

DRUM MUSIC: A PERFORMANCE GUIDE AND DISCUSSION OF JOHN MACKEY'S
INFLUENTIAL CONCERTO FOR THE MODERN PERCUSSIONIST

Christopher Wayne McWilliams, B.M., M.M.

Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

August 2017

APPROVED:

Mark Ford, Major Professor
Dennis Fisher, Committee Member
Christopher Deane, Committee Member
Benjamin Brand, Director of Graduate Studies
in the College of Music
John W. Richmond, Dean of the College of
Music
Victor Prybutok, Dean of the Toulouse
Graduate School

McWilliams, Christopher Wayne. "*Drum Music*": *A Performance Guide and Discussion of John Mackey's Influential Concerto for the Modern Percussionist*. Doctor of Musical Arts (Performance), August 2017, 47 pp., 3 tables, 1 figure, 11 musical examples, bibliography, 16 titles.

John Mackey is an influential and prolific composer of wind band literature. His focus on and exploration of the percussion section are defining characteristics of his compositional voice. Mackey's concerto for percussion and wind band, *Drum Music*, is a perfect example of his exploitation of the myriad timbres available within the percussion family, and also serves to showcase the versatility required of a modern percussionist. This dissertation and accompanying lecture recital provide a comprehensive guide for performers of the work. Major aspects of Mackey's compositional approach are discussed with emphasis placed on his use of percussion throughout his works. Analysis and performance concerns are discussed for each of the concertos three movements, and information is provided on the reduced version of the work prepared as part of this study.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks and gratitude to my committee members and mentors Mark Ford, Christopher Deane, and Dennis Fisher for their assistance with this project and their influence in shaping me as a teacher and performer. I also want to express my gratitude to John Mackey and Dr. Eric Willie for their time, insight and support for this project. Finally, I want to say a special thank you to my parents, Russ and Donna, for their constant love and support.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Ever since the 2003 premier of his work *Redline Tango*, John Mackey has been an exceptionally prolific and sought-after composer of wind band literature. Whether it be in the band halls of countless high school and college programs across the country, on the football field as part of a world class drum corps show, or on stage with a professional ensemble like the Dallas Wind Symphony, it is not uncommon to hear the energetic, rhythmic drive of Mackey's music. In order to convey the infectious rhythms and unique textures in his compositions, Mackey relies heavily on the percussion voice.

For many years during the early stages of wind band composition, the percussion section served a subsidiary role to the winds. The percussion parts were often purely accompanimental, adding color and emphasis to climactic moments and establishing a consistent pulse when necessary, but rarely essential to the core of the musical thought. However, since the latter half of the twentieth century, the percussion section has been the dominant family of experimentation and growth in wind band literature.¹ Composers such as Vincent Persichetti, Karel Husa, Joseph Schwantner, and Michael Colgrass have helped to establish the percussion section as an integral voice in wind band repertoire through their melodic, motivic, and colorful percussion writing. Schwantner, discussing the significant use of percussion in his seminal work *...and the mountains rising nowhere*, stated his desire to “write a work where the percussion section would

¹ Craig Thomas Pare, “An Examination of Innovative Percussion Writing in the Band Music of Four Composers: Vincent Persichetti - Symphony for Band; Karel Husa - Music for Prague 1968; Joseph Schwantner - and the mountains rising nowhere; Michael Colgrass - Winds of Nagual” (DMA diss., University of Cincinnati, 1993), vi-vii.

be on an equal footing with the woodwinds and brass.”² No modern composer has embraced this focus on the world of percussion quite like John Mackey.

Not only has Mackey continued down this path laid by the prolific composers before him, he has even further emphasized the role of percussion in his compositions. In a discussion of his compositional process from a blog post on his personal website, ostimusic.com, Mackey states the following:

From the beginning, I know what I want the percussion and trombones to do. I’m not a composer who layers on percussion at the end. Percussion is essential to the texture and drive of what I write, and it’s always been that way with my large ensemble pieces.³

By treating the percussion voice in this manner, it is not only on equal footing with the woodwinds and brass, as Schwanter desired, but now at the very core of the composition itself. This is certainly evident when listening to Mackey’s work. The percussion section is often substantial, both in the number of players and in the number of instruments required. The percussion voice is regularly used to establish rhythmic ostinati, a common element of Mackey’s writing, and to provide rhythmic tension and release. He uses both melodic and non-pitched percussion to present key motivic material, often combined with wind voices to create unique textures. The percussion section is often featured through extended solo moments. And Mackey is constantly exploring the endless number of interesting timbres available in the percussion section through his description of specific instruments, implements, and playing areas. All of these elements are present and highlighted in Mackey’s concerto for percussion and wind band, *Drum Music*.

² Pare, “An Examination,” 54.

³ John Mackey, “How the Setup Works,” *Osti Music: The Website of Composer John Mackey* (blog), January 7, 2008, accessed February 16, 2017, <http://ostimusic.com/blog/index.php?s=how+the+setup+works>.

The primary purpose of this study is to provide a performance guide for John Mackey's *Drum Music*. In addition to discussing the specifics of preparing and performing the concerto, suggestions will be made for possible adjustments to the solo part in order to better facilitate a performance most appropriate to Mackey's vision and compositional voice, both for the full concerto, and for the reduced version being prepared as part of this study. Finally, *Drum Music* will be discussed as a characteristic example of Mackey's writing style for the percussion idiom, and as a work that showcases the varied skill sets required of the modern percussionist.

CHAPTER 2

BIOGRAPHY

For someone with such a musical lineage, John Mackey certainly took an unorthodox path into the world of composition. Mackey, born October 1, 1973 in New Philadelphia, OH, has never actually had formal training on any musical instrument. His parents, Joan, a former flutist in local regional orchestras, and David, a former trumpet player in the Treasure Island Navy Band and current freelance saxophonist in the New Philadelphia area, had started John's older sister on both clarinet and piano from a young age. However, she disliked the lessons so much, they decided to refrain from enrolling John in any instrumental training. Instead, it was John's grandfather Harvey who first piqued his musical interest.⁴

Harvey, a semi-professional clarinet player and owner of a local music store, introduced John to a very early music notation program called *Music Construction Set*. After some brief instruction on basic meter and rhythm, John began to input various sheet music around the house into the software to hear the playback. Soon equipped with his own version of the program and two Commodore 64 personal computers, John would use his mother's access to the music library at The Ohio State University (where she worked as a secretary in the music department) to regularly check out scores and meticulously input them into the software. John attributes his initial knowledge of orchestration, counterpoint, and transposition to these countless hours spent inputting and analyzing the music of Bach, Beethoven, Tchaikovsky, and many other classical masters.⁵

⁴ Rebecca Leigh Phillips, "John Mackey: The Composer, His Compositional Style and a Conductor's Analysis of *Redline Tango* and *Turbine*" (DMA diss., Louisiana State University and Agriculture and Mechanical College, 2007), 4-5.

⁵ Eric M. Smedley, "John Mackey," in *A Composer's Insight: Thoughts, Analysis and Commentary on Contemporary Masterpieces for Wind Band*, ed. Timothy Salzman (Galesville, MD: Meredith Music Publishers, 2003), 143-146.

Mackey made the decision to pursue composition in college, and was accepted into the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he studied under Donald Erb. There, Erb encouraged John to grow into his own voice, and Mackey's hallmark energetic and rhythmic sound is already present in one of his earliest works, *Elegy and Fantasie* for violin and piano, a piece he began in high school and finished under Erb's tutelage. Towards the end of his time at CIM, Mackey won a composition contest offered by the Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra with his work, *Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night*, and received a few subsequent commissions. With that initial success, Mackey was accepted into the prestigious Juilliard School to pursue his graduate work with legendary composer John Corigliano.

During his time at Juilliard, Mackey participated in the Composers and Choreographers Workshop, which would ultimately have a significant effect on both his compositional voice and the growth of his career. It was through these connections that Mackey first met choreographer Robert Battle, who commissioned John for a number of works and became a longtime friend and collaborator. Some of the pieces that Mackey composed for dance collaborations during and after the Juilliard workshops include *Mood Indigo*, for amplified piano and drum set, *Quilted Rhythms*, *Strange Humors*, for string quartet and djembe, *Damn*, for amplified clarinet and four percussionists, and *Mass*, his last work in NYC and first attempt at minimalism, written for a percussion sextet.⁶ Mackey's works were premiered by numerous dance companies around the city, including the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and the Parsons Dance Company, where he also served as music director from 1999-2003.⁷ These many forays into the world of dance

⁶ Phillips, "John Mackey," 7-13.

⁷ Smedley, "John Mackey," 144-145.

helped to further develop Mackey's reliance on energetic and complicated rhythms and metric structures as core components of his compositions.

Another major influence on Mackey's writing from his time in New York came through his connection to percussionist Damien Bassman. Bassman and Mackey were roommates at Juilliard, and Mackey credits Damien with introducing him to rock and jazz with mixed meters, something that now permeates the majority of Mackey's compositions. Speaking of Bassman, Mackey states that he can "Do anything! Whenever I write percussion parts, this is the person I work with."⁸ Mackey's first percussion concerto, his *Concerto for Percussion and Orchestra*, was written for and premiered by Bassman in 2000.

Mackey's first connection with the world of wind band music came through his friend and fellow Corigliano student Eric Whitacre, who suggested Mackey begin to write for the idiom. Pursuing his friend's suggestion, Mackey attended the 2003 CBDNA convention and offered some of his recordings to interested college band directors. Soon after, he was contacted by Scott Stewart, then at Emory University, who suggested Mackey write a wind band transcription of his orchestral work *Redline Tango*, a piece commissioned by the Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra and premiered in 2003. Initially averse to the idea, believing the work would be entirely too difficult and not idiomatic for an ensemble without strings, Stewart was eventually able to convince Mackey to give it a try.⁹ The wind band version was premiered in February of 2004 by the Emory University Wind Ensemble under Stewart's baton, and served to launch a new chapter in Mackey's career as a prolific and respected composer of wind band

⁸ Phillips, "John Mackey," 10.

⁹ Smedley, "John Mackey," 145.

music. Mackey received both the 2004 Walter Beeler Memorial Composition Prize and the 2005 ABA/Ostwald Award from the American Bandmaster's Association for the work, and *Redline Tango* has since been performed over 250 times worldwide.¹⁰

Since the success of *Redline Tango*, Mackey's career has flourished. He has written twenty-five works for wind band and three concerti, as well as numerous chamber works and a song cycle. He has received commissions from the American Bandmaster's Association, Dallas Wind Symphony, and regular requests from various universities and high school ensembles. Some of his more popular pieces include *Asphalt Cocktail*, *Turbine*, *Kingfishers Catch Fire*, *Wine-Dark Sea: Symphony for Band*, *Harvest: Concerto for Trombone*, written for longtime New York Philharmonic principal trombonist Joseph Alessi, and *Aurora Awakes*, which garnered Mackey another ABA/Ostwald Award and the National Band Association's William D. Revelli Award in 2009.¹¹

¹⁰ "Bio," Osti Music: The Website of Composer John Mackey, accessed March 19, 2017, <http://ostimusic.com/Bio.php>.

¹¹ Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

COMPOSITIONAL INFLUENCES AND APPROACH

There is an ever present dichotomy of influence in John Mackey's compositional voice. The influence of masters of the Classical canon like Bach and Samuel Barber is evident. The hours Mackey spent meticulously inputting their music into his computer taught him the fundamentals of counterpoint and orchestration. There are noticeable influences from some more modern Classical composers as well, such as Warren Benson, Steve Reich, John Adams, and most of all, his mentor John Corigliano.¹² However, in addition to Western art music, Mackey has always been interested in popular music and culture. One example can be found in his 2009 composition *Aurora Awakes*, where Mackey quotes the iconic guitar riff from U2's hit, "Where the Streets Have No Name," in the keyboard percussion ostinato that threads throughout the entire work.¹³ And Mackey's love for progressive rock bands such as Tool and Metallica may be the most recognizable and striking element of his eclectic style.

On a basic level, Mackey states that his music "is about tune and rhythm, and rhythm is the most important thing."¹⁴ His many dance collaborations throughout his career have helped to cultivate this rhythmic emphasis. They have also contributed to his use of energetic lines, programmatic elements, and the overall visceral aesthetic Mackey strives to create for the listener.¹⁵ Mackey's use of rhythm was more consonant in his earlier works, with the rhythm and meter more closely related and homogenous. In his more recent compositions, there is a much

¹² Phillips, "John Mackey," 28-30.

¹³ Doug Martin, "Aurora Awakes," in *Teaching Music Through Performance in Band, Vol. 8*, ed. Richard Miles (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2010), 602-611.

¹⁴ Phillips, "John Mackey," 32.

¹⁵ Smedley, "John Mackey," 150.

higher reliance on rhythmic dissonance, and meter is often independent from the rhythmic flow. This leads to rhythms that are often complex and asymmetrical. He also regularly uses polyrhythms and cross-rhythms to create energy and forward momentum, two elements initially developed during his time in a Juilliard eurhythmics class.¹⁶ This forward momentum is further established through the consistent use of ostinati - one of Mackey's most characteristic compositional devices. These ostinati not only serve a rhythmic purpose, but are used to delineate form and phrase structures, and are often layered to create unique textures.

Melodies are sparse in Mackey's music, but often lyrical when present. Rather than writing a large variety of themes, he instead relies on compositional techniques such as augmentation, diminution, and fragmentation applied to one or two main melodies. From a textural standpoint, Mackey uses a basic approach, simply deciding whether a given section should be "thick or thin."¹⁷ His orchestrations often feature an emphasis on low reeds, saxophones, trombones, and of course, percussion.¹⁸

Mackey admits that harmony has not traditionally been a priority for him, but that expanding his harmonic language is certainly a compositional goal. His harmonies are typically tertian-based and tonal under his melodic lines, and then focused more on clusters and atonality when no melody is present. Mackey also strives for fresh harmonies through a technique he refers to as "dirtying." He explains:

A V chord really isn't a V chord because I'll add in a #4, #7, b9. I do that all of the time. It's still a dominant chord and still rooted in tonality...but 'dirty.'¹⁹

¹⁶ Phillips, "John Mackey," 33-35.

¹⁷ Ibid, 37.

¹⁸ Smedley, "John Mackey," 151.

¹⁹ Smedley, "John Mackey," 152.

This technique is especially present in Mackey's most recent compositions, including *Drum Music*. These "dirty" harmonies also further help to link Mackey to the world of jazz and popular music.

Mackey's compositional process can be somewhat unconventional. Once the basic concept for a project is established, he gets to work sketching a timeline, a process impressed upon him during his time under Corigliano. Here Mackey outlines his ideas for the foundational rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic motives for the work. Once he is comfortable with the architectural sketch, he moves to the computer, where he begins with a short score. He sets up several staves, all assigned to piano, and inputs the main motivic ideas. In addition to the piano staves, he also includes percussion, and often trombone, two voices he considers essential to the heart of his compositions. He then gets to work editing and altering the rhythmic and melodic material, "dirtying" chords, and making any necessary adjustments to the form and pacing. Once he is satisfied with those elements, he finishes by orchestrating the material in the piano staves.²⁰ Mackey's inclusion of percussion at such an early stage of his compositional process is influential because it speaks to the foundational role the voice serves in his work.

Of all these elements combining to form Mackey's compositional approach, his use of percussion may be the most distinctive. As mentioned above, he often requires a substantial number of both instruments and players in his wind band works. *Asphalt Cocktail* calls for seven players in the percussion section, while *Turbine* includes eight separate percussion parts (best performed with nine players), with fifteen different styles and sizes of cymbals.²¹ These parts regularly play very important roles in Mackey's compositions as well. In *Xerxes*, the percussion

²⁰ Ibid., 153.

²¹ Phillips, "John Mackey," 95-96.

voice introduces a repeating, sixteenth note triplet motive that becomes a major theme throughout the work. The percussion section has an extended soli in *Undertow*, bookended by passages where they engage in call and response with the winds.²² Dominic Talanca, in a discussion of *The Frozen Cathedral*, states that “the sheer number of percussion instruments, implements, and placements result in much of the works effect.”²³ In *Turbine*, where Mackey depicts his fear of flying, it’s the percussion voice he uses to represent the plane itself. And *Foundry*, a work written for middle schoolers and funded completely through a Facebook status, uses the unique timbres of “found” percussion as the centerpiece of the composition.

The ability to visually see exactly how the myriad of sounds in the percussion section are being created is an effective tool, and Mackey has always seemed to understand and utilize this visual appeal of percussion in his writing. In his work *Strange Humors*, he suggests that the djembe player, who plays a primary role in the piece, be placed in a “visibly prominent position” for “projection and drama.”²⁴ With his tambourine parts, Mackey regularly includes notes to the player with visual emphasis, including height of the instrument and method of attack at various moments throughout a work. And in *Asphalt Cocktail*, Mackey admits that the inclusion of the metal-filled trash can was more to visually showcase the visceral feeling of the music rather than for its aural contributions.²⁵

²² Jacqueline K. Townsend, “A Comparative Performance Analysis of *Undertow* and *Xerxes* by John Mackey” (MM thesis, Bowling Green State University, 2011), 15-20.

²³ Dominic Talanca, “The Frozen Cathedral,” in *Teaching Music Through Performance in Band, Vol. 10*, ed. Richard Miles (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2014), 838-853.

²⁴ Jacob Wallace, “Strange Humors,” in *Teaching Music Through Performance in Band, Vol. 7*, ed. Richard Miles (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2009), 765-772.

²⁵ John Mackey, interview by author, April 13, 2017.

Lastly, Mackey takes every opportunity to explore the vast array of timbres available within the percussion section. He credits composers such as George Crumb, a pioneer in timbre exploration, with influencing his desire to explore color within the percussion voice, and makes a conscious effort to find a new percussion sound or effect with each new composition.²⁶ He regularly calls for unique instruments (steel plates in *Turbine*, waterphone in *Frozen Cathedral*, metal cocktail shaker filled with nuts and bolts in *Asphalt Cocktail*, etc.) and implements (hard plastic mallet, triangle beater, standard mallet, threaded steel rod, and a Superball mallet, all for tam-tam in *Frozen Cathedral*, etc.) in his compositions. Mackey is also incredibly detailed in his descriptions of instruments, implements, playing areas, and techniques in his pieces.

I'm very specific about cymbal types and mallet types, mallet hardnesses, and different mallets in different hands. That's very important to me.²⁷

In *Turbine*, Mackey even provides MIDI sound files with the score for reference to the specific sounds he is looking for in the percussion section. All of these elements combine to make the percussion section an extremely prominent aspect of Mackey's compositional voice.

²⁶ Mackey, interview by author, April 13, 2017.

²⁷ Townsend, "A Comparative Performance," 26-27.

CHAPTER 4

DRUM MUSIC

Mackey's concerto for solo percussion and wind ensemble, *Drum Music*, is actually his second percussion concerto, after his aforementioned *Concerto for Percussion and Orchestra*. That concerto, written for his good friend Damien Bassman and premiered in 2000, further showcases the myriad of musical genres from which Mackey draws inspiration. The first movement, "Groove," has clear ties to Indian and African folk styles with its reliance on hand drums in the solo voice and a basic modal scale used for the melodic material. And the regular phrase structures, drum set-inspired multiple percussion setup, and clearly, the title, certainly allude to rock music in the second movement, "Steady Rock."²⁸ All of these elements can also be found in *Drum Music*.

Mackey had received various requests over the years to orchestrate his *Concerto for Percussion and Orchestra* for wind band, but was never convinced that the work would transfer well considering its reliance on various effects idiomatic to strings. However, when he was approached by conductor Joseph Hermann and percussionist Dr. Eric Willie about the prospect of a concerto for percussion and wind band, Mackey loved the idea of composing a new work. The original commission was for an eight to ten minute "concertino," which Mackey thought would consist of one large work comprised of two or three connected mini-movements, similar to Dutilleux's *Sonatina for Flute and Piano*, a very influential work for Mackey. Composing with his newly acquired Yamaha Disklavier, Mackey would write percussion music during the day with the piano on "silent mode" and the keys mapped to percussion samples on his computer, and then utilize the normal piano function at night to compose pitched, "pretty" music.

²⁸ Phillips, "John Mackey," 14.

However, this led to a rather large amount of material, most of which was too disparate to be included in one, connected composition, so the work eventually blossomed into a full, sixteen-minute concerto with three stand-alone movements.²⁹

The first movement of the work, *Infiltrate*, is actually a rearrangement of a movement from another Mackey composition, *Annals*, which he originally wrote in 2001 for a dance company. The original orchestration was for string quartet, and has a modal, almost Indian quality (complete with characteristic half and whole-step glissandi in the violins), which was an area Mackey was drawing inspiration from at the time. After hearing a marching band arrangement around the time of the *Drum Music* commission, Mackey decided the material may work well as a mallet feature.³⁰ The resulting movement is quirky and colorful, exploring unique woodwind orchestration and showcasing some of the myriad timbres available in both the section and solo percussion parts.

For the second movement, *Incubate*, Mackey simply wanted to write something lyrical, and chose to have the soloist utilize one of his favorite percussion colors, sustained vibraphone with motor. The movement has a beautiful and haunting quality to it,³¹ and is certainly a departure from the aesthetic present in the majority of Mackey's work. However, the third and final movement, *Incinerate*, is quintessential "Mackey." The music is aggressive and driving, full of odd meters and dense, syncopated rhythms. It also has clear influences from the progressive rock bands introduced by former roommate and friend Damien Bassman.³² The soloist spends the majority of the movement playing a multi-percussion setup with obvious drum set influence,

²⁹ John Mackey, "Drum Music," *Osti Music: The Website of Composer John Mackey* (blog), September 6, 2011, accessed March 12, 2017, <http://ostimusic.com/blog/drum-music/>.

³⁰ Mackey, interview by author, April 13, 2017.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Mackey, interview by author, April 13, 2017.

and the part is a combination of groove, melodic writing around the six toms, and virtuosic technical moments.

Drum Music was premiered on October 11, 2011 by the Tennessee Technological University Wind Ensemble under the direction of Joseph Hermann, with Dr. Willie as the percussion soloist. Mackey was in attendance for the premier and the days of rehearsal prior to the performance, working closely with Professor Hermann and Dr. Willie on issues of balance and orchestration, and making choices on instruments and color options for the soloist. After the premier, Mackey went through a rather large revision process of the work, the specifics of which will be discussed in detail later in the document.³³ After this initial, significant revision, Mackey made further adjustments to the third movement of the work after attending a performance by the University of Texas Wind Ensemble under the direction of Jerry Junkin, with soloist Thomas Burritt. Burritt then performed the current version of the work with the Dallas Wind Symphony in April of 2013.³⁴

³³ John Mackey, "How it's fixed: Drum Music," *Osti Music: The Website of Composer John Mackey* (blog), November 1, 2011, accessed March 11, 2017, <http://ostimusic.com/blog/how-its-fixed-drum-music/>.

³⁴ John Mackey, "Austin, part 3: Showtime," *Osti Music: The Website of Composer John Mackey* (blog), November 18, 2012, accessed March 11, 2017, <http://ostimusic.com/blog/austin-part-3-showtime/>.

CHAPTER 5

I. *INFILTRATE*

Analysis

Mackey describes the opening movement to *Drum Music* as “really just a lyrical, song-like piece.”³⁵ Tonally, the movement has a very modal sound, sitting mostly in D mixolydian. The music is quirky in its use of space and melodic lines full of intervallic leaps. In characteristic Mackey style, the lines roll through a mix of changing meters, creating rhythmic interest without sounding disjunct. For the soloist, this movement is mostly a marimba focus, but also includes extremely quick changes to and from vibraphone, sizzle cymbal, and a djembe/hi-hat station.

As can be seen in Table 1, the form of the movement is a fairly straight forward rondo. Mackey begins the work rather minimally, with an introduction that runs from measures 1-25, or rehearsal letter A. The soloist, on marimba, plays fragmented motivic ideas that serve as seeds for the movement’s main thematic material. Interspersed with the soloist’s lines are more motivic fragments from the woodwinds, adding color and interesting counterpoint. With the majority of the melodic material derived from a D mixolydian scale, the prominence of A to D harmonic motion, and the cadential moment of an E-flat fully diminished seventh sonority (a tritone substitution for the dominant A) resolving to D on the downbeat of rehearsal letter A, the introduction also serves to establish the movement’s tonal center of D.

TABLE 1: Form of I. *Infiltrate*

Formal Division	Measure Numbers	Thematic Description
Introduction	1-24	Introductory motivic fragments
A	25-37	A theme
B	38-51	B theme

³⁵ Mackey, “Drum Music.”

Formal Division	Measure Numbers	Thematic Description
A2	52-59	A theme (shortened)
C	60-68	C theme
A3	69-78	A theme
D	79-90	D theme
A4	91-100	A theme (shortened)
E	101-116	Ostinati comprised of thematic fragments
C2	117-125	C theme in winds
D2	126-135	D theme in winds initially, joined by soloist in m. 132
Coda	136-end	A theme + introductory fragments

The recurring motive, or A theme, of the rondo is first stated by the soloist beginning at measure 25. The theme has a rather standard construction of an antecedent phrase, from measures 25-30, and a consequent phrase, from measures 31-37. The theme is similar in mood to the introduction, characterized by melodic leaps, syncopated accents, frequent use of space, and the use of the woodwind family to color, harmonize, or provide counterpoint to the soloist. By contrast, the following B theme is very lyrical, stated by the soloist on marimba and reinforced by the oboe. Mackey utilizes a one-handed roll technique in the soloist's right hand to provide length to the melody, and the C to D melodic motion further reinforces a mixolydian modality.

After a return of the A theme in measure 52, this time shortened, the lyricism continues in the statement of the C theme, presented here in the first clarinet. Here, the soloist briefly shifts to a supporting role for the antecedent phrase, before joining the clarinet with the melody at the end of the section, now on vibraphone. The brass are finally asked to contribute their color for the D theme. Beginning with pickups to measure 81, the euphonium joins the soloist (on vibraphone) in stating a melodic line that flows smoothly over the alternating 6/4 and 5/4 meters.

Rehearsal E brings the first prominent use of an ostinato, a staple of Mackey's compositions. However, rather than the percussionists establishing this rhythmic pattern, as is often the case, here the winds are asked to build the ostinato while the soloist plays on djembe and hi-hat. The wind voices are treated in a form of hocket, with each individual line being rather sparse, but the composite creating a driving eighth note pattern in a repeating four measure phrase (three measures of 4/4 plus one of 3/4). From here, the rondo form is abandoned and the music builds in intensity through a repetition of the C theme to a dynamic climax at measure 126, where the D theme is combined with various other motivic fragments to create a texture thick with counterpoint and rhythmic intrigue. The soloist returns to marimba for the coda to the movement, where the A theme makes one last appearance, interspersed with quotes from the introduction, and the music slowly dissipates in texture and energy.

Performance Concerns

For the soloist, one of the larger concepts to consider in *Infiltrate* is that of color, which is something integral to *Drum Music*, and something that a percussionist should always consider in decisions regarding their performances. This will include the choice of instruments, implements, and playing techniques. Because of the extremely fast transitions between marimba and vibraphone in *Infiltrate*, the soloist must find a mallet that allows for clarity and appropriate sound quality on both instruments. Mackey also writes for extremes in range between the instruments, so it will be necessary for the mallet to speak on the top end of the vibraphone, while not sounding overly harsh on the bottom octave of the marimba. With these considerations in mind, a medium hard mallet with some weight and a rather tightly woven yarn is recommended. The soloist may also consider the use of a slightly softer mallet in the outside

position of the left hand to facilitate a warmer tone on the low end of the marimba, but sticking considerations must be adjusted so that the softer mallet is not utilized on vibraphone.

The main decision to be made regarding instrumentation in the first movement deals with the required cymbal. Initially, Mackey simply called for a standard suspended cymbal, which should be placed in front of the low end of the marimba. However, at the suggestion of Dr. Willie in the rehearsals leading up to the premier, a sizzle cymbal was used instead of the suspended, and Mackey immediately preferred the sound.³⁶ A larger (18” or more) cymbal with rivets or with a chain resting on top may be used for the desired effect. However, in a video discussing his preparation for an upcoming performance of *Drum Music* with the Dallas Wind Symphony in 2013, Thomas Burritt talks about his use of two cymbals stacked on top of each other as an alternative option.³⁷ Burritt uses a ride cymbal with a thinner 12” splash stacked on top of it, creating a unique sound that, with the appropriate pressure from the wing nut on the cymbal stand, does not ring nearly as long as other sizzle cymbal options. This would provide clarity to the cymbal moments and following material.

Mackey further explores the use of color in the first movement by calling for the soloist to occasionally play on the frame of the marimba or vibraphone with the shaft of the mallets. He also calls for color changes by striking the mallet shafts together, and hitting the sizzle cymbal with the “wooden tip of mallet.” Originally, all of these moments were written for the frame, but after finding some of them too cumbersome to get to without moving in a way counter to the mood of the music, Dr. Willie began to experiment with the “stick clicks” and sizzle cymbal.

³⁶ Mackey, “How it’s fixed: Drum Music.”

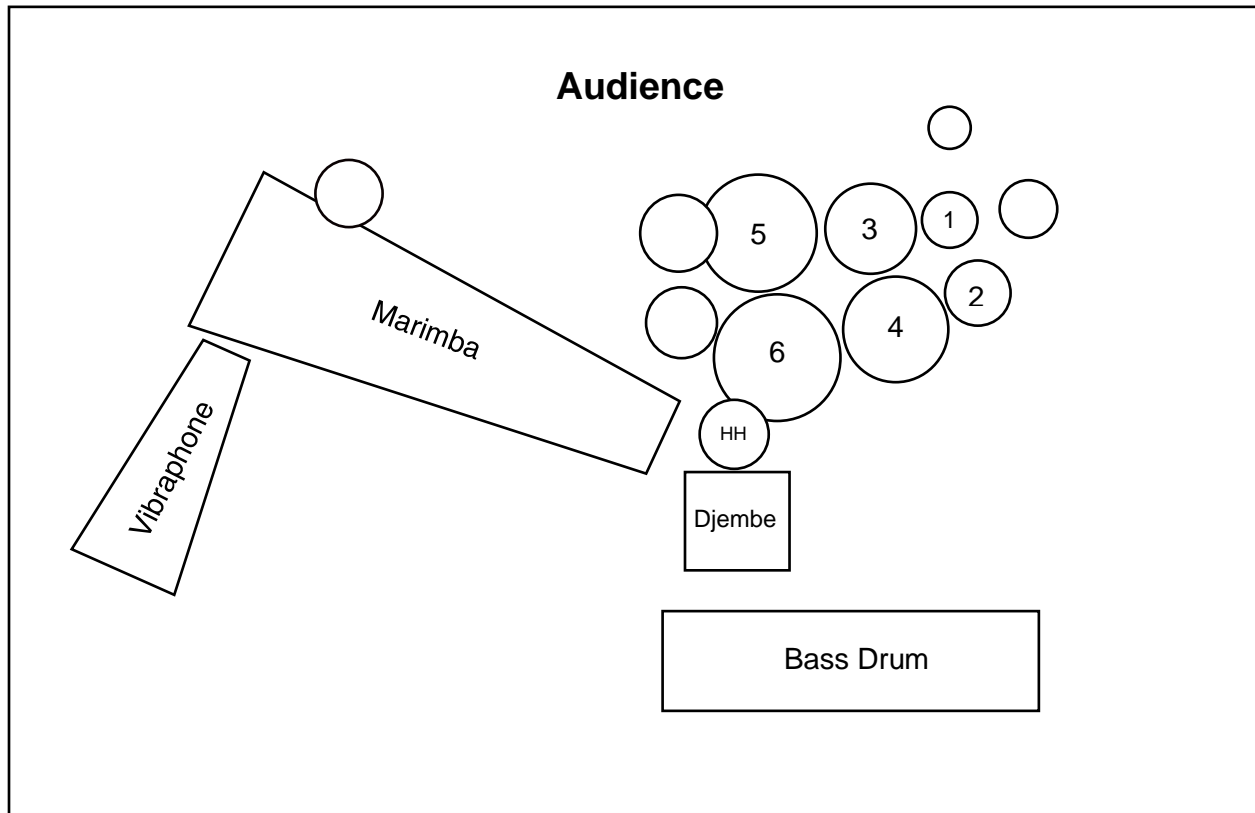
³⁷ “Percussion Axiom TV: Episode #98 John Mackey’s ‘Drum Music’ Movement 1,” YouTube video, 7:01, posted by Thomas Burritt, April 15, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZfxZiKPdaA>.

Mackey enjoyed the variations of color, and the part was adjusted.³⁸ For the frame timbre, it is suggested that the rhythms be played with both of the mallets in one hand attacking the frame together, with the same motion that would be used for a standard double vertical stroke. Contact should be made near the middle of the mallet shafts for a full sound with the ability to rebound. In the majority of cases, using the left hand on the low end of the marimba provides the most efficient transition to and from the frame moments. However, moving to the upper end piece of the marimba could provide more of a visual moment, which is an important element for Mackey and something that will be discussed further in subsequent movements.

To execute the shaft-on-shaft rhythms, the soloist should flatten their left hand slightly and play the rhythms with the two mallets in their right hand attacking the two stationary mallets in their left, taking care to attack as squarely as possible for rhythmic clarity. The hands should also be held up so that the audience can see the source of the color they are hearing. Lastly, Mackey's instruction for "wooden tip of mallet" on the sizzle cymbal should be addressed. Attacking the cymbal with the butt end of the mallet while holding four mallets will result in a rather unwieldy and inefficient motion. Instead, it is suggested that the soloist raise and invert their hand, allowing their mallet heads to hang down towards the marimba. Here, a rotation of the wrist in a simple single independent stroke may be utilized to strike the edge of the cymbal with the shaft of the inside mallet, just below the head, which should adequately provide the wood-on-cymbal color Mackey desires for those moments. It should also be noted that if the choice is made to use a stacked cymbal instead of the more traditional sizzle cymbal options, the shaft of the mallet may not provide enough force to allow the cymbals to adequately sizzle, so attacking the cymbal with the head of the mallet may be preferable.

³⁸ Eric Willie, interview by author, February 15, 2017.

FIGURE 1: Suggested setup for soloist



Body position and choreography between instruments are two of the main challenges present for the soloist throughout *Infiltrate*. However, before these movements can be discussed, an instrument setup must be suggested (see Figure 1). As can be seen in Figure 1, the soloist will be focused on the left side of the setup (player perspective) throughout the first movement. In order to facilitate the quick movements from marimba to vibraphone throughout *Infiltrate*, it is suggested that the soloist place the vibraphone perpendicular to the bottom of the marimba, creating a “letter L” of sorts.

When listening to the soloist throughout the first movement, the marimba part does not read as overtly virtuosic or technically demanding. However, it is in the wide range of the instrument traversed over very short periods of time where the challenge really lies. In order to ensure a successful performance, the position and use of the body must be considered and

memorized in the same way that the notes, rhythms and dynamics on the page are internalized. The more grounded the body center can be behind the keyboard, the more likely it is for the soloist to perform with consistent note accuracy, which is especially essential in a work with such clear tonality. Once the ideal central position is determined for a given passage, the soloist can utilize a transfer of weight over either foot to move across the large range of the keyboard quickly.

A particularly challenging passage can be seen below in Example 1. Between measures 19 and 20, the marimba line travels across three and a half octaves in the course of five beats. It is recommended that the soloist center their body around middle C (C₄), and smoothly shift their weight from their left foot to their right. A similar issue can be found in Example 2.

18 19 20 21

Percussion

Marimba

mf mp cresc.

22 23 24

Perc.

Mar.

f mf

EXAMPLE 1: Mvmt. I, mm. 18-25

EXAMPLE 2: Mvmt. I, mm. 46-52

Here, the soloist is asked to travel across four octaves between the end of measure 46 and the downbeat of measure 48, but this time, the left hand must also reach across the right while maintaining a one-handed roll. The soloist should again center around C₄, but now must also rotate their torso so that their upper body is facing the top end of the marimba to facilitate the line in the second half of measure 46. Once measure 47 is completed, the soloist must use the four counts of rest in measure 48 to reset their body, this time centered around F₃. Measure 49 can be executed from this position, with the use of small hip rotations to facilitate the mixed-manuals caused by the accidentals. Then, one step can be taken up the instrument while playing measure 50, to a body center on A₄, which will allow for the execution of measure 51, the end of the B theme.

Lastly, Example 3 shows one of the quick transitions between instruments required in *Infiltrate*. With the suggested setup, the chord at the low end of the marimba in measure 132 should be played with the soloist's body centered between the two instruments. With their arms extended and weight shifted over their right foot, the marimba chord can be reached, and then

one step can be taken to get into position on the vibraphone to execute the passage beginning in measure 133 with the pedal engaged appropriately.

EXAMPLE 3: Mvmt. I, mm. 132-136

One of the other major challenges with *Infiltrate*, the versatility required of the soloist, is actually a major reason I believe *Drum Music* and Mackey's percussion writing in general to be so important. While there are many well-written concertos featuring percussionists on a single instrument, such as marimba, vibraphone, timpani, or even snare drum, there are very few that require the soloist to show a comfort and virtuosity with a variety of percussion instruments and musical styles within a single work. *Drum Music* is continuing down a path blazed by works such as Joseph Schwantner's *Concerto for Percussion* and Jennifer Higdon's Grammy award-winning *Percussion Concerto*.

However, I would argue that *Drum Music* may call for the soloist to be an even more versatile player by requiring hand drumming ability and a fairly significant level of independence with the hi-hat parts included in both the first and third movements. This inclusion of elements of drum set-influenced playing into his concert percussion writing is certainly something that is evident in a wide range of Mackey's compositions. It also gives further credence to the necessity for percussionists of today to become diverse, well-rounded players

who are comfortable fitting into a wide range of musical genres. With *Drum* Music, Mackey has provided an avenue for modern percussionists to really showcase their versatility.

CHAPTER 6

II. *INCUBATE*

Analysis

The second movement of the work, *Incubate*, was written entirely at the piano, “and it sounds like it,” according to Mackey.³⁹ The music is extremely still and lush, providing a stark contrast to the angularity and energy of the outer movements. Mackey felt the stillness would be unexpected for a percussion concerto. He was also striving to create something emotional, even anguished, with the movement. Initially, looking for sustain from the soloist, Mackey wrote for rolls on the marimba. However, he also wanted to include bowed vibraphone because of his love for the color, but quickly realized the logistical mess that would cause for the soloist in combination with the marimba. Eventually, he settled on writing everything for vibraphone with a slow motor, which he believed created the illusion of a “haunted music box.”⁴⁰

The structure of the movement, seen in Table 2, is a rather simple passacaglia, or a series of variations over a repeating bass ostinato. The initial iteration of the fundamental chord progression (G-Am-Em-F) is stated by the clarinet choir at measure 15. The movement begins with a quasi-cadenza for the soloist on vibraphone, which serves to introduce the new timbre and establish the “haunted” quality of the music. When the passacaglia starts in measure 15, the vibraphone begins to build the main theme of *Incubate*. The line harmonically dances around the progression, creating tension and release, and helping to loosely establish A minor as the tonic. After a brief return to the cadenza material from the opening and one last statement of the tune

³⁹ Mackey, “Drum Music.”

⁴⁰ John Mackey, “How It’s Made: Incubate,” *Osti Music: The Website of Composer John Mackey* (blog), September 17, 2011, accessed March 13, 2017, <http://ostimusic.com/blog/how-its-made-incubate/>.

on vibraphone, the soloist moves to concert bass drum while the ensemble picks up the theme and begins to expand on the chord progression.

TABLE 2: Form of II. *Incubate*

Formal Division	Measure Numbers	Thematic Description
A	1-14	Quasi-cadenza for soloist
B	15-28	Basic passacaglia in winds; A theme from soloist
A₂	29-38	Cadenza material
B₂	39-44	Basic passacaglia in winds; A theme from soloist (shortened)
C	45-52	Expanded passacaglia (pickups to m. 48), A theme in winds
C₂	pickups to 53-end	Expanded passacaglia only (no theme)
D	-	BD cadenza

The use of concert bass drum provides great contrast to the lush, creeping chords in the winds, and has the added benefit of being audible over the slowly building sustain of the passacaglia. Mackey also finds it to be a visceral and visually theatrical choice, stating that he “wanted this concerto to be fun to *watch* too,”⁴¹ an important element to consider for the performer, and one that will be discussed further. The climax of the movement arrives with the pickup to measure 53, where the entire ensemble states the expanded passacaglia twice more, at full volume, while the soloist opens up on the bass drum. Mackey chose to end the movement with a bass drum cadenza that serves as a bridge to the final movement, providing the soloist with an opportunity for creativity and exploration.

⁴¹ Mackey, “How It’s Made: Incubate.”

Performance Concerns

The first performance concern that should be addressed for *Incubate* is the use of the bow. When utilizing a bow on vibraphone, or any percussion instrument, one of the biggest challenges for the performer is consistency of response and volume from note to note. Because of the resistance present with the metal vibraphone bars, especially in the mid-to-low range of the instrument, a cello or bass bow may be utilized for added stability and resistance. The bow should be lightly rosined to assist in gaining friction, but care should be given not to apply too much pressure, which will cause the bow to catch and stop the vibration of the bar. In his dissertation on extended performance techniques in the vibraphone music of Christopher Deane, Joshua Smith recommends the bow be placed at a 90 degree angle to the outer edge of the vibraphone bar for optimal and consistent response.⁴²

In *Incubate*, Mackey often writes for unison attacks between a bowed note in the right hand, and struck octaves in the left hand. This can be challenging to execute in a way that the listener hears as a true unison. It is recommended that the performer try to initiate the bowed note in the right hand slightly ahead of the attack with the left hand, by about a sixteenth note, which will give the bowed bar a split second longer to speak at the same time as the left hand. There is also a moment, seen in Example 4 below, where the performer must quickly place the bow in *between* the octave held in the left hand. This is actually not something Mackey realized he required until seeing Dr. Willie rehearse the work during the premier process, but is now noted in the solo part. In order to execute this, the performer should shift up to the top of the instrument as quickly as possible with their left hand between beats four and five in measure 26, and have

⁴² Joshua D. Smith, "Extended Performance Techniques and Compositional Style in the Solo Concert Vibraphone Music of Christopher Deane" (DMA diss., University of North Texas, 2008), 16-17.

the bow in their right hand prepared to drop down between the two mallets. Because of this position, and the fact that the performer is asked to attack the bars at the very top of the instrument's range, the body center should be extremely high behind the vibraphone, with the hips turned towards the center. It is also highly recommended that the player take Mackey's suggestion to depress the pedal with a weight since it is held down throughout, which would make this passage much more comfortable.



EXAMPLE 4: Mvmt. II, mm. 26-28

The other major performance element to consider in *Incubate* is the bass drum cadenza, which acts as a brief introduction and transition into the last movement of the work. In the music, Mackey instructs that the cadenza “should hint at material from the third movement; any mallets/hands are acceptable; player should switch to Blasticks (or equivalent) at end of cadenza; and cadenza should not exceed two minutes.”⁴³ In addition to its functional purpose of connecting the two movements of the work, this can be a moment to truly focus on two core characteristics of the percussion voice - visual interest, and color.

As stated above, Mackey regularly showcases the visual appeal of percussion performance. In addition, Mackey has regularly exploited the vast array of colors available within the percussion section. Both of these elements should inform decisions made regarding

⁴³ John Mackey, *Drum Music*, (Osti Music, Inc., 2011).

the cadenza. Performers are encouraged to explore timbre options on the instrument with both playing areas (rim, shell, stand, various spots on head) and implements (wooden, felt, or rubber bass drum beaters, sticks, Superball mallets, brushes, keyboard mallets, Blasticks). Visual appeal should factor into these decisions, as well as inform the performance of the cadenza.

Example 5 below offers some key rhythmic motives from the third movement that may be utilized as seed material for the cadenza. These are either primary rhythmic motives for specific sections of the movement, or recurring ideas throughout, and they can be built, developed, and combined to form the cadenza's rhythmic foundation. Together with the exploration of timbre possibilities on the instrument, the soloist should be able to construct a cadenza that is both visually and sonically compelling, smoothly moving the listener from the haunted stillness of *Incubate* to the driving energy of the closing movement, *Incinerate*.

The image displays five musical staves, each labeled with a number in a box at the beginning. Each staff is written on a five-line staff with a double bar line at the end. The staves contain rhythmic notation for a single melodic line, likely for a bass drum or similar percussion instrument, as indicated by the 'H' symbol in the key signature area of each staff. The notation includes various note values (quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes), rests, and dynamic markings (accents). The time signatures change across the staves: Staff 1 starts in 7/8 and changes to 2/4 and 4/4; Staff 2 is in 7/8 and ends in 3/4; Staff 3 is in 3/4 and ends in 3/2; Staff 4 is in 3/2 and ends in 2/2; Staff 5 is in 2/2.

EXAMPLE 5: Possible cadenza source material

CHAPTER 7

III. *INCINERATE*

Analysis

In his initial blog post regarding *Drum Music*, Mackey perfectly describes the aesthetic of his closing movement, *Incinerate*.

After countless concertos have worked so hard to prove that drummers should be seen as more than just rock stars, I'm pleased to report that the last movement of my piece is going to ruin it for everybody.⁴⁴

As mentioned previously, the movement is quintessential Mackey. The music is aggressive and angular. Time signatures are constantly changing, and combined with the consistent syncopation of the rhythmic lines, a driving, asymmetrical groove fuels the music throughout, evoking the familiar sound of progressive rock.

For the soloist, *Incinerate* is extremely technically demanding. The majority of the movement is performed on a large multi-percussion setup, akin to a standing drum set, comprised of six tom-toms, four cymbals, and hi-hat, with a brief section focused on the djembe/hi-hat station utilized in the first movement (instrument specifics will be discussed further into the chapter). As can be seen in the quote above, Mackey takes the opportunity in *Incinerate* to draw the focus onto the “rock star” aesthetic that can be characteristic of un-pitched percussion. He embraces the fact that “playing a solid groove with proper feel and pocket, requires a ‘real musician’ as much as anything else,”⁴⁵ a concept required of and appreciated by percussionists in all genres of music.

⁴⁴ Mackey, “Drum Music”

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Unlike the rondo and passacaglia forms utilized in the first two movements of the work, the form of *Incinerate* does not quite fall within traditional formal structures, something that could be said for many of Mackey's compositions. As can be seen in Table 3, there are four main thematic ideas. However, the C theme is the only true theme original to this last movement. The A and B motifs are better characterized as two bar thematic fragments that serve as recurring ostinati, and the D themes, while original lines, are built on a quote and expansion of the chorale from movement two.

TABLE 3: Form of III. *Incinerate*

Formal Division	Measure Numbers	Thematic Description
Introduction	1-32	Soloist and section perc. intro.
A	33-43	A theme (mm. 33-38) B theme (mm. 39-43)
B	44-56	C theme
A₂	57-68	B' theme (mm. 57-64) B theme + A theme (mm. 65-68)
B₂	69-82	C' theme
C	83-102	Percussion interlude
D	103-150	D chorale (mm. 103-110) D ₁ theme (mm. 111-118) D ₂ theme (mm. 119-126) D ₁ theme (mm. 127-134) D ₂ theme (mm. 135-146, + A theme mm. 147-150)
A₃	151-154	A + B themes
B₃	155-168	C'' theme
Coda	169-end	B theme + extension

The soloist begins the movement, making a seamless transition from the bass drum cadenza at the end of movement two, and is quickly joined by the percussion section. Together, they establish the driving rhythmic energy of the movement, largely through the use of call and

response. The winds join at measure 33 with the A theme, a syncopated, angular ostinato, which is quickly combined with the B theme, a more powerful ostinato stated by the ensemble's bass voices. The main thematic line of the movement, or C theme, is first stated by the high brass in measure 44. The theme has an aggressive antecedent phrase, marked "vulgarily" by Mackey, contrasted by a soaring, almost resilient consequent.

Following a return to the A section, this time with the order of the ostinati reversed, and another statement of the C theme starting at measure 69, there is a percussion interlude. Here, the soloist makes a brief return to the djembe/hi-hat station utilized in movement one, providing a welcome texture change and palette cleanse. When the move is made back to the toms, Mackey writes a flowing line for the soloist, with perpetual rhythm punctuated by accents creating melodic lines. This contrasts from the writing for the soloist up to this point, which has been more of a "classic" drum set oriented part, focusing on groove, fills, and cymbal punctuations. Together with the section percussion, the writing builds in volume and density until the winds return in measure 103.

Here, Mackey revisits the climactic chorale from *Incubate*. However, he alters the harmonies slightly to fit the mood of the movement more appropriately, changing to a minor mode, and begins to develop the material. The first sign of lyricism in the movement is heard in the heroic line stated by the horns and euphonium in measure 113. In measure 119, Mackey modulates the chorale up a step to a tonal center of D. The D1 and D2 sections are repeated, with the energy slowly but consistently building. After a massive fill from the soloist, the climax finally arrives at measure 151, where Mackey simultaneously states both the A and B ostinati. After one last declaration of the main, C theme, there is a coda where the soloist is able to make a final flourish, and the concerto comes to a resounding end.

Of all the movements, Mackey made the largest revisions to *Incinerate* after the premier. The biggest issue was certainly balance, which is not only a common problem for percussion concerti in general, but an issue present in many of Mackey's compositions due to his liberal use of dynamic extremes and his preference for large percussion sections and thick orchestration. Mackey often writes for double, triple, or even quadruple forte in an attempt to achieve the appropriate sound through his computer's playback, but acknowledges that his dynamics may need adjusting in actual performance,⁴⁶ stating "often my dynamics refer to energy level rather than volume."⁴⁷

In order to assist with balance problems in *Incinerate*, Mackey and Dr. Willie made two major adjustments for the soloist. First, the bottom heads were removed from the toms, providing a shorter, "punchier" sound, which Mackey preferred. They also decided to move the soloist to a riser behind the ensemble for the last movement of the work, beginning with the bass drum cadenza at the end of *Incubate*. This not only assisted with the balance problems, but with the travel backstage and climb to the top of the riser, also provided an added, dramatic visual element that Mackey found effective. In addition to these adjustments for the soloist, Mackey revised the orchestration to assist in the low woodwind projection and clarity of melodic material throughout.⁴⁸ All of these balance adjustments are important to consider when preparing and performing the work.

⁴⁶ Phillips, "John Mackey."

⁴⁷ Jacob Edward Wallace, "John Mackey's *Concerto for Soprano Sax and Wind Ensemble* (2007): An Analysis and Conductor's Guide to Performance" (DMA dissertation, University of Georgia, 2009), 86.

⁴⁸ Mackey, "How it's fixed: Drum Music."

In addition to balance concerns, Mackey also felt many of the original fills for the soloist were too similar to each other, or did not come across exactly as he had anticipated. According to him, the resulting revisions have made the part “considerably harder,”⁴⁹ a sentiment echoed by Dr. Willie.⁵⁰ Whereas the original part was almost entirely influenced by Tool drummer Danny Carey, by adjusting more fills to focus on the lowest tom, Mackey has also evoked the sound of Lars Ulrich’s classic double kick pedal work with Metallica.⁵¹

Performance Concerns

The first performance aspect that should be discussed for the soloist is that of instrumentation. For the tom-toms, the combination of the rock aesthetic of the movement and extreme density of the solo part seem to imply a short, punchy sound. In the instrument list and key on the first page of the solo part, Mackey specifies that the six tom-toms should be “tightly tuned,” and “single head preferred,” a sentiment echoed in his blog post on the premier and initial revision process.⁵² Depending on the performance venue and decisions made regarding the placement of the soloist relative to the ensemble, some form of dampening (gaffer’s tape, RTOM Moongel, etc.), especially on the lower drums, is also recommended to assist with rhythmic clarity.

Mackey also offers alternative choices for the highest and lowest toms, stating in the key that the lowest tom may be replaced with a mounted kick drum, and the highest tom with a “high, unpitched drum of the player’s choice.” In a blog regarding Thomas Burritt’s performance

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Willie, interview by author, February 15, 2017.

⁵¹ Mackey, “How it’s fixed: Drum Music.”

⁵² Ibid.

of the work at the University of Texas, Mackey expands on this, stating that he “always wanted a sound with a ‘pop’ for the highest drum,” but was reluctant to specify a snare drum, concerned that it would read as cliché. However, after hearing Burritt use a 13” piccolo snare, he found it to be the “best sound.”⁵³ By contrast, Dr. Willie feels that the part does not necessarily have a purpose as a snare drum voice,⁵⁴ which is a sentiment the author shares. There are moments where the fills or lines Mackey has written, which include the top drum, have a melodic nature to them, and using a set of six drums within the same family would maximize this melodic contour. Ultimately, there is validity to both options, and the performer is encouraged to experiment with various setups to find the sound they feel best fits the work.

Regarding the cymbal sounds, for both the soloist and the section percussionists, I believe the most important information is expressed by Mackey in his instrument list, where he includes the description “quick-decay, colorful cymbals.” While this is in reference to the two China cymbals in the soloist’s setup, I believe it is applicable to all of the cymbals used in the work. Because of the prevalence of cymbal colors throughout the movement, choosing instruments that can be impactful without overpowering and bleeding into subsequent lines is essential to the balance and clarity of both the soloist and the ensemble as a whole. Cymbals that have a dark or even “trashy” timbre might fit the mood of the movement well, and considering Mackey’s fondness for and regular utilization of unique percussion colors, performers are encouraged to be creative with their instrument choices.

The hi-hat independence required of the soloist while executing extremely dense material with the hands is one of the primary challenges present in *Incinerate*. As can be seen from my

⁵³ Mackey, “Austin, part 3: Showtime.”

⁵⁴ Willie, interview by author, February 15, 2017.

setup suggestion in Figure 2, I recommend the soloist use their left foot for all of the hi-hat work in the movement, both because it allows for a comfortable execution of the written material with the hands, and because, for right-handed players, there is a familiarity present with the left foot being the generally preferred option for hi-hat on drum set. However, the stepped hi-hat part throughout the movement is extensive, and there is nothing prohibiting the performer from choosing to use their right foot, especially if they feel it to be stronger and more adept at the quick motions required.

The most challenging aspects of independence occur during the percussion break and subsequent iterations of the D themes. In Example 6, the soloist is asked to quickly open and close the hi-hat in a repeating, dotted quarter note pattern, while the hands execute a challenging, quarter-note driven passage on the toms. It is recommended that the performer spend plenty of time with the tom part by itself initially, finding a preferred sticking and developing comfort until they can execute the part consistently. Then, start to simply step the hi-hat on the beginning of each dotted quarter note pattern, taking note of where the groupings align with the hands, and memorizing the sound of the composite part. Lastly, the performer should slowly incorporate the quick open-closed motion, making sure to balance the majority of their weight onto their right foot so their left is free to move quickly and consistently. It may also be useful to utilize materials focusing specifically on left foot independence, such as Jan Prins's book *Hi-Hat Integration at the Drum Set*, when preparing *Drum Music*.



EXAMPLE 6: Mvmt. III, mm. 97-98

Incinerate also includes some instances where the speed of rhythm written and/or the order of drums and cymbals called for by Mackey may make it close to impossible for the performer to execute at the indicated dynamic and with the energy required to achieve an appropriate level of “rock star.” This “rock star” aesthetic that I am attempting to maintain and further convey with these adjustments comes from comments Mackey has made on his website regarding his intention with this last movement of the work.

The first suggestion is simply the removal of grace notes in two locations (m. 36, b. 2+; m. 98, b. 5+). In both instances, Mackey has written flams on the top tom, with the preceding eighth notes on either hi-hat or low tom. Based on my setup, that would require a movement with one hand from the extreme left side of the setup to the extreme right within the space of one eighth note (slightly less due to the grace note). At such a quick tempo, it is my opinion that the flams may cause enough of an interruption in the flow of the line to warrant their omission.

Measure 53 provides another opportunity for discussion. At the end of the measure, notated below in Example 7, the soloist must attack both toms and cymbals together. However, the sixteenth note written between these unisons on beat four (counting in 4/4 instead of 2/2) makes it extremely challenging to reach the unison attacks. By removing the note, as shown in Example 8, the line is much cleaner and can be executed in a more consistent fashion.



EXAMPLE 7: Mvmt. III, original m. 53



EXAMPLE 8: Mvmt. III, revised m. 53

The end of the percussion break in the middle of the movement is one of the most challenging passages for the soloist in the entire concerto. At the end of measure 101, shown in Example 9, there is one small adjustment that can be made to assist in the execution and clarity of this important fill. On beat six (counting in 6/4 rather than 3/2), the line requires the soloist to play descending sixteenth notes, and then immediately jump back up to the top tom on the first beat of measure 102. With almost any setup possible, these rhythms would have to be played with a right-hand lead approach, which would create an awkward sticking moving back up the drums at this tempo and volume. By omitting the “e” of beat six, as seen in Example 10, the soloist can get their left hand down to the low tom, alternate the three sixteenth notes, and have a much smoother transition back up to the top tom in measure 102.



EXAMPLE 9: Mvmt. III, original m. 101-102

EXAMPLE 10: Mvmt. III, revised mm. 101-102

One final example of this challenge can be found at the very end of the movement, notated below in Example 11.

EXAMPLE 11: Mvmt. III, mm. 183-end

These three measures illustrate the culmination of a movement that has been slowly building in energy and volume. It is imperative that they are executed in a way that allows the work to finish strong, as indicated by the “fff” dynamic marking. From an ensemble timing standpoint, it is also imperative that the first three notes of measure 183, between the fourth tom (bottom system) and small China cymbal (top system, stems up), be played in a way that is easily read by both the conductor and ensemble, in order for everyone to end the work together two measures later. However, the triplet figure on beat two of measure 183 makes it quite difficult to accomplish both tasks. The performer is required to move extremely quickly with their left hand across multiple drums, and with their right hand off the small China cymbal, which does not provide much rebound, in order to facilitate the part as written. While not impossible, it makes it very difficult for the soloist to provide a consistent eighth note cue, and an energetic and fluid ending to the work. In my opinion, simply removing the second partial of the triplet on beat two would accomplish both of those tasks while not interfering with what I believe to be Mackey’s goal for the aesthetic of the work’s ending.

CHAPTER 8

DRUM MUSIC REDUCTION

When I first spoke with Mackey regarding my interest in *Drum Music*, I inquired about a piano reduction of the work to use for recital and concerto competition opportunities. He stated that there was not one currently written, and he had no plans on writing one in the foreseeable future, but that he would certainly be open to allowing someone to make an attempt at the project. He also mentioned the use of piano and one percussionist in a reduction being created for his trombone concerto, *Harvest*, and suggested that as an option worth considering for *Drum Music* as well, due to the large role given to the five section percussionists throughout the piece. I decided to make a reduction of the work a priority of mine for this project, both to perform in the recital that accompanies this document, and to generally encourage more performances of the work. However, given my extremely minimal experience on piano, I did not feel completely comfortable deciding what may or may not be idiomatically appropriate to write for the instrument. In order to assist with this, I chose to collaborate with colleague Alex Shawver, a percussionist, pianist, and composer, currently engaged in graduate composition work at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX.

When approaching this reduction, one of my biggest concerns was regarding the effectiveness of a piano alone (the most common method of reducing a work) in replicating the lengthy sustain and thick timbre that is essential to the composition. After exploring some options and discussing the project with professor and mentor Paul Rennick who also performed the work, it was decided to use a piano, synthesizer, and one section percussionist in the reduction. The synthesizer provides the ability to vary timbre and sustain for long periods of time, while the additional percussionist helps to fill the foundational role served by the section

players in the full orchestration and make the “percussion break” in the third movement more akin to Mackey’s initial vision.

Alex had the following to say regarding his approach to the reduction of the wind score.

The various layers of the wind score can be filtered into the two keyboard parts largely according to their tendency toward more articulated or sustained passages. Even when lines may not be particularly sustained but still legato and lyrical, they might also be suited for the synth, where the piano takes the staccato woodwind decorations and bass voices, as is the case in most of the first movement. The textures of the second movement are much more straight-forward, the rich sustained sonorities of the low brass and woodwinds fitting well into the synth part, while the piano takes the floating melodies of the woodwinds and high brass. In the last movement, the majority of the wind parts, if not playing melody or embellishing gestures, engage in an energetic ostinato driven by the bass. While the piano would be suited to emulate such a raucous character, I imagined that a powerful synth patch could maximally exploit the energy of the figure. The piano then takes the melody and staccato woodwind decorations, similar to those in the first movement.⁵⁵

With the synthesizer serving such an important role in the reduction, finding patches that fit the varied aesthetic of each movement is crucial to the success of any performance. For the first movement, a patch with a clear front followed by a lengthy, mellow sustain would be most appropriate to match the woodwind dominance of the original orchestration. The second movement requires something warm and lush, such as a full choir or string section to aid in the emphasis on “glacial,” lengthy sustain present throughout. In this instance, it may be possible for the reduction to present a rendering of the movement more closely aligned with Mackey’s vision than the original wind version, which can often lack ideal length and intensity due to the necessity for the wind players to breath.⁵⁶ For the last movement, a brass patch with significant front would be most effective in order to match the bite and intensity of the original.

⁵⁵ Alex Shawver, e-mail message to author, April 7, 2017.

⁵⁶ Mackey, interview by author, April 13, 2017.

In dealing with the five original percussion parts, I needed to find a way to include as much of their rhythmic drive and added color as possible, while not completely overbalancing the piano and synthesizer. My solution was to use a single player with a multi-setup very similar to a drum set. The player will sit for the majority of the work, only standing to play the xylophone parts in the third movement, which will allow them to execute both hi-hat and bass drum parts simultaneously. The parts written for the rim of the concert bass drum originally will be played on the shells of the toms when possible, and a djembe will be utilized in the position that the snare drum usually occupies in a standard drum set arrangement so that all the hand drum moments from the third movement of the work are covered. The sandpaper blocks are included from the first movement to provide an effective timbre nuance, as well as the majority of the xylophone from the third movement, which often plays independent lines.

From an execution perspective, the biggest challenge with a performance of the reduction is of course ensemble balance, as is often the case with percussion concerti. Volume adjustments will need to be made by the synthesizer player from movement to movement in order to maintain appropriate balance, and the piano may need to be amplified, depending on the acoustics of the performance venue. For both the soloist and section percussionist, all the cymbal sounds should be as short as possible, and the drums should have plenty of punch but minimal sustain. Players are encouraged to experiment with stacking cymbals to provide short, “trashy” sounds, or even using gaffers tape on the cymbals themselves to help reduce their length and vibrancy. Mackey’s original written dynamics will need to be adjusted down at times, as is often the case in performances of the full concerto as well. Lastly, because of the slow tempo and sparse nature of the second movement, the soloist may need to cue and/or visually supply tempo at times without a conductor present.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

John Mackey's contributions have given further legitimacy to the percussion voice in wind band literature and Classical composition in general. A composer who regularly considers percussion from the outset and uses the voice as a foundational element of their compositions helps to not only further elevate the percussive voice onto equal footing with the rest of the ensemble, but also shines light on some of the more unique and engaging aspects of the percussion family. Mackey's embrace of the visual interest inherent in percussion performance and the massive palette of timbre possibilities available throughout the instrument family focuses on the two biggest elements the percussion section can bring to a composition.

His place as a member of a new generation of classical composers whose influences seem to include equal proportions of art, popular, and world music has put him in a position to write a concerto that showcases the skill set of a true modern percussionist. More so than any generation before, a successful working percussionist in 2017 must be technically and musically diverse. They must have excellent tone and rhythmic precision on concert percussion, expression and lyricism on marimba, the characteristic colors of hand percussion, and independence and groove on drum set, all within the same performance. *Drum Music* is the next concerto in a very short list of pieces that allow players with this diverse skill set to shine. It also provides another reason for players to strive for this diversity with their individual growth. By providing both a reduction of *Drum Music* and insight into the preparation and performance of the work, it is my hope that more percussionists will be encouraged to develop into the type of player who may comfortably perform a work like John Mackey's *Drum Music*, and more composers will follow Mackey's lead in shining a light on the possibilities and diversity inherent within the percussion family.

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