

MARIMBA ROSSA

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ABSTRACT

Marimba Rossa is a three-movement concert piece for marimba and symphony orchestra. The 14-minute piece is written in the spirit of the Italian Baroque concertos of Antonio Vivaldi (the “Red Priest” for whom the piece is named), using a harmonic and rhythm language that is heavily influenced by the concert and pop music of the late twentieth-century. *Marimba Rossa* was composed with the concept of *Ars Combinatoria* in mind. First espoused by George Rochberg in 1973, *Ars Combinatoria* is concert music that uses musical gestures drawn from any musical tradition.

The accompanying monograph provides a detailed history of the modern concert marimba and an account of the evolution of its concert and popular music repertoire. Specific information about the marimba’s origins in Asia, its place in the *Bible*, the development of the European *strohfiedel* xylophone, the refinement of the instrument in America, and a discussion of the Guatemalan, Mexican, and Japanese marimba tradition is included to provide a context and rationale for the composing of *Marimba Rossa*. The contributions of John Calhoun Deagan, Ulysses G. Leedy, George Hamilton Green, Harry Breuer, Clair Omar Musser, and others are chronicled. Other topics include: the use of the xylophone in the symphony orchestra; polytonality; modal writing; and the folk music of Calabria, Italy. The monograph also describes the juxtaposition of the marimba and various instrumental consorts and the metaphoric class struggle these pairings represent in *Marimba Rossa*.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of my parents, Concetta and Michael, and to my children, Jonathan, James, and Elizabeth.

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CHAPTER 1

PRE-COMPOSITIONAL DETERMINATIONS

Before beginning to compose, I made several decisions about what *Marimba Rossa* would be: how I wanted it to sound, and what I would do to get it to sound the way I wanted. I resolved to create a piece in three movements, each about five minutes long, which would follow the fast-slow-fast pattern of the Italian Baroque concerto. As a percussionist, I knew of the dearth of melodic solo literature for mallet percussion instruments. Although the solo marimba literature is growing, percussionists often borrow pieces from the solo repertoire of other instruments for study and performance. As a mallet student, I often studied Baroque-era compositions for flute, violin, or cello, finding these to be wonderful vehicles for gaining an understanding of musical line and for learning interpretation. I wanted to compose a solo work for marimba and an orchestra that manifested the musical characteristics of the concertos of Antonio Vivaldi, Johann Sebastian Bach, George Phillip Telemann, and George Fredrick Handel—the compositions from which I learned about music. In short, I would devise a composition that borrowed the *essence* or *spirit* of the Baroque concerto. However, the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic language I would use would be that evolved from my experiences of writing, recording, and performing rock music; working as an arranger for symphony orchestras, broadcasting, and popular records; working in the pit for a large opera company and on the stage with a symphony orchestra; and my graduate study in composition.

For many years, I have been influenced by George Rochberg's observation that composers working in the late twentieth-century could write music that freely combined elements from any musical genre. All sorts of music—concert, popular or folk—could once again be grist for the composer. This is not a new idea. For centuries composers have borrowed from then-popular music and from each other. In a 1973 article, Rochberg described *Ars Combinatoria* as including “all the gestures, old and new, of which music is capable” (Rochberg, 1973).

I find *Ars Combinatoria*—creating concert music that uses musical gestures familiar to the listener and the player that are borrowed from folk, popular, and art music from any era—very appealing. As a young listener, composer, and performer I was unenthusiastic about much of the twentieth-century concert music I experienced, especially that composed by those academic aspirants who were adherents of the Second Viennese school or rigid disciples of one composer or another. My musical interests were then, and have remained, broad. I admired and respected the work of many composers, including: Igor Stravinsky, Béla Bartók, Michael Colgrass, George Crumb, William Kraft, Alan Hovhaness, Vincent Persichetti, Ned Rorem, and George Rochberg as well as the work of many popular music composers. Rochberg's new mandate was the encouragement I needed to create new works that made use of the music I knew and loved as my “undifferentiated stockpile” (Hyde, 1996, p.211): the building blocks for my new compositions.

I was first exposed to Professor Rochberg and this open-minded approach during lectures I attended as an undergraduate at the Temple University Institute of Music at

Ambler, Pennsylvania. During that same summer of 1969, I also attended seminars given by Vincent Persichetti. I soon became familiar with Persichetti's treatise, *Twentieth-Century Harmony* and was familiar with his commitment to music that was expressly distinct from that of the students of the Second Viennese school. It was not until my graduate studies with Richard Brodhead in 2005, however, that I was reminded of Rochberg's missive.

In designing a composition for marimba and orchestra that is generally analogous to a Baroque concerto, but in the musical language I speak, I chose to make *Marimba Rossa* musically, as well as technically, challenging. My goal was to create rich musical lines—a kind of *bel canto* marimba playing—as well as passages with notes in rapid succession, large leaps, contrary motion between the hands, and chords. For *Marimba Rossa*, the performer would, for the most part, need only two mallets, and require an instrument with a five-octave range. I chose to have one movement in the form of a dance and to have the middle movement be *senza misura*, or at least sound that way, and be modeled in spirit after the second movement of my composition, *Red Lotus*. Even though I chose not to follow exactly the formal dictates of the Italian concertos of Antonio Vivaldi, I would nevertheless choose to honor the father of the concerto form by naming my piece with a reference to him. Nicknamed *Il prete rosso*, “The Red-haired Priest” (Timberlake, 1969), I decided to name my new work, *Marimba Rossa*—a double pun because the marimba is made of rosewood. By creating a fanciful name for this yet-to-be-written piece, I pay a second tribute to Vivaldi, who often christened his works with fantastic or at least programmatic titles, like *Estro armonico* [The Harmonic Whim], *La*

Stravaganza [The Extraordinary], and *Cimento dell'Armonia e del'Inventione* [The Contest Between Harmony and Invention] (Bukofzer, 1947, p.229).

CHAPTER 2

EVOLUTION OF THE CONCERT MARIMBA

Asian and Middle Eastern Origins

The birth place of the marimba is unclear and a matter of controversy among scholars. It is accepted, though, that marimba-like instruments were developed by indigenous persons the world over and are found in almost every culture. Anthropologists believe that marimbas were carried from one culture to another as lands were conquered or as a result of business intercourse. Their design was continually refined as local and foreign customs intermingled. Imported modifications perceived as improvements were kept as others were discarded. What has emerged after several thousand years of evolution is a beautiful-sounding concert instrument made with rosewood bars suspended over tubular resonators and having a range of up to five octaves.

Ancient marimbas are among the oldest extant musical instruments of any kind. A marimba made of tuned stones and struck with mallets was found in Vietnam in 1954. It is called a *schist*. Archaeologists estimate it to be 5,000 years old (Kite, 2007).

In Greece, archaeologists have discovered a keyboard instrument with slab-type keys made of solid stone set with jewels and having resonators. It is believed that the Greek stone marimba was made in 2300 BCE (Jackson, 1954, p. 23-32). Interestingly, this instrument includes resonators that are constructed to lengths that correspond correctly to calculations later developed by Pythagoras. “Pythagoras, during his scientific

investigations of sound phenomena, used analogues of the marimba to demonstrate the laws of beat frequency difference” (Peters, 1975, p.129).

Gordon Peters, former percussionist of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, in his 1975 treatise, *The Drummer: Man*, agrees that marimba-like instruments were developed independently in many lands. However, using references of musical instruments in literature and specimens from statuary and paintings to support his thesis, Peters proffers that the marimba and its antecedents emerged in the Middle East in about 3000 BCE. “Keyboard percussion instruments, that is, a series of homogeneous different-pitched struck materials, have been found in most of the major cultures in pre-Christian times” (Peters, 1975, p.125). According to Peters, the *Bible* books of *Genesis* and *Job* have references to the *ugab*, a member of the *ranat* family of marimbas. Peters claims that “*ugab*” and “*ranat*” are incorrectly translated as “organ” or “flute” in most editions of the *Bible*, but originally meant “marimba.” Perusals of two contemporary translations of the *Bible* reveal significant discrepancies. *The Christian Life Bible* translates *ugab* as “flute” in *Genesis*:

“His brother’s name was Jubal. He was the father of all those who play the harp and the flute” (Genesis 4:20 and 4:21).

The NIV Study Bible translates *ugab* as “harp” in *Job*:

“They sing to the music of the tambourine and harp;” (*Job* 21:12).

Genesis and *Job* were written in approximately 3500 BCE. The translation of instrument names, even in the *Bible*, is a matter of varied opinions. The most important

nineteenth-century scholar on the subject, Carl Engel, in his 1879 treatise, *The Literature of National Music*, discusses the problem of historical instrument names.

A wooden harmonicon, like the marimba of balafo [*sic*] of the negroes [*sic*], is ‘a piano;’ and when we are told that a native minstrel executed with admirable skill his plaintive national tunes on ‘a mouth-organ,’ we are left in uncertainty as to whether the instrument was a Jew’s harp or a pandean [*sic*] pipe like the Hebrew ugab [*sic*]. However, it is hardly necessary to show that most of the musical information offered in English books of travel is useless, since the student has probably ascertained this already from experience. (Engel, 1879, p.94).

The problem of interpreting the names of Biblical instruments accurately remains.

The controversy surrounding the identity and significance of the Biblical instruments derives from the complexity of the original source. Even the term itself is ambiguous, as it may denote the instruments of the period described by any given text of the Bible, those of the period and environment in which the written tradition originated, or those that have remained in the memory of society from a certain stage of the oral tradition. Furthermore, should a reference to an instrument be regarded as a theological symbol or an historical document? Must it be placed in the relevant context by archaeological finds before it may be regarded as concrete fact? It is possible to discuss the subject only if an interdisciplinary approach is adopted involving ‘new and processual archaeology’, recent studies of the Pentateuch, and modern archaeomusicology. Although the organological information provided by the Biblical texts themselves is scant, the social and symbolic context of the music often can be established quite precisely (Braun).

Mallet instruments were also played in China before 2500 BCE. These were Marimba-like instruments that divide the octave into 12 pitches. The *pien-chung* was

used in the court of Emperor Huan Ti in 2697 BCE or earlier. Also appearing during the pre-Christian epoch was the *lus*, made first of bamboo, then of copper, and later of stone. Archeologists believe that Chinese instrument-makers progressed from one material to another in search of a material that would be unaffected by atmospheric conditions and would therefore remain at a constant pitch.

Other marimba prototypes include pitched gongs made of stones that are cut, polished, and suspended in two equal rows of 16 stones. Called the *pien-king* or Eastern gong, it was played with small wooden mallets. Shaving or filing the gong's thickness adjusted the tuning of the gongs of the *pien-king*. Chinese marimba precursors like the *pien-king* or *lus* were indispensable features of private and official occasions at the pagoda of the Emperor and in the temples (Peters, 1975, p. 125-129).

Gordon Peters discusses in depth several other antecedents of the modern marimba in support of his claim that the marimba originated in the Mediterranean, then spread to Asia and elsewhere. The *ou*, an instrument that remains in use today, has 20 or more pieces of metal, sometimes in the shape of saw teeth, placed along the back of a hollow, wooden, animal-shaped figure. Often a crouching tiger, the figure rests on a resonating sounding board; its metal teeth are either plucked or struck.

There are other examples of historic marimba-like instruments. Sounding-stones were used in the Christian churches of Ethiopia as early as the 17th century. An etching on a stone slab found in China and dated to about 206 BC depicts the philosopher Confucius playing stone chimes. Instruments of similar design are still used in Confucian temples.

Early Hindus also used marimbas in their worship service. Evidence is available showing that the *voorang* marimba was used by the Hindus as early as about 600 BC.

Travelers from China brought marimba-like instruments to Indonesia, including Bali and Java. For instance, an instrument similar to the Mediterranean *ranat* marimbas called the *gangsa Djongkok* was found to be in use by the Balinese by about 500 BC.

Europe

Early inhabitants of Europe played marimba-like instruments. These were instruments developed by indigenous persons and also those brought in by travelers, traders, and conquerors from Greece, Rome, and the Middle East. The European xylophone existed in two different designs. Northern Europeans, persons from Scandinavia and Germany, played the *ranat*. Eastern Europeans, including Russians, the Poles, and the Tartars, played the *strohfiedel*. Musicologists Sir George Grove and J.F. Cook used the German name, *strohfiedel*, to describe the marimbas found in use in northern European countries (Grove, 1954). The *strohfiedel* was a collection of tuned wood lengths laid out over any convenient surface (Kite, 2007, p.127). “The Germans called the xylophone a ‘straw fiddle’ because it originally consisted of blocks, of no specified number, of glass or metal but usually of wood, tuned to scale and arranged on belts of straw and struck with two small hammers. It is a very ancient instrument and no one knows its exact origin” (Cook, 1937). It is probable that the tuned idiophones played in Europe were first brought to the Middle East by travelers from China, Japan, and

Indonesia, where idiophones were played for thousands of years. From there, mallet instruments were brought to Europe. These included the *ranat*, a trough xylophone with five to eight bars suspended over a resonating box.

The xylophone is mentioned in a number of books on musical instruments published in sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century Europe. Martin Agricola, a music theorist who lived from 1486 to 1556, refers to a *strofiedel* in his treatise, *Musica instrumentalis deudsch*, written in 1529. Agricola's *strofiedel* was made up of 25 tuned wooden bars. In 1620, the organist and composer Michael Praetorius (1571-1621) shows a fifteen-bar *strofiedel* built in the shape of a pyramid in his *Theatrum instrumentorum* (the second volume of *Syntagma musicum*) (Kite, 2007, p.128).

Africa

Marimbas were probably played in Africa for thousands of years before African colonial times. As in other lands, marimbas were developed by indigenous persons and, as Peters theorizes, also brought to the continent through East Africa by Malaysians. An article from the 1930s by Jaap Kunst supports Gordon Peters' assertion. Writing in the *Proceedings of the Musical Association* (of the Royal Musical Association), Kunst discussed the German-Austrian musicologist Erich von Hornbostel's claim that there are many similarities between the peoples of Africa and those of the Indonesian isles, including the instruments they play and how they are tuned. The direction of the flow of information, von Hornbostel postulates, was *into* Africa (Kunst, 1935-1936).

As in Europe, the marimbas played in Africa were developed from designs brought in by Mediterranean travelers. Again like Europe (and the Americas), it is likely that a marimba of local design pre-dated African exploration by Asian, Middle Eastern, and European travelers. Undoubtedly, the marimba was refined and redesigned as travelers brought their version of the instrument with them to new lands.

The marimba is most probably both native in origin and an import from the East. Furthermore, the marimba underwent some changes and modifications ... When the African instrument arrived in Central America, it was no longer completely an imitation of Indonesian art, but sported two African imprints, first, its name, 'marimba,' and second, its African-styled gourds, (resonators) under the keyboard (Peters, 1975, p. 138).

Peters lists the addition of resonators as a significant contribution of the African marimba-makers; however (as mentioned earlier), marimbas with resonators existed in Greece in pre-Christian times.

The Americas Before 1800

Rebecca Kite, in her 2007 biography of marimba virtuoso Keiko Abe, asserts that mallet instruments reached the American continent via two different routes. The xylophone (*xylo* from the Greek meaning, "wood" and *phono* meaning "sound"), arrived via Asia and Eastern Europe through Western Europe in the form of the *strohfiedel* (the "straw fiddle"), and the marimba arrived from Indonesia and Africa through Central America, where it developed into a distinctly Guatemalan and Mexican instrument (Kite, 2007, p. 126). The development of the marimba in Guatemala is also the subject of some

controversy, as many believe the marimba evolved from instruments played by pre-Columbian indigenous peoples.

Africans from Southeast and Central Africa, brought as slaves to the Americas by Portuguese traders, reconstructed their native mallet percussion instruments in the New World and referred to them by their original African names: *malimba* (or *marimba*). Note that the *l* and *r* are interchangeable in many African languages (Kubik, Blades, and Holland, 2008).

It seems clear that wooden idiophones developed in several parts of the world, perhaps simultaneously. They were then transported by travelers, traders, and slaves to other parts of the world (Kubik, et al., 2008).

America After 1800

James Strain, historian for the Percussive Arts Society and Associate Professor of Music at Northern Michigan University, has found that by 1880 there were more than fifteen manufacturers building *strohfeidel*-type xylophones in the United States, England, Germany, and Switzerland. The building of xylophones and marimbas began in earnest in the United States when, in 1910, J.C. Deagan and U.G. Leedy experimented with improvements on the mallet instruments of Europe, Africa, and South America. “John Calhoun Deagan (1853-1934) founded the Deagan Company in Saint Louis in 1880 and moved the firm to Chicago early in the twentieth century. Deagan, a professional clarinetist, was fascinated with the science of acoustics and the theory and practice of

tuning” (Samuels). While serving in the United States Navy, Deagan attended lectures in London given by Heinrich Helmholtz. These aroused his curiosity about acoustics and provided him with the information he needed to correct a problem he experienced as a musician performing in the theater orchestra pits: poorly tuned glockenspiels. The glockenspiel, also known as orchestra bells, is a kind of idiophone with metal bars and no resonators. “Deagan developed the first scientifically tuned glockenspiel. This was the beginning of a career that has affected every musician and percussionist for the past 120 years” (Strain). Deagan’s efforts to build glockenspiels that are in tune resulted in his being able to convince musicians in the United States to adopt the frequency of 440 cycles per second as the standard tuning A (A4, the major sixth above middle C). In 1910, Deagan persuaded the American Federation of Musicians to adopt the pitch A at 440 cycles per second as the standard tuning note.

Another element significant to the growth in stature and popularity of the marimba and xylophone was the introduction of rosewood as *the* medium of choice for mallet instrument bars. Deagan’s work in acoustical physics led to his conclusion that Honduran Rosewood is the “most satisfactory wood for use in xylophones and marimbas. This is still regarded as the preferred wood for these instruments” (Strain).

Other developments in the United States during the 1920s advanced methods of tuning wooden bars and facilitated the integration of xylophones and marimbas into ensembles. These tuning processes also permitted a refinement in sound that distinguishes the marimba from the xylophone. In 1927, while working at the Leedy Drum Company, Hermann E. Winterhoff and Henry J. Schluter of the J. C. Deagan

Company devised a method for tuning wooden bars. Specifically, their method facilitated the tuning of the second and third partials of wooden bars. Prior to 1927, xylophones and marimbas were out of tune with themselves and with other instruments: the second and third partials were not regular multiples of the fundamental. In my experience, the first partial of the early xylophones and marimbas sounded a minor seventh rather than a perfect octave—a distraction indeed! With Schluter's and Winterhoff's new tuning method, mallet percussion instruments could participate more fully in musical ensembles of all types.

The introduction of the rosewood bar and the development of new tuning methods also aided in the evolution of the marimba and xylophone as separate and distinct instruments with different sound colors and ranges. Through the 1930s, the two instruments were essentially the same, with the term, "marimba," being used to describe the lower range of the mallet instrument, and "xylophone" its upper octaves. In an article that appeared in *Etude Magazine* in 1932, one of the most important marimbists of the first half of the twentieth century, Clair Omar Musser, wrote:

First, let us consider classifications. There are countless people who have been erroneously informed as to the relationship between the marimba and its analogue, the xylophone. Today there is absolutely no difference whatsoever between the two instruments (Musser, 1932, p. 251).

Over the next two decades, further refinements in tuning methods would underscore the differences and distinctions between the two instruments. Eventually, the marimba would evolve into an instrument with a warm, quiet timbre and a five octave

range, while the xylophone would become a more polished version of its earlier self: loud, brash, and piercing.

From Folk Instrument to the Concert Hall

The progression of the xylophone-marimba from folk instrument to concert instrument followed two paths through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One path led the xylophone to become an accepted and valuable member of the symphony orchestra cohort of melody instruments. The second path brought the xylophone, and eventually the marimba, to their positions as solo concert instruments.

A survey of the famous orchestration treatises of the nineteenth-century through the mid-twentieth-century reveals that the xylophone was not often or highly regarded.

The *Grand Traité d'Instrumentation et d'Orchestration Modernes* by Hector Berlioz was first published in 1843/4 and reissued in a revised and enlarged edition by Richard Strauss in 1904. The xylophone is not included in the list of percussion instruments “with definite pitch” (Berlioz, 1943). Nikolay Rimsky-Korsakov, in *Principles of Orchestration*, first published in 1922 writes that, “The xylophone is a species of harmonica composed of strips or cylinders of wood, struck with two little hammers. It produces a clattering sound, both powerful and piercing (Rimsky-Korsakov, 1964, p.32).” In his description of the xylophone’s range, Rimsky-Korsakov states that the pitches from F2 through B2 are “confused”, and that F#2 “...is often missing” (Rimsky-Korsakov, p.31).

By the mid-1950s, the xylophone's place in the orchestra was better established. The xylophone was no longer the "clattering" sound effect to which Rimsky-Korsakov referred or which Camille Saint-Saëns employed in *Danse Macabre* of 1875. By the middle of the twentieth-century, there was a substantial body of important compositions that included the xylophone as an integral member of the ensemble. Maurice Ravel made great use of the instrument in his opera of 1911, *L'heure espagnole* (The Spanish Hour), as did Igor Stravinsky in *The Firebird* (1910), *Petrushka* (1911), *Le Sacre du Printemps* (1913), and *Les Noces* (1923); Bela Bartók with *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta* (1936); Edgard Varèse in his 1931 piece, *Ionization*; and Aaron Copland in 1942 with the ballet, *Rodeo*. The context in which the xylophone is used in each of these compositions indicates to me that it was employed for its timbre and not as a signifier of any programmatic notion.

By 1955, composer and Harvard music theorist Walter Piston devoted five paragraphs in his treatise on orchestration to a description of the xylophone and how it could be best used in the orchestra. At the time of its writing, Piston was able to establish the precise range of the instruments then in common use. Curiously, he indicates that the "exact octave, especially of upper tones, is hard to determine, and octave transpositions are freely used by players..." (Piston, 1955, p.318). Perhaps for the first time in a respected and widely circulated orchestration text, Piston includes the *marimba* in the list of tuned percussion instruments. Describing the marimba as "a more mellow xylophone" and having a range of four octaves, Piston indicates that the marimba is rarely used in symphony orchestras, "although solos with orchestral accompaniment have been written

for it” (Piston, p. 318). These solos and the ones that followed will be the subject of the next section of this monograph.

Advances in methods of tuning led to a burgeoning of xylophone and marimba manufacturing and, eventually, a distinction in the timbre of the two idiophones. These advancements in turn accelerated the rise of the xylophone, and then the marimba, as solo concert instruments.

By the turn of the twentieth-century, the xylophone, often accompanied by a military-style band, was firmly established as a solo instrument. Military-style bands become a major type of entertainment following the American Civil War. Municipalities, social organizations, companies, and schools formed amateur bands and many featured xylophone soloists at their performances. Marimba bands also experienced a brief period of popularity from 1915 to 1919. The Hurtado Brothers Royal Marimba Band performed at the San Francisco World’s Fair in 1915 (Kite, p.232). They subsequently toured the United States and recorded for the Victor Talking Machine Company (Percussive Arts Society).

Several professional concert bands also toured the country, the most famous of which was the John Phillip Sousa band. Formed in 1892, Sousa’s concert bands often featured xylophone soloists performing pieces modeled after the popular music of the day or transcriptions of symphonic compositions originally written for voice or another instrument. During the forty years that John Philip Sousa maintained his band, he employed at least seven men as xylophone soloists. It was very common for Sousa’s soloists to perform transcriptions of opera arias with the xylophone taking the singer’s

part (Kite, 2007, p.145). By the late 1920s, several men became famous xylophone soloists, including Joseph Green, who was soloist with the Sousa band for several years beginning in 1917. Other famous xylophone soloists include Joseph Green's brothers, Lewis Green and George Hamilton Green, Harry Breuer, Clair Omar Musser, Charles Daab, Albert Benzler, Lou China "Friscoe," and William Dorn.

George Hamilton Green (1893-1970) is one of history's greatest xylophone players, and the composer of virtuoso xylophone pieces that are still enormously popular. Green made numerous live radio appearances, including many with famed bandleader Paul Whiteman, as well as some of the first cylinder recordings for the Edison Company. In 1927, George Green and his brothers, Joe and Lew, together made history recording music for Walt Disney's first animated sound cartoons, *Steamboat Willie*, *The Opry House*, and *Skeleton Dance* (Kite, 2007). Green composed dozens of short pieces including, "Log Cabin Blues," "Rainbow Ripples," and "The Whistler." Many of Green's compositions for xylophone are still in print and remain popular with performers and audiences.

Like George Hamilton Green, Harry Breuer composed much material for the marimba and xylophone. Breuer's compositions include "Back Talk," "Bit O' Rhythm," "Happy Hammers," and "On the Woodpile."

George Hamilton Green was also famous for his pedagogical materials. From his studio in New York, Green sold a 50-lesson correspondence course that has influenced several generations of mallet percussionists (Fairchild, "George Hamilton Green"). Green's mail-order lessons have been reprinted and published in book form. An example

of the original lessons is shown in Appendix 2. Mallet players, like George Hamilton Green and others who worked in concert bands, recording studios, theaters, and radio station orchestras, were well respected for their technical prowess, but the music they became famous performing was generally of a light classical or popular nature and was not of great aesthetic interest. While the popular and entertaining phenomenon of the flashy xylophone soloist continued on for several years, another vein of solo mallet music began to be mined as performers and composers turned to the marimba as a vehicle for self-expression in concert music.

Instrument manufacturer John Calhoun Deagan was an early supporter of concert music for the marimba. In 1916, J.C. Deagan commissioned the Australian-born composer, Percy Grainger to write *In a Nutshell: Suite for Orchestra, Piano, and Deagan Percussion Instruments* (Strain).

Clair Omar Musser (1901-1998), a marimba virtuoso, composer, businessperson and educator, was “one of the most important figures in the marimba world in the first half of the twentieth century” (Kite, p.166). Musser had a career as a recitalist and toured the United States, Canada, and Europe performing concertos by Bach, Chopin, Mendelssohn, and Paganini with symphony orchestras. During the 1920s, Musser formed the Imperial Marimba Band, made cylinder recordings, and toured the United States and Europe with his ensemble, performing popular and classical music arranged by Musser (Fairchild).

In the 1930s, while employed as a designer and promoter for the J.C. Deagan company, Musser organized the Century of Progress Marimba Orchestra to perform at

the Chicago World's Fair in 1933, and in 1935 he formed the International Marimba Symphony Orchestra, which comprised 100 marimba players—50 men and 50 women—to tour Europe. In addition to arranging the music for these groups, he found and coached the musicians, often providing them with private lessons (Kite, p.167).

In his composing and teaching, Musser continued to promote the marimba as a recital and concert instrument. His *Etudes* and *Prelude* are evidence of his work in the evolution of the marimba as a concert instrument, as was his teaching at Northwestern University, which began in 1946 (Kite, 2007, p. 235). One of Musser's students and a member of the Century of Progress Marimba Orchestra was Ruth Stuber Jeanne (1911-2004). Jeanne went on to build a freelance career in New York, where she worked as a percussionist and timpanist. It was for her that Paul Creston composed the *Concertino for Marimba*. Jeanne premiered Creston's *Concertino*—the first concerto ever composed for the marimba—at Carnegie Hall in 1940. Another of Musser's protégés was Jack Conner, a member of the International Marimba Symphony Orchestra. Later, as a member of the St. Louis Symphony's percussion section, Jack Conner commissioned French-American composer Darius Milhaud to compose the *Concerto for Marimba and Vibraphone*. Conner premiered this second concerto for marimba with the St. Louis Symphony in 1949 (Kite, p. 170).

Doris Stockton and Vida Chenoweth were also students of Musser. Stockton recorded for RCA Victor records and performed as a marimba soloist with members of the New York Philharmonic, and with Leopold Stokowski at the Hollywood Bowl. Chenoweth, who was born in Oklahoma in 1930, played the premiere of *Concerto for*

Marimba in 1959, written for her by Robert Kurka. Chenoweth has recorded several albums that contain the most important literature for the marimba including the *Concertino* by Creston, the *Concerto* by Kurka, Milhaud's *Concerto for Marimba and Vibraphone*, and works by several Latin American composers, including Manuel José Hernandez de León, Heitor Villa-Lobos, and Jorge Álvaro Sarmientos (Chenoweth).

Vida Chenoweth retired from performing in 1964 to enter Christian missionary work in linguistics and Bible translation. Her retirement marked the end of an era: "...the world of the solo xylophonist and solo marimbist in the United States that had begun in the nineteenth century was disappearing" (Kite, p. 172). At this point, there were still very few compositions written for the marimba. In a list of compositions for xylophone, marimba, and vibraphone compiled by James Dutton for the *Instrumentalist Magazine* in 1959, there were only five newly composed pieces for marimba solo; the rest were arrangements or transcriptions of works for other instruments. The new pieces written for marimba were *Miniatures* by Eloise Matthies, *Tocata* by Emma Lou Diemer, *Concertino for Marimba and Orchestra* by Paul Creston, *Suite for Marimba* by Alfred Fissinger, and the *Concerto for Marimba and Vibraphone* by Darius Milhaud. These few concert pieces joined the *Preludes and Etudes* by Clair Omar Musser to form the "serious" concert works available for marimbists at the beginning of the second half of the twentieth-century.

The marimba's popularity as a solo instrument was not limited to the United States. It was also popular in Japan where marimba virtuoso Kieko Abe established a very successful career as a performer and teacher. Abe, who was born in Tokyo in 1937,

concertizes throughout the world, and is a prolific composer. During her first tour of the United States in 1977, Abe introduced a new audience to her innovative method of independence among the four mallets she holds. Her mallet independence method has been adopted by the current generation of marimba soloists, including Evelyn Glennie, Nancy Zeltsman, and Leigh Howard Stevens.

During the twentieth-century there was a steady growth in the stature of the marimba as a solo instrument. This growth mirrored developments in marimba making—refinements in tuning, differentiation of the marimba from the xylophone, and the increase in the instrument's range—and the creation of solo repertoire. Called "...a century of innovation for the percussion world" (Mazza, 2003), developments in the percussion music repertoire occurred along two distinct paths. One led to the expanded use of percussion instruments in concert music for their color and expressive capabilities, thus moving the percussion family of instruments away from the primary eighteenth-century role as signifiers of the military. The other path led to the development of an idiomatic solo repertoire of thoughtfully composed concert music.

Soloists throughout the first half of the twentieth-century either performed transcriptions of solos originally composed for other instruments (primarily for violin) or played lighter pieces written in the popular forms of the day.

Paul Creston's 1940 composition, *Concertino for Marimba and Orchestra* signaled the beginning of a new era in solo percussion literature. Although the French-American composer Darius Milhaud (1892-1974) wrote his *Concerto for Percussion and Chamber Orchestra*, Op. 109, in 1929, it was Creston's *Concertino* that simultaneously

caught the imagination of the listening public, received critical acclaim, and established the marimba as an expressive musical instrument capable of more than the flash of show business novelty.

Born in New York of poor immigrant parents, Creston was essentially self-taught. He was nevertheless well respected by the academic establishment. Henry Cowell writes in the *Musical Quarterly* that “Paul Creston’s approach to musical composition is simple, direct and understandable...All his music shows his care for continuity and consistency” (Cowell, 1948, p. 534). Creston’s writing of the *Concertino* is an important milestone in the growth of percussion literature because, it marked the first time a respected composer of concert music wrote for the marimba as soloist with a symphony orchestra accompaniment. Cowell adds, “Creston believes that all music is based either on song or on dance and he likes to make full use of the simple contrast afforded by these two bases.” “He [is] to be found in the front rank of American composers” (Cowell, 1948, pp. 533-539).

Today, marimbas are beautifully made instruments with finely-tuned Honduran rosewood bars. There is a growing number of marimba soloists who enjoy successful performing careers. Composers are creating interesting and challenging works for the instrument. This is a wonderful time to compose for the marimba.

CHAPTER 3

FORM, HARMONIC LANGUAGE, MELODIC AND RHYTHMIC DEVELOPMENT

Tubby the Tuba, at a rehearsal, sitting forlornly in the back row of the orchestra: “Oh, what lovely music.” (Sighs).

Peepo the Piccolo, rushing to Tubby’s side: “Here, what’s the matter?”

Tubby: “Oh, every time we do a new piece, you all get such pretty melodies to play. And I? Never, never a pretty melody.”

Peepo, arms stretched out: “But people don’t write pretty melodies for tubas. It just isn’t done.” (Tripp, 1941/2006)

In his 1995 book, *The Social and Religious Designs of J.S. Bach’s Brandenburg Concertos*, Michael Marissen asserts, “*Tubby the Tuba* captures powerfully the enculturated notion of the orchestral hierarchy” (Marissen, 1995, p. 3). In the minds of many performing musicians, conductors, and listeners, the instruments of the percussion section are even lower in the hierarchy of orchestral instruments than are tubas. I believe that percussion’s lowly image developed for many reasons over several centuries. One recent reason is the huge popularity of percussion-playing vaudeville acts from the early 1900s, some of whom performed holding mallets while wearing puppets on their hands; another is the repertoire of novelty or “light classical” works for orchestra or band and percussion that accrued from those vaudeville performers. (As a young free-lancing drummer in the 1970s, I remember playing a variety show at the Masonic Temple in Reading, Pennsylvania that included a puppet-wearing mallet player).

Mallet percussion instruments—xylophones and marimbas—have oftentimes been regarded as instrument of lowly standing: a novelty, a sound effect from the percussion section, like the slide whistle, slap stick, or taxi horns. Perhaps it is our

knowledge of their humble origins as poorly-tuned folk instruments played by untrained peasant and native musicians that remains lodged in our collective memory and keeps this thinking alive. Along with the instruments of the batterie, its performer members are also usually ranked at the bottom of the orchestral hierarchy.

The joke goes, “What do you call a person who hangs around with the musicians in the band?” Answer: “The drummer.” Spotlighting the percussionist as I have with *Marimba Rossa*, moving the “drummer” from the rhythm section to the “front-line,” is a musical *coup d'état* of significant proportions. After all, percussionists do not tune with the rest of the orchestra and are often tasked with sitting and waiting during long sections of important compositions so they can then enter (hopefully at the right time) to provide a climactic sound effect of one sort or another.

Though not unique—there are now dozens of solo compositions written for marimba and orchestra—the percussionist in a feature role in front of all those aristocratic violinists still represents the crossing of a major socio-musical threshold. Throughout *Marimba Rossa*, I endeavor to explore the interplay between instruments in their metaphorical representation of various social classes and use this interplay to instigate musical invention.

Another of my thoughts while writing *Marimba Rossa*, indeed one of my primary interests in composing a marimba solo at all, was to create a piece that is *musically* challenging: to show that the marimba can be a highly expressive vehicle for a highly expressive musician.

I incorporate a folk song into *Marimba Rossa's* first movement. The recording from which I transcribed the folksong featured an ancient shawm playing the melody. The shawm is a signifier of the rural, the working class. To me, the violins of the orchestra signify the cultural elite, as did the horns symbolize “the very essence of nobility” (Marissen, 1995, p.23) in Bach and Vivaldi’s era.

Earlier in the first movement, at measures 51 through 53, a solo viola is featured in opposition to the same horn passage that later accompanies the marimba and oboe in their playing of the folksong. This, too, represents a conscious juxtaposition of the orchestral classes. Throughout *Marimba Rossa*, I ally the marimba with the cellos and the violas. They are musical comrades in this orchestral class struggle.

I wrote *Marimba Rossa* in an effort to create a work for solo marimba and orchestra of substantial musical weight; one with no dependence on novelty. Thus, I hope to add to the growing number of serious concert works for marimba and orchestra like the works of Creston, Milhaud, Kurka, Abe, and others.

American popular music of the second half of the twentieth-century has significantly influenced my composing in subtle ways. Melodic gesture, the choice of harmonic collections, rhythmic groupings (especially syncopations), a sense of humor, and a sense of “groove,” meaning an interpretation of the notated rhythms within the context of a popular style, all find their antecedent in the music I listened to as a teenager and wrote and performed as a young man. My concert music compositions have also been informed by my work in pop recordings and music for broadcasting.

One can find an analogue for the dance feel of Movement I in the groove of many of the recordings of the organist Jimmy Smith. My older brother, Michael, introduced me to Smith's playing, along with that of Dave Brubeck, George Shearing, Stan Kenton, Henry Mancini and others, when I was about 13-years old. As a result, I eschewed the popular rock music of the day in favor of what I perceived as the more interesting work of these creative musicians. Jimmy Smith's recordings, especially his work with Stanley Turrentine, Kenny Burrell and Donald Bailey, often featured a blues shuffle groove in 12/8. The syncopated entrances of the harp and piano in measures 4 through 16, and then in the winds and harp in measures 45, 46, and 47 are akin to the "ghost notes" played on the snare drum by Bailey in the Smith recordings of the 1960s.

In measures 7, 8, 9, and 10; 18, 19, and 20; 25 and 44, one can hear the influence of George Shearing. Shearing's signature sound was a "locked-hand" voicing where a melody was played in octaves accompanied by closely voiced chords in between. The melody was doubled by the vibraphonist at the unison and by the electric guitarist at the octave lower. I reference the effect of this texture by having the marimba doubled by strings, harp, or winds playing the legato lines of the third movement.

Movement III is designed to have the rhythmic drive of an up-tempo rock tune while simultaneously reflecting the mixed-meter (and often modal) compositions of Dave Brubeck's recordings from the 1960s. The sense of drive comes from my taste for pop music that I acquired in the 1980s and 1990s.

The altered chords and polychords that permeate *Marimba Rossa* (and much of my writing in general) reside firmly in my musical memory, the effect of years of

listening to creative artists as musically varied as Thelonious Monk, Stan Kenton, and Henry Mancini, just as my rhythmic sense of groove has been shaped by Earth, Wind and Fire, and Stevie Wonder.

Movement I

Marimba Rossa is a three-movement solo work for the five-octave concert marimba with orchestra accompaniment. The range of the concert marimba is shown in Figure 1.

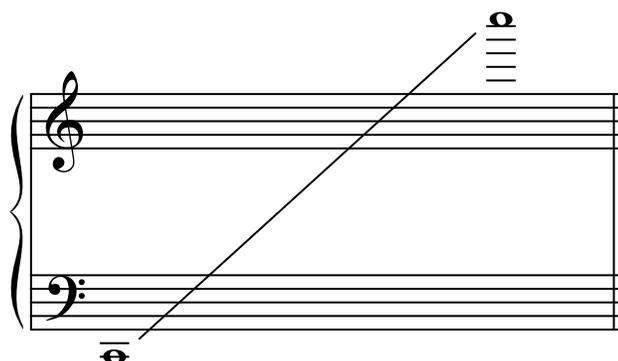


Figure 1. Pitch range of the five-octave concert marimba.

In a general way, *Marimba Rossa* follows Vivaldi's "tripartite shape of the chamber concerto," (Pincherle, 1957, p. 140) meaning that the movements are of contrasting tempos: fast, slow, then fast. In Antonio Vivaldi's collection of twelve concertos, *L'Estro armonico*, numbers 1, 5, 8, 10 and 11 are in three movements: *allegro*, *largo* and *allegro*. The three movements of *Marimba Rossa* are marked *andante*, *moderato-largo*, and *allegro*. Movement I is in two sections: an *andante pastorale* and a

moderato tarantella. The meter throughout the movement is 6/8, with some instances where the eighth notes are regrouped to constitute measures of 3/4, a hemiola (e.g. measures 4, 28, 66, 82, and 114). Other hemiolas occur in measures 128, 136, and 143, where the pattern of three eighth-notes to the beat can also be heard as two eighth-notes to a quicker beat. In these instances, I have chosen to keep the 6/8-meter in force and to write the rhythm as duplets. The sense of Movement I—its spirit and 6/8 meter—was inspired by a *pastorale* I heard on a recording of music from the *Calabria* region of Italy by Alan Lomax and Diego Carpitella. The *pastorale* from the Lomax/Carpitella recording is quoted in the second part of the movement (Lomax, 1954).

The melodic and harmonic material of Movement I is generally modal, but along with the Lydian, Dorian and Mixolydian collections, I use the octatonic scale, the “Gypsy scale” (a synthetic scale) (Dallin, 1974, p. 40), and the hexachord, 6-Z29 [023679]. Figure 2 illustrates the intervallic designs of the collections I use throughout the three movements of *Marimba Rossa*.

The pitch-class collection [023679] is identified as hexachord 6-Z29 in Allen Forte’s *The Structure of Atonal Music* (Straus, 2000). I use the hexachord simply as another mode. The symmetry of this hexachord fascinates me, as do its harmonic implications: it contains a minor triad, a major triad, and a diminished 7th chord, a dominant 7th chord with a suspended 4th, and the minor triad with the added 6th and 9th. Hexachord 6-Z29, in one transposition or another, occurs in measures 3, 15, 21, 35, 81, and 145.

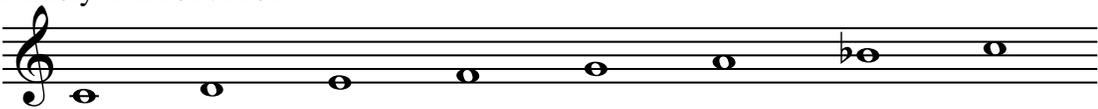
Lydian collection:



Dorian collection:



Mixolydian collection:



"Gypsy" scale collection:



Octatonic collection:



Hexachord 6-Z29:



Figure 2. The six pitch collections that form the basis for *Marimba Rossa*.

The first theme of Movement I enters at measure 16, anchored initially in the Lydian collection in D-flat. The introduction that precedes the first theme has two significant features: a pedal on C, the leading tone in D-flat from measures 5 through 15, and a two-measure instance of hexachord 6-z29 beginning at measure 14. The pedal note in the strings appears twice in this movement, and at each instance the strings take turns playing *col legno*, with the back of the bow as if it were a drum stick. As Rimsky-

Korsakov describes the *col legno* effect, “The sound produced is similar to the xylophone...” (Rimsky-Korsakov, p. 32).

Several polychords, appearing in transposition and inversion, are used throughout *Marimba Rossa*. The first occurs at measure four, where a G major chord is superimposed on an A major chord. Beat three of this measure features the simultaneous sounding of a G-flat major seventh chord with a flatted fifth in the strings, accompanying a polytonal flourish in the flutes. In the flourish, flute one plays a scale in B-flat Lydian and flute two plays a passage based in G-flat Lydian. Polytonality, the use of the major seventh chord with the fifth lowered, and the use of polychords are all central features of Movement I and the whole of *Marimba Rossa*. Figure 3 provides a list of the polychords I used in composing *Marimba Rossa* along with examples of the major seventh chord with the lowered fifth.

B major over A major	C major over B-flat major	D major over C major (no 5th)	A minor over G major	B-flat major 7th with flatted 11th	E-flat major 9th with flatted 5th
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Figure 3. Recurring polychords and altered chords found in inversion and transposition in *Marimba Rossa*.

The first theme appears again in the marimba at measure 36, this time in F-Lydian, and varied to create a melodic sequence (measures 36 and 37). A linear

intervallic pattern (Cadwallader, 1998) is introduced in measure 33 and recurs at measure 34 and 36. I introduce material in A-mixolydian in measure 41. The harmony introduced in the second half of measure 41 is based on an altered version of the so-called “*Petrushka* chord,” the F-sharp major triad superimposed on a C major triad. I alter the chord substantially by presenting it as C-augmented over F-sharp. Figure 4, an excerpt from the piano reduction, shows measure 41.

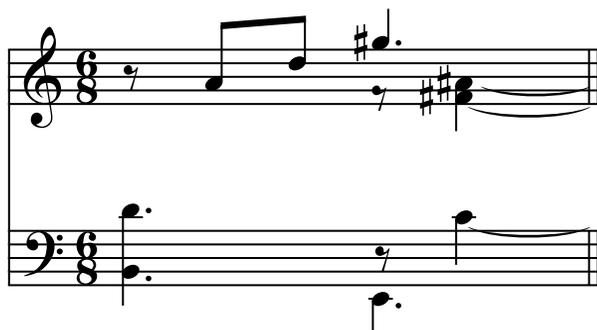


Figure 4. Piano reduction showing the polychord C augmented superimposed on F-sharp major.

I introduce the second theme in the marimba and the orchestra at measure 43. Theme two is developed around the 6-z29 hexachord. Development of the second theme proceeds first in A-flat Lydian, then in D-flat Lydian. Throughout this section, the orchestral accompaniment is polychordal (e.g., G-minor over A-flat with the added major 7th and flatted fifth in measure 45; E-flat over D-flat in measure 49; F-minor over G-minor in measure 46; and D-major over C-major in measure 52.). Measures 52 and 53 feature a melodic imitation, or echo, of the marimba melody by the orchestra. The scalar material in measures 56 and 57 is octatonic, while the scalar material in measures 58 and

59 is based on the “Gypsy scale” on G. “The scale, with its two augmented seconds, is synthetic as far as the major-minor and modal systems are concerned, but it occurs with sufficient frequency to have a common designation—that of *gypsy* [*sic*] *scale*. Though not included in our basic scale systems, it is used extensively in other parts of the world” (Dallin, 1974, p. 41). Measure 58 also represents the beginning of a transition back to the material of the first theme.

The first theme is reintroduced in the lower strings at measure 65, accompanied by a recurrence of the polychord C augmented over F-sharp. From measure 69 through 72 there is a progression by fourths: B-flat Lydian to E-flat Lydian to A-flat Lydian, followed in measure 72 by a reiteration of the leading-tone pedal (C) in D-flat, the tonal center for the beginning of the next large section of the movement, the *tarantella*. The *tarantella* begins at measure 83. Again, the hexachord 6-z29 is used to make the transition (see, *accelerando* at measure 81).

A folk song from the Calabria region of Italy is introduced in measure 88. I found this tune in a collection of folksongs recorded by Alan Lomax and Deigo Carpitella (Lomax, 1954). In the original recording, the melody is played on a shawm. The shawm is accompanied by a small bagpipe, called the *a paro* bagpipe, and a tambourine. I have attempted in my setting of the folksong to create in the orchestra a sense of the hurdy-gurdy, another instrument often used in the accompaniments of folk music of this region. The melody, played first by the marimba (measure 88), is set in D-major, but the orchestra accompanies it in C-Lydian. The winds play the melody, now transposed to B-major at measure 92, as the orchestra continues in C-Lydian, with the marimba supplying

an obbligato, also in C-Lydian. At measure 100, the melody is played by the oboe (imitating the shawm), accompanied by the horns (with bassoons filling out the harmony) with a repeat of material from measures 52 and 53. The notion of the juxtaposition of the rural and the royal is intentional, and is a microcosm of the work as a whole. I used much of the same material to compose the entire first movement. The material is developed throughout the large sections of Movement I. I outline the thematic development of Movement I in Table 1.

Only in subtle ways does Movement I follow the form of the Vivaldian concerto. For instance, I did not write a tutti ritornello or concertino episodic material. Instead, I tried to capture the essence of the concerto form, borrowing from the Baroque concerto the basic sense that it is a dialogue between two musical equals—in the case of *Marimba Rossa*, the orchestra and the concert marimba.

I launch *Marimba Rossa* with a grand statement of the first theme played by the entire orchestra. This is followed immediately by the solo instrument, which takes the first theme up in development. The orchestra's introduction of the first theme is not a Vivaldian *Fortspinnungstypus* ritornello, nor could it be, since the requirement of such is that “the first segment grounds the tonality with primarily tonic and dominant harmonies, ending on the either the tonic or the dominant...” (Marissen, 1995, p. 15). Even though I use tonal materials throughout *Marimba Rossa*, I use them in a way inconsistent with the tenets of functional harmony.

Table 1. Outline of the thematic development of Movement I

Phrase	Measures	Description
Ia	1 through 15	Introduction (including first use of first theme and dominant pedal)
Ib	16 through 28	Development of first theme
Ic	29 through 42	Introduction of marimba solo using first theme
Id	43 through 82	Introduction and development of second theme
IIa	83 through 88	Transition to folk song using development of first theme
IIb	89 through 103	Introduction and development of folk song
IIc	104 through 116	Reprise and development of material second theme (like Id)
IIId	117 through 147	Further development of first theme (like Ib)

All of this combining of elements—theme one with the folksong; the folksong with the regal intertextuality of the horns, the working class marimba and the aristocratic strings—is brought to a sudden halt with fortissimo fourths in the orchestra at measure 103.

The first theme recurs in augmentation in the low strings, beginning at measure 107. I then begin a reworking of the material from the first part of this movement.

Movement I ends somewhat inconclusively, creating a sense that it is a structural upbeat to Movement II.

Movement II

The second movement of *Marimba Rossa* embraces the essence of the Italian concerto form without adhering to its strictures. The melody of the solo marimba is quasi-improvisatory and sometimes ornamented. This characteristic mirrors the melodies of Baroque concerto second movements. I create a sense of cadence and resolution by placing short, chorale-like passages throughout the movement. Each chorale passage phrase is built up of the polychords that I use in the three movements of *Marimba Rossa*.

Oftentimes during the second movement, I place the recurring polychords in the piano part in its lowest register and in close voicing. I intend with these gestures to create the effect of a large tam-tam. The effect is enhanced in measure 18 when I have the low piano chords accompanied with a quiet suspended cymbal roll. The collection of polychords as I voice them for the piano in Movement II is shown in Figure 5.

A substantial part of the material I used to create the second movement is drawn from Movement III. I composed Movement III before I composed Movements I and II. By so doing, I was able to have the first two movements share material drawn from Movement III. There is a sense of inevitability, therefore, when Movement III begins, underscoring a notion of arrival engendered by the role of Movement I and II as anacrusis.

The image displays a musical score for Piano in Movement II, focusing on specific measures. The score is written in 4/4 time and consists of two systems. The first system shows measures 1 and 4. In measure 1, the bass clef contains a polychord of two triads: one with a sharp sign and another with a natural sign, both marked with an 8vb (octave below) and a dashed line. The dynamic marking is *mp*. In measure 4, the bass clef contains a polychord of two triads, both marked with an 8vb and a dashed line. The second system shows measures 18 and 36. In measure 18, the bass clef contains a complex polychord of multiple triads, marked with an 8vb and a dashed line. In measure 36, the bass clef contains a polychord of two triads, one with a flat sign, marked with an 8vb and a dashed line.

Figure 5. The polychords as they are voiced for the piano in Movement II.

Movement III

I begin Movement III with a statement of the first theme played forte by the solo marimba accompanied by the recurring polychords that are sounded in the winds in a syncopated, staccato rhythm. The opening marimba material is immediately repeated in the winds accompanied by the strings playing the syncopated polychords. The development of these two ideas—the marimba melody comprised of the first theme and the syncopated polychords—provides the basis for the entire movement. Figure 6 shows the opening theme and the syncopated staccato polychords.

The musical score is divided into three systems. The first system includes Flutes, Oboe, Clarinet in B♭, Bassoon, and 2 Horns in F. The second system includes the Marimba. The third system includes Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Cello, and Bass. The tempo is marked 'Allegro' with a quarter note equal to 120 beats per minute. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The music features recurring polychords in syncopation, first appearing in the winds (measures 1-10) and then in the strings (measures 11-15). Dynamics range from mezzo-forte (mf) to forte (f).

Figure 6. Opening theme showing the recurring polychords in syncopation, appearing first in the winds then in the strings.

A new thematic idea is introduced at measure 15, where a series of five polychords is sounded. These recurring polychords, in this order, are heard as a collection several times during the course of the third movement. Instances of the recurring polychords can be found in measures 44 and 45. In measure 46, the collection of polychords is presented first in augmentation (in 5/4), then in a rhythmic variation (in 7/8), and then in another augmented variation again in 5/4. The collection of polychords

is transposed each time it occurs. The polychord collection occurs again at measures 69, 70, and 71.

I develop the staccato polychordal material from the opening accompaniment in measures 53, 54, 55, and 56. Here again, as in Movement I, the strings play *col legno* to imitate the percussive attack of the marimba.

I begin a *cadenza* for the solo marimba at measure 113. My models for the writing in the *cadenza* are the unaccompanied *Sonatas and Partitas* for violin (BWV 1001–1006) by Johann Sebastian Bach. I use the *cadenza* to further develop the opening thematic material in the marimba. The marimba is at first accompanied by the low strings in the manner of a *recitativo accompagnato*, but proceeds unaccompanied, beginning at measure 123, for the remainder of the *cadenza*. Wanting to offer the soloist the greatest degree of flexibility in a further effort to engender expressiveness, I have marked the *cadenza* to be performed *rubato*. At its end, I call for the soloist to make an *accelerando* back to the movement's starting tempo. The original tempo needs to be established by measure 151, where I have the orchestra re-enter for a restatement of the first theme.

All of *Marimba Rossa*, with the exception of the *cadenza*, can be performed using only two mallets. The soloist needs four mallets to perform the *cadenza*. If the soloist holds only two mallets for the playing of the first two movements (some performers prefer to always hold four mallets), the soloist can pick up the additional mallets during the rests at measures 106, 107, and 108. I have chosen not to specify the type of mallets the player should use to perform *Marimba Rossa*, except to indicate in the performance

notes that the player can determine mallet choice based on a familiarity with the performance instrument, the size of the hall, and the complement of the orchestra.

I begin a small fugue at measure 178. I base the fugue subject that enters first in the viola, on a three-note gesture that recurs throughout the first and third movements. Figure 7 compares the first theme of Movement I, the gesture as it recurs in Movement III, and the fugue subject of Movement III.

In a final effort to display the marimba as an instrument capable of highly expressive gestures, and to eschew any notion of novelty or flash, I chose to end the *Marimba Rossa* with a graceful decrescendo to pianissimo in the solo marimba and the orchestra.

Movement I, measure 1

bassoons, celli, and bassi *etc.*

f

Movement III,
measures 23 through 26

marimba *etc.*

mp

Movement III
measures 178 through 180

viola *etc.*

f

Figure 7. Comparison of first theme of Movement I (measure 1) with a recurring gesture from Movement III (measures 23 through 26), and the fugue subject of Movement III (measures 178 through 180).

CHAPTER 4

ORCHESTRATION

Several factors affected my decisions regarding the complement of instruments I would employ to accompany the marimba. I wanted a wide, though fairly standard, palette of instrumental colors. I also wanted to write for more than five string voices and to write *divisi* string parts. Despite its ability to project in the higher registers, the marimba is a quiet instrument in its lower registers, so I needed to create an accompaniment that allowed the marimba's beautiful lower notes to be heard. I chose to compose for an orchestra of modest proportions: two flutes, two oboes, two B-flat clarinets, two bassoons, and two French horns; percussion (suspended cymbal, triangle, and tambourine), harp, piano, and strings. To accommodate the *divisi* writing, but not overpower the marimba, I wrote with a moderate complement of strings in mind: six first violins, six second violins, six violas, four violoncellos, and three basses. The composition was all completed in pencil "short score," and then orchestrated directly into the *Finale*[®] computer notation program. Since the short scores were very complete, and included my preliminary choices of instrumentation, I was able to create the complete score quickly.

During the process of orchestrating *Marimba Rossa*, I was continually mindful of accompanying the marimba with instruments voiced in a way that would support and enhance the instrument's sometimes-delicate sound. In several instances (e.g., measures 31 through 40 of Movement I and measures 116 through 121 of Movement III), I create

an accompaniment featuring violas and cellos in an effort to undergird the sense of the marimba and the lower strings as comrades.

There are many instances where the marimba provides an obbligato, for instance in measures 92, 93, and 94 of Movement I, or joins as part of the accompaniment, as in measures 17 and 18 in Movement III. I intensify the dialog between the solo marimba and its accompaniment by having the strings use *col legno* bowing to imitate the marimba. I call for the strings to use the *col legno* technique in both Movements I and III.

I had several goals in mind in orchestrating *Marimba Rossa*. Chief among these was my desire to create a full orchestral sound and to then feature various sections of the orchestra accompanying the solo marimba. For the tarantella section of the first movement, I chose to have the orchestra imitate the folk instruments heard in Alan Lomax's recording of the Calabrian folk song that I reference in the movement. The instruments in the folk song recording include the shawm, the *a paro* bagpipe, and the tambourine. Throughout the orchestrating of Movements I and III, I remained mindful of my intention to pit the marimba against the horns and the strings in my metaphorical interaction of the social classes. Vivaldi employed the flute and the oboe ... "in a ... characteristic way, employing their tone color almost symbolically in scenes of a rustic nature" (Pincherle, 1957, p. 124). I, too, chose to have these instruments, along with the marimba, represent the working classes, while the violins, cellos, and horns were used to represent the aristocracy.

I wanted to establish a very delicate texture in the second movement, and did so by having the strings play *sul ponticello*, *tremolando* and *divisi*, all at soft dynamics. The

polychords I place in the low register of the piano provide an important counterbalance in timbre to the effects of the upper strings.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

To proceed by elimination—to know how to *discard*, as the gambler says, that is the great technique of selection (Stravinsky, 1947. p70).

Of the many insights I gained in composing *Marimba Rossa*, the two most important were learning what to keep, and learning to trust my instincts. For me, the two are related. A musical idea comes in a flash, like a card dealt quickly by a professional card player, and then the mind begins to reason: Do I keep this idea as-is, or do something with it (and if so—what?), or, do I discard it? In the song, “The Gambler,” by the American writer, Don Schlitz, the philosopher-card shark sings, “the secret to survivin’ is knowing what to throw away and knowing what to keep” (Schlitz, 1978). In composing *Marimba Rossa*, I discarded an entire movement and many pages of the movements that I retained. I trusted my instincts in writing the first movement as a dance in a fixed meter, and to include a large section on a tonal folk tune. I trusted my instincts to “borrow” from myself, and, at some point in the writing of each movement, I trusted my instinct that the movement was complete. Of course, in composing, the composer (at least this composer) never really wins. At best, the composer evolves to become the best steward of musical-hands-dealt that is possible.

I am mostly pleased with the results of my efforts to manage and polish the musical notions I intuited. The musical issues I have wrestled with in *Marimba Rossa* will again be examined in other compositions.

The process of teasing out what I determine are the right pitch classes always teaches me much about music and provides me important lessons about who I am as a composer and a person. Of my work in *Marimba Rossa*, I am probably most pleased that I was able to place the marimba in the center of a musical texture where I could successfully demonstrate the instrument's depth of expressive capabilities, and that I was able to, in a very small (though perhaps slightly obtuse), way, honor a handful of people whose presence and love has made my life richer.

In composing *Marimba Rossa*, I wanted to make use of gestures borrowed from an earlier time, but, at the same time, have the music sound contemporary. As Martha Hyde aptly phrased it "... music is alone in striving to be modern as well as ancient" (Hyde, 1996, p.210). I endeavored to use classical phrase structure, simple dance patterns, and Baroque contrapuntal textures in *eclectic* or *exploitative* imitation (Hyde, 1996, p. 211), and to juxtapose their use with contemporary sensibilities of melodic and harmonic organization and rhythm. I made an earnest effort to exploit the expanded harmony, syncopation and mixed meters of late twentieth-century popular music by using serial, minimalistic and common practice techniques in development to create music that is fresh-sounding while being neither nostalgic nor derivative.

The last decade of the twentieth-century and the first decade of the twenty-first-century have seen a rapid growth in the solo repertoire composed specifically for the concert marimba. Many important composers have created solo marimba pieces of great significance during this time. These include compositions by Jacob Druckman (*Reflections on the Nature of Water*), Paul Lansky (*Three Moves*), Steven Mackey (*See*

Ya Thursday), Gunther Schuller (*Marimbology*), Joseph Schwantner (*Velocities*), and Maurice Wright (*Concertpiece for Marimba and Orchestra*). I am happy for having had the opportunity to, in some small way, add to the burgeoning repertoire for the concert marimba. I very much look forward to employing what I learned in composing *Marimba Rossa* in my next work.

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APPENDIX A

ALLA PASTORALE

Alla Pastorale
(Christmas Music)

*Calabrian folk song
recorded by Alan Lomax & Diego Carpitella
in August 1954
transcribed by L.A. deLise, 2007*

$\text{♩} = 80$

The musical score consists of nine staves of music, each beginning with a measure number (4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 25). The music is written in a single melodic line on a treble clef staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 6/8. The piece concludes with a double bar line at the end of the final staff.

