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### Players, Not Parts: Rethinking Percussion Writing For Wind Ensemble

Ben Overton Alford

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PLAYERS, NOT PARTS: RETHINKING PERCUSSION WRITING FOR WIND  
ENSEMBLE

by

Ben Overton Alford

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Musical Arts

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## **Abstract**

This document is both a supplement to and an explanation of my final project for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of Memphis. I have taken five compositions for wind ensemble and rearranged the percussion parts to assist with the ease of performance, equipment, and personnel. I began work on this project in the Fall of 2022, inspired by a rehearsal of *Urban Requiem*, and was able to have my edit of *A Child's Garden Of Dreams* performed by the percussion section of the University Of Memphis Wind Ensemble during the performance of said piece in the Fall of 2023. I present this document so that the reader can better understand the performance, equipment, or personnel issues typically experienced by a percussion student performing in these ensembles.

The purpose of this project is to bring awareness to the stresses that are inadvertently placed on the average percussion player in a typical university wind ensemble.

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## Introduction

There are two aspects to what makes a percussion performance challenging: the technical and the logistical. Technique involves movement, stamina, consistency of sound, and any other aspect that deals with the physical act of playing percussion. Logistics, however, refer to the spatial and equipment-centric aspects to percussion performance. Technique can be trained and practiced, but logistics are a result of writing. Take a situation where a percussionist needs to play marimba, snare drum, and crash cymbals on the same piece. It is not enough that this player must arrange the three instruments in a close enough proximity to move from one to the other, but they must also account for the fact that each of these instruments requires different implements. This player must make sure that they can put down and grab whatever sticks or mallets they may need in a timely manner while not making extraneous noise. Far too often, players will encounter a part where they must move between two very different instruments in a very short time. A percussion part with several different instruments is not, in it of itself, unreasonable, but in arranging for percussion players, the writer must keep in mind the spatial and physical difficulties that this player may experience in this process.

On the subject of equipment, one must keep in mind the percussion instruments that are available to an average music school. Some composers like to make unconventional moves by doubling or tripling certain instruments to create a larger sound. As long as an ensemble director is aware of either the equipment on standby, or the cost of purchasing the required instruments, this is not the biggest issue. The issue does not come when instruments are doubled for composition's sake, the issue occurs when a composer or editor does not pay attention to the logistics of setting up a percussion part. At times, a composer will write a passage on a percussion staff regardless of what instruments have already been assigned to that part. The end

result is a percussion part with an excessive list of instruments for one player, which results in a gargantuan setup. Combined with the logistical difficulties mentioned previously, this also creates an issue regarding the available equipment. If a piece requires more than one of the same instrument, if that equipment is even available to the players, the distinction between build quality and wear and tear between those identical instruments will be noticeable. For example, say a piece calls for two tam-tams even though only one is ever played at once: the chances of the two tam-tams being the same size, material, and using the same implements are extremely rare, so this creates a situation where two separate sounds are emitting from a part meant to sound monolithic. This is doubly true with mallet percussion, as in addition to the logistical difficulty of having more than one marimba on stage, mallet instruments are built with a myriad of different materials that can ever so slightly alter the timbre and resonance of the sound produced.

Lastly, I must address the difficulties of personnel. Since the wind ensemble often stands as the premier large ensemble in a school of music, the director of said ensemble will desire only the best players in this group. With this in mind, while the size of the percussion section is perhaps the most variable in a concert band setting, a wind ensemble will consist of only a few select players. Put simply, too many pieces require too many players, and a principal player will no doubt be forced to find a percussionist from outside the ensemble to cover a part.

All three of these issues will be addressed in my rewrite of these percussion parts. In my process, the goal was to create new percussion parts that: allow for a simple and convenient logistical setup, utilize the minimal amount of equipment possible, and respect the average personnel present in a university wind ensemble, all the while maintaining the artistic intention of the composer.

For my process, I obtained a score for each of these pieces and used them to transcribe the original percussion parts into Sibelius notation software. I chose this method both to lessen the potential for errata and to better understand the composer's compositional desires with certain instruments. From then, I observed all the parts together on a large score and took note of when and how often each instrument plays. From there on, I was able to arrange the percussion parts in a way that made the most logistical and technical sense.

Before continuing, I must make a disclaimer regarding the timpani. With few exceptions, the timpani part is typically written on its own part separate from the rest of the percussion, and as such, is not usually a component of the difficulties previously laid out. While this remains true for four of the five pieces I have chosen, with the fifth piece not even containing timpani at all, I have still opted to write out the timpani parts for this project. The reason is that in my rewriting process, I wanted to observe each individual timpani part for its long passages of rests; this way I could use the timpani player to handle a stray percussion instrument within their setup whenever necessary. Granted, this type of change may not be welcome in an orchestral or professional ensemble, but I am strictly approaching this from the perspective of an academic scenario. This method proved to be greatly helpful for three of the four pieces that included timpani; the exception, *Paris Sketches*, will still include a timpani part for completion's sake.

### ***Urban Requiem*- Michael Colgrass**

*Urban Requiem* is scored for a chamber wind ensemble.<sup>1</sup> Michael Colgrass's intent was to utilize the wind and percussion personnel normally found in a symphony orchestra, sans

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Colgrass, *Urban Requiem*, (Toronto: Colgrass Music), b.

strings, with a saxophone quartet as the centerpiece; this means that the percussion section requires one timpanist and four percussionists.<sup>2</sup>

While the timpanist is given their own part, the remaining percussion is notated on a single percussion score. When a principal percussionist is asked to assign parts for a piece with a percussion score, they must take it upon themselves to determine what instruments are going to be performed by which players. Once this task is completed, all assigned players will read off of their own copy of the score. While there are benefits to playing off of written out scores, such as the ease of following the piece in rehearsal due to the numerous cues, this engraving method has the danger of adding unnecessary difficulty to the percussion section due to the frequency of page turns.

While part assignments are an expected duty for a principal player to perform, there is an extra layer of responsibility given to the percussion principal. The frequency of which all personnel perform on a concert, the difficulties and growth opportunities for said players, and ensuring that a difficult part is covered by a competent player are all considerations that a principal must consider when assigning parts. While this is true for any section, the percussion principal has the additional task of considering equipment and stage setup requirements. So with the addition of these duties as principal player, deciphering and dividing a percussion score may provide unnecessary additional stress. With that in mind I have taken the liberty of preemptively dividing the percussion score of *Urban Requiem* into separate and numbered percussion parts.

Including the five timpani, there are 22 different instruments or instrument groups in *Urban Requiem* to be divided between the players.<sup>3</sup> Keeping in mind the composer's intent of keeping the ensemble in a reduced chamber format, it seemed necessary to maintain the five-

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<sup>2</sup> Colgrass, *Urban Requiem*, b.

<sup>3</sup> Colgrass, *Urban Requiem*, 1-100.



person personnel recommendation in Colgrass's score. After copying the percussion music from the score, I checked for any instance where certain instruments were playing simultaneously; these instances informed what instruments should be assigned to different players. For example, since Glockenspiel, Crotales, and Vibraphone are all performed simultaneously at measure 85, they would have to be assigned to separate parts.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout the score, there are several noticeable intricacies that informed the edit. For one instance, there is a long passage from measure 258 to 304 that features a tambourine and two sizzle cymbals played in a multi-percussion setup.<sup>5</sup> A problem arises when it becomes apparent that the piece moving forward will require seven additional suspended cymbals, three for the jazz drumset part at measures 304 to 386, and four large cymbals to be struck at the piece's climax at measure 669.<sup>6</sup> For the sake of keeping equipment to a minimum, the mounted tambourine setup and four cymbals were placed in the same part (Percussion 3) and the player is instructed to attach and remove sizzles with ample rest time to do this quietly. This lessened the amount of required suspended cymbals to seven.

There is a section change at measure 601 where I noticed another problem area: four instruments- Chimes, Glockenspiel, Crash Cymbals, and Bass Drum- are playing nearly simultaneously with an extremely fast turnaround to a log drum only two measures later.<sup>7</sup> Movement from any of the aforementioned instruments to log drum would be difficult seeing as how they all utilize very different implements to perform, but for this scenario the timpani part proved to be an asset. The timpani had most recently played at measure 354 and would not return until measure 624, so given the open space, the piece's single cymbal crash was given to the

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<sup>4</sup> Colgrass, *Urban Requiem*, 8.

<sup>5</sup> Colgrass, *Urban Requiem*, 29-33.

<sup>6</sup> Colgrass, *Urban Requiem*, 33-45, 83.

<sup>7</sup> Colgrass, *Urban Requiem*, 76-77.

timpani player.<sup>8</sup> This allows for Percussion 1 to handle the bass drum, Percussion 2 for the chimes, and Percussion 4 for the glockenspiel so that Percussion 3 is given ample time to prepare for their entrance on the log drums at measure 603.

In creating these new parts, the most important consideration to be made was the inclusion of two instruments that are best performed by a musician with prior knowledge of their styles, jazz drumset and steel pans.<sup>9</sup> Understanding their importance to the piece's sonic soundscape, with Colgrass drawing on jazz and world influences, it seemed appropriate to assign the drumset part to Percussion 1 and the steel pans to Percussion 2; doing so both separates the instruments to allow for specialized players to handle them and also signifies their overall importance to the piece.

In the end there were now four separate and distinct percussion setups. Percussion 1 plays vibraphone, marimba, small 8" crash cymbals, concert bass drum, and jazz drumset. Percussion 2 plays crotales, steel pans, sleigh bells, 2 congas (with optional djembe or darabuka substitutions), and tubular bells. Percussion 3 plays xylophone, 2 high tam-tams, mounted tambourine, four suspended cymbals with 2 sizzle attachments, and log drum. Percussion 4 plays glockenspiel, timbales, 3 cowbells, bongos, and 8" suspended cymbal (splash cymbal). In addition, the timpani player plays 24" crash cymbals.

For my rewrite, I took an extra step to reduce the cognitive load on any performers of this piece. By preemptively assigning instruments to a part, I have codified and simplified the preparatory, practical, and rehearsal process. While the existence of percussion scores is not, in itself, a problem, certain pieces with copious amounts of percussion instruments and quick turnarounds between them are best written with individual players in mind.

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<sup>8</sup> Colgrass, *Urban Requiem*, 38, 79.

<sup>9</sup> Colgrass, *Urban Requiem*, b.

### ***Fiesta Del Pacifico- Roger Nixon***

In earlier wind ensemble pieces, it is not all that uncommon to see nothing more than timpani, snare drum, bass drum, cymbals, auxiliary percussion, and mallet percussion make up the entirety of the percussion section with one player on each instrument. With this in mind, when percussion scores were not used, each instrument typically had its own part assigned to it. Timpani and mallet percussion had their own parts, snare drum and bass drum could either be written together or read from the same part, and cymbals were either written on their own or contained with other auxiliary instruments. This method of part division can be seen in Roger Nixon's *Fiesta Del Pacifico*, but within this lies an unconventional discrepancy: the piece requires eight players. The percussion parts include timpani (1 player), xylophone & glockenspiel (1 player), snare drum & bass drum (2 players), cymbals (1 player), and a part with tambourine, triangle, and castanets (3 players).<sup>10</sup>

This amount of personnel has the potential to bring about a dilemma: what if there aren't enough players? In this situation, the principal may have to bring another player in to cover the part or, at the discrepancy of the conductor, cut the part out entirely. These solutions ought to be last resorts, however, and in order to maintain the integrity of the piece and the ensemble playing it, it should be avoided if at all possible. With this in mind, I sought out a method to compress the parts to be played by fewer performers.

Following the transcription of the parts, and observing them laid out in a score, it is noticeable that there are never more than six percussion instruments being played at once. Moreover, the only moments where this occurred were m. 381-386, and the final note played in

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<sup>10</sup> Roger Nixon, *Fiesta del Pacifico*, (London: Boosey & Hawkes), 1.

the ultimate measure.<sup>11</sup> If no more than six percussionists are required for any given moment, these parts could be adapted into a six-player setup that does not require logistically challenging movement. In the end, this edit was accomplished from the task of combining parts.

Noticing that xylophone and glockenspiel are handled easily by one player due to the plentiful amount of time between instruments, there is the potential of including an auxiliary instrument with this part. A further score analysis revealed that the two instruments that play the least frequently are the triangles and castanets. A small triangle is played only during the Tempo di Valse section at m. 231-280, and a large triangle is played towards the end of the piece starting at m. 381.<sup>12</sup> The castanets, though featured in a solo, are equally underused and only appear at m. 227-231 and m. 353-392.<sup>13</sup> With how sparsely these instruments are played, it became clear that it was logistically doable for a player on another part to move to these auxiliary instruments for the brief period they are required.

With the knowledge that the triangles never play simultaneously with the timpani, the parts were combined to create the Timpani & Triangle part; the timpanist can either use a trap stand or clip the triangle(s) to their music stand to quickly move between instruments. In the case of the castanets, there were two candidates for merging: mallet percussion and cymbals. The cymbals seemed better suited for the castanet solo at m. 227, but play simultaneously with castanets starting at m. 351.<sup>14</sup> Conversely, the mallet percussionist would need an instantaneous turnaround at m. 227 to play the castanet solo, but does not play during the entirety of m. 353-392.<sup>15</sup> So in the end, the castanets became a “shared” instrument: placed on a trap table between

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<sup>11</sup> Nixon, *Fiesta del Pacifico*, 68-70, 74.

<sup>12</sup> Nixon, *Fiesta del Pacifico*, 42-45, 74.

<sup>13</sup> Nixon, *Fiesta del Pacifico*, 41-42, 61-71.

<sup>14</sup> Nixon, *Fiesta del Pacifico*, 41-42, 61.

<sup>15</sup> Nixon, *Fiesta del Pacifico*, 41-42, 61-71.

the two players, the cymbal player can take the solo at m. 227, and the mallet player can perform the passage starting at m. 353. By merging the castanet and triangle parts with other instruments, all the while leaving snare drum, bass drum, and tambourine completely unaffected, *Fiesta del Pacifico* now only requires six players.

With the former two pieces I have rewritten, I wanted to encourage the notion of “one on a part” wherever possible. In doing so, my intention was to lessen the cognitive load on the principal percussionist. By dividing a percussion score into individual parts and combining parts to lessen the required number of players, I have showcased two solutions to hypothetical scenarios that an average principal player will face: preemptive division of instruments and compression of parts. Put simply, having individual parts that are easily performed by one or two players that do not exceed the amount of percussion personnel lessens some of the undue stresses on an average wind ensemble percussionist. The following three pieces, although they follow this method, introduce new issues regarding logistics and equipment availability.

### ***Noisy Wheels Of Joy- Eric Whitacre***

Eric Whitacre’s *Noisy Wheels Of Joy* has a percussion section that is scored for one timpani player, one mallet percussion player, and two additional percussionists.<sup>16</sup> Though this arrangement seems self-explanatory, when one looks at the actual instrument list, more than a few oddities are present. The Mallet Percussion part uses vibraphone, glockenspiel, xylophone, and marimba as one might expect from a mallet percussion part.<sup>17</sup> When taking a look at the Percussion 1 part, there is a bit of a curious inclusion: a glockenspiel, which is not only an

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<sup>16</sup> Eric Whitacre, *Noisy Wheels Of Joy*, (Las Vegas: Carpe Ranam Productions), 1.

<sup>17</sup> Whitacre, *Noisy Wheels Of Joy*, 1-15.

instrument found in the mallet percussion part but is found in an area where the aforementioned player is resting, plays a brief passage from m. 68-72.<sup>18</sup> Even more bizarrely, this is the only non-pitched instrument in Percussion 1's part; triangle, crash cymbals, suspended cymbal, bass drum, and snare drum make up the rest of the part's instrumentation.<sup>19</sup> With this in mind, it could be argued that the glockenspiel was accidentally placed in the wrong staff, but either way the editing issues in *Noisy Wheels Of Joy* are easily fixable thus far. However, when taking a look at the Percussion 2 part, more compounded problems arise.

While the Percussion 2 part begins simply enough, with a mark tree at the piece's beginning, some complications reveal themselves only a few measures later.<sup>20</sup> Measures 20-24 feature a xylophone, an instrument already present in the mallet percussion part, never to be played again after this section.<sup>21</sup> Four suspended cymbal rolls are also featured; while it is not uncommon for a piece to use multiple suspended cymbals (see the Colgrass), why exactly these passages are divided between the two players in this particular manner is unclear.<sup>22</sup> A snare drum, already seen in Percussion 1, is featured in the part three times, including one instance where Percussion 1 is resting.<sup>23</sup> A second triangle also appears for no more than two quarter notes at measure 105, once again, when Percussion 1 is resting.<sup>24</sup> The most noticeable case of doubling, however, is the inclusion of marimba, an instrument used for no more than two measures in the mallet percussion part.<sup>25</sup> In measures 71-72, the player must quickly jump from a

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<sup>18</sup> Whitacre, *Noisy Wheels Of Joy*, 9.

<sup>19</sup> Whitacre, *Noisy Wheels Of Joy*, 1-15.

<sup>20</sup> Whitacre, *Noisy Wheels Of Joy*, 1.

<sup>21</sup> Whitacre, *Noisy Wheels Of Joy*, 2-3.

<sup>22</sup> Whitacre, *Noisy Wheels Of Joy*, 1-15.

<sup>23</sup> Whitacre, *Noisy Wheels Of Joy*, 4, 8, 15.

<sup>24</sup> Whitacre, *Noisy Wheels Of Joy*, 14.

<sup>25</sup> Whitacre, *Noisy Wheels Of Joy*, 14.

three mallet chord on marimba to a pianissimo bass drum roll in a single quarter note.<sup>26</sup> The bass drum was also, of course, originally found in the Percussion 1 part.<sup>27</sup>

At this point, it is also worth noting the issue of turnaround: the ability to quickly move to the next instrument without making extraneous noise. Turnaround must be considered when creating effective percussion parts. The quick turnaround at measure 72 is just one example of the limited beats and measures that the Percussion 2 player has to move freely and quietly between instruments, and with a piece marked *Allegro Vivace*, this proves to be a challenge.<sup>28</sup>

There is also the issue of equipment limitations. If each part is meant to be performed by one player, and no sharing is involved (none is indicated in the score), this would mean that *Noisy Wheels Of Joy* requires two triangles, two suspended cymbals, two snare drums, two bass drums, two xylophones, two marimbas, and three glockenspiels, none of which are ever doubled for compositional purposes.<sup>29</sup> The list of instruments does not need to be this dense, especially when none are purposefully doubled, so in my task to rewrite this piece, I decided to scrap the given parts and rework the percussion from the ground up.

With the frequency of mallet percussion throughout the piece and the redundancy of having a “mallet percussion” part, it seemed best to do away with that part and create a new part labeled “Percussion 3”.

The first goal of this rewrite was to prevent doubling wherever possible so each mallet instrument was assigned to one player: player one handles vibraphone and glockenspiel, player two handles xylophone, and player three handles marimba. As the next most noticeable doubling was in the snare drum and bass drum parts, these instruments could be implemented into a single

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<sup>26</sup> Whitacre, *Noisy Wheels Of Joy*, 9.

<sup>27</sup> Whitacre, *Noisy Wheels Of Joy*, 8.

<sup>28</sup> Whitacre, *Noisy Wheels Of Joy*, 1.

<sup>29</sup> Whitacre, *Noisy Wheels Of Joy*, 1-15.

part with minimal turnaround (bass drum plus marimba was out of the question). Thankfully, the snare drum fits nicely alongside the marimba part, and the bass drum likewise with the xylophone part. Now the time has come to assign the auxiliary percussion. Since the mark tree only appears at the very beginning, it could be placed in any part besides Percussion 1, playing the vibraphone, so it could be shelved for the time being. The crash cymbals and triangle are played very infrequently and along with the equally sparse vibraphone and glockenspiel entrances, fit nicely into Percussion 1's part. Though an initial goal was to combine all suspended cymbal instances to one player, it would not work logistically due to the girth of the instrumentation. It is, however worth considering that the timpanist has a rather non-challenging part with little more than scant rolls and accented single strokes. So, in the end, and depending on the instrumental circumstances, three suspended cymbal rolls were given to the timpani player, and three to Percussion 1. With only the mark tree remaining, and due to the scarcity of snare drum and marimba passages, it was assigned to Percussion 3.

With these changes and a slight retooling of the assignment practice, the logistical and physical difficulties of *Noisy Wheels Of Joy* are solved. Player one has vibraphone, glockenspiel, triangle, crash cymbals, and suspended cymbal, player two has xylophone and bass drum, and player three has mark tree, marimba, and snare drum. The timpanist also has a suspended cymbal.

### ***Paris Sketches-* Martin Ellerby**

When looking at the score for *Paris Sketches*, the piece calls for timpani plus three percussion players, but there is also an interesting program note regarding orchestration:



“The composer realises [sic] that pianos, bells, vibraphones and even xylophones are sometimes impractical, and is prepared to sanction their omission if necessary.”<sup>30</sup>

While Ellerby’s consideration for practicality is noted, the piece does not need for any instruments to be omitted to achieve this purpose. If Ellerby wants bells, vibraphones, and even xylophones in his piece, there shall be an effort made to make it practical and accomplished.

Throughout the four movements of *Paris Sketches*, there are 27 individual percussion instruments or instrument groups divided between three players: seven for Percussion 1, eleven for Percussion 2, and nine for Percussion 3.<sup>31</sup> As was witnessed in *Noisy Wheels Of Joy*, there is an amount of instrument doubling is present. The most equipment-centric concern is that all three players require glockenspiel.<sup>32</sup> There are multiple passages in the fourth movement that require two glockenspiels to be played at once, but the necessity of three glockenspiels on stage is dubious.<sup>33</sup> As for the duplicated instruments with no compositional doubling, there are two tam-tams, snare drums, bass drums, triangles, sets of three pitched drums, sets of tubular bells, and sets of clashed cymbals.<sup>34</sup>

With three individual percussion parts, it is clear that no more than three percussionists are playing at once; so logistically, the piece can be performed by three players. However, with the goal in mind to prevent unnecessary doubling and regarding the inconsistency of instrument assignments in the original parts, I opted for a new solution: adding a fourth player. By increasing the personnel by one, there arises a scenario that gives each performer a more concise

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<sup>30</sup> Martin Ellerby, *Paris Sketches*, (Kenley: Maecenas Music), b.

<sup>31</sup> Ellerby, *Paris Sketches*, 1-69.

<sup>32</sup> Ellerby, *Paris Sketches*, 1, 47, 67.

<sup>33</sup> Ellerby, *Paris Sketches*, 47-67.

<sup>34</sup> Ellerby, *Paris Sketches*, 1-69.

setup and ample time to move between instruments. This rewrite was also heavily influenced by the idea of sharing. So in the stage layout, Percussion 1-4 are laid out in order starting from stage right. Standing closest to the timpani is Percussion 4 who singlehandedly handles the bass drum and a suspended cymbal while sharing a pair of crash cymbals and possibly a triangle (if only one is available) with Percussion 3. Percussion 3 handles snare drum, tubular bells, shares the aforementioned crash cymbals and triangle with player four, and also shares a tam-tam with Percussion 2. Percussion 2, in addition to the shared tam-tam, plays a large setup that includes vibraphone, glockenspiel, tenor drum, 3 tuned drums, and another suspended cymbal. Percussion 1 is farthest stage right, shares no instruments, and performs on glockenspiel, xylophone, and wood block. The timpani part is left unaltered.

I do understand, however that there may be scenarios where including a fifth player is not reasonable, so for that I have offered a second solution: a percussion score. While the most logistically sound solution is the addition of a fifth player, the percussion score should serve as an alternative solution as all instruments and their usage in the piece are visible for all three players to see.

### ***A Child's Garden Of Dreams- David Maslanka***

David Maslanka's *A Child's Garden Of Dreams* is written for six percussionists playing a massive arsenal of pitched and unpitched percussion including tuned wine glasses, a slide whistle, and three massive multi-percussion drum groups.<sup>35</sup>

It should be noted that in the program notes in the score for *A Child's Garden Of Dreams*, underneath the list of percussion instruments required, there is a disclaimer that reads, "with the

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<sup>35</sup> David Maslanka, *A Child's Garden Of Dreams*, (New York: Carl Fischer, Inc.), 4.

exception of the drum groups in the 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, instruments duplicated in this listing of the parts are shared.”<sup>36</sup> The logistical stage setup will still require much thought on the part of the performers, but this disclaimer should be kept in mind. However, if doubling is eschewed as suggested in the program notes and the players follow the original parts, several logistically challenging situations can be found.

Starting with the original Percussion 1 part, the first movement goes by with little struggle as the player remains on marimba throughout with a very brief detour on xylophone at measures 89 to 96.<sup>37</sup> During the second movement, however, the first major logistical issue occurs: at measure 20, and repeated at measure 51, the player must play a “deadstick” three-note chord on marimba and then immediately play a pedaled note on vibraphone only one beat apart.<sup>38,39</sup> Since three players are tacet for this movement, another player could be utilized to split the part between two players.<sup>40</sup> Another issue awaits the player in the fourth movement. Beginning at measure 107, a large tom-tom is played with the marking of “muffled, sinister”, but at measure 111 leading into 112, a series of 32<sup>nd</sup> notes on tom-tom leads directly into a permuted chord on marimba.<sup>41</sup> Granted, a large tom-tom can be played with a marimba mallet to create a “muffled and sinister” tone, so the issue of chosen implements is not the main cause for alarm. Rather, the speed of the turnaround between instruments seems unnecessary when several other percussion players are resting before and after this shift.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Maslanka, *A Child's Garden Of Dreams*, 4.

<sup>37</sup> Maslanka, *A Child's Garden Of Dreams*, 5-34.

<sup>38</sup> Maslanka, *A Child's Garden Of Dreams*, 38.

<sup>39</sup> Maslanka, *A Child's Garden Of Dreams*, 43.

<sup>40</sup> Maslanka, *A Child's Garden Of Dreams*, 35-45.

<sup>41</sup> Maslanka, *A Child's Garden Of Dreams*, 99-102.

<sup>42</sup> Maslanka, *A Child's Garden Of Dreams*, 101-102.

For Percussion 2, a majority of the fifth movement is performed on marimba, which has exclusively been played by Percussion 1 previously.<sup>43</sup> Why the marimba assignment has shifted between movements is unclear, but logistically there are few issues with the part until measure 106. The player must perform a quick turnaround from marimba at measure 105 to hi-hat with snare drum sticks, which has never been used by player 2 up to this point, at measure 108.<sup>44</sup> If one is to believe the program note that “no doubling is required”, this would mean the hi-hat would need to remain in close proximity to the marimba in order to facilitate this turnaround.

While there are no noticeable turnaround difficulties in Percussion 3 or 4’s parts, the third movement contains two challenges for Percussion 5 and 6. From measure 15 to measure 46, Percussion 5 must play vibraphone and xylophone simultaneously.<sup>45</sup> While it is physically possible to tackle this part by stacking the two instruments, with the xylophone in the back and the vibraphone in the front to allow for pedaling, then the overall setup would either require a second separate xylophone, or force the xylophone to always be played from a distant position. In addition to this challenge, there is the added task of finding a mallet that can provide similarly effective strong timbres and dynamics if played on both instruments. On the subject of incompatible mallets, Percussion 6 must rapidly alternate between fortissimo rolls on suspended cymbal and tam-tam, which are marked as being played by “hard timpani mallets”.<sup>46</sup> The attempt to consolidate the difficult part combination is no doubt appreciated, but this solution is highly questionable from a practicality perspective. Tam-tams, suspended cymbals, and timpani all have specific mallets designed for them; while different implements can be used for certain effects,

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<sup>43</sup> Maslanka, *A Child’s Garden Of Dreams*, 5-112.

<sup>44</sup> Maslanka, *A Child’s Garden Of Dreams*, 138-139.

<sup>45</sup> Maslanka, *A Child’s Garden Of Dreams*, 4.

<sup>46</sup> Maslanka, *A Child’s Garden Of Dreams*, 64-67.

the purpose of these rolls in the music suggest that a proper mallet is best utilized. Therefore, the tam-tam and suspended cymbal would be best suited on different parts.

It appears that the percussion instruments that provide most of the timbral and compositional character to *A Child's Garden Of Dreams* are the mallet percussion instruments and the three drum groups, all of which are assigned to Percussion 1, 2, and 3.<sup>47</sup> Percussion 4, 5, and 6 are mostly assigned auxiliary percussion such as crash cymbals, triangle, bass drum, and the odd snare drum.<sup>48</sup> Although this appears to be the case throughout most of the piece, sometimes the latter performers are asked to play wood blocks, temple blocks, or tom-toms, all instruments found in the drum groups played by Percussion 1, 2, and 3. Examples of this include Percussion 4 playing large tom-tom and tenor drum at measure 119 of the fifth movement, Percussion 5 playing temple blocks (alongside Percussion 4, no less) during the aleatoric section of the fourth movement, and Percussion 6 playing two wood blocks at measure 93 of the first movement.<sup>49</sup>

This rewrite was no doubt the most in depth as the logistical difficulties had to be considered across five different movements. However, beginning with a basic infrastructure- Percussion 1-3 playing the mallet parts, and Percussion 4-6 handling the drum groups- the remaining instrumentation could be divided fairly. The separation of the drum and mallet parts was done both in the interest of logistical ease and egalitarianism, as too much onus was placed on the first three players in the original part layout.

As for the numerous challenging turnarounds, the new version fixes the following. The fast turnaround by the marimba player in the second movement has been solved by assigning the

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<sup>47</sup> Maslanka, *A Child's Garden Of Dreams*, 48-54.

<sup>48</sup> Maslanka, *A Child's Garden Of Dreams*, 4.

<sup>49</sup> Maslanka, *A Child's Garden Of Dreams*, 119, 88, 30.

marimba and vibraphone to different players and includes a fourth player for good measure. The heedless xylophone/vibraphone and tam-tam/cymbal combinations in the third movement are also solved using this method. With the mallet percussion and drum group separation staying consistent, there should be no challenging turnaround for the marimba player in the fourth movement. The hi-hat from the marimba part in movement five is taken out and given to a different player. Lastly and most importantly, throughout the piece, any instance of tom-toms, wood blocks, or temple blocks are all played by Percussion 4, 5, and 6.

In order to make my rewrite flow as smoothly as possible, there was one last unconventional addition that needed to be made: a communal setup. In addition to the six stations manned by each player, there is an additional setup in the center of the percussion area where all the shared instruments lie. Since I was not able to assign snare drum, crash cymbals, hi-hat, or various other instruments to only one player, I thought it best to make them shared instruments and provide an easy path between setups with ample time to make turnarounds.

In the end, the percussion instrumentation for *A Child's Garden Of Dreams* is now as follows.

Percussion 1 handles marimba, 2 crystal wine glasses, and a shared vibraphone with player 2. Percussion 2 handles only vibraphone in their individual setup. Percussion 3 has xylophone, glockenspiel, a large suspended cymbal, three antique cymbals, two triangles of differing sizes, and a sizzle cymbal. Percussion 4 has the first drum and wood block setup along with 4 small gongs and a ratchet. Percussion 5 has the second drum and wood block setup along with crash cymbals, two suspended cymbals of differing sizes, slide whistle, and plays the optional “strings inside piano” part. Percussion 6 has the third drum and wood block setup along with hi-hat. Along with all this, there is a communal percussion setup which includes 2 snare

drums, hi-hat, tambourine & anvil on table, large crash cymbals, concert bass drum, and a large tam-tam.

### **Conclusion**

I wish to stress that this document is not meant to be a degradation of the composer, but rather an asset. The purpose here is to respect a compositional vision while also providing helpful tools to the performers. The sounds that a composer desires are not under scrutiny; this document merely presents easier methods to create those sounds.

With *Urban Requiem*, I divided the percussion score into four separate parts, thereby lessening the cognitive load of both reading a percussion score and assigning parts within one. In *Fiesta Del Pacifico*, through the combination of certain parts I was able to reduce the percussion personnel from eight to six. And for the latter three works, *Noisy Wheels Of Joy*, *Paris Sketches*, and *A Child's Garden Of Dreams*, I took their distributed “one on a part” format and rearranged the instruments to better suit a single player’s playing abilities.

I hope that I have adequately addressed some of the performance, equipment, and personnel issues that can be experienced by a performing percussionist in a wind ensemble, and several methods that can ease these tensions and provide said student with a fairly challenging and rewarding experience

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