone in the 1920's. With the addition of the vibraphone, American manufacturers had now created a family of four keyboard percussion instruments: the marimba, the xylophone, the glockenspiel, and now the vibraphone. Having a family of four keyboard percussion instruments created compositional possibilities similar to the four standard instruments of classical string instrument family.

The history of the vibraphone starts in 1922 when Herman Winterhoff of the Leedy Drum Company makes the "metal marimba" with steel bars along with Winterhoff's "Vox Human" tremolo motor effect. In 1924, the Leedy Drum Company rebranded the instrument as the "vibraphone." As early as 1924, famous Vaudeville headliner Louis Frank Chiha records *Aloha Oe* and *Gypsy Love Song* on the Edison Label which officially is the first recording of the vibraphone. In 1927, Billy Gladstone created the dampening bar for the vibraphone which makes

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<sup>31</sup> Holmgren, 20.

the instrument not ring out forever and introduced the characteristic foot pedal to the vibraphone. Also in 1927, J.C. Deagan introduced their famous “Vibraharp” which is essentially the same as Leedy’s Vibraphone except Deagan’s instrument uses aluminum bars opposed to steel bars. The aluminum bars of Deagan’s “Vibrapharp”, which gives the instrument its mellow and sweet sound, is now the standard metal used for vibraphones to this day.<sup>32</sup> During this era, nobody knew what to call this instrument, and names like the “vibraceleste” start to add to the confusion as well. While most people today have settled on the term vibraphone, back then – artists found the middle ground and said I play the “vibes” and I am a “vibist.”<sup>33</sup>

With this new instrument came the first generation of vibists that brought this instrument, as well as keyboard percussion playing, to international acclaim. The “Big Four” consist of Lionel Hampton, Red Norvo, Terry Gibbs, and Milt Jackson.<sup>34</sup> Lionel Hampton has been considered the first jazz vibist since Louis Armstrong invited him to play the vibraphone on his 1931 album with the Sebastian New Cotton Club Orchestra. He appeared on pieces such as “Memories of You” and made his initial mark as the biggest vibist of the Early Jazz and Swing Era. Red Norvo, who was also a famous Vaudeville headliner playing marimba and xylophone, showcased the vibraphone on a 1932 Paul Whiteman Album. He utilized four-mallet playing during a time when most musicians only played with two mallets. Red Norvo was not only an extremely influential jazz vibist known for an amazing touch and musicality, but also made four-mallet keyboard playing popular. Milt Jackson, inspired by Red Norvo and Lionel Hampton, entered the world as one the foremost vibists of the Bebop era playing with every famous musician like Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, and Thelonius Monk and was a famous band

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<sup>32</sup> John Beck, *Encyclopedia of Percussion* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 399-400.

<sup>33</sup> Carolyn Stallard, "The Vibraphone: Past, Present, and Future," *Percussive Notes* 53, no. 3 (2015): 52.

<sup>34</sup> Stallard, 52-52.

leader and had his own groups. Terry Gibbs was the final member of the “Big Four” and he entered the scene at a similar time as Milt Jackson and played with every big name imaginable. Gibbs had his own groups as well and wrote over 300 songs<sup>35</sup>

In the first half of the twentieth century, keyboard percussion soloists were prominently touring internationally, performing in the burgeoning American recording industry, and the burgeoning American TV and radio industry. Along with the inspiration and guidance of Clair Omar Musser, the marimbists of the second era had plenty of western role models and were inspired to start a classical solo art form.

### *Section 3: Multi-Percussionist Inspirations*

This section will cover the first era jazz drumset tradition that inspired the multi-percussionists of the second era. The multi-percussionists of the second era also needed role models to look up to and prove that being a solo percussionist was viable and worth pursuing.

The term “multi-percussion”, and the corresponding repertoire written for this percussion instrument grouping, is an invention of classical music. Multi-percussion is the classical music equivalent of the drumset in jazz music. For both multi-percussion and the drumset, the term implies that the percussionist is not just playing one percussion instrument, but a collection of instruments arranged in a setup where a soloist can play everything at once. The term “multi-percussion” is therefore a simple term describing one person playing multiple percussion

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<sup>35</sup> Stallard, 52.



instruments in a single setup. It was the jazz idiom that was the first to prove the then radical notion that a single percussionist playing a setup of multiple percussion instruments could create a valuable and exciting solo artform.

The history of the drumset starts in the late nineteenth century when African American musicians, who primarily performed in a marching band style ensembles, moved their ensembles indoors to provide entertainment for dances, parties, and various social gatherings.<sup>36</sup> As these indoor ensembles were becoming established, a lack of funding only allowed for one percussionist to perform, but they still wanted to retain as many percussion parts as possible.<sup>37</sup> Fulfilling this request was a difficult task. In western cultures, percussion in any band or orchestra is played by a percussion section of musicians. The percussion section (excluding the timpanist) typically consists of a snare drummer, a bass drummer, a cymbal player, and an accessory percussion player. Therefore, in New Orleans, ensembles were requesting that one percussionist do the job of four percussionists.

The first attempt at playing multiple percussion parts at once was called “double drumming.” Most African American musicians of the time started off by using leftover percussion instruments from the Civil War. With time, the marching snare drums that were traditionally worn on one’s body with a sling were replaced with orchestral snare drums mounted on stands. The snare drums were placed at an angle so that one could take their drumsticks and play the bass drum and the snare drum at the same time. There were limitations to what could be played on the snare drum because one hand was also busy playing the bass drum, but it did the

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<sup>36</sup> Beck, 201.

<sup>37</sup> Beck, 201.

trick at the beginning. Furthermore, a small Turkish cymbal was mounted onto the bass drum for the occasional cymbal crash with a drumstick.<sup>38</sup>

Today, many consider the bass drum pedal an unremarkable piece of percussion hardware, but the invention of the bass drum pedal changed the drumset forever. Many crude versions were made in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, but most drummers regarded these early versions as more of a fuss than they were worth. By 1909, William Ludwig had created the bass drum pedal that largely resembles what is still used to today. William Ludwig went on to not only be an excellent drummer, but also founded one of the most revered drum companies in the world.

With the invention of the bass drum pedal, one hand is now freed up. This allowed for one hand to focus on a cymbal, the other hand to focus on the snare drum, and the right foot to focus on the bass drum accompaniment. Not only that, with the right leg taking the bass drum, the hands are now freed up to play more intricate parts on the snare drum as well as playing accessory instruments mounted onto the bass drum. At this point, one drummer *was* actually capable of doing all the jobs of a four-person percussion section of an orchestra or band.

Warren “Baby” Dodds, born in New Orleans in 1898, is considered the first jazz drummer.<sup>39</sup> Warren’s ancestors had deep musical roots as African drummers and Warren’s brother Johnny was a noted clarinetist.<sup>40</sup> Influenced by street drummers and ragtime musicians, Warren’s career took off in 1918 when he started performing on Fate Marable’s riverboat band, which is where he started performing with a young Louis Armstrong. Warren is known for both his innovations to the drumset design as well as his musical abilities to support soloists, connect

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<sup>38</sup> Dennis Brown, “Double Drumming,” *Percussive Notes* 20, no. 1 (1981): 32.

<sup>39</sup> Beck, 202.

<sup>40</sup> Beck, 203.

phrases with the band, and be a soloist himself – a radical notion at the time for a percussionist in the western world.

During the early jazz era and into the swing era, drummers started having quite a lot of accessory instruments added to their drumsets. Observing Warren Dodds play a concert at Lincoln Gardens in Chicago, his instrument list included: a 28-inch bass drum, a 14x6.5 inch metal snare drum, a bass drum pedal, four tuned cowbells, a woodblock, a slapstick, a 16 inch Chinese cymbal, a 16 inch Zildjian cymbal, and a 10 inch Chinese tom-tom.<sup>41</sup> Drumsets of this era were actually referred to as ‘trap sets’. ‘Trap’ was short for contraptions because drummers of that generation played so many accessory percussion instruments which were often referred to as contraptions. This term is still in use today in the orchestral percussion world where percussionists have many ‘trap tables’ which are used to hold all of the accessory percussion instruments.

One final addition to the trap set properly solidified the notion in jazz that one percussionist could be a soloist, and that was the invention of the sock cymbal (precursor to the hi-hat). Originally While Warren Dodds was playing on a steamboat in St. Louis in his early career, William Ludwig was observing Dodds play: “...I used to stomp my left foot, and Ludwig asked me if I could stomp my toe instead of my heel. I told him ‘I think so. So he measured my foot on a piece of paper and the space where I would have it and he made a sock cymbal. One day he brought one for me to try.”<sup>42</sup> With this invention, all four limbs were utilized by one percussionist. Over time, drumset playing would evolve where four or more individual musical

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<sup>41</sup> Thomas Shultz, “A History of Jazz Drumming,” *Percussionist* 16, no. 3 (1979): 110.

<sup>42</sup> Rick Mattingly, “Warren Baby Dodds,” *Percussive Notes* 45, no. 4 (2007): 16

lines are being played simultaneously; a level of technical and musical demand matched only by organists.

Returning to the pivotal chamber music works for percussion of the early twentieth century, it was quite clear how classical music was taking hints from jazz and the trap kit. Igor Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du Soldat* (1918) utilizes percussion in a double drumming fashion of the early trap kit. This percussionist in *L'Histoire du Soldat* plays triangle, snare drum, toms, bass drum, hi-hat, cymbals, tambourine, and no bass drum pedal or hi-hat cymbal. Darius Milhaud's ballet *La Creation du Monde* (1923) has two percussion parts. One percussionist plays timpani, and a second part for a trap kit that utilizing a bass drum pedal. The influence of jazz percussion was showing up in classical music.

During the height of jazz's swing and big band era of the 1930's, drummers were moving away from a trap kit and into the design of the modern drumset that is the standard still today. Gene Krupa is not only an influential musician for his contributions as a performer to the jazz solo percussion artform, but also in shifting away from the trap kit through his influential instrument designs.

Gene Krupa changed two big aspects of the trap kit. First, he got rid of most of the traps, and second, he changed the design of tom-toms. In the previous era, drummers like Roy Knapp of Chicago were popularizing an extensive amount of traps added to a kit.<sup>43</sup> Feeling as though the trap kit needed to be streamlined, Krupa took most traps off except a cowbell. Secondly, Gene Krupa replaced the Chinese style toms, which have drumheads made of animal hides tacked onto the thick wooden shell, and designed the modern American tom that could be

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<sup>43</sup> Jake Sheff, "Evolution of the Drumset," *Rhythm! Scene* 1, no. 3 (2014): 8.

mounted onto the bass drum.<sup>44</sup> Collaborating with the Slingerland drum company, Krupa's new tom used similar hardware and heads to the snare drum and bass drum. This made the toms fully tunable to the player's preference and made the snare drum, bass drum, and toms a homogeneous sound palate capable of playing melodies just on the drums.<sup>45</sup> With these changes, it was more appropriate to call the instrument a drumset.

With these changes Krupa standardized the configuration of the drumset. Now known as a '4-piece kit', every drumset consists of a rack tom-tom, a floor tom-tom, a snare drum, a kick drum, a hi-hat cymbal, a ride cymbal, and a crash cymbal. This configuration became standard in the 1940's and remains to this day. Electing to include additional tom-toms or cymbals is a choice left up to each individual drumset player, but at a minimum, every drumset contains a 4-piece kit.

It is not an understatement to say that Gene Krupa changed the artform when he performed with the Benny Goodman orchestra at Carnegie Hall in 1938. After the crowd had been going wild all night with the fantastic music that they were witnessing, Gene Krupa began his iconic solo on his new toms to the song *Sing, Sing, Sing*. The crowd was enjoying Gene so much that they repeated the chorus many times and audience members were breaking out in dance. Benny and Gene, with just the clarinet and drums, were bringing the house down, and from that point on, drum solos became a prominent part of most jazz orchestras and any era of jazz music after.<sup>46</sup>

Not only did Krupa elevate the solo status of the drumset, but he also proved that percussionists were musicians of equal importance to the other instrumentalists. Krupa was one

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<sup>44</sup> Sheff, 9.

<sup>45</sup> Scott Fish, "Innovators of Jazz Drumset: Part II," *Percussive Notes* 22, no. 4 (1984): 17-18.

<sup>46</sup> Fish, 17.

of the first drummers who was also a bandleader. Krupa would artistically direct his groups with the authority to hire and fire any musician he wanted. Many drummers would follow in Krupa's legacy of being fantastic soloists and bandleaders, like famed drummer Buddy Rich, making it known to the western world that jazz drummers had an established solo artform and were valued musicians in positions of authority. The multi-percussionists of the second era took note and had strong role models to look up to.

## Chapter 2: Second Era – 1950’s: Independent Classical Percussionists Soloists - Two Factions

### Section 1: The Marimbists

Inspired by the first era xylophonists and Central American marimbists, the second era of marimbists were excited to create a classical solo art form for the marimba. Returning to the necessary symbiotic relationship between composer and performer, the second era marimbists needed to find composers to write them solo repertoire to get the classical marimba art form off the ground.

It is now important to introduce the “generations” framework. The “generations” framework shows how each particular solo art form evolved, and this section will discuss three distinct generations of marimbists.

In the first generation of marimbists, the first two moves in the solo marimba artform were made by Ruth Stuber Jeanne and Jack Connor. Following Jeanne’s training from George Hamilton Green and her experience in Musser’s 1933 Century of Progress Marimba Orchestra, Ruth Stuber Jeanne premiered the first marimba concerto ever written by Paul Creston titled *Concertino for Marimba* (1940) in Carnegie Hall. As a freelance musician in New York City, she performed in a marimba trio, played percussion, and played timpani with the New York Orchestrette Classique.<sup>47</sup>

The second marimba concerto ever written was the *Concerto for Marimba and Vibraphone* (1949) by Darius Milhaud. Jack Connor commissioned Milhaud to write this

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<sup>47</sup> Sarah Smith, “The Birth of the Creston Marimba Concerto: An Interview with Ruth Jeanne,” *Percussive Notes* 34, no. 2 (1996): 62.

concerto for the St. Louis Symphony, the symphony with which he was a section percussionist. Jack Connor was also a prominent jazz drumset and vibraphone player and performed in Musser's 1935 International Marimba Symphony Orchestra.<sup>48</sup>

The most influential marimbist of the first generation is Vida Chenoweth. She is "hailed as the first concert marimbist... and one of the most influential artists ever to perform on the instrument."<sup>49</sup> What makes Chenoweth different than other marimbists of her generation was the dedication of her artistic output to widely performing marimba concerti and solo works written by classical composers. Not only was she a phenomenal performer, but a respected ethnomusicologist who devoted a portion of her output to studying the marimba in Central America.<sup>50</sup>

After Chenoweth's parents had heard one of Musser's marimba orchestras in the 1940's, Chenoweth later decided she wanted to go study with Musser at Northwestern University in 1948 while she was in high school. Unprecedented at the time, Musser was the professor of marimba at Northwestern University from 1946-1950. No such position had ever existed in a university or a conservatory anywhere in the world. Chenoweth turned out to be a promising student and won a National Marimba Contest shortly after studying with Musser. By winning this competition, she was awarded a spot in one of Musser's two-hundred-piece marimba orchestra, one of the largest marimba orchestras Musser ever put together. Chenoweth ended up attending Northwestern and earned herself a degree in music criticism and marimba performance, studying under Musser.<sup>51</sup> Again, it was unheard of to major in marimba performance at this time, but Chenoweth's education set her up to become the first professional classical solo marimbist.

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<sup>48</sup> Kite, 170.

<sup>49</sup> James Strain, "Vida Chenoweth," *Percussive Notes* 32, no. 3 (1994): 8.

<sup>50</sup> Martin Weir, "Catching Up With Vida Chenoweth," *Percussive Notes* 32, no. 3 (1994): 53-54.

<sup>51</sup> Kite, 172.



Chenoweth's devotion to performing classical pieces composed specifically for the marimba, and performing them widely in world-class venues, raised the classical solo marimba artform to a level of respect equal in stature to the violin, piano, or guitar.<sup>52</sup> Chenoweth famously performed the first two marimba concertos, new solo marimba works, and commissioned new concerti that she performed with prominent orchestras worldwide. Her two most prominent commissions were Robert Kurka's *Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra, Op. 34* (1956), which she premiered in Carnegie Hall in 1959, and the *Concertino para Marimba y Orquesta* (1958) by Jorge Sarmientos, Guatemala's foremost composer.

A final distinction of the first generation of marimbists is the xylophonist approach towards playing. During this time, the xylophone and marimba were thought of as interchangeable instruments. One would study technique with George Hamilton Green and learn about the marimba with Clair Omar Musser, like Ruth Stuber Jeanne did.<sup>53</sup> It is in the second generation of marimbists that the approach to playing the marimba moved away from a xylophonist approach to a distinct marimbist approach. No person is more influential in the second generation of marimbists than Keiko Abe of Japan.

Keiko Abe grew up during WWII and the post-war American occupation of Japan. Due to the American occupation, American culture became very popular in Japan. As for music, the xylophonist tradition had entered Japan as well. When Keiko Abe was in elementary school, her music teacher had an afterschool band called 'Midori Gakudan' which incredibly included an entire xylophone section, not a single xylophone, but an entire xylophone section. From this

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<sup>52</sup> Strain, 8.

<sup>53</sup> Kite, 168-169.

experience, Keiko received an excellent education on the xylophone starting from a very young age.<sup>54</sup>

In 1950, Abe heard the marimba for the first time when American missionaries Lawrence and Mildred Lacour arranged a marimba ensemble to tour Japan for an evangelical missionary trip.<sup>55</sup> The Lacours had previously toured the world in Musser's 1935 International Marimba Symphony Orchestra, and upon hearing the sonorous organ-like tone of the marimba, teenage Keiko Abe was taken aback in awe by the marimba's beautiful tone.

Not able to acquire a marimba yet, Abe kept playing the xylophone and won a youth talent competition for NHK (Japan's leading broadcast corporation) in 1951. This experience allowed Abe the opportunity to regularly perform xylophone solos on live radio for NHK. Prominent first era xylophonist Yoichi Hiraoka, who what had deported form the U.S. during WWII, heard Keiko Abe perform live on the NHK radio and gave Abe his indorsement for a promising career as a professional xylophonist.<sup>56</sup>

After Abe went to college, she started her professional career as a studio musician in Japan from the late 1950's through the 1960's. During this time, she was able to buy her first Musser marimba and started the Xebec Marimba trio, which did a lot of recording of pop tunes and classical arrangements. Towards the end of her studio career, Keiko decided to commit full-time towards her dream of being a classical solo marimbist. Keiko Abe knew that if this classical solo marimbist art form was to take off, a lot more pieces would need to be written for the marimba. Starting from the 1960's to the end of her career, she commissioned and composed almost 200 works for the marimba.

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<sup>54</sup> Kite, 14.

<sup>55</sup> Kite, 17.

<sup>56</sup> Kite, 21-22.

Keiko Abe was also responsible for bringing the marimba back into the international spotlight. The marimba had fizzled out after Vida Chenoweth's performance career ended in 1971. Abe famously made her first appearance to the international classical percussion community at the 1977 Percussive Arts Society International Convention in Knoxville, TN. At this convention, she performed multiple recitals of classical solo marimba works that she commissioned. Her musicality and technique on the marimba astounded audiences and she planted the seed that inspired the third generation of marimbists. A soon-to-be prominent third generation marimbist, a young Robert van Sice remarked after watching Abe in 1977 that "I had never seen a percussionist play at the level of a concert pianist. It wasn't just her execution, which was flawless. It was her seriousness of purpose, her dedication to marimba performance as a serious artform. It profoundly touched me."<sup>57</sup>

Another important aspect of Keiko Abe's influence is the design of the marimba. After the premiere of Minoru Miki's *Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra* (1969), Abe and Miki talked about the issues with the Musser marimba that she was performing on. They both agreed that the instrument was lacking clarity of pitch and especially lacking projection.<sup>58</sup> This inspired Abe to reach out to Yamaha corporation to create a new concert marimba. At the time, the standard range of marimbas manufactured by Musser were four octaves in range, and Abe wanted to add an extra octave to the bass range so that she could play music with a pianistic approach where a distinct harmony could be in the left hand and melody in the right hand when using four mallets. While five-octave marimbas were the standard size with the Central American marimbists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Abe encourage their

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<sup>57</sup> Kite, 104.

return as the new standard marimba. In 1984, Abe stated “Today, if a marimbist wants to have serious concert activity, he or she must use a five-octave marimba.”<sup>59</sup>

A final distinction of the second era marimbists is the transition from the xylophonist approach to a distinct marimbist approach. Switching to the five-octave marimba and the pianistic approach that came from the added bass range influenced this shift. Not only that, Abe would voice each of her four mallets as if they were four voices of a choir, and this is a distinct difference in approach compared to xylophone playing. Abe therefore left the third generation of marimbists a plethora of five-octave solo repertoire that featured this pianistic approach, and the third generation would go on to codify the approach and continue to bring international acclaim to the classical solo marimba art form.

Prominent third generation marimbists came out of the United States starting in the late 1970’s and 1980’s. The most notable of the third generation were Leigh Howard Stevens, Robert van Sice, Nancy Zeltsman, and William Moersch. All of these third generation marimbists utilized the distinct pianistic approach, performed classical solo marimba repertoire widely on a world-class stages, and commissioned many works for the marimba. Let us discuss each individual’s unique contributions to the classical solo marimbist art form.

Leigh Howard Stevens got his start on the marimba by studying with Vida Chenoweth. He is known for revolutionizing four mallet marimba technique with his adaptation of the Musser Grip which he calls the Stevens’ Grip. This grip features individual mallet independence and finger finesse inspired from Stevens’ time studying with famous drumset player Joe Morello. In 1979, Stevens published his technique book called *The Method of Movement* which meticulously lays out the Stevens’ Grip to a global audience who now has access to this

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<sup>59</sup> Kite, 209.

knowledge. Stevens is also an industry titan. Through his company Malletech, he commercially makes available his own five-octave marimba, other keyboard percussion instruments, mallets, sticks, and a music publishing company. His entrepreneurial achievements and contributions made high quality products available to marimbists worldwide.

William Moersch's career started as a chamber musician with his group the Musical Elements Ensemble. He also founded the New York Quintet which took influence from Keiko Abe's Tokyo Quintet. Moersch soon turned his efforts into becoming a soloist with his New York City debut marimba recital in 1984, winning the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) consortium commissioning grant in 1984, and becoming the first marimbist to win the NEA Solo Recitalist Fellowship 1986. His most notable contribution lies in commissioning, especially when he founded his organization "New Music Marimba". New Music Marimba's mission is to commission exceptional marimba music from the world's top composers.<sup>60</sup> Through New Music marimba and Moersch's personal marimba projects, it is not an exaggeration to say that he is responsible for commissioning almost every masterwork for the marimba. This includes solo works, concerti, and chamber music.

Nancy Zeltsman's unique contribution, apart from being a phenomenal soloist, is prominently bringing the marimba into chamber music. While the marimba had appeared in chamber music before, it was written in a simplistic fashion utilizing the first generation xylophonist approach. Zeltsman brought the distinct pianistic approach of the third generation of classical marimbists featuring technically advanced four mallet playing. Zeltsman most famously accomplished this with her marimba and violin duo called Marimolin with violinist Sharan

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<sup>60</sup> David Via, "PASIC '89: An Individual Entrepreneur – A Discussion with William Moersch," *Percussive Notes* 27, no. 5 (1989): 29.

Leventhal.<sup>61</sup> Nancy is also a revered pedagogue through her unique position as Professor of Marimba at Boston Conservatory at Berklee since 1993 as well as holding the Zeltsman Marimba Festival (ZMG) since 2001.

Robert van Sice, while in Europe for most of performing career, studied the marimba with Keiko Abe and Leigh Howard Stevens and is known for continuing to elevate the marimba as a serious classical music instrument with his musicianship equal to those of standard classical instruments. Robert van Sice is also extremely influential in marimba design like Leigh Howard Stevens. Beginning by working with marimba manufacturers like Korogi to design higher quality marimbas, he is best known for his design work with Andre Adams and helping take the Adams Percussion company off the ground. Adams marimbas are arguably revered as the Steinway of marimbas. Robert van Sice is also known for marimba mallet design creating a distinct American sound to the marimba. He achieved this by combining Stevens' marimba mallet design with the sound concepts from his former teacher Cloyd Duff, arguably one of the most influential American timpanists of all time.

After this third generation of marimbists, the marimba became an accepted instrumental art form in the classical music industry with a deep repertoire of solo music. They helped create a market producing world-class marimbas and marimba mallets to percussionists around the globe. More marimbists of note have emerged in the twenty-first century, notably Bogdan Bacanu who is a phenomenal performer and leading international pedagogue, but a new direction for the marimba takes place as the third era of classical solo percussionists emerge in the 1980's.

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<sup>61</sup> Rick, Mattingly. "2022 Hall of Fame: Nancy Zeltsman," *Percussive Notes* 60, no. 4 (2022): 12.

## Section 2: The Multi-Percussionists

The “generations” framework will apply to the multi-percussionists as well. This section will discuss three distinct generations of multi-percussionists and how their influence evolved the solo multi-percussionist art form.

Unlike the marimbists, the impetus for the classical solo multi-percussionist art form was not coming from the performers, but from the composers. Even though the first era jazz drumset players had proven to both composers and percussionists that this was a valuable art form, percussionists could not see themselves as multi-percussion soloists in classical music. Therefore, despite composers being eager to get started, the art form was stalling without professional performers.

Returning to John Cage and his amateur percussion quartet of composers and dancers, by the 1950’s, they were reaching their technical limits performing classical percussion repertoire. John Cage even wrote the first solo work for multi-percussion entitled *27' 10.554"* (1956), but the premiere didn’t happen until 1962 in Munich, was lackluster in quality, and the piece was not performed in its entirety.

In 1950’s Europe, Karlheinz Stockhausen was also excited to start a solo multi-percussion artform but similarly could not convince any orchestral percussionists in West Germany to play his music. “There was only one person in this part of Germany who said ‘Yes, I can do that’ and that was Herr Caskel. The other [percussionists] were not interested, and Stockhausen knew that the other percussionists in the area never had any time.”<sup>62</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>62</sup> Jonathan Hepfer, “Christopher Caskel and the Birth of Zyklus,” *Percussive Notes* 60, no. 2 (2022): 59.

Christoph Caskel became the first solo multi-percussionist and Stockhausen's official percussionist.

Caskel started his relationship with Stockhausen performing in Stockhausen's orchestral work for three simultaneous orchestras entitled *Gruppen* (1957). After the premiere, Stockhausen was not pleased with the execution of the percussion section which played: marimba, vibraphone, four tom-toms, snare drum, African slit drum, Indian bells, triangle, tam-tam, cymbals, and cowbells. At this time, orchestral percussionists in Europe were not familiar with these instruments from the United States and across the world.

Stockhausen recognized that percussionists had no formal training on these instruments, or contemporary music for that matter, and needed solo repertoire to study to improve their skills. To address this issue, Stockhausen talked to Dr. Steinecke, who was the festival organizer of the Darmstadt Summer Festival, and advocated for the creation of a percussion competition at Darmstadt. Dr. Steinecke liked that idea but asked Stockhausen "How would we have a percussion competition? What are the participants supposed to play?" In response, Stockhausen agreed that he didn't know what the percussion contestants would play, and Dr. Steinecke responded "Well, I guess you better write something, Herr Stockhausen."<sup>63</sup>

Using the exact percussion instruments from *Gruppen*, and arranging them in a circular setup around a soloist, Stockhausen wrote the second ever multi-percussion work entitled *Zyklus* (1959). The premiere of *Zyklus* was given by Cristoph Caskel at the Darmstadt percussion competition, and important to note, this was the first ever classical solo percussion competition in the history of classical music.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Hepfer, 56.

<sup>64</sup> Udow, Michael. "An Interview with Karlheinz Stockhausen." *Percussive Notes Research Edition* 23, no. 6 (1985): 17.



Around the same time in the United States, John Cage finally caught a break and was able to put down the drumsticks and mallets and have trained classical multi-percussionists play his works. Cage was able to do this because Professor Paul Price had influenced a large change in percussion education in American universities and trained the first American generation of classical multi-percussion soloists.

Professor Paul Price founded the first percussion ensemble in academia in 1950 at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. This was the first percussion ensemble that was accredited as a graduation requirement for percussion majors that focused only on classical percussion ensemble works, not orchestral performance or jazz. Paul Price's influence is responsible for revitalizing the then forgotten percussion ensemble works of the first half of the twentieth century, performing works of living composers, and commissioning over a hundred new ensemble works.<sup>65</sup>

Paul Price eventually became the director of percussion at the Manhattan School of Music (MSM) in 1957 and started a percussion ensemble there as well, bringing all of his experience from Illinois to New York City. His students at MSM performed all over New York and became the first solo multi-percussionists – the most notable of which was Max Neuhaus.

Max Neuhaus was convinced that he was going to be the next greatest jazz drummer, and was inspired by Gene Krupa.<sup>66</sup> Neuhaus' vision changed when he enrolled at MSM in 1957 and studied with Paul Price. While an upperclassman at MSM, Neuhaus already started a career as a solo multi-percussionist. Neuhaus reached a global audience when he attended Darmstadt in 1962, and while there, Neuhaus performed his interpretation of *Zyklus* for Stockhausen. This

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<sup>65</sup> Fredrick Fairchild, "Paul Price in Memoriam" *Percussive Notes* 25, no. 2 (1987): 1.

<sup>66</sup> Megan Murph, "Max Neuhaus and the Musical Avant-Garde." (MM Theses, Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College, 2013), 10, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

connection proved fruitful as Neuhaus soon became a favored percussionist of Stockhausen and Pierre Boulez and toured the world extensively with their ensembles. By 1964, Neuhaus was at the height of his career traveling the globe as a classical solo multi-percussionist playing in the world's most prestigious venues.

Christoph Caskell and Max Neuhaus are therefore realized as the two most prominent figures of the first generation multi-percussion soloists. Caskell was a part of Stockhausen's ensemble and integral part of Stockhausen's pieces such as *Gruppen* (1957), *Zyklus* (1959), *Kontakte* (1960), *Refrain* (1961), and other chamber works. Caskell also premiered the fifth multi-percussion solo ever written entitled *Interiuer I* (1967) by Helmut Lachenmann and became an influential teacher to the second generation of multi-percussionists. Neuhaus championed a lot of new works, including an authoritative performance of Cage's *27' 10.554"* in 1964 at Carnegie Hall. Neuhaus also premiered the third multi-percussion solo ever written entitled *The King of Denmark* (1964) by Morton Feldman.

A distinction of the first generation of multi-percussion solo works is the large size of the setups and *how* composers wrote for this generation of works. The first five major multi-percussion solos (Cage's *27' 10.554"*, Stockhausen's *Zyklus*, Lachenmann's *Interiuer I*, Feldman's *King of Denmark*, and Wuorinen's *Janissary Music*) have massive setups that enclose the soloist in a circle of percussion instruments. The pieces are composed in the vein of "percussion's second practice" where one percussionist must masterfully interpret and manage an astounding array of colors and timbres in one setup. Even though pieces like Lachenmann's *Interiuer I* and Stockhausen's *Zyklus* feature a marimba and vibraphone, *how* they are composed for does not include the pianistic approach that the second era marimbists codified.

The first generation of multi-percussion works also do not have standardized setups. This meant that each work utilized different percussion instruments and arranged them in a unique way. When giving a recital of these works, one needed separate equipment for each piece. Otherwise, a 15-minute intermission between each work would be necessary to set up the following work.

The logistics for touring the first generation of multi-percussion solos proved to be unsustainable. One multi-percussionist required a massive moving truck's worth of equipment just to put on a recital. At this point in time, there were not any professional percussion cartage or percussion instrument rental companies to aid in this endeavor, so the first generation of multi-percussionists were doing hours of heavy lifting on their own before concerts. It is no surprise that Max Neuhaus changed his artistic output in 1969 to curating sound art installations, leaving behind being a solo multi-percussionist. "For one, he [Neuhaus] was tired of transporting 2,000 pounds of percussion equipment from one concert to the next, becoming especially frustrated during his European and Spoleto tours."<sup>67</sup> The second generation of multi-percussion solos started in the 1970's and features what is known as 'theatrical percussion'. Theatrical percussion marked a radical change in the size of setups where all the instruments could now fit into a suitcase.

Theatrical percussion can be described as performing percussion instruments while singing, speaking, acting, or dancing. Theatrical percussion was a product of the 'new music theatre' movement starting in the 1960's in France. When Vinko Globokar composed the first theatrical percussion solo *Toucher* (1973), multi-percussionists rejoiced because a high-quality

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<sup>67</sup> Murph, 62..

piece was added to their limited repertoire, and it requires only seven small instruments that the multi-percussionist can choose. One can select whatever instruments they like, as long as they can be played by hand and that they match the syllables of the text to be spoken.

A brief description of 'new music theatre' is required here. 'Music theatre' is an umbrella terms of which 'new music theatre' is a subgenre of. 'Music theatre' was a movement starting in the 1960's which was aesthetically opposed to opera, which was seen as antiquated museum culture.

Equally typical of this contrasting of 'opera' to 'music theatre' is an intermingling of aesthetic and institutional aspects. For instance, 'opera' is associated as much with the plot carrying role of the singing parts as with the large orchestra apparatus and the publicly funded opera house itself; contrariwise, 'music theatre' stands for a smaller form, for the more flexible apparatus and for the giving of equal importance to all the employed theatrical means, which can even lead to the complete absence of singing in music theatre.<sup>68</sup>

'New music theatre' is most succinctly defined by the French Ministry of Culture in 1980 as "a theatre spectacle whose dramaturgy is essentially controlled by a musical project and has meaning only in relation to it."<sup>69</sup> This type of theater is entirely led by composers, and the theatrical components are written into the score and created by the composers. The composers will often take on the responsibility of the stage direction themselves. The 'new music' portion of the title refers to the contemporary musical tradition that these composers were writing within. Some of the key composers of this movement are Vinko Globokar, Georges Aperghis, Heiner Goebbels, Francois Sarhan, Mauricio Kagel, and Thierry de May.

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<sup>68</sup> Matthias Rebstock, "Varieties of Independent Music Theatre in Europe," In *Independent Theatre in Contemporary Europe: Structures–Aesthetics–Cultural Policy*, ed. Manfred Brauneck and ITI Germany (Bielefeld: 2017), 528.

<sup>69</sup> Rebstock, 530.

The most influential percussionist of the second generation of multi-percussionists performing in the ‘new music theatre’ subgenre was Jean-Pierre Drouet. Drouet started his professional relationship with Vinko Globokar in their free improvisation quartet called the New Phonic Art in 1969. In 1973, Globokar formed his Laboratorium project which was an open work that expanded until 1985. Laboratorium comprised 10 stable musicians, including Drouet, and concerts consisted of various pieces strung together. These pieces varied in size of the ensemble, and the combinations would include 1, 2, 3, and up to 10 musicians.<sup>70</sup> Laboratorium is where the first theatrical percussion solos are born including: *Toucher* (1973) and *?Corporel* (1985).

Drouet continued to solidify theatrical percussion with solo works such as Georges Aperghis’ *Le Coprs à Corps* (1978) and through his percussion trio ‘Trio le Cercle’ which primarily performed theatrical percussion chamber works. The trio consisted of Jean-Pierre Drouet, Gaston Sylvestre, and Willy Coquillat and they premiered many gripping works such as Mauricio Kagel’s *Dressur* (1977), Georges Aperghis’s *Les Guetteurs de Son* (1981), and Iannis Xenakis’ *Okho* (1989). Theatrical percussion continued to solidify as it became a mainstay of solo multi-percussionist’s repertoire worldwide. In the United States, multi-percussionist Jan Williams, another famous Paul Price student, commissioned Frederic Rzewski to compose *To The Earth* (1985). *To The Earth* is a piece for a percussionist reciting poetry while playing four flowerpots that can be found at a hardware store.

In the mid-1980’s, the third generation of multi-percussion solos found a compromise between the massive setups of the first generation and the portable theatrical percussion setups of

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<sup>70</sup> John Warnaby, “Vinko Globokar: Revaluating a Phenomenon,” *Tempo* 61, no. 240 (2007): 5.

second generation. The setups of the third generation were moderate in size and primarily consisted of various drums arranged in a setup akin to a standing drumset.

Typical instruments of the third generation of multi-percussion include a bass drum, toms, congas, and bongos. These third generation setups featured a homogeneous collection of drums which formed a scale of pitches from high to low, a spectrum of timbres from bright to dark, and a spectrum of resonances from dry to wet. In general, this third generation of multi-percussion solos got rid of most accessory percussion, cymbals, gongs, and keyboard percussion instruments. One cannot help but notice that the third generation of multi-percussion works stripped away a lot of the “traps” just as Gene Krupa popularized removing the traps from the trap kit. Furthermore, almost all third generation multi-percussion solos feature virtuosic and rudimental drumming techniques, most likely influenced by the virtuosity of jazz drumset players like Buddy Rich.

Unlike the jazz drumset, it is important to reiterate that multi-percussion setups have never become standardized, and that is true of all three generations of solo multi-percussion works. While a few third generation multi-percussion solos do not confine themselves to just drums, they do all share the common traits of using a limited setup, such as David Lang’s *The Anvil Chorus* (1991).

The most influential solo multi-percussionists of the third generation were Sylvio Gualda and Steve Shick. Important to note, Gualda and Schick did not just perform the third generation multi-percussion works, but they played all three generations of works. Sylvio Gualda is known for his collaborations with Jean-Pierre Drouet and composer Iannis Xenakis. Gualda was the preferred percussionist of Xenakis, and Xenakis wrote Gualda multi-percussion pieces such as *Psappha* (1975), *Rebonds* (1988), and chamber music works – most notably for harp and multi-

percussion such as *Oophaa* (1989). Steve Schick studied with famous multi-percussionist pedagogue Bernhard Wulff and Schick is known for his masterful interpretations and recordings of the three generations of multi-percussionist solo works. Schick is a respected author, scholar on percussion, and commissioned many works such as James Wood's *Rogosanti* (1986) and David Lang's *The Anvil Chorus* (1991)

A marked difference between the three generations of classical solo multi-percussion works and three generations of classical solo marimba works is that each generation replaced the next for the marimbists whereas the multi-percussionists welcomed each new generation of repertoire on top of the prior generation (just like the percussion practices). Furthermore, when a new generation of multi-percussion works came about, composers did not stop writing in the styles of past generations in favor of the style of the present generation. For example, composers continued to write in the first generation style of utilizing a wide timbral palette on a large setup well past the 1970's, most notably with the pieces *I Ching* (1982), by Per Nørgård and *Six Japanese Gardens* (1994), by Kaija Saariaho. Similarly, second generation works featuring theatrical percussion did not stop being composed for after the 1980's, most notably François Sarhan's *Homework* (2008) and Thierry de May's *Silence Must Be!* (2002). In contrast, most third generation marimbists do not play first generation classical marimba repertoire due to the xylophonist approach feeling outdated, and the marimba works of the second generation that continue to be played feature the pianistic approach of playing.

Like the marimbists, multi-percussion did not go away after its third generation. Multi-percussion also became an accepted instrumental art form in the classical music industry with a deep repertoire of solo music. Like the marimbists, multi-percussion took a new direction as the third era of classical solo percussionists emerged in the 1980's.

### Section 3: Why Two Factions?

Before discussing the third era of independent classical percussion soloists in chapter three, it is worth examining why the second era of classical solo percussionists had two factions. For any other instrument, the notion of two concurrent factions creating a solo instrumental art form at essentially the same time does not intuitively make sense.

Steve Schick notes in his book *The Percussionist's Art: Same Bed, Different Dreams*:

When I turned fifty a few months ago I was struck by the thought that I was older than the oldest piece in my repertoire... As a percussionist, I again found myself in the midst of a unique contradiction: percussion playing is an ancient art form, but notated music for solo percussion is very recent... With percussion playing, the discrepancy between the history of the instrument and its first use in the practice of notated classical music is extreme.<sup>71</sup>

At first glance, one may be tempted to say that Schick's claim of being older than the oldest solo percussion piece is false. After all, Schick was born in 1954 and Paul Creston's *Concertino for Marimba and Orchestra* was written in 1940. His claim is true though considering the first multi-percussionist solo was John Cage's *27' 10.554"* and was written in 1956. Schick's repertoire is different than the marimbist repertoire, and this is why a distinction between marimbists and multi-percussionists is necessary to account for two concurrent independent classical percussion soloist art forms whose histories run parallel to one another.

For percussionists, having two concurrent art forms is not uncommon because other genres of music essentially have "drummers" and "keyboard players". In classical music, one

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<sup>71</sup> Steven Schick, *The Percussionist's Art: Same Bed, Different Dreams* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 231.



could boil down the marimbists as the “mallet players” and the multi-percussionists as the “drummers.” This binary model exists in jazz, and knowing that both second era factions were inspired by jazz, it can be inferred that classical solo percussionists copied jazz percussion’s binary model of the “drummer” and “keyboard player”.

In the solo jazz art form, the drumset (drummer) and the vibraphone (keyboard player) have always been separate instruments to pursue and specialize in. This binary model is ingrained in academia as well. When a student seeks to study jazz percussion performance in academia, one majors in either jazz drumset or jazz vibes.

This binary model has expanded beyond jazz as well. Especially for the drumset, the instrument has been a mainstay in every popular music genre of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Professional drumset players therefore study all genres of jazz, pop, rock, hip-hop, and everything else in-between. This scope necessitates specialization solely on the drumset.

In classical music, the binary model of the second era percussion soloists was perpetuated through the influence of academia as well. The multi-percussionists have held academic faculty positions since 1950, most notably starting with Paul Price at the University of Illinois, but the marimbists only began holding academic faculty positions starting in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s. Starting with the third generation of marimbists, Robert van Sice became the professor of marimba at the Rotterdam Conservatory in 1989, Nancy Zeltsman became the professor of marimba at the Berklee College of Music and the Boston Conservatory in 1993, and Leigh Howard Stevens being the professor of marimba at the Royal Academy of Music in 1997. Other prominent marimbists like Michael Burritt entered academia in 1995 at Northwestern University but was a professor of percussion. Clair Omar Musser was an early exception with his unique marimba lecturer position at Northwestern from 1946-50. Keiko Abe held a marimba lecturer

position at the Toho Gakuen School of Music in 1970. Toho Gakuen school started as a music school for children but eventually turned into a precollege, college, and graduate music school.

In this forty-year gap where marimbists essentially did not teach in academia, most marimba instruction was done privately. Abe taught marimba seminars for weeks at a time across the globe, as well as offering students to travel to Japan to study with her for a month or two. Stevens followed suit by starting his marimba seminar in 1980 which would last for a few weeks, and Nancy Zeltsman started her Zeltsman Marimba Festival in 2001 following a similar model.

What brought marimbists into academia? Along with the prominence of the solo marimba art form, a shift in chamber music necessitated marimbists into academia. Both mixed-instrumentation chamber music and percussion chamber music from the early twentieth century to the 1980's was primarily written in the multi-percussionist approach of composition. This means that the chamber music of that time did not utilize the pianistic approach codified by the third generation of marimbists. This shift towards the pianistic approach started in the late 1970's through the influence of the famous Nexus Percussion Group.

Nexus brought back virtuosic keyboard percussion to percussion chamber music when Bob Becker prominently performed the ragtime xylophone solos of the first era. This shift continued in the 1980's with Toru Takemitsu's *Rain Tree* (1981) and the influence of Nancy Zeltsman's marimba duo Marimolin. By the 1990's, the pianistic marimbist approach started to be commonly utilized in both percussion chamber music and mixed-instrumentation chamber music in pieces such as Peter Klatzow's *Ambient Resonances* (1994), Philippe Manoury's *Le Livres de Claviers* (1987-1988), Gunther Schuller's *Phantasmata* (1989), Alejandro Viñao's *Tumblers* (1990), Philippe Hurel's *Tombeau* (1999), and Kevin Puts' *And Legions Will Rise*

(2001). This shift necessitated the need for marimbists to teach chamber music as well as the marimba solo repertoire.

The need for marimbists in academia continued with the prominence of the marimba in modern orchestral music. Not only was the marimba a feature in percussion sections, the pianistic approach from the third generation of marimbists was being applied to the vibraphone as well. Now, marimbists were holding faculty positions at orchestral-focused institutions to teach students the newly required marimba solos and excerpts that were on orchestral auditions.

Almost as soon as marimbists entered academia, the third era of solo percussionists started taking off and the marimbist and multi-percussionist factions merged. Why is it that classical solo percussionists abandoned specializing in either marimba or multi-percussion? Why not continue the specialist binary like the jazz solo percussion art form? I contend that the answer lies in the influence of the orchestra in classical music.

For every instrumentalist in classical music, performing in an orchestra or a band is a core part of their education. Even if an instrumentalist does not choose to specialize in orchestral performance for their professional career, performing in the orchestra or band is an integral part of one's classical music education starting from a young child through university. Since the end of percussion's first practice, percussionists have been performing in the percussion section of orchestras and have been expected to play all of the instruments in the percussion section. As the orchestral percussion section kept expanding in percussion's second and third practice, the need for versatility and the ability to play any percussion instrument that a composer wrote for became important. It is the orchestra that set the precedent that classical percussionists are not specialists of singular instruments but specialists playing a family of many instruments.

It is not just the classical music genre that holds the notion that a percussionist plays a family of percussion instruments. In Afro-Caribbean music, the percussionist also plays a family of instruments including shakers, guiros, timbales, bongos, congas, various hand drums, and various accessory percussion instruments.

One could argue that the term “percussionist” implies a performer who plays a family of instruments, not a performer specializing on a singular percussion instrument. Therefore, why would independent classical percussion soloists continue to specialize? In the 1980’s, classical percussion soloists marked a new era when they decided to do just that and combine the prior marimbist and multi-percussionist art forms.

## Chapter 3: Third Era - 1980's: The Two Factions Merge

### Section 1: Solo-Percussionists

When Evelyn Glennie was interviewed in 2008 and asked: “what do you consider your greatest accomplishment so far?”, Glennie replied “the fact that a full-time solo percussionist did not exist before.”<sup>72</sup> Similar to Schick’s claim in the previous section of this dissertation, one may be tempted to say that Glennie’s claim is false considering the percussion soloists of the second era. On the other hand, I contest that what Glennie did was fundamentally different than the marimbist and multi-percussion specialists of the prior era. Starting in the mid-1980’s, Glennie hailed in a new era of independent classical percussion soloists by combining the marimba and multi-percussion art forms as well as adding the burgeoning classical solo art forms of the snare drum and vibraphone.

Utilizing the term “solo percussionist” that Glennie coined, I opt to add a hyphen like “multi-percussionist” to bring added specificity to the term. Therefore, a “solo-percussionist” is defined as an independent classical percussion soloist who combined the prior marimba and multi-percussionist art forms as well as added the burgeoning classical solo art forms of the snare drum and vibraphone.

Evelyn Glennie’s career kicked off when she won first prize at the Shell/London Symphony Orchestra Music Scholarship in 1984. She won this prize at the end of her time as a student at the Royal Academy of Music. Glennie’s professional career became firmly established in 1987 when she was invited to tour Bartok’s *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion* (1937)

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<sup>72</sup> Lauren Weiss, “2008 Hall of Fame: Evelyn Glennie,” *Percussive Notes* 46, no. 4 (2008): 21.

with Sir George Solti, Murray Perahia, and timpanist David Corkhill. This Bartok project ended with a recording that won a grammy in 1989.<sup>73</sup>

At the beginning of her career, classical percussionists were not sure if she was a marimbist or a multi-percussionist. At first glance, Glennie was following in the steps of famous multi-percussionists Jean-Pierre Drouet and Sylvio Gualda who also kickstarted their careers with their 1972 recording of Bartok's *Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion* with Katia and Marielle Labèque. Yet on the other hand, Glennie went to Japan for a month in 1986 to study with Keiko Abe like countless third generation marimbists had done. In 1990, Glennie released her first solo album *Rhythm Song* which primarily featured respected marimba solo repertoire, classical arrangements on the marimba, as well as ragtime xylophone works. At this point, she seemed to be a marimbist.

Her second solo album *Light in Darkness* (1991) featured cherished Keiko Abe repertoire, respected marimba repertoire, a vibraphone solo, and a commission from composer John McLeod (a duet with piano and percussion where the percussionist plays marimba and multi-percussion both in one setup). The McLeod commission hinted toward the new direction that she was about to forge.

When Glennie's album *Rebounds* was released in 1992, it was finally clear that she was not going to choose either the multi-percussionist or marimbist lane. This album features Glennie performing the respected Rosauero and Miyoshi marimba concertos, but also plays the Milhaud percussion concerto and a new percussion concerto from composer Sir Richard Rodney Bennett written in 1990. The Milhaud percussion concerto is unique not only because it was written in 1929, well before the second era of classical percussion soloists, but because it is the only

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<sup>73</sup> Weiss, 18.

percussion concerto written in a first generation multi-percussionist style. The soloist in the Milhaud concerto plays all the orchestral percussion instruments at once in a large setup enclosing the soloist. The Bennett percussion concerto is also unique because it is one of the first “third era solo-percussionist concertos” where the soloist utilizes the pianistic marimba approach and multi-percussion all in one concerto.

In an interview in 2002, Glennie remarked: “When I started my career, I wanted to be a solo percussionist. People told me that it wasn’t possible; there was no repertoire. Well, now the repertoire exists and it *is* possible to sustain a career as a soloist.”<sup>74</sup> I assert that it is important to interpret her claim in the light of the distinct new “third era solo-percussionist concertos” (mentioned above) that she was trailblazing. When playing recitals, she would play a variety of established second era solo repertoire along with solo vibraphone and snare drum repertoire. These “third era solo-percussionist concertos” were distinctly different in how they were composed.

Glennie has had an incredible international solo career appearing in over 40 countries and performing around 100 concerts a year in the world’s most renowned venues. Glennie has been the subject of many documentaries and has appeared on programs such as Sesame Street – bringing the solo-percussionist art form to a wider audience. She has also commissioned over 200 works, most notably “third era solo-percussionist concertos”, to provide repertoire for the trail that she was blazing.

After Evelyn Glennie, the merging of the second era factions was cemented by Peter Sadlo. Peter Sadlo is the second solo-percussionist of this particular art form’s generation. One

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<sup>74</sup> Lauren Weiss. “Evelyn Glennie,” *Percussive Notes* 40, no. 2 (2002): 19.

of the best students of the famous German percussion teacher and composer Siegfried Fink, Sadlo started his performance career in 1982 as the principal timpanist of the Munich Philharmonic from the early age of 20. Sadlo's timpani position also kicked off his teaching career at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater München. While performing as a timpanist, Sadlo simultaneously was the first percussionist to win two major international classical music competitions as a percussionist. He won the Concours de Genève International Music Competition in 1982 and the ARD International Music Competition in Munich, Germany in 1985.

At first glance, Sadlo appeared to align with the marimbist faction. He won the ARD competition playing the Darius Milhaud *Concerto for Marimba and Vibraphone* and a marimba arrangement of Franz Schubert's "*Fantasie*" *Piano Sonata in G major, d. 894*. Sadlo's debut solo album was entitled *Marimbissimo* (1994) where he played popular marimbist repertoire and classical arrangements on marimba – especially J.S. Bach.

In 1998, Sadlo came out with his solo album *Percussion in Concert* (1998) which appeared in two volumes. Notable features on these albums include Milhaud's *Concerto for Marimba and Vibraphone* (1947), Bertold Hummel's *Concerto for Percussion and Orchestra* (1985), Paul Creston's *Concertino for Marimba and Orchestra* (1940), Franco Donatoni's *Concertino for Timpani and Orchestra* (1953), and Siegfried Fink's *Vibraphone Concerto* (1958). Just like Glennie, Sadlo made it clear that he was not going to specialize in just the marimba or multi-percussion, and with concerti like Hummel's *Percussion Concerto*, he was interested in developing the new medium of "third era solo-percussionist concerti".

Especially after Sadlo's next solo album *Xenakis – Rebounds and Other Works for Percussion* (1999), Sadlo not only proved that "third era solo-percussionists" were capable of



combining the second era art forms, but they were capable of producing the finest interpretations of the vibraphone, marimba, multi-percussion, snare drum solo, and timpani repertoire without specializing on just one percussion instrument.

Apart from Sadlo's performance career, he was the most influential professor training the next generations of solo-percussionists. Not only did he teach at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater München, but also at the Mozarteum in Salzburg since 1990. Unfortunately, Sadlo died early from surgery complications in 2016. Sadlo was also revered for performing works that crossed genres especially through his chamber ensemble "Peter Sadlo and Friends." Sadlo's group would perform respected percussion ensemble repertoire as well as arrangements of works from Bach utilizing a percussion ensemble that included drumset and a Latin percussion setup.

The second generation of solo-percussionists consists of Martin Grubinger and Colin Currie. Following in the footsteps of Peter Sadlo, Martin Grubinger is one of the most influential solo-percussionists. In an interview, Grubinger states that Sylvio Gualda and Peter Sadlo were his biggest inspirations.

I remember I was 6 years old, and I heard Peter Sadlo performing Xenakis's *Rebonds B*, and this was so fascinating to me. He was playing it at Munich Gasteig, the Munich Philharmonic Hall, and I was captivated: the wood-blocks, the combination with the drums, the change between the rhythmic structure and this kind of improvisation on the wood-blocks and then the roll back to the rhythmic structure again with the sixteenth note on the bongo and the kind of melody on the left hand.<sup>75</sup>

Grubinger is known for his sensitivity, broad range, execution, and tremendous performance energy. Grubinger is also capable of playing every classical solo-percussion

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<sup>75</sup> Éric Denut, "Interview: Martin Grubinger about Xenakis," *Éditions Durand-Salabert-Eschig*, September 30, 2014, <https://www.durand-salabert-eschig.com/en-GB/News/2014/09/Interview-Martin-Grubinger-about-Xenakis.aspx>.

instrument at an unprecedented level of technical and musical mastery. He is equally at home as a recitalist, “third era solo-percussionist” concerto soloist, and has a chamber group called the “Percussive Planet Ensemble.” The Percussive Planet Ensemble pays homage to “Peter Saldo and Friends” but on a larger scale and tackles many genres. Grubinger brings the solo-percussionist artform to a larger audience by performing in all the premier concert halls around the globe, his residencies with countless major orchestras, and his television program called *KlickKlack*. *KlickKlack* airs on the popular BR Television Network (Bayerischer Rundfunk) where Grubinger co-stars this program with cellist Sol Gabetta. The TV show covers the classical, jazz, and contemporary music happenings of the present day – including the musical projects that Grubinger is a part of.

There are four “third era solo-percussionist concertos” that Grubinger commissioned that have become standard works: Avner Dorman’s *Frozen in Time* (2007), Friedrich Cerha’s *Concerto for Percussion and Orchestra* (2008), Tan Dun’s *The Tears of Nature* (2012), and Peter Eötvös’ *Speaking Drums* (2014). The other influential second generation solo-percussionist is Colin Currie, who has premiered over 70 works for percussion, primarily “third era solo-percussionist concertos.”

In a similar vein to Evelyn Glennie, Currie jump started his solo percussion career when he won the Shell/London Symphony Orchestra Music Scholarship in 1994. Also like Glennie, he picked up the torch on commissioning solo-percussionist concertos due to the lack of repertoire in this new medium. Currie’s greatest commissions include Jennifer Higdon’s *Percussion Concerto* (2005), Einojuhani Rautavaara’s *Incantations* (2008), and Kalevi Aho’s *Sieidi* (2012). Currie also brings visibility to the art form by playing with all the major orchestras around the

world as well. He has started his own recording company called ‘Colin Currie Records’ devoted towards recording percussion music as well as his recent ventures as a conductor.

At this point of examining the solo-percussionists, it is important to return to the “eras of percussion soloists” framework and ask what percussion instruments did solo-percussionists perform on?

The widely performed percussion instruments that third era solo-percussionists specialized in were the marimba, the vibraphone, multi-percussion, theatrical percussion, and the snare drum. Moving forward, I will utilize the term “instrument groups” to account for the fact that multi-percussion and theatrical percussion are a non-standardized assortment of multiple percussion instruments.

The notion of specialist instruments groups is an important concept when composers choose to augment one of the instrument groups with other percussion instruments. For example, when looking at Avner Dorman’s *Frozen in Time* (2007), one would be correct to say the soloist performs roughly 20 percussion instruments if each instrument is counted individually. A nuanced perspective illuminates that this solo-percussionist concerto plays three instrument groups: an augmented marimba, augmented vibraphone, and multi-percussion. For example: *Frozen in Time*’s solo marimba part *features* the marimba and is augmented by almglocken and a doumbek. This perspective can aid in bringing concision to the seemingly endless array of instruments that solo-percussionists perform on.

It is common, but not necessary, for a composer to augment the five instrument groups with countless percussion instruments. This augmentation gives each of the five instrument groups a unique sound in a composer’s composition. This concept is analogous to cooking where there are core ingredients that show up in almost every dish of a cuisine, and one can add a

variety of species and other ingredients to give each dish its own distinct flavor. For example: corn, rice, beans, and citrus are core staples of Mexican cuisine. By learning how to prepare those core staples in various ways, along with adding countless species and other ingredients, one has the basis for how to cook countless dishes that make up Mexican cuisine. This concept is transferable to third era solo-percussion. The core staples are analogous to the five specialist instrument groups, and the various spices and other ingredients are analogous to the countless percussion instruments that are augmented on top of the five instrument groups.

Examining these five instrument groups, some of the choices are self-evident and others require justification. The marimba and multi-percussion are the self-evident instrument groups because they were the specialist art forms from the second era. The vibraphone and the snare drum were introduced as solo instruments during the third era of solo-percussionists, so their justification will be covered in the next two subsections. Theatrical percussion is a strong choice because multi-percussionists have performed theatrical percussion since the second era, but is theatrical percussion widely performed enough to be one of the five instrument groups for third era solo-percussionists?

This line of reasoning now begs the question “is theatrical percussion a subgenre of multi-percussion, or does it deserve to be its own specialist instrument group”? Historically, theatrical percussion has been seen as a subgenre of multi-percussion. With multi-percussion not being a standardized instrument grouping, it is convenient to lump theatrical percussion into multi-percussion. Multi-percussionists argue that theater is implicit in all multi-percussion and any form of percussion in general. Steven Schick states that multi-percussion’s roots in the jazz drumset with early jazz and blues “could not be separated from the natural drama in the lives of

the musicians and listeners. Therefore, drum set playing in this idiom is constituted as a kind of folk theater.”<sup>76</sup>

This argument relies on the fact that percussion is arguably the most physically involved instrument due to the striking of various instruments with sticks and mallets. In certain musical moments, percussionists will need to raise their sticks up high to strike their instruments with varying degrees of velocity. If the music necessitates it, this gesture can be visually very large. When adding multi-percussion into the mix, especially the large first generation setups, learning these pieces will require the percussionist to spend time choreographing mallet changes and gracefully moving from one instrument to the next (think Lachenmann’s *Interieur I*, for example). All these components are related to the physicality of playing percussion, but this physicality is subjective. One will witness a spectrum of physicality when performers play percussion repertoire. Some choose to be conservative in their physicality, some may choose to flashy, and everything in-between. This physicality therefore has everything to do with performance style, and all instrumentalists choose their subjective performance style within a spectrum of physicality. Variation in performance style is not unique to percussion.

In theatrical percussion, the physicality is not subjective and is meticulously notated by the composer, just as the notes and pitches are. Georges Aperghis notates in his theatrical percussion piece *Le Corps á Corps* (1978) before the “II. Le Recit” section to “turn your head to the right, as if you are surprised by something.” This physicality requested by the composer is not subjective, and it is imperative to adhere to these directions, just it is imperative to adhere to the notes and rhythms notated by any composer. Again, this has nothing to do with performance style, and is a reminder that theatrical percussion comes from the new music theatre movement

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<sup>76</sup> Beck, 291.

and the aesthetics of musicians taking on the role of actor as well as performer. None of the other percussion instrument groups come from this aesthetic heritage. Therefore, I contend that the aesthetics are the defining factor that is unique only to theatrical percussion, deserving to classify the art form as its own instrument group.

So, if multi-percussionists played theatrical percussion as well as multi-percussion, is there a strong enough case for theatrical percussion to be an instrument group mainstay of third era solo-percussionists? After all, multi-percussionists used to play timpani solos as well, most notably Elliott Carter's *Eight Pieces for Four Timpani* (1950/1966), but the timpani solo repertoire did not become a mainstay of third era solo-percussionists. Jan Williams, Sylvio Gualda, and Peter Sadlo famously played the Carter Timpani Pieces because they were all professional timpanists, and when the multi-percussionist art form was in its infancy, why not play a solo on an instrument one is already masterful at? Due to solo-percussionists having far more solo repertoire to choose from, solo-percussionists typically do not program timpani solos anymore.

The solo theatrical percussion repertoire has only continued to grow since its introduction in the 1970's, and solo-percussionists widely perform works such as François Sarhan's *Homework* (2008), Georges Aperghis' *Le Corps á Corps* (1978), and Frederic Rzewski's *To the Earth* (1985). Theatrical percussion has notably made it into "third era solo-percussionist concerti" as well. Popular percussion concerti that feature theatrical percussion include Steven Stucky's *Spirit Voices* (2003), Chen Yi's *Percussion Concerto* (2003), and Peter Eötvös' *Speaking Drums* (2014). This wide performance therefore necessitates theatrical percussion's inclusion into the five instrument groups.

## Section 2: Added Instrument Group: The Vibraphone

This section is an exploration into the development of the vibraphone's classical solo repertoire. The strange thing about the vibraphone's arrival as a widely performed classical solo instrument for solo-percussionists in the third era is that the vibraphone has been used in classical music since that first era. Comparatively, the marimba entered classical music in the second era thanks to the independent soloists of the marimbist art form, but the vibraphone was adopted into classical music almost as soon as the instrument was created.

As a reminder, the vibraphone was created in the U.S. in the 1920's, and by the end of the decade, the design of the vibraphone had reached maturity. The first vibraphone recordings happened in the late 1920's and early 1930's in jazz, and then the vibraphone made its first classical appearance in Darius Milhaud's *L'annonce faite à Marie* (1932). Composers kept using the vibraphone in works such as Alban Berg opera *Lulu* (1934) and Olivier Messiaen's *Trois Petites Liturgies de la Presence Divine* (1944).<sup>77</sup> Also during this time, Darius Milhaud prominently featured the vibraphone in the second movement of his *Concerto for Marimba and Vibraphone* (1947). The vibraphone was an exciting new keyboard percussion instrument in classical music, and composers favored it over the marimba. The vibraphone's appeal relies on its sustain pedal, which functions like a piano pedal. The pedal gives the vibraphone a distinct advantage over the marimba with its ability to better control the shaping of melodies, phrases, and articulation.

With the success of the jazz vibists in the first era, and the international prominence of the jazz solo vibist art form, the vibraphone's use in classical music and film music took on a

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<sup>77</sup> Brian Graiser, "Classical/Contemporary Compositions for the Vibraphone: 1921-2021," *Percussive Notes* 49, no. 4 (2021): 71.

new role as a sonic marker for jazz as well. Like the saxophone, the vibraphone was utilized by composers to give a classical composition a distinctive “jazz flavor”. A prominent example of which is the vibraphone’s use in Leonard Bernstein *Symphonic Dances* (1960) from *West Side Story*.<sup>78</sup>

Apart from being a sonic marker of jazz, composers continued to develop a unique classical voice for the vibraphone in chamber music. Furthermore, the vibraphone remained the keyboard percussion instrument of choice by classical composers in chamber music from the 1960’s onward. Standout pieces of this time include Karlheinz Stockhausen’s *Refrain* (1961), Morton Feldman’s *Durations IV* (1961), Toru Takemitsu’s *Rain Tree* (1981), and the works of George Crumb.

Dr. Brian Grasier highlights the importance of the symbiotic relationship between composer and performer by attributing the increase of the classical solo vibraphone repertoire to composer Gita Stienen, vibist David Friedman, and composer/percussionist Stuart Saunders Smith in the 1970’s.<sup>79</sup> David Friedman is not only considered one of the greatest jazz vibist of all time, but an artist who blurs the lines between classical and jazz. Meeting Friedman at university, Stienen wrote some of the first repertoire for classical vibraphone and had the likes of Friedman performing pieces such as her *Three Pieces for Vibraphone* (1978), *Four Bagatelles* (1970), and *Sonata for Vibraphone*.

Like Leigh Howard Stevens, Friedman’s influence as a vibist continues its hold in classical music with his method book *Vibraphone Technique: Dampening and Pedaling* (1973). This method book has become a standard for classical and jazz vibraphone players to learn the

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<sup>78</sup> Grasier, 71.

<sup>79</sup> Grasier, 73.



techniques specific to vibraphone. During this time, Stuart Saunders Smith started to write the widely performed *Links Series of Vibraphone Essays* (1974-94) as well.

Collaborations between jazz and classical keyboard soloists started to become popular starting in the late 1980's as well. Keiko Abe is also known as a respected improviser and prominently toured Japan in 1990 with revered jazz vibist Dave Samuels. In this tour, they featured music incorporating Samuel's jazz improvisation with Abe's free improvisation style. The tour culminated in the album *Keiko Abe and Dave Samuels – Merging Classical and Jazz Forms - Live in Concert* (1993).<sup>80</sup> Abe is also known for performing improvisations with David Friedman.<sup>81</sup>

Between the 1980's and 1990's, it is hard to ignore the influence of third era solo-percussionists and composer/performer Emmanuel Séjourné on the rise to prominence of vibraphone. The wide performance of the solo vibraphone literature and the beginnings of including the vibraphone as an instrument group in the "third era solo-percussionist concerti" brought the visibility the vibraphone needed as a classical solo instrument. It is hard to ignore the influence of the pianistic approach from the marimbists that classical vibraphone pieces started to adopt during this time as well. By combining the pianistic approach from the third generation marimbists with the distinct classical voice that the vibraphone has always maintained in chamber music, the classical solo vibraphone finally found a codified voice. Notable works during this time include Franco Donatoni's *Omar* (1985), Edison Denisov's *Schwarze Wolken* (1984), and Philippe Manoury's *Le Livre des Claviers IV* (1988).

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<sup>80</sup> Kite, 92.

<sup>81</sup> Kite, 105.

The classical solo vibraphone art form continued to be influenced by the Clermont-Ferrand International Vibraphone Competition in France. Along with encouraging percussionists to pursue the solo vibraphone art form, the competition brought international recognition and respect to the vibraphone in classical music. Furthermore, The Clermont-Ferrand International Vibraphone Competition commissioned composers to write new works for the competition. Through these means, many wonderful pieces have been added to the solo vibraphone repertoire such as Philippe Hurel's *Loops II* (2002) and Emmanuel Séjourné's *Concerto for Vibraphone and String Orchestra* (1999).

International competitions like this one make for an important reminder that the classical music industry does benefit from international instrumental competitions. While composer Béla Bartók is famous for proclaiming that “competitions are for horses, not artists,” instruments with established solo art forms and a deep repertoire going back over 300 years (such as the piano and violin) are privileged to hold that opinion. For the young solo vibraphone art form, the benefits far outweigh the negatives.

To this day, many solo works are being written for the vibraphone, and groups like ‘The Vibraphone Project’ are working for more advocacy and commissioning for the classical solo vibraphone art form. The vibraphone is prominently featured in most “third era solo-percussionist concerti” such as Avner Dorman's *Frozen in Time* (2007), Jennifer Higdon's *Percussion Concerto* (2005), Michael Daugherty's *UFO* (1998). Now that the vibraphone's solo repertoire is solidified, it quickly has become one of the strongest of the five classical percussion instrument groups.

### Section 3: Added Instrument Group: The Snare Drum

This section is an exploration into the development of the snare drum's classical solo repertoire. Like the vibraphone, the snare drum arrived as one of the five instrument groups in the third era of solo-percussionists. Considering that solo-percussionists did not start performing solo snare drum repertoire until the 1980's, one would be forgiven for assuming that the snare drum is a relatively new instrument, but the opposite is true. Out of the five instrument groups, the snare drum is the oldest, and it has been used in classical music since percussion's first practice. The snare drum was used in classical music as early as 1706 in French composer Marin Marais' opera *Alcoyne*.<sup>82</sup>

Furthermore, the snare drum is arguably the most important percussion instrument for every percussionist to master, regardless of performance specialty. Technical mastery of the snare drum, and the lessons learned from this pursuit, provides the universal technique necessary to play any percussion instrument group. If the snare drum is unanimously revered as an important instrument group, what took the snare drum so long to develop a classical solo art form? I contend that the snare drum suffers from a twofold affliction: stigma and lack of rudimental language.

The snare drum, with the defining snare wires stretched across the bottom head, originates from a centuries-long drum and fife tradition in European military music. This tradition traces back to the medieval period in Europe around the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century to an instrument called the tabor which had snares on the instrument. The musician would play a one-handed fife and a one-handed tabor simultaneously. Over the centuries, this job was relegated to

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<sup>82</sup> David Brensilver, "History of the Snare Drum: Centuries of Innovation," *DRUM! Magazine*, 2015, 3.

two separate musicians which evolved into the modern drum and fife tradition used in military bands to signal battle calls, keep foot soldiers in step, and for ceremonial purposes.<sup>83</sup>

By the Classical era, military music had become popular in Europe thanks to the influence and majesty of Ottoman Military bands. With this popularity, the Janissary instruments from the Ottoman Military bands (timpani, bass drum, cymbals, triangle, crescent) were the first percussion instruments to enter the classical orchestra and formed the core instruments of percussion's first practice. Again, the snare drum is not a Janissary instrument, rather a percussion instrument from the drum and fife tradition in Europe. Due to the drum and fife tradition being associated with the lower class, composers were not interested in including the snare drum into classical music.

The snare drum's permanent position in the European orchestra can be attested to Napoleon and his expansive military. In Napoleon's view, if his Grande Armée was going to conquer the entire continent of Europe, he needed the largest military band in history to match the majesty of his empire. Therefore, Napoleon included Drum and Fife snare drums in addition to typical aristocratic Janissary instruments so that the percussion section of his Grande Armée would ring a deafening sound throughout all the cities and town that he invaded.<sup>84</sup>

Thanks to Napoleon, the snare drum enjoyed some social mobility and newfound respect in European musical culture. The snare drum soon became a permanent member in the classical orchestra. Composers such as Ludwig van Beethoven notably started to include the snare drum in his military music for the Prussian Army, such as his *Marsch für die Bömische Landwehr* (1818).

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<sup>83</sup> Guy Gauthreaux, "Orchestral Snare Drum Performance: An Historical Study" (DMA diss., Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College, 1989), 18, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

<sup>84</sup> Rey Longyear, "The Domestication of the Snare Drum," *Percussionist* 3, no. 1 (1965): 2.

Despite the snare drum securing a place in classical music during the Classical era, composers utilized the instrument in a limited fashion to give a composition a “military flavor.” The snare drum was suffering from stigma and was used in this limited capacity through percussion’s first and most of the second practice. Typically, composers wrote for the snare drum to merely play loud punctuation, sustained drum rolls, fast driving rhythms, and ornaments. By the end of the second practice, this started to change when composers of Russia’s Mighty Handful wrote for the snare drum with nuance in pieces such as Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Scheherazade* (1888) and *Capriccio Espagnol* (1887) and Alexander Borodin’s *Polovtsian Dances* (1890).

Like each of the five instrument groups discussed in this dissertation, each solo art form required inspirations from outside classical music to establish the solo art form, and the snare drum is no different. Around the same time as the snare drum was being incorporated into European orchestras, snare drumming was reaching new heights in the United States. Following the American Revolutionary War, official positions were created for snare drummers in the U.S. Army Drum, Fife, and Bugle Corps. The first instruction books for drummers were printed in America written by Charles Steward Ashworth who was the conductor of the U.S. Marine Band from 1804 to 1816.<sup>85</sup> Notable in this book was the inclusion of rudiments which are still used today. Rudiments are codified sticking patterns and rhythms with various articulations that are analogous to the words that drummers use to make music. The crafting of the various rudiments together is how one creates poetry on the snare drum, and the rudiments are the foundation of the snare drum’s melodic language. Every percussionist needs to spend years learning their rudiments to speak the language of the snare drum, and the process of refinement lasts a lifetime.

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<sup>85</sup> Dan Spalding, "The Evolution of Drum Corps Drumming," *Percussionist* 17, no. 3 (1980): 119.

Fast forward to the present day, there are 40 standard rudiments, as well as hybrid-rudiments that continue to add to the available rhythmic vocabulary to be used in snare drum music.

In the late nineteenth century, the snare drum underwent many advancements in the drum and fife tradition. Due to the advent of the radio and modern forms of communication, drums and fifes become an outdated form of communication for militaries, and the snare drum retires from active-duty service and enters civilian life. Snare drummers start performing in drum and bugle corps and military bands, but only for ceremonial purposes. Now, snare drummers are pursuing their craft for the sake of art, not for warfare.

Come the early twentieth century, the Drum and Fife tradition of snare drumming was becoming technically advanced, snare drummers underwent serious musical training, and were considered legitimate professional musicians. With the advent of jazz drumset in the first era, rudimental drumming was applied to all the drums and cymbals of a drumset. For the percussionists in classical music, all percussionists train in rudimental percussion as well. At this point, no matter the genre of music the drummer performs in, everyone shares a common heritage in rudimental drumming on the snare drum. So much so that jazz drumset players, marching percussionists, and classical percussionists all study from the same snare drum books from legendary rudimental drummers such as George Lawrence Stone, Sanford Moeller, John Wilcoxon, John Pratt, and more.

In order for the snare drum to shed its stigma in classical music, the compositional approach for classical solo snare drum repertoire needed to utilize rudimental language. In 1982, this finally happened with Áskell Másson's snare drum concerto *Konzertstück* (1982). This piece has been championed by Evelyn Glennie and was an instant success due to the rudimental language present in the composition. Másson is a widely performed Icelandic composer who

writes for a variety of instruments and ensembles. He is also a widely performed composer for snare drum due to his rudimental training as a percussionist. Shortly after his concerto, Másson composed his famous solo *Prim* (1984) which was also widely performed by Glennie.

After *Konzertstück* and *Prim*, classical percussionists wanted more solo repertoire written for snare drum; not just etudes, but works written by composers for the concert stage. In 1988, percussionist Sylvia Smith started a commissioning project called “The Noble Snare”. This commissioning project was named after the famous Noble & Cooley Drum Manufacturing Company founded in 1854 who co-sponsored the project. This commissioning project is in four volumes and has over 30 compositions for solo snare drum. Notable composers commissioned for this project include Stuart Saunders Smith, Milton Babbitt, John Cage, Thomas DeLio, Alvin Lucier, Christian Wolff, Robert Ashley, and Pauline Oliveros.

Despite the snare drum having hundreds of short solos and etudes, Smith’s impetus for the Noble Snare was to move away from utilizing these tools in the context of solo recitals. In a 2004 email interview with Jason Barker, Smith states:

I think of an etude as an exercise or piece centered around a particular technical challenge, and that their reason for existence is to assist the performer in making a series of technical advances. An etude begs the question: A technical advance toward what? The reason a performer works with etudes is for some reason other than the etude. A composition is complete in itself. Compositions move ahead of etudes. So if you want change in music, you start with composition. The rest will follow.<sup>86</sup>

Despite the historical significance and reverence that the Noble Snare project holds in the development of solo snare drum repertoire, the compositions are not widely performed by solo-percussionists. This begs the question, what is the missing element keeping these works from

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<sup>86</sup> Jason Baker, "The History and Significance of the Noble Snare," *Percussive Notes* 44, no. 3 (2006): 72.

being widely performed by solo-percussionists? Again, I contend the reason is the missing rudimental language.

The Noble Snare project was largely based on two criteria: commissioning established composers for their expertise and influence to elevate the snare drum as a serious concert instrument, and bringing stylistic diversity to this project by commissioning stylistically diverse composers.<sup>87</sup> While the premise is sound, most composers ended up writing these pieces in the limited fashion that most classical composers have done for centuries. The snare drum writing therefore included loud punctuations, sustained drum rolls, fast driving rhythms, and ornaments. When using that limited compositional vocabulary, it is difficult to create narrative and melodic interest in a solo snare drum composition. This issue can only be remedied with the rudimental language which is not taught to composition students at university.

Solo snare drum compositions since the Noble Snare have been more widely performed when composers started to not only utilize rudimental language, but also electronics as narrative tools for their compositions. Notable pieces using rudimental language include Áskell Másson's *Kim* (2001), Nicolas Martynciow's *Impressions* (1999), Nicolas Martynciow's *Tchik* (2003), and Shaun Tilburg's *Ricochet* (2017). Notable solo pieces including electronics include Andy Akiho's *Stop Speaking* (2011) and Nina Young's *Heart.throb* (2021).

Again, highlighting the importance of competitions for young instrumental art forms, the Modern Snare Drum Competition has brought international attention to the snare drum as well as commissioned great solo works such as Gene Koshinski's *Swerve* (2017), Casey Cangelosi's *Slight of And Evil Hand* (2013), and David Skidmore's *Goodnight Noises Everywhere* (2020). Other movements of note are Shaun Tilburg's "Dynamic Snare" project. Taking inspiration from

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<sup>87</sup> Baker, 73.



the “Noble Snare”, the commissions for the “Dynamic Snare” feature solo snare works with rudimental language from drumset, concert, and marching traditions as well as works for snare drum with electronics.

Not only do solo-percussionists perform the solo snare drum repertoire and snare drum concertos, but they feature the snare drum for encore performances. Martin Grubinger regularly performs improvised solos on modern American rudimental snare drums, and Alexej Gerassimez’s encores have been notated and turned into popular compositions such as *Asventuras* (2011). The snare drum has also been a featured solo instrument in “third era solo-percussionist concerti”. The snare drum, utilizing rudimental language, is featured in one of Peter Sadlo’s most famous commissions – Ferran Cruixent’s *Focs d’Artifici* (2008). Despite the snare drum’s solo repertoire being the shallowest and newest of the five instrument groups, the historied reverence for the snare drum quickly made it a widely performed instrument group for solo-percussionists.

#### Section 4: Conclusion

Today, with the emergence of a third generation of solo-percussionists, it is clear that the work of Evelyn Glennie and Peter Sadlo was not just a trend, but rather a template to follow. The third generation of solo-percussionists is currently beginning their professional careers now, and solo-percussionists like Christoph Sietzen are already making waves as one of the most promising solo-percussionists of his generation. Not only is Sietzen regularly invited to widely perform as a soloist at world-class venues, but he has also made some of the most definitive recordings of solo works on all five percussion instrument groups and has commissioned “third

era solo-percussionist concerti” such as Georg Friedrich Haas’ *Konzert für Klangwerk und Orchester* (2019) and Johannes Maria Staud’s *Whereas The Reality Trembles* (2022).

The solo-percussionist tradition has codified itself in other aspects as well. Revered professors such as Robert van Sice and Michael Burritt, who made their careers being marimbists, now teach their students all five instrument groups. Solidifying the prominence of the third era solo-percussionist art form, the three most prestigious international percussion competitions (the Concours de Genève International Music Competition, ARD International Music Competition in Munich, and the TROMP International Percussion Competition in Eindhoven) all require participants to perform solo repertoire on the marimba, vibraphone, multi-percussion, theatrical percussion, snare drum, and “third era solo-percussionist concerti”.

It is important to note that the solo-percussionist tradition laid out in this dissertation is only a template. Furthermore, the five percussion instrument groups that were established should be seen as instrument groups that are the most widely performed, and not a prescriptive and confining list. Due to the wide performance and international visibility of the solo-percussionist art form, classical percussion soloists in general enjoy performing percussion concerti that involve many solo instruments - such as the timpani, drumset, steelpan, and more.

In music, studying with a master has always been an important aspect of a musical education. Through this, a lineage can be traced. By briefly observing Christoph Sietzen’s lineage: one of Sietzen’s teacher is the famous marimbist Bogdan Bacanu, and Bacanu studied with Peter Sadlo and Keiko Abe. In this small example alone, one can already see the connectivity between marimbists, multi-percussionists, and solo percussionists. Throughout the course of this dissertation, and through the new frameworks and contexts that were provided, it is

clear that the art forms of the marimbists, multi-percussionists, and solo-percussionists are distinct – yet form a continuum.

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