

ABSTRACT OF MUSICAL ARTS PROJECT

Andrew Michael Bliss

The Graduate School

University of Kentucky

2008

DAVID LANG: DECONSTRUCTING A CONSTRUCTIVIST COMPOSER

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A musical arts project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in the College of Fine Arts at the University of Kentucky

By
Andrew Michael Bliss

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: James B. Campbell, Professor of Music

Lexington, Kentucky

2008

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The percussion compositions of David Lang hold a prominent place within the percussion solo repertoire. Lang's constructivist approach to composition, as well as his resistance to tradition, has secured him a highly respected position among performers and composers alike. Percussion repertoire is yet to receive the in-depth scholarship that it currently warrants. Considering the relative youth of the genre, a Pulitzer Prize winning composer such as Lang's interest in percussion writing should not be overlooked. Furthermore, the logistical nature of dealing with percussion notation, orchestration, and performance requires a specialist, making it difficult for most musicologists to offer the proper insight and observations. This monograph exposes the complex and multi-dimensional solo percussion works of David Lang, specifically *The Anvil Chorus*, *Scraping Song*, and *Unchained Melody*. The document provides insight into the composer's intentions while offering strategies to confront the physical and psychological issues that arise when preparing these works for performance. It also deconstructs Lang's compositional processes and reveals the similarities in his approach from piece to piece, thus clarifying his style. Currently, no resources exist that discuss Lang's percussion writing in-depth. The availability of this monograph elucidates Lang's prominence in the solo percussion genre while also contributing to the performance practice and understanding of his percussion compositions.

KEYWORDS: David Lang, Music, Percussion, Multi-percussion, Bang on a Can

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DAVID LANG: DECONSTRUCTING A CONSTRUCTIVIST COMPOSER

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To Dad, for teaching me how to spell and to Ruby, for teaching me how to read.

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PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW AND IMPETUS

When compared to many other genres in Western art music, classical percussion literature has a relatively short lineage. It has been just over seventy-five years since Edgard Varèse composed *Ionisation* (1931), which served as the genesis of the percussion ensemble repertoire. In the ensuing decades, composers began creating works for multi-timbral solo percussion, something that did not exist until the late 1950s. John Cage's *27'10.554" for a Percussionist* (1956) and Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Zyklus No. 9* (1959) sparked a movement that quickly established itself among other solo concert music idioms. Commonly referred to as "multiple percussion," this new genre has fit comfortably into the pluralistic nature of 20th- and 21st-century art music. The diversity of percussion and its untapped potential immediately prompted investigation from prominent composers. Masterpieces emerged from Morton Feldman (*King of Denmark* - 1964), Helmut Lachenmann (*Interieur I* - 1966), Charles Wuorinen (*Janissary Music* - 1966), and Iannis Xenakis (*Psappha* - 1975). More recent decades have seen works from James Wood (*Rogosanti* - 1986), Brian Ferneyhough (*Bone Alphabet* - 1991), Kaija Saariaho (*Six Japanese Gardens* - 1995), Michael Gordon (*XY* - 1998), and John Luther Adams (*Mathematics of Resonant Bodies* - 2003).

Working in a field of solo literature that is less than fifty years old, especially when compared to the centuries of repertoire for solo piano or violin, gives any composer the potential to significantly influence the future of the repertoire. The percussion compositions of David Lang have done just that. Lang's prominence as a composer has earned him commissions from the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, St.

Paul Chamber Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and the American Composers Orchestra.¹ As the recipient of the 2008 Pulitzer Prize in Music, for his composition *Little Match Girl Passion*, Lang has written many works featuring percussion in both solo and ensemble capacities. These pieces augment traditional compositional methods, instead taking a constructivist approach that emphasizes a work's structure. Many of Lang's compositions, particularly those in the percussion idiom, explore the mechanical and mathematical dimensions of music, layering complex rhythmic cycles over pointillistic attacks of sound. Despite its cyclic complexity, Lang's music also commonly features characteristics inspired by his love for rock music: a persistent sense of "groove,"² amplified instruments, and clear sectional form. This coexistence of complexity and clarity is present in many of Lang's compositions.

Lang's success in the percussion idiom has been due in part to his collaborations with Steven Schick. Schick, Distinguished Professor of Percussion at the University of California at San Diego and a Consulting Artist in Percussion at the Manhattan School of Music, has commissioned over 100 new works for percussion and has been the most prominent performer of Lang's percussion works. When asked about Lang, Schick states, "David is one of the three composers that I can think of...where I will always play everything that [he writes]."³

Despite Lang's prominence as a composer, formal research and analyses of his compositions are rather sparse. The writings that are available do not cover the specifics

¹ Alburger, "Bang on an Ear," 1.

² Groove is a persistent sense of forward-moving pulse.

³ Steven Schick, interview by the author, September 2008.

of his compositional process and style with any breadth. Kyle Gann, former music critic for the *Village Voice* and professor of music at Bard College, has noted some aspects of Lang's style in his writings, but he has not published anything solely concentrating on Lang and his output. Other sources available at this time include interviews administered by Mark Alburger (*21st Century Music*) and Deborah Artman (Lang's artist statement) as well as a dissertation by Charles Gran, which offer some very general insight into Lang's aesthetic. Shafer Mahoney's thesis provides a detailed analysis of Lang's work, *International Business Machine* and unpublished documents by Kevin Lewis and Tomm Roland offered additional perspectives on *The Anvil Chorus*. However, these analyses all focus on Lang's works from the early 1990s, and nothing has been done to place Lang's style, which has greatly evolved since then, into a larger historical and analytical framework. In addition, the logistical nature of dealing with percussion notation, orchestration, and performance requires a specialist, making it difficult for most musicologists to offer the proper insight and observations.

The aim of this document is to present the reader with a history of Lang's background and a synthesis of his style with relation to current musical trends. This information is then applied to performance practice through a discussion of Lang's three solo percussion works: *The Anvil Chorus* (1991), *Scraping Song* (1998), and *Unchained Melody* (2004). Chapter Two begins by discussing Lang's background including his childhood, formal education, and the development of Bang on a Can. Chapter Three follows by discussing Postminimalism and Totalism, categories that often are associated with Lang, which is followed by an examination of Lang's compositional aesthetic. Lang employs several principal techniques that serve as the foundation for many of his

compositions, which are also discussed in Chapter Three. These include permuted substitution, metric superimposition, and rhythmic displacement. An in-depth discussion of these techniques derives appropriate vocabulary and terminology for Lang's music and also encourages and enhances performance practice. Chapters Four through Six focus on *The Anvil Chorus*, *Scraping Song*, and *Unchained Melody* respectively, each providing an in-depth analytical discussion that connects theoretical observations to performance practice possibilities.

The presentation of this research allows for an analysis of Lang's compositional processes and an understanding of how he establishes unity within his style. When one considers the youth of the genre, it becomes clear that solo percussion repertoire has not received the critical scholarship that it currently demands. A Pulitzer Prize-winning composer's works are a worthy starting point for such a study.

CHAPTER TWO: BACKGROUND OF DAVID LANG

Upbringing

David Lang was born in 1957 in Los Angeles⁴ and was raised in a Jewish family.⁵ As a child, he was interested in becoming a composer, though he never took a particular liking to classical music. In fact, he learned about being a composer before knowing anything about music. When Lang was young, he was exposed to Dmitri Shostakovich's *Symphony No. 1* in a film performance of Bernstein's Young Persons Concerts with the New York Philharmonic.⁶ The film profiled Shostakovich as having written his first symphony at nineteen years of age. Lang, who was only nine at the time, thought, "I have ten years and I could do it."⁷ From that point forward, everything he did was directed towards his ambition of becoming a composer.

Lang's chosen path was not an easy one. He states, "My family was tremendously unartistic. I was not allowed to have music lessons when I was a kid, because my older sister had music lessons, and it had been a horrible failure."⁸ Luckily, his persistent interest in composition finally persuaded his mother to consult with Henri Lazarof, who was on the music faculty at UCLA for a number of years. Lang recalls the beginning of this relationship:

When I was thirteen, my mother took me to UCLA, with a big box full of all the music that I had written, to find out whether I should be encouraged. So, Lazarof looked at my stuff and took me on as a student. I studied with him until I went off

4 Kyle Gann, *American Music in the Twentieth Century* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2006), 378-9.

5 Adam Wasserman, "The Matchmaker," *Sunday Arts*, May 6, 2008, <http://www.thirteen.org/sundayarts/audio/davidlangfinal.mp3> (accessed October 10, 2008).

6 Mark Alburger, "Bang on an Ear: An Interview with David Lang," *21st Century Music* (September 2000): 4.

7 David Lang, interview by Deborah Artman, "Artist Statement," <http://www.redpoppymusic.com> (accessed March 20, 2008).

8 Alburger, "Bang on an Ear," 4.

to college. I studied with him for so long, for two days a week over three years. We went through every instrument in the orchestra, looking for a month, for example, at examples of solo flute music by Berio, Petrassi, Varèse, and Lazarof's music himself. Music by Europeans. It was a very specialized education.⁹

As a teenager, Lang would get his friends together to play his own compositions. He remembers not reflecting on the performances, but simply being happy to hear them.¹⁰ Lang's teenage musical education was enhanced by studies at Stanford University after he became Martin Bresnick's first student there in 1972. Bresnick stated that "Lang had everything it took to be a composer."¹¹ Lang recalls specifically the moment he realized his deep connection to his craft:

As I got older, I started listening to music in a different way. I realized that if I looked at the choices other composers made in their music, I could learn something about them—what a person likes, what he's afraid of, things he's proud of. And if I looked at the choices I made in my music, I could learn about myself. Once I realized that music came directly from my own thoughts about the world, I started paying more attention to them. That's when I became a composer.¹²

University Education

Upon graduating from high school, David Lang chose to continue his education at Stanford University. Lang attended Stanford with the intention of going to medical school (and did graduate with a bachelor's degree in chemistry in 1978),¹³ but he quickly discovered that his true passion was music. As it turned out, his first year at Stanford

⁹ Alburger, "Bang on an Ear," 5.

¹⁰ David Lang, interview by Deborah Artman, "Artist Statement," <http://www.redpoppymusic.com> (accessed March 20, 2008).

¹¹ Avinash Chak, "Eli musician wins Pulitzer for Opus," *Yale Daily News*, April 9, 2008, <http://www.yaledailynews.com> (accessed September 15, 2008).

¹² Alburger, "Bang on an Ear," 1.

¹³ Kyle Gann, "Lang, David," *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.grovemusic.com> (accessed September 20, 2008).

(1974) was also the last year of Martin Bresnick's tenure and coincided with a one-semester appointment for Lou Harrison.¹⁴

While completing his bachelor's degree, Lang also studied with composer Martin Jenni, who was filling a semester-long sabbatical leave.¹⁵ Bresnick had introduced Lang to Jenni's compositions, but Lang was unprepared for how moving his experience of getting to study under Jenni would be. Lang recalls taking a French Music seminar that covered music from the Frankish Empire to the 20th century:

Each week we would look in depth at one piece or composer: the *Messe de Notre Dame*, *La Mer*, Léonin's *Magnus Liber*, the Berlioz *Requiem*, Solage, Fauré, Messiaen. I was a snotty undergraduate and had no interest in this music, I thought, and I went into this class with great reservation, really only because Bresnick had essentially ordered me to. Nothing in my education had prepared me to enjoy a class so much...it was by far the best course I had as an undergraduate.¹⁶

After completing his undergraduate education, Lang moved to Iowa City, Iowa to pursue his master's degree in composition at the University of Iowa. In 1978, Lang's Stanford professor, Martin Jenni, was beginning a new job there, and Lang, along with his classmate Heinrich Taube, decided to follow Jenni to Iowa City. The three California composers relocated to Iowa and, by coincidence, ended up sharing an office.

From the 1960s through the early 1980s, the University of Iowa was, in many respects, a hotbed of contemporary music. Iowa, like a number of universities, had received grant money from the Rockefeller Foundation to establish exciting new programs, and the university dedicated its funds to the creation of a new music center.¹⁷

¹⁴ Alburger, "Bang on an Ear," 6.

¹⁵ David Lang, "Donald Martin Jenni (1937-2006): A Remembrance," *New Music Box*, July 28, 2006, <http://www.newmusicbox.org/article.nmbx?id=4737> (accessed September 22, 2008).

¹⁶ Lang, "Donald Martin Jenni," 1.

¹⁷ Steven Schick, interview by the author, September 2008, 1.

Steven Schick states that he “really doesn’t know of a contemporary university, maybe outside of the University of California at San Diego,¹⁸ that currently has the kind of focus, energy, and resources to do contemporary music in the way that Iowa City did at that time. It was really extraordinary.”¹⁹

When Lang arrived at Iowa, he worked with a distinguished faculty, which included Jenni as well as Richard Hervig, William Hibbard, and Peter Todd Lewis. According to Lang, Hervig, who led the department, always maintained a disciplined environment and the students were exceptionally determined and motivated.²⁰ Schick recalls a similar scenario, adding that the atmosphere was highly competitive.

Also noteworthy at Iowa, was the devotion of the faculty to their students’ education. Schick recalls, “They really focused their attention on the students, which was kind of unprecedented. Most faculty members now have such a pressure to tour and to publish that actually their best energy gets placed outside, but that really was not the case in Iowa City. They were competing to see who could offer more interesting classes and write more interesting music...it was really a fabulous atmosphere.”²¹ As classmates, Schick and Lang had courses available to them covering a wide-variety of topics, including William Hibbard’s semester-long class on Schoenberg’s *Pierrot Lunaire*.²² Lang mentions, “This is what education is supposed to be and almost never is. Ultimately it did not matter to me what subject he was teaching. If he taught the class I took it, because I knew it would be deep.”²³

¹⁸ Steven Schick is now on the music faculty at UCSD.

¹⁹ Steven Schick, interview by the author, September 2008, 1.

²⁰ Lang, “Donald Martin Jenni,” 1.

²¹ Steven Schick, interview by the author, September 2008, 1.

²² Lang, “Donald Martin Jenni,” 1.

²³ Lang, “Donald Martin Jenni,” 1.

After leaving Iowa, Lang moved on to pursue a DMA in composition at Yale, where he reunited with department head Martin Bresnick and met Jacob Druckman. Paired together, these two “were a really good combination, because Jacob really was about the musician active in the community. Martin was really about the composer-thinker and Jacob was really about the composer-doer.”²⁴

Lang’s fellow students at Yale included Aaron Kernis, Michael Daugherty, and Michael Gordon. While there, Lang was involved in Bresnick’s concert series *Sheep’s Clothing*, “which took an eclectic and unconventional approach to the presentation of new works.”²⁵ Lang later graduated with a DMA from Yale University in 1989.

Bang on a Can

As Lang worked to complete his final degree at Yale, he naturally began looking for appropriate venues and performers to play his music. From this desire to promote his own works, along with those of his contemporaries, came Lang’s most recognized professional achievement to-date: co-founding Bang on a Can. Their current artistic statement is as follows:

Formed in 1987 by composers Michael Gordon, David Lang and Julia Wolfe, Bang on a Can is dedicated to commissioning, performing, creating, presenting and recording contemporary music. With an ear for the new, the unknown and the unconventional, Bang on a Can strives to expose exciting and innovative music as broadly and accessibly as possible to new audiences worldwide. And through its Summer Festival, Bang on a Can hopes to bring this energy and passion for innovation to a younger generation of composers and players.²⁶

Bang on a Can has become one of the most celebrated organizations for contemporary music performance, recording, and promotion in the United States and around the world.

²⁴ Alburger, “Bang on an Ear,” 6.

²⁵ Kyle Gann, “Lang, David,” *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.grovemusic.com> (accessed September 20, 2008).

²⁶ Bang on a Can website “About Us” (accessed October 10, 2008).

In addition to the well-known Bang on a Can All-Stars (the organization's touring performance group), Bang on a Can has also created the People's Commissioning Fund, a project aimed to provide "gifted experimental composers with a unique opportunity to write for a world-renowned ensemble."²⁷ This has helped the consortium bring their listeners closer to the music by allowing the audience to contribute towards the music that is played on their concerts. Bang on a Can also created Cantaloupe Records in March of 2001 as an effort to create a place for music that would normally "slip between the cracks."²⁸ The record label has been extremely successful and has helped Lang, Wolfe, and Gordon in their mission of creating a home for risk-taking new music composers and performers.

The beginnings of Bang on a Can occurred when David Lang met Michael Gordon at the Aspen Music Festival in 1977. Though they did not hit it off at first,²⁹ the two were later reunited while attending Yale, where Lang admits they were best known as "the troublemakers at the back of the class."³⁰ Gordon later met composer Julia Wolfe at Yale, and the two became some of Lang's closest friends. This trio met daily for meals or coffee and discussed the state of music and how their compositions had no place in it. When asked about the beginning of Bang on a Can, Lang paralleled the beginnings to a record store:

The thing about a record store is they have all the different sections of the store to make it easy for you to find the music you know you like. But you may not be the kind of composer who wants to fit in one of those categories, those composers don't have a venue, a kind of place that supports them, a kind of funder that supports them. They don't have musical institutions that support them or radio

²⁷ Bang on a Can Website (accessed October 10, 2008).

²⁸ Cantaloupe Website (accessed October 10, 2008).

²⁹ David Lang, interview by the author, September 2008, 7.

³⁰ Alburger, "Bang on an Ear," 6.

stations which just play that kind of music. They don't have a good place to go... they're homeless. We wanted to be the place where the homeless composers could all go.³¹

As “homeless” composers, they decided to start a festival of their own where there were no presumptions and no preconceived expectations. It was their belief that anything and everything could be played at such a festival, ensuring that all who came would inevitably enjoy something they heard. They also decided they wanted to make the festival a marathon format, with the belief that no one in their right-mind could possibly listen to twelve straight hours of music, meaning each attendee would come to their own conclusions about what they heard. All too often groups of people attend concerts and there is a clear favorite that is discussed afterwards over coffee. The marathon format would insure that each person would see a different combination of pieces and everyone could experience the music at an individual level.³²

Around this time, Lang received a grant from the state of New York to present a concert featuring his music. Graciously, he took the opportunity to invite Gordon, Wolfe, and others to create a communal contemporary music event, rather than making the evening a glorification of himself. When deciding what type of advertising would garner the most press, Lang suggested “Many Happy Experiences with Some Composers of the Future.” Julia countered with “Some Composers Sit Around and Bang on a Can,” and the name stuck.³³

The first Bang on a Can marathon was on Mother's Day in 1987 in an art gallery in SoHo, New York. They facetiously called it the “First Annual” Bang on a Can

³¹ David Lang, interview with Jim Lehrer, *Newshour*, PBS, August 21, 2008.

³² David Lang, in discussion with the author, September 2008.

³³ Alburger, “Bang on an Ear,” 8.

marathon; (the threesome had no idea then how much success they would later have). The trio invited composers whose music they wanted to hear on a concert, music that did not fit comfortably into predetermined genres. When describing this music, Lang said, “it seems to me that if you want a composer who's really trying to do something interesting, you're not trying to fit into a bin that has an easy location. You're trying to find something that actually hovers around.”³⁴ Lang believes that much of the reason Bang on a Can has been a success is because they provide unique music for an audience who wants unique music. The trio has often debated whether planning a new piece on an orchestra concert is a good idea, due to the fact that the audience is there to hear the classics.³⁵ With Bang on a Can, the trio knows that the audience comes specifically to hear what is new, fresh, and cutting edge. They have made a home for the homeless.

Steven Schick and the Bang on a Can All-Stars

For the first three years, Bang on a Can existed as a one-day marathon only, but the composers found themselves having some “house” instrumentalists – soloists who were always ready to take on a new challenge, doing so with the utmost virtuosity and musical sensitivity. From this group, the Bang on a Can All-Stars were formed, largely out of the necessity for touring the marathon, which had gained quite a following. These six players were soloists, chosen for their ability and dependability, not instrumentation, and included Steven Schick (percussion), Maya Beiser (cello), Robert Black (bass), Mark Stewart (guitars), Evan Ziporyn (clarinets), and Lisa Moore (piano).

³⁴ Frank J. Oteri, “Bang on a Can,” *New Music Box*, May 1, 1999, <http://www.newmusicbox.com/article.nmbx?id=12> (accessed September 3, 2008).

³⁵ Frank J. Oteri, “Bang on a Can,” *New Music Box*, May 1, 1999, <http://www.newmusicbox.com/article.nmbx?id=12> (accessed September 3, 2008).

Every composer needs a champion of his music, and Steven Schick has become the “house percussionist” and champion for all of Lang’s music. Schick’s relationship with Lang has a long history: Schick moved to Iowa City around 1973, and when Lang later arrived, they had classes together and became friends. They later became even closer friends through their professional collaboration, and specifically through Bang on a Can. Schick made his New York solo performance debut in 1987, and Lang attended the concert, which was only a short time before the first Bang on a Can marathon. Schick performed in the 1988 marathon and in every marathon following until his departure from the Bang on a Can All-Stars in 2000. Since then, he has been a regular attendee and participant of the marathon and has maintained close contact with Lang. When asked about their relationship, Lang states,

Steve is one of the most important and powerful and amazing musicians I’ve ever met. And he’s one of the closest and most inspiring friendships that I’ve had. I’ve been really lucky to meet a couple of people in my life who were my colleagues basically, who really were amazing. The people who really have a vision of what they do which is larger than the vision they inherited. I remember when I was a student at Iowa, I was a year at Iowa, I was an entire year there, until I realized that Steve was not faculty...He really has been an amazing presence in my life.³⁶

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³⁶ David Lang, interview by the author, 5-6.

CHAPTER THREE: STYLE AND TECHNIQUES

The information that follows in this chapter offers insight into Lang's influences, followed by a discussion of some of his work and stylistic traits. The information provided here will give the reader a better understanding of Lang's style, which will also aid in understanding the analyses in the following chapters. Finally, this information will assist the reader in placing Lang into a larger musical context outside of percussion composition.

Influences

Growing up as the son of a doctor, Lang had an inherent interest in science and math from a young age. The interest in music that stemmed from the Shostakovich video was always in a scientific "take it apart, from the inside of the car," kind of interest.³⁷ Lang believes that many composers begin their musical careers by playing beautiful melodies on piano or violin, later deciding that they wanted to write similar melodies of their own. Unlike other composers, he approached music in a deconstructionist fashion: "For some reason, I guess because of my particular background, I started by going through music counting, by looking at things and taking them apart, and that's why, when I was in high school and heard Philip Glass and Steve Reich, it really made so much sense to me."³⁸

Lang, born in 1957, attended high school in the early to mid 1970s. As Kyle Gann (critic/scholar/composer) points out, "the Deutsche Grammophon recording of *Drumming*³⁹ appeared in 1973; Glass's *Einstein on the Beach* at the Met hit in 1976. At

³⁷ David Lang, interview with the author, September 2008, 1.

³⁸ David Lang, interview with the author, September 2008, 1.

³⁹ *Drumming* was one of Steve Reich's earliest masterworks

that moment an entire generation was beginning its musical education.”⁴⁰ It is easy to imagine these being of interest to the teenaged Lang.

With Lang’s background in science and math, his first hearing of Reich and Glass was one that offered a sense of clarity. These composers were extremely influential on Lang, as was Terry Riley after Lang heard *In C* in the mid 1960s. Upon further investigation of this music, Lang thought to himself “It’s really just proportion. That’s it. It’s music in its most elemental and naked form. A sound that takes up a certain amount of time that’s followed by another sound that takes up another amount of time, and what is the relationship of those measurements.”⁴¹

For a kid who was always interested in taking music apart and putting it back together again, minimalism offered a new light. The early minimalist works of the late 1960s and early 1970s were heavily process-oriented. In his famous essay, *Music As a Gradual Process*, Reich mentions “I am interested in perceptible processes. I want to be able to hear the process happening throughout the sounding music.”⁴² Reich’s early output included his “phase compositions,” which, in their purest form, were literally two tapes played simultaneously, while one slowly went out of phase with the other. Since then, Reich has expanded his orchestration and acquired techniques such as rhythmic builds, which allow for a resulting melody to emerge over the top of these underlying pulsations.

While these musical mavericks have had a substantial effect on Lang’s output, he credits Shostakovich as being his greatest influence. As previously mentioned, Lang

⁴⁰ Kyle Gann, “A Forest for the Seeds of Minimalism: An Essay on Postminimal and Totalist Music,” August 1998, <http://www.kylegann.com/postminimalism.html> (accessed September 20, 2008).

⁴¹ David Lang, interview with the author, September 2008, 1.

⁴² Steve Reich, *Writings on Music (1965-2000)*, (Oxford University Press 2002), 34.

learned that Shostakovich had written his first symphony at the age of nineteen, which was extremely motivating to Lang. Though Lang was interested in Shostakovich's entire output, his love for contemporary music led him to become particularly attracted to Shostakovich's late works. Lang wanted to know what Shostakovich was writing at that time, which for Shostakovich, was the middle of a melancholy time, both personally and stylistically. He suffered his first heart attack in 1966, another in 1971, and later fought a tough battle with lung cancer before dying in August of 1975. His work from the late 1960s and early 1970s is particularly notable for its use of twelve-tone themes, which often were symbolic of death and stasis.⁴³ Lang says "those pieces were all 12-tone, they were all dissonant, they were all deliberately very distancing, they were creepy...it's not like saying I fell in love with the Age of Gold, "Polka," and that's the kind of music I want to write. It's presented as what's happening at that very moment."⁴⁴ Lang states that he has "never seen the idea of writing music as a historical accumulation of great masters, but rather as something that's happening right now."⁴⁵

Lang has taken this combination of influences and worked to create his own voice. He considers himself fortunate to be living in a time period where there is no specific composer or style to try to live up to. As Lang points out, "We don't have anyone whose music is anything but idiosyncratic. You don't hear a piece by Steve Reich and go 'the goal for every composer in the world now is to make music with plus eleven chords that has this kind of pulse; that's music!'"⁴⁶

⁴³ David Fanning, "Shostakovich, Dmitry," *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (accessed September 22, 2008).

⁴⁴ David Lang, interview with the author, September 2008, 1-2.

⁴⁵ David Lang, interview with the author, September 2008, 1.

⁴⁶ David Lang, interview with the author, September 2008, 2.

The pieces Lang writes, while often “readily accessible to the ear, are derived from highly mathematical and intensely detailed formal structures.”⁴⁷ Many of his early works such as *Orpheus Over and Under* (1989), *Face So Pale* (1992), and *Slow Movement* (1993) could easily be viewed as direct descendants of the strong minimalist tradition mentioned. They feature a glassy texture with subtle alterations over a long stretch of time—a classic example of minimalist tendencies.⁴⁸ Lang believes that his compositional output is all connected not by “a sound or style or tonality, but rather [by] mechanical things about how pieces are structured.”⁴⁹

A classic example of this appears when Lang discusses his piece *Spartan Arcs*, a solo for piano that is included in his longer suite, *Memory Pieces* (1992). As he puts it, “it’s a bunch of six-note arpeggios, where gradually the next arpeggio starts before the first one finished.”⁵⁰ As this process occurs, the results ultimately produce rich and unpredictable harmonies. Though this sounds complex, Lang has simply overlapped a part of the new arpeggio with the remainder of the old one, which has not finished its pattern yet. Against this process, Lang combines asymmetrical rhythms as well as a variety of time signature changes. This shift in time descends from 6/16 down to 3/16 and back “in a very complicated process, that guarantees all sorts of asymmetries.”⁵¹

The processes seen in *Spartan Arcs* are a representative example of what one can expect in much of Lang’s music. Though Mark Swed’s famous comment about Lang’s

⁴⁷ Kyle Gann, “Lang, David,” *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (accessed September 20, 2008).

⁴⁸ Kyle Gann, “Lang, David,” *Grove Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com> (accessed September 20, 2008).

⁴⁹ David Lang, interview with Deborah Artman, Artist Statement, <http://www.redpoppymusic.com> (accessed September 15, 2008).

⁵⁰ Alburger, “Bang on an Ear,” 3.

⁵¹ Alburger, “Bang on an Ear,” 1.

work states “there is no name yet for this kind of music,”⁵² it is actually quite possible to recognize larger 20th-century trends in Lang’s compositions. Kyle Gann, in his text *American Music in the Twentieth Century*, has synthesized many of these trends and includes Lang briefly in some of his discussions. Gann, former music critic for the *Village Voice*, was reviewing Lang, Gordon, and Wolfe as early as their first marathon in 1987 and stuck around for years, writing up new music reviews from New York City. Throughout this period, he has named and defined two particularly intriguing modern-day musical trends: Postminimalism and Totalism.

As Gann mentions in his writings, he believes the simplistic and approachable nature of *In C* by Terry Riley, along with the work’s audible phasing process, allowed composers born after 1940 to start anew with music’s fundamental properties. This fresh start created an offshoot from minimalism that has been termed “Postminimalism.” As Gann states:

Postminimalism can be characterized as an idiom of mostly diatonic tonality, usually with a steady and sometimes motoric beat. Often the music is written according to strict contrapuntal or rhythmic procedures, with an underlying numerical structure. Postminimal composers are fond of taking minimalism’s out-of-phase loops or additive forms...as structural background, which they then disguise with a wealth of surface contrapuntal activity. Postminimal music will generally, like a Baroque work, have the same texture and possibly dynamics from beginning to end. Emotional expression in Postminimal music tends to lie in qualities of the entire piece, not in moment-to-moment swings of mood.⁵³

Certainly, many of these qualities parallel much of Lang’s music. Other composers mentioned in this category are William Duckworth, Janice Giteck, Daniel Lentz, Elodie Lauten, and Paul Drescher. Gann goes on to mention that “repetition in Postminimal music is rarely completely absent, but it is also rarely immediate, and is

⁵² http://www.bangonacan.org/about_us/david_lang (accessed October 10, 2008).

⁵³ Kyle Gann, *American Music in the Twentieth Century*, (Wadsworth, 2006), 325.

often elaborately disguised. Minimalist composers, Reich and Glass in particular, were interested in creating processes to listen to. Postminimalist composers may often use strict processes, but rarely at an audible level; the listening focus lies elsewhere.”⁵⁴

These observations are extremely resonant in regards to Lang’s statements. “I think one of the interesting things about working with patterns is there’s a way in which they’re sort of universal. You start them up and they run themselves. If that’s all you’re doing, where is the authenticity? Where am I in that process?”⁵⁵ While Lang has showed a great amount of respect for Reich and Glass, he has also made it clear that he wants to take things a step further. Lang strongly believes that the “listening focus,” as Gann says, is never supposed to be on the process, but rather on the greater emotional reaction that the combinations of those processes create.

Lang refers to the “glitches” in his compositional cycles as follows:

So those things, which you call fingerprints, or the glitches, I think the music is where the glitches are. It’s how the things don’t work; it’s how the math almost works. That’s where the music is I think. In *Cheating, Lying, Stealing*, there are several different ways that I try this...The beginning is of course this expansion pattern that at one moment, I just decide, I don’t like the rhythm in that measure...I’m skipping it. The last section, the big 5/8 section, it’s two mathematical patterns...in collision with each other. So there’s a pattern for how the groupings inside the measures change, there’s a pattern for how the larger phrases change, there’s a pattern where a 3/8 measure interrupts at progressively closer and closer intervals, so basically it’s not about math and purity. It’s about how I’ve used these patterns like a demolition derby or something, and that’s where the music is.⁵⁶

This insightful explanation from Lang helps to legitimize his style as at least partially Postminimalist. Robert Fink, author of *Repeating Ourselves: American Minimal Music as Cultural Practice*, clarifies Postminimalism: “Minimalism’s basic contract with the

⁵⁴ Kyle Gann, *American Music in the Twentieth Century*, (Wadsworth, 2006), 326.

⁵⁵ David Lang, interview by the author, September 2008, 3.

⁵⁶ David Lang, interview by the author, September 2008, 3.

listener had been Reich's disarming promise that he was not interested in hidden structures, that 'all the cards were on the table'. Postminimalists preferred to keep at least a few up their sleeves."⁵⁷

Totalism, another modern-day trend, is where Lang tends to be included in Kyle Gann's writings. Gann believes Totalists are heavily influenced by the rhythmic structure of minimalism without the constant repetition. Their music always displays a clearly audible beat, if not multiple beats at the same time, though "their music never articulates the grid against which complexity can be perceived."⁵⁸ In his book *American Music in the Twentieth Century*, Gann further clarifies the following:

Totalism suggests having your cake and eating it too; in this case, writing music that appeals to audiences on a sensuous and visceral level, and yet which still contains enough complexity and intricate musical devices to attract the more sophisticated aficionado...As a result, Totalist music can generally be characterized as having a steady, articulated beat, often flavored by rock or world music.⁵⁹

Lang, an incredibly intelligent and well-rounded musician, brings, like anybody, decades of different life experiences to the table. All musicians bring influences from their childhood, hobbies, and education, and Lang is no exception. He blends heavy influences of popular music with inspiration from classical composers such as Bach, who happens to be Lang's favorite.⁶⁰ Once one is familiar with Lang's music, it is clear that he does not fit neatly into either of these areas, popular or classical. Gann states that his music is "less systematic and rhythmically complex than that of his Totalist colleagues."⁶¹

⁵⁷ Robert Fink, *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music*, 542.

⁵⁸ Kyle Gann, *Music Downtown: Writings from the Village Voice*, (University of California Press, 2006), 128.

⁵⁹ Gann, *American Music*, 355.

⁶⁰ Adam Wasserman, "The Matchmaker," *Sunday Arts*, May 6, 2008, <http://www.thirteen.org/sundayarts/audio/davidlangfinal.mp3> (accessed October 10, 2008).

⁶¹ Gann, *American Music*, 355.

Though his music is less rhythmically complex for the performer, the meticulous manner in which Lang manipulates his cycles is unmatched.

Compositional Aesthetic

When Lang was fifteen, he went to see a performance of *Lilacs* by Carl Ruggles in Los Angeles. Lang had read some about Ruggles, but had not had an opportunity to listen to much of his music. Based on the title of the work, Lang was ready for a beautiful, flowery piece, and instead says he still remembers the jolt he felt when hearing it. “This is the ugliest thing I’ve ever heard, there must be something here!”⁶² The consequent phrase in this statement is what sets David Lang apart. His attraction to the imperfection of a piece has become the backbone of his compositional aesthetics.

The experience that I thought was going to be easy turned out to be difficult, and that was interesting to me. And I think that may have been my first brush with that concept which has become so important to me: of having silly pieces that turn out to be very serious. The idea of getting something that you weren’t looking for—I think it really came from that. I really do remember that as being a very important experience for me.⁶³

Much in the way that Steve Reich expects each listener to hear his pieces in different ways, Lang likes to write music that does not have a predetermined listener-composition relationship. In *The Slow Movement* (1993), Lang mentions “the whole point of it was to say O.K. well, here you have this really interesting object, and I’m going to rotate it in front of you. You are free to have whatever relationship to it that you like.”⁶⁴ Lang is not as concerned with controlling how his audience connects to his compositions.

Lang prefers to challenge his audiences by offering unexpected and innovative ideas in his works. He likes to compare his place as a composer to the career of an

⁶² Alburger, “Bang on an Ear,” 11.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 13.

inventor. As he says, “Invention always moves forward. That’s the part of the music world I want to be in. I don’t want to inherit a situation unchallenged. I want to feel like I live in a world I made.”⁶⁵ This approach has caused Lang to become interested in devising frameworks for musical narratives within his compositions. As he mentions in his artist statement, these are “not surface narratives that tell you how to feel, but deeper narratives that tell you how things are made.”⁶⁶

Narratives, for Lang, can cover a stretch of topics. For example, he states:

I might base a piece on the life span of a potato, or the rhythms of a blacksmith’s hammer in the Middle Ages, or the map of inflection in a Hebrew psalm. I ask myself questions like, wouldn’t it be great to have a piece of music that was one chord whose notes fell slightly and really slowly over 45 minutes? What would that be like? Or, what if a piece was deliberately sly and underhanded – a series of unreliable, imperfect repetitions? I imagine all sorts of parameters or models and design projects in such a way that the musical experiences I’ve already had can’t help me. Most of all, I keep exploring ways to redefine virtuosity and to give audiences a deeper experience of music than what they get in daily life...I dream about projects that break down formal barriers.⁶⁷

Though Lang regularly pushes boundaries, he says he feels like he is over-educated to be deemed an experimentalist.⁶⁸ As a composer who has been commissioned to write for orchestras, which to many is the ultimate symbol of the past, Lang has kept an open mind. “I believe in those musical worlds. I have a problem with them, but I believe in them. I’m in an interesting place in relation to the orchestral world and the opera world, too, because I’m interested in sort of being an experimental traditionalist.”⁶⁹ It is important to note Lang’s combination of these terms. His approach certainly has

⁶⁵ David Lang, interview with Deborah Artman, Artist Statement, <http://www.redpoppymusic.com> (accessed March 20, 2008).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Alburger, “Bang on an Ear,” 5.

⁶⁹ Alburger, “Bang on an Ear,” 2-3.

experimental tendencies, though he holds the past in high regard as well. Lang states, “I have tremendous respect for music that is already written. So much good music has been written with the traditional rules. The traditional rules are the emotional rules, and they lead you to traditional places. Melodies go up and then they go down. You create tension and release tension. There are million of things that are so unspoken, so fundamental, that you just never talk about them.”⁷⁰ One must know the rules before breaking them, and Lang’s respect and knowledge for these traditional approaches combined with his desire to take risks has allowed him to create his own unique voice.

Lang’s Percussion Writing

Lang began writing percussion solos in the mid-1980s, and his works have since become some of the most celebrated music in the percussion repertoire. His percussion writing is also prominently used in his mixed chamber ensembles as well as his recent percussion quartet, *The So-Called Laws of Nature* (2002). Lang has managed to find a unique voice within percussion and has firmly positioned his work among the best in the repertoire. According to Steven Schick, “One of the main things he’s done is to write a diversity of pieces, none of which in my opinion are a derivative of other things. In other words, *Anvil Chorus* is not a grandson of *Psappha*⁷¹. I think that this is one of the things that we really owe him, from that standpoint. We owe David big time, just for the amount of diversity that he’s afforded us.”⁷²

While examining many of these works, one begins to notice certain recurring compositional methods that Lang uses to construct the structural elements of his pieces.

⁷⁰ David Lang, interview with Deborah Artman, Artist Statement, <http://www.redpoppymusic.com> (accessed March 20, 2008).

⁷² *Psappha* being the ground-breaking percussion solo written by Iannis Xenakis in 1975.

⁷² Steven Schick, interview by the author, September 2008, 5-6.

Before delving into an in-depth discussion of his compositional techniques and their impact on performance practice, it is necessary to have a working vocabulary surrounding some of the common techniques found in Lang's music.

Lang's Compositional Techniques

One idiosyncrasy found in many of Lang's works is the idea of *metric superimposition*, in which he aims to shift the listener's perception of the beat. Meter is defined in *The Harvard Dictionary of Music* as "the pattern in which a steady succession of rhythmic pulses is organized; also termed time." This entry goes on to mention that "The perception of meter is a function of the organization of pitch as well as duration. It consists in recognizing every *n*th pulse or beat as the first in a new recurrence of the metrical pattern."⁷³

Given this definition, the label of metric superimposition is fitting for Lang's regular use of attacks of equal duration to frame a finite amount of material, which causes the listener to shift his perception of where the beat is located. This differs from syncopation, which the *Harvard Dictionary* defines as "...the contradiction of the regular succession of strong and weak beats within a measure or a group of measures whose metrical context nevertheless remains clearly defined by some part of the musical texture that does not itself participate in the syncopation."⁷⁴ After reviewing these descriptions, metric superimposition is even more appropriate for describing Lang's method, as it directly relates to meter, however does not always "remain clearly defined by some part of the musical texture." This is a fine example of Lang not articulating "the grid against

⁷³ Don Michael Randel, *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 4th Ed. Pg. 507.

⁷⁴ Don Michael Randel, *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 4th Ed. Pg. 861.

which complexity can be perceived,”⁷⁵ further helping to define his position as a Totalist as well as a Postminimalist.

In his analysis of *International Business Machine*, Shafer Mahoney categorizes Lang’s layering as periodic, quasi-periodic, and aperiodic, depending on the regularity of these patterns.⁷⁶ Mahoney describes periodic layers as “Those events separated by a regular interval of time,” while aperiodic are described as events “separated by irregular lengths of time.”⁷⁷ This leaves quasi-periodic layers, which Mahoney defines as “gestures which sometimes seem periodic, but are not, in fact, governed by a steady numerical relation. They mediate between the strict, mechanical regularity of periodic events and the rhythmic freedom of aperiodic events.”⁷⁸

Mahoney’s terminology works for *IBM*, a large orchestral work with multiple layers. While it easily breaks up Lang’s layering into three clean-cut groups, this system focuses heavily on Lang’s mechanics while only briefly discussing how they affect the aural experience. For example, Mahoney defines periodic layers as a series of equidistant attacks, but this does not discuss how that affects the listener or performer. Furthermore, the difference between aperiodic and quasi-periodic is not clearly defined and leaves room for ambiguity. By labeling it as “quasi” it gives the technique a sense of not living up to its perfect counterparts. In actuality, Lang has made it clear that these glitches are precisely where the music lies, making a less divided discussion of his style more appropriate. As one becomes more familiar with Lang’s music, one learns to see these

⁷⁵ Kyle Gann, *Music Downtown: Writings from the Village Voice*, (University of California Press, 2006), 128.

⁷⁶ Shafer Mahoney, “David Lang’s ‘The International Business Machine’: An Analysis” (PhD diss., University of Rochester, 1999), 3-9.

⁷⁷ Mahoney, “International Business Machine,” 3-6.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 8.

processes quickly; some of his patterns are perfectly executed, and some have slight interruptions. Regardless, Lang's music occurs as a result of these interruptions or glitches, making it more relevant to include these layers all under the single categorization of metric superimposition.

The opening measures of Section Two in *The Anvil Chorus* serve as an ideal introduction to metric superimposition. Throughout this section, Lang keeps the 8/8 time signature constant, while changing the periodicity with the entrance of each resonant metal voice. Seen in Figure 3.1, Section Two begins with the alternation of two resonant metal voices. The first resonant metal (notated on a treble clef G) begins with attacks consistently occurring five sixteenth notes apart. The end of the second measure shows an abrupt switch to the second resonant metal (which sits on treble clef F), with the attacks now four sixteenth notes apart, though not situated on the downbeat. As these alternations continue, it causes the listener to shift his perception of pulse. In the score, there is also a woodblock line occurring above these resonant metals that consists of only eighth and sixteenth notes. This simple passage of common duple divisions acquires a new complexity due to the background it is being placed against.

Figure 3.1: Metric Superimposition in Section Two of *Anvil Chorus*, mm. 57-68

In metric superimposition, the perception of the pulse shifts, yet the original tempo, the grid that the musician is using for performance, never actually changes. This is different from Elliott Carter’s famous technique of metric modulation. In metric modulation, there is a constant pulse perceived and underneath, the time signatures and rhythmic values cause a change from one tempo to another.

Lang is certainly not the first composer to use repeating rhythmic cycles in his music, however, his use of these loops has become the foundational structure for many of his pieces. Without explaining the particular vocabulary needed to discuss Lang’s music, an analysis of Lang’s music would be ambiguous and confusing.

Permutated Substitution

A second technique that is particularly characteristic of David Lang is his use of *permutated substitution*. Lang uses permutation to create a sense of rhythmic friction in many of his works. This technique has several formats and is best understood if viewed through a simple example. In this process, Lang slowly permutes a variable factor (y) through a number of cells filled with a constant factor (x), until the pattern slowly morphs

from containing all of the constant (x) to all of the variable (y). Before getting confused in the mathematics, it is easier to understand this by referring to Figure 3.2. Here, one can see that the eight-bar example consists of measures containing either eight or seven attacks, which, when put in groupings of two, it becomes clear that a pattern is occurring. Thus, Lang is working in a two *cell* system.

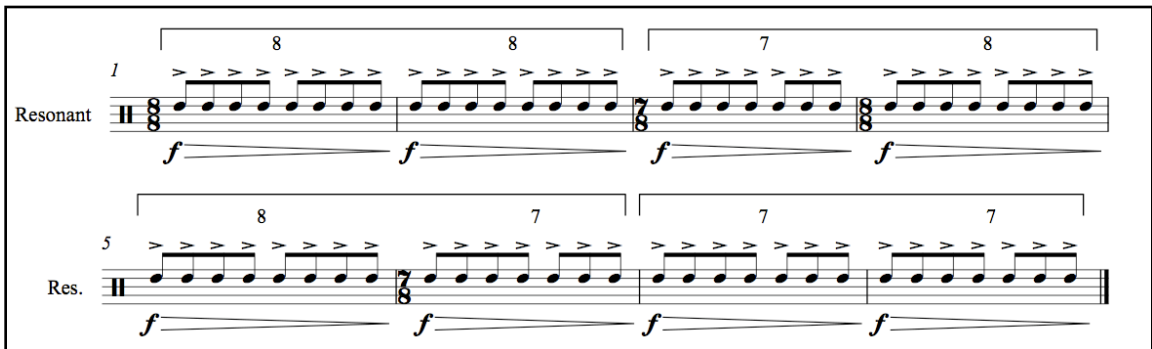


Figure 3.2: Two-cell system in opening measures of *Anvil Chorus*, mm. 1-8

Inside this two-cell system, the constant factor (x) is the groupings of 8. Figure 3.2 shows the first two cells both with the constant factor. In measure three, the variable factor (y) is the groupings of 7. In a two-cell system, there are very few permutations possible. Measures 5 and 6 show that the variable factor, 7, has permuted from the first cell (in measure 3) to the second cell. Finally, since both possible permutations have occurred, measures 7 and 8 show the variable factor (7) has taken over both cells.

While this process can occur using any musical parameter, it is important to note that the most common parameter manipulated with this technique is the number of attacks in a cycle, also seen above in Figure 3.2. After examining the musical example, it may also be beneficial to understand this process conceptually. See Table 3.1 for a mathematical explanation of the process which occurs in Figure 3.2. In Group A, (x) is

the constant and (y) is the variable. In this example, Lang is applying this permuted substitution process to sets that contain only two cells.

Group A			
Set 1 (x, x)	Set 2 (y, x)	Set 3 (x, y)	Set 4 (y, y)

Table 3.1: Two-Cell Sets

Due to the low number of cells per set, the permutations are limited, and quickly exhaust all possibilities. Now look at the next example, in a three-cell system (Table 3.2). Here, Lang permutes every variation of one variable (y) and then moves to two variables in Sets 5-7. Set 8 contains the only use of three variables, due to the fact that Group B is only a three-cell system to begin with.

Group B			
Set 1 (x, x, x)	Set 2 (y, x, x)	Set 3 (x, y, x)	Set 4 (x, x, y)
Set 5 (y, y, x)	Set 6 (y, x, y)	Set 7 (x, y, y)	Set 8 (y, y, y)

Table 3.2: Three-Cell Sets

Finally, consider the following example, in a four-cell system. Once again, Lang permutes the variable (y) using all possibilities, including one cell (Sets 1-5), two cells (Sets 6-11), three cells (Sets 12-15), and finally four cells (Set 16).

Group C			
Set 1 (x, x, x, x)	Set 2 (y, x, x, x)	Set 3 (x, y, x, x)	Set 4 (x, x, y, x)
Set 5 (x, x, x, y)	Set 6 (y, y, x, x)	Set 7 (y, x, y, x)	Set 8 (y, x, x, y)
Set 9 (x, y, y, x)	Set 10 (x, y, x, y)	Set 11 (x, x, y, y)	Set 12 (y, y, y, x)
Set 13 (y, y, x, y)	Set 14 (y, x, y, y)	Set 15 (x, y, y, y)	Set 16 (y, y, y, y)

Table 3.3: Four-Cell Sets

This system of permuted substitution is used extensively in all three of David Lang’s percussion solos. After initial understanding of a rather complex mathematical system, it becomes simple to observe this process occurring throughout Lang’s work. In fact, as will be discussed later, it is the primary technical focus in *Scraping Song* throughout the entire piece.

Rhythmic Displacement

Rhythmic displacement is a technique that is much simpler to understand and is only used sporadically by Lang in his solo percussion works. The technique simply consists of a repeating motive whose entrance is displaced by a distinct rhythm. For example consider Figure 3.3. Here, a two count rhythmic motive is displaced by one eighth note. Lang uses this technique in his solo works, usually in conjunction with other events to create rhythmic ambiguity and tension.



Figure 3.3: Rhythmic Displacement by one eighth-note

“Two Ways of Seeing a River”

In Mark Twain’s famous essay, *Two Ways of Seeing a River*, he discusses how his passion for the Mississippi River changed after he “had come to know every trifling feature that bordered the great river as familiarly as I knew the letters of the alphabet.”⁷⁹ While investigating the music of David Lang, one can easily begin feeling the same way; it is important to continue to appreciate “the music itself” as one discovers the underlying

⁷⁹ Mark Twain, *Two Ways of Seeing A River*, 1883.

mathematical processes. As Steven Schick states, “You just can’t categorize David as ‘here’s this guy who makes mathematical music...,’ you just can’t. While it’s true, it’s not complete.”⁸⁰

While Lang was in college during the 1970s, many of his peers butted heads with him over compositional purpose. Other students, taught to respect the serialist trends of the Second Viennese School, valued compositions based on their ability to be analyzed. But Lang felt “the point of music is to work – to move people, to get inside you, to accomplish some sort of larger emotional task. In order to accomplish that larger emotional task, the piece has to be well made. But you can’t say that a piece is well made if it doesn’t accomplish that larger task.”⁸¹ Many works, particularly from the serialist tradition leave out this last step, and only focus on the number game. Lang insists that this is not what people should focus on in music.

Furthermore, it is important to see the following analytical information for what it is worth, and that is, one viewpoint. The imbedded systems in Lang’s music are highly intriguing and knowing this information can be quite useful when learning his pieces. Steven Schick, for example, does not focus as much on these systems to develop his interpretation:

Anvil Chorus, for example, is pretty straight forward to some extent. It’s also an earlier piece...*Scraping Song* is as well. The idea of ‘you start with things in six and you gradually replace them in a systematic way so that everything is in five.’ It’s pretty obvious and you both can’t miss it and can’t play the piece without knowing it. *String of Pearls* – much less obvious. There absolutely are some things, but I never really cared that much about that. I don’t think that an intelligent performance relies...boy, a lot of people would disagree with this I

⁸⁰ Steven Schick, interview by the author, September 2008, 6.

⁸¹ David Lang, interview by the author, September 2008.

suppose...relies on you understanding the systematic aspects of the piece. I play it like Bach, or I try to.⁸²

While it appears that Schick has a slight disagreement with the proposed approach, the response to this analytical information is ultimately the choice of the performer. These processes in *Anvil Chorus* and *Scraping Song* are not always as obvious as Schick may believe, particularly for young students who are working on these pieces.⁸³

In discussion, however, Schick did agree that analysis (and learning in general) can skew music in an overly analytical direction, making it difficult to regain objectivity and true passion for the sound of a work. Mark Twain's essay provided an interesting idea parallel to this. With the heavily-weighted importance of decision making in percussion performance, it is necessary to gather as much information as possible while developing an interpretation. Using this as a motivation, the following chapters discuss theoretical principals of Lang's solo percussion works, intending to provide insight that will positively impact future performances of these compositions.

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⁸² Steven Schick, interview by the author, September 2008, 6.

⁸³ This may be due to the close relationship that Schick has had with Lang. In hindsight, these things are very obvious, but for performers who have not had the extensive firsthand experience with Lang that Schick has, the processes covered in this document do not unveil themselves in a readily perceptible fashion.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE ANVIL CHORUS (1991)

Background and Notes

In 1991, Lang wrote *The Anvil Chorus*,⁸⁴ which has since become his most heralded and frequently performed percussion piece. The work arose out of a strong relationship with Steven Schick, who recalls that Lang proposed the idea of the piece to him, a slight role reversal from the normal commission process. At that time, Schick had recently begun his first year as professor of percussion at the University of California at San Diego. The term “long-distance relationship” took on a new meaning in their collaboration. Schick states, “David wrote me the piece and sent it to me and I remember on a couple of occasions playing it for him over the telephone...I have no idea what that must have sounded like...”⁸⁵ Despite its unorthodox beginnings, *The Anvil Chorus* was premiered to critical acclaim during the Bang on a Can Marathon on May 12, 1991.⁸⁶ The festival was held at La Mama, an experimental cultural center in New York City.

Another early performance of the piece took place on New Music Research Day at the 1991 Percussive Arts Society International Convention in Anaheim, California. During this time, Schick was also touring the work heavily, giving it a great deal of exposure. This eventually led to *The Anvil Chorus* being included on the exclusive repertoire list for the 2002 Percussive Arts Society Solo Contest. Schick mentions he “would be surprised, shocked in fact, if David has another piece in his repertoire that has been played more than *The Anvil Chorus* has.”⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Published by Red Poppy and administered by G. Schirmer Inc.

⁸⁵ Steven Schick, interview by the author, September 2008, 2.

⁸⁶ “Past Events.” *Bang on a Can*. <http://www.bangonacan.org/events/show/356> (accessed October 10, 2008).

⁸⁷ Steven Schick, interview by the author, September 2008, 2.

The Anvil Chorus gained its inspiration from the jarring sounds once heard in a blacksmith shop. In this pre-industrial craft, blacksmiths often devised counting structures that insured they would not strike the irons at the same moment.⁸⁸ These varying attacks combined to form a cacophony of metallic melodies, essentially creating an *Anvil Chorus*. Lang takes this inspiration, and, in his normal fashion, combines asynchronous waves of rhythm that crash together at indeterminate times, creating a pulsation of piercing discord.

The absence of a fixed instrumentation leaves the performer with a plethora of interpretive decisions before ever playing a note of *The Anvil Chorus*. Lang scored the work for three central groups of instruments that are used to create interwoven cyclic material: (1) three resonant metals, intended to be played with mallets, (2) four non-resonant metals, also played with mallets, and (3) four “junk” metals that are attached to foot pedals. These three metallic groups, along with a kick bass drum and a pair of woodblocks, make up the complete artillery of instruments. To any responsible performer, the lack of specificity given in regard to instrument selection immediately poses questions of interpretation and approach. In a piece imbued with metallic sounds, the instrument choices for one metallic family directly affect the aural clarity of the next. Certainly delineating between frequencies allows all of the components of the piece to speak clearly.

The rhythmic structure Lang uses throughout is characteristic of his constructivist style. In particular, he employs multiple processes simultaneously in many parts of the work. While Lang does not believe it is the performer’s job to take great care in making

⁸⁸ Steven Schick, *The Percussionist’s Art: Same Bed, Different Dreams*, (University of Rochester Press, 2006), 26.

his mathematical processes obvious to the listener, it is still the performer's responsibility to give each cycle its own voice. This is not as complicated as one might think, as each cycle is isolated within one of the three groupings of metallic voices. However, it emphasizes the importance of wise decision-making when the performer selects the instruments for the different metallic families. It should be clarified that when Lang calls for resonant, semi-resonant, and non-resonant metals, he is not only specifying the manner in which the instruments sustain and decay, but also the relative pitch of these sounds. Steven Schick provides insight into this concept after working with Lang before the premiere:

The score asks for resonant, semi-resonant, and non-resonant metals, but I believe that resonance – in other words the length and nature of the decay of the instruments – was not precisely what David wished to specify. It is more accurate to say that he wanted to control the length of notes in combination with the relative sense of pitch of the instruments. By resonant, he means both sustaining instruments but also instruments of clearer and more appreciable pitch. By non-resonant he means dryer, but also noisier, junkier, and more jarring sounds. David uses the pitched “resonant” instruments to create an overall sense of the work as harmonically driven. The noisier “non-resonant” ones propel the work rhythmically and indeed even melodically. The ability to control resonance is central to developing a sense of melodic line within a diverse set of percussion instruments. Differences among noise instruments are audible only if the instruments are allowed to resonate. For example, a cymbal sounds nothing like a small tam-tam unless you choke it immediately. Then the similar noisiness of attack is more noticeable and the two instruments sound a great deal alike. The impression of melody and forward-moving narrative sense results naturally from similarity of noisy attacks.⁸⁹

There is a peculiar aesthetic in choosing, for example, three parts from an automobile engine rather than selecting from traditional, pre-manufactured metallic percussive sounds such as suspended cymbals or gongs. Percussionists have any object in the world available to them for a piece like *The Anvil Chorus*, and often one person's

⁸⁹ Schick, *The Percussionist's Art*, 31.

trash truly is another's treasure. Many of the best metallic sounds can be found in a junkyard or a forgotten storage area. Past performances have used everything from metal pipes to used frying pans. These instrument choices determine crucial factors of the piece and often dictate the long-term effectiveness of its performance as well.

The logistics involved with setup, instrument choice, and interpretation in percussion literature have an imbedded sense of ambiguity. Certain performers and performances are legendary, and these have spawned an oral tradition about what instruments a performer used to play a certain piece, where he got them from, and how he set them up when he was performing. *The Anvil Chorus* is certainly not exempt from this phenomenon. In an interview Schick comments on this:

I love the fact that there is flexibility, like so much of the repertoire, and there's a tension between the oral tradition, in other words the way in which you unknowingly and unconsciously decide or a community decides upon a way in which something is to be done. It develops, it codifies. And the fact that, via its flexibility, the piece should naturally be quite different from one performer to another. I think there is tension there, and to some extent, the recordings have made some difference. I mean, when I hear it in masterclasses, very often there's a similarity to the recordings that I know, both mine and Evelyn's,⁹⁰ and then there's also this sort of sense that you never really know what you're going to get, and people, for the most part, I think have taken advantage of the liberties in the score.

One aspect of the *Anvil Chorus* that has been discussed by many percussionists is the fact that Lang calls for a total of five foot pedals, which immediately suggests performing the piece seated, in a fashion similar to a drumset. While this has been successful, Lang actually prefers that performers stand for this piece. Schick's explanation for this preference is as follows:

⁹⁰ Evelyn Glennie is a world-renowned percussion soloist who was inducted into the Percussive Arts Society Hall of Fame in November, 2008.

Teetering on the pedals and reaching out for the array of brake drums, steel pipes, or frying pans is not a comfortable performing experience and undoubtedly not a graceful sight. But the necessity for the percussionist simultaneously to address each instrumental group with its distinct musical and choreographic particularities places the player (just as the blacksmiths put the piece of metal) uncomfortably at the center of the action. Musically, the percussionist must represent the diversity of sounds while urging them to merge as a single piece of music. Physically the goal is more basic: don't fall down. But in both cases, the issue of balance among instrumental groups is central.⁹¹

Formal Layout

Anvil Chorus is divided into six sections, each of which contains classic Langian techniques. The sectional layout is as follows:

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Measures	1-56	57-113	114-133	134-154	155-198	199-218

Table 4.1: Formal Layout of *Anvil Chorus*

These sections are largely delineated by the ending of strict processes and a drastic change in texture. Section Two begins at the end of a strict permuted substitution, when Lang suddenly changes the pattern and instruments in both hands. Section Three is recognized due to the return of the opening 8-7 motive. This section comes to a close with a dramatic pause and a slower tempo at measure 134. Here, Lang introduces new material again and shifts the focal point to the foot pedals. Section Five is marked by a tempo change and the first integrated sixteenth note texture in the piece. After a flurry of rhythm, Lang begins the final section by once again reiterating the opening 8-7 theme and highlighting a metric superimposition simultaneously.

⁹¹ Schick, *The Percussionist's Art*, 28-29.

Vocabulary

For the purposes of discussion, the different percussive voices in the *Anvil Chorus* will be referred to with designations of RM 1-3 for the three resonant metals, NRM 1-4 for the four non-resonant metals, FP 1-4 for the four foot pedal metals, and WB 1-2 for the two woodblock voices. In all discussions, these voices will begin with 1 as the lowest and increase as necessary. The bass drum does not need a designation, as there is only one voice.

Section One (mm. 1-56)

The Anvil Chorus begins in 8/8 meter with an eight-bar theme, which consists of groupings of 8, 8, 7, 8, 8, 7, 7, and 7 eighth-notes respectively (see Figure 4.1). Lang uses this theme regularly throughout the work, each time utilizing the same alternating voicing of RM2 and RM1. This recurring pattern provides the listener with an aural anchor throughout the piece, though it is deceptively unstable. At first glance, the opening measures seem to only present a recognizable theme, however, they also function at an important structural level, displaying one of Lang's most popular and successful techniques, permuted substitution.

The figure displays two staves of musical notation. The top staff, labeled 'Resonant', and the bottom staff, labeled 'Res.', both feature a sequence of eighth notes with accents. The notes are grouped into measures of 8, 8, 7, 8, 8, 7, 7, and 7 eighth notes. The notation includes dynamic markings 'f' and a fermata over the final measure of the sequence.

Figure 4.1: Permuted Substitution in *The Anvil Chorus*, mm. 1-8

When viewed through the opening statement of *The Anvil Chorus*, permuted substitution occurs as follows. The opening two measures contain 8 eighth-notes each. This creates a pairing of two 8-note rhythmic cells. In the ensuing pair of measures, the first cell changes to 7 notes instead of the expected 8, while the second cell remains constant at 8 notes. The third pair of measures places the 8-note cell before the 7-note cell. The fourth pair of measures consists of two 7-note cells. This means that the 7-note cell takes the position of variable: it did not occur in the first group of measures; it occurred first in the second pair of measures, and it appeared second in the third pair of measures. Having thus achieved all possible permutations of 7 and 8, the 7 finally replaces both. When grouped in pairs, the beginning statement looks like this:

8-8	7-8	8-7	7-7
-----	-----	-----	-----

Table 4.2: Pair grouping of the opening statement of *The Anvil Chorus*

When viewed in this manner, it is easy to see the constant, 8, being overtaken by the variable, 7, as it permutes its way through the pattern from left to right, until finally filling both positions. This instance is quite a simple sampling of this technique, and more complex versions will be seen in later sections of the work.

While this is important from a structural standpoint, what is more important is the level of complexity it brings to the work. The listener is immediately presented with thematic material that is brought back in various settings throughout the work, however the theme is precariously difficult to sing to oneself. Unlike the familiar melody of a children's song, the opening of *The Anvil Chorus* is much more reminiscent of watching someone dance to a skipping record. There is enough sense of repetition that it seems familiar, however the underlying process ensures that it also keeps the listener slightly off

balance at all times. The diminuendo in each measure magnifies this inconsistency. After each initial attack, the remainder of each measure has an echo effect, with each pronounced entrance fading away rather than establishing pulse.

Though the initial occurrence of the 8-7 theme is unaccompanied, Lang complicates subsequent statements by superimposing pointillistic metallic and bass drum attacks. After Lang introduces the 8-7 theme, it is repeated twice, once beginning at measure 9, and once at measure 17. During these two repetitions, the non-resonant metals and bass drum juxtapose the theme with entrances at a seemingly random rate. These syncopated interruptions fall in all parts of the 8-7 permutation, making the piece feel even more off-kilter. A closer look at these entrances reveals that despite the listener's likely confusion, there are actually strict patterns to be found in these interruptions.

Lang begins the disruptive statements by introducing NRM2 in measure 9. Each voice's entrance is also preceded by a corresponding foot pedal voice; NRM2 enters with FP3. After careful analysis, one can see that the seemingly random impacts from the NRM voices actually occur with a very regular periodicity. The isolated attacks (seen in Figure 4.2 below) of each NRM2/FP3 combination average around 36 eighth-notes apart (see Table 4.3 below).

The figure displays two musical staves. The top staff is labeled 'Non-Resonant' and the bottom staff is labeled 'NRM'. Both staves are in 8/8 time. The 'Non-Resonant' staff shows a sequence of notes with accents and rests, indicating entrances. The 'NRM' staff shows a similar sequence of notes with accents and rests, indicating entrances. The notation is in 8/8 time and spans measures 9 to 24.

Figure 4.2: Entrances of NRM/FP voices in mm. 9 - 24

The bass drum enters next in measure 10 (represented in Figure 4.2 by the “x” notehead), and its entrances are also at regular intervals. This is subsequently followed by NRM1 (which is paired with FP2 and seen in measure 18) and finally NRM3 (which is paired with FP4, but not contained in Figure 4.2). These recurring entrances, though easy to conceive as completely random, are in fact an augmentation of Lang’s metric superimposition technique, a more common version of which is introduced at the beginning of Section Two. As seen in Table 4.3, the attacks of each voice are equidistant.⁹² The augmentation occurs due to Lang’s expansive use of space between entrances. This augmentation, along with the overlapping of these entrances, eliminates any marked rhythmic profile throughout this passage.

Table 4.3 shows the consistency of each entrance. After carefully measuring the space between attacks, it is unmistakable how carefully Lang has placed each entrance. Once these cycles are recognized, it is easy for one to understand how Lang has derived the non-resonant metal material throughout Section One.

NRM2/FP3	36	36	34	36	36	37	36	37	37	R9
BD	75	74	72	72	R34					
NRM1/FP2	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	R53	
NRM3/FP4	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	R23.5	

Table 4.3: Non-resonant metal cycles occurring in Section One of *The Anvil Chorus*

In the middle of these cycles, in measure 25, Lang starts a second permuted substitution, this time in 3-cell sets rather than 2. This coincides with the entrance of

⁹² Small inconsistencies are shown in Table 4.3.

NRM3/FP4. Similar to the previous example, it can be deceiving how and where to group the measures so that the underlying process will reveal itself. This permutation occurs with a constant of 7 and a variable of 6 eighth notes, and is put to use in 3-cell sets.⁹³ This 24-measure process unfolds meticulously as follows:

7-6 Permutation in Section One							
7-7-7	6-7-7	7-6-7	7-7-6	6-6-7	6-7-6	7-6-6	6-6-6

Table 4.4: Three-Cell, 7-6 Permutation in Section One

Once this process is completed, Lang recycles the 8-7 permutation to nicely finish the end of the first main section. The non-resonant metals are left with a remainder (as seen in Table 4.3) as an abrupt texture change occurs, signifying the beginning of Section Two.

Section Two (mm. 57-113)

Section Two initiates the stratification of two unique cycles. Beginning in measure 57, Lang deploys a syncopated woodblock theme that repeats six times. Within each repetition, developmental material is added until the section is resolved by a strain of accented sixteenth notes on WB2. This accentuation acts as a rhythmic cadence for the preceding material and makes subsequent reiterations of the subject easy to recognize. The five repetitions of the woodblock material begin in measures 64, 72, 81, 91, and 102 respectively, each adding one additional measure of material. While Lang does not provide a clear system for extending each repetition, it is unquestionable that he develops material that already exists. This development is seen in Figure 4.3 below.

Throughout this entire section, Lang unfolds a completely independent process in the non-resonant metal voices. Here, Lang continues to use his metric superimposition

⁹³ Review Group B (3 Cell-Sets) in Table 3.2 for review of this process.

technique,⁹⁴ however this time it is drastically truncated. This adaptation makes the

The image displays a musical score for woodblock, organized into two systems. The first system, located at the top, covers measures 57-63 (marked *mm.* 57-63), 64-71 (marked *mm.* 64+71), 72-80 (marked *mm.* 72-80), 81-90 (marked *mm.* 81-90), 91-101 (marked *mm.* 91-101), and 102-113 (marked *mm.* 102-113). The second system, located at the bottom, covers measures 57-63 (marked *W. Bl.*), 64-71 (marked *W. Bl.*), 72-80 (marked *W. Bl.*), 81-90 (marked *W. Bl.*), 91-101 (marked *W. Bl.*), and 102-113 (marked *W. Bl.*). The notation consists of six staves per system, each with a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, often grouped in beams. The woodblock part is characterized by a series of sharp, rhythmic pulses that become increasingly dense and truncated towards the end of the section.

Figure 4.3: Woodblock development in Section Two, mm. 57-113

⁹⁴ This was used in the non-resonant metals in Section One, but is difficult to perceive due to the spacing of the entrances.

repetitive rhythms easily recognizable, while simultaneously causing an indefinite sense of pulse, due to their constantly shifting state. Lang maintains a consistent pairing of non-resonant and foot-pedal metals from Section One and also assigns each specific NRM voice with a fixed periodicity from attack to attack, as shown in Table 4.5 below.

NRM2/FP3	5 sixteenth notes apart
NRM1/FP2	4 sixteenth notes apart
NRM3/FP4	3 sixteenth notes apart
NRM4/FP1	6 sixteenth notes apart

Table 4.5: Periodicity of Non-Resonant Metal attacks (NRM)

This metric superimposition process can be broken down into four separate subsections, which constitute 12, 13, 12, and 20 measures in length. The first and third subsections are identical and utilize alternating entrances of NRM2 and NRM1. Using these voices, Lang’s third instance of permuted substitution can be seen. Identified by the number of attacks per voice, this substitution method will be referred to as the 6-5 permutation, and unfolds as follows:

6-5	5-6	6-6	5-5
-----	-----	-----	-----

Table 4.6: Pair grouping of the 6-5 Permutation

This example of Lang’s technique is somewhat difficult to identify since it is not as strict a permutation,⁹⁵ however it is clearly intentional and its ending is clearly marked by the

⁹⁵ The permutation in Section One not only used all variations, but also unfolded them in perfect order, moving from all of one number, through each mathematical possibility, until resulting in all of the substituted number. Lang’s use here uses all variations, but not in this precise order.

entrance of NRM3/FP4 in measure 69, thus signifying the beginning of the second subsection.

The second subsection (mm. 69-81) for the non-resonant metals introduces NRM3 into the ongoing cycle that already includes NRM2 and NRM1 from subsection one. With this addition, the sequential number of attack points per voice (NRM2, NRM1, and NRM3) form a near perfect palindromic pattern as follows:

4	(5)	8	3	7	6	7	3	8	4
---	-----	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Table 4.7: Palindrome Layout in Subsection Two

The fourth subsection,⁹⁶ which begins in measure 94, is signified by the introduction of the final non-resonant voice, NRM4/FP1. At this point, Lang is now using all four non-resonant metal/foot pedal combinations, in random alternation. The results of analyzing their attacks per voice is as follows:

3	4	5	6	8	3	7	6	6	7	3	3	9	2	7
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Table 4.8: Imperfect Layout in Subsection Four

It becomes apparent that Lang’s patterns, while strict in subsections one and three, are not as systematic in subsections two and four. When trying to make sense of these more erratic patterns, it is helpful to take a different vantage point.⁹⁷ By extracting the number of attacks *per voice* in sequence, rather than viewing the attacks of all voices successively, one can provide further support that Lang is definitely using a version of

⁹⁶ The third subsection is an exact duplication of the first subsection, as previously mentioned, thus it does not need to be discussed.

⁹⁷ Kevin Lewis, “Form, Rhythm, and Process in David Lang’s *The Anvil Chorus*,” (Unpublished Paper, presented at the Roots and Rhizomes Festival at the University of California, San Diego, February 2007), 4.

systematic repetition (see Table 4.9). Each voice's grouping is separated by the other voices, so this pattern can be difficult to discover at first.

	Subsection Two	Subsection Four
NRM3	4-8-6-3	4-8-6-3-7
NRM2	3-8	3-9
NRM1	5-7-7-4	5-7-7-2

Table 4.9: Number of attacks per voice

By viewing Table 4.9, one can quickly see that the two subsections are very similar. While not a perfect match, it is noteworthy that the only inconsistencies occur at the end of these number strings. If one considers how neatly the woodblock material lines up with the beginning of Section Three, it is safe to assume that the woodblock process is dictating the form, not the non-resonant metals. That said, these small inconsistencies at the end of the non-resonant metal patterns may simply be due to Lang adhering to this simultaneous woodblock cycle previously discussed.

Section Three (mm. 114-133)

While the top resonant metal voice formally controlled the first two sections, Section Three is led by the two ten-bar phrases of the bass drum and the least used NR4/

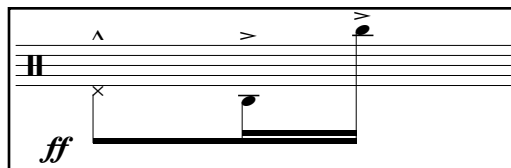


Figure 4.4: Featured motive using the bass drum and NR4/FP1 combo

FP1 combination in the lower voice. This combination is the featured motive in the next two sections and is seen in Figure 4.4. These ten-bar phrases begin with three two-bar

segments, which utilize the previously unseen technique of rhythmic displacement. Here, Lang uses this technique to systematically prolong the entrance in each of the second bars by one eighth note.

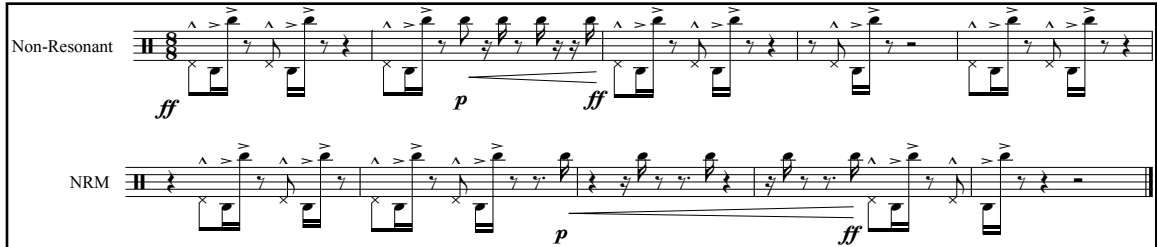


Figure 4.5: Lang’s use of rhythmic displacement in the ten bar motive, mm. 114-123

In the space between each rhythmic motive, Lang often employs his metric superimposition technique, once again eliminating any reassurance of a pulse center (see the NR4 voice on treble clef A). As seen in Figure 4.5, there is a space in the end of the tenth bar; following this measure, the entire 10-bar section repeats itself. The brash sounds of the bass drum and metal throughout this section show clear signs of Lang’s intimate history with popular music and make it clear that his numerical processes are only one of his primary influences.

Above this process, Lang restates the opening resonant metal melodies in an abbreviated form. He cycles once through the 8-7 permutations and the second ten-bars use a portion of the 7-6 permutations as seen in the beginning of the piece. The process is slightly disguised due to the consistent, rather than alternating, time signature.

Section Four (mm. 134-154)

The transition into Section Four marks a couple of remarkable events in *The Anvil Chorus*. The section begins with an extended amount of space, which starts from the

ending of Section Three and lasts until the woodblocks enter almost a full bar into Section Four. This empty space occurs at the Golden Section of the piece.⁹⁸

This section creates a unique texture despite principally utilizing previously heard material. The bottom voice in particular is almost an exact replica of the twenty bars seen in Section Three. One interesting difference is in measure 144. When compared to the first statement at measure 123, the second statement at measure 144 includes one additional repetition of the bass drum/NRM4 motive. Since Section Three is missing the extra repeat seen in Section 4, an empty space occurs, suggesting that Lang may be highlighting the Golden Section by “masking”⁹⁹ some material. This theory becomes undeniable as the second half of Section Four begins.

The first two bars (mm. 145-6) are repeated, as expected, but then followed by an elaborate amount of space. The only material remaining is the bass drum NRM4 motive on alternating downbeats. However, if one overlays the previous ten measures of material, the entire ten-bar statement remains intact, with a consuming amount of masking over the top. The one inconsistency is in the final two measures, where Lang seems to be adding a voice of his own to wrap up the section.

The piece also makes a dramatic *meno mosso* tempo change. It would be natural to assume that this tempo change was taken to accentuate the appearance of the Golden Section, but it actually was changed because of performance issues. According to Schick, “the tempo reduction at, what I think of as the sort of gamelan section, where all the

⁹⁸ The Golden Section is determined by taking the total number of measures (218) and multiplying by 0.618, which produces a result of 134. Measure 134 is the beginning of Section Four and also in the middle of the dramatic silence.

⁹⁹ Masking can be described as overlaying systematic material with rests in such a way that when the rests are complete, a process picks up where it would be had the rests not been there.

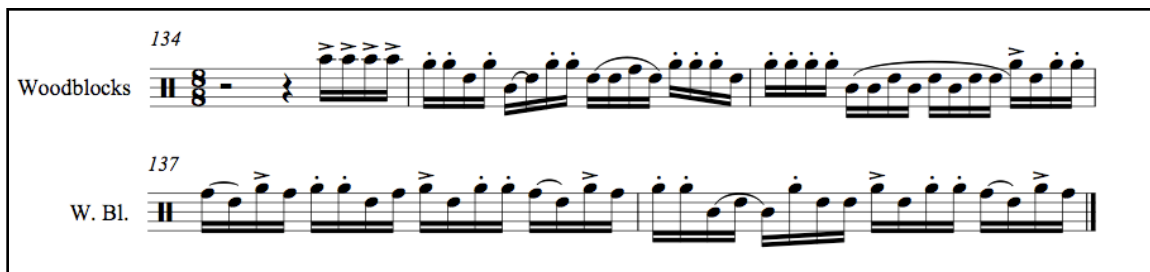
woodblocks are going on, came as a result of me really just not being able to play it at the fast tempo, so some of the oral traditions have actually been codified to the score.”¹⁰⁰

The material above all of this seems to be new, but with a closer look is in fact the exact woodblock material from the final phrase (mm. 102-113) of Section Two. Lang has combined this motivic material with all three resonant metal voices, creating an ongoing line of sixteenth notes. Figure 4.6 below shows a small sampling of this texture, beginning in measure 134.

Figure 4.6: Sixteenth note texture disguising woodblock material, mm. 134-138

Section Five (mm. 155-198)

Section Five begins with a *subito* dynamic and tempo change, entering much softer with a dynamic flurry of constant sixteenth notes. Lang presents rhythmic counterpoint between both upper and lower voices, while still maintaining separate systems. The upper resonant metal voices are restated almost verbatim from Section One



The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Woodblocks and W. Bl. (Wangku). The score is divided into two systems. The first system, labeled '134', shows the Woodblocks part starting with a rest followed by a series of sixteenth notes with accents. The second system, labeled '137', shows the W. Bl. part with a similar sixteenth note texture. The notation includes stems, beams, and accents to indicate the rhythmic pattern.

once again, this time with only two repetitions of the 8-7 permutations at the beginning, rather than three. They are followed by the 7-6 and 8-7 permutations as expected, with an additional 6-6-4 pattern at the end. This addition is to facilitate the process that is being used in the bottom non-resonant metals, which dictate the length of the section.

¹⁰⁰ Steven Schick, interview by the author, September 2008, 3.

As in Section Two, the bottom NRM voice goes through an extended permutation sequence; the initial statement serves as the constant (6) and is slowly substituted with groupings of five attacks as follows:

6-6-6-6	5-6-6-6	6-5-6-6	6-6-5-6	6-6-6-5	5-5-6-6	5-6-5-6	5-6-6-5
6-5-5-6	6-5-6-5	6-6-5-5	5-5-5-6	5-5-6-5	5-6-5-5	6-5-5-5	5-5-5-5

Table 4.10: NRM Permuted Substitution in Section 5

Lang adds yet another layer of complexity here by separating the foot pedal metals from their corresponding NRM partners, and setting them on a process of their own. This division between FPM and NRM creates a third layer of rhythmic activity. The space between these FPM impact points is spacious but equidistant, creating another augmented metric superimposition. The space between attacks slowly diminishes by an eighth note (measure 155), quarter note (beginning in measure 169), and finally a dotted quarter note (beginning in measure 186).¹⁰¹ This method gives the ending of Section Five natural momentum as the saturation of impacting blows increases.

Section Six (mm. 199-218)

Section Six brings *The Anvil Chorus* to a close as Lang synthesizes the different techniques used throughout the rest of the piece. Again, stratified into three layers, rather than two, the top voice reiterates the familiar 8-7 permutations into measure 206. Here, it begins a diminished version of the same pattern, without the first pairing:

¹⁰¹ If one looks closely, it appears a foot pedal note should exist in measure 158 on FP2. This note did not appear in earlier printings of the score, however is in newer printings, and is present on most commercial recordings as well.

(7-7)	6-7	7-6	6-6
-------	-----	-----	-----

Table 4.11: Diminished 6-7 pairing in Section 6

This goes into measure 211, where yet another diminution occurs:

(6-6)	5-6	6-5	5-5
-------	-----	-----	-----

Table 4.12: Diminished 5-6 pairing in Section 6

Finally, the process happens once more beginning in measure 215, to end the piece:

(5-5)	4-5	5-4	4-4
-------	-----	-----	-----

Table 4.13: Diminished 4-5 pairing in Section 6

The bass drum, which has been used sparingly, enters to help build tension in this last section, and occurs every five eighth notes from its first entrance to the end. This cycle aligns in perfect synchronization with the end of the above mentioned resonant metal cycle, giving the piece a raucous punch to end the work. Moreover, Lang adds a layer of complexity by utilizing the metric superimposition technique in the lower NRM/FP combinations. These are indeed also in their own pattern at first, and are being manipulated by a permuted substitution process, seen in Table 4.14 below.

6-5	5-6	6-6	5-5
-----	-----	-----	-----

Table 4.14: 6-5 Permuted Substitution manipulating the lower NRM/FP

This pattern is completed in measure 211, where the NRM3/FP2 combination is brought in, thickening the texture once more as the piece ends with a flurry of hammering. From measure 211 to the end, the number of attacks per NRM voice produces the strain of numbers seen in Table 4.15.

4	5	8	3	7	6
---	---	---	---	---	---

Table 4.15: Pattern created by number of attacks

While this does not produce the expected pattern-based results, it is particularly quirky that there are no duplications, and that precisely one example of each number from previous patterns is represented in the final six blows of *The Anvil Chorus*.

CHAPTER FIVE: SCRAPING SONG (1998)

Background and Notes

*Scraping Song*¹⁰² was premiered on a series of three consecutive evening concerts that Steven Schick gave in New York in 1998. The event, entitled “Three Nights of Percussion,” stood to represent a culmination of Schick’s work to-date, featuring almost every substantial piece in the solo percussion repertoire, all performed from memory. Premiered on the same evening as *XY* (the rigorous solo work by Lang’s long-time colleague, Michael Gordon), *Scraping Song* is now a decade old and has found firm footing in the evolving timeline that represents the history of solo percussion literature.¹⁰³

The inspiration for the piece comes from *Zyklus No. 9*, the monumental piece by Karlheinz Stockhausen that is often cited as the first notable work for percussion solo. *Zyklus*, a German word literally meaning “cycle,” allows the performer to choose a starting point anywhere in the score. Placed in the center of an enormous instrumental artillery, which includes toms, gongs, marimba, vibraphone, and cymbals, the performer also has several intimate moments where only the guiro is used. Lang recalls watching Schick, while preparing this work at the University of Iowa, “audition” guiros for over an hour. Reflecting on that experience, Lang says “I’d never thought of percussion that way, and I’m not sure anybody thought of percussion that way...as being not only capable of having that kind of emotional range, but obligated to have that kind of emotional

¹⁰² Published by Red Poppy; administered by G. Schirmer Inc.

¹⁰³ Steven Schick, “Three Nights of Percussion,” Unpublished program notes from New York City Concert Series, 1998), 3.

range.”¹⁰⁴ “Steve treated each guiro as if it were a violin, drawing from each an expressive range I never realized a percussion instrument could have.”¹⁰⁵

With fond memory of this experience, Lang decided to write an entire solo piece surrounding this phenomenon. Lang brought the idea to Schick several years after *The Anvil Chorus* had been written. When asked about the impetus for this second solo collaboration with Lang, Schick replied with the following:

It’s always been a part of my personality to dwell on some ideas and some people, so, as a result, David is one of the three composers that I can think of, with whom I’ve had a life-long relationship and with whom I’m always ready to play anything that they do, and I will always play everything that they do. David is one of them, John Luther Adams, and Roger Reynolds. These are not decisions that you make, but all of the sudden I realized, I really believe in this music. Obviously, those are very, very different composers, but I like the idea of a long relationship, a kind of relationship/friendship, that spans lots of pieces, so that the piece becomes not an opportunity so much, but a kind of token of the relationship. You mention ‘97-‘98, well that was where our friendship was in ‘97-‘98. I don’t remember who brought the idea to whom, but actually I think David has come back to me when percussion seemed right to him rather than the other way around. But we’re always talking about new things and we have some things that we’ll still do.¹⁰⁶

Strikingly different from the metallic forges of *The Anvil Chorus*, *Scraping Song* takes a much different approach to the idea of a percussion solo. With an instrumentation that includes 4 bells (or bell-like materials), 4 resonant junk metals, 4 guiros (or other scraped instruments), and a rock bass drum (with foot pedal), Lang notes that “in some way it is meant to be a lyrical companion to my piece *The Anvil Chorus*.”¹⁰⁷ The piece features looping patterns on the resonant junk metals, which consistently appear at a

¹⁰⁴ David Lang, interview by the author, September 2008, 5-6.

¹⁰⁵ David Lang, *Scraping Song*, (New York, NY: Red Poppy Music, Distributed by G. Schirmer, Inc., 1997).

¹⁰⁶ Steven Schick, interview by the author, September 2008, 4.

¹⁰⁷ David Lang, *Scraping Song*, (New York, NY: Red Poppy Music, Distributed by G. Schirmer, Inc., 1997).

pianissimo dynamic, allowing for the ceaseless scraping of the guiros to coexist with the fluctuating entrances of the bells. As Schick states, “it is a percussion piece without the usual percussive bombast. In a repertoire that very often seems to be a test of strength and stamina, *Scraping Song* is refreshingly lyrical.”¹⁰⁸

Due to the unique timbre of each instrument in the score, these voices maintain distinct clarity throughout the piece. By not allowing these instrumental groups to coalesce, a multi-textured serenade is created, allowing the rustling guiro to distinguish itself from the pureness of the bells. This differs from a more common approach to percussion, one that blends multiple noises into one clear texture, that has been used as far back as Varèse and Stravinsky. As Schick points out, however, this individuality of instrumental families creates incompatible technical approaches.¹⁰⁹ The four guiro voices require a technical approach that demands tautness and rigidity; meanwhile against this horizontal motion, the bell voices are played vertically with a buoyant stroke, as an expressive melody emerges.¹¹⁰ This ying and yang is a rather difficult balance, and makes communicating the lyrical sense of *Scraping Song* a delicate task.

Formal Layout

Scraping Song, like *The Anvil Chorus*, contains six distinct sections, which feature a large amount of rhythmic stratification. These sections are organized in the following manner:

¹⁰⁸ Steven Schick, “Three Nights of Percussion,” Unpublished program notes from New York City Concert Series, 1998), 6-7.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Measures	1-67	68-135	136-196	197-262	263-326	327-386

Table 5.1: Formal Layout of *Scraping Song*

Similar to *The Anvil Chorus*, *Scraping Song*'s form is determined by the processes at work. All six section contain strict processes. The ending of these processes are usually noted by the addition of an instrument or a complete change in texture. Lang utilizes multiple permuted substitutions throughout, each of which change slightly as the composition enters into the next section.

Vocabulary

For the purposes of discussion, the individual voices in *Scraping Song* will be referred to with designations of RM 1-4 for the resonant junk metal sounds, S 1-4 for the scraped guiro-like sounds, and B 1-4 for the bells sounds. Once again, these voices will begin with 1 as the lowest and increase as necessary. The distinct pitch of the bell notes will follow this policy as well, and will be labeled as follows:

B1	Pitch B
B2	Pitch C
B3	Pitch D
B4	Pitch E

Table 5.2: Bell note labeling system for *Scraping Song*

Also similar to the *The Anvil Chorus*, the bass drum does not need a designation as there is only one voice, which only appears in Section Six.

Section One (mm. 1 – 67)

In many ways, *Scraping Song* can be seen as a direct continuation from Lang's earlier masterpiece, *The Anvil Chorus*. In Section One, Lang demonstrates a combination of his metric superimposition and permuted substitution techniques. He consistently rotates through the use of scrapers S3, S4, S2, and S1, using one voice per measure. These voices switch on the second eighth note of the following bar, thus creating a four-bar cycle.¹¹¹ The resonant junk metals use the same pitch cycle (R3, R4, R2, R1), however they are rotating through a six-bar rhythmic cycle that augments itself from eighth notes up to dotted quarter notes and back.

Figure 5.1: Six-bar rhythmic cycle with permuted substitution, mm. 2-13

With this established, one can focus on the more complex pattern also occurring in the resonant junk metals. While the aforementioned six-bar rhythmic cycle is a clear example of Lang's metric superimposition, the primary process is a four-measure permuted substitution, taking place simultaneously in the resonant metals. The opening of this cycle contains five attacks per voice, and then Lang begins his process of permuted

¹¹¹ This is likely because ending before the downbeat would cause a gap in sound, as opposed to nicely overlapping with the entrance of each metal voice above.

substitution, replacing the five attacks with six. See Figure 5.1 and Table 5.3 to see how this process unfolds:

5-5-5-5	6-5-5-5	5-6-5-5	5-5-6-5	5-5-5-6	6-5-5-6	5-6-5-6	5-5-6-6
5-6-6-5	6-5-6-5	6-6-5-5	6-6-6-5	6-6-5-6	6-5-6-6	5-6-6-6	6-6-6-6

Table 5.3: 5-6 Permutation in Section One

It is clear that after permutating one grouping of six attacks through the four-cell system, Lang then begins substituting a pair of sixes, then three sixes, until finally, all four cells contain six attacks. It is also interesting to note that this 5-6 four-cell permutation is the same pattern that Lang utilized in Section Five of *The Anvil Chorus*; Lang has simply reversed the constant and variable numbers, making 6 the variable here, rather than the constant. This process is completed in measure 65, which is signified in the score by a large silence and the word “freeze.”

Section Two (mm. 68 – 135)

Lang introduces Section Two with a guiro scrape¹¹², similar to the beginning of the piece, and begins an almost identical cycle. The most notable change is that an additional layer has been added in the bells. Though the texture is a bit thicker, the permuted substitution occurs in exactly the same manner as in Section One, with the variable now four attacks rather than six.

The featured element in Section Two is the complex process in the bell layer. At first glance, the bells seem to have no sense of formal arrangement whatsoever, as the changing time signatures make it difficult to recognize any pattern. A careful dissection of

¹¹² This is much like Lang’s use of the guiro in the third movement of *The So-Called Laws of Nature*, written four years later.

the material, however, reveals a process decidedly similar to the extended metric superimposition method used in Section One of *The Anvil Chorus*. The spaciousness between entrances again restricts the attack points from developing any rhythmic profile, thus making its regularity inaudible to the listener. Lang distributes four attack points per voice through the pitch cycle B4, B3, B1, B2, B1, though the beginnings of these cycles often overlap, making it difficult to trace. Figure 5.2 shows the beginning of this process, starting in measure 69. Here one can clearly see the 4-5 permutation taking place in the resonant junk metals, with four attacks from each bell voice. Note that before the fourth and final attack of B3 (pitch D), B1 (pitch B) enters, making the initial detection of this pattern very difficult.

The figure shows three staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'Res. Metals' and contains four measures. Above the notes are groupings of five notes, each labeled with a '5'. The time signature starts at 5/8, changes to 12/8, then 5/4, and finally 15/16. The middle staff is labeled 'RM' and also contains four measures. Above the notes are groupings of four and five notes, labeled '4' and '5' respectively. The time signature starts at 5/4, changes to 12/8, then 5/4, and finally 15/16. The bottom staff is also labeled 'RM' and contains four measures. Above the notes are groupings of five and four notes, labeled '5' and '4' respectively. The time signature starts at 5/4, changes to 12/8, then 5/4, and finally 15/16.

Figure 5.2: Permuted Substitution used in Section Two, mm. 69-80

Once these groupings are identified, one can observe that the space between each bell note amounts to twenty-three sixteenth notes. This space is consistently maintained throughout, as each pitch alternates its entrance through the cycle. In measure 108, Lang only uses three attacks of B3 (pitch D). Otherwise, he uses precisely four attacks of each voice. It is also unique that he uses a five cell rotation (B4, B3, B1, B2, B1) with only

four pitches. These small manipulations, combined with the completely irregular distance between the endings of one pitch entrance and the beginnings of the next, are a tribute to Lang's Postminimalist style.

Before moving to Section Three, it is important to once again observe the bell sequence that is occurring. When an analysis is correctly applied to Section Two, the daunting texture of Section Three is instantaneously clarified.

Section Three (mm. 136 – 196)

Section Three includes a pointillistic use of only the four bells, leaving an extreme amount of space and absolutely no pattern to speak of. In Section Two, the bell pattern is the most difficult to understand, yet once it is recognized, one will quickly notice that it simply continues on into, and throughout, Section Three. The four-pitch sequence, with attacks twenty-three sixteenth notes apart continues from the end of Section Two and ends perfectly with B4 as the guiro scrape in measure 197 takes the work into Section Four. He does not leave the rotation completely to itself, as his well-expected glitches can be seen in the B3 cycle that begins in measure 165 (featuring two attacks with a doubled distance of 46 sixteenth notes instead of 23) as well as in measures 185-7, where he uses a distance of only 22 sixteenth notes. Regardless, Lang's delicate use of bell notes at a *pianissimo* dynamic in Section Three is one of many reasons that *Scraping Song* carries such lyrical qualities and sets itself apart from his other works for solo percussion.

Section Four (mm. 197 – 262)

After a much sparser Section Three, Lang unleashes another permuted substitution cycle in Section Four. While this section is similar to earlier passages, it is much more disguised. Section One began with the alternation of four pitches, making the

matching four-bar cycle easy to deconstruct. In Section Two, the cycle is remarkably similar with the addition of the bell voice. Section Four alternates only three of the four available resonant junk metal voices (one per measure), which are now sequenced with the higher bell voice. The bell voice cycles through five attacks per pitch, without regard to measures or time signature, instead controlled by the alternation of the resonant junk metal voices. In addition, the overall rhythmic values are still on a six-bar cycle, making it problematic to decipher the primary process. This technique can be quite deceiving, specifically since neither the pitch material nor the rhythmic material lines up with the substitution process that is controlling the composition.

The image shows three staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'Res. Metals' and features a complex sequence of time signatures: 5/8, 15/16, 5/4, 15/8, and 2/4. It contains five groups of notes, each labeled with a '5' above it, indicating five attacks per pitch. The middle staff is labeled 'RM' and has time signatures: 2/4, 15/16, 5/8, 15/16, and 5/4. It contains four groups of notes, each labeled with a '5' above it. The bottom staff is also labeled 'RM' and has time signatures: 5/4, 3/4, 5/4, and 15/16. It contains four groups of notes, labeled with '5', '2', '5', and '5' above them, indicating varying numbers of attacks per pitch.

Figure 5.3: mm. 198-209 in Section Four

Beginning in measure 198, Lang begins his process of permuted substitution, this time with groupings of two attacks per measure. After introducing the 4-cell control phrase in measures 198-201, the variable begins in measure 202 with two quarter notes in the bar instead of five (see Figure 5.3). This 5-2 permuted substitution process proceeds as expected until all four units are occupied by two attack points in measures 258 – 261.

Section Five (mm. 263 – 326)

Section Five begins in measure 263 with a drastically different texture. The guiros are no longer present and the non-resonant metals return to their normal four pitch cycle (R3, R4, R2, R1). The expected attack points remain with a six-bar rhythmic cycle, but are now saturated with constant sixteenth notes in the bell voice. This twist is something particularly fresh and interesting about *Scraping Song*. After each downbeat Lang fills in the remainder of each beat using the following note strain: B4 (E), B3 (D), B1 (B), B2 (C), B3 (D). While not every note is always present (the right side of the strain is often truncated due to shorter beat-lengths), the full strain can be seen in measure 266 and also in Figure 5.4 below.



Figure 5.4: The unmasked material that is used to fill in Section Five

Here, the 15/8 time signature uses a dotted-quarter note as the primary larger beat, thus allowing for six sixteenth notes per beat. These six notes represent the most per beat in any of the cycle of eighth, dotted eighth, quarter, and dotted quarter notes, and thus presents the full cycle. It is particularly important to note that these five pitches in the bell sequence (E, D, B, C, D) are also the exact same five-note sequence that was used in Sections Two and Three, which then continued into Section Four. Starting in measure 267, Lang fills the beats by starting with a different note out of this string of pitches. Lang determines which note to use by selecting each successive pitch after every four bars (see Figure 5.5). This switch occurs at this frequency because it lines up with the larger permuted substitution sequence. By looking carefully at the downbeat of each

measure, one notices that the control group of five attacks is presented in measures 263-266, at which time a 5-1 permuted substitution begins, concluding in measure 326. In retrospect, it is also relevant to notice that the substitution process from the beginning is now laid out as 5-6, 5-4, 5-2, and 5-1. The absence of 5-3 is due to the masking of Section Three, which left only the bell pattern remaining.

The image shows a musical score for three percussion parts: Res. Metals, RM, and RM. The score is written in a complex, multi-measure format with various time signatures (3/8, 5/8, 7/8, 9/8) and dynamic markings like 'pp'. Fingerings '1' and '5' are indicated above notes. The Res. Metals part starts with a 'pp' marking and has a '5' above the first measure. The RM parts have '1' and '5' markings above notes in various measures.

Figure 5.5: The 5-1 Permuted Substitution in Section Five, mm. 263-274

Section Six (mm. 327 – 386)

The final section of *Scraping Song* features the addition of the isolated bass drum impacts. Lang utilizes a complex resonant metal pattern, leaving the scrapers and bells out of the final section, while he continues to oppose a six-cell rhythmic cycle with a four-cell pitch cycle. This creates asynchronous patterns, which are also overlaid onto an entire section of 6/8, rather than the mixed meter passages from before. The combination of these conflicting cycles is a perfect example of Lang “playing demolition derby.”¹¹³ These patterns are difficult to follow, even after one understands that they are there, and when combined are equally difficult to hear.

Before delving into the music, it is helpful to explain the process that is occurring first. As mentioned, Lang is only using the resonant junk metals voices in this passage.

¹¹³ David Lang, interview by the author, September 2008, 3.

He keeps the earlier rhythmic cycle intact (though it is all in 6/8), and each pitch entrance plays the next corresponding rhythm. To review, this rhythm cycle is eighth notes, dotted eighths, quarters, dotted quarters, quarters, and dotted eighths. At this point, Lang has “yo-yoed” up to the dotted quarter note value and back, where the eighth note then enters and the cycle starts over.

These rhythms are being played by a cycle of four pitches: RM3, RM4, RM2, and RM1. The juxtaposition of this four-cell pitch cycle and six-cell rhythmic cycle creates a twelve-cell system, with twelve being their common denominator. Table 5.5 clarifies this system; this twelve-cell system is shown by the bold lines after every three lines. This table also shows the entrance of each pitch and the rhythm that it plays based on the cycle previously described. The left column of Table 5.5 shows the number of rotations through the four-pitch cycle and the corresponding measure number that each cycle starts in.

After viewing Table 5.5, one can see that in measure 327 Lang offers a control pattern and then begins a permuted substitution of “10s.” This 10 represents the variable in this process, in which Lang is replacing the correlating rhythmic pattern with three attacks spaced ten sixteenth notes apart.¹¹⁴ It is also clear that Lang is following his permuted substitution method, though the system of permutation is slightly altered. Lang normally begins the two-variable section by starting on the left, however here (in cycle 6) he leaves the second variable in the fourth cell rather than the second. As always, Lang has a few entrances that are slightly out of line with the norm, which are noted with asterisks. The RM3 in cycle 14 only appears once (at this point the cycles are extremely overlapped and difficult to separate) and the RM4 in the final cycle only appears five

¹¹⁴ The dotted quarter is otherwise the longest value, spaced six sixteenth notes apart.

sixteenth notes apart instead of ten. Similar to *The Anvil Chorus*, Lang completes *Scraping Song* with his most complex and unique section of the work, causing the piece to end with great momentum.

	RM3	RM4	RM2	RM1
1 m. 327	Eighth	Dotted Eighth	Quarter	Dotted Quarter
2 m. 333	10	Dotted Eighth	Eighth	Dotted Eighth
3 m. 336	Quarter	10	Quarter	Dotted Eighth
4 m. 340	Eighth	Dotted Eighth	10	Dotted Quarter
5 m. 346	Quarter	Dotted Eighth	Eighth	10
6 m. 350	10	Dotted Quarter	Quarter	10
7 m. 355	Eighth	10	Quarter	10
8 m. 358	Quarter	Dotted Eighth	10	10
9 m. 362	Quarter	10	10	Dotted Eighth
10 m. 366	10	Dotted Eighth	10	Dotted Quarter
11 m. 370	10	10	Eighth	Dotted Eighth
12 m. 372	10	10	10	Dotted Eighth
13 m. 375	10	10	Quarter	10
14 m. 377	10*	Dotted Eighth	10	10
15 m. 379	Quarter	10	10	10
16 m. 382	10	5*	10	10

Table 5.4: Matrix outlining Section Six of *Scraping Song*

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CHAPTER SIX: UNCHAINED MELODY (2004)

Background and Notes

Unchained Melody,¹¹⁵ David Lang's most recent multi-percussion solo, was once again written for Steven Schick. Schick states that Lang sent him the piece after Schick decided to resign from the Bang on a Can All-Stars. Schick regarded this as "the ultimate sign of friendship...a way of saying 'we're still in this together.'"¹¹⁶

For instrumentation, Lang chooses 7 glockenspiel notes, 7 noises, and 1 brake drum or other nasty¹¹⁷ metal. In the opening page of the score, Lang makes it clear that the 7 glockenspiel notes¹¹⁸ should be removed from the instrument, allowing the performer to play them in a more consolidated space. The 7 "noise" instruments that Lang calls for are intended to double these glockenspiel notes, much like some of the pairings Lang uses in his previous percussion works.

These pairings stay consistent throughout the entire piece, which greatly simplifies the process of learning the work. Unique pairs throughout would obviously complicate the learning process, but by keeping these groupings locked, the noise instruments can serve as literal doublings throughout. Technically speaking, Lang states in the score that "the glockenspiel part must be played entirely with one hand; the percussionist's other hand plays the noises."¹¹⁹ While this certainly could work, this would require the performer to play double stops throughout the entire piece, with the left hand perfectly mirroring the right. By following Lang's instructions, the tediousness of

¹¹⁵ Red Poppy; administered by G. Schirmer Inc.

¹¹⁶ Steven Schick, interview by the author, September 2008.

¹¹⁷ Lang uses the term "nasty" to describe scrap metal or found objects with a particularly grating sound.

¹¹⁸ The seven glockenspiel notes called for are low E, F, and high G, Ab, A, B, C

¹¹⁹ David Lang, *Unchained Melody*, (New York, NY: Red Poppy Music, Distributed by G. Schirmer, Inc., 2004).

constant double stops for seven minutes could produce a feeling not unlike that of holding onto a jackhammer.

A setup that allows the performer to play both the noise and bell note simultaneously, using the same hand, would be more advantageous. This approach requires the use of four mallets, which is not a problem for today's well-trained percussionist. The freedom to alternate hands enhances the opportunities to show space and duration in one's movement, and allows an increased amount of relaxation and opportunity for gesture. A successful percussion performance, because of the physical nature of the craft, relies on kinetics and gesture more than any other instrument. When navigating these complex setups, one mental hesitation is magnified through the correlating delayed motion. Steven Schick comments on the importance of gesture:

One of my favorite photographs of myself playing was taken in the late 1970s. Every summer my wife, Wendy, taught in a program for deaf and hearing-impaired children. And, every summer, for reasons that now escape me, I thought it was a good idea to play a concert of contemporary percussion music for the kids. The photo shows me in mid-performance of Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Zyklus*. I am coiled like a discus-thrower to deliver a fierce backhand stroke to a gong. All of my weight is on one leg; hair is flying. In the front row of children a deaf boy has his fingers in his ears. He will not hear the sound, but he still knows that it's going to be really loud and reacts accordingly. Physicality and gesture in percussion music are powerful tools of communication.¹²⁰

While gesture will complete a fantastic performance of *Unchained Melody*, an interpretation must begin with the selection of sounds and instruments. As Lang says, the "choice of noise is left to the performer, although I encourage performers to create a wide range of sounds."¹²¹ Much like his compositional aesthetic, Lang adds "I like the idea of a tune with complications. In *Unchained Melody* I imagine that the glockenspiel is in the

¹²⁰ Schick, *The Percussionist's Art*, 140.

¹²¹ David Lang, *Unchained Melody*, (New York, NY: Red Poppy Music, Distributed by G. Schirmer, Inc., 2004).

background, as if the tune is the resonant byproduct of a more relentless foreground of noisy accents.”¹²² These statements ask the performer to walk a thin line. With an indeterminate range of instruments, the options are limitless. The performer is expected to choose their own sounds, but this freedom can quickly become paralyzing in trying to decide how to begin the piece. Decisions regarding the duration of each sound source, its physical look and size, and the material it uses (such as wood or metal) all must be addressed before one can fully grasp the complexities of the piece.

For inspiration, or shall one say evidence, in these decisions, the melodic content will offer clues. Through analysis of *Unchained Melody*, many things become more apparent by looking at the melodic and harmonic material, which has not been as prominent in Lang’s other percussion works. The rhythms used in *Unchained Melody* are fairly simple and the notes can be easily divided into two groups: one being the low E and F, and the other being the remaining five higher pitches. As the following discussion will reveal, Lang switches between F-minor and E-minor, then F-minor/major and E-minor/major with the A-natural and A-flat acting as a sort of Picardy third.¹²³ The A-flat is not introduced until later in the piece, adding a level of harmonic complexity to what was previously an E-minor and F-minor alternation. This knowledge opens up endless possibilities, and is the defining factor for making decisions. Successful versions of the piece could exist by simply selecting unique sounds, though none would offer the subtle implication and depth of interpretation as those sounds selected with regard to the underlying harmonic process which materializes. One could easily alter sounds so that

¹²² David Lang, *Unchained Melody*, (New York, NY: Red Poppy Music, Distributed by G. Schirmer, Inc., 2004).

¹²³ A Picardy third, a term generated in the Baroque era, denotes the practice of ending an otherwise minor composition with a major chord.

the two triads had a certain dissonance or tension with yet more options for the nasty metal sound and finally the A-flat and A-natural, which determine the quality of the two triads. Further specificity of how this scenario could evolve will be left to the performer, however it is hoped that these considerations will give future interpretations more insight.

While these initial setup and instrument choices are crucial, most professional performers would agree that technique is simply a means to an end. Just as one may choose to overlook a sticking designation (which is often only a suggestion), setup is always a personal choice for any percussionist. Like the other works presented in this study, these problematic situations immediately demand that the performer make an individualized interpretation regarding their approach to *Unchained Melody*.

Section A (mm. 1-30)

Lang begins the piece with a unique passage, marked “joyous and slightly enigmatic.” The pattern that Lang lays out in this section is much different than those seen in his previous percussion solos. It is important to remind ourselves that this piece was written six years after *Scraping Song*. The entire opening passage anchors itself on a high C with alternations between A-flat and G occurring in between. Additionally, the passage utilizes a large amount of mixed-meter with combinations of eighths, dotted eighths, and quarter notes all combined. A closer look at this alternation of pitches and rhythms produces another technique that Lang frequently uses in his percussion writing: palindromes.¹²⁴ As seen in Table 6.1 below, the occurrence of the A-flat and G create a palindrome throughout Section A. The center of this palindrome occurs in measure 12 (see Figure 6.1), at which point, the pattern reverses itself. In addition, the durations of

¹²⁴ The yo-yo-ing technique mentioned previously in Chapter Five is a palindrome. This approach is also used in *The So-Called Laws of Nature* at several points.

6.3 it is clear that Lang has allowed this non-systematic pattern to ebb and flow throughout the other two palindromic cycles, once again displaying a perfect example of his “crippled symmetry”¹²⁵ approach.

-	2	2	2	4	4	3	2	3	3
3	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	3
3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	1

Table 6.3: Rhythmic Value of Pitch C in Section A

Section B (mm. 31 - 59)

Section B is another series of palindromes, which now incorporate the use of harmonic shift. The most noticeable difference from Section A is that Lang employs one of the two available lower pitches (E and F) on the downbeat of each measure. Before looking through the section carefully, it is important to note that on a larger scale, measures 31 and 45 are identical, spelling out an F-minor triad. It is also important to notice that the center point between these two measures, measure 38, spells out an E-minor triad with all eighth-notes rather than sixteenths (see Figure 6.2). After making these observations, one quickly notices that a palindrome is formed: measure 31 is the same as 45, 32 is the same as 44, 33 is the same as 43, and so forth. Though the notes do not play backwards in a palindromic fashion, the measure’s order does.

¹²⁵ See Chapter Seven for a thorough explanation of Feldman’s “crippled symmetry.”

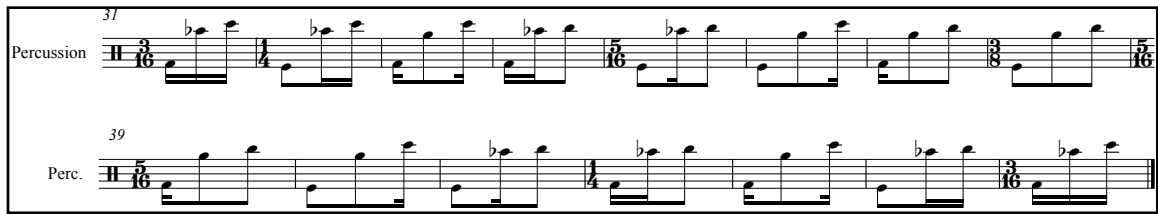


Figure 6.2: Palindrome created by the measures in Section B, mm. 31-45

Recognizing this correlation is significant because Lang is also working out a second palindrome in another layer. The section begins and ends with a 3/16 bar, in which each note consists of one beat, while the middle is a 3/8 bar where each note gets two beats. Further investigation will reveal that the measures between these points each have a series of sixteenth notes and eighths together. The eighth notes are always a pitch from the E-minor triad and the sixteenth notes are always taken from the F-minor triad. These beats are undergoing a permuted substitution process (as seen in Table 6.4) which also shows the second palindrome. This substitution is gradually replacing the F-minor triad with the E-minor and then back again. Once this process is over, the entire section (mm. 31-44) repeats itself again, causing the section itself to be a nested palindrome.

1-1-1	2-1-1	1-2-1	1-1-2	2-1-2	2-2-1	1-2-2	2-2-2
1-2-2	2-2-1	2-1-2	1-1-2	1-2-1	2-1-1	1-1-1	

Table 6.4: Permuted Substitution of rhythmic values in Section B

After a seven measure strain of F-minor repetitions and a repeat back to the beginning of the piece, Lang moves into Section B2. This section takes on a similar process as Section B, but this time, it is working in a four-cell system instead of three.

The image shows a musical score for Percussion, consisting of five staves. Each staff begins with a measure number: 67, 73, 79, 85, and 91. The notation includes various time signatures (4/4, 5/16, 3/8, 7/16, 2/4, 3/8, 5/16) and accidentals (flats and naturals) on the notes. The notes are primarily eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. The score is enclosed in a rectangular box.

Figure 6.3: Section B2, containing a four-cell system, mm. 67-96

Lang uses the exact same process rhythmically and harmonically as in Section B, though this time with the addition of an A-natural. This pitch is not only the newest aspect Lang adds, but also holds a very special place harmonically. Section B utilized E, G, and B along with F, A-flat, and C. This created two minor triads, however the A-flat in the F-minor triad is also the major third (G-sharp) for the E-minor triad. Section B2 now adds A-natural which is the major third of the F-minor triad. This combination with the previous notes allows for both triads to now carry major or minor qualities throughout. This subtle, yet significant harmonic addition is put in context while Lang unfolds a 4-cell permuted substitution, seen here in in Table 6.5.

1-1-1-1	2-1-1-1	1-2-1-1	1-1-2-1	1-1-1-2	2-1-1-2	2-1-2-1	2-2-1-1
1-2-2-1	1-2-1-2	1-1-2-2	1-2-2-2	2-1-2-2	2-2-1-2	2-2-2-1	2-2-2-2
2-2-2-1	2-2-1-2	2-1-2-2	1-2-2-2	1-1-2-2	1-2-1-2	1-2-2-1	2-2-1-1
2-1-2-1	2-1-1-2	1-1-1-2	1-1-2-1	1-2-1-1	2-1-1-1		

Table 6.5: Permuted Substitution of rhythmic values in Section B2

Section C (mm. 127-176)

Section C begins after a reprise of Section A from measures 97-126. Section A is the same here as before, except it is now cycling around a high A-natural instead of C. This makes the pitch set consist of G, A-flat, and A-natural, which happen to be the three pitches determining the major and minor qualities of both of the triads.

Section C begins with a sixteen-bar control statement¹²⁶ from mm. 127-142. Here Lang features a simple additive process in every fourth measure. Beginning in measure 130 (seen in Figure 6.4 below), Lang uses one eighth note, which is added onto in measures 134 and 138 respectively. After the variable measure has filled, it cycles backwards in measure 142, allowing for the cycle to begin again starting in measure 143, now with an added element of complexity.

This second cycle is quite simple. Lang repeats the previous four-bar cycle while adding a B-natural, one sixteenth note after every attack. This B-natural appears only once per four-bar cycle, moving from left to right for each repetition. The second four-bar cycle begins in measure 147, where the B follows the second sixteenth note, and so on (see Figure 6.4).

¹²⁶ As with the “control” in a scientific experiment, Lang’s control statement is a musical phrase that maintains a consistent form despite the musical processes changing around it.

Figure 6.4: Additive process throughout Section C, mm. 127-174

Sections Following

After the completion of Section C, it becomes apparent that Lang is using some kind of larger formal structure in *Unchained Melody*. Section A returns (mm. 175-204), this time using low Es and Fs in conjunction with high C, B, and A-flat. This repeats a second time, beginning in measure 205, with each of the higher pitches shifted down, resulting in B-natural, A-flat, and A-natural. Upon arrival of measure 234, there is an empty 2/4 measure, where Section A concludes and Section C begins a second strain. This repeat of Section C is an exact replica. The only thing missing from the initial statement is the opening sixteen-bar control statement.

Nasty Metal Section (mm. 267-314)

In this section, Lang makes the first and only use of the nasty metal sound in all of *Unchained Melody*. This part is also the most difficult (as are many of the latter sections of his other solo works discussed) to unveil analytically. The entire section is in 3/8 and consists of a repeated four-bar pattern that is masked by an asynchronous pattern of nasty metal attacks. The four bar pattern mentioned is as follows:



Figure 6.5: Four-bar pattern unmasked

This four-measure sequence, while it contains Langian glitches throughout, is the source of all of the pitch-based material in this section. The overlaying nasty metal notes are seemingly much more random. The frequency of nasty metal attacks produces no recognizable patterns until it is matched with the rhythmic values of all the notes in Section A. To be clear, one must take both the A-flat and G palindromic rhythms (discussed earlier), as well as the rhythmic value of the above C pitch in alternation. When these rhythms are mapped out in numerical figures, they produce the values seen in Table 6.6 below. Referring to Figure 6.6, one can see that at the beginning, in measure 267 the first nasty metal (x note head on the highest staff) has a duration of two sixteenth notes until the next entrance. This is followed by three, two, two, two, and so forth which can then be seen to match Table 6.6. There are a few minor exceptions, of course. Lang skips the highlighted pitches in row 4 of Table 6.6¹²⁷ in the nasty metal section. These rhythmic durations occur in Section A, but do not reappear in the nasty metals part.

¹²⁷ The rows given here have no effect on the data and are simply there for purposes of reference and discussion.

Additionally, this process finishes in measure 296 after the fourth sixteenth note of six, where the sequence then repeats. The process continues exactly as the first time and ends in measure 314, which is the second cell in row four of Table 6.6.

The image displays a musical score for Percussion, spanning measures 267 to 314. The score is written on seven staves, each labeled with a measure number (267, 272, 279, 286, 293, 300, 307) and the instrument name 'Perc.'. The notation is highly complex, featuring a dense sequence of notes and rests, with many notes marked with accents (^) and slurs. The rhythm is intricate, with frequent sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/8. The score concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots at the end of measure 314.

Figure 6.6: Nasty Metal Section, demonstrating durational pattern, mm. 267-314

1	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	4	2
	Ab	C	Ab	C	G	C	Ab	C	Ab	C	Ab
2	4	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3
	C	Ab	C	G	C	G	C	G	C	Ab	C
3	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	4
	G	C	Ab	C	G	C	G	C	G	C	G
4	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	3
	C	G	C	G	C	G	C	G	C	Ab	C
5	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
	G	C	Ab	C	G	C	G	C	G	C	Ab
6	3	2	3	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	1
	C	Ab	C	Ab	C	Ab	C	G	C	Ab	C

Table 6.6: Rhythmic and Pitch relationships in Section A

Section A: Conclusion (mm. 315-345)

Lang ends the piece with a final recapitulation of Section A, this time stated exactly as it was at the beginning of the piece. Lang matches the beginning and ending, possibly hinting at an overall palindromic form, though one does not seem to exist. Section B is never repeated, but instead replaced by the nasty metal section. The empty bar in measure 234 seems to be a perfect place for the Golden Section or halfway point, however this does not appear. Lang, in his most characteristic way, uses familiar patterns while still keeping a couple of cards up his sleeve.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY

Feldman

Studying the music and compositional style of David Lang has been a learning experience that does not end with his percussion solos. Lang's percussion music, while important within our craft, offers only a small of the composer. In an attempt to locate Lang within the larger context of 21st-century music, it is useful to look into the past for inspiration. One quotation that offers particular resonance comes from Morton Feldman (1926-1987):

What Western musical forms have become is a paraphrase of memory. But memory could operate otherwise as well. In *Triadic Memories* [1981], a new piano work of mine, there is a section of different types of chords where each chord is slowly repeated. One chord might be repeated three times, another, seven or eight - depending on how long I felt it should go on. Quite soon into a new chord I would forget the reiterated chord before it. I then reconstructed the entire section: rearranging its earlier progression and changing the number of times a particular chord was repeated. This way of working was a conscious attempt at "formalizing" a disorientation of memory. Chords are heard repeated without any discernible pattern. In this regularity (though there are slight gradations of tempo) there is a *suggestion* that what we hear is functional and directional, but we soon realize that this is an illusion; a bit like walking the streets of Berlin - where all the buildings look alike, *even if they're not*.¹²⁸

Morton Feldman's "crippled symmetry" is reminiscent of many of his pattern-based techniques, which he eventually used in his famous work of the same name (1983). "Feldman set up balanced proportions and then 'crippled' them by introducing minute deviations. The resulting patterns, at first symmetrical and then subtly diversified ('crippled') were devised in relations to particular instrumental timbres and ranges..."¹²⁹ This demonstrates that while Lang's music is certainly refreshing and distinctive, it does have historical precedence and while Lang has no published discussion of his influence

¹²⁸ Morton Feldman, *Give My Regards to Eighth Street*, (Cambridge, MA: Exact Change, 2000), 137-8.

¹²⁹ Roger Sutherland, "Record Reviews," *Tempo*, New Series No. 214, Oct. 2000, 52.

by Feldman, there are certainly similarities in their use of patterns. Those who are intimately familiar with historical uses of percussion might also see signs of Stravinsky in his use of juxtaposition and stratification, of Xenakis in his virtuosic style and dramatic use of silence, or of Reich in his use of repetition and process. Lang's music, whether through direct influence or not, displays traits of some of the greatest composers ever to write for the genre, while his style remains particularly unique.

The investigation into synthesizing Lang's style has been challenging. As previously noted, Lang is intensely influenced by science, number, and patterns. He does not, however, believe in the sterile products that the serialist movement created. Lang also believes that music is meant "to accomplish some sort of larger emotional task,"¹³⁰ yet he is not at all intrigued by the sweeping melodies and traditional harmonic function from, say, the Romantic period. Lang's style is unique because he has found a way to use process without completely abandoning his audience.

Lang also redefines how one can approach composition, by exploiting the ugly and focusing on the uncomfortable. By taking a close look at some of these misfit musical parameters, Lang has found a way to tap into previously unexplored emotions. He does this using atypical tension and release patterns. Rather than using a conventional harmonic resolution or a cliché percussion entrance, Lang builds tension through rhythmic cacophony, asynchronous cycles, amplified dissonance, restricted compositional palates, or unconventional performance techniques. His use of these techniques has given him a subdued profile which allows complexity and richness to be recognized.

¹³⁰ David Lang, interview by the author, September 2008.

Further Research

It is with great hope that this document will encourage those in the percussion community to further embrace Lang's works and consider this information regarding their preparation and performance practice. The issues raised here should encourage a deeper thought processes about Lang's compositions, which should lead to a heightened interpretation. Also, it is hoped that *Scraping Song* and *Unchained Melody* will garner the same attention that *The Anvil Chorus* has over the last eighteen years.

That said, Lang has written a number of other works that deserve examination, including his mixed chamber ensembles and more specifically his critically acclaimed percussion quartet, *The So-Called Laws of Nature* (2002). A discussion of this work would require an entirely separate study as the piece is in three movements and lasts over thirty minutes in length. This could yield similar musical discoveries to those in Lang's works that are discussed in this paper.

It is also important that a larger musical picture is identified through this study. Many consider David Lang to be one of the greatest living composers and he has written extensively for percussion simply because he was asked. Since percussion solos continue to be an emerging field in musical composition, Lang's attention to the genre is significant. One must wonder what might become the percussion equivalent of Bach's violin concerti, or Liszt's piano solos. Perhaps this can be accomplished by actively seeking out and commissioning those composers who will contribute new and exciting perspectives to the percussion repertoire. Percussionists have worked for decades to be taken seriously and be put on an equivalent level with other musicians. Although this may have been accomplished in many ways, the solo percussion repertoire is far from it. The

music of David Lang represents a valuable addition that will be studied and performed for years to come. The grace and beauty of his music combined with his mischievous constructivist methods have created a unique voice that is certain to withstand the test of time and will enjoy a prominent position in the timeline of solo percussion repertoire.

PART TWO

CHAPTER EIGHT: PROGRAM NOTES

A candidate for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree at the University of Kentucky must present three recitals in partial fulfillment of program requirements. Following are the programs and program notes from the DMA Chamber Percussion Recital on Saturday February 23, 2008; the DMA Lecture Recital on Wednesday April 16, 2008; and the DMA Solo Recital on Monday April 21, 2008.

DMA Chamber Percussion Recital

Andrew M. Bliss
Saturday, February 23, 2008, 1:00 p.m.
Singletary Center for the Arts
Recital Hall

Program

Six Marimbas (1986)

Steve Reich (b. 1936)

*Brian Archinal, David Hutter, Kerry O'Brien,
Erin Walker, & Tim Wilburn - marimbas*

Cheating, Lying, Stealing (1993)

David Lang (b. 1957)

*Clint Davis - piano
Natalie Lehr - bass clarinet
Maggie Thompson - cello
Brian Archinal & Kyle Forsthoff - brake drums/triangles*

Red Arc/Blue Veil (2001)

John Luther Adams (b. 1953)

Mabel Kwan - piano

Threads (2005/6)

Paul Lansky (b. 1944)

Aaron Graham, Brian Nozny, & Tim Wilburn - percussion

Program Notes for the DMA Chamber Percussion Recital

Six Marimbas is a re-scoring of Reich's 1973 work, *Six Pianos*. Encouraged by percussionist James Preiss, Reich released the version for six marimbas in 1986. The 1973 work comes after the completion of Reich's early period of composition, which regularly featured his self-created technique of phasing. In this, and other concurrent works, Reich utilizes two primary compositional techniques: substituting beats for rests and resulting patterns. While these techniques were used before, specifically in his 1970-71 masterpiece *Drumming*, *Six Marimbas* is unique because this substitution process occurs against players already playing the full pattern in another rhythmic position. The piece is constructed in three main sections. Each section features multiple "builds" by pairs of players, which are usually followed by resulting patterns—portions of the composite patterns that are extracted and momentarily highlighted. As with all of Reich's music, these processes take precedence in the composition, allowing each audience member to experience the whirling eighth note textures in a unique way.

Steve Reich has become known as one of the world's foremost living composers and one of the most popular composers in the minimalist movement. Reich grew up in New York and in California and later graduated from Cornell University with a degree in philosophy. Reich's primary composition teachers included Luciano Berio, Darius Milhaud, and Vincent Persichetti. Through the 1970s, Reich became heavily influenced by non-classical influences such as Gamelan music, African drumming, post-bop jazz, and Indian classical music. Near this time, many of his best known works for percussion

were produced. His use of and interest in percussion in his compositions recently earned him an induction into the Percussive Arts Society Hall of Fame.

Cheating, Lying, Stealing is a mixed chamber work for cello, bass clarinet, piano, percussion, and two brake drum and triangle players. David Lang states the following about his work:

A couple of years ago, I started thinking about how so often when classical composers write a piece of music, they are trying to tell you something that they are proud of and like about themselves—'here's this big gushing melody, see how emotional I am.' Or, 'here's this abstract hard-to-figure-out piece, see how complicated I am, see my really big brain. I am more noble, more sensitive, I am so happy.' The composer really believes he or she is exemplary in this or that area. It's interesting, but it's not very humble. So I thought, 'what would it be like if composers based pieces on what they thought was wrong with them? Like, here's a piece that shows you how miserable I am. Or, here's a piece that shows you what a liar I am, what a cheater I am.' I wanted to make a piece that was about something disreputable. It's a hard line to cross. you have to work against all your training. You are not taught to find the dirty seams in music. You are not taught to be low-down, clumsy, sly and underhanded. In *Cheating, Lying, Stealing*, although phrased in a comic way, I am trying to look at something dark. There is a swagger, but it is not trustworthy. In fact, the instruction on the score for how to play it says: Ominous funk.¹³¹

David Lang is one of three co-founders of Bang on a Can. His compositions have been heard around the world by groups such as the Santa Fe Opera, the New York Philharmonic, the San Francisco Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, and the Kronos Quartet. In addition, Lang's percussion works have become increasingly well known due to his strong ties with world-renowned soloist Steven Schick.

¹³¹ G. Schirmer Inc., "David Lang," http://www.schirmer.com/Default.aspx?TabId=2420&State_2874=2&workId_2874=30010

“*Red Arc/Blue Veil*,” says Luther Adams, discussing his duo for piano, percussion and pre-recorded electronic sounds,

is the first work in a projected cycle exploring the geometry of time and color - what Kandinsky called ‘those inner sounds that are the life of the colors.’ As with all of Luther Adams’s recent music, the composer imagines the ensemble as a single instrument, and the entire piece as a single complex sonority. The computer-processed sounds are derived directly from the acoustical instruments. In *Red Arc/Blue Veil*, the electronic sounds are layered in tempo relationships of 3, 5, and 7, while the piano and mallet percussion trace a single arc, rising and falling from beginning to end. *Red Arc/Blue Veil* was commissioned and premiered by Ensemble Sirius.¹³²

John Luther Adams lives outside of Fairbanks, Alaska, where the Alaskan wild has saturated every portion of his compositions. Using static textures, process-based procedures, and subtle progression, Adams’s music can certainly be labeled as Postminimalist while in a sub-category all of its own. He has taken specific interest in using percussion, which can be found in many of his compositions including his monumental work for percussion solo, *The Mathematics of Resonant Bodies*.

Paul Lansky recalls that “*Threads*,” was

written for So Percussion in 2005, is a half-hour long ‘cantata’ for percussion quartet in ten short movements. There are three ‘threads’ that are interwoven in the piece: *Arias* and *Preludes* that focus on the metallic pitched sounds of vibraphones, glockenspiel and pipes; *Choruses* in which drumming predominates; and *Recitatives* made largely from Cage-like noise instruments, bottles, flower pots, crotales, etc. The aims of the different threads are to highlight the wide range of qualities that percussion instruments are capable of, from lyrical and tender to forceful and aggressive, and weave them into one continuous texture. The movements are performed without interruption.¹³³

Paul Lansky is currently a Professor of Music at Princeton University. A former student of Milton Babbitt and Edward Cone, Lansky has become best known for his work

¹³² John Luther Adams, Liner notes for “Red Arc/Blue Veil,” (Cold Blue Music CB0026).

¹³³ Paul Lansky, “Threads,” unpublished score from the composer, 2004/5.

in the computer music field, specifically as a pioneer in the development of computer music languages and algorithmic composition. The metaphor most often used by Lansky to describe his use of the computer in his music is an “aural microscope,” with which he “tries to make the ordinary seem extraordinary, the unmusical, musical.” Like photographs, “recordings of real-world sounds...create a nostalgic ache in that they almost capture events which are, in reality, gone forever,” and Lansky’s music can be extremely affecting. The percussion community perhaps best knows him for his work, *Three Moves for Marimba*, which has become a staple in professional solo marimba repertoire.

DMA Lecture Recital

“Traversing Enveloping Sonic Landscapes: John Luther Adams and *The Mathematics of Resonant Bodies*”

Andrew M. Bliss

Wednesday, April 16, 2008, 1:00 p.m.

Singleton Center for the Arts

Recital Hall

Program Overview

John Luther Adams

Background

Style

Influences

Works

Percussion Works

Strange and Sacred Noise

Mathematics of Resonant Bodies

Background

Burst / Stutter

Performance of *Burst*

Rumble, Roar, and Wail

Performance of *Wail*

Shimmer, Thunder and Crash

Closing Remarks

DMA Solo Percussion Recital

Andrew M. Bliss
Monday, April 21, 2008, 8:00 p.m.
Singletary Center for the Arts
Recital Hall

Program

<i>Fertility Rites</i> (1997)	Christos Hatzis (b. 1953)
<i>Broken Drum</i> (2003)	Matthew Burtner (b. 1971)
<i>Olana</i> (2007)	Kyle Gann (b. 1955)
<i>Mathematics of Resonant Bodies</i> (2002) <i>II. Rumble</i>	John Luther Adams (b. 1953)
<i>Madison's Unicorn</i> (2000)	Brett Dietz (b. 1972)
<i>The Whimsical Nature of Small Particle Physics</i> (2006)	Ben Wahlund (b. 1977)
<i>Trilogy</i> (2000) <i>III. Tamboo</i>	Dave Maric (b. 1970)

Program Notes for the DMA Solo Percussion Recital

Christos Hatzis says the following about *Fertility Rites*:

Fertility Rites, for five-octave marimba with digital audio, is part of a series of works written in the 1990s. The connecting thread that runs through all of these works is Inuit throat singing. My fascination with the Inuit and their culture started in 1992 during the course of creating a radio documentary / composition for CBC Radio called The Idea of Canada. That was the first time I heard this strange and haunting music. A few years later I got myself involved in a similar project, this time focusing entirely on Inuit culture, and throat singing in particular. This latter project took CBC producer Keith Horner and me to Baffin Island in arctic Canada where we spent two weeks recording throat singers and interviewing elders of the Inuit communities in Iqaluit and Cape Dorset. The recorded material was eventually used in four compositions (including this one) the other three being Footprints in New Snow, a thirty-eight minute radio documentary/composition, Nunavut for string quartet and tape and Hunter's Dream, a one-minute miniature commissioned by rock keyboardist Morgan Fisher for a CD of miniatures he was producing at the time in Japan.

The title of the work derives from the throat songs themselves. In one of our interviews in Iqaluit, Horner and I learned that throat songs were originally a fertility ritual, a shamanistic mating call which the women performed while the men were out hunting. The katajjaq (vocal games) in this piece are used to evoke this primordial practice. Their sexual suggestiveness is further enhanced by electronic processing (lowering the pitch by an octave or more transforms the original sound into a semblance of heavy breathing), or through juxtaposing the katajjaq against other types of amorous music stylistically more familiar to the listener, such as the 'French-sounding' second movement or the tango-like music of the third. In addition to the katajjaq samples, the tape part consists of prerecorded marimba sounds (normal, 'bent' and bowed) which both in terms of timbre and musical treatment represent a virtual extension of the instrument's abilities. In a programmatic sense they represent the performer's 'thoughts' or 'instincts' in contrast to the instrument on stage which represents the performer's 'voice'. Sometimes what is being 'felt' and what is being 'said' are diametrically opposed, like in the first movement where the gentle, non-possessive music for the marimba and the dark, longing calls on the tape contradict each other. But in the end both inner and outer worlds merge into uninhibited abandon and celebration of sexuality and life.

Christos Hatzis was born in Greece and initially studied composition at the Hellenic Conservatory of Athens. He later continued his studies at the Eastman School of Music and SUNY in Buffalo, NY. He has created several works inspired by the music of

the Inuit, Canada's arctic inhabitants, and his Inuit-inspired works, particularly the radio documentary *Footprints in New Snow*, have promoted Inuit culture around the globe. His strongest inspiration is his own religious faith, and his religious works have been hailed by critics and audiences alike as contemporary masterpieces. In addition, his writings have been published on *Interface*, *Organized Sound and Harmony*, are increasingly translated into other languages and are frequently listed as required reading for music courses in tertiary educational institutions.

When reflecting on the impetus of *Broken Drum*, Burtner recalls being attracted to the idea of turning garbage into art.

The metamorphosis from garbage into art object and from refuse into something of beauty attracted me. Here, in sound, as in Duchamp's art, the trash placed on a pedestal takes on new meaning. The double pun of the title signifies this relationship in addition to pointing to the musical processes at work. Musically the piece focuses on two ideas: 1) the acoustic sonorities of the brake drum, and 2) the "broken drum" metaphor represented by rhythmic systems that in various ways are imperfectly constructed or disintegrated through cross-polymetric relationship.¹³⁴

Burtner accomplishes this goal with the aid of an electronic accompaniment. Using the Max/MSP graphical environment, the performer is released from total accountability for the electronics. A timer is present that allows the performer to perform freely while synchronizing at specific points throughout the work. *Broken Drum* was written for percussionist Morris Palter.

Matthew Burtner's music has been described by *The Wire* as "some of the most eerily effective electroacoustic music I've heard," and *21st Century Music* writes "There is a horror and beauty in this music that is most impressive." First prize winner in the

¹³⁴ Find source

Musica Nova International Electroacoustic Music Competition, his music has also received honors and awards from Bourges, Gaudeamus, Darmstadt, Meet the Composer, ASCAP, Luigi Russolo, American Music Center, and others. His music has been commissioned by Spectri Sonori, Musik i Nordland, Phyllis Bryn Julson and Mark Markham, the Peabody Trio, Heidelberg Ministerium of Arts/ Trio Ascolto, and Ensemble Noise among others.

Burtner's instrumental and electroacoustic music explores electroacoustics, interactive media, extended rhythmic, and noise-based musical systems. His music has been recorded for DACO (Germany), The WIRE (U.K.), Centaur Records (USA), Innova (USA), and the Euridice Label (Norway). Two solo CDs, *Metasaxophone Colossus* (2004) and *Portals of Distortion* (1999) are available from INNOVA Records. His original computer music research is presented regularly at international conferences, and has been published by journals such as *Organized Sound*, the *Journal of New Music Research* and the *Leonardo Music Journal*. He has been composer-in-residence at Musikene in San Sebastian, Banff Centre for the Arts, and the IUA/Phonos Institute in Barcelona.

Burtner is currently Assistant Professor of composition and computer music at the University of Virginia where he is Associate Director of the VCCM Computer Music Center. A native of Alaska, he studied philosophy, composition, saxophone, and computer music at St. Johns College, Tulane University (BFA 1993), Iannis Xenakis's UPIC Studios, the Peabody Institute of JHU (MM 1997), and Stanford University's CCRMA (DMA 2002). At Stanford he studied and worked closely with Max Mathews, Jonathan Harvey, Brian Ferneyhough and Jon Berger.

Since 1999 Burtner has developed the Metasaxophone, a project involving imbedded computer systems and augmented performance. Paul Wagner of the *Saxophone Journal* has described the metasaxophone as "a new instrument with new and exciting textures for the saxophone world... the music is as mysterious and fascinating as the instrument itself," and *Scram Magazine* writes "If Burtner's saxes were flesh, they'd be bionic: wired for feedback loops and computerized programs...Burtner explores the outer edges of live performance potential."

Olana is a vibraphone solo commissioned by Andrew Bliss in 2007 as part of an ongoing effort to augment the literature for concert vibraphone. In this particular work, the performer is asked to hold the pedal down for extended periods of time, thus allowing new harmonies to emerge from the tones in a cluster. Olana is the name artist Frederic Church's Persian-style home which overlooks the Hudson River Valley in New York; this is where Gann first envisioned a detailed sketch of the work. This piece is dedicated to Kerry O'Brien, a close friend of both Bliss' and Gann's.

Kyle Gann was the new-music critic for the *Village Voice* from 1986 to 2005. His primary composition teachers include Ben Johnston, Morton Feldman, and Peter Gena; influences from these notable composers have produced Gann's unique rhythmic language, which is often based on differing successive and simultaneous tempos. In 2003, the American Music Center awarded Gann its Letter of Distinction along with Steve Reich, Wayne Shorter, and George Crumb. Gann is currently a professor of music history and theory at Bard College, where he has taught since 1997.

The Mathematics of Resonant Bodies was commissioned and premiered by Steven Schick and lasts sixty-five minutes when performed in full. The cycle is divided into eight movements, each focusing on “noise” instruments and inspired by compositional pioneers such as Conlon Nancarrow, Morton Feldman, Henry Cowell, and Alvin Lucier. Additionally, these movements are combined with computer-manipulated source recordings of each noise instrument; these “auras,” when integrated with live performance, create a sonic landscape which allows the audience and performer to explore the resonant envelopes of each of these instruments simultaneously.

Rumble, the second movement of *Mathematics*, brings the bass drum to the forefront for closer examination. *Rumble* was inspired by James Tenney, and is one of three movements where Adams uses a process that strictly focuses on amplitude.

John Luther Adams composes from his home outside of Fairbanks, Alaska where he has resided since the mid-1970s. Adams style can be seen as a cross between Morton Feldman and Henry Cowell specifically due to Feldman’s fascination with soft sonorities and Cowell’s exploration of irrational rhythms. As an adolescent, Adams was interested in the music of Frank Zappa, particularly due to the composers he was influenced by such as Varèse, Webern, and Feldman. After studying at CalArts, Adams moved to Alaska where he was the timpanist for the Fairbanks Symphony for over a decade. An avid environmentalist, Adams balanced his life between environmental advocacy and composing until 1989 when he was able to commit to composing full-time.

As a composer he uses any means necessary to communicate the power of the elemental forces he experiences daily and has found much success in doing so. Currently his sound and light environment, *The Place Where You Go to Listen*, is featured at the

Museum of the North in Fairbanks, Alaska. It has received critical acclaim around the world and has been featured in *Time*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, *NewMusicBox*, and NPR's *Living on Earth*. He has written music for orchestras, small ensembles, percussion, and electronic media, and in 2006 was named one of the first United States Artist Fellows. He has worked with prominent performers such as Bang on a Can, Other Minds, Almedia Opera, the Sundance Institute, Percussion Group Cincinnati, So Percussion, the California E.A.R Unit, FLUX Quartet, the Paul Drescher Ensemble, and Steven Schick. Most recently, The John Luther Adams Project has formed which as a group of talented artists are specifically dedicated to the performance of his music.

Madison's Unicorn is a solo for five-octave marimba and is dedicated to Madison McCoy. Exhibiting typical characteristics of Dietz's compositional style, the piece features lots of mixed meter time signatures and frequent juxtaposition of thematic ideas.

Brett Dietz is the percussion instructor at Louisiana State University School of Music. He received his undergraduate and master's degrees from Duquesne University and earned his DMA from Northwestern. Dietz has studied percussion with Stanley Leonard, Andrew Reamer, and Michael Burritt, while his principal composition teachers include Joseph W. Jenkins, David Stock, and Jay Alan Yim.

The Whimsical Nature of Small Particle Physics is a cutting-edge solo for snare drum and pre-recorded electronics. Wahlund reflects on the impetus and inspiration for the piece:

In the fall of 2006 a dear family friend gave me a tour of his workplace - the Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory (Fermilab). This is home to an atomic particle accelerator where atoms are violently slammed into each other at indescribable speeds and a collision detection center takes “pictures” of the results. Among the many results recorded at Fermilab are a type of subatomic particle known as “quarks” and scientists refer to them as one of six “flavors” - top, bottom, up, down, strange, and charm. This helps scientists at this facility, and others, to understand the nature of matter, anti-matter, space in general, and even the most fundamental components of time itself. I was moved at this visit by how their work was so reverent in one way, but playful in another. With names like “strange,” “charm,” and the term “flavors,” I was reminded of the musical giants I have come to revere who also walked this fine line between playing God and being a child.

This work is presented as a suite of the six flavors of quark, with a seventh dance entitled “collision.” Accompanying the snare drum is a recording entirely made of sounds I recorded in the Collision Detection Center at Fermilab, expressly for a soundscape in this work. There are no other sounds involved, though a significant amount of liberties have been taken to present this as a technically and intellectually challenging experience, while at the same time visceral, playful and organic - not much unlike the work of Fermilab’s scientists themselves.

Musically, this work is inspired by the contributions of Másson and Delecluse, while at the same time humbly trying to give respect to the likes of Pratt and Wilcoxon.

Ben Wahlund is an internationally award-winning composer, educator, and performer of percussion. With bachelor degrees from the University of Mary in Bismarck, North Dakota, as well as a Master’s Degree in Music Theory and Composition and a Performance Certificate in percussion from Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois, Ben Wahlund has seen success as a musician on a number of fronts since the early 1990s. Mr. Wahlund is a regular performer and guest lecturer at the Birch Creek Music Center in Egg Harbor, Wisconsin, as well as a private teacher and adjudicator in the Naperville, Illinois area. Ben Wahlund also serves as the percussion specialist at Naperville Central High School, where the high school percussion ensemble’s concert Drumshow consistently performs to capacity crowds of over 3,000 people.

His works have been performed in the United States, Canada, Germany, Spain, Poland, Japan, Australia, and most recently, France. Additionally, Ben Wahlund's compositions have placed twice in the Percussive Arts Society International Composition Contest, first place for the Quey Percussion Duo Annual Composition Contest, and second place in the Keystone Composition Contest. Ben Wahlund is published exclusively by HoneyRock Publications and lives in the Chicago area with his wife, Jennifer, and two dogs, Billie Holiday and Charlie Parker.

Trilogy was commissioned by percussionist Colin Currie and was initially intended as a short piece that brought together the styles and sounds of modern electronic dance music with the world of contemporary classical percussion. The result was a more ambitious three-movement electro-acoustic work that covers multiple stylistic features (referring to the music of five continents) and explores many different approaches to structure (ranging from the freely improvised to the mathematically binding). The piece uses a wide variety of instrumentation throughout and is considered by Currie to be his “party piece.”

Dave Maric is a UK-based composer of acoustic and electronic music. Throughout his student life, he shied away from academic training in composition and instead spent his creative time working on his own independent projects within the fields of jazz, improvisation, electronic and popular music. In 1991 he began a six-year stint as pianist in the Steve Martland Band, which also led to performance opportunities with other contemporary music ensembles (including the London Sinfonietta). During this period he became fully immersed in a branch of contemporary classical music that was as

much informed by pop music and jazz as it was by the history of western art music. This gave him the impetus and inspiration to start creating his own "classical" works, beginning with a number of formative chamber pieces written between 1994 and 2000. Meanwhile, Maric was experimenting further with electronic compositions and increasingly used this discipline in tandem with his writing for acoustic instruments, which eventually led to his first commissioned work, *Trilogy*, for percussionist Colin Currie in 2000.

The immediate success of this piece very quickly led to a number of new chamber works for musicians such as pianists Katia and Marielle Labeque, and violinist Viktoria Mullova. Katia Labeque collaborated with Maric for a number of years on a live performance project called the Katia Labeque Band which released one album recording, *Unspoken*. Festivals and organizations such as the Lucerne Festival, Radio France and BBC Radio 3 then began to take note and commissioned Maric for a number of new works; including music for Colin Currie (much of which appears on the album recording *Borrowed Time* released by Onyx Classics in 2007), Katia Labeque, Viktoria Mullova, trumpeter Hakan Hardenberger, guitarist Fred Frith, and his first commissioned orchestral work, *Spellbound* (written for L'Orchestre National de Montpellier). Maric then embarked on his long term ambition to work with contemporary and classical dance after the British choreographer Cathy Marston chose Maric's chamber work *Broken Fiction* as the basis for a new dance piece in 2003 of the same name. This ultimately led to a number of successful collaborations between Maric and Marston, most notably the full evening work *Ghosts*, for the Royal Opera House, London in 2005, and the forthcoming

full evening orchestral work A Tale of Two Cities for Northern Ballet Theatre, which will premiere on 30 August 2008 at the West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds, UK.

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ANDREW M. BLISS VITA

Information

Birthday: February 12, 1981

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Education

University of Kentucky (UK), Lexington, KY ***In Progress***

- Doctor of Musical Arts, Percussion Performance and Pedagogy

University of Kentucky (UK), Lexington, KY **May 2006**

- Master of Music, Percussion Performance and Pedagogy

Northern Illinois University (NIU), DeKalb, IL **May 2004**

- Bachelor of Music, Percussion Performance

PROFESSIONAL TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University

Percussion Faculty, Centre College; Danville, KY **2005-Present**

- Instructor of Applied Lessons, MUS 150-450
- Director of Percussion Ensemble, MUS 194

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Univ. of Kentucky; Lexington, KY **2004-2008**

- Instructor of Percussion Methods, MUC 157
- Instructor of Applied Lessons, MUP 118-418
- Percussion Arranger / Instructor of UK Wildcat Marching Band, MUC 190
- Assistant Conductor of UK Basketball Pep Band
- Assistant Conductor of Percussion Ensemble, MUP 173 (001)
- Assistant Conductor of Steel Band, MUP 173 (002)

Adjunct Percussion Director, Univ. of Kentucky; Lexington, KY **Spring 2006**

- Sabbatical replacement for Professor James Campbell
- Director of Percussion Ensemble, MUP 173 (001)
- Director of Steel Band, MUP 173 (002)
- Instructor of Applied Lessons, MUP 118-518

Other Teaching

FE Caption Head, Madison Scouts Drum & Bugle Corps; Madison, WI **2007-08**

- Coordinator of auditions and membership selection
- Designer of technique program
- Equipment manager
- Coordinator of summer design changes
- Principal instructor of music and exercise program

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY

Published Articles

“Studio Teaching Philosophies of Vicki Peterson Jenks.” *Percussive Notes* 43 (2005): 57-61.

Audio Recordings

Live from Lexington, University of Kentucky Percussion Ensemble **Oct. 2008**

- [Pennsauken, NJ]: Disc Makers, [2007]. Compact disc.

Live from Lexington, University of Kentucky Percussion Ensemble **Oct. 2007**

- [Pennsauken, NJ]: Disc Makers, [2007]. Compact disc.

Tympanum Ubiquitäs, Honeyrock Percussion Publishing **Oct. 2007**

- [Everett, PA]: Disc Makers, [2007]. Compact disc.

Band Spectacular, University of Kentucky Wildcat Marching Band **Jan. 2005**

- Included my Percussion Arrangements: [2004-2005]. Compact disc.

[One], Recording by the Base4 Percussion Quartet **Oct. 2004**

- [DeKalb, IL]: Reler Records, [2004]. Compact disc.

2003 Wind Band Sampler, Alfred Music Publishing Company **Jan. 2003**

- Wind Band Promotion CD (Section percussion): [2003]. Compact disc.

Funk & Junk, NIU Huskie Marching Band **Jan. 2003**

- [Pennsauken, NJ]: Disc Makers, [2003]. Compact disc.

Creative and Performing Activities / International Invitations

Guest Artist, Royal Swedish Army Band; Stockholm, Sweden **Oct. 2008**

- Ensemble Coaching and masterclass for the recruits of Rolf Landberg

Workshop, Sigtuna Kulturskola; Märsta, Sweden **Oct. 2008**

- Snare Drum FUNdamentals workshop for the students of Jonathan Lundberg

Guest Artist, Norrtälje Musikskolain; Norrtälje, Sweden **Oct. 2008**

- Ensemble Coaching and private lessons for students of Martin Wiström's

Workshop, Kultursholan i Rimbo; Rimbo, Sweden **Oct. 2008**

- Workshop for the “Marimbos” Percussion Group run by Bengt Hilding

Adjudicator, Thailand Drumline Contest **Aug. 2008**

- Invited to judge the Individual and Ensemble Contests throughout four days of competition

- Northern Illinois University Steel Band** **2000-01, 2003**
- 2nd place, World Steel Band Festival; Port of Spain, Trinidad, Oct. 2000
 - First U.S. group to place in finals of competition
- Creative and Performing Activities / National Performances**
- Artist Clinician/Endorser, Black Swamp Percussion Instruments** **2006-Present**
- Artist Endorser, Sibelius Notation Software** **2007-Present**
- Artist Clinician/Endorser, Evans Drumheads & D'Addario Company** **2007-Present**
- Artist Clinician/Endorser, Innovative Percussion Mallets & Sticks** **2008-Present**
- Guest Artist, Tennessee Tech University; Cookeville, TN** **Nov. 2008**
- Guest soloist on *Mudra* by Bob Becker with TTU Percussion Ensemble
 - “Signature Sounds” masterclass for percussion students of Eric Willie
- Panelist, PAS International Convention (PASIC); Austin, TX** **Nov. 2008**
- Music Technology Panel Discussion entitled “Augmented Musicianship”
- Faculty, Music for All World Percussion Symposium; Normal, IL** **2005-06, 2008**
- Workshop, ATMI National Conference; Salt Lake City, UT** **Nov. 2007**
- ATMI (Association for Technology in Music Instruction)
 - Co-Presenter with Kerry O’Brien
 - Conference held in conjunction with College Music Society National Conference
 - Presentation, “Technology for the Common Man: Skill Sets for the Educator and Performer.”
- Artist, PASIC Focus Day; Columbus, OH** **Nov. 2007**
- Performance with the Base4 Percussion Quartet of Akira Nishimura’s *Concerto for Timpani & 5 Percussionists*
- Assistant Conductor / Artist, PASIC; Columbus, OH** **Nov. 2007**
- Conductor for the world premiere of Christopher Deane’s percussion ensemble, *Pyriphlegethon*
 - Showcase Concert performance with the University of Kentucky Percussion Ensemble
- Research Poster Presentation, PASIC; Columbus, OH** **Nov. 2007**
- “20th-Century Blacksmith: The Forging of David Lang’s *Anvil Chorus*.”
- Part-Time Arranger, University of Texas at Arlington; Arlington, TX** **Sep. 2007**
- Masterclass, University of Tennessee at Martin; Martin, TN** **Aug. 2006-07**
- 3-day residency with the battery and front ensemble for the UTM Marching Band

- Performer, University of Tennessee at Martin; Martin, TN** **Mar. 2007**
 • Concert with the Nief-Norf Project (my contemporary chamber performing ensemble)
- Lecture, University of Tennessee at Martin; Martin, TN** **Mar. 2007**
 • “Percussion Music is Revolution: Percussion Literature through the 20th Century.”
- Performer, Mercer University; Macon, GA** **Mar. 2007**
 • Concert with the Nief-Norf Project
- Performer, Virginia Tech University; Blacksburg, VA** **Mar. 2007**
 • Concert with the Nief-Norf Project
- Artist, PAS Kentucky Day of Percussion; Lexington, KY** **Feb. 2007**
 • Snare Drum “FUNdamentals” Masterclass
- Masterclass, University of Tennessee at Martin; Martin, TN** **Oct. 2006**
 • Timpani Masterclass for UTM percussion studio
- Artist, Bands of America World Percussion Symposium; Normal, IL** **June 2006**
 • Showcase Concert & Masterclass with the Base4 Percussion Quartet
- Performer, Northern Illinois University; DeKalb, IL** **Mar. 2006**
 • Concert with the Nief-Norf Project
- Artist, Illinois Valley Day of Percussion; Oglesby, IL** **Feb. 2006**
 • Concert with the Base4 Percussion Quartet
- Performer, Cleveland State University; Cleveland, OH** **Nov. 2005**
 • Concert with the Base4 Percussion Quartet
- Assistant Conductor / Artist, PASIC; Nashville, TN** **Nov. 2004**
 • Showcase Concert with the University of Kentucky Percussion Ensemble
- Artist, PASIC; Louisville, KY** **Nov. 2003**
 • Showcase Concert with the Base4 Percussion Quartet
- Percussion Staff, Capital Sound Drum & Bugle Corps; Madison, WI** **2003**
 • Front Ensemble Technician for Winter Season
- Creative and Performing Activities / Regional Performances**
- Double Tenor player, Blue Steel Professional Steel Band** **2004-Present**
 • Monthly Community Performances throughout Central Kentucky
- Orchestral Percussionist / Timpanist** **2000-Present**
 • Lexington (KY) Philharmonic Orchestra, extra percussion, 2005-Present
 • Elmhurst (IL) Symphony Orchestra, extra percussion, 2004

- West Suburban Orchestra (IL), extra percussion, 2004
- Beloit (WI) Symphony Orchestra, extra percussion, 2003-04
- Illinois Valley Symphony Orchestra, extra percussion, 2003
- Kishwaukee Symphony Orchestra (IL), section percussion, 2000-04

Percussion Instructor, Central Music Academy; Lexington, KY 2005-Present

- Non-profit institution that provides lessons for under-served children in downtown Lexington
- Director of two after-school steel bands
- Private lesson teacher for percussion and piano
- Teach at week-long summer music camp yearly

Percussion Consultant, Lafayette High School; Lexington, KY 2005-06, 2008-Present

- Instructor of percussion class three times a week
- Conduct percussion ensemble rehearsals
- Private lessons for a dozen high school students weekly
- Teach 8th grade percussion class once a week

Guest Artist, University of the Cumberland; Williamsburg, KY Oct. 2008

- Multi-percussion masterclass and private lesson teaching for percussion students of Jim Corcoran

DMA Solo Percussion Recital, University of Kentucky; Lexington, KY Apr. 2008

- Music by Hatzis, Burtner, Dietz, Luther Adams, Gann, Wahlund, & Maric

DMA Lecture Recital, University of Kentucky; Lexington, KY Apr. 2008

- “Traversing Enveloping Sonic Landscapes: *Mathematics of Resonant Bodies* by John Luther Adams”

DMA Chamber Percussion Recital, Univ. of Kentucky; Lexington, KY Feb. 2008

- Music by Steve Reich, David Lang, Paul Lansky, and John Luther Adams

Kyle Gann Composer Portrait Concert, Univ. of Kentucky; Lexington, KY Feb. 2008

- Premiered commissioned piece, *Olana*, for solo vibraphone
- Coordinated all aspects of concert including artists, programming, marketing, and funding

Masterclass, Lafayette High School; Lexington, KY Jan. 2007

- Tambourine & Triangle Masterclass for percussion students

Faculty, Yamaha Sounds of Summer Percussion Camp; Lexington, KY 2005-06

Performer, University of Kentucky; Lexington, KY Feb. 2006

- Concert with the Nief-Norf Project

MM Solo Recital, University of Kentucky; Lexington, KY	Jan. 2006
• Music by Álvarez, Reich, Xenakis, Supko, Másson, DeSantis	
Workshop, Cumberland College; Cumberland, KY	Apr. 2005
• Timpani workshop involving percussion studio; hands on demonstration	
Performer, IMEA State Conference; Peoria, IL	Jan. 2004
• Performer with the NIU Latin Jazz Ensemble	
Teaching Assistant, Birch Creek Music Festival; Birch Creek, WI	2003-04
• Conductor of percussion ensemble	
• Equipment manager	
• Performer in faculty ensemble	
Percussion Specialist, Benet Academy; Lisle, IL	2003-04
• Private instructor for all percussion students	
• Instructor for grade school and middle school music camps	
Performer, Fremd High School; Palatine, IL	Nov. 2003
• Concert with the Base4 Percussion Quartet	
Performer, Wheeling High School; Wheeling, IL	Nov. 2003
• Concert with the Base4 Percussion Quartet	
Performer, Benet Academy; Lisle, IL	Nov. 2003
• Concert with the Base4 Percussion Quartet	
Percussion Arranger, Rock Island High School; Rock Island, IL	Fall 2003
• Winner Class 4A High Percussion at Illinois State University State Finals	
Percussion Instructor, NIU Community School for the Arts; DeKalb, IL	2002-04
• Instructor of private students who were enrolled in the Community School	
Front Ensemble Member, Madison Scouts Drum and Bugle Corps	2001-02
• Performer in DCI Individual Competition, 2002	
• 1st place in Drum Corps Midwest Ensemble Competition, 2001-02	
• Performer in DCI Ensemble Competition, 2001-02	
Percussion Arranger, NIU Huskie Marching Band; DeKalb, IL	2001
• Coordinate auditions and membership selection	
• Design technique program	
• Inventory, manage and order equipment	
• Principal instructor of music and exercise program	
Front Ensemble Member, Capital Sound Drum and Bugle Corps	1999-2000

Accomplishments of Students (Selected)

Ben Coyer (Lafayette High School Student) 2008

- Accepted to All-District Band

Brian Archinal (UK Undergraduate) 2004-08

- Accepted for Graduate School at the University of California - San Diego as a Teaching Assistant, Spring 2008
- Accepted to the Bang on a Can Summer Institute, Summer 2007
- Accepted to Leigh Howard Stevens Marimba Festival, Summer 2007

Charlie Olvera (UK Undergraduate) 2004-08

- Accepted for Graduate School at IUPUI as Teaching Assistant in Music Technology, Spring 2008

Ryan Nestor (UK Undergraduate) 2004-08

- Accepted to Leigh Howard Stevens Marimba Festival, Summer 2007

David Hutter (UK Undergraduate) 2006-08

- Accepted to Leigh Howard Stevens Marimba Festival, Summer 2007

Alex Harmon (UK Undergraduate) 2006-08

- Invited to perform at the University of Alaska - Fairbanks New Music Festival, Spring 2008

Dustin Shahidehpour (Member, Madison Scouts) 2007-08

- Accepted to Lawrence Conservatory (Appleton, WI) with full tuition waiver and scholarship, Spring 2008

Davy Anderson (UK Undergraduate) 2004-07

- Accepted for Graduate School at the University of Alaska at Fairbanks as a Teaching Assistant, Spring 2007
- Accepted to SICPP Contemporary Music Festival as Performer, Spring 2007
- Accepted to MUSIC '07 festival in Cincinnati, OH as Performer, Spring 2007

Colin Campbell (UK Undergraduate) 2004-07

- Accepted for Graduate School at the University of Michigan as a Teaching Assistant, Spring 2007

Jordan Munson (UK Undergraduate) 2004-07

- Accepted to the University of Alaska at Fairbanks as an Assistant in the Super Computing Center, Spring 2007

Steven Logan (High School Student) 2004-06

- Accepted to the Cincinnati Youth Orchestra, Sep. 2005
- Attended Interlochen Summer Program and was offered full-tuition for year-round attendance, Summer 2005

Brad Meyer (UK Undergraduate) 2004-06

- Accepted to the University of South Carolina as a Teaching Assistant, Spring 2006
- Placed in the Percussive Arts Society Collegiate Keyboard Competition, Nov. 2004

Mike Culligan (High School Student) 2002-04

- Awarded full tuition to attend Duquesne University as a Percussion Major, Spring 2004
- Placed into the IL All-State Percussion Ensemble and selected as a solo timpanist, Jan. 2004

Recital Preparations

- Logan Wells (junior recital) Mar. 2008
- Ryan Nestor (senior recital) — Feb. 2008
- Alex Harmon (sophomore recital) — Feb. 2008
- Aaron Graham (senior recital) — Feb. 2008
- Tim Wilburn (sophomore recital) — Feb. 2008
- Will Keith (senior recital) — Feb. 2008
- Phil Robb (senior recital) — Jan. 2008
- Brian Archinal (senior recital) — Nov. 2007
- Charlie Olvera (senior recital) — Oct. 2007
- Jon Doty (junior recital) — Mar. 2007
- Ryan Nestor (junior recital) — Mar. 2007
- Colin Campbell (senior recital) — Feb. 2007
- Brian Archinal (junior recital) — Jan. 2007
- Aaron Graham (junior recital) — Jan. 2007
- Davy Anderson (senior recital) — Jan. 2007
- Davy Anderson (junior recital) — Feb. 2006
- Brad Meyer (junior recital) — Feb. 2005

Commissions

- **Supko, John.** *This River*. Solo Percussion work for Andy Bliss. Forthcoming, 2008.
- **Sellers, Joey.** *Five Fantasies, Four Percussionists*. Percussion Quartet for Base4, 2007.
- **Gann, Kyle.** *Olana*. Solo Vibraphone work for Andy Bliss. December 2007. Premiered Feb. 2008.
- **Wahlund, Ben.** *The New Objectivist*. Percussion Quartet for Base4. Naperville, IL: Black Dog Productions, 2005.

Honors and Awards

- **Friends of Music Grant**, UK; \$750 for support of Nov. '07 College Music Society/ ATMI Presentation — Feb. 2008
- **Support Funding Grant**, UK Graduate School; \$400 for support of John Supko Commission — Sep. 2007
- **Graduate Teaching Assistantship**, UK School of Music — 2004-Present
- **TORA Scholarship Recipient**, UK School of Music — 2004-05
- **Scholarship Recipient**, NIU Music School — Full Tuition, 2002-03

- **Leadership Award**, Northern Illinois University — Spring 2001
- **Paul Bujisa Memorial Scholarship Recipient**, NIU Huskie Marching Band — Spring 2001
- **NIU Huskie Marching Band Outstanding Band Member Award** — Fall 2000
- **NIU Huskie Marching Band Drumline Excellence Award** — Fall 1999
- **NIU Huskie Marching Band Outstanding First-Year Member Award** — Fall 1999

SERVICE

Professional Service

- **Percussive Arts Society Scholarly Research Committee** — Fall 2007-Present
- **Vice-President, Percussive Arts Society (PAS) KY Chapter** — Feb. 2007-Present
- **Percussive Arts Society Music Technology Committee** — Fall 2006-Present
- **Host, PAS Kentucky Statewide Day of Percussion** — Feb 2006-08
- **Judge, Morehead State University (KY) Gallagher Competition** — Apr. 2006
- **Adjudicator, Arlington High School Marching Competition (TN)** — Sep. 2005
- **Administrative Assistant, PAS Kentucky Statewide Day of Percussion** — Feb. 2005
- **Adjudicator, Grant County High School Marching Competition (KY)** — Oct. 2004
- **Advisory Board, NIU Career Planning & Placement (IL)** — 2002-04
- **Assistant Coordinator, NIU Campus Activity Board's Concert Committee (IL)** — Spring 2001

Professional Development and Affiliations

- **Society for Electro Acoustic Musicians in the U.S. (SEAMUS)** — Fall 2007-Present
- **Association for Technology in Music Instruction (ATMI), Member** — Spring 2007-Present
- **College Music Society (CMS), Member** — Fall 2005-Present
- **Percussive Arts Society (PAS), Member** — Fall 2001-Present
- **BASIC Day of Percussion (Stockholm, Sweden)** — Oct. 2008
- **North American Frame Drummer Association (NAFDA) National Workshop (Mendham, NJ)** — Mar. 2008
- **Michael Spiro Afro-Cuban Workshop (Lexington, KY)** — Mar. 2008
- **Roots and Rhizomes: Seventy-Five Years of Percussion Music (San Diego, CA)** — Feb. 2007
- **Tau Beta Sigma, Honorary Member** — Spring 2006
- **Percussive Arts Society International Convention** — 2001-08
- **Student Liaison, College Pedagogy Committee** — 2004-06
- **Percussive Arts Society Collegiate Committee Board Member** — 2002-06
- **Steven Schick Private Contemporary Music Workshop (San Diego, CA)** — Mar. 2005
- **Midwest Band & Orchestra Clinic (Chicago, IL)** — 2004-05
- **Cloyd Duff Timpani Master Class (University of Missouri-Kansas City)** — June 2004
- **Michael Spiro Afro-Cuban Workshop (Lexington, KY)** — May 2004
- **Illinois Music Educators Association Convention (Peoria, IL)** — 2001, 2004
- **Pi Kappa Lambda National Music Honor Society, Member** — Spring 2004
- **Phi Mu Alpha Men's Music Fraternity, Alumnus**

Primary Teachers

- James Campbell - Percussion performance and pedagogy
- Rich Holly - Percussion performance and pedagogy
- Robert Chappell - Percussion performance and pedagogy, tabla
- Orlando Cotto - Afro-Cuban Percussion, Marimba
- Cliff Alexis - Steel pan
- Jeff Stitely - Drumset
- Liam Teague - Steel pan