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THE MODERN SNARE:
AN ANALYSIS OF REPERTOIRE FOR SNARE DRUM AND ELECTRONICS BY
UNDERREPRESENTED COMPOSERS

by

Susannah Rae Clabough

A Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

Major: Music

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May 2024
In memory of my grandparents
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ABSTRACT

This document seeks to examine five pieces for solo snare drum and electronics by underrepresented composers. An important current topic of conversation among the percussion community is diversity. This prompted the selection of music by composers of two marginalized groups: Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) and female-identifying composers. Each piece is analyzed to highlight electronics used, extended or uncommon techniques, different types of equipment needed, and performance choices. The five pieces examined in the document are *Stop Speaking* by Andy Akiho, *Spur* by Ivan Trevino, *Pulsar* by Francisco Perez, *Obbligato Snare Drum Music No.1: “The Power of Love”* by Thomas Kotcheff, and *Heart.throb* by Nina C. Young.

A brief introductory chapter begins the document with five subsequent chapters about each of the pieces. Each chapter begins with a biography about the composer before beginning the analysis. An overview of the origin of the piece is followed by four sub-sections entitled “electronics,” “extended/uncommon techniques,” “interpretation/artistic choices,” and “equipment.” The “electronics” sub-section examines the type of electronics utilized as well as the challenges and/or important aspects to note when learning and performing the pieces. The “extended/uncommon techniques” sub-section showcases unusual notation, techniques, and how to achieve them. The sub-section entitled “interpretation/artistic choices” lists some challenging moments in the piece and some ways to successfully achieve them. Some other aspects noted may be suggestions on clarifying articulations, suggestions for alternatives, and practice tips. The final sub-section of each chapter is about equipment. Listed in this portion is both the percussion and audio equipment needed to perform each piece.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Stop Speaking</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biography</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Spur</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biography</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Pulsar</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biography</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biography</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Heart.throb</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biography</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Conclusion</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

1. Sections 1 and 2 in *Stop Speaking* 11
2. Notation key for *Stop Speaking* 12
3. Example of rim scrape followed by brush strokes 15
4. Forte and piano dynamics indicated as accented and unaccented notes 16
5. Decrescendo indicated “shaft to tip” 23
6. Tip of stick on the rim at pp dynamic and no change in articulation 26
7. Technical setup for a piece with split channel track 29
8. Audio track cues above solo snare drum line 33
9. Notation key for *Pulsar* 35
10. Measures three and four of *Pulsar* 35
11. Traditional grip versus matched grip 40
12. Technical setup for a piece with separate stereo and click tracks 43
13. Rhythmic shift indicated in measures 34-36 47
14. Notation key for *Obbligato for Snare Drum No. 1: The Power of Love* 50
15. Measures three through five *Obbligato for Snare Drum No. 1: The Power of Love* 50
17. Measure 141 of *Obbligato for Snare Drum No. 1: The Power of Love* 55
18. Example of an alteration to flam taps in place of the flams in measure 141 55
19. 8 Ohm Transducer, Dayton Audio DAEX25 Sound Exciter 61
20. Contact microphone, Cortado MKII 62
21. Example of drum head diagram, measures eight and nine 64
22. Young’s numbering system in *Heart.throb*  
66

23. Electronics setup diagram for *Heart.throb*  
71
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

History

The origin of the snare drum can be traced back to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to an instrument called the tabor, which had rope tension tuning and snares typically on the head that was struck. As this type of drum progressed through history, it was seen frequently in the military as a means of signaling different formations or used to indicate commands to the military members. The snares eventually moved to the bottom head, and the drum was often on a sling to be played at a forty-five-degree angle. Eventually, the snare drum made its way into orchestral compositions, most notably in opera, around the nineteenth century. As the compositional landscape changed, so did the amount of percussion instruments being used in orchestral repertoire. With this rise, the snare drum continued to modify and change, the principal difference being the use of tension rods instead of rope tensioning. This was first introduced by Cornelius Ward in 1837.¹ Today, one could find a snare drum made out of a multitude of materials, in a variety of sizes, and with an infinite number of customizations. The instrument has become so versatile that any given performer could utilize multiple drums for one performance.

The need for instrument modifications came from the increasing presence of the instrument in the repertoire. More composers began utilizing snare drum in orchestral compositions, and eventually snare drum became a solo instrument. In the mid-twentieth century, solo compositions for snare drum emerged with some notable pieces being Michael Colgrass’s *Six Unaccompanied Solos for Snare Drum* (1957), Warren Benson’s *Three Dances for Solo Snare Drum* (1961), and Mitch Markovich’s *Tornado* (1966). The large majority of early solo and ensemble percussion compositions come from percussionists that were performing and/or teaching. As time progressed, more composers from various musical backgrounds decided to add percussion compositions to their repertoire catalogs. Today, the majority of repertoire for percussion ensembles and solo playing is still written by percussionists, but with the expansion of wind band and orchestral literature, the list of composers is broadening beyond percussionists.

The style of writing moved away from the initial rudimental influence that arose from the military time period to a more exploratory way of writing. Compositions started utilizing more ornamentation (expanding beyond basic rudiments i.e. flams, ruffs, etc.), different implements, a wider range of dynamic contrast, and striking multiple surfaces on the drum. As composers began to implement these new aspects, the percussionists’ techniques began improving to meet the needs of these compositional components. The repertoire was becoming more exploratory and eventually the rise of electronic and computer music influenced percussion writing. With advancements in technology such as MIDI, synthesizers, and samplers, percussionists were inspired. As computers advanced, so did the creation and implementation of electronic sounds in music. Eventually,
programs like Max and Ableton Live were created, which allowed composers to utilize computers to generate sounds.

The invention of digital audio workstations, such as Ableton Live, Logic Pro, and Garageband, forged a new outlet for composers to utilize electronic creativity. In the twenty-first century, percussion repertoire began integrating audio tracks to serve as an accompanying figure to soloistic pieces. There is one piece that created an explosion of similar compositions in snare drum repertoire specifically. In 2011, Tom Sherwood commissioned percussionist Andy Akiho to write a solo for the Modern Snare Drum Competition. This work, entitled *Stop Speaking*, is a composition unlike anything that was being written for snare drum at the time. This new creative way of writing inspired composers to explore the possibilities of electronic snare drum music, some of which will be discussed in this document.

**Introduction**

Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB) is an important movement many communities are having conversations about. The percussion community recently has been working diligently to engage in these types of conversations. The February 2024 installment of the Percussive Arts Society (PAS) magazine *Percussive Notes* is titled “Diversity in Percussion” and discusses many facets of diversity within the percussion community, including but not limited to the “Network for Diversity in Concert Percussion (NDCP)”, the “Alliance of Black Orchestral Percussionists (ABOP),” and more. In recent years, there have been more efforts made to promote a diverse and
inclusive percussion community, from the K-12 classroom to performance halls and beyond. Some of the most notable progress has come from the creation of networks, alliances, and databases that highlight the work of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) and people who identify as female.

In 2021, two groups were formed that began to enhance the experience of younger percussionists in underrepresented groups. Both the “Network for Diversity in Concert Percussion (NDCP)” and the “Alliance of Black Orchestral Percussionists (ABOP)” created mentorship programs where professional musicians are working directly with high school and college age students. The NDCP is a collective of performers, educators, and businesses who serve as a resource for, and support to, aspiring professional percussionists from underrepresented and underserved communities (including but not limited to Black, Indigenous, Hispanic, Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, Queer, and women) in an effort to improve equity, diversity, and inclusion in the concert percussion community.²

The group helps to provide a space where individuals can be mentored, define goals, get financial support from grants, and provides access to equipment. Similarly, the ABOP functions with professional musicians mentoring young students, who are called “Protégés.” The aim is to develop the “whole person.”³ In addition to furthering their musicianship through master classes, seminars, and mock auditions, Mentors work with Protégés on organizational skills and financial basics.⁴

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³ Raynor Carroll, “Alliance of Black Orchestra Percussionists, 60.

⁴ Raynor Carroll, “Alliance of Black Orchestra Percussionists, 60.
In addition to these groups, the Percussive Arts Society has their own group committed to diversity called “The Diversity Alliance.” The Diversity Alliance “coordinates efforts to develop and foster initiative aimed at expanding membership diversity and enhancing community outreach, with special emphasis on serving historically marginalized populations within PAS and throughout the world.” The Diversity Alliance has many resources and information available to PAS members, including hearing loss, anti-racism, LGBTQIA+, composer databases, and more. The database of composers is an integral part promoting the music of individuals who occupy an underrepresented community, as one of the goals of The Diversity Alliance is to serve marginalized populations. Some of the databases available are “Percussion Ensemble Works by Women-Identifying Composers,” “The New Works Project,” “Music by Black Composers,” “Composers Equity Project,” and more.

In this document, five pieces of repertoire for solo snare drum with electronics will be analyzed. Each piece is analyzed to highlight electronics used, extended or uncommon techniques, different types of equipment needed, and performance choices. The pieces to be examined are the following: Stop Speaking by Andy Akiho, Spur by Ivan Trevino, Pulsar by Francisco Perez, Obbligato Snare Drum Music No.1: “The Power of Love” by Thomas Kotcheff, and Heart.throb by Nina C. Young. There are plenty of well-written pieces in this particular subsection of percussion literature, but

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these five were chosen for two specific reasons: they were written by underrepresented composers and they utilize different types of electronic elements.

The composers of these pieces represent members of two underrepresented groups: people of color and women. More recently, composers from a diverse array of cultural and ethnic backgrounds are saturating the musical realm, particularly in percussion repertoire. Not only is there an increase of composers from diverse backgrounds, but performers are making conscious and intentional decisions to program works from these composers. The intent of highlighting these composers and their works is that more people will become aware of the growing diversity of percussion composers. Performing pieces by underrepresented composers makes music a more colorful space, both figuratively and literally. The medium of music represents so many facets of the world, so the compositions performed should represent people who come from a vast and multi-faceted existence.

These pieces were chosen due to the differing types of electronic elements that are used. The first four pieces utilize arguably the most common electronic accompanying feature: a pre-composed digital playback track. There are more specific differences with the playback tracks that will be discussed in the subsequent chapters. The fifth piece by Nina C. Young is largely different in the fact that it employs the use of live electronics.
Biography

Known for a wide array of compositions, Japanese-American composer Andy Akiho is a prominent figure in percussion repertoire. Akiho began his musical career as a percussionist in his high school marching band, and he spent several years simultaneously participating in Drum Corps International. He went to college at the University of South Carolina, where he was first introduced to the steel pan. He spent many years in his twenties traveling to Trinidad performing and learning more about the steel pan and the culture surrounding the instrument. Much of his collegiate career wasn’t spent studying composition, yet he still has an impressive list of mentors. Some of his compositional mentors include Julia Wolfe, David Lang, Ezra Laderman, Christopher Theofanidis, Steve Mackey and Paul Lansky. As of the year 2024, he has been nominated for five GRAMMY awards and is a Pulitzer Prize finalist. Akiho has also received many prestigious awards including the Rome Prize, Harvard University Fromm Commission, Lili Boulanger Memorial Prize, and more. He has been commissioned by many organizations, such as the New York Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra, Oregon Symphony Orchestra, Music@Menlo, LA Dance Project and more. In addition to composing, Akiho is still an active steel pannist performing his works around the globe.
Overview

As previously mentioned, Andy Akiho wrote a piece that revolutionized the existence of pieces for snare drum and electronics. *Stop Speaking* was commissioned by Tom Sherwood for the 2011 Modern Snare Drum Competition hosted by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. The Modern Snare Drum Competition has been hosted annually since 2008, allowing performers 26 and under to compete in two divisions: Division I for performers 26 and under and Division II for performers 19 and under. The mission of the competition is to “educate the percussion community on a wide array of snare drum repertoire including newly commissioned works.”\(^1\) Since 2011, several other pieces for snare drum and electronics have been commissioned by the Modern Snare Drum Competition, furthering the existence of snare drum pieces with electronics.

The Modern Snare Drum Competition is helping bring new compositions into the repertoire, but often times these pieces may not reach a wide audience immediately. When Akiho was commissioned by Tom Sherwood, he was writing other music for percussion, a majority for steel pan. *Stop Speaking* didn’t truly gain major traction in the community until 2014. Chris Lamb, principal percussionist with the New York Philharmonic, released a video performing the piece. The video incorporates old Apple computer products, which brings a visual element to the audio track. Lamb’s video has created great success, garnering over 82,000 views since its publication in 2014.\(^2\)

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Electronics

*Stop Speaking* utilizes a digital playback track. This piece made an abrupt musical statement when it was published. It is to be performed without a consistent tempo, something very unusual and uncharacteristic of most music, especially for percussion. The audio track begins the piece with a very unexpected clicking sound. This sound may be familiar to many, as it is Apple’s sound for increasing the volume on their computers. This is followed by a robotic voice that begins by saying “hello” multiple times. Akiho created this track using Apple’s Speech Preference Center with the voice input named “Vicki.” There are moments where Vicki glitches or stutters, much like one would expect of a robotic or computerized being. Akiho typed the monologue into a Word Document that was then sent through the software and read out by Vicki. The following is a portion of the monologue that is heard on the audio track:

HELLO! HELL OH HELLO? HELLO? HELLO?
OH! MY NAME IS VICKI
I WILL PROVIDE THA DIGITAL PLAYBACK! FOR THIS COMPOSITION
FOR SOLO SNARE DRUM AND ELECTRONICS
EYE MEAN MY MMMMM MY MY MY MY VOICE WAS ONLY CREATED
YOU SING A MACBOOK PRO AND A
MY CROW SOFT WORD DOCUMENT
AND MY PART WAS TYPED OUT WORD FOR WORD
MY MY MMMM MY MY MY MY PART WAS TYPED OUT WORD FOR WORD
THEN, SPEECH!! WAS ENABLED TO ALLOW ME TO LIV

I AM ALIVE!!!!! AND I AM HAPPY TO PROVIDE THE TEXT TO THIS COMPOSITION!! THERE ARE MANY OF US IN THE SPEECH SPEECH PREFERENCES THE APPLE SPEECH PREFERENCES AND I AM GLAD TO BE THE CHOSEN THE CHOSEN VOICE I AM VICKI AND I AM THE CHOSEN VOICE!! INSTEAD, OF PICKING, ALEX, BRUCE, FRED, JUNIOR, RALPH, AGNES, KATHY, PRINCESS, OR VICTORIA I WAS CHOSEN!! THANK YOU!
THANK YOU! THANK YOU YOU YOU YOU!!! THANK THANK THANK THANK YOU UUUUUUUU THANK YOU!!! UNFORTUNATELY! WHEN THE PIECE COMES TO AN END… I WILL I WILL WILL I? I WILL STOP SPEAKING? STOP, SPEAKING! STOP SPEAKING STOP SPEAKING?? I WILL, STOP SPEAKING!!

………….


…………

The percussionist’s part relies heavily on the playback for the placement of every entrance, making the combination of the performer and audio track function as a duet.

The spoken words of Vicki are not rhythmically in time. Therefore, each entrance of the snare drum is completely gestural and based off of the phrase being spoken. The way the performer can execute these entrances is by mimicking the speed and articulation of what the track provides. Stated in the performance notes, Akiho writes:

The speed and rhythmic articulation of the digital playback text determines the pulse of each temporal phrase. Line up attacks/releases on the snare drum rhythms/rests to text when a vertical arrow is present between the staves. If there is not an arrow present, use the text as a reference point (the tempo of these phrases may vary slightly between performances.)³

³ Andy Akiho, Stop Speaking (Aki Rhythm Press, 2011).

⁴ Akiho, Stop Speaking.
This creates a challenge when initially learning the piece, because most musicians (percussionists particularly) rely heavily on metronomes for practicing repertoire. Arguably, the majority of music exists using some form of steady beat or the concept of being rhythmically in time. This piece exists in the smaller percentage of music that has no steady pulse, yet both the performer and playback track are aligned in a rhythmic and gestural sense.

Figure 1 shows an example of alignment with vertical arrows and an example of alignment based on speed of text. Another way that Akiho highlights the lack of steady pulse is with the absence of bar lines. Each musical phrase exists from one number to the next, always spanning one line on the page. Some of these phrases contain more notes and will last for varying segments of time, as each musical phrase is metrically related to the spoken word.

Figure 1. Sections 1 and 2 in *Stop Speaking*
Extended/Uncommon Techniques

Percussionists are often accustomed to seeing strange notations in their music such as note heads that are not a circular dot or stems with slashes through to signify a roll, but Akiho creates an entire performance key due to the vast amount of notation he uses in Stop Speaking. Figure 2 shows the key as it is listed in the performance notes. It can be noted that there are fifteen different strokes to be used in this composition. Every line and space on the staff are in use, and he also uses different shaped note heads or shapes on the stem to convey each change. Akiho also writes suggested stickings in the score, and with this unusual notation, he sometimes uses other letters. This is shown in the key on the staff and also clarified underneath with more information.

Figure 2. Notation key for Stop Speaking

Stop Speaking by Andy Akiho

In addition to the notation key, he also writes suggestions on how to successfully perform these extended techniques. A few of the extended techniques are the rim scrape, rim knock, flick, and the thumb roll. These techniques are not uncommon to percussionists as many of them originate from other instrument’s technique. For example, the thumb roll technique is used often on tambourine, so one should approach this the
same way. The rim knock is synonymous to the term cross stick, which is commonly used for drum set playing. The flick is unusual, as he indicates to “flick fingers in a fan-like motion triggered by the thumb.” This is a motion usually associated with propelling an object suddenly with your fingers and is not often used in musical compositions.

**Interpretation/Artistic Choices**

Overall, *Stop Speaking* is of an advanced skill level, combining the complex rhythmic passages with the unusual notation and the lack of consistent rhythmic pulse. This piece is unlike many in this medium, yet Akiho has done a superb job at making the uncommon elements approachable to the performer. As previously noted, Akiho provides an incredibly in-depth notation key to aid the performer in the initial learning stages. With the myriad of sound concepts to be produced on the snare drum, he utilizes each line and space and different shaped note heads. This is visually helpful, as the performer can easily distinguish between two differing strokes or implements very quickly.

An aspect of this piece that could be challenging are the moments where the performer has to utilize different parts of their hands. As indicated in the key, the performer is required to make the following sounds with their hands: flick, thumb roll, finger tips, and full hands. Notating these separate kinds of strokes mimics the same concept he applies with the sticks – multiple sounds can be created with one implement. A difficulty in using the hand is similar to one a performer would often find while using sticks. When a particular stroke is repeated, a performer should try to replicate the sound

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5 Akiho, *Stop Speaking*. 

13
exactly. For example, each iteration of an accented flick should sound the same. In this instance, it may be more challenging because using fingers and flicking motions are uncommon on the snare drum. Isolating these smaller passages and working on consistency will help when performing these types of strokes in context. Working on these smaller sections at a slower tempo and gradually increasing speed can help unify consistency of strokes.

A thumb roll is a common technique for tambourine playing, so the transfer from tambourine to snare drum should present minimal challenges. Often times, performers will apply beeswax or a soy-based wax to their tambourine head to make thumb rolls easier. Akiho mentions that beeswax could be applied to the snare head, but another solution would be to quickly lick the fingertip before performing the thumb roll. This prevents the need to apply beeswax to the head while still providing a decent amount of grip for sliding the finger/thumb across the head.

In the notation key, a “rim scrape” is notated with the words “spiral stick” below. Akiho writes his description of this implement to be “any textured stick that is capable of producing a guiro-like sound when scraped across the rim.” The only time he utilizes this implement is on the second page of the piece, between the very end of line eight and through line ten. Each scrape is followed by a brush sliding across the drum head. The scrape symbol connects to the first brush note, which could be interpreted that these two motions should connect. The spiral stick scraping across the rim has a very different timbre to the brush sliding across the head. To make sure the audience can hear the switch between implements, the performer might experiment with adding a tenuto to the

---

6 Akiho, *Stop Speaking.*
first note of each brush phrase. The addition of a tenuto would also help to emphasize the slur that occurs under the brush strokes. Figure 3 shows the notation of the scrape followed by the brush.

Figure 3. Example of rim scrape followed by brush strokes

Stop Speaking by Andy Akiho

Akiho clearly states dynamic contrast as well as accented versus unaccented notes. Throughout the piece, the performer is expected to play a wide range of dynamics, from \textit{ppp} to \textit{fff}. If there is a long phrase with one consistent dynamic, Akiho will often include a forward-facing arrow indicating to continue with the same dynamic until a new one is written. As indicated in the notation key, there is a difference between an uppercase letter and a lowercase letter. In percussion music, often composers will include suggested sticking indications with the letters “r” and “l,” but in this case Akiho went one step further. The difference between the uppercase and lowercase letters is to specify accented and unaccented notes. He still includes the accent marking above the note on accented notes, but the addition of the uppercase letter helps to quickly identify accented notes. There are other moments in the score where the uppercase/accented notes are to be performed at a different dynamic than the unaccented notes. In these instances, Akiho
will indicate the two dynamics with a backslash in between. An example of this can be found in figure 4.

Figure 4. Forte and piano dynamics indicated as accented and unaccented notes

Stop Speaking by Andy Akiho

Equipment

As could be expected by the extensive notation key, there is a lot of equipment required to perform this piece. The performer will need a snare drum, a pair of snare drum sticks, a wire brush, and a spiral stick. Most of those implements are in every percussionist’s arsenal of equipment, but the one outlier is the spiral stick. The spiral stick is difficult to find. A major resource for purchasing percussion equipment is Steve Weiss Music, a website that sells everything from small sound effects to large instruments (marimbas, timpani, etc.). Steve Weiss has their own line of equipment called Liberty One, and the Liberty One brand makes an implement called a “rasping stick.” It is a solid wood rod, without any tapering, that has grooves cut into the stick. It resembles the *guiro*, a Latin American instrument made from a hollowed-out gourd that has notches cut on one side and is scraped with a stick. When playing the spiral stick, it is notated to
slide across the rim of the snare drum, creating a guiro-like sound with the wooden stick across the metal rim.

This piece requires a relatively minimal audio setup and is generally accessible for most performers. This piece utilizes a device to play audio files, 3.5mm stereo headphone splitter, headphones, and speakers. To run the audio, the performer will need a way to send the track through the speakers. Most often, performers will use a computer, phone, or iPad to play the audio files. Although this particular audio file does not include a click track as part of the performance tracks, it would be advised that the performer use headphones or an on-stage monitor to help align themselves better with the track. An audio interface is not necessary in this setup, as a performer could utilize the headphone splitter to run sound to both the headphones and speakers. If using an audio interface to run the sound, the headphone volume can be adjusted independently from the audio track that is running through the speakers, as they would be in separate channels.\(^7\)

This overall setup is relatively simple for a piece with fixed media, but a performer’s preference can make it more elaborate. Some performers prefer a wireless audio experience, as opposed to running a headphone cable directly to an interface or computer. If a performer decides to go the wireless route, they will need to purchase a transmitter and receiver. Although this frees the performer from being attached to a cord, this particular setup can be very expensive, running anywhere from around $200 to an

upwards of $1,000. It should be noted that the wireless setup is optional, as the piece is made to function with the smaller setup discussed previously.
 CHAPTER 3

SPUR

Biography

Percussionist, composer, and educator Ivan Trevino is well-known in the percussion community for his solo, duo, and percussion ensemble compositions. His Mexican-American heritage can be seen in his compositions through his inspiration and often the text accompanying the music, such as his Song Books which are works for a singing marimbist. He has had the opportunity to perform many of his compositions on five continents. His compositions have won several first-place prizes in the Percussive Arts Society International Composition Competition for both solo and ensemble works. As an educator, Trevino currently serves as Professor of Practice in Percussion at the University of Texas at Austin. He is also an artist and clinician for Innovative Percussion, Black Swamp Percussion, Zildjian Cymbals, Evans Drumheads, Pearl / Adams, Meinl, and Beetle Percussion. In addition to performing his own works, Trevino is also a drummer in the international touring cello rock quartet, Break of Reality.¹ Most of his compositions are centralized around a percussion instrument, whether it be a solo, duo, or ensemble piece. He most recently added a piece for wind band to his catalog, entitled Run

that was commissioned by the Eastman Wind Ensemble, which features two percussion soloists along with a standard wind band instrumentation.

Overview

The second piece being analyzed in this project is entitled *Spur* by Ivan Trevino. *Spur* was commissioned by a consortium led by Korry Friend. Friend is active performing, teaching, and composing for percussion throughout the United States. He has commissioned pieces from young composers, such as Adam Hopper, Anna Meadors, Francisco Perez, and Ivan Trevino to promote new music for percussion.² Trevino took inspiration from the great composer and percussionist, Jacques Delécluse. Delécluse is most known for his snare drum studies, which are standards used in collegiate study. The title of the piece comes from Friend and Trevino’s shared love of the San Antonio Spurs basketball team. The Spurs are known for being less flashy than some other teams in the league, which has a strong correlation to the compositional aspects seen in this piece. In the program notes, Trevino writes this about his inspiration for the piece:

> While other music for snare drum can be flashy, loud and fast, Delécluse’s music is subtle, thoughtful and nuanced. It truly exposes a player’s touch and sensitivity on the instrument, utilizing shading and phrasing to create an artful, beautiful experience. I wanted to compose a piece through a similar lens while simultaneously blending my own compositional language.³

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Trevino successfully completes his mission to take inspiration from Delécluse while including aspects of his compositional style. The piece begins with a section that has strong resemblance of many of the études Delécluse wrote, including soft dynamics, use of rudiments, and metric shifting. The middle section requires the performer to utilize more of the drum to create different sounds and timbres. This a very common aspect of Trevino’s compositions. The final section of the piece includes short two measure segments that were taken directly from Delécluse’s études.

This composition has a calm and relaxed feeling, and this is reflected largely by the dynamics written. The performer does not play above a *mezzo forte* except for a portion of one measure. The subtlety and nuance of this piece are what makes it difficult. Trevino writes for the performer to play a number of difficult rhythms at a soft dynamic, which takes a certain skill and intense control. Overall, the writing is very standard for a snare drum solo, with lots of ornamentation and rudiments.

**Electronics**

*Spur* has an audio track that accompanies the snare drum soloist. The audio track for this piece contains distinctly melodic material that swells in and out of the texture. Throughout the piece, the track contains an atmospheric nature. In the middle section of the piece, the track is enhanced by some electronic drum set sounds while the melodic material is still present. Trevino’s writing for the snare drum works cohesively with the audio track, as much of the rhythms are enhanced by the sounds in the track. There are moments where the soloist is playing at incredibly soft dynamics and the track becomes
the prominent figure. This interplay between both the snare drum and the audio track happens throughout the piece, with each aspect relying on the other. This composition would not function in the same regard without the track.

When the soloist and the track are not trading moments of prominence, the two parts tend to work in unison. The track will emphasize moments in the snare drum part, by mimicking the rhythmic line exactly or putting an emphasis on one moment in a phrase. This is especially prevalent in the middle section of the piece (measures forty-nine through eighty-six), where the most amount of dynamic contrast occurs. As the track aligns with the soloist, it creates a distinct difference to the outer two sections, from auditory and compositional standpoints.

As is very common in a Delécluse étude, there are brief moments of silence. This piece differs from an étude because the track often makes up for the silence by continuing to build momentum. As mentioned previously, the piece ends with short two measure segments from a variety of Delécluse études. In between each of these segments are two measures of rest. The track starts out this section with short swells through the two measures of playing and two measures of silence. This eventually shifts to a consistent crescendo in the background to fill the moments of silence. As the piece comes to a close, the track sounds similar to prior moments in the piece. After a long roll that spans thirteen measures, the piece ends with three very soft notes. The track is fading away into nothing as the performer places the final three notes, reaching complete silence around six seconds after the final note.
Extended/Uncommon Techniques

This piece displays many common features of a snare drum solo, including rudiments, changing time signatures, and a variety of dynamic contrast. These aspects are expected, as the piece is inspired by a composer who is known for his snare drum études. Although it is very reminiscent of Delécluse, there is one aspect that is slightly less conventional, and it is displayed in the middle section of the piece (measures forty-nine through eighty-six). As previously mentioned, the middle section represents Trevino’s writing style, maximizing the number of timbres that can be created on a singular instrument. Throughout this portion of the composition, the performer is playing on the rim of the snare drum. Trevino indicates which portion of the snare drum stick that is to be used during this section. When the tip of the stick is indicated, the dynamics are softer, and when the shaft is indicated, the dynamics are louder. There are several instances where the performer has to move from the tip to the shaft and vice versa, moving further up and down the stick to create dynamic contrast. Musically, he makes this distinction to indicate a crescendo or decrescendo. An example of this can be seen in figure 5.

Figure 5. Decrescendo indicated “shaft to tip”

*Spur* by Ivan Trevino
Halfway through this section in the piece, the track and soloist reach a peak. The soloist is now playing what sounds similar to a drum set beat, as striking the head is reintroduced, creating an interplay between the two timbres (rim and drum head). This drum set beat is reinforced by bass drum sounds in the audio track. Trevino indicates this section as “silky, groovy”\(^4\) which gives the performer a clear picture of how this section should sound much like a drum set beat. This portion of the piece is the loudest and has the most activity coming from the soloist and audio track, which is a stark difference from the material that preceded this section. As this section is louder than the previous, it aids the performer in creating a “groovy”\(^5\) and relaxed feel, as they don’t have to worry as much about containing the dynamics.

**Interpretation/Artistic Choices**

The first thing any performer should do when learning a new piece of repertoire is read the performance/program notes if the piece includes them. This is very important in helping inform the performer about how to approach the music before beginning the learning process. For *Spur* specifically, it is helpful to know that the piece derives much of its inspiration and material from Delécluse’s writing style. The entire first page of this composition is reminiscent of a Delécluse etude, with long moments of soft dynamics, dynamic shifts in a short amount of rhythmic time, and a large amount of ornamentation.

\(^4\) Ivan Trevino, *Spur* (Ivan Trevino, 2016), 3.

\(^5\) Ivan Trevino, *Spur* (Ivan Trevino, 2016), 3.
Delécluse is known for writing at extreme ends of the dynamic range. Often one etude could span from $ppp$ to $fff$, and in many instances these drastic changes happen within a measure. To play Delécluse takes sophistication and the performer must have a good sense of how to best achieve these dynamic extremities. Learning *Spur* would give a percussionist an introduction to performing Delécluse études, as the dynamic range is smaller. The majority of the composition never exceeds a *mezzo forte* dynamic. To gain a better understanding of the style of writing that inspired this piece, a performer could study the études in *Douze Études pour Caisse-Claire* by Jacques Delécluse, specifically études one, three, nine, and eleven.

A challenging aspect of this piece is the extended periods of soft dynamics. The average percussionist is comfortable with playing at loud dynamics, but it takes a significant amount of control to play at extremely soft dynamics. The second page of the piece enters into the section where the timbre changes by shifting to the rim of the snare drum. Trevino writes a twelve-measure phrase that is marked at a *pianissimo* dynamic without any articulation markings. Keeping a consistent sound throughout this section while utilizing alternating sticking patterns could create a great challenge for the performer. To add to the already existing difficulty of alternating strokes at a quiet dynamic, the performer is told to use the tip of the stick. This makes accuracy of strokes difficult to achieve due to the narrowness of the rim. Figure 6 shows an example of this section with *pianissimo* dynamics and no articulation markings.
Since the middle portion of this piece utilizes a large portion of the snare drum sticks, careful consideration should be made into the type of sticks chosen. To create an even wider timbral difference between the drum head and the rim, a nylon tip drumstick is a plausible recommendation. The nylon tip stick will create an obvious change in timbre in the moments where “tip to shaft” and “shaft to tip” appear. The change from the wooden shaft of the stick to the plastic tip will add another element to the auditory experience of the dynamic contrast.

Following the middle section is a brief eight measure interlude from the audio track. The track creates a calm and dreamy atmosphere, with a sound that swells from soft to loud. This interlude allows the performer to shift their mindset from the groove-like section that came before it to a solemn and introspective final section. The solo line re-enters in measure 94, with a specific description reading “reflective, meditative, played with eyes closed.”\(^6\) The performer would need to memorize this portion of the piece to perform with their eyes closed, which is a choice entirely up to the individual. A

\(^6\) Ivan Trevino, *Spur* (Ivan Trevino, 2016), 4.
performer could still create a “reflective”7 and “meditative”8 experience for the listener without closing their eyes. There are many other aspects to body language that would make an audience member feel the calming sense that is to be expected from this section of the piece, including relaxed posture, legato movements in between phrases, and a slow release at the end of the piece. If the performer chooses to play this portion with closed eyes, the indication to “open eyes”9 is on the final note of the piece, which also happens to be at the softest dynamic indicated in the entire composition.

**Equipment**

The percussion equipment needed for this piece is very minimal, requiring only a snare drum and drum sticks. As previously mentioned, some thought should be made about what type of snare drum sticks to choose. The main consideration in this choice is regarding the section where the performer plays on the rim. Playing on the rim will often lead to small dents in the stick, so most percussionists tend to use less expensive pairs of sticks for pieces that require a large amount of playing on the rim. Another aspect of consideration would be the smaller dynamic range of this piece. For ease and control, a performer may choose to use a lighter or thinner stick. Sticks that are marketed towards drum set playing are generally thinner and lighter than sticks for concert snare drum playing, so the choice might be made to use a drum set stick. If the performer also makes

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7 Ivan Trevino, *Spur* (Ivan Trevino, 2016), 4.
the choice to use a stick with a nylon or plastic bead, drum set sticks tend to have more options for nylon bead size.

Electronic equipment needed for this piece is fairly standard for a piece that includes a backing track. The performer will need a device for the playback track (computer, tablet or phone), headphones, a headphone splitter, and amplification for the track. Trevino includes multiple tracks with the composition which gives the performer options to choose from for running the playback. The three tracks included are the following: headphone splitter, stereo for audience, and stereo for performer. The headphone splitter track includes both the click and the audio track that is split between two channels. The click is panned to the left and the backing track is panned to the right. The stereo for audience track includes the backing track only. The stereo for performer is only the click track.

The performer would need to utilize software such as Garageband or Logic Pro to run the stereo track, because they would need to add the click track to a separate channel. This allows the backing track to go directly to the audience while the click track only goes to the performer’s headphones. If the performer goes this route, they will need an audio interface to run through two separate channels. The performer can also decide to use the headphone splitter track. If this is the case, they will need the headphone splitter to make sure the backing track and click pan to each channel. Since the track is panned to only one side, the speakers will need to be running sound from the same channel. Figure 7 shows an example of a potential setup that was created by Matthew G. Jordan for a performance of a piece with split channel track.

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Figure 7. Technical setup for a piece with split channel track

Biography

Francisco Perez is active in the percussion community as a performer, composer, and educator. He currently serves on faculty at Texas A&M University as Instructional Associate Professor of Percussion Performance and was previously on faculty at Lamar University. As a composer, Perez has written pieces for solo percussion as well as percussion ensembles. Perez has been commissioned by several universities including the University of Kentucky, Texas Christian University, Northwestern State University and University of Texas at Arlington. His compositions have been performed at The Midwest Clinic, Texas Music Educators Association, and the Percussive Arts Society International Convention. Perez is published by Tapspace Publications and C. Alan Publications. As a performer, he has performed internationally in Chile, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Spain, and China. Perez has also performed extensively in the United States, most notably as a founding member of the BlueSHIFT Percussion Quartet. In addition to his compositions for percussion, Perez also has served in various capacities in the marching arts for several award-winning high school and college drumlines across the United States.1

Overview

The third composition being analyzed in this project is entitled *Pulsar* by Francisco Perez. This piece was commissioned as part of a consortium led by Korry Friend in 2016. Perez was watching the reboot of the television show *Cosmos*, which gave him some astronomical inspiration. He writes this in the program notes to describe the inspiration for the title of the piece.

As an extremely dense remnant of a long-gone massive star, a “pulsar” is a highly magnetized neutron star which can rotate between 7,000 and 40,000 times per minute. Combined with this rotation, its colossal density, and intense magnetic fields, powerful beams of electromagnetic radiation project in all directions of space to act as a sort of galactic lighthouse for distant observers.²

This particular explanation of this astronomical entity helps to explain the way in which Perez composed the electronic track. Throughout the piece, the listener will observe layers of distinct sounds and rhythmic motifs that interact with the soloist. While the layering of sounds may seem quite involved, much of the melodic material is simplistic in nature. This is due in part to the atmospheric sound he has created. He also mentions the sound scape he created was inspired by electronic music, most notably the group *Moderat*.³

Perez has a history in the marching arts, as he participated in Drum Corps International, marching with the Cavaliers Drum & Bugle Corps in 2011 and 2012 and the Crossmen Drum & Bugle Corps in 2010. During his time with the Cavaliers, he had

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the opportunity to work with Michael McIntosh, one of the Percussion Caption
Supervisors for the drum corps. McIntosh has had a very successful career in the
marching arts community, working with and composing for groups from high schools to
professional ensembles. Perez took much of his compositional inspiration for this piece
from McIntosh, as the writing is very dense and rudimental in style.

**Electronics**

*Pulsar* includes an audio track to accompany the snare drum soloist. As
previously mentioned, Perez wrote the track to resemble electronic music and to
incorporate the rhythmic characteristics of pulsars. The audio has a melodic line as well
as other rhythmic sound effects in the background that add to the musicality of the track.
This combination creates an ethereal and atmospheric sound scape. To mimic the rapid
rotations of a pulsar, Perez writes several layers that interact with the soloist. These layers
include recurring motifs and polyrhythms that can be heard in multiple sections of the
piece.\(^4\) Overall the melody heard in the track is relatively simple, but the combination of
the rhythmic and percussive features alongside the melody create the perfect pairing for
the solo snare drum.

The track works seamlessly with the solo part. Throughout the piece, there are
numerous instances where the track aligns rhythmically with the performer. When the
solo part is less dense, Perez includes cues above the snare drum line to indicate moments
where the performer lines up with the track. There are moments where the soloist has a

few measures of rest. To keep the performer in time, the cues written above the music help the soloist have a visual representation of what they are hearing. These cues often include instrument names to easily identify what sound is being heard. When the solo part is denser, Perez omits the cue. It is needed less in these moments, because the performer is relying more on the click track to stay in time. Figure 8 shows an example of the cues above the solo line.

Figure 8. Audio track cues above solo snare drum line

Throughout the piece, the track works as an accompanying figure to the snare drum, with some exceptions. There are moments where the texture is thinner, and the track is less involved but provides color and rhythmic emphasis to the snare drum. There are other sections in the piece where the soloist’s part is dense, and the track provides a consistency that functions more as a duet than accompaniment. Although the sections of prominence for the track are slim, there is one twelve-measure segment prior to the recapitulation where the track comes to the foreground (measures 194 through 205). This
interlude propels the performer into the final section of the piece (measure 206 to the end) with a short *accelerando*. Overall, the track provides a melodic line, rhythmic intensity, and an ethereal environment to the solo snare drum part.

**Extended/Uncommon Techniques**

Much of Perez’s writing for *Pulsar* is derivative of rudimental style drumming. For many percussionists, this piece is reminiscent of modern drum corps style writing. It consists of many quick rhythmic passages and a large number of flams and rim shots. Flams and other variations of flam rudiments are commonly used ornamentations in rudimental style writing. As previously mentioned, much of Perez’s influence on this solo comes from his experience in drum corps and in the marching arts. Some aspects of this piece are less common in snare drum repertoire but are becoming more popular in the marching arts space.

*Pulsar* is written using the percussion clef and only one line on the staff. Each stroke type is notated with a different symbol, and these symbols appear above, below, or on the line. Figure 9 shows the notation key that Perez created for *Pulsar*. It can be noted on this key that there are two different “x” shaped note heads; the one above the staff is notating to play on the rim and the one below is notating a rimshot. This can be seen at the very beginning of the piece.
One technique that is less common for snare drum writing is simultaneously playing on the rim and the drum head. In *Pulsar*, the very first instance of this appears in measure three. Perez writes separate rhythmic passages that are played concurrently, one hand on the rim and one hand on the drum head. Figure 10 shows measures three and four, where both rhythmic lines superimposed together, one above and one below the staff line.
The second uncommon technique in this piece is the use of a “stick on stick shot.” This technique requires the player to keep the bead of one stick on the head and to strike the shaft of that stick with their other stick. In Pulsar, Perez uses this technique only a few times. The note preceding this indication is a press, where the performer makes a short buzz with just one stick. After performing the buzz, the soloist leaves that stick on the head of the drum and strikes the shaft with the stick that is not in use. The timbre of this sound is somewhere between a rim knock and a rimshot. The sound is bright in timbre from the stick-on-stick contact but still has depth as the sound is traveling through the drum head.

Interpretation/Artistic Choices

One of the first choices the performer has to make is whether or not they will perform the piece with snares on or off. This is one of the artistic choices left up to the performer, and Perez states “This work is to be performed on an articulate, yet balanced, drum of the performer’s choosing with or without snares.” One of the biggest obstacles a performer may face with this piece in particular is balance. If the performer chooses to play with the snares off, the balance between the track and the drum will need to be tediously monitored in whatever space it will be performed in. If the performer chooses snares on, this problem may be less prevalent, as the sound of snares tend to allow a different kind of projection. Without the crisp clarity of the snares on, the tuning of the

\[ \text{Francisco Perez, } \textit{Pulsar} \text{ (Portland: Tapspace Publications, LLC, 2017).} \]

\[ \text{Francisco Perez, } \textit{Pulsar} \text{ (Portland: Tapspace Publications, LLC, 2017).} \]
drum used may be a topic of concern. To allow the drum to be in the foreground of the sound, tuning the drum to a pitch that is clearly heard above the sounds of the track should be a consideration. Perez also mentions that the soloist should serve as a part of the track, only “leading musically and not dynamically.”

As the soloist is the leading force in a musical sense, an important element to a successful performance of this piece is to accurately display dynamic contrast. This piece utilizes an extreme range of dynamics, from fortissimo all the way to niente. Often in rudimental playing, a large portion of the dynamics span from a moderate volume to very loud. Perez has adapted the idea of rudimental style playing to exist in the concert snare drum realm by incorporating incredibly soft dynamics as well as moments of loudness. Perez’s idea that the soloist should lead this composition musically is well supported by the dynamic contrast in this piece.

Articulation is an important component of all music, but sometimes composers tend to overlook this when writing for percussion. If the composer themselves is a percussionist, this tends to be less of an issue versus composers who come from other musical backgrounds. In this case, Pulsar has a wide array of articulations written for the solo snare drum. Perez has written three main articulations; unaccented, tenuto, and accented. He writes all three of these articulations at each dynamic throughout the piece. As the Merriam-Webster Dictionary states, the definition of tenuto is the following, “in a manner so as to hold a tone or chord firmly to its full value.” This definition holds true to most musicians but is often interpreted differently for some percussion instruments like

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the snare drum. In this case, it is more difficult to create a longer note on an instrument that when struck has a very quick decay. One way to interpret a tenuto, in this piece in particular, is that it fits somewhere in between an unaccented and an accented note. A tenuto can have slightly more weight than an unaccented note but does not contain the same velocity and attack as an accented note. These three articulations can be thought of in a three-tier system, growing in intensity, velocity, and stroke speed from unaccented, tenuto, and accented.

There are several moments in this piece where the performer is playing two separate rhythmic passages simultaneously on the rim and the drum head. While these two surfaces have different timbres, it is important to make sure they are balanced to one another. To help the performer successfully balance these sounds, Perez consistently writes the rhythmic line for the rim to be at least one dynamic level higher than the drum. Another way the performer could aid in the balance of these two aspects would be to utilize the area of the drum head that is closer to the rim. As the performer gets closer away from the center of the head, the sound thins out and is easier to control at softer dynamics. This helps the drum to not overpower the rim in these sections.

Consistency of strokes and articulations is an important aspect to this piece. There is material that repeats in multiple sections of the piece as well as certain sounds that reappear often. The first large thematic section spans from measure twenty-four to measure forty-six. This section repeats in the recapitulation in measures 206 to 224. There are a few rhythmic changes between these two sections and a few measures omitted, but the dynamic contrast is the same in both instances. The rhythms and dynamics between these two sections should be identical. The most difficult aspect of this
is keeping them the same while having played a large portion of the piece in between both sections. Another difficult aspect of this piece is keeping each stroke and sound consistent. Making sure the same portion of the stick is used to strike the rim, and that the same amount of stick is used in each rimshot can be difficult, especially when they occur throughout the piece and often at different dynamic points. Striving to have consistency of strokes is a necessary detail to have a successful performance.

As Perez takes his inspiration for writing this piece from rudimental style drumming, there are some artistic choices that can be made by the performer to enhance the rudimental writing style. Tracing back to the origins of the snare drum, some of the earliest instruments were used in military scenarios. These drums were worn over the shoulder and hung at an angle at the player’s left side near waist level. With these drums hanging to the left, a grip had to be created to prevent the performer from injury or discomfort. This is where the traditional grip originated. In this grip, the right hand uses an overhand grip while the left hand uses an underhand grip. In most modern concert and orchestral settings, performers can be seen using matched grip, where both the left and right hand are using the overhand grip. A visual example of these two different grips can be seen in Figure 11.
As this rudimental drum evolved, performers started wearing them on harnesses that sat on the shoulders, putting the drum in front of them. With the drum moving from the side to the front, the tilted angle was an aspect that was kept. Modern snare drum hardware has the ability to tilt a drum to any degree that the performer should desire. Since the solo snare drum part in *Pulsar* is rudimental in style, both the grip and drum position should be taken into consideration by the performer.

**Equipment**

*Pulsar* has a fairly minimal equipment list for a piece of repertoire with audio playback. The percussion equipment needed for this performance is a snare drum (with snares on or off) and a pair of snare drum sticks. As previously mentioned, the performer has to make an artistic choice of whether they will perform this piece with the snares on or off. This choice could influence the type of snare drum chosen. Some aspects to consider would be the dimensions of the drum, the material of the drum (wood or metal),
and the amount of muffling to add. Perez has recorded this piece and produced a video that can be found on the YouTube page of the publisher, Tapspace Publications. While referencing this video, it can be seen that he has taken the bottom head off of the snare drum he is performing on. This creates a very dry and muted sound. If the performer decides they will perform without the snares on, this could be an option. All aspects of the drum should be considered in this performance, specifically once the decision has been made whether to perform with or without snares.

There are several ways to perform this track live in a performance venue, and the choice the performer makes regarding the tracks will confirm which equipment is needed. To perform *Pulsar*, the soloist will need a device to play the audio track (computer, tablet, etc.), headphones, speakers to amplify the track, and an audio interface. Two additional pieces of equipment that could be needed are a headphone splitter and a digital audio workstation, such as Logic Pro or Garageband. Perez includes five tracks with the purchase of the piece: full performance, audio accompaniment only, audio + click practice, click only, and mono split. The full performance track includes the full mix of the audio with the solo part. The audio accompaniment only track is the full stereo audio without any other components, which lends it to be the best for performance. The audio + click practice is made to have both components for rehearsal scenarios. The click only track is best if the performer desires to perform the piece with only the click in their headphones. Finally, the mono split has both the audio and click simultaneously, with one panned left and one panned right. This particular track loses the stereo effect if used in live performance.

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The performer has two main choices for performance: using the mono split track or utilizing a digital audio workstation to combine the audio accompaniment only track with the click track. If the performer chooses the mono split, the track can be run through an audio interface with a headphone splitter so that the audience only hears the track while the performer hears the click. All speakers will need to be panned to the left so the audience only hears the audio track and not the click track. If the performer chooses the suggested route by the composer, a digital audio workstation will need to be used so that the click track, and the audio accompaniment can run through two separate outputs that will feed into the audio interface. This setup is a little more complicated and requires some basic knowledge about digital audio workstations. For a visual representation, figure 12 is a diagram created by Matthew G. Jordan that shows a technical setup for a piece that utilizes a combination of a separate stereo track with a click track. Overall, the choice is up to the performer and Perez made the piece accessible to performers with a wide knowledge of electronic equipment.

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Figure 12. Technical setup for a piece with separate stereo and click tracks

CHAPTER 5

OBBLIGATO SNARE DRUM MUSIC NO. 1: “THE POWER OF LOVE”

Biography

Thomas Kotcheff is a composer and pianist based in Los Angeles, California. His compositions have been performed on international stages by the following groups: The Riot Ensemble, Seattle Symphony, Sandbox Percussion, HOCKET, Peabody Percussion Group and more. As a composer, Kotcheff has had the opportunity to be a composition fellow with many organizations, including but not limited to the Los Angeles Philharmonic’s National Composers Intensive, the Aspen Summer Music Festival and School, and Bennington Chamber Music Conference. He has been an artist in residence at The Byrdcliffe Art Colony, The Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts, The Avaloch Farm Music Institute, The Studios of Key West, and The Hermitage Artist Retreat. In addition to his instrumental works, he has also composed and orchestrated for several films, including the Academy Award, Golden Globe, and GRAMMY winning score for Oppenheimer, as well as Black Panther: Wakanda Forever, Haunted Mansion, Origin, and Bob Marley: One Love. Kotcheff has been the recipient of multiple awards including a Charles Ives Scholarship, a Presser Foundation Award, a BMI Student Composer Award and more. In addition to his work as a composer, he frequently commissions and premieres new works for piano. In 2020, he released the world
premiere recording of a 75-minute solo piano composition entitled *Songs of Insurrection* by Frederic Rzewski. He founded the Los Angeles based piano duo HOCKET. Currently, Kotcheff serves as a faculty member at the Colburn School teaching music theory and ear training.\(^1\)

**Overview**

The fourth piece being examined in this document is Thomas Kotcheff’s *Obbligato Snare Drum Music No. 1: “The Power of Love.”* This piece was written in collaboration with Michael Compitello and is dedicated to him. Compitello works eagerly to commission new works that explore the possibilities of sound with percussion instruments. He has developed relationships with composers such as Thomas Kotcheff, Tonia Ko, Amy Beth Kirsten, Robert Honstein and more. He spends much of his time performing with several chamber groups (New Morse Code and Percussion Collective) as well as serving as Associate Professor of Percussion at Arizona State University.\(^2\)

Compitello premiered *Obbligato Snare Drum Music No. 1: “The Power of Love”* on March 3, 2020 at Arizona State University.\(^3\) Kotcheff and Compitello have collaborated before on other projects, and these collaborations sparked further interest in Kotcheff to


explore more writing for snare drum. This work combines difficult snare drum writing with Celine Dion’s extremely popular version of the song *The Power of Love* to create a new and inventive outlook on snare drum playing with electronic track. This piece is available for free through Kotcheff’s website, largely in part to the use of a copyright song. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, an *obbligato* is “an elaborate melodic part accompanying a solo or principal melody and usually played by a single instrument.”\(^4\) It derives its roots from obligatory, meaning “mandatory, required”\(^5\) which would equate to “not being omitted” in musical terminology. For this piece of music, the interpretation of obbligato could mean that neither the solo snare drum part nor the audio track should be performed without the other. After a thorough analysis of the work, it is clear that the music was composed with a direct relation to the musical and rhythmic aspects of Celine Dion’s *The Power of Love*, making both the solo snare drum music and the audio track function in tandem.

**Electronics**

In writing the audio track, Kotcheff took Dion’s *The Power of Love* and manipulated it to shift tempo, drastically change octaves, and change time signatures in the middle of vocal phrases. With all these changes happening throughout the piece, it is important that the performer align their part with the audio track. Kotcheff has included a

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cue for the audio track underneath the solo snare drum to align help the performer successfully line up each important musical moment. Throughout the piece, all of these musical shifts can be heard with emphasis from the snare drum. When the track shifts in tempo, it is sometimes accompanied by a polyrhythm written in the snare drum part. The shift in tempo often happens as a manipulation of the rhythm in the vocal line that aligns with the snare drum polyrhythmic pattern. The first indication of this is in measure thirty-four, when the time signature shifts to 4/7. Kotcheff keeps the measures barred in 4/4 but indicates the two groups of seven are overlayed across three full measures of 4/4 time. The pulse is immediately slower in these measures, and he has given an audible cue in the click track by subdividing the pickup in the new tempo. This can be seen in figure 13.

Figure 13. Rhythmic shift indicated in measures 34-36

| 34 |

\[
\frac{5}{4} \quad \frac{6}{3} \quad \frac{3}{3} \quad \frac{5}{7} \quad \frac{7}{7}
\]

Kotcheff has written a specific cue into the snare drum that is an indication of each shift in the track. He writes a strike on the rim to signal the shift. This stays consistent throughout the piece. This can also be seen in figure 13. The very first note in measure thirty-four is an indication of the track shifting time, which can be seen notated

\[
\text{I'm your lady and}
\]

Obbligato Snare Drum Music No. 1: “The Power of Love” by Thomas Kotcheff
as an “x” on the very top line of the staff. Another indication of the shift in audio track is the notation of the audio cues. When the track is playing the original recording, the notes in the cue look like normal note heads. In addition to the strike on the rim, the audio track notation also changes. The note heads change to upside down triangles. As soon as the next rim click is written, the note heads in the cue change back to normal as well.

Kotcheff also indicates in the audio cue if there is a shift away from the lyrics to a guitar melody, which can be helpful for the performer. This happens twice in the piece, once in a short interlude and as a cue to the final section of the piece.

**Extended/Uncommon Techniques**

Kotcheff writes a few things that are less common in snare drum writing, the first one being that he specifically notates where the performer should play on the snare drum head. A very common practice for snare drum playing is to utilize playing zones. A performer can get multiple sound characteristics from each area on the head. Often a performer will play closer to the center of the head for a louder and impactful sound, while going to the very edge near the rim to get a quieter and more delicate sound. In this piece, Kotcheff challenges the performer by indicating varying dynamics at each point on the drum. Often he writes louder dynamics at the edge, where a performer would typically be playing softly. This creates a different timbre than if a performer were to play the same dynamic towards the center. By indicating specific playing areas, Kotcheff has allowed the performer to create a variety of timbres without a very detailed lengthy
explanation. Simply creating a notation that represents the playing zones has added another level of musicality to the performance.

A second uncommon aspect to this piece is the use of junk metal. Playing on “found” instruments, being objects that are not inherently made to be musical, is not an unusual aspect of percussion music. Composers are becoming more comfortable asking percussionists to use everyday items as instruments, such as glass bottles, bowls, sandpaper, and in this case two pieces of junk metal. Kotcheff indicates that these two pieces of metal should be non-resonant and that they should be placed on the portion of the snare drum closest to the performer. Going to a local hardware store and browsing different metal objects may prove successful for finding small objects that will work for this piece. The performer would need to choose items that will lay flat on the drum and have enough surface area to play at a full range of dynamics.

Figure 14 shows both the setup diagram as well as the notation key. Kotcheff only makes use of four of the five lines on the staff, with the top line indicating several different strokes based on note head. As previously mentioned, Kotcheff has notated when the performer is to utilize different playing zones. At first glance, the notation key only indicates the middle and the edge playing areas. He uses these two lines on the staff as a guide, and every area on the head in between these two lines is indicated on the spaces and lines in between the middle and the edge. An example of this can be seen in figure 15, showing measures three through five. In measure five, there is a triplet rhythm that moves from the edge to the center with a decrescendo.
In this same musical example, another uncommon technique is shown. In measure four, a roll is indicated with an arrow to go from an ordinary roll speed to a slow roll speed. Oftentimes, this effect is accompanied by a crescendo or decrescendo. In this particular example, the rhythm following the roll is slower than an average roll speed at this tempo. He uses a rhythmic change to emphasize a dynamic change, which enhances the musical capabilities of a non-pitched instrument.
Interpretation/Artistic Choices

The first decision the performer should make after deciding to play this piece is regarding the junk metal. Since there is only one parameter about the metal pieces, it is up to the performer to choose the type of metal sound they like and best fits their personal vision for the piece. Kotcheff states that the two pieces of junk metal are to be non-resonant. This gives a wide array of choices for the performer. Some slightly resonant metal pieces could be chosen and then further muted when placing them on the drum. As the two pieces of metal are notated on two different lines, the performer could interpret that this indicates two separate pitches, one higher than the other. This could influence the performer’s choice as well.

Once the performer has chosen their metal sounds, they will need to decide how the metal should be placed on the drum. A difficulty in having objects on the snare drum head is that they will inevitably move around when being struck and when the drum is played. There are several solutions the performer could find, a few including attaching the metal to the drum or placing the metal pieces on a towel. Using a towel would be a great solution for a performer that decided to choose a slightly resonant metal, as this would provide a small amount of dampening.

As previously discussed, Kotcheff has clearly indicated playing zones. This particular compositional choice frees up the performer to focus on other musical aspects of the piece. While this indication of playing zones is helpful, it also challenges the performer musically. Typically, a performer chooses a playing zone based on dynamics, but nearly every instance of shifting zones in this composition is for a timbral change.
There are moments where the shift accentuates a dynamic contrast, such as in figure 15, but even in that example, the main focus is the change in timbral sound. A challenge with this particular example is that a performer will be traveling from a less resonant spot on the drum to the most resonant spot on the drum while decreasing volume to niente. The mechanics of this type of musical moment require a certain level of musicality and skill that an advanced performer would have.

In the percussion community, it has become very common to practice snare drum pieces or études with a song instead of using a metronome. Oftentimes, this helps the percussionist to connect the rhythmic aspects of snare drum playing with musicality, as it can be easy to forget that the snare drum can be more than simply a rhythmic instrument. It is important the performer choose a song that is close to their selected tempo. The song should function in a similar form and time signature. The compositional aspect of pairing a very well-known song with an extremely technical snare drum solo is almost unheard of. This piece is likely the first composition of its kind and can easily spark a new avenue for composers. Because Dion’s cover of the song has been extremely popular for over three decades, the concept of altering the track in any way could be viewed in a negative light. For the purpose of this composition, all the changes made to the track are simply musical choices made by Kotcheff to create a more interesting accompanying figure for the snare drum solo.

This solo is technically challenging and is best suited for an advanced performer. Some of the technical characteristics of this piece include polyrhythms, multiple rhythmic figures nested inside of one another, shifting time signatures, sudden tempo changes, and quick rudimental patterns. Kotcheff writes many groupings of five in this piece, but
several distinct variations. Some of these common iterations include five over two quarter notes, five over one quarter note, five notes in between two eighth notes, and even five over four quarter notes. Oftentimes within the five notes spanning two quarter notes, Kotcheff inserts rests or rhythmic figures superimposed within the five-note passage. An example can be seen in figure 16. Figure 16 shows measures 98 and 99 and presents several different rhythmic nesting examples. In measure 98, Kotcheff writes a dotted sixteenth thirty-second note rhythm that is followed by a sixteenth note triplet figure. Placing these in the correct spot rhythmically can be challenging, as it is already a difficult figure to subdivide. Making sure each rhythmic alteration lines up with a partial of the five-note pattern will help the performer to accurately perform these measures. Examples of this type of rhythmic nesting can be found throughout the piece. The performer could create exercises to practice placing these figures correctly. An example of an exercise could include breaking down the figures to their most basic form and then slowly adding the nested rhythms back in until it is correct.

Figure 16. Measures 98-99 in *Obbligato for Snare Drum No. 1: The Power of Love*

Obbligato Snare Drum Music No. 1: “The Power of Love” by Thomas Kotcheff
There is a section in the middle of the piece that changes time signature every measure. During this portion of the piece, the track has the greatest number of changes. As previously mentioned, the signal that the track is changing occurs when the soloist strikes the rim. This section spans from measure 105 to 128. Throughout this section, the track changes thirty-two times. With the track constantly changing and the time signature shifting every measure, this middle portion of the piece almost emulates a broken record. The constant and sudden changes seem spastic and sporadic, which is a very drastic change in character from the section preceding this material. Immediately following this chaotic middle section is a nine-measure long buzz roll that is accompanied by a very low distorted sound in the track. This buzz roll serves as an interlude to connect the disjointed section back to the main sound material found in the chorus. Following the buzz roll is a four-measure segment that leads back into the chorus, and during this segment Kotcheff writes a difficult rudimental pattern. In measure 141, there are flams written as sixteenth notes on beats three and four that crescendo moving from the center of the drum to the edge. Alternating flams at a tempo marking of quarter note equals 140 bpm is challenging for advanced players. If the performer is struggling to make these flams clear, the choice could be made to change to flam taps. In this scenario, it will make the rhythm cleaner and it is an easier rudiment to successfully perform at the written tempo. Figure 17 shows the flams written in measure 141, and figure 18 shows an alteration to flam taps that could be substituted for the purpose of clarity.
Another interesting aspect of this piece is that Kotcheff writes an eleven-measure segment that is an improvised solo. This solo section spans from measure 160 to measure 171, and Kotcheff notes “Improvised solo (11 bars) using snare & junk metal; no snare rim.” The track stays consistent throughout this improvisatory section, which is why he notes that the soloist should not utilize the rim, as that signals a change in the track. Adding an improvisation section in a snare drum solo is very unusual and is not incredibly common. A common aspect in a large amount of popular music genres is to

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have a small solo section where an instrument takes the lead without any vocal lines. This could be a reason for why Kotcheff included this improvisatory section, to give the snare drum soloist an opportunity to create their own ideas over the audio track. There could be another motive for this improv section: it could be meant as a response to the lyrics of the song. The lyrics suggest that love is so powerful it can make a person feel a myriad of emotions, from comfort to fear. Kotcheff could have included this improvisation section to allow the performer to respond emotionally to the lyrics, whether they have a positive or negative impact on the performer. It can be a powerful thing to allow one’s personal experiences into live performance. It can create a more musical and authentic performance when the performer is relating directly to their own feelings and experiences. An important aspect of improvising is creating musical thoughts that keep the integrity of the style. For this piece, a performer could incorporate some of the aspects that are characteristic of Kotcheff’s writing (playing zones, polyrhythmic figures, alternating between metal and drum, etc.)

**Equipment**

One of the most unique aspects of this piece is the use of two pieces of “non-resonant junk metal.” Aside from choosing the metal sounds that best suit the performer’s intent for the piece, the percussion equipment required is very minimal. In addition to the metal pieces, a snare drum and snare drum sticks are all the performer would need. As previously mentioned, one of the challenges with the selection of the

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metal pieces is finding the best way to keep them from moving around on the drum head. As this piece was just completed four years ago, there are not an exorbitant number of recordings available. The few that are available to reference tend to use one of two solutions for keeping the metal in place: putting a towel on the drum and the metal on top or using some form of adhesive to keep the metal attached to the drum head. Placing a towel or adhesive on a drum head will cause varying amounts of muffling to the head. Both options are adequate choices, but ultimately it is up to the performer to decide which amount of muffling they think best suits their ideal sound for the piece.

The electronic equipment needed for *Obbligato Snare Drum Music No. 1: The Power of Love* is similar to some of the pieces previously mentioned in this document. This piece includes three different audio tracks: click, playback, and a track with both the playback and click. As previously mentioned, when composers include a track with both the playback and click, this eliminates the stereo quality of the track which is the best quality for live performance. Thankfully, Kotcheff allows the performer to choose whichever audio experience they feel more comfortable utilizing. For the best audio experience, it would be suggested to utilize a digital audio workstation to run both separate tracks to achieve a stereo experience. This will require the performer to have a computer with a digital audio workstation, headphones, an audio interface, and speakers. Some basic knowledge about digital audio workstations is required to run this audio setup, but Kotcheff did include the split track with click and playback panned separate directions if the performer feels more comfortable utilizing a headphone splitter. This isn’t recommended, as the quality of the audio will suffer panned to each side. This piece would utilize the same audio set up referenced in Figure 12.
CHAPTER 6

HEART.THROB

Biography

Composer and sonic artist Nina C. Young is known for projects that range from concert pieces to interactive installations. Her music is well-known to have modern and experimental aspects, while taking some influence from genres spanning from classical to popular music. She “strives to create unique sonic environments that explore aural architectures, resonance, and ephemera.”¹ Young’s works have been presented by Carnegie Hall, LA Phil’s Next on Grand, the National Gallery and more. Her compositions have reached international audiences through performances by the American Composers Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, Le Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, the Aizuri Quartet, Yarn/Wire and more. Young has received a myriad of awards including the 2015-2016 Rome Prize at the American Academy in Rome, a 2021 Guggenheim Fellowship, a Koussevitzky Commission, a Charles Ives Scholarship, Aspen Music Festival’s Jacob Druckman Prize, and various honors from BMI, IAWM, and ASCAP/SEAMUS. Carnegie Hall commissioned Young to compose a work for the American Composers Orchestra entitled Out of whose womb came the ice, written for baritone, orchestra, electronics, and generative video. Several

other recent projects range from a violin concerto commissioned by the Philadelphia Orchestra and Los Angeles Chamber orchestra to an immersive audio-visual installation commissioned by EMPAC. Young’s breadth of projects make her one of the most unique and up-and-coming composers of late. Young is currently an Associate Professor of Composition at the University of Southern California. She also serves as Co-Artistic Director of New York’s Ensemble Échappé. Her compositions are published through one of the world’s largest publication companies, Peermusic Classical.

Overview

The final piece being analyzed in this document is Nina C. Young’s Heart.throb. This piece was commissioned by Michael Compitello as part of his project entitled Unsnared Drum. Compitello writes the following about the project. “Unsnared Drum reframes how people think about, perform, and practice the snare drum, freeing the drum from its historical and idiomatic chains. It asks whether the snare drum can be bold, coy, suave, and elegant: in short, interesting.”² As part of the project, Compitello commissioned four female composers to stretch the confines of what exists for snare drum literature. He worked closely with each composer, collaborating, premiering, and recording each of the four pieces. He states the following about the outcome of the pieces composed. “The result is a collection of pieces which highlight the snare drum’s breadth

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of sonic possibility and depth of expressivity, revealing an instrument of drama, grace, and heart.”

Heart.throb is nothing short of that description. This work for snare drum pushes any compositional boundary existing for the instrument. Young combines her sonic knowledge with her experimental compositional style to create a landmark in snare drum literature. This piece utilizes live electronics that enhance the physical manipulations made to the snare drum before and during the performance. In the performance notes, Young writes a suggestion regarding aspects of the snare drum that the performer should choose. She states “The smaller, taller, more resonant drums work best. The drum should be unevenly tuned with fairly slackened tension.” This one specification alone seemingly breaks a critical rule about snare drum maintenance: tuning. A very standard aspect of all percussion instruments that contain a head of some sort is that the drum head should be tightened and evenly tuned, to create a crisp and centered sound. Young is suggesting the performer break that rule before even performing this piece. The aim of loosening the head is to help the drum best interact with all the electronic aspects and with the unusual types of strokes the performer will utilize.

Electronics

Arguably the most important aspect of this particular work is the use of live electronics. Young has essentially transformed a snare drum with two pieces of electronic

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4 Nina C. Young, Heart.throb (New York: Peermusic Classical, 2019).
equipment: a contact microphone and a transducer. Compitello writes, “Nina affixes a transducer to the head of the drum, turning the instrument into a speaker which broadcasts a pulsating and undulating bed of sinusoids.” When the performer attaches the transducer to the bottom head of the snare drum, it will cause the head to vibrate. These vibrations turn into waves, which is then translated by the brain to equal sound. A contact microphone is designed to be physically attached to whatever object is producing sound. The difference between this type of microphone and an air microphone is that it receives audio signal from vibrations instead of sound waves found in the air. For this piece, the performer will have to attach the contact microphone to the side of the snare drum with gaff tape. Young gives recommendations for both the transducer and the contact microphone she suggests, and these can be seen in figures 19 and 20 respectively.

Figure 19. 8 Ohm Transducer, Dayton Audio DAEX25 Sound Exciter

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The combination of these two pieces of equipment with the program Max create an experience with live electronics. Max is an interactive program that allows individuals to create their own sound worlds using Max objects that create software instruments, effects, and samplers. The program responds to keyboard controls and outside devices like MIDI controls. Max functions with both Max and MSP objects. A Max object communicates by sending messages at a specific moment through patch cords. These messages are in response to actions made by the individual controlling the program, either through a keyboard stroke or a MIDI note played. The individual can also schedule events to occur in their project. MSP objects function in a similar way, as they are connected by patch cords but the way they communicate is different. MSP objects are connected with what is called a “signal network.” This network functions by MSP objects

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forming relationships between each other. The relationships calculate the information that is needed to perform the audio in each particular instant. With the functionality of the “signal network,” it allows the patches to run at a faster audio rate than a Max patch would.

Young has created a patch using Max/MSP that amplifies and works cohesively with the sound being produced in the snare drum. For the beginning section of the piece, there is very little sound being produced by the patch, as the amplification is slowly increasing in volume. The first moment of obvious electronic manipulation is in measure eleven, where Young notes that “oscillators begin.”7 This continues to become prevalent when the performer begins to use their hands on the drum head. The amount of pressure that is indicated in the score changes the sound emitting through the patch aided by the vibrations from the transducer. This section is followed by a long electronic swell that moves into a new section. The next section removes the oscillators and adds in live delay. Towards the end of this section, the performer accelerates and there is a high pitch that ascends in conjunction with the accelerando in the snare part. The performer begins rolling on the rim of the drum, and this is accompanied by more high pitch electronic squeals. These are accentuated by strikes on the drum head that begin slowly and increase metrically as the time signatures change. The final section of the piece utilizes the combination of pressure on the top drum head by various implements with the vibrations of the snares on the bottom head. The performance cresendos until the very end, which is signaled by the snares being abruptly turned off, stopping all sound and all vibrations.

7 Nina C. Young, *Heart.throb* (New York: Peermusic Classical, 2019).
Extended/Uncommon Techniques

This piece exists as a complete work of extended and uncommon techniques. Young is very intentional with specifying every detail, down to the specific inches of the drum stick the performer is to use. This piece would be impossible to perform without such structure and specificity. In addition to a notation key that is specific to the snare drum strokes, she includes a table regarding placement on the drum, specific roll notation, and electronic pedal trigger cues.

The first uncommon aspect in this piece is the notation of where the performer is to make contact with the drum head. Young notates this above the snare drum part as a circle with two “x’s” to indicate each hand. Oftentimes the hands are in different positions on the drum, or only one hand is in use. These positions can be noted by the “x’s” in different places or only one shown on the diagram. This is seen throughout the piece whenever the performer is utilizing an implement of some kind. An example of this diagram can be seen in figure 21, which features measures eight and nine.

Figure 21. Example of drum head diagram, measures eight and nine

Heart.throb by Nina C. Young
Since this piece utilizes a transducer and Max to create live electronic manipulation, Young writes some interesting techniques to enhance the auditory experiences. One of the most prominent features of this piece is the way she uses changing pressure to influence the shifts in the electronic sounds being created. From the very beginning of the piece, the performer is taking a felt mallet and swirling it in a circular motion across the head. Towards the end of the piece, the performer uses a metal wire brush on the head. Young indicates the change in pressure to emulate a crescendo and/or decrescendo. Simultaneously, the performer is creating a different musical line with the butt end of a drum stick. That musical line eventually becomes a metrical segment of turning the snare mechanism on and off. The snares being turned on and off in a rhythmic pattern creates a change in pressure and vibrations of the bottom head, which overtakes the electronics as the transducer is vibrating on the bottom head.

Another unusual aspect of this piece is related to the changing in pressure. A few minutes into the piece, the performer begins using different parts of their hand to press on the head, which creates a melodic pitch-bending sound through the electronics. Young indicates for the performer to use three distinct sections of the hand, notated specifically as palm, fingertips, and wrist. She manipulates pressure by indicating shifts between each of the three parts of the hand; sometimes all three are together in unison and other times there is only one or two parts being utilized. These shifts are audibly heard in the electronics, creating a melodic sound.

In the performance notes, Young includes several detailed charts that aid the performer in understanding the notation seen within the piece. One of the rather unusual aspects in the performance notes is the specifications of which portion of the stick should
be used. She creates a numbering system to specify each inch on the stick, starting with the tip being zero and increasing by one inch for each number subsequently. This numbering system is used throughout the piece, mostly when it is indicated to perform on the rim or on the head with sticks. If the same number is to be repeated for an extended period of time, Young indicates this with an arrow that stretches until the next number occurs. Figure 22 shows an example of the number systems in measure 86.

Figure 22. Young’s numbering system in Heart.throb

Heart.throb by Nina C. Young

**Interpretation/Artistic Choices**

The first choice a percussionist needs to make to perform this piece is which drum they would like to use. Young notes that the drum should be unevenly tuned and to a lower pitch. This piece is not meant to be polished in a traditional way, which could be a reason for the indication that the drum is to be prepared in less standard ways than one would associate with the snare drum. As much of this piece relies on changing pressure and applying many implements to the drum head, taking multiple types of drums into
consideration would be advised. Experimenting with tuning multiple drums to a lower pitch and several of the pressurized components would aid the performer in finding the perfect drum sound for their performance.

A composer’s writing can tell us much about their intent, but oftentimes some aspects can be misunderstood or unclear. If a composer includes program notes, it can give performers a clearer insight into the intent of the piece. Young includes program notes for *Heart.throb*, and they read the following:

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military marching bands,  
drumcore parades,  
sharp, staccato rudiments:  
The obvious story  
of the snare drum.

delicate contrast,  
precision and care,  
passionate nuance:  
A secret love story  
of warm resonance cradled  
by tension coupled heads.
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With simple technological meditation, the percussionist, our valiant heartthrob, pulses life into the membranes. The drummer reveals interior whispers – resuscitated, amplified, filtered. The drum reveals the drummer.  

These program notes show the care Young took when composing this piece, meticulously including every detail to specify exactly how each rhythmic iteration should be performed. The poetic nature of her words is evident in the intentional spacing of each line of text. This shows how Young took inspiration from the historical aspects and previous writings for the snare drum and made something completely new that fits into her world of composition. Her use of vibrations and Max patches create the opportunity

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8 Nina C. Young, *Heart.throb* (New York: Peermusic Classical, 2019).
for the percussionist to “pulse life into the membranes”\textsuperscript{9} and “reveals interior whispers.”\textsuperscript{10} This presents the composition as more than just music on a page but an immersive experience for performer and audience both. The performer and audience become encapsulated by the environment being created between snare drum and electronics. All of these aspects tie directly into Young’s compositional style, making this a landmark piece for percussionists and composers alike.

There are so many aspects of this piece that are specified by Young’s intense detailed notes, which make it easier to perform but allows for less interpretation by the performer. As this type of piece is unusual and less common in the percussion medium, it is helpful to have tips and guidelines to follow for performance. When performing alongside a Max patch, a performer is somewhat stuck inside the confines of the patch. In this case, the performer is triggering the changes in the patch, so there is some flexibility. Young writes these trigger points as numbers inside of a triangle shape. These are moments written into the Max patch that will be triggered only by the performer. Throughout the piece, there are fifty-nine separate electronic cues. As this piece does not have a click track, the triggering of electronic cues can help keep a performer aligned.

**Equipment**

Out of all the pieces analyzed in this document, *Heart.throb* has the most extensive amount of equipment needed. The percussion equipment needed for this piece

\textsuperscript{9} Nina C. Young, *Heart.throb* (New York: Peermusic Classical, 2019).

\textsuperscript{10} Nina C. Young, *Heart.throb* (New York: Peermusic Classical, 2019).
is a snare drum of the performer’s choice (chosen with the uneven tuning and lower pitch in mind), a pair of wooden drumsticks, a pair of hard-spun felt balls, one “dreadlock,” and two metal brushes. Choosing the snare drum that the performer finds will best fit the composer’s suggestions is one of the most important aspects of this piece. As the performer utilizes every inch of the drum head, it is important that the tuning be uneven and low in pitch to best achieve the variety in sound. The choice of wooden snare sticks should be carefully considered, as much of the playing with the sticks happens on the rim and utilizes most of the sticks, as previously mentioned regarding Young’s numbering system. The performer will use the tips of the sticks, so using a stick with an elongated bead may aid in better accuracy than a smaller or rounded tip.

Hard-spun felt balls fall into two categories: timpani mallets or “swizzle” sticks. Most often, percussionists would use a hard felt mallet for timpani playing, multi-percussion setups, or quick implement changes. A “swizzle” style stick is a normal drum stick with a hard felt ball on the butt end of the stick, making it a great implement for quick transitions. Oftentimes, pieces will call for drum sticks to be used on an instrument followed by a fast change to something like a suspended cymbal roll. The “swizzle” sticks are great for these moments, as a percussionist can quickly flip the sticks around and have a softer mallet to use.

The last two implements needed for this piece are metal brushes and a “dreadlock”. These are similar implements, as they are both types of brushes. The metal brushes Young is referring to are the most standard type of brushes used by percussionists. Often called “wire brushes,” these are commonly used in drum set playing and for other effects in percussion repertoire. The “dreadlock” is a type of brush that is
most often used in marching percussion. The “dreadlock” is a product made by percussion company Vic Firth, and the product description includes that “dreadlocks” “feature braided heavy gauge stainless-steel wires that produce bold percussive sound.”

Young uses the “dreadlocks” to scrape across the rim of the snare drum, which creates a crisp and explosive character against the hand motions changing pressure of the drum head.

The electronic equipment needed for this piece is more extensive than other piece in this document. The performer will need a computer with Max8 to run the patch (included with purchase of score), an audio interface (minimum one channel input with pre-amp and one channel output), one USB MIDI pedal, one contact microphone, one xlr cable, one Class T amplifier, one 8 ohm transducer, speaker cable (16 AWG), one cable to connect amplifier to audio interface, and power supply cables for the amplifier, laptop, and audio interface.

To run the audio patch, the performer will need a computer with Max8 downloaded. When the score is purchased, Young has information included on how to gain access to the patch download. An audio interface is needed to connect the contact microphone and amplifier to the input and output respectively. As previously mentioned, Young includes cue markings for when the performer needs to trigger a change in the electronics. A USB MIDI pedal is needed to trigger these changes and will be connected to the computer running Max8. The contact microphone will be attached to the side of the snare drum with gaff tape, commonly used on electrical equipment. Young includes a suggestion in the score for the Cortado MKII. An xlr cable is needed to connect the

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contact microphone to the audio interface in the channel one input. A Class T Amplifier is required to connect the transducer to the audio interface. The 16 AWG speaker cable connects the transducer to the amplifier’s output and the amplifier is connected to the output of the audio interface. The setup for this piece is very intricate and extensive, so Young has included a diagram to best help the performer in successfully connecting all electronics to the correct places. Figure 23 shows this diagram as it is included in the score.

Figure 23. Electronics setup diagram for Heart.throb

Heart.throb by Nina C. Young
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

From its inception to now, the snare drum has endured countless changes and modifications. It began with rope tension tuning and was used in military movements to signal formations and commands. The snare drum became a prominent figure in the expansion of the percussion section in orchestral repertoire. As the instrument was modified to keep up with the increasing repertoire, the drum became recognized as a solo instrument in the mid-twentieth century. From that moment on, the snare drum has progressed into what we now know the instrument to be and the repertoire followed those changes. Now, snare drum is seen as a staple figure in wind band and orchestral ensembles and has become one of percussion instruments with the most diverse solo music catalog. Percussionists around the world perform with the snare drum in its many facets, including the most revolutionary and exploratory repertoire: music with electronics.

The five pieces analyzed in this document present repertoire for the snare drum with an electronic aspect. These pieces showcase new innovations, developing compositional aspects, and five important composers from underrepresented groups. Including an audio component of spoken voice that controls the speed of all musical figures is something few composers had implemented at the time of Stop Speaking’s inception. Andy Akiho used this uncommon compositional technique and combined it
with modern technology to create a monologue as an accompanying figure to a snare drum solo. Ivan Trevino incorporated idioms from Jacques Delécluse’s writing in his piece *Spur*. Trevino takes inspiration from a compositional giant in percussion and blends it with his own writing style to create a soundscape that blurs lines between traditional and new-age percussion writing. Francisco Perez takes a compositional approach of combining aspects of marching percussion with electronic music components. While there are many rudimental style solos in the repertoire, this piece takes a modern approach of incorporating playback as accompaniment to the solo. Perez’s inspiration from electronic music to create the playback transforms an older style of writing and makes it relevant to the growing catalog of percussion music. A very powerful statement of musicality and experimentation, Thomas Kotcheff’s *Obbligato Snare Drum Music No. 1: “The Power of Love”* showcases an incredibly crafted example for blending “classical” instruments with popular music icons. Celine Dion’s rendition of *The Power of Love* creates a very interesting audio accompaniment to a wildly technical snare drum solo, but Kotcheff takes moments to alter the iconic singing very suddenly, keeping the listener engaged in the performance. Finally, the most innovative composition analyzed is *Heart.throb* by Nina C. Young. *Heart.throb* challenges the very meaning and existence of the instrument itself. Young manages to morph the snare drum into a loudspeaker, a melodic instrument, and asks the performer to encapsulate what it means to be a percussionist. The compositional magnitude of this piece pushes past the existing framework for music in the percussion medium and creates a clear pathway for the future of writing for this instrument.
The purpose of this document is to showcase composers of diverse backgrounds and highlight the work they are doing for the percussion community. Further research will introduce performance guides for each piece, providing more in-depth information regarding topics in this document as well as other ideas not discussed (how to set up audio equipment, utilizing digital audio workstations, preparing pieces for performance, etc.). Each of the five composers have differing characteristics to their compositional styles, but they all have added valuable pieces of repertoire to this genre of percussion literature. As two of the five composers are not percussionists, this shows that some of the most exploratory writing for percussion can come from those who are inherently less familiar with the intricacies of percussion writing. The work of these five composers reflects the innovative and ever-changing medium of snare drum repertoire.
REFERENCES


