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# The History and Development of the Percussion Orchestra

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF MUSIC

THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERCUSSION ORCHESTRA

By

WESLEY PARKER

A Treatise submitted to the  
College of Music  
in partial fulfillment of the  
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The members of the committee approve the treatise of Wesley B. Parker defended on April 22, 2010.

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## ABSTRACT

The modern percussion ensemble<sup>1</sup> has emerged as a vital medium of music performance and education, and continues to receive more recognition as a viable artistic medium. Perhaps less well-known is a type of percussion ensemble (abbreviated PE for the duration of this study) which concentrates on large, tonal, keyboard percussion-oriented works: the Percussion Orchestra (abbreviated PO for this study). This treatise focuses on the history and development of the PO, specifically noting the origins, important figures, and performing ensembles within the genre.

The evolution of the PE begins with the futurist ideas of F.T. Marinetti and Luigi Russolo and continues with the first work composed exclusively for percussion instruments, Edgar Varese's *Ionisation* in 1931. Throughout the 1930s a notable amount of material (although some unpublished) was written for the PE, which appealed to composers mainly because of the textures and sounds not previously heard in a Western concert setting. During World War II, composers took a hiatus from composing for the PE as the interest shifted to the rudimental or military style drum ensemble (which would evolve into the modern drum line and drum corps).

Beginning in 1950, the PE was incorporated into the college curriculum at the University of Illinois by Paul Price. This sparked great interest from other percussion pedagogues, and more universities began to explore a PE class at their schools. Additionally, percussion students began to form professional PEs with their college or university as the "home base." Ensembles such as the Blackearth Percussion Group and the Eastman Marimba Masters would stem from these universities. In addition to performances, these groups pioneered PE recordings, commissioned new works for PE, and established residencies at many universities where they taught and shared

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<sup>1</sup> In this study, the term percussion ensemble is a type of chamber ensemble that uses percussion instruments exclusively.



their passion for percussion and the PE.

The concept of a PO began with Dr. Richard Gipson, who launched the OU Percussion Press and a subsequent commissioning series for PE composition at the University of Oklahoma. The compositions were expansive, often employing eight to twelve (sometimes more) percussionists, and focused primarily on an extensive number of keyboard percussion instruments in addition to a varying combination of pitched and unpitched percussion instruments, many of which are common symphonic percussion instruments.

## **Research**

The development of percussion and the PE may be traced through a variety of courses ranging from the futurist manifestos of F.T. Marinetti and Luigi Russolo to scholarly literature written concerning the “noise music” of the early Twentieth Century. There are two standard sources used for referencing the history of percussion, John Beck’s *Encyclopedia of Percussion* and James Blades *Percussion Instruments and Their History*. However, there are currently no definitive sources that provide a historical or pedagogical perspective on the subject of the PO or even attempt to define it as an entity separate from the PE. This lack of scholarly writing on the subject provides an exceptional opportunity to contribute to the development of documentation, which will focus upon the aforementioned literature as well as scholarly articles from music education journals and percussion journals such as *Percussive Notes* (a magazine begun in 1973 dedicated exclusively to scholarly writings about percussion). In addition to this, most other references to a PO are found within the professional titles of performing ensembles or compositions.

An integral part of the research process involved interviews with percussion teachers who have significant experience in the development of the PO. These include Richard Gipson of Texas Christian University (formerly Director of the Oklahoma University Percussion Orchestra), John Parks of Florida State University, Blake Tyson of the University of Central Arkansas, Brian West of Texas Christian University, and James Campbell of the University of Kentucky, all of whom have performed with,

administered, and/or directed award-winning Percussion Orchestras. They have thus become resources of valuable information that has gone largely undocumented beyond available audio recordings of their specific performing groups. The interviews shed light on the development of the PO and provide insight not only about the current trends and significant leaders of this genre, but also about the direction that the PO might take in the future.

Each interview consisted of a predetermined set of questions that encouraged each respondent to define and elaborate on the concept of the PO. This method facilitated comparisons among responses, while giving freedom for elaboration on issues pertinent to the study. Because each pedagogue's viewpoint is unique, additional responses are also noted within the study.

## CHAPTER 1

### FUTURISM AND *THE ART OF NOISE*

The turn of the Twentieth Century was a time of great change and innovation. Some of the developments during this period include Max Planck's formulation of Quantum Theory, the first trans-Atlantic radio signal, the first flight by the Wright brothers at Kitty Hawk, the first American popular film, the first license plates in the United States, the groundbreaking of the Panama Canal, the opening of the New York City Subway system, the completion of the Trans-Siberian railway, the publishing of Einstein's Theory of Relativity, the first electric washing machine, Ford's introduction of the Model T, and the invention of plastic. The sounds of the city were booming with the creation of these machines, cars, railways, and construction sites. The music stemming from this period was reflected in this change and was a source of inspiration for composers interested in percussion.

In 1909, Italian poet Filippo Tomasso (F.T.) Marinetti (1876-1944) published a very controversial manifesto that would challenge the very essence of European society and at the same time stimulate the European intellectual community. This movement was dubbed "futurism," and his publication was simply titled *The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism*. In this document Marinetti specifically states eleven points that outline his futurist ideas:

## The Futurist Manifesto

1. We want to sing about the love of danger, about the use of energy and recklessness as common, daily practice.
2. Courage, boldness, and rebellion will be essential elements in our poetry.
3. Up to now, literature has extolled a contemplative stillness, rapture, and reverie. We intend to glorify aggressive action, a restive wakefulness, life at the double, the slap and the punching fist.
4. We believe that this wonderful world has been further enriched by a new beauty, the beauty of speed. A racing car, its bonnet decked out with exhaust pipes like serpents with galvanic breath...a roaring motorcar, which seems to race on like machine-gun fire, is more beautiful than the Winged Victory of Samothrace.
5. We wish to sing the praises of the man behind the steering wheel, whose sleek shaft traverses the Earth, which itself is hurtling at breakneck speed along the track of its orbit.
6. The poet will have to do all in his power, passionately, flamboyantly, and with generosity of spirit, to increase the delirious fervor of the primordial elements.
7. There is no longer any beauty except the struggle. Any work of art that lacks a sense of aggression can never be a masterpiece. Poetry must be thought of as a violent assault upon the forces of the unknown with the intention of making them prostrate themselves at the feet of mankind.
8. We stand upon the furthest promontory of the ages!...Why should we be looking back over our shoulders, if what we desire is to smash down the mysterious doors of the Impossible? Time and Space died yesterday. We are already living in the realms of the Absolute, for we have already created the infinite, omnipresent speed.
9. We wish to glorify war – the sole cleanser of the world – militarism, patriotism, the destructive act of the libertarian, beautiful ideas worth dying for, and scorn for women.

10. We wish to destroy museums, libraries, academies of any sort, and fight against moralism, feminism, and every kind of materialistic, self-serving cowardice.
11. We shall sing of the great multitudes who are roused up by work, by pleasure, or by rebellion; of the many-hued, many-voiced tides of revolution in our modern capitals; of the pulsating, nightly ardor of arsenals and shipyards, ablaze with their violent electric moons; or railway stations, voraciously devouring smoke-belching serpents; of workshops hanging from the clouds by their twisted threads of smoke; of bridges which, like giant gymnasts, bstride the rivers, flashing in the sunlight like gleaming knives of intrepid steamships that sniff out the horizon; of broad-breasted locomotives, champing on their wheels like enormous steel horses, bridled with pipes; and of the lissome flight of the airplane, whose propeller flutters like a flag in the wind, seeming to applaud, like a crowd excited.<sup>2</sup>

Although Marinetti penned the original futurist movement's demands largely based on the requirements of literature, his ideas clearly embraced the other creative arts, both visual and musical. What resulted was a very experimental, challenging and creative period for music, albeit largely unrecognized with the exception of rare performances and a few scholarly journal articles. For music composition in particular, this period and style would be pivotal in the use of percussion. Futurism's suppression of melody and melodic instruments coupled with its focus on rhythm presented the many different timbres possible through the use of percussion instruments.<sup>3</sup>

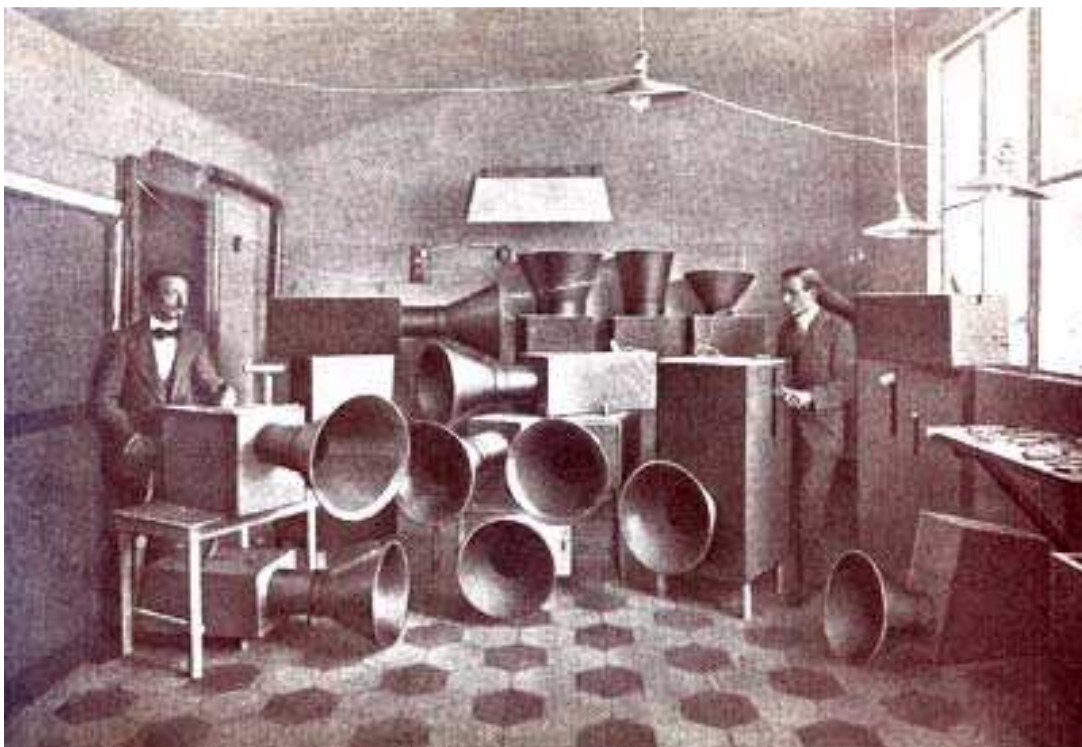
Following Marinetti's manifesto, an Italian composer and painter named Luigi Russolo constructed a futurist manifesto on music in 1913, entitled *The Art of Noise*. This treatise emphasized the idea that noise could be considered music and that composers and musicians are too often stifled by the burden of tradition. The objective for futurist music was to alleviate all boundaries set by traditional tonalities and to strike all common instrumentation, melodies, harmonies, and rhythmic stability from music.

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<sup>2</sup> F. T. Marinetti, *Critical Writings*, ed. Günter Berghaus (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), 13-14.

<sup>3</sup> Larry Dean Vanlandingham, "The Percussion Ensemble" (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1971), 3.

This development prompted Nicholas C. Gatty to write of the futurists in 1916, “On the face of it, their productions are little more than studies in musical noises, and it is perhaps quite in keeping with the inner logic of things that they do not adapt their ideas for musical instruments but seek to obtain more stimulating effects with specially constructed machines.”<sup>4</sup> Thus the sounds of the industrial boom in the early Twentieth Century influenced an innovative type of music laden with new unorthodox instruments that were able to reproduce the industrial soundscape. One example of new instrumentation was created by Russolo himself. He deemed it his *intonarumori*, or noise-organ (see Figure 2.1). Seemingly a series of funnels, boxes, and levers, the *intonarumori* was meant to sound as obscure as it looked. Unfortunately, none of these instruments have survived to the present day.



This picture is part of the public domain and not protected by copyright.

**Figure 1.1** Russolo (left) and his intonarumori

<sup>4</sup> Nicholas C. Gatty, “Futurism: A series of Negatives,” *The Musical Quarterly*, II (1916), 12, quoted in Rodney J. Payton, “The Music of Futurism: Concerts and Polemics,” *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (January 1976), 26-27.

Russolo also created a noise orchestra, complete with sections, somewhat like the traditional orchestra's string, wind, and percussion sections. Russolo's new sections were divided, however, according to the type of sound he was trying to reproduce and usually came in three different sizes to cover a variety of pitches and volumes. These are Russolo's six categories of instruments for the futurist orchestra:

1. roars, claps, noises of falling water, driving noises, bellows
2. whistles, snores, snorts
3. whispers, mutterings, rustlings, grumbles, grunts, gurgles
4. shrill sounds, cracks, buzzing, jingles, shuffles
5. percussive noises using metal, wood, skin, stone, baked earth, etc.
6. animal and human voices: shouts, moans, screams, laughter, rattlings, sobs<sup>5</sup>

Russolo would also go on to describe what he felt was the leading trend in futurist music. He stated,

“Nowadays musical art aims at the shrillest, strangest and most dissonant amalgams of sound. Thus we are approaching noise-sound. This revolution of music is paralleled by the increasing proliferation of machinery sharing in human labor. In the pounding atmosphere of great cities as well as in the formerly silent countryside, machines create today such a large number of varied noises that pure sound, with its littleness and its monotony, now fails to arouse any emotion.”<sup>6</sup>

Although this futuristic music movement never developed as Russolo envisioned (due partially to his nationalistic ideas, the international community was somewhat ignorant of futurist experimentation), his writings did bring about great philosophical changes in music and encouraged composers to both exploit industrialism and embrace

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<sup>5</sup> Luigi Russolo, *The Art of Noise* (futurist manifesto, 1913), *Great Bear Pamphlet* (Something Else Press, 1967), 10.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

the sounds of daily life. What resulted from the futurist music was not a new type of orchestra as Russolo had created, but a type of music that glorified the noise of machinery during the 1920s. This type of music, often called “machine music,”<sup>7</sup> was experimental in the use of percussion and other non-traditional noise making, but still within pieces of music that held true to some sort of musical form, tonal system, rhythmic organization, or a combination of these elements.

Ten years after *The Art of Noise*, what Russolo deemed “noise-sound” would prove to be a noticeably influential factor in George Antheil’s *Ballet Mécanique* (1924). It was in this composition that Antheil took the industrial sounds so greatly hailed by Marinetti and Russolo and combined them with classical percussion instruments and pianos to create a work that truly highlighted the new age of machines.<sup>8</sup> Featuring the sounds of small and large airplane propellers as well as small and large bells, buzzers, sirens, xylophones, bass drums, and tam-tam, Antheil composed this score for a film by the same name by Dudley Murphy and Fernand Léger.<sup>9</sup> Accompanying Antheil’s audible machinery sounds, the film features alarming images of machinery and other industrial objects consistent with the theologies of futurist ideals and the glorification of industry and machines.

In addressing the impact that futurism, Marinetti, and Russolo had on music composition and its use of percussion, it should also be noted that the term “futurism” was often misconstrued in music journals and music reviews in the early Twentieth Century. The term became almost a cliché describing any type of music that was difficult or explored a new style, such as the music of Arnold Schoenberg.<sup>10</sup> The real futurist movement and futurist style of music always traces a lineage back to Marinetti and the composers (largely Italian) who wrote in the true futurist style as outlined by *The Art of Noise*.

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<sup>7</sup> Larry Dean Vanlandingham, “The Percussion Ensemble” (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1971), 3.

<sup>8</sup> George Antheil’s *Ballet Mécanique*, while using noise makers stemming in part from the futurist movement, is representative of the “machine music” compositional style of the 1920s.

<sup>9</sup> The original version of Antheil’s *Ballet Mécanique* was scored for 16 player pianos, four bass drums, three xylophones, tam-tam, seven electric bells, siren, and three airplane propellers. Antheil reorchestrated the parts in 1953 to four pianos, four xylophones, two electric bells, two propellers, timpani, glockenspiel, cymbal, wood block, triangle, field drum, tambourine, tenor drum, and bass drum.

<sup>10</sup> Rodney J. Payton, “The Music of Futurism: Concerts and Polemics,” *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (January 1976), 26.



## CHAPTER 2

### THE FOUNDING OF THE PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

Following the turn of the Twentieth Century and the new futurist movement in Europe, some composers began to give percussion instruments a more pronounced and important role. The futurist musical objectives (the lack of tonality, form, or organized rhythm) did not take root in music composition beyond this short-lived insurrection, but in the 1920s there was a group of composers that took some of the mechanical sounds, especially those produced by percussion instruments, and combined compositional techniques of the “common practice period” in regard to the tonal system, rhythmic organization, form, and textures. Works from the 1920s that capture the essence of “machine music” can be seen in Appendix A. These specific pieces, while exploring the use of the percussion instruments (especially as they related to the sounds of industry and machines), did not exclusively use percussion, but combined the use of percussion instruments with other orchestral string and wind instruments.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to the works from the 1920s that featured machine music, there were more monumental orchestral works that featured prominent percussion elements from this period, including Igor Stravinsky's *Petrouchka* (1911), *The Rite of Spring* (1913), and *Les Noces* (1923), along with chamber music such as Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du Soldat* (composed in 1918, this piece is widely regarded to be the first example of a multi-percussion set-up, i.e., one percussionist is responsible for playing a variety of instruments), Paul Hindemith's *Kammermusik No. 3* (1925), and Henry Cowell's *Ensemble* (1925).

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<sup>11</sup> Larry Dean Vanlandingham, “The Percussion Ensemble” (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1971), 3.

Pieces such as Amadeo Roldan's *Ritmicas* (1930) and Alexander Tcherepnin's *Second Symphony* (1927) employ the full symphony orchestra in their music, but also feature the percussion section as a solo ensemble within a larger group. Roldan featured the PE in *Ritmica No. 5* and *Ritmica No. 6*,<sup>12</sup> and Tcherepnin wrote exclusively for percussion sounds in the second movement of his *Second Symphony*.<sup>13</sup> Today, *Ritmica No. 5* and *Ritmica No. 6* are commonly played alone in PE concerts.

Some scholars acknowledge *Ritmica No. 5* and *Ritmica No. 6* as the "first" PEs composed in Western music due to the instrumentation being exclusively for percussion instruments (Antheil's *Ballet Mécanique* was scored for percussion plus pianos). On the other hand, there are others that do not credit the *Ritmicas* because all movements of the work are not composed exclusively for percussion. Although it did employ a piano, most agree that Varese's *Ionisation* was the first true PE composition due to its intention of being performed as a solo work in a concert setting (the premiere of this piece was conducted by Nicolas Slonimsky on March 6, 1933, in New York City).

Edgar Varèse composed *Ionisation* in 1931. This particular work, calling for thirteen players and thirty four instruments, may be classified as a touchstone for the PE as it is the first piece composed for the PE. Exploring a variety of styles was commonplace in the 1920s and 1930s as the PE was establishing roots in music performance and literature. *Ionisation* uses many of the futurist "noise makers" from the time of Russolo such as sirens, anvils, and slapsticks, and also includes Latin-American and jazz influences as well as employment of multi-meter and polyrhythmic sections.

By the end of the 1930s, works composed exclusively for percussion instruments usually followed one of two separate models. One, the orchestral model, uses one instrument per person, like the arrangement of most orchestral works. The other, the multi-percussion model, places multiple instruments under the hands of one performer. From the 1930s until today, these two models are still used; however, smaller PE works often tend to use the multi-percussion model, while larger PEs can afford each person to be responsible for a sole instrument.

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<sup>12</sup> *Ritmica* Nos. 1-4 are scored for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, and piano

<sup>13</sup> In the second movement of Tcherepnin's *Second Symphony* percussion instruments, in addition to string players knocking on the body of their instrument with the butt of their bow, were used exclusively.

The chart found in Appendix C shows significant works representing the beginning of the PE through the 1930s and early 1940s. Note how most works use a smaller number of performers, even though the instrument list (consisting of primarily unpitched percussion) may be extensive. This is in contrast to the PO, which uses a larger number of performers with each performer usually responsible for a single pitched percussion instrument.

During and after World War II, there was a hiatus from this early developmental period of the PE and the subsequent repertoire. While there was no formal cessation or renouncement of PE works during the middle to late 1940s, there is simply have a period when PE music was scarcely written. What was present (presumably stemming from the military campaigns of World War II and the popularization of military-influenced bands) was the popularization of the marching drum ensemble and its repertoire. This would later lead to the further development of professional marching bands as well as marching PEs in school band programs. The PE as it was developed through the 1930s and early 1940s would embark on a second phase of growth beginning in the 1950s, after the PE was introduced into academia.

## CHAPTER 3

# THE IMPACT OF CLAIR OMAR MUSSER AND THE MARIMBA ORCHESTRA

From an early age Clair Omar Musser was infatuated with keyboard percussion. He began his musical training on violin, but after exposure to the sound of a xylophone for the first time during his fifth grade year, he was awestruck and immediately began his lifelong affair with keyboard percussion instruments. Musser developed into an exquisite marimbist, performed professional recitals, and sought opportunities to meet many other professional marimbists. One of these professional marimbists, Abraham Hildebrand, encouraged Musser to study with “the unquestionably world’s greatest teacher – Philip Rosenweig,”<sup>14</sup> an immigrant that had formerly taught cimbalom (hammered dulcimer) in Warsaw and Paris before coming to America.

Musser took Hildebrand’s advice, and developed into one of the foremost marimba soloists in the country. He was hailed as a virtuoso and performed across the United States, Canada, and Europe. During a trip to Chicago where he was to perform as a soloist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Musser was introduced to Charles Dawes and to his brother Rufus Dawes, currently serving as President of the Century of Progress Committee (this committee was actively planning a celebration of the centennial of Chicago).<sup>15</sup> Rufus Dawes expressed his desire for something new and thrilling for this event, and Musser remembered his father’s raving about the Honduras Marimba Orchestra that played at the San Francisco World’s Fair in 1915.<sup>16</sup> He

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<sup>14</sup> Marg Holmgren, “Clair Omar Musser and the Marimba Symphony Orchestra,” *Percussive Notes*, Spring/Summer 1978, 20.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

proposed that Dawes and the other committee members sponsor the creation of a similar marimba orchestra, which Musser planned to organize, rehearse, and conduct.

In 1933, with the approval from Dawes and the Century of Progress Committee, Musser formed his first “large” marimba-exclusive performing group to play at Chicago’s Century of Progress International Exposition – a World’s Fair that spanned 1933 and 1934, in celebration of the centennial of the city of Chicago. The concert took place at Soldier Field in Chicago in front of an estimated crowd of more than 100,000 people. For this concert, Musser created unique marimbas for each performer dubbed the “Century of Progress Model.” This was important as he would also use the same idea for the IMSO, although it was a different design.

Musser formed another group called the International Marimba Symphony Orchestra (IMSO). Consisting of 50 men and 50 women, ages 17 to 25, these artists were recruited to perform a tour in 1935, including a final concert at Carnegie Hall after a 21 day European tour. The intended highlight of the tour was a planned stop in London on April 27-28, 1935, to play for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the coronation of King George V. In planning for this special event in London, the Deagan Company (a keyboard percussion manufacturer that had employed Musser) created a special model of marimbas hailed as the “King George” series. The King George marimbas were made exclusively for the 100 performers in the IMSO, plus one extra to take in case of an equipment emergency and one other for Musser’s personal use, leaving the total production number at 102. Each one of these marimbas was created to the specifications of the intended owner. A plaque displaying the performer’s name was placed on a gold shield on the front of the instrument, which also was engraved with the British coat of arms (by renowned artist Alexander Jacobs). Above the coat of arms, each marimba had a built in “music rack” attached to the upper manual.<sup>17</sup> Beyond the historical significance of these marimbas, the instruments assumed extra value because they were never reproduced: in fact, Musser destroyed all of the blueprints and plans used for constructing the marimbas.

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<sup>17</sup> David Eyer, “The Truth About the King George Marimba as Used in the International Marimba Symphony Orchestra,” *Percussive Notes*, December 1990, 47.

The package crafted for each member of the IMSO (a marimba custom-built to the performer's respective height, a gold-filled shield bearing each member's name, music, mallets, shipping trunks, and all costs for the tour) cost \$500 (roughly the price of a new car in 1935).<sup>18</sup>

As the first large touring marimba ensemble from America, the IMSO encountered a number of logistic difficulties. Travelling overseas, packing and unpacking the 25 tons of instruments in all of their respective cases, and accommodating the requirements of various venues was a very time consuming and rigorous process. The IMSO even endured a bit of sea-sickness while making the journey from the United States to England. In his autobiography, William F. Ludwig states,

“During the five day crossing, twenty of us set up our marimbas in the ship's salon and entertained the passengers each night with selections from our repertoire. The ship rolled and so did our marimbas. I was one of the few players with a stomach to play every night of the crossing.”<sup>19</sup>

While travelling Europe, the IMSO encountered a wide variety of venue sizes, and none were big enough to hold all members of the group. Not once during their European tour were all 100 performers in the IMSO able to play at the same time. Even at the closing concert at Carnegie Hall, where the stage was enlarged, only 85 marimbas could fit on stage.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, Ludwig remembers that “all 100 marimbas and players dressed in formal attire made a wonderful and most formidable sight and sound.”<sup>21</sup> Even though the orchestra disbanded after their final concert in Carnegie Hall in 1935, the impact of this ensemble was very influential on the future role of keyboard percussion instruments in the PE.

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<sup>18</sup> William F. Ludwig, *The Making of a Drum Company: The Autobiography of William F. Ludwig II* (Michigan: Rebeats Publications, 2001), 13.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-14.

<sup>20</sup> Willis M. Rapp, Forward to *Music o Musser's International Marimba Symphony Orchestra* (Maryland: Meredith Music, 2009), 2.

<sup>21</sup> William F. Ludwig, *The Making of a Drum Company: The Autobiography of William F. Ludwig II* (Michigan: Rebeats Publications, 2001), 13.

Musser divided the IMSO into five groups/ranges to cover all harmonic areas (this arrangement had first been done with the Century of Progress Marimba Orchestra in 1933). He requested the Deagan Company to create 20 instruments with a range of small C to C4 to accommodate the bass part, and the remaining eighty marimbas to be produced with a range of small F to F4.<sup>22</sup> He also created two two-octave bass marimbas that sounded the bass part one octave lower than written. Transcribed and arranged by Musser, the music was notated in treble clef for parts one through four and in bass clef for part five (again reflecting his intention of a fully voiced marimba symphony orchestra).

Musser would later recreate various large marimba ensembles throughout the 1930s and 1940s, and although he had some success, these groups were perceived more as a novelty with no real sustainability. Some of Musser's marimba orchestras organized after the disbanding of the IMSO include a 125 piece marimba orchestra sponsored by Philips University in Enid, Oklahoma, in April 1941, and also a 150 piece marimba orchestra that gathered five months later in Chicago. Musser created an even larger group in September of 1949, when he assembled a 200 piece marimba orchestra sponsored by the *The Chicago Tribune*. This group played at Soldier Field to an audience of 111,000 people. In 1950 he conducted a group of three hundred marimbists for the Chicago Fair. This group also featured a 100 piece vocal choir and a large assemblage of contrabass marimbas.<sup>23</sup>

Since the 1950s, other teachers and performers have attempted to recreate the large marimba ensemble. One such ensemble came together on October 28-29, 1978, at the 1978 Percussive Arts Society International Convention. Dubbed the 1978 PASIC Marimba Orchestra, this group consisted of 54 college-aged marimbists performing at Arizona State University. One major highlight of this particular concert was the surprise appearance of Musser himself who served as a guest conductor at the concert (three of his works for marimba orchestra were performed).

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<sup>22</sup> Willis M. Rapp, Forward to *Music of Musser's International Marimba Symphony Orchestra* (Maryland: Meredith Music, 2009), 3.

<sup>23</sup> Marg Holmgren, "Clair Omar Musser and the Marimba Symphony Orchestra," *Percussive Notes*, Spring/Summer 1978, 21.

Another large marimba ensemble in honor of Musser and the IMSO took place on March 28, 1998, at the West Point Percussion Festival in West Point, New York, under the organization of Staff Sergeant Dana Kimble, a percussionist in the United States Military Academy Band at West Point. This marimba orchestra featured 164 marimbists playing on 134 marimbas. Conducting this ensemble was Dr. Frederick Fennell, a percussionist and long time conductor of the Eastman Wind Ensemble. This concert was narrated by two members of the original IMSO from 1935, William F. Ludwig II and John Chellis (Jack) Connor. Musser himself was not able to attend this concert at West Point because of his declining health. He died later that year on November 7, 1998.

One of the latest attempts at a mass marimba orchestra took place at the Florida Day of Percussion at the University of Central Florida on April 4, 2009. At the event, there were 84 marimbists playing on 60 marimbas conducted by Jeff Moore, Professor of Percussion at the University of Central Florida. The following are some pictures of the event taken by the author:



**Figure 3.1: The collection of marimbas prior to rehearsal.**





**Figure 3.2: A picture of the complete marimba orchestra just before rehearsal.**



**Figure 3.3: An original “King George” bass marimba used by the IMSO.**



**Figure 3.4: A close-up picture of the original “music rack” and King George crest.**



**Figure 3.5: The Marimba Orchestra in concert.**

Considering this type of ensemble had never before attempted such a lengthy tour, especially in such high-profile places as London, Paris, and Carnegie Hall in New York City, this group proved to be an invaluable pioneer regardless of tickets sales or how much profit was turned from each city. Logistically, the IMSO encountered many problems. In London, there was an argument between the British Musician's Union and the New York Local Musician's Union which led to the seizing of the IMSO's ship. The musicians were subsequently not allowed to disembark to play at the ceremony honoring King George V, and would not play leave the boat to start the tour until they arrived in Paris. After the negative reaction to the concert in Paris, the IMSO packed up their trunks (the French warehouse men were on strike at the time) and moved on to the second leg of their tour in Brussels, Belgium. After the concert in Brussels, the plan was to enter Germany. Ludwig recalls this event:

“Our tour plans to enter Germany were forestalled because of a Jewish member, Maggie Hanesack. German officials boarded the train to check all passports just before we crossed the border. They made it clear that Maggie would not be allowed to enter Germany because she was Jewish. As a matter of principal, Mr. Musser refused to leave her behind. So back to Paris we went.”<sup>24</sup>

The second arrival into Paris was not any more successful than the first. Although the concert was much more successful due to a programming change by Musser, the group was completely out of money. The IMSO did not have enough to pay their hotel bills or their boat tickets back to the United States. Ella Deagan, President of the J.C. Deagan Company, wired \$10,000 to get the instruments released from the impound and to purchase boat tickets. To this, Ludwig states candidly, “Were it not for the J.C. Deagan Company of Chicago, I might have grown up French!”<sup>25</sup> Due to the extensive hardships experienced through this tour, the IMSO (and subsequently the marimba orchestra) could hardly be seen as a serious professional group at all. In fact, an extensive tour like that of the IMSO has yet to be attempted again by a marimba orchestra of that size.

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<sup>24</sup> William F. Ludwig, *The Making of a Drum Company: The Autobiography of William F. Ludwig II* (Michigan: Rebeats Publications, 2001), 16.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE IN ACADEMIA

Primitive drumming or percussive ensembles are thought to be traceable to prehistoric times. Even in third world cultures, cities, villages, or countries there are often significant drumming ensembles that can be found during religious or social ceremonies. The incorporation of percussion into Western music took a much longer road by way of military music, namely Janissary (Turkish) music, through the operatic and then symphonic venues. In comparison with other chamber ensembles in Western music, the PE is still a relative newcomer. Other chamber groups such as the string quartet have thrived for hundreds of years and enjoy an expansive repertoire of music from a wide variety of composers. Although the PE repertoire is still lacking in relation to the other popular chamber ensembles, there has been a significant increase in the number of quality works for PE. In the early and mid-Twentieth Century, the PE was a fledgling group, and there was no commercially defensible reason for many publishers to take on this genre of music. The demand for PE music was virtually non-existent (it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that many universities gave consideration to the employment of a PE in their curricula) which meant sales and revenue would be low. Unfortunately, until this publishing challenge could be rectified, PE music was not readily available such as it is today.

Until the 1950s, the PE was not present in higher education. Performance training was focused largely on symphony orchestra repertoire. Solo percussion performance was not an option of study, and neither was performing in a PE. In 1950, Paul Price succeeded in incorporating the PE into the curriculum at the University of Illinois.

Paul Price, a native of Massachusetts, was trained in percussion at the New England Conservatory of Music. It was here during the late 1930s and early 1940s that he was exposed to the thrilling new music being composed for percussion by Varèse, Cowell, Harrison, and others. He served in the Army and completed his bachelor's and master's degrees from the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music where he remained very interested in music for the PE.

In 1949, after Price graduated from CCM, he began teaching at the University of Illinois. The following year (1950) he introduced the idea of PE as a part of the music curriculum, a step that would aid in the PEs acceptance as a worthy form of chamber music. The administration agreed to Price's proposal, and the PE was now able to enjoy a new level of exposure. Non-percussionist music students, faculty, and the general public could now experience in concert what had started in the 1930s, but until this point was not found outside of highly cultured musical circles.

Following Price's lead, colleges and universities throughout the United States began offering the PE as a true chamber music opportunity for their percussion students. This development has progressed and expanded to the present, and most four-year American colleges and universities now have PE as part of their curriculum. The formation of the first professional PEs also stemmed from academia. Ensembles such as the Blackearth Percussion Group (University of Illinois, Northern Illinois University, and Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music) and the Eastman Marimba Masters (Eastman School of Music) were cultivated in these environments.

The formation of the Blackearth Percussion Group came in 1972, when Chris Braun, Garry Kvistad, Richard Kvistad, Allen Otte, and Michael Udow created a PE whose focus was on the performance and promotion of new music for the genre. Garry Kvistad was the visionary for this group and set out to obtain the best percussionists he knew to create this unique group. Garry Kvistad had just recently graduated from the Oberlin Conservatory, and through this school met Chris Braun, who he asked to join the group. In addition to this, Garry contacted his brother Rick Kvistad (graduated from Oberlin and the University of Illinois) and another friend, Allen Otte (graduate of Oberlin Conservatory), both of whom agreed to join BPG. The fifth member, Michael Udow was a master's student at the University of Illinois at the time and it was Tom Siwe, the

Professor of Percussion at Illinois that turned Udow to the group (Garry Kvistad was originally going to pursue his master's degree there as well until he was offered a full-time job).

The BPG noted their frustration with the lack of professional performance possibilities, most notably the lack of new music being performed within the symphony orchestra repertoire. In addition to the lack of contemporary percussion music, they felt that the performance within the repertoire was being performed at an inferior level. This drive to increase the standard of performance of contemporary PE literature led the BPG to be a very important and influential group. BPG talked with Siwe about their endeavors, and Siwe offered BPG a residency at the University of Illinois. They moved to Illinois in the summer of 1972 and were given unlimited access to concert halls, practice facilities, and equipment. Beginning in January of 1973, the BPG was offered to share a single percussion teaching position as artists-in-residence at Northern Illinois University. With this acceptance, they became the first PE to ever hold a university teaching position. In 1977, BPG auditioned for and was offered a position as ensemble-in-residence at the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. Here they would not just teach as they did at NIU, but also carry regular faculty teaching loads. Although BPG officially disbanded in 1979, Otte still teaches at CCM and is involved with Percussion Group Cincinnati, professional PE in residence.

Founded in 1953 at the Eastman School of Music, the Eastman Marimba Masters was one of the first groups of percussionists to perform in a chamber setting. Developed as a vision of Gordon Peters, a graduate student at Eastman and former student of Musser at Northwestern University, Peters wanted to develop a chamber group for percussionists similar to what Paul Price had founded at Illinois a few years prior. Both the EMM and the University of Illinois experienced a very limited repertoire. The EMM initially was to play a series of twelve marimba ensemble transcriptions arranged by Musser, as well as be a medium for Peters to hone his performing and conducting skills. They accomplished a great deal for the genre by commissioning, composing, and arranging over 100 works. In addition to conducting and performing with the group, Peters also selected the mallets, music, and the rehearsal schedule of the group, largely due to the inexperience of the other members.

With each passing school year at Eastman, the line-up for the EMM changed. Consisting of undergraduate and graduate students from Eastman, “the ensemble never increased beyond seven players for logistical reasons involving instruments and personal schedules.”<sup>26</sup> The performers played exclusively on marimbas with the exception of one string bass player that Peters added to further support the bass line of the music. The EMM’s members would prove to be some of the most influential percussionists in the country. Some of these members include Gordon Peters (former principal percussionist of the Chicago Symphony, former Professor of Percussion at Northwestern University, first President of PAS, former conductor of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago), John Beck (former Professor of Percussion at Eastman), Stanley Leonard (former timpanist with the Pittsburgh Symphony, composer), and Mitchell Peters (composer, former timpanist and percussionist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic). Many other members also have retired from successful careers in both teaching and performing. In 1959, Peters accepted an invitation from Fritz Reiner to become principal percussionist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. After Peters left, the group continued performing under the name “The Marimba Aires.”

### **Percussion Ensemble Competition in Higher Education**

One of the best opportunities to gain exposure as a group, as a composer, or to listen to new and exciting PEs is through performance competition. Percussion and drum competitions have continued to grow in size and quality, both for solo artists and PEs. The greatest promoter of PE competition is the Percussive Arts Society, an international non-profit percussion organization whose goal is “promoting percussion education, research, performance and appreciation throughout the world.”<sup>27</sup>

Beginning in 1971, the Percussive Arts Society hosted a percussion festival twice each year (this national event, called the PAS Day of Percussion, changed to a two day event named the Percussive Arts Society National Conference in 1974, and then

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<sup>26</sup> Jeffery Calissi, “The Marimba Masters” (D.M.A. diss., University of North Carolina Greensboro, 2004), 26.

<sup>27</sup> Anonymous, *PAS 101*. [Online]. Available from <http://www.pas.org/About/PAS101.aspx>. 29 December 2009.

changed a third time to an annual event called the Percussive Arts Society International Convention, or PASIC, in 1976).<sup>28</sup> Then in 1986, the Percussive Arts Society created a competition to feature schools with some of the best PEs in the country. Although both university and high school PEs have been featured at Percussive Arts Society events since 1971, the current main goal as stated on the PASIC Competitions web site is "...to encourage, promote and reward musical excellence among high school and collegiate PEs. Each year, two high school ensembles and three college ensembles are selected to perform showcase concerts at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC)."<sup>29</sup>

In discussing the growth and relevance of the PE in higher education, it should be noted that most of these groups were titled just that: a "Percussion Ensemble." However, there are a few American percussion programs that established a similar, but somewhat larger and specifically-defined group. Founded by Dr. Richard Gipson at the University of Oklahoma, this new style within the PE tradition has become known as the "Percussion Orchestra."

### **Richard Gipson and the University of Oklahoma Percussion Orchestra**

When Richard Gipson began teaching at the University of Oklahoma in 1976, he was the university's first Professor of Percussion. Not only did he introduced the PE to the School of Music, he won the annual Percussive Arts Society International Percussion Ensemble Competition four times (1989, 1990, 1994, 2001), recorded five compact discs (the most of any university PE), and the OUPE was named the outstanding PE of the year by the Percussive Arts Society in 1990. The ensemble has premiered over twenty works for PE. In a recent interview, Gipson was asked about the recording process that he took at OU and why he felt that it was important to make recordings of the music from the Commissioning Series and the Percussion Press. He replied,

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<sup>28</sup> Scott Cameron, "PASIC Percussion Ensembles: A Historical Overview," *Percussive Notes*, April 2006, 58.

<sup>29</sup> Anonymous. *PASIC Competitions*. [Online]. Available from <http://www.pas.org/PASIC/Competitions.aspx>. 29 December 2009.



“Other than the standard archival of concerts the first ten years there, the actual commercial recording and distributing was a result of being invited to play a concert at PASIC '85 in Los Angeles. We did a number of commissioned works on that concert. It was a very successful concert. It was perhaps one of the most rewarding concert experiences that I ever had in my career because the timing was right, the environment was right, and the ballroom we played in was huge and packed. We got an incredible response from the audience. I could tell by that response that there was a whole bunch of people in the field that were hungering for the same type of thing that we were doing, which was playing substantial, wonderful pieces of music all by ourselves. Pieces like *Diabolic Variations* had never been heard. We played a whole concert of that type of music in that event and it was an extraordinary experience. When I got back after that concert, the overriding thought that I had in my mind was that the ensemble has spent a lot of time working the pieces up, these are new pieces and there was this great reaction and response to the live concert out there, and the only recording I had was from a little Nakamichi cassette recorder that I had put in front of the stage.

This was in the fall of 1985, and there was this brand new technology that had just come along, and if you went to the right audiophile store, you could actually pick up and hold in your hand this brand new thing called a compact disc. They cost \$17 to \$18 a disc, and very few of them were available. They were all produced by audiophile specialty companies. You had to pay a fortune for a CD player, etc., but it was state of the art digital technology, and the sound was an extraordinary improvement. The word was on the street about CDs and digital recordings and how you could capture extraordinary sounds and reproduce them with the CDs. In a word, it was a perfect fit for percussion because the dynamic spectrum and acoustical spectrum that could be produced on a compact disc was so extraordinary that it would fit perfectly for percussion. I didn't really think about creating any CDs. What I thought about was finding someone who was doing high-quality digital recording so I could engage them to come and make an archival recording of the works we had done in PASIC '85. That was my whole motivation – just capture this for posterity in the new digital environment. A colleague of mine there at OU knew some people in New York City who were on the cutting edge of this and were doing digital location recordings. I called the guys up and

told them what I wanted to do and they became captivated by the notion of this project. They said, 'Send us a recording of what you did at PASIC and let us listen to it.' So I sent it to them. They called me back and they said, 'This is great. We love this stuff. Not only would we like to come record your group, but we would like to actually release it on our CD label.' Of course I said, 'Great!' All I had to do was pay for the recording session and they would take it and do everything after that. So that's how the first CD – Laser Woodcuts – came along. This was a small New York City-based audiophile company whose portfolio was very impressive at the time. They had recordings of the Eastman Jazz Ensemble, and a list of extraordinary musicians that they had recorded on their label. That is how the whole recording thing started. I kind of got bit by that bug.

Over the years, the CD medium grew and the price came down and the opportunities expanded. All of the CDs we did were done through commercial producers. We didn't do any vanity recordings at all. Now anyone can do a vanity recording and publish it, but all of our stuff was done through real live-music publishers. We didn't pay anybody to do our stuff, they paid us. Those days are kind of gone now. It is a different world. That's how it all started. I really didn't have an idea of recording our compositions for the mass market. All I wanted to do was get a digital recording of what we did at PASIC '85 and it just kind of took off."<sup>30</sup>

In addition to his duties as the Professor of Percussion, Gipson also served the university and the School of Music in a variety of administrative capacities. In 1979, his service as the Assistant Director for the School of Music was followed by his tenure as Interim Director of the School of Music from 1980-1981. In 1988, he was awarded the Provost's Faculty Administration Fellowship and would go on to serve the university as Executive Assistant to the President of the University (1989-1991), Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs (1991-1992), and Director of the University of Oklahoma School of Music (1992-1997).

In an effort to expand the repertoire for this larger PE (a repertoire which was nearly non-existent with the exception of some transcriptions from groups like Musser's

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<sup>30</sup> Richard Gipson, interview with Author, 10 February 2010.

marimba orchestras or Dick Schory's Percussion Pops Orchestra<sup>31</sup>), Gipson envisioned what would later be identified as the OU Percussion Ensemble Commissioning Series. It was through this Commissioning Series that Gipson and the PE at the University of Oklahoma gained international notoriety, vaulting the program to elite status for percussion performance and education. These advancements in PO performance, commissions, and publishing at the University of Oklahoma under Gipson played a vital role in producing the significant interest and growing repertoire for this style today.

### **The University of Oklahoma Commissioning Series and Percussion Press**

In 1978, only 28 years after the formation of the first university-based PE, Dr. Richard Gipson embarked on a commissioning project to aid in the expansion of available repertoire for this kind of group. Since his own college years, Gipson's goals had included the creation and building the repertoire for the growing PE – namely by way of large, tonal, keyboard percussion-oriented works. In the thirty-plus years of its existence, the commissioning project, now known as the University of Oklahoma Percussion Ensemble Commissioning Series, has proven to be a successful medium through which some of the most popular works for PE have been premiered.

The Commissioning Series began when Gipson asked John Beck, Professor of Percussion at the Eastman School of Music, to compose a piece to be played by the OUPE featuring a drum set soloist. The piece, *Concerto for Drum Set and Percussion Ensemble*, was premiered at the 1978 Oklahoma Percussion Festival featuring Ed Shaughnessy (formerly a drummer with the "Tonight Show" band) on drum set.<sup>32</sup> The commission was originally intended to be a one-time phenomenon, but after the

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<sup>31</sup> During the 1960s and 1970s, Dick Schory's Percussion Pops Orchestra also enjoyed great success. It was Schory's goal to create a true entertainment group, playing tonal music that would leave all audiences satisfied. This ensemble, originally formed at Northwestern University, consisted of four percussionists, guitar, bass and keyboard (later brass and woodwind sections were added, along with a variety of synthesizers) and focused on transcriptions of popular tunes for its repertoire.<sup>31</sup> These pieces were not published, however, and therefore did not add significantly to the repertoire of the PE. Schory's group was also unique because it was not exclusively a PE, even though the title may have been deceiving, and for this reason its contributions are not pertinent to this study of the PO.

<sup>32</sup> Lance M. Drege, "The University of Oklahoma Percussion Ensemble Commissioning Series and Percussion Press, 1978-1999: An Examination of Its History" (D.M.A. diss., University of Oklahoma, 2000), 27.

success of the first commission, the administration agreed to continue funding the commissions. In fact, the Director of the School of Music at the University of Oklahoma, Dr. Jerry Neil Smith, would compose the second commission. As shown in Appendix D, the commissions have continued on nearly an annual basis since then. Concerning the origination of the Commissioning Series, Gipson recollects,

“Early in my years at OU we had a composer that was Director of the Music School there. I asked him to write us a piece, and he wrote us a piece. Then we had a percussion festival that featured Ed Shaughnessy. There was nothing at the time where you could have percussion ensemble play with a drum set player, so I had John Beck write us a piece. Then the idea started to grow that maybe a Commissioning Series would be a way to chip away at this girth of repertoire. I had heard Gainsborough at PASIC ‘77 by Harold Jones and East Carolina and it clicked immediately – here is a piece that is utilizing percussion in a very orchestral way. They were carrying the whole ball by themselves. I remember listening to that piece and saying, ‘Wow. This just doubles the forces and explores the possibilities.’ So I contacted Tom Gauger to see if he would write us a piece, and he agreed to write *Portico*. It all took off from there.”<sup>33</sup>

A large majority of the composers featured in the Commissioning Series are not percussionists, and at the time they were asked to compose a piece for the Commissioning Series, most had never composed a work exclusive to percussion. In an interview regarding why he chose these non-percussionist composers for the Commissioning Series, Gipson stated,

“When I commissioned a piece of music, I commissioned the composer and the music that I know that the composer has written and is capable of writing. When you strike gold, it is when you have a composer who is extraordinarily gifted musician who really knows how to write for the instruments and really brings the instrument’s capabilities to life...One of the things that I

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<sup>33</sup> Richard Gipson, interview with Author, 10 February 2010.

always believed in very strongly is that you have to be working with someone who really had a compositional gift and be able to transfer that into the medium.”<sup>34</sup>

The Commissioning Series succeeded in building the repertoire for the PO. The instrumentation listed for each composition in the Commissioning Series (see Appendix E) clearly shows the pattern of large, keyboard percussion-oriented works. While Gipson talked with each composer about his ideas for each particular piece, the instrumentation was always central in his requests. In fact, beginning with Thomas Gauger’s *Portico* for PO, each contract for a commissioned work included “being a work for principally mallet keyboard instruments.”<sup>35</sup> In his doctoral dissertation on The University of Oklahoma Percussion Press and Commissioning Series, Lance Drege writes,

“...every commissioned work since *Portico* in 1980, has been typically scored for a keyboard family consisting of three to five marimbas, one or two vibraphones and xylophones, a set of bells and chimes, and often one or two sets of crotales. This nucleus of keyboard instruments has become a defining element in the University of Oklahoma Percussion Ensemble Commissioning Series and has contributed to an overall sound that has become quite identifiable with the series.”<sup>36</sup>

This instrumentation has become a staple sound not only of the Commissioning Series, but of other works for PO. Evident in Appendix E and F, this core instrumentation plays a significant role in the uniqueness of this particular Commissioning Series and all works published under the secondary project, the University of Oklahoma Percussion Press (OUPP).

With the establishment and success of the OUPE Commissioning Series, the

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Lance M. Drege, “The University of Oklahoma Percussion Ensemble Commissioning Series and Percussion Press, 1978-1999: An Examination of Its History” (D.M.A. diss., University of Oklahoma, 2000), 29.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 30.

next issue to address was publishing. As noted above, few publishers were interested in works for PO. It was a unique style and sound, so unique that initially there was little to no demand for it anywhere else. In this capacity, it was much like the IMSO – revolutionary for its time, but with no proof of any real sustainability or profitability. Music publishers believed there were not enough organizations and teachers interested in this style, and therefore saw little chance for profit.

Facing this issue, Gipson secured a grant to establish his own non-profit university publishing company through the school. This project, established as the OU Percussion Press (OUPP), was made possible with a seed money research grant from the OU Associates through the University of Oklahoma Research Council. Gipson elaborates,

“I wrote a research proposal grant at OU and it was funded under a special program. The basic budget was to underwrite the cost of preparing the first run of pieces, and in looking at the pieces of music that we cranked out over the years, it is an interesting evolutionary process in itself because you can look at how they were created and follow the development of the Press. The first run was all done with engravings and was professionally printed with color covers, etc. The second evolution of printings came about because the Macintosh computer came along. Here was an opportunity to be able to type-set our pieces myself and save an extraordinary amount of money. The one labor source that I had that was free was me. I put all of the music in for most of the middle run of the Percussion Press on the computer. Apple also had introduced the first laser printer in the world. I wrote another research proposal and got some money to buy that laser printer. That is how I produced a camera-ready copy for that whole second swath of pieces. This was before Adobe released their first music font (which was Sonata font) so it looks pretty squirrely. It was not high level engraving, but it was produced on a laser printer and it was good enough to print from. When Adobe came out with Sonata font, all of those funky notes turned into really sharp, beautiful post-script fonts. That is the way it is still done. All of

the engraving is done there in house at school [Oklahoma] and the camera-ready copy is created and pieces are published right there on site.”<sup>37</sup>

Gipson actually drew the concept of the OUPP from his prior experience with the University of Miami Music Press (publisher of *Cataphonics* by Lawrence Weiner and *African Welcome Piece* by Michael Udow). The OUPP gave composers more incentive to write for this style, knowing that they had a reliable avenue to publish their work, and this project became the avenue through which many of the commissioned works for PO could now be published and made available to the public. Concerning the idea behind the OUPP, Gipson states,

“No one would publish this stuff. Not even what we would consider the percussion publishers of the ‘80s. They wouldn’t touch this stuff because it was too hard and it was too big. I don’t blame them. Take a piece like *Canzona* or even *Diabolic Variations* – you are talking about large force pieces with large instrumentations... long pieces, requiring lots of good players. Back in those days there weren’t very many people who could touch these things. It would have been ridiculous for a commercial publisher to undertake that. I understood that. That’s why I started the Percussion Press. I wanted to create an entity that didn’t care about making money. We just wanted to sell enough copies to libraries and schools who could play these pieces just to reinvest in the Press and keep it running. Commercial publication was not an option and I understood that.”<sup>38</sup>

The OUPP did not limit their publications to the works in the Commissioning Series. Works by xylophonist Harry Breuer, classical works, and Christmas music (The OUPE produced a recording of Christmas music titled *Christmas Bells, Mallets, and*

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<sup>37</sup> Richard Gipson, interview with Author, 10 February 2010.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

*Drums*) are also published through the OUPP.<sup>39</sup> While the total number of publications is currently over 50, a small number in relation to other music publishers, the OUPP has nevertheless remained a dedicated avenue for works of the PO. Appendix F lists some of the works outside of the Commissioning Series that are currently published by the OUPP.

While other music publishing companies have begun to see the validity of publishing works for all types of PEs, the OUPP remains the first music publisher to focus on works primarily for the PO. Thus, the contribution that the OUPP has made to the sustainability of the PO is immeasurable in its expansion of literature for this particular group. The OU Commissioning Series and OUPP, all recognized visions of Richard Gipson, have single-handedly spawned a style of music for percussion that is no less important than when machine music changed the way we perceive percussion and percussion performance. Both the OU Commissioning Series and the OUPP remain a valid medium through which new works for PO are premiered and published.

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<sup>39</sup> Lance M. Drege, "The University of Oklahoma Percussion Ensemble Commissioning Series and Percussion Press, 1978-1999: An Examination of Its History" (D.M.A. diss., University of Oklahoma, 2000), 29.



## CHAPTER 5

# THE PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE AND THE PERCUSSION ORCHESTRA

What is a Percussion Orchestra, and how does it differ from a Percussion Ensemble? This is an undefined area that has not been specifically addressed. To establish a comparison there first must be a foundation for the definition of a PE. John H. Beck defines “Percussion Ensemble” in his *Encyclopedia of Percussion* as “the assemblage of percussionists and percussion instruments to perform music written for them.”<sup>40</sup> Larry Vanlandingham, in his doctoral dissertation on the PE states, “...the term percussion ensemble shall refer to chamber music which centers on percussive instruments.”<sup>41</sup> The chapters above cover the inception and incorporation of the PE into Western music, notably in the development of the ensemble in education. As seen in Appendix C, these PEs include a wide variety of percussion instrumentation ranging from traditional symphonic instruments to simple everyday objects such as pots, pans, or even auto brake drums.

Prior to Gipson’s tenure at OU and his subsequent exploration into music for PO, PE music had taken very distinct paths in style. The PE music of the 1930s and 1940s was very experimental with sounds, particularly noises being perceived as sounds, and also incorporated of a variety of unpitched and exotic instruments. At the same time, there was also a period during the twenties when ragtime xylophone and marimba music were extremely popular (and has enjoyed resurgence in popularity largely

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<sup>40</sup> John H. Beck, “Percussion Ensembles,” in *Encyclopedia of Percussion*, ed. John H. Beck (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1995): 269.

<sup>41</sup> Larry Dean Vanlandingham, “The Percussion Ensemble” (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1971), iii.

through the success of the professional PE NEXUS). During the 1950s, after the University of Illinois introduced the PE into the music curriculum, composers such as Michael Colgrass (a student of Paul Price at the University of Illinois) wrote for groups of pitched and unpitched instruments (ethnic and traditional Western), many times with one player performing on one instrument.

As a matter of definition in dictionaries or music lexicons, there are no standard entries for a PO like that of the PE. Any endeavor to define a PO, in contrast to a PE, must take note of the elements common to the works commissioned, published, and performed by the University of Oklahoma Percussion Ensemble under the direction of Dr. Richard Gipson and the noticeably different style of PE music developed during his era. The OUPE also served as a paradigm for percussion programs at universities across the nation who wanted to explore this same type of new sound within their PEs.

The first identifiable element within a PO is the primary use of keyboard percussion instruments. These instruments – marimbas, xylophones, vibraphones, glockenspiels, chimes, and crotales – are used in conjunction with one another to create a variety of textures (something that could not happen when using only one, perhaps two pitched percussion instruments as found in many works from 1930-1945 and the 1950s and 1960s). These keyboard percussion instruments are orchestrated to cover the fullest range of notes possible, taking special attention to the use of the extended bass range of the marimbas. Additionally, the concert marimba expanded its lower range in 1985 as a result from a collaboration between Japanese marimba soloist Keiko Abe and the Yamaha Corporation and the capabilities of the extended range were exploited by composers. Bass marimba parts could then be played without having to own a separate bass marimba such as the Musser marimba orchestras did in the first half of the century. In studying the development of the PO in the 1980s and beyond, Musser's marimba orchestras clearly were definitive in their extensive employment keyboard percussion instruments.<sup>42</sup>

Beyond the PO's extensive use of keyboard percussion instruments, an increase in size is also definitive. While defining any object or group as "large" or "small" can be

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<sup>42</sup> This is opposed to the early percussion ensemble music of Cage, Harrison, Varèse, and others with the portrayal of machine music and noise as sound.

ambiguous, it is logical for these comparisons to note the average numbers of players for each composition for reference. A comparison of works for PO published by the OU Percussion Press reveals an average number of between eight and twelve performers, a size traditionally classified as “large” when describing PEs. Without the larger number of people to perform, thereby creating a larger, louder, and harmonically and texturally more diverse group, the sound would not be characteristic of what has become the definitive PO sound.

It should also be noted that according to Beck’s previously suggested definition, a PO must be a specific type of PE in satisfying all parts of this definition – an assemblage of percussionists performing music written for percussion. Establishing this fact, it is evident that the PO is not a separate entity, acting in isolation from the PE as some might think, but is, instead, merely a style difference within the genre.

In speaking with Richard Gipson, he elaborated on the objective behind the formation of the PO and why he felt that it was important to explore the creation of this new style.

**Parker:** How would you define a PO?

**Gipson:** I am not sure that there is a hard and fast definition of it at all, but I have a conceptual definition that I have always worked with in my mind. I generally think of it as a larger ensemble of eight or more players that are essentially three quarters of which are keyboard instruments.

**Parker:** Do you know when you started using the term “Percussion Orchestra” to describe what you were doing at OU? Had you previously heard the term?

**Gipson:** It is one of those conceptual evolutions that was on its way in my mind. When I actually started calling it the PO was in 2000.

**Parker:** Do you remember why you went that direction and started using that title for this style?

**Gipson:** Curricularly and conceptually we had moved to a point where we had a definition of groups such that there was one particular group, which was in fact our top group, was really focused almost exclusively in playing these large-force primarily keyboard works. Then we had enough other groups playing other kinds of repertoire that it seemed appropriate to start drawing a distinction. We no longer had the PO, for instance, splitting up and playing quartets and quintets. The actual definition of the group and type of music that they were working on performing became a little bit more clarified.

**Parker:** Was or is there a main objective with the development of the PO? For instance, was it to promote tonality in percussion, educational benefits, or explore a new style in percussion?

**Gipson:** I became aware and passionate very early in my life and career about percussionists being able to perform extraordinarily complex and beautiful music by themselves and we could indeed be an independent music-making force. All we needed was the vehicle, wonderful music, and the opportunity to play it. It was nothing about us as musicians or as percussionists that was standing in our way. Musically, I wanted to do it. Technically it was important. You can only play ensemble (orchestral music, band music, quartets, and quintets) so long, and you didn't really become challenged to play what I would call the symphonic leading roles that so many of our colleagues in the other instrument areas do through their course of playing in symphony orchestras. At some point or another they are making the primary music. The opportunity to play that kind of music I felt would extend us as musicians and as technicians. There was a musical effort and technical effort that could be resolved in playing the right kind of music in the right kind of form. Another one that I can kind of describe it is kind of evangelical motivation. I really believed that we could play this kind of music and reach people with it in a way that was not common. People never knew we could do this, either 1) because we didn't have the music or 2) that we weren't playing for them. It is just fun to play an extraordinary piece of music all

by ourselves as a group of percussionists. People respond to it on a musical level when you are stretching yourself outside your normal role – outside of primarily an accompanying entity. The frustration that I had as a teacher, conductor, and musician was that I knew we could do these things we just didn't have anything to do it with. That was the primary motivation.

**Parker:** In creating what we can now define as the “Percussion Orchestra,” was there any influence from other professional PEs such as Dick Schory’s Percussion Pops Orchestra?

**Gipson:** No, it was quite the opposite. I very much wanted to pursue ways of presenting percussionists in a very serious manner that was more aligned to the symphony orchestra than a “popsy” approach, or what I would call more of a “gimmicky” type of approach. I didn’t want us to become pigeon-holed into that role. So, no, I didn’t have any influences within the percussion side. When I was a graduate student working on my master’s degree, I was given permission to create a mallet ensemble. It was a result of we were playing stuff in PE and it had mallet parts obviously, but nothing that capitalized on multiple mallet opportunities, so I created this group. It was a volunteer group. The only requirement to be in the group was that you had to arrange something for mallet ensemble. So guys would bring in anything from trios on up to pieces for six or seven players. Back in those days we didn’t have five or six five-octave marimbas running around. We were lucky if we had two marimbas and a vibraphone. If everybody brought up their instruments on the same day, we might get four marimbas on the stage. The idea of actually creating something for keyboard percussion instruments to be on their own... I could tell at that early stage that there were great possibilities. I had known about the historic Musser marimba orchestras – I never had a chance to hear one – but the potential was there if we could find the right music.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Richard Gipson, Interview with Author, 10 February 2010.

The term “ensemble” can be ambiguous in its use at times. Some use it to describe the actual group of percussionists, and some even use the term to refer to the individual pieces of music to be played by the group. In a recent interview with Dr. John W. Parks IV, Professor of Percussion at Florida State University, he discussed the PO in a separate light in relation to the PE, noting the ambiguity that the term “ensemble” can bring:

“If you consider that ‘Ensemble’ covers the entire gamut of the genre (all instrumental configurations, conducted and unconducted), then ‘Orchestra’ is a subset of it, or a special ensemble configuration within what we would call ‘Percussion Ensemble.’ So consider it a special configuration within what we would call ‘percussion ensemble.’ Some call the pieces themselves ‘ensembles,’ but I prefer calling by players or composer names (quartets, or ‘Cage’).”<sup>44</sup>

Dr. Brian West, Professor of Percussion at Texas Christian University, added to this by stating, “many programs still use the more traditional name “Percussion Ensemble” and perform a variety of pieces under this title – smaller chamber-type pieces and larger more PO type pieces.”<sup>45</sup> In these situations, the word “ensemble” can be very unclear, especially when it is being used unrelating to style.

James Campbell, Professor of Percussion at the University of Kentucky, related in an interview that the PO very closely to a symphony orchestra in its ability to split or combine instruments to create sections or different groups within the larger ensemble. He stated,

“It seems the PO is a large PE divided into related groups. It encompasses a full range of keyboards from soprano to bass (glockenspiel through bass marimba). You might find these groups typically to be related to the standard symphony orchestra written in pairs or divisi. Marimbas scored like violins, glock (glockenspiel), crotales, xylo (xylophone), vibes, chimes and

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<sup>44</sup> John Parks, Interview with Author, 26 November 2009.

<sup>45</sup> Brian West, Interview with Author, 9 February 2010.

timpani used as winds and lower strings and untuned percussion as a separate group.<sup>46</sup>

In listening or watching a work for PO, this relationship is quite clear, and further score study can support this claim. The role of each voice is treated uniquely and serves as an important factor in sufficient harmonic support and textures. Moreover, the timbres from each instrument are taken into consideration just as they would be when one is writing for a symphony. Timbral exploration through the use of metallic, wooden, skin, or even mechanically produced sounds often provides each composer with a plentiful palette of sounds from which to choose.

In conclusion, the definition of a PO as spearheaded by Richard Gipson at the University of Oklahoma is a style of PE composition and performance consisting of between eight and twelve performers, nominally with keyboard percussion instruments, and performing mainly tonal works orchestrated in a symphonic style.

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<sup>46</sup> James Campbell, Interview with Author, 6 January 2010.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE FUTURE OF THE PERCUSSION ORCHESTRA

The future of the PO is somewhat unknown; however, there are certain trends that portend favorably. The high level of quality in works being commissioned and composed, the ready availability of works for PO, and a stable frequency of programming help point to a sustainable future for the PO.

The quality of music being composed in this style is vital for its continued development. In addition to works found in the OU Commissioning Series, there are other significant pieces of music that have been composed for PO. As with the works in the OU Commissioning Series, the main objective has been to focus on creating each piece of music for a core of keyboard percussion instruments.

One such composition, composed by Blake Tyson, Professor of Percussion at the University of Central Arkansas, is *A Ceiling Full of Stars*. Composed in 2009, this particular work is currently one of the most popular pieces for PO.<sup>47</sup> It features an ensemble whose nucleus is keyboard percussion, and it has received many accolades since its premiere. In a recent interview with Tyson, he shed light on his introduction to the PO and its influence on his composing *A Ceiling Full of Stars*. The following is an excerpt from that interview:

**Parker:** What was your first experience with a PO? Was it through an ensemble you played in or a group that you heard?

**Tyson:** My first experience was probably playing Diabolic Variations at

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<sup>47</sup> So far this piece has been performed 23 times and recorded on two compact discs.



the University of Alabama. That was back when you couldn't download pieces online or even know much about them. I only had a basic idea of the piece, thought it sounded interesting, and I asked my professor, Larry Mathis, if we could do it. He ordered it and we gave it a go. We quickly found out just how difficult it was. You might say I got thrown off the deep end into the PO.

**Parker:** What was your initial reaction when you were first exposed to a group that was so large and keyboard oriented?

**Tyson:** I loved the sound of all those keyboards and especially all of those marimbas together.

**Parker:** Have you always had an interest in composing for a PO?

**Tyson:** I don't really think in terms of the label "Percussion Orchestra" when I think about composing. For me it really all falls under the generic term "Percussion Ensemble." I have been interested in writing large ensemble music for a while. Finding the time and opportunity is the trick.

**Parker:** You recently completed a work for PO titled *A Ceiling Full of Stars*. As a composer, what did you encounter when composing for a PO versus a smaller PE like your piece *Cloud Forest*?

**Tyson:** I think that composing for a larger number of keyboards gave me the possibility to realize melodic and accompaniment figures that would be impossible (or at least unreasonably difficult) with fewer keyboards. By distributing the music around the ensemble you are able to do things with space and rhythm that would be impossible or at least ill-advised with a smaller group. Of course, you also have to make sure with more players that you don't leave some of them standing around with nothing to do for

too long. I certainly kept that in mind when writing the piece.

**Parker:** Who do you look to for inspiration when composing for such a large group?

**Tyson:** There are composers that have written for this kind of ensemble before me, and I definitely studied how they did it. I didn't just draw inspiration from percussion compositions, of course. I also drew inspiration from my study of orchestral music and a thousand other places. What I wanted to do was to write music that seemed connected to the instruments, not super-imposed on them. It's important to remember that percussion instruments can't do everything that a full orchestra can do. But, they can do a lot of things that a full orchestra can't do. It's also important to remember that the PO tone palette is very limited in some ways. While a symphony orchestra has tubas, cellos, basses, bassoons, trombones, bass clarinets, etc. to create colors in the bass voicings, the PO basically has marimba and timpani (and sometimes piano). You can add tuned gongs or other low sounds, but those sorts of things are unwieldy and don't support long term orchestration. So when we look for inspiration in writing for other instruments or ensembles, we should be aware that it is usually not possible to directly transfer the ideas, and we should be aware that, despite the large number of instruments on stage, we have fairly narrow orchestrational possibilities with our melodic instruments.

**Parker:** Before you began to write *A Ceiling Full of Stars*, why did you decide to write for a large keyboard PE?

**Tyson:** Brian West commissioned me to write the work for the TCU Percussion Ensemble. I was trying to write for a group that included not only the keyboards, but timpani and percussion as well. After I finished

the first draft it became obvious to me that I was trying to force timpani, toms, and cymbals into a piece that didn't need them. I took them out and the piece fell perfectly into place (the triangle parts were always written to be played by the marimbists).

**Parker:** Do you feel that there is a demand for composition for PO?

**Tyson:** Certainly at the university level. Well written compositions for the PO can be great teaching tools in addition to being great pieces of music. They give the percussion student the chance to experience what a clarinetist or a violinist experiences every day. Playing consistently throughout a piece, playing long lines with long term phrasing and not just being a brief burst of color like we often are in orchestras and wind ensembles. But, I don't think there will ever be much demand on a professional level.<sup>48</sup>

In addition to the current literature being composed and played by a variety of school-based PEs, it is vital to assure that the works are available for purchase and use. During Gipson's early years at the University of Oklahoma, there were no music publishers interested in publishing works for PO. Now that time has proven the PO to be a valuable resource that is in demand with percussion programs across the nation, almost all percussion publishing companies include some type of work for a large, keyboard percussion based PE. HoneyRock Publishing, C. Alan Publications, Keyboard Percussion Publications (KPP), OUPP, Row-Loff Productions, JW3, and Drop 6 Media are some of the most popular publishers that supply music for PO. In addition to each company's listing the instrumentation for each of their works and providing a search bar to help locate a specific piece or composer, Drop 6 Media, C. Alan Publications, Row-Loff Productions, and HoneyRock Publishing also present the ability to search their PE music by number of performers. While the number of performers by itself does not constitute a PO, this simplifies the browsing process by eliminating all

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<sup>48</sup> Blake Tyson, Interview with Author, 17 January 2010.

small and medium-size PEs. Overall, works for PO are readily available through a variety of percussion publishers – a significant change from the early years of Gipson – demonstrating the growth and development of this particular style as a staple in the repertoire for the PE.

One final element vital to the future of the PO is the frequency of programming and performance. In Tyson’s interview, when asked about the interest that he is receiving concerning *A Ceiling Full of Stars*, he was quick to point out the demand for and programming of the piece by some of the top PEs in the country:

“There have been at least 15 performances of the piece in the past year, including one by the LSU ensemble under Brett Dietz at PASIC, as well as at Eastman, Northwestern, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida State, Central Florida, Kentucky, etc.... I think there are at least 8 more (that I know of) coming up this semester. TCU just released it on their new CD and FSU’s CD with their recording of it will come out in April.”<sup>49</sup>

Clearly the demand for quality PO works is evident not only through university PE performances, but also through recordings (in this case Texas Christian University and Florida State University). In an interview with John Parks, Professor of Percussion at Florida State University, he further supported the continued programming of PO works through a balanced PE program (one that offers a wide variety of styles as well as sizes). Concerning this balance of programming, he stated,

“It depends on what your mission is: in a university setting, a PE should cover all kinds of literature – smaller chamber works, large works, mixed ensembles with other instruments, etc. All of that falls under ‘percussion ensemble,’ although some programs tend to concentrate more on the larger ‘orchestra’ works.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Blake Tyson, Interview with Author, 17 January 2010.

<sup>50</sup> John Parks, Interview with Author, 26 November 2009.

When asked if he thought there was an advantage in concentrating on one style of PE music or mixing styles, he said,

“If you only studied the PO literature, your students would lose the opportunities to work on the masterworks of Cage, Harrison, Varese, etc. On the other hand, if you only programmed smaller ‘classic’ chamber works, the students miss out on the opportunities to concentrate on the qualities I mentioned earlier regarding the challenges of PO music.”<sup>51</sup>

The logic of balancing a PE program would seem to insure the importance of this genre, especially in its education ramifications concerning style, musicality, musicianship, balance, listening, and execution.

In an interview with Dr. Brian West, Professor of Percussion at Texas Christian University, he emphasized the importance of the PO as a medium to demonstrate percussionists as musicians and not solely valuable for rhythm. He stated,

“I believe the PO helps validate the genre more to non-percussionists who associate PE with smaller chamber pieces that primarily focus around rhythm. Utilizing larger forces, performing complex melodic and harmonic music, playing pieces of substantial length, etc. are all part of this distinction. I believe this type of percussion music will continue to grow in popularity in the future, not necessarily replacing smaller chamber pieces but adding to the repertoire greatly. My hope is that this type of music will help percussionists be seen as true valuable musicians, not just drummers who can play complex rhythms. Pieces like this will hopefully help the genre be seen as contemporaries to the symphony orchestra and wind symphony, not as less important ensembles.”<sup>52</sup>

Additionally, Parks is optimistic about the future of the PO:

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Brian West, Interview with Author, 9 February 2010.

“More transcriptions are becoming available for the ensemble, and more serious composers with footprints that will last more than a few years have taken interest in the genre, which means that we'll have much more to look forward to. Plus, many recording projects (Brian West's and ours at FSU specifically) are going to continue ‘spreading the word’ about the viability of the PO medium.”<sup>53</sup>

In closing, Gipson speaks of the future of the PO:

“The future is still ahead of it as a medium. The only frustration that I have after doing this for so many years is that it is still such a difficult road to get the word out. My belief system is such that every percussionist out there needs to have an opportunity to play this kind of music many times, and I don't see that happening yet. That is frustrating. There's work [with the PO] that a lot of guys have done [at other universities]. We certainly weren't the only people to do this, but I will admit that I still go to PASICs and it is still rare to hear these high quality compositions written by top-rate composers. That is a frustration for me. In my wildest dreams, I would have wanted it to have caught on so well and so compellingly that it wasn't unusual. It still remains unusual which I guess is a frustration.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> John Parks, Interview with Author, 26 November 2009.

<sup>54</sup> Richard Gipson, interview with Author, 10 February 2010.

## APPENDIX A

### MACHINE MUSIC THAT FEATURE AN INCREASED USE OF PERCUSSION

<b>Title</b>	<b>Composer</b>	<b>Date</b>
<i>Pacific 231</i>	Arthur Honegger	1924
<i>Ballet Mécanique</i>	George Antheil	1924
<i>HP</i>	Carlos Chávez	1927
<i>Dance of Steel</i>	Serge Prokofiev	1927
<i>Skyscrapers</i>	John Alden Carpenter	1927
<i>Symphony of Machines Steel Foundry</i>	Alexander Mossolov	1928

## APPENDIX B

### ORCHESTRAL AND CHAMBER MUSIC FEATURING AN INCREASED USE OF PERCUSSION

<b>Title</b>	<b>Composer</b>	<b>Date</b>
<i>Petroushka</i> Instrumentation: Timpani, xylophone, glockenspiel, bass drum, two snare drums, cymbals two tambourines, triangle, tam-tam	Igor Stravinsky	1911
<i>The Rite of Spring</i> Instrumentation: Timpani (two players), crotales, cymbals bass drum, tam-tam, triangle, guiro, tambourine	Igor Stravinsky	1913
<i>L'Histoire du Soldat</i> Instrumentation: Two snare drums, field drum, bass drum with mounted cymbal, tambourine, triangle	Igor Stravinsky	1918
<i>Les Noces</i> Instrumentation: Seventeen percussion instruments	Igor Stravinsky	1923
<i>Kammermusik No. 3</i> Instrumentation: Multiple percussion instruments	Paul Hindemith	1925
<i>Ensemble</i> Instrumentation: Thundersticks	Henry Cowell	1925



## APPENDIX C

### NOTABLE WORKS FOR THE EARLY PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

<b>Title</b>	<b>Composer</b>	<b>Date</b>
<i>Ballet Mécanique</i> Instrumentation: Orchestra bells, small and large airplane propeller sound, tam-tam, cymbal, wood block, triangle, field drum, tambourine, small and large electric bell, tenor drum, bass drum, xylophones, pianos Performers: Fifteen	George Antheil	1924
<i>Ritmica No. 5</i> Instrumentation: Claves, quijada, cow bells, guiro, maracas, bongos, timbales, bass drum, timpani, marimbula Performers: Eleven	Amadeo Roldan	1930
<i>Ritmica No. 6</i> Instrumentation: Claves, quijada, guiro, maracas, bongos, timbales, timpani, bass drum, marimbula, cow bells Performers: Eleven	Amadeo Roldan	1930
<i>Ionisation</i> Instrumentation: Chinese cymbal, bass drum, cow bell, tam-tams, gong, bongos, bass drums, field drum, tenor drums, sirens, friction drum, guiros, Chinese blocks, claves, triangle, maracas, snare drums, suspended cymbal, crash cymbals, sleigh bells, tubular chimes, castanets, orchestra bells, tambourine, anvils, slapstick, triangle, piano Performers: Thirteen	Edgard Varèse	1931
<i>Estudio en forma de preludio y fuga</i> Instrumentation: Police whistle, sirens, claves, guiros, maracas, whips, small hand bell, crash cymbals, palmadas (hand claps), triangle, anvils, bell, suspended cymbal, tam-tam, field drum, snare drums, bongos, African drums, timpani, bass drums, pianos Performers: Thirty-one	José Ardévol	1933

## Appendix C - continued

<b>Title</b>	<b>Composer</b>	<b>Date</b>
<i>The Abongo</i> Instrumentation: Small drums, medium and large drums, water drum, small and large tin pans, small and large barrels, timpani, small and large tam-tams, snare drum, small cymbals, large gong, cymbal, chorus of handclappers Performers: Twelve plus chorus of handclappers	John Becker	1933
<i>March Suite</i> Instrumentation: Cowbells, wood blocks, suspended cymbals, tom-tom, piano, slide whistle, triangle, snare drum, flat Hatian drum, bass drum Performers: Three	William Russell	1933
<i>Three Dance Movements</i> Instrumentation: Triangles, dinner bell, bottle, anvil, tom-toms, finger cymbal, suspended cymbal, Chinese cymbal, crash cymbals, wood blocks, snare drum, bass drum, piano, slapstick Performers: Four	William Russell	1933
<i>Ostinato Pianissimo</i> Instrumentation: Rice bowls, xylophone, wood blocks, frame drum, guiro, bongos, tom- toms, gongs, pianos Performers: Nine	Henry Cowell	1934
<i>Auto Accident</i> Instrumentation: Glass plates, snare drum, bass drum, siren, ratchet, Chinese wood blocks, temple bells, timpani, chimes, musical tumblers (water tuned), xylophone, piano Performers: Twelve	Johanna Beyer	1935
<i>IV</i> Instrumentation: Unspecified Performers: Nine	Johanna Beyer	1935
<i>Quartet</i> Instrumentation: Any percussion instrument Performers: Four	John Cage	1935
<i>Percussion Music for Three Players</i> Instrumentation: Suspended cymbals, temple blocks, small tulip bells, anvil, wood blocks, tom-toms, triangle, maracas, tam-tam, bass drum Performers: Three	Gerald Strang	1935
<i>Three Iventories of Casey Jones</i> Instrumentation: Pop bottles, large bottle with marbles, drums, cymbals, gongs, piano Performers: Five	Ray Green	1936
<i>A Dance</i> Instrumentation: Snare drum, tam-tams, bass drum, suspended cymbal, gong, piano Performers: Six	John Becker	1938

## Appendix C - continued

<b>Title</b>	<b>Composer</b>	<b>Date</b>
<i>March</i> Instrumentation: Snare drum, bass drum, string drum, anvil, tambourine, gong, thundersheet, temple blocks, tom-toms, suspended cymbals, triangles, metal bowls, temple gongs, Chinese wood blocks, rice bowls Performers: Six	Johanna Beyer	1938
<i>Pulse</i> Instrumentation: Korean dragon's mouths, wood blocks, Chinese tom-toms, tom-toms, rice bowls, Japanese temple gongs, suspended cymbals, gongs, pipe-lengths, auto brake drums Performers: Five	Henry Cowell	1939
<i>Three Movements for Percussion</i> Instrumentation: Bass drum, snare drum, tom-tom, crash cymbals, gong, bells, triangle, tambourine, wood blocks, timpani, triangles, wood blocks, lion's roar Performers: Nine	Johanna Beyer	1939
<i>First Construction in Metal</i> Instrumentation: Orchestra bells, thundersheets, piano, oxen bells, sleigh bells, auto brake drums, cow bells, Japanese temple gongs, suspended Turkish cymbals, anvils, Chinese cymbals, gongs, water gong, tam-tam Performers: Seven	John Cage	1939
<i>Imaginary Landscape</i> Instrumentation: Variable-speed phono turntables, frequency recordings, muted piano, cymbal Performers: Four	John Cage	1939
<i>Fifth Symphony</i> Instrumentation: Suspended cymbals, gongs, triangle, small bell, wood block, rattles, sistrums, small drum, muted gong, snare drum, triangle, medium bell, tortoise shells, high medium drum, low medium bell, low medium drum, thundersheet, low bell, bass drum Performers: Four	Lou Harrison	1939
<i>Second Construction</i> Instrumentation: Sleigh bells, wind glass, Indian rattle, maracas, snare drum, tom-toms, temple gongs, maracas, tam-tam, muted gongs, water gong, thundersheet, prepared piano Performers: Four	John Cage	1940
<i>Living Room Music</i> Instrumentation: Speaking and striking anything in the room Performers: Four	John Cage	1940

## Appendix C - continued

<u>Title</u>	<u>Composer</u>	<u>Date</u>
<i>Canticle No. 1</i>	Lou Harrison	1940
Instrumentation:	Tambourine (or sistrum), wood blocks, high bells, gourd rattle, dragon's mouths, glass bells (or temple gongs), wooden rattle, clay bells, cow bells, morache (or guiro), glass windbell, triangle, suspended cymbal, large bell (or auto brake drum), tam-tam, thundersheet, high drums, muted gongs, low drums	
Performers:	Five	
<i>Song of Queztecotl</i>	Lou Harrison	1940
Instrumentation:	Water glasses, wood blocks, sistrums, cowbells, brake drums, wooden rattle, snare drum, guiro, glass wind chimes, triangle, gong, tam-tam, tom-toms, bass drum	
Performers:	Four	
<i>Third Construction</i>	John Cage	1941
Instrumentation:	Northwest Indian rattle, tin-cans, tom-toms, claves, Chinese cymbal, maracas, two teponaxtle, two cow bells, Indo-Chinese rattle, lion's roar, tambourine, quijada, cricket callers, conch shell, tin can rattle, wooden ratchet, bass drum roar	
Performers:	Four	
<i>Double Music</i>	John Cage/Lou Harrison	1941
Instrumentation:	Graduated water buffalo bells, graduated muted auto brake drums, sistras, graduated sleigh bells, auto brake drums, thundersheet, Japanese temple gongs, tam-tams, six cow bells, Chinese gongs, water gong	
Performers:	Four	
<i>Canticle No. 3</i>	Lou Harrison	1941
Instrumentation:	Ocarina, iron pipes, wood blocks, auto brake drums, xylophone, elephant bells, guitar, water buffalo bells, wood box, sistra, snare drum, bass drum, tom-toms	
Performers:	Six	
<i>Fugue</i>	Lou Harrison	1941
Instrumentation:	Flexatone, claves, maracas, metallophones, box, cow bells, meditation bells, auto brake drums, metal wash tub, bell-coils, bass drum, tam-tams, suspended cymbal, triangles	
Performers:	Four	
<i>Labyrinth No. 3</i>	Lou Harrison	1941
Instrumentation:	Bongos, tom-toms, bass drums, sistrum, Japanese button gong, thunder sheet, temple bell, flexatones, saws, elephant bell, water gong, claves, maracas, wood rattle, rasp guiros, teponatzli, glass wind chimes, contrabass viol, small bells, cup bells, muted gongs, suspended cymbals, wood blocks, temple blocks, flower pots, porcelain bowls, water glasses	
Performers:	Eleven	
<i>Credo in US</i>	John Cage	1942
Instrumentation:	Gongs, tin cans, electric buzzer, tom-toms, piano, radio or phonograph	
Performers:	Four	

## Appendix C - continued

<b>Title</b>	<b>Composer</b>	<b>Date</b>
<i>Imaginary Landscape No. 2</i> Instrumentation: Tin cans, conch shell, ratchet, bass drum, buzzers, water gong, metal waste basket, coil of wire, lion's roar Performers: Five	John Cage	1942
<i>Toccata</i> Instrumentation: Orchestra bells, large Indian drums, small Indian drum, xylophone, snare drums, tenor drums, suspended cymbals, tubular chimes, claves, maracas, timpani, tam-tams, bass drum Performers: Six	Carlos Chávez	1942
<i>Concerto for Violin and Percussion Orchestra</i> Instrumentation: Metal pipes, auto brake drums, coffee cans, maracas, suspended cymbals, clock coil chimes, gongs, tam-tam, metal wash tubs, bass drum, contrabass viol, snare drum, violin Performers: Five plus solo violin	Lou Harrison	1942
<i>Suite</i> Instrumentation: Brake drums, triangles, temple blocks, Japanese bells, clock coils, metal wash tub, thundersheet, tam-tam, gongs, bass drum Performers: Five	Lou Harrison	1942
<i>October Mountain</i> Instrumentation: Marimba, orchestra bells, timpani, tenor drum, gong, bass drum, tam-tam Performers: Six	Alan Hovhannes	1942
<i>Amores</i> Instrumentation: Chinese tom-toms, pod rattle, wood blocks, prepared piano Performers: Three	John Cage	1943

## APPENDIX D

### WINNERS OF THE PERCUSSIVE ARTS SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE COMPETITION

<b>Year</b>	<b>University Winner(s)</b>
1986	Oberlin College
1987	University of Utah
1988	Louisiana State University
1989	Rice University University of Oklahoma
1990	James Madison University University of Oklahoma
1991	University of Utah Kent State University
1992	Rice University Central Michigan University
1993	Capital University Ohio University
1994	University of Oklahoma U. of North Carolina- Greensboro
1995	Lawrence Conservatory Central Washington University
1996	Oklahoma State University Northwestern University

**Appendix D – continued**

<b>Year</b>	<b>University Winner(s)</b>
1997	University of Southern California Southern Methodist University
1998	East Carolina University Western Michigan University
1999	Central Michigan University
2000	Texas A&M University- Commerce University of Southern California
2001	University of Oklahoma University of Kentucky
2002	Arizona State University Northwestern University Conservatoire Sufeieur de Paris
2003	Millikin University University of Houston Northern Illinois University
2004	University of Kentucky Music Academy of Zagreb Rutgers University
2005	The Ohio State University Texas Christian University Malmoe Academy of Music (Sweden)
2006	University of Houston Central Michigan University University of Texas
2007	Florida State University University of Kentucky Northwestern University

**Appendix D – continued**

<b>Year</b>	<b>University Winner(s)</b>
2008	Curtis Institute of Music The Ohio State University Texas Christian University
2009	Northern Illinois University University of North Texas Yale University



## APPENDIX E

### THE OU COMMISSIONING SERIES COMMISSIONED WORKS LIST

<b>Title</b>	<b>Composer</b>	<b>Date</b>
<i>Concerto for Drum Set and Percussion Ensemble</i> Instrumentation: Timpani, marimba, xylophone, suspended cymbal, vibraphone, water gong, vibra-slap, bongos, conga, tom-toms; with solo drum set Number of Performers: Seven plus drum set soloist	John Beck	1977
<i>Dirge and Alleluia</i> Instrumentation: Unpublished Number of Performers: Eight	Jerry Neil Smith	1978
<i>Suite for Keyboard Percussion</i> Instrumentation: Four marimbas Number of Performers: Four	J. Westley Slater	1979
<i>Portico</i> Instrumentation: Four marimbas, two vibraphones, orchestra bells, tubular chimes, crotales, xylophone, timpani, snare drum, four tom-toms, triangle, suspended cymbal, cymbal attached, tam-tam, bass drum, glass wind chimes, sleigh bells Number of Performers: Ten	Thomas Gauger	1980
<i>Two Movements for Mallets II</i> Instrumentation: Orchestra bells, xylophone, two vibraphones, four marimbas Number of Performers: Eight	William J. Steinohrt	1981
<i>The Manes Scroll</i> Instrumentation: Tubular chimes, two marimbas, bass marimba, two xylophones, two vibraphones, orchestra bells, crotales (2 octaves) Number of Performers: Ten	Christopher Deane	1983

## Appendix E - continued

<b>Title</b>	<b>Composer</b>	<b>Date</b>
<p><i>Canzona</i></p> <p>Instrumentation: Orchestra bells, xylophone, vibraphone, two marimbas, bass marimba, timpani, tam-tam, triangle, chimes, conga, temple block, bass drum, suspended cymbal, crotale, celeste, suspended cymbal, field drum, conga, tom-tom, bongos, tam-tam</p> <p>Number of Performers: Eight</p>	J. Westley Slater	1984
<p><i>Duo Chopinesque</i></p> <p>Instrumentation: Non-pitched percussion, timpani, orchestra bells, chimes, xylophone, two vibraphones, three marimbas, bass marimba</p> <p>Number of Performers: Ten</p>	Michael Hennagin	1985
<p><i>Diabolic Variations</i></p> <p>Instrumentation: Crotales, orchestra bells, vibraphone, tubular chimes, xylophone, three marimbas, bass marimba, timpani</p> <p>Number of Performers: Ten</p>	Raymond Helble	1984
<p><i>Twilight Offering Music</i></p> <p>Instrumentation: Nine player mallet keyboard ensemble, bass marimba, timpani, percussion</p> <p>Number of Performers: Twelve</p>	Blake Wilkins	1987
<p><i>Chameleon Music</i></p> <p>Instrumentation: Crotales, orchestra bells, two xylophones, two vibraphones, glass wind chimes, three marimbas, ceramic wind chimes, tom-toms, three suspended cymbals, cricket-call, flexatone, castanets, auto spring coil, triangle, bass drum, tam-tam, five tom-toms, five temple blocks, cricket-call, triangle, two gongs, five brake drums, metal windchimes, bass marimba, bamboo wind chimes</p> <p>Number of Performers: Ten</p>	Dan Welcher	1987
<p><i>The Phantom Dances</i></p> <p>Instrumentation: Orchestra bells, two xylophones, two vibraphones, four marimbas, three snare drums, castanets, sandpaper blocks, eight roto-toms, crotales, cowbell, two tambourines, mark tree, suspended cymbal, tubular chimes, maracas, wood block, bass drum, bongos, slapstick, gongs, tam-tam, triangle, suspended cymbal, tom-toms, brake drum, sleighbells, temple blocks, claves, slit drum, timpani, guiro, field drum, vibra-slap</p> <p>Number of Performers: Twelve</p>	Michael Hennagin	1989
<p><i>Crown of Thorns</i></p> <p>Instrumentation: Four marimbas, bass marimba, two vibraphones, orchestra bells</p> <p>Number of Performers: Eight</p>	David Maslanka	1982
<p><i>Percuss-Sonata</i></p> <p>Instrumentation: Unpublished</p> <p>Number of Performers: Ten</p>	David Ott	1991

## Appendix E - continued

<b>Title</b>	<b>Composer</b>	<b>Date</b>
<i>Compendium</i> Instrumentation: Two orchestra bells, two vibraphones, chimes, two xylophones, four marimbas, bass marimba, crotales, timpani, percussion Number of Performers: Eleven	Blake Wilkins	1993
<i>Circadian Rhythms</i> Instrumentation: Orchestra bells, xylophone, vibraphone, three marimbas, bass marimba, timpani, percussion Number of Performers: Ten	Carolyn Bremer	1996
<i>The Palace of Nine Perfections</i> Instrumentation: Orchestra bells, two vibraphones, chimes, xylophone, four marimbas, timpani, percussion Number of Performers: Ten	Eric Ewazen	1997
<i>The Night Watch</i> Instrumentation: Orchestra bells, two xylophones, two vibraphones, four marimbas, chimes, bubble wrap, bongos, anvil, claves, piccolo snare drum, maracas, five temple blocks, ratchet, metal wind chimes, two wood blocks, sand blocks, crotales, guiro, bass drum, snare drums, two cowbells, suspended cymbals, crash cymbals, triangles, hi-hat, gong, sleigh bells, crash cymbals, tambourine, four tom-toms, china cymbal, plastic grocery sacks, slapstick, vibraslap, castanets, tam-tam, timpani Numbers of Performers: Twelve	Joseph Blaha	2000

## APPENDIX F

### WORKS OUTSIDE OF THE COMMISSIONING SERIES PUBLISHED BY THE OUPP

<b>Title</b>	<b>Composer</b>
<i>Back Talk</i> Instrumentation: Xylophone, four marimbas Number of Performers: Five	Harry Breuer, arr. Gipson
<i>Blue Tid Bit</i> Instrumentation: Xylophone, three marimbas Number of Performers: Four	Harry Breuer, arr. Gipson
<i>Four Stick Joe</i> Instrumentation: Xylophone, three marimbas Number of Performers: Four	Harry Breuer, arr. Gipson
<i>Minor Moment</i> Instrumentation: Xylophone, three marimbas Number of Performers: Four	Harry Breuer, arr. Gipson
<i>Away in a Manger</i> Instrumentation: Orchestra bells, crotales, two vibraphones, six marimbas, bass marimba Number of Performers: Eleven	Mack Wilberg, arr. Gipson
<i>Carol of the Bells</i> Instrumentation: Two orchestra bells, two vibraphones, crotales, chimes, marimba, bass marimba, sleigh bells, finger cymbals, triangle Number of Performers: Ten	Richard Gipson
<i>Christmas Medley</i> Instrumentation: Orchestra bells, two vibraphones, three marimbas, bass marimba, timpani, chimes, crotales, triangle, tom-tom, suspended cymbal, finger cymbals, mark tree Number of Performers: Eleven	James Faulconer, arr. Gipson

## Appendix F - continued

<b>Title</b>	<b>Composer</b>
<i>The Christmas Song</i> Instrumentation: Orchestra bells, two vibraphones, crotales, four marimbas, percussion Number of Performers: Twelve	Mel Torme, arr. Gipson
<i>Deck the Halls</i> Instrumentation: Orchestra bells, crotales, two vibraphones, xylophone, three marimbas, bass marimba, chimes, timpani, snare drum, crash cymbals, bass drum, triangle, suspended cymbal Number of Performers: Thirteen or Fourteen	Randol Alan Bass, arr. Gipson
<i>Fum, Fum, Fum!</i> Instrumentation: Two orchestra bells, two vibraphones, xylophone, three marimbas, bass marimba, timpani, percussion Number of Performers: Twelve	Mack Wilberg, arr. Gipson
<i>I Saw Three Ships</i> Instrumentation: Orchestra bells, two vibraphones, three marimbas, bass marimbas, chimes, timpani, percussion Number of Performers: Twelve	Mack Wilberg, arr. Gipson
<i>Marimba Carol Medley</i> Instrumentation: Eight marimbas Number of Performers: Eight	Richard Gipson
<i>Oh, Green and Shimmering Tree, Good Day</i> Instrumentation: Orchestra bells, two vibraphones, crotales, three marimbas, bass marimba, chimes, timpani, percussion Number of Performers: Twelve	Mack Wilberg, arr. Gipson
<i>Oh Holy Night</i> Instrumentation: Two orchestra bells, crotales, two vibraphones, three marimbas, bass marimba, chimes Number of Performers: Ten	Richard Gipson
<i>Silent Night</i> Instrumentation: Orchestra bells, crotales, two vibraphones, three marimbas, bass marimba, chimes, mark tree Number of Performers: Ten	Richard Gipson
<i>Twelve Days of Christmas</i> Instrumentation: Orchestra bells, crotales, two vibraphones, xylophone, two marimbas, bass marimba, chimes, timpani, triangle, nightingale, cricket, snare drum, cowbell, train whistle, slide whistle, finger cymbals, sleigh bells, suspended cymbal, duck call, mark tree, castanets Number of Performers: Twelve	Richard Gipson

## Appendix F - continued

<b>Title</b>	<b>Composer</b>
<i>We Wish You a Merry Christmas</i> Instrumentation: Orchestra Bells, crotales, two vibraphones, xylophone, three marimbas, bass marimba, chimes, timpani Number of Performers: Eleven	James Faulconer, arr. Gipson
<i>Lasciatemi Morirearr</i> Instrumentation: Five marimbas Number of Performers: Five	Claudio Monteverdi, arr. Gipson
<i>Field of the Dead</i> Instrumentation: Vibraphone, four marimbas, bass marimba Number of Performers: Six	Sergei Prokofiev, arr. Gipson
<i>Adagio from Symphony No. 3</i> Instrumentation: Four marimbas Number of Performers: Four	Camille Saint-Saens, arr. Gipson
<i>Melisande's Death</i> Instrumentation: Vibraphone, six marimbas, bass marimba Number of Performers: Eight	Jean Sibelius, arr. Gipson
<i>Concertare</i> Instrumentation: Orchestra bells, vibraphone, chimes, six marimbas, crotales, timpani, snare drum Number of Performers: Twelve	Raymond Helble
<i>Diptych #2</i> Instrumentation: Orchestra bells, temple blocks, chimes, vibraphones, piano, celeste, timpani, triangle, three suspended cymbals, three snare drums, finger cymbals, two low toms, bass drum, solo marimba Number of Performers: Eight plus solo marimba	Gordon Stout

## APPENDIX G

### DR. JOHN W. PARKS IV, INTERVIEW

NOVEMBER 26, 2009

**Parker:** How do you define the PO?

**Parks:** Personally, I define it in the spirit of what Richard Gipson did at OU; typically several marimbas (usually four to five), two vibraphones, glockenspiel, chimes, timpani, plus the traditional battery of percussion instruments you would find in a symphonic section (snare drums, bass drum, cymbals, etc.).

**Parker:** How does a PO differ from a PE?

**Parks:** If you consider that "Ensemble" covers the entire gamut of the genre (all instrumental configurations, conducted and unconducted), then "Orchestra" is a subset of it, or a special ensemble configuration within what we would call "Percussion Ensemble." So consider it a special configuration within what we would call "Percussion Ensemble." Some call the pieces themselves "ensembles," but I prefer calling by players or composer names (quartets, or "Cage").

**Parker:** Where did the idea of a PO begin?

**Parks:** On one hand, you might consider Roldan or Varese the beginnings – more specifically Varese, as it was conducted (which typically I also associate with "Percussion Orchestra"). But I probably fall more on the side of Gipson and the OU

model when he began the commissioning projects.

**Parker:** Do you feel that the PO is a valid performing ensemble?

**Parks:** I think the success of the OU project and many of Richard's students and their programs speaks to this, of course. Some people choose not to include large pieces as part of their programming (at the university level or high school level), but I think much of that has to do with the massive equipment requirements to pull off pieces like "The Night Watch" or other OU commissions.

**Parker:** Where do you see the PO in 10 years? 25 years? 50 years?

**Parks:** Healthy, I would hope. More transcriptions are becoming available for the ensemble, and more serious composers with footprints that will last more than a few years have taken interest in the genre, which means that we'll have much more to look forward to. Plus, many recording projects (Brian West's and ours at FSU specifically) are going to continue "spreading the word" about the viability of the PO medium.

**Parker:** Do you feel that the PO should be regarded separately from a PE?

**Parks:** No, rather it should be a subset of it, the same way that a "Threads" ensemble or "Nishimura" ensemble or something like that would be a subset of the "Ensemble."

**Parker:** What composers do you feel most successfully portray the musical goals and ideas of the PO?

**Parks:** David Maslanka, Joseph Blaha, Blake Wilkins, Dan Welcher, Eric Ewazen – but also some non-OU people like Clif Walker, Blake Tyson and other young composers.



**Parker:** Is the PO growing in both popularity and/or instrumentation (especially considering the recent influx of non-Western percussion instruments into our culture)?

**Parks:** I don't think that the genre is growing due to these two factors at all. Remember that a large number of university programs do not have access to all the instruments needed to perform many of the OU-type works, or simply consider composers like James Wood and Xenakis to be superior literature and therefore would never consider programming something like "Phantom Dances." And also that many of those same works do not involve large numbers of non-Western instruments. I think probably DCI and chamber works for PE are more responsible for the non-Western inclusion of lots of instruments than the PO.

If the "popularity" is in-fact growing, it's mostly due to PASIC performances of groups like OU, Houston, TCU, Florida State, Kentucky, etc. as well as recordings.

**Parker:** What do you feel a percussion student can learn in the context of a PO that he might not within a PE or another chamber ensemble?

**Parks:** What it's like NOT to count 300 bars of rests, first off! For me, the pedagogical positives are wed to the nature of the genre – what is it like to "play like a string player" or as a string section member? What is it like to play lyrical lines that are the "solo" lines of a group, rather than colors or rhythms that we would normally play in a symphony orchestra? Balance, blend, hierarchy, listening, ensemble execution – one PO piece per semester could eclipse three or four years of "on the hot seat" symphonic playing and dealing with the same issues in shorter blocks. It's the perfect blend of chamber and ensemble playing with much more playing to do than in a band or orchestra section.

**December 18, 2009**

**Parker:** Do you find different complexities in rehearsing a PE that is primarily based on keyboard percussion versus that of one that is more geared towards unpitched percussion?

**Parks:** It depends upon the piece - for example, rehearsing something like *Ionisation* requires a different level of vertical alignment in execution, as drums and metals typically have a much sharper attack envelope. And often there's not a sustain element that has to be addressed. In keyboard ensembles, especially lyrical or chorale type passages, the articulations can be manipulated with myriad tiny adjustments – mallet angles, mallet types, roll types, placement on the bars, balance, blend (especially among like instruments) – it's not that it's so different from drums and other unpitched things, you just have different aggregate sounds, and with those comes a potentially different hierarchy.

**Parker:** A majority of works written for PO are very tonal and very accessible, even to those that are not musicians. How do you think that this style of composition and performance relate to those early PEs of the 1930-1945 era that were more atonal, experimental, and tended to be more "machine music" oriented?

**Parks:** Well, they're not the same, so they don't really relate. The language and instrumental combinations are totally different.

**Parker:** Is there a balance within a PE for both PO music and smaller PE works or works that are more drum oriented?

**Parks:** It depends on what your mission is: in a university setting, a PE should cover all kinds of literature – smaller chamber works, large works, mixed ensembles with other instruments, etc. All of that falls under "percussion ensemble," although some programs tend to concentrate more on the larger "orchestra" works.

**Parker:** Do you think that there is an advantage to concentrating on one style of PE music (for example the PO), or do you think that it is more advantageous to mix the styles of PE music?

**Parks:** If you only studied the PO literature, your students would lose the opportunities to work on the masterworks of Cage, Harrison, Varese, etc. On the other hand, if you only programmed smaller "classic" chamber works, the students miss out on the opportunities to concentrate on the qualities I mentioned earlier regarding the challenges of PO music.

**Parker:** The PEs of the University of Oklahoma, Texas Christian University, and the University of Houston all have recordings of their PE playing primarily PO works. With the FSU PE releasing a new recording in the Spring of 2010, were you ever tempted, or are you, going to play these types of works to get into the mix of schools that have already done this, or is it more focused on another objective?

**Parks:** Our upcoming disc is different from theirs in two ways: First, there are chamber works included on the disc (Cage's Third Construction and the new Bobo marimba quartet). The other pieces are larger works, and probably could be considered PO (especially Blake's piece, commissioned by TCU, and Rusalka's aria which was rearranged especially for this project), but the whole disc couldn't really be qualified as "Orchestra."

The other difference is in the recording itself – the "image" of many OU and similar recordings puts the listener in a hall (typically they are recorded in a large hall) about 20 rows back, so the whole image is focused at a distance. Ours was recorded in our percussion studio, so the image is much closer to the listener – about 10-15 feet in front of the group, then the "hall" is added afterwards.

**Parker:** Why do you think some universities prefer to stay away from the larger PO works, especially if they have an adequate amount of instruments?

**Parks:** Some people just don't like the literature and don't enjoy transcriptions – similarly there are programs that never program pop literature – (Samuels, Metheny transcriptions, etc.). So it's a matter of taste and what you think the students should know when they graduate.

## APPENDIX H

### INTERVIEW WITH JAMES CAMPBELL

JANUARY 6, 2010

**Parker:** A lot of the PO's roots can be traced back to Richard Gipson at the University of Oklahoma. As a colleague who experienced this style in the makings, do you remember your perceptions of these pieces when they were first premiered? Do you feel differently about them now?

**Campbell:** The roots actually go back to Dick Schory and his Percussion Pops Orchestra. I would say that you could probably also trace the roots back to the Mexican Marimba Bands (Hurtado Bros.), Musser Marimba Orchestras and institutional groups at Eastman and Northwestern, etc...

The difference at OU is that the pieces were original art music, not transcriptions nor pop oriented.

**Parker:** As someone who has experienced much success with the University of Kentucky Percussion Ensemble, what do you feel are the pros and cons of programming pieces that are so large and keyboard oriented?

**Campbell:** Pros – If you program an entire concert with similar instrumentation to each work, the stage logistics are less challenging because you don't have to move equipment between pieces.

Cons – I like a variety of music and to program works by composers who wrote for eclectic instrumentation and group sizes. Important composers haven't written for the traditional PO: Steve Reich, David Lang, John Cage, etc...

**Parker:** Many of these pieces have been played over the years at the annual PAS convention, as someone who has been very involved, both as a conductor and as the past-president, have you seen any trends concerning the PO? Do you see it growing or taking a back seat to smaller works such as trios, quartets, or quintets?

**Campbell:** The strength of the works usually determines the frequency of programming. There are challenges to programming some of these large works: you need personnel (sometimes 13 or more players), large instrument collection (4 marimbas, two vibes, etc), large place to rehearse, etc. Not all schools or professional groups have all those resources available.

**Parker:** How would you define a PO, especially as it differs from the PE?

**Campbell:** It seems the PO is a large PE divided into related groups. It encompasses a full range of keyboards from soprano to bass (glockenspiel through bass marimba). You might find these groups typically to be related to the standard symphony orchestra written in pairs or divisi. Marimbas scored like violins, glockenspiel, crotales, xylophone, vibes, chimes, and timpani used as winds and lower strings and untuned percussion as a separate group.

## APPENDIX I

### INTERVIEW WITH DR. BLAKE TYSON

JANUARY 17, 2010

**Parker:** What was your first experience with a PO? Was it through an ensemble you played in or a group that you heard?

**Tyson:** My first experience was probably playing Diabolic Variations at the University of Alabama. That was back when you couldn't download pieces online or even know much about them. I only had a basic idea of the piece, thought it sounded interesting, and I asked my professor, Larry Mathis, if we could do it. He ordered it and we gave it a go. We quickly found out just how difficult it was. You might say I got thrown off the deep end into the PO.

**Parker:** What was your initial reaction when you were first exposed to a group that was so large and keyboard oriented?

**Tyson:** I loved the sound of all those keyboards and especially all of those marimbas together.

**Parker:** Have you always had an interest in composing for a PO?

**Tyson:** I don't really think in terms of the label "Percussion Orchestra" when I think about composing. For me it really all falls under the generic term "percussion ensemble." I have been interested in writing large ensemble music for a while. Finding

the time and opportunity is the trick.

**Parker:** You recently completed a work for PO titled *A Ceiling Full of Stars*. As a composer, what did you encounter when composing for a PO versus a smaller PE like your piece *Cloud Forest*?

**Tyson:** I think that composing for a larger number of keyboards gave me the possibility to realize melodic and accompaniment figures that would be impossible (or at least unreasonably difficult) with fewer keyboards. By distributing the music around the ensemble you are able to do things with space and rhythm that would be impossible or at least ill-advised with a smaller group. Of course, you also have to make sure with more players that you don't leave some of them standing around with nothing to do for too long. I certainly kept that in mind when writing the piece.

**Parker:** Who do you look to for inspiration when composing for such a large group?

**Tyson:** There are composers that have written for this kind of ensemble before me, and I definitely studied how they did it. I didn't just draw inspiration from percussion compositions, of course. I also drew inspiration from my study of orchestral music and a thousand other places. What I wanted to do was to write music that seemed connected to the instruments, not super-imposed on them. It's important to remember that percussion instruments can't do everything that a full orchestra can do. But, they can do a lot of things that a full orchestra can't do. It's also important to remember that the PO tone palette is very limited in some ways. While a symphony orchestra has tubas, cellos, basses, bassoons, trombones, bass clarinets, etc. to create colors in the bass voicings, the PO basically has marimba and timpani (and sometimes piano). You can add tuned gongs or other low sounds, but those sorts of things are unwieldy and don't support long term orchestration. So when we look for inspiration in writing for other instruments or ensembles, we should be aware that it is usually not possible to directly transfer the ideas, and we should be aware that, despite the large number of instruments on stage, we have fairly narrow orchestrational possibilities with our



melodic instruments.

**Parker:** Do you anticipate writing for PO again in the future?

**Tyson:** I hope that I do. Again, I just need the time and opportunity...and inspiration

**Parker:** Before you began to write *A Ceiling Full of Stars*, why did you decide to write for a large keyboard PE? Have you had many people express an interest in the piece since its premiere?

**Tyson:** Brian West commissioned me to write the work for the TCU Percussion Ensemble. I was trying to write for a group that included not only the keyboards, but timpani and percussion as well. After I finished the first draft it became obvious to me that I was trying to force timpani, toms, and cymbals into a piece that didn't need them. I took them out and the piece fell perfectly into place (the triangle parts were always written to be played by the marimbists).

Yes. There have been at least 15 performances of the piece in the past year, including one by the LSU ensemble under Brett Dietz at PASIC, as well as at Eastman, Northwestern, USC (S. Carolina), UGA, FSU, UCF, Kentucky, etc.... I think there are at least 8 more (that I know of) coming up this semester. TCU just released it on their new CD and FSU's CD with their recording of it will come out in April. I'm very thankful that so many people have programmed the work. And, of course, I'm thankful to Brian West for asking me to write the piece.

**Parker:** Do you feel that there is a demand for composition for PO?

**Tyson:** Certainly at the university level. Well written compositions for the PO can be great teaching tools in addition to being great pieces of music. They give the percussion student the chance to experience what a clarinetist or a violinist experiences every day. Playing consistently throughout a piece, playing long lines with long term phrasing and

not just being a brief burst of color like we often are in orchestras and wind ensembles. But, I don't think there will ever be much demand on a professional level.

**Parker:** As a percussion professor at the University of Central Arkansas, do you include pieces for PO in your PE concerts each semester? Do you feel that it is a valid and integral part of the percussion curriculum in higher education?

**Tyson:** Yes I do. For my reasons, see the above answer. It also gives the percussionists a chance to be an active participant in the great musical moments, instead of just counting measures as the great moments pass them by.

## APPENDIX J

### INTERVIEW WITH DR. BRIAN WEST

FEBRUARY 8, 2010

**Parker:** How do you define the PO?

**West:** A large group of percussionists performing primarily tonal music for large forces (approximately 10+ players, 10-12 being a very common number). The emphasis is usually on melodic/harmonic instruments (i.e. the use of KPI, keyboard percussion instruments).

**Parker:** How does a PO differ from a PE?

**West:** Although the names can be synonymous, some common distinctions include: the size of the group, the use of and need for a conductor (many smaller PE pieces are played uncondacted), the focus on keyboard instruments, and the performance of primarily tonal music. It should be noted that many programs are performing PO style pieces, but still naming the group a PE.

**Parker:** Where did the idea of a PO begin?

**West:** Although there is history of large groups of percussionists performing primarily tonal music (i.e. Musser's marimba groups, etc.), I believe the way the term is used today was coined by Dr. Richard C. Gipson in 2001. Dr. Gipson had been performing this type of literature, with this type of an ensemble for years. When he took the OU

group to New York City in 2001, he felt a need to make a distinction between a PE and what he was doing at OU – performing with a larger group of percussionists utilizing traditional harmonies, etc. Dr. Gipson wanted to be sure there was a noticeable difference from the smaller uncondacted chamber pieces that many people associated with the title “percussion ensemble” and the works he was commissioning and performing.

**Parker:** Do you feel that the PO is a valid performing ensemble?

**West:** Yes.

**Parker:** Where do you see the PO in 10 years? 25 years? 50 years?

**West:** I believe the PO helps validate the genre more to non-percussionists who associate PE with smaller chamber pieces that primarily focus around rhythm. Utilizing larger forces, performing complex melodic and harmonic music, playing pieces of substantial length, etc. are all part of this distinction. I believe this type of percussion music will continue to grow in popularity in the future, not necessarily replacing smaller chamber pieces but adding to the repertoire greatly. My hope is that this type of music will help percussionists be seen as true valuable musicians, not just drummers who can play complex rhythms. Pieces like this will hopefully help the genre be seen as contemporaries to the symphony orchestra and wind symphony, not as less important ensembles.

**Parker:** Do you feel that the PO should be regarded separately from a PE?

**West:** It can be, however many programs still use the more traditional name “Percussion Ensemble” and perform a variety of pieces under this title – smaller chamber-type pieces and larger more PO type pieces.

**Parker:** What composers do you feel most successfully portray the musical goals and ideas of the PO?

**West:** Eric Ewazen – The Palace of Nine Perfections, Symphony for Percussion  
Raymond Helble – Diabolic Variations, Concertare, Prelude and Rondo alla Marcia  
David Maslanka – Crown of Thorns, Hohner

**Parker:** Is the PO growing in both popularity and/or instrumentation (especially considering the recent influx of non-Western percussion instruments into our culture)?

**West:** I believe so. However, this type of music can be more challenging to put together – more people, more instruments, etc.

**Parker:** What do you feel a percussion student can learn in the context of a PO that he might not within a PE or another chamber ensemble?

**West:** I guess it depends on how you define “Percussion Ensemble”. As stated above, the title “Percussion Ensemble” is still used in many places but PO style pieces are being performed. Things that can be learned from performing this style of pieces include: teaching percussionists to perform melodies (not always perform supporting roles), teaching percussionists to perform harmonic support parts, gaining valuable experience performing more complex keyboard percussion parts, gaining experience on a wider variety of percussion instruments, teaching balance and blending within the same instrument family – it is much different balancing and blending 4 or 5 marimbas than it is 1 marimba, etc. and also blending tuned percussion instruments (keyboards) with non-tuned instruments, teaching listening skills across a large ensemble (geographically across a stage, etc.), teaching the art of following a conductor – which may not always be the same from performance to performance, and teaching the ability to read at the various instruments while watching a conductor. I would also like to state that the performance of smaller chamber style percussion pieces is very valuable to

percussionists. However, equally valuable is performing in a larger PO setting for several reasons – some examples are above.

## APPENDIX K

### INTERVIEW WITH DR. RICHARD GIPSON

FEBRUARY 9, 2010

**Parker:** How would you define a PO?

**Gipson:** I am not sure that there is a hard and fast definition of it at all, but I have a conceptual definition that I have always worked with in my mind. I generally think of it as a larger ensemble of eight or more players that are essentially three quarters of which are keyboard instruments.

**Parker:** Do you know when you started using the term “Percussion Orchestra” to describe what you were doing at OU? Had you previously heard the term?

**Gipson:** It is one of those conceptual evolutions that was on its way in my mind. When I actually started calling it the PO was in 2000.

**Parker:** Do you remember why you went that direction and started using that title for this style?

**Gipson:** Curricularly and conceptually we had moved to a point where we had a definition of groups such that there was one particular group, which was in fact our top group, was really focused almost exclusively in playing these large-force primarily keyboard works. Then we had enough other groups playing other kinds of repertoire that it seemed appropriate to start drawing a distinction. We no longer had the PO, for

instance, splitting up and playing quartets and quintets. The actual definition of the group and type of music that they were working on performing became a little bit more clarified.

**Parker:** Was or is there a main objective with the development of the PO? For instance, was it to promote tonality in percussion, educational benefits, or explore a new style in percussion?

**Gipson:** I became aware and passionate very early in my life and career about percussionists being able to perform extraordinarily complex and beautiful music by themselves and we could indeed be an independent music-making force. All we needed was the vehicle, wonderful music, and the opportunity to play it. It was nothing about us as musicians or as percussionists that was standing in our way. Musically, I wanted to do it. Technically it was important. You can only play ensemble (orchestral music, band music, quartets, and quintets) so long, and you didn't really become challenged to play what I would call the symphonic leading roles that so many of our colleagues in the other instrument areas do through their course of playing in symphony orchestras. At some point or another they are making the primary music. The opportunity to play that kind of music I felt would extend us as musicians and as technicians. There was a musical effort and technical effort that could be resolved in playing the right kind of music in the right kind of form. Another one that I can kind of describe it is kind of evangelical motivation. I really believed that we could play this kind of music and reach people with it in a way that was not common. People never knew we could do this, either 1) because we didn't have the music or 2) that we weren't playing for them. It is just fun to play an extraordinary piece of music all by ourselves as a group of percussionists. People respond to it on a musical level when you are stretching yourself outside your normal role – outside of primarily an accompanying entity. The frustration that I had as a teacher, conductor, and musician was that I knew we could do these things we just didn't have anything to do it with. That was the primarily motivation.



**Parker:** In creating what we can now define as the “Percussion Orchestra,” was there any influence from other professional PEs such as Dick Schory’s Percussion Pops Orchestra?

**Gipson:** No, it was quite the opposite. I very much wanted to pursue ways of presenting percussionists in a very serious manner that was more aligned to the symphony orchestra than a “popsy” approach, or what I would call more of a “gimmicky” type of approach. I didn’t want us to become pigeon-holed into that role. So, no, I didn’t have any influences within the percussion side. When I was a graduate student working on my master’s degree, I was given permission to create a mallet ensemble. It was a result of we were playing stuff in PE and it had mallet parts obviously, but nothing that capitalized on multiple mallet opportunities, so I created this group. It was a volunteer group. The only requirement to be in the group was that you had to arrange something for mallet ensemble. So guys would bring in anything from trios on up to pieces for six or seven players. Back in those days we didn’t have five or six five-octave marimbas running around. We were lucky if we had two marimbas and a vibraphone. If everybody brought up their instruments on the same day, we might get four marimbas on the stage. The idea of actually creating something for keyboard percussion instruments to be on their own... I could tell at that early stage that there were great possibilities. I had known about the historic Musser marimba orchestras – I never had a chance to hear one – but the potential was there if we could find the right music.

**Parker:** Can you tell me where the idea stemmed from to create the OU Commissioning Series? Did you know that it was going to be an ongoing Series?

**Gipson:** Well, I hoped it would. It actually started with an odd situation. Early in my years at OU we had a composer that was Director of the Music School there. I asked him to write us a piece, and he wrote us a piece. Then we had a percussion festival that featured Ed Shaughnessy. There was nothing at the time where you could have PE play with a drum set player, so I had John Beck write us a piece. Then the idea started to grow that maybe a Commissioning Series would be a way to chip away at this girth of

repertoire. I had heard Gainsborough at PASIC '77 by Herald Jones and East Carolina and it clicked immediately – here is a piece that is utilizing percussion in a very orchestral way. They were carrying the whole ball by themselves. I remember listening to that piece and saying, “Wow. This just doubles the forces and explores the possibilities.” So I contacted Tom Gauger to see if he would write us a piece, and he agreed to write *Portico*. It all took off from there. I had a supportive administration at OU. We weren't paying much for these commissions I can tell you, but the composers weren't writing them for the money, they were writing them for the opportunity to get something played and explore this new opportunity. Michael Hennagin was a composer on our faculty and he got in immediately. He just bought into the notion of the PO. Again, I hoped that it would be a long time project, but I had no idea if we could sustain it. I applied for an internal grant at OU and got some seed money to develop the OU Percussion Press and that was a way to publish these pieces and get them out there so that other people could play them. The first piece that I wanted to publish through the Percussion Press was *Portico*, but it took so long to get the grant approved and actually get an answer back, that by the time that I got the answer and got back with Tom Gauger he had already decided to publish it himself. The primary purpose of the Percussion Press was to get new pieces out so that people could play them, and secondarily, hopefully make enough money to keep it going so that we could continue to get new releases – not to make money, but just to stay afloat.

**Parker:** Many composers in the Commissioning Series are not percussionists – why is that? Was it intentional?

**Gipson:** It was intentional. When I commissioned a piece of music, I commissioned the composer and the music that I know that the composer has written and is capable of writing. When you strike gold, it is when you have a composer who is extraordinarily gifted musician who really knows how to write for the instruments and really brings the instrument's capabilities to life. That's when you have really hit it. One of the things that I always believed in very strongly is that you have to be working with someone who really had a compositional gift and be able to transfer that into the medium. Probably

the best example of that in the whole Commissioning Series from my standpoint was Dan Welcher. I had heard a number of Dan Welcher symphony pieces, and while he used percussion, you couldn't say that he was a percussion composer. He really dug in and studied and learned capabilities of the instruments. The piece we got was a tour-de-force for the ensemble.

**Parker:** Is there a certain method that you used to contact each of them, such as a specific letter of proposal?

**Gipson:** It got more formal as the years went on. It started out fairly informal and there were some consistencies. I always communicated to the person that I was interested in a piece that for primarily three quarters keyboard instruments. Usually I said I wanted a piece for at least eight players and that grew to about twelve players. I said that I wanted a piece that was ten to fifteen minutes in length. So those criteria over the years became more formulaic. As time went by, I started getting more specific in terms of talking with the composers by saying, "I heard a piece of yours, enjoyed it, and thought it was a possibility that you would consider writing us a piece for primarily mallet percussion instruments." I would always send them copies of the scores that I had and recordings so if they didn't know the ensemble, they could hear it and at least get an idea of what I was talking about. There were a number of occasions that they would get back with me and be quite flattering and say, "Now I know why you were interested in something like this." I never had anyone turn me down.

**Parker:** What demand led to the development of the OU Percussion Press? Had you run into any previous problems with other companies expressing to you that the demand didn't justify publishing the works?

**Gipson:** Absolutely. No one would publish this stuff. Not even what we would consider the percussion publishers of the '80s. They wouldn't touch this stuff because it was too hard and it was too big. I don't blame them. Take a piece like *Canzona* or even *Diabolic Variations* – you are talking about large force pieces with large

instrumentations... long pieces, requiring lots of good players. Back in those days there weren't very many people who could touch these things. It would have been ridiculous for a commercial publisher to undertake that. I understood that. That's why I started the Percussion Press. I wanted to create an entity that didn't care about making money. We just wanted to sell enough copies to libraries and schools who could play these pieces just to reinvest in the Press and keep it running. Commercial publication was not an option and I understood that. These days, anyone can be a publisher, but in those days, actually taking a piece of music, getting it engraved and printing it was extremely expensive. That was why I started the Press, so that we could be a publisher that didn't have to worry about making money.

**Parker:** Can you tell me what steps were taken in the establishment of the Percussion Press?

**Gipson:** Well, it took money to get it started. I wrote a research proposal grant at OU and it was funded under a special program. The basic budget was to underwrite the cost of preparing the first run of pieces, and in looking at the pieces of music that we cranked out over the years, it is an interesting evolutionary process in itself because you can look at how they were created and follow the development of the Press. The first run was all done with engravings and was professionally printed with color covers, etc. The second evolution of printings came about because the Macintosh computer came along. Here was an opportunity to be able to type-set our pieces myself and save an extraordinary amount of money. The one labor source that I had that was free was me. I put all of the music in for most of the middle run of the Percussion Press on the computer. Apple also had introduced the first laser printer in the world. I wrote another research proposal and got some money to buy that laser printer. That is how I produced a camera-ready copy for that whole second swath of pieces. This was before Adobe released their first music font (which was Sonata font) so it looks pretty squirrely. It was not high level engraving, but it was produced on a laser printer and it was good enough to print from. When Adobe came out with Sonata font, all of those funky notes turned into really sharp, beautiful post-script fonts. That is the way it is still done. All of

the engraving is done there in house at school [Oklahoma] and the camera-ready copy is created and pieces are published right there on site.

**Parker:** Can you tell me about the recording process with the OU Percussion Orchestra and why you felt it was important to make multiple recordings of music from the Commissioning Series and Percussion Press?

**Gipson:** Other than the standard archival of concerts the first ten years there, the actual commercial recording and distributing was a result of being invited to play a concert at PASIC '85 in Los Angeles. We did a number of Commissioned works on that concert. It was a very successful concert. It was perhaps one of the most rewarding concert experiences that I ever had in my career because the timing was right, the environment was right, and the ballroom we played in was huge and packed. We got an incredible response from the audience. I could tell by that response that there was a whole bunch of people in the field that were hungering for the same type of thing that we were doing, which was playing substantial, wonderful pieces of music all by ourselves. Pieces like *Diabolic Variations* had never been heard. We played a whole concert of that type of music in that event and it was an extraordinary experience. When I got back after that concert, the overriding thought that I had in my mind was that the ensemble has spent a lot of time working the pieces up, these are new pieces and there was this great reaction and response to the live concert out there, and the only recording I had was from a little Nakamichi cassette recorder that I had put in front of the stage.

This was in the fall of 1985, and there was this brand new technology that had just come along, and if you went to the right audiophile store, you could actually pick up and hold in your hand this brand new thing called a compact disc. They cost \$17 to \$18 a disc, and very few of them were available. They were all produced by audiophile specialty companies. You had to pay a fortune for a CD player, etc., but it was state of the art digital technology, and the sound was an extraordinary improvement. The word was on the street about CDs and digital recordings and how you could capture extraordinary sounds and reproduce them with the CDs. In a word, it was a perfect fit

for percussion because the dynamic spectrum and acoustical spectrum that could be produced on a compact disc was so extraordinary that it would fit perfectly for percussion. I didn't really think about creating any CDs. What I thought about was finding someone who was doing high-quality digital recording so I could engage them to come and make an archival recording of the works we had done in PASIC '85. That was my whole motivation – just capture this for posterity in the new digital environment. A colleague of mine there at OU knew some people in New York City who were on the cutting edge of this and were doing digital location recordings. I called the guys up and told them what I wanted to do and they became captivated by the notion of this project. They said, "Send us a recording of what you did at PASIC and let us listen to it." So I sent it to them. They called me back and they said, "This is great. We love this stuff. Not only would we like to come record your group, but we would like to actually release it on our CD label." Of course I said, "Great!" All I had to do was pay for the recording session and they would take it and do everything after that. So that's how the first CD – Laser Woodcuts – came along. This was a small New York City-based audiophile company whose portfolio was very impressive at the time. They had recordings of the Eastman Jazz Ensemble, and a list of extraordinary musicians that they had recorded on their label. That is how the whole recording thing started. I kind of got bit by that bug.

Over the years, the CD medium grew and the price came down and the opportunities expanded. All of the CDs we did were done through commercial producers. We didn't do any vanity recordings at all. Now anyone can do a vanity recording and publish it, but all of our stuff was done through real live-music publishers. We didn't pay anybody to do our stuff, they paid us. Those days are kind of gone now. It is a different world. That's how it all started. I really didn't have an idea of recording our compositions for the mass market. All I wanted to do was get a digital recording of what we did at PASIC '85 and it just kind of took off.

**Parker:** Based off of what you just said, was PASIC '85 first time that people were receptive to the idea of the PO?

**Gipson:** Well, yes and no. We had gotten an invitation to play at a couple of other conventions before them. We had done a Southwest MENC in Colorado and we did a Colorado Music Educators, OMEA – small potatoes kinds of things comparatively speaking. I've been to just about every PASIC, and so I knew what the audience possibility was. PASIC '85 was different than today's PASICs. Today there is so much going on, so many different venues, and there's enough in the exhibit hall to keep everybody occupied for the whole convention. It was a different world 25 years ago. My guess was that we were the only thing happening that afternoon, or maybe one of two things. So to have a huge turnout was a huge possibility at the time. It was still unique enough that I think a lot of people turned out out of curiosity. I think you are right, in retrospect. It was the first chance to have a large audience of primarily percussion-savvy people and we had such a terrific response to that, that it really catapulted it.

**Parker:** Did you ever receive any specific feedback from other colleagues concerning the PO style?

**Gipson:** Oh yeah, absolutely. It was constant. It was very reinforcing. I had many, many colleagues that felt the same way, that there was a tonal palette and an instrumental possibility for the PE that wasn't being capitalized on. They appreciated the fact that we were doing something about it and taking the opportunity at the convention to focus on it. I got tons of feedback on this, and as a result, when the pieces came out through the Press, we sold a lot of pieces. Some people have done some studies on this, but at one point, I think *Diabolic Variations* was the most played piece at PASIC for a 15 or 20 year period. We weren't existing in a vacuum, we were just able to do something about it. A lot of people liked the opportunity and grabbed it and went with it too.

**Parker:** What specific elements from the PO have you found to be particularly beneficial to your students?

**Gipson:** Well, the opportunity to play keyboard music, to play tonal or sometimes atonal, [as well as the] melodic and harmonic roles. Primary roles in the creation of a symphonic texture – to me, that's was what the compelling byproduct was of all this. To have the first couple of marimba players playing roles that were equivalent to violin roles or cello roles or primary woodwind roles in orchestra. There is an extraordinary amount of musicianship that can be learned from doing those kinds of things and playing within those contexts. It doesn't matter how good of a percussionist you are or how good of a timpanist you are, you can't serve those roles in a traditional symphony orchestra. The timpanist gets the best chance to do it, but it is a long way from playing the violin part. With a lot of this music, that was the analogous role... to play those primary roles in the creation of this music.

**Parker:** How do you feel about the future of the PO? I know with Dr. West at TCU he is doing a lot of things with the PO style, and the same thing with Dr. Wilkins at Houston. Do you think it is evolving? Do you think that it has a solid future?

**Gipson:** Yes. The future is still ahead of it as a medium. The only frustration that I have after doing this for so many years is that it is still such a difficult road to get the word out. My belief system is such that every percussionist out there needs to have an opportunity to play this kind of music many times, and I don't see that happening yet. That is frustrating. There's work [with the PO] that a lot of guys have done [at other universities]. We certainly weren't the only people to do this, but I will admit that I still go to PASICs and it is still rare to hear these high quality compositions written by top-rate composers. That is a frustration for me. In my wildest dreams, I would have wanted it to have caught on so well and so compellingly that it wasn't unusual. It still remains unusual which I guess is a frustration.



## **APPENDIX L**

### **INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL LETTER**

Office of the Vice President For Research  
Human Subjects Committee  
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2742  
(850) 644-8673 • FAX (850) 644-4392

#### **APPROVAL MEMORANDUM**

Date: 6/16/2009

To: Wesley Parker [wbparker@hotmail.com]

Address: 26 Applewood Circle, Cabot, AR, 72023  
Dept.: MUSIC SCHOOL

From: Thomas L. Jacobson, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research  
The History and Development of the Percussion Orchestra

The application that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be

Expedited per 45 CFR Â§ 46.110(7) and has been approved by an expedited review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If you submitted a proposed consent form with your application, the approved stamped consent form is attached to this approval notice. Only the stamped version of the consent form may be used in recruiting research subjects.

If the project has not been completed by 6/15/2010 you must request a renewal of approval for continuation of the project. As a courtesy, a renewal notice will be sent to you prior to your expiration date; however, it is your responsibility as the Principal Investigator to timely request renewal of your approval from the Committee.

You are advised that any change in protocol for this project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee prior to implementation of the proposed change in the protocol. A protocol change/amendment form is required to be submitted for approval by the Committee. In addition, federal regulations require that the Principal Investigator promptly report, in writing any unanticipated problems or adverse events involving risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the Chair of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Human Research Protection.

The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

Cc: John Parks, Chair [jparks@fsu.edu]

HSC No. 2009.2741

## APPENDIX M

# INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD INFORMED CONSENT FORM

*The History and Development of the Percussion Orchestra*  
*A Treatise*  
by Wesley Parker

### INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

I, \_\_\_\_\_, do hereby give consent to Wesley Parker to conduct an interview concerning the matters of and relating to the percussion orchestra. This specific interview will be used in conglomeration with other leading experts in higher education to define the history and development of the PO through the doctoral treatise work of Wesley Parker at The Florida State University entitled *The History and Development of the Percussion Orchestra*. I fully understand that portions of this interview may be used in scholarly material on the percussion orchestra, with full credit given to any direct quotations used. Participation is voluntary, refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled, and I understand that I may discontinue participation at any time without penalty. I am aware that the interview process is a no risk situation, and that all interviews will be conducted in a professional manner to be used for the purpose of educating and further scholarly research. I will be allowed to review their quotes prior to publication, and therefore there is no risk of misquotation or publication of a statement that I do not wish to be published. Benefits of this study will be the visibility of my expertise through

scholarly research and potential future publications on the subject. The interview will last approximately two hours. Upon beginning the interview, I will be asked a predetermined series of questions, but understand that there may be other questions that arise from the conversation taking place within the interview that will be asked. The interview may consist of a video and/or audio recording, and to this I give my full consent, understanding that the original video and/or audio clip will never be made available to the public and will be solely used for research and accurate documentation purposes. Telephone interviews will not be recorded in any fashion. The confidentiality of your interview responses are protected to the extent allowed by the law. Further consultation after the initial interview may be required and I understand that I may be contacted if the need arises. Any additional questioning beyond the initial interview will be completed at the convenience of the participant. All study materials, audio transcripts, video transcripts, treatise and additional pertinent materials such as notes or any email correspondence will be stored in a password protected computer only used by the Wesley Parker. Any questions about the interview process or personal rights should be directed to:

Study Researcher

Wesley Parker  
(901)237-6767  
wbparker@hotmail.com

Researcher's Major Professor

Dr. John W. Parks IV  
(850)644-0397  
jparks@fsu.edu

The Florida State University Institutional Review Board (IRB)

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## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

### **Wesley Parker**

Wesley Parker is currently the percussion instructor at Harding University in Searcy, AR, as well as adjunct music instructor at Arkansas State University- Beebe in Beebe, AR. Prior to this appointment he held the position of adjunct percussion instructor at Gulf Coast Community College in Panama City, FL. Wesley began pursuing his doctoral degree in percussion performance from The Florida State University in 2005. Prior to this, he received a Master's Degree in percussion performance from the University of Kentucky in 2005, and a Bachelor's Degree in percussion performance from the University of Memphis in 2003. His percussion teachers include Dr. John W. Parks IV, James Campbell and Dr. Frank Shaffer. He has also received training in ethnic percussion from Ed Murray and drum set from Don Patterson. Wesley has taught at many award winning high schools throughout Tennessee, Kentucky, Florida, Georgia and Arkansas, including the BOA Grand National Finalist Lafayette High School in Lexington, KY, and Lincoln High School in Tallahassee, FL. Professional performing experiences include the Memphis Symphony Orchestra and the Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra. Wesley is a proud endorser of Innovative Percussion, a member of the Black Swamp Percussion Educator Network, and is currently serving as president of the Arkansas chapter of the Percussive Arts Society.