THE EVOLVING ROLE AND INSTRUMENTATION

OF THE WIND BAND

PERCUSSION SECTION

by

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ABSTRACT

The instrumentation of the wind band has never been standardized and has continued to evolve and expand over time. However, the collections of wind instruments that are used has remained fairly consistent which is a contrast to the percussion section. While many percussion instruments have a long history, their use in the wind band is relatively new in comparison to the wind instruments. This document will explore the evolution of percussion instruments utilized in the wind band by examining several landmark pieces that changed the trajectory of percussion writing for wind bands.

The number of percussion instruments as well as their function changed dramatically in the twentieth century and this trend has continued into the early twenty-first century. Several landmark wind band pieces can be linked to this function and instrumentation change. These pieces contributed to the lasting shift in the percussion’s role by requiring new instruments and playing techniques. This shift also created the need for more percussionists than the traditional four players used in the professional bands of the late nineteenth century. Many of the pieces prominently featured the percussion section rather than using them in their traditional function of ostinatos and cadence point support. These pieces shifted the function of the wind band percussion section and their impact can be traced into modern wind band literature.
DEDICATION

This document is dedicated to my wife, Ansley, and our son, Fischer. You have supported me endlessly through this journey and without your support I would never have completed this adventure. Your tireless patience, love, and faith in me has kept me steadfast in my pursuit of this degree. There are truly no words to adequately express my gratitude for your unwavering encouragement. I love you and will forever be grateful for you giving me this opportunity.
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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ..................................................................................................................................... ii

DEDICATION ................................................................................................................................ iii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................................ iv

LIST OF FIGURES .................................................................................................................. vi

INTRODUCTION ....................................................................................................................... 1

SYMPHONY FOR BAND, OP. 69 .......................................................................................... 4

...AND THE MOUNTAINS RISING NOWHERE ................................................................... 27

ASPHALT COCKTAIL ............................................................................................................. 46

REDLINE TANGO ................................................................................................................ 61

CONCLUSION ......................................................................................................................... 72

REFERENCES .......................................................................................................................... 74
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td><em>Symphony for Band</em>, Percussion Notation Guide</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td><em>Symphony for Band</em>, Movement I – Measures 1–2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td><em>Symphony for Band</em>, Movement IV – Measures 260–261</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td><em>Symphony for Band</em>, Movement I – Measures 21–25</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td><em>Symphony for Band</em>, Movement I – Measures 54–56</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6</td>
<td><em>Symphony for Band</em>, Movement I – Measures 260–261</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7</td>
<td><em>Symphony for Band</em>, Movement IV – Measures 35–38</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8</td>
<td><em>Symphony for Band</em>, Movement II – Measures 25–30</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.9</td>
<td><em>Symphony for Band</em>, Movement I – Measures 40–44</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.10</td>
<td><em>Symphony for Band</em>, Movement I – Measures 61–63</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.11</td>
<td><em>Symphony for Band</em>, Movement III – Measures 37–39</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.12</td>
<td><em>Symphony for Band</em>, Movement IV – Measures 116–118</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td><em>…and the mountains rising nowhere</em>, Arioso</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td><em>…and the mountains rising nowhere</em>, Percussion Notation Guide</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td><em>…and the mountains rising nowhere</em>, Measure 1</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td><em>…and the mountains rising nowhere</em>, Measure 37</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td><em>…and the mountains rising nowhere</em>, Measure 2</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td><em>…and the mountains rising nowhere</em>, Measure 3</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the twentieth century, many composers began to experiment with the possibilities of the percussion section. This was a considerable change from its minimal use in late nineteenth century wind band works by notable band composers such as John Philip Sousa, Edwin Franko Goldman, and Henry Fillmore. During the same period, prominent orchestral composers such as Igor Stravinsky and Béla Bartók explored many of the possibilities for percussion in works such as *L’Histoire du Soldat* (1918), *Les Noces* (1923), and *Piano Concert No. 1* (1926).

Edgard Varèse is widely acclaimed for his utilization of percussion instruments. According to Frank Battisti, Director Emeritus at The New England Conservatory, “He embraced percussion instruments because of their lack of pitch, which made possible limitless rhythmic development outside the tempered scale.” His use of the percussion ensemble to create new percussion combinations was highly influential on the expansion on the instrumentation and role of the percussion section within the wind band. His work *Ionisation* (1931) was groundbreaking.

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at the time in the use of various combinations of percussion sounds.\textsuperscript{3} The piece was written exclusively for percussion and explored a wide range of timbral and rhythmic ideas. Although its effect was not immediate, Varèse’s use of percussion would send shockwaves through the compositional landscape in the utilization of percussion timbres as well as rhythmic possibilities.

The early twentieth century saw an increase in the number of major works being composed for wind band. Composers such as Holst, Vaughn Williams, Milhaud and Hindemith composed works for band that have become cornerstones in the repertoire. However, the percussion utilization in these pieces follows much of the same as the marches by Sousa and Fillmore. The percussion section served a role of support to the band and was used less prominently than in the percussion ensemble literature of that time. The percussion section was teeming with timbral and rhythmic possibilities that had yet to be harnessed for the wind band until Vincent Persichetti wrote his groundbreaking \textit{Symphony for Band, Op. 69}.

Karel Husa continued to explore the possibilities of the percussion section in the mid to late twentieth century with his work \textit{Music for Prague 1968}. His expanded use of the percussion section and movement written solely for percussion greatly impacted the path of the wind band percussion section. The work by Husa was highly evolutionary at its time, and influenced composers into the modern era. While each composer may not be directly influenced by others, the possibilities that have been created for the wind band percussion section created an atmosphere from which the each new generation of composer could evolve. While there are many composers who influenced the evolution of the role and instrumentation of the percussion section, a few standout as significant in the evolutionary landscape. Persichetti began the

exploration, which Schwantner continued to develop. These composers, in conjunction with other prominent composers such as Karel Husa, made a lasting impact on the evolution of percussion utilization in the wind band in the twentieth century. This evolution has continued into the current century by the prominent composer John Mackey. Mackey continues to create new and interesting combinations of percussion instruments and utilize the percussion section in more prominent ways. These composers have helped pave the way for the evolution of the wind band percussion section.
SYMPHONY FOR BAND, OP. 69
Vincent Persichetti

Vincent Persichetti’s (1915–1987) *Symphony for Band Op. 69* was written during the years of 1955 and 1956. The piece was commissioned by the Washington University Chamber Band as a six–minute piece emulating a style similar to another of his works, *Psalm for Band.* Persichetti developed the piece into the four–movement symphony and it has become a standard in the wind band repertoire. His sensitivity to the percussion section and utilization of the percussion section in new and unique ways makes this work one of particular interest for percussionists. Battisti says, “His unique and imaginative use of percussion color and texture, which Persichetti first used in his *Symphony for Band,* enlarges the overall fabric of the composition.” It is this type of new utilization of the percussion section that makes this work of particular merit in regard to the evolving use of the percussion section.

Persichetti uses an extensive collection of wind and percussion instruments for this work. He had initial apprehension to composing for wind band alone, but after a revelation, he states, “When composers think of the band as a huge, supple ensemble of winds and percussion, the

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obnoxious fat will drain off, and creative ideas will flourish.”  The instrumentation for this four movement Symphony is:

- Piccolo in C
- 2 Flute
- 2 Oboe
- 1 Eb Clarinet
- 3 Bb Clarinet
- 1 Alto Clarinet
- 1 Bass Clarinet in Bb
- 2 Bassoon
- 2 Alto Saxophone
- 1 Tenor Saxophone
- 1 Baritone Saxophone
- 3 Cornet
- 2 Trumpet
- 4 Horn
- 1 Euphonium
- 3 Trombone
- 1 Tuba
- 3 Percussion

This instrument list displays the extensive collection of instruments that Persichetti utilizes for this work. At first glance, the percussion instrumentation seems minimal when considering there are only three percussion parts. This is deceiving due to the expanded instrumentation that Persichetti uses for each percussionist. Although there are only three parts, there are a total of 15 instruments used by the percussionists. This number can be seen by viewing the percussion notation guide included in the notes of the composition which is included in figure 1.1.

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6 Vincent Persichetti and Rudy Shackelford, "Conversation with Vincent Persichetti, "Perspectives of New Music" 20, no. 1/2 (1981): 120.
In addition to expanding the instrumentation used by the percussion section, Vincent Persichetti made a profound impact on the evolving role of the percussion section in the wind band. In his symphony there are a number of ways in which he places the percussion section in a position to play a more prominent role in the overall landscape of the work. His treatment of the percussion section throughout this work is considered to be one of the most prominent aspects of the piece.\footnote{Joe Barry Mullins, "Three Symphonies for Band by American Composers," PhD diss., 1967, 76.}

Persichetti uses the percussion section to play melodic and motivic material, to create
new and interesting tone colors, and to rhythmically compliment the wind parts to create a cohesive and interesting work.

**Motives**

One of the most prominent features of his use of the percussion section is the way in which he introduces melodic and motivic material with the percussion section throughout the piece. Up until this point in wind band history, the percussion section had been treated exclusively as a supporting section with few exceptions. According to Sterling Cossaboom’s dissertation, “Throughout the introduction the percussion are employed both as an independent color and an independent section, frequently unaligned rhythmically or dynamically with the winds.”

There are a few prominent moments of the piece that feature the percussion section with the first being at the beginning of the work. Persichetti introduces five rhythmic motives that are used throughout the duration of the piece. These ideas are highlighted in figure 1.2 which shows the entire introduction.

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There are many instances throughout the piece when Persichetti uses either the entire rhythmic motive or partial versions of the motives to create a sense of cohesiveness. An example of this use of the rhythmic motives can be found in the fourth movement at measure 260-261 in the xylophone part (figure 1.3). Once presented by the xylophone, only the initial segment of the
rhythmic motive is then played by the flute and clarinet. This motive is a version of [or derived from] the fourth rhythmic motive that is presented at the beginning of the work, yet it is still being used in the fourth movement of the symphony. The number of instances in which the rhythmic motives are reused and manipulated throughout the piece is staggering. This further displays Persichetti’s understanding of the cohesion throughout the course of a large-scale work and shows his deft skill with allowing the percussion section to continually weave the motives into the fabric of the piece.

**Figure 1.3 – Symphony for Band, Movement IV, mm. 260–261**

Following the presentation of the initial rhythmic motives, the tempo changes to Allegro, and the xylophone and three snare drums present the A theme melodic material. At this point in the wind band history, it was not uncommon for the xylophone to present a melody, but here it presents the melody before any other instruments and is joined by the three snare drums of varying pitch with the snares turned off, an innovative use of percussion. This collection of three snare drums echos Stravinsky’s *L’Histoire du Soldat*. The striking similarities in instrumentation
make it apparent that Persichetti was at least aware of the instrumental possibilities of the snare drum. The articulate xylophone and the resonant sound of the snare drum provided a unique character to the melodic presentation. This can be seen in Figure 1.4.

**Figure 1.4 – Symphony for Band, Movement I, m. 21–25**

In this presentation of the A theme, the xylophone does not use all of the pitch content that the clarinets do as they follow the xylophone entrance. The clarinets present a further expanded version of the A theme which the xylophone initially presented. In addition to the expansion, the clarinets utilize a different collection of pitches than the ones used by the xylophone. This, in combination with the fact that the snare drums accompany the xylophone, generates a sense of tonal ambiguity until the clarinets present the full A theme. H. Owen Reed makes comment on the fact that when a non–pitched instrument accompanies a pitched instrument; the non–pitched instrument takes on a unique tonal quality.\(^{10}\) This unique tonal

\(^{10}\) H. Owen Reed, Joel T. Leach, and Deanna Hudgins, Scoring for percussion and the instruments of the percussion section (Alfred, 2010).
quality can be heard when the xylophone is accompanied by the snare drums. This unique tonal color creates an interesting contrast to the clarinets that follow.

In contrast to this utilization of the xylophone in a soli situation with the other percussionists, there are other instances of the xylophone playing the melody, but in conjunction with other wind instruments. Measures 54–56 of Movement I utilize the xylophone playing the melodic figure with the flute, oboe, and Eb clarinet in unison initially. This is altered slightly as the xylophone employs the same pitch content but alters the rhythm from the woodwinds. This gives the xylophone a unique version of the melodic line, while still fitting within the ensemble in terms of style and pitch content. The Flute, Oboe, Eb Clarinet, and Xylophone parts can be seen below in Figure 1.5.

Figure 1.5 – Symphony for Band, Movement I, m. 54–56
Further into the first movement, the snare drum, cymbals, and bass drum have the opportunity to present the A theme. This is a rarity to have three snare drums present a melodic figure with a contour that follows the initial motivic presentation by the xylophone. In this instance, the snare drum entrance gives the feeling of a recapitulation to the A theme. This would make sense due to the presentation of the theme by an instrument that played it initially, but it is quickly recognized that the snare drums are simply restating the beginning of the motive before the ensemble moves forward with another idea. However, to give a melodic figure both rhythmically as well as in contour to a non pitched instrument, shows Persichetti’s vision of the percussion section as an equal contributor to the ensemble.

Keeping with that same idea, Persichetti presents the A theme with a new pitch collection at mm. 220–225 in the percussion section with low brass accompaniment. In addition to presenting the A theme again, it is further embellished before the wind entrance in measure 226. This alludes to the rhythmic motives that were presented in the introduction of the movement. In this instance, the xylophone, snare drums, and timpani are presenting the melody, which serves as a miniature recapitulation before moving forward with the B theme in the winds. These ideas can be seen in Figure 1.6.
At the beginning of the fourth movement, the winds present the melodic material that makes up the A theme. The percussion section begins the movement in a supportive role. Following the melodic presentations by the winds, the percussion section is given the A theme at measure 35, and that continues until measure 39. Again, Persichetti gives the percussion section a melodic theme to play showing his view of the percussion section as an equal contributor to the entire ensemble. He has chosen for the snare drums to be at the forefront of the melodic figure.

In this situation, he had to determine how to treat the lower neighbor tone that is present in the original melodic material that the winds played. Persichetti used a snare drum roll to fill the void of the missing lower neighbor which adds an interesting timbre to a melody that has already been
played. This is an example of one way that Persichetti was able to overcome the tonal restraints of the non–pitched instruments that he chose to include in the percussion instrumentation of this piece. This can be see in Figure 1.7.

**Figure 1.7 – Symphony for Band, Movement IV m. 35–38**

![Figure 1.7 – Symphony for Band, Movement IV m. 35–38](image)

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It is clear throughout this symphony that Persichetti found value in the percussion section and found moments to include the percussion section equally with the other sections of the wind band. The percussion section is given the opportunity to introduce and develop melodic and motivic ideas throughout the course of the work. This was a major compositional shift especially when considering the time at which this piece was composed.

**Tone Colors**

Persichetti makes it abundantly clear through the duration of this work that he had specific tone colors in mind for various moments. He achieves some of the tone colors by requesting specific implements to be used in specific instances. He also is specific about the
playing area in which some of the instruments should be played. In addition, he creates fresh and interesting combinations of wind and percussion instruments at specific moments throughout the work. All of these techniques combine to show that Persichetti wanted to utilize the percussion section to create new and unique sounds as well as being aware of many of the possibilities of implements and playing areas of the instruments.

In an effort to achieve specific tone colors of the percussion instruments, Persichetti is very specific on which implements are to be used at specified moments in the piece. This is a technique that is new to wind band at the time, but is a common feature of previous works by Berlioz and Stravinsky. While the implements are considered to be standard, Persichetti uses them in non–traditional ways especially in the wind band setting. The implements that Persichetti has chosen to utilize for this piece are snare sticks, timpani sticks, and wire brushes. This is a small list of implements, but the various ways in which he employs them is much more extensive. The following is a list of the various uses of the implements:

Triangle with snare drum sticks  
Cymbal with handle of timpani sticks  
Snare drums with timpani mallets  
Snare drums with wire brushes  
Timpani with hard sticks  
Tambourine with snare drum sticks  
Bass drum with snare drum sticks  
Sizzle cymbal with wire brushes  
Snare drum with sticks
Timpani with timpani mallets  
Cymbal with snare drum stick

Clear instructions are provided at the entrance of each instrument as to which implement is to be used and it is understood by the performer that they are to continue to use that implement until alternate instructions are provided. Persichetti clearly writes which instrument is being performed as well as what the implement to be used should be. This is interesting in that he provides a clear percussion notation guide at the beginning of the score, but still finds in necessary to write the percussion instrument name at the beginning of each section. This can be clearly seen in Figure 1.8.

Figure 1.8 – Movement II, m. 25–30

Persichetti is very clear with his marking of which implements are to be used for most of the piece; however, there are two instances in which he is not clear as to the specific type of implement to be used. When Persichetti writes “timpani mallets” he does not specify which type of timpani mallet should be used. There are many variations in the types and styles of timpani
mallets, so his lack of designation is interesting, considering his attention to detail with the other implements. According to Fennell:

The modern kettledrummer, for instance, comes with a case filled with sticks whose heads are made from a variety of materials. Here are a few of the hammers which are available: soft lambswool, coarse sheepskin (replacing the Berlioz baguettes d'éponge), soft felt (with degrees of hard centers), hard felt, chamois–covered felt, soft rubber, hard rubber, rattan and hickory wood. Composers should know as much about the timpani sticks as they do about methods of bowing and attack for strings.\textsuperscript{11}

With this in mind, it does call to question if Persichetti simply did not have a preference for which mallet was to be used for this section. In light of his full consideration of colors created by the other percussion instruments, it does seem to be a contrast that he does not specify which type of timpani mallet to use. However, he may give this freedom to allow the timpani player the ability to make the appropriate choice for each musical situation.

In addition to not specifying the type of mallet to be used for the timpani, he also does not specify which type of mallet to be used for the xylophone. Similar to the timpani, the mallet selections available to the xylophone are extensive, so it is a contrast for Persichetti to not be specific in stating which type of xylophone mallet should be used for the various situations throughout the work. However, Fennell does state that, “Though the variety of mallets for the vibracussions is considerable, the established practices are these: the glockenspiel and xylophone

\textsuperscript{11} Frederick Fennell, "A Modern Use of Percussion," \textit{Modern Music} XXIII, no. 3 (1946), 177.
are played with mallets of hard vulcanized rubber, the vibraphone and marimba with yarn–wound mallets, and the chimes with a rawhide hammer.”¹²

In addition to the types of implements to be used, Persichetti is also specific in respect to the playing zones and techniques that he would like each to be used a various musical moments in the piece. In Movement I, (mm. 40–44) the snare drum part states that it should be played on the rim of the drum with the handles of timpani sticks. This is a very specific request and dependent upon the type of timpani mallet used the timbre for the rim would change. In measures 27–37 of Movement II, Persichetti gives instructions that the tambourine is to be placed on a felt covered table and played with snare drum sticks. This will create a unique timbre by dampening some of the resonance of the tambourine jingles due to it being placed on the felt covered table. At many points in the piece, he makes request for the snare drums to be played with the snares off. This turns the snare drums into a tom type drum rather than a snare drum. He also has moments in the piece, especially the fourth movement, where he wants the snare drums to be muffled by a piece of cloth. This effect reduces the amount of resonance by each drum and thus changes the characteristic timbre of the snare drums. He is also specific in his request of playing zones for the cymbal whether it is to be played on the edge or on the dome of the cymbal. Again, it is clear that Persichetti has a specific timbre in mind for these moments in the piece rather than leaving the timbre created by the instrument up to the performer.

Persichetti is also very thoughtful in his combinations of percussion and wind instruments. He creates many fresh and interesting instrumental combinations, which add variety

¹²Frederick Fennell, "A Modern Use of Percussion," Modern Music XXIII, no. 3 (1946), 179.
to the symphony. In the first movement, he combines the horns with the timpani in the higher register. At the time of composition in the wind band history, it was uncommon for the timpani to play in a role other than supporting and adding emphasis to cadential points. Bowles asserts that, “There seems to have been a fundamental shift, particularly in America, away from the concept of supporting or underpinning the music as an ensemble instrument towards viewing the role of the timpani as essentially a solo instrument.”

Although the timpani is scored in octaves with the horns, it is clear based on the introductory material, that the composer does not see the timpani as an instrument to solely provide cadential support.

In measures 21–25 of Movement I, the snare drums and xylophone combine to present the initial melodic material. As discussed previously, the idea of percussion carrying the melody is a unique situation, but the combination of xylophone and snare drums in a melodic contour add more interest. It creates a unique timbre color that signifies a change in the melodic material of the work. In addition to this instance, measures 37–39 of the fourth movement contain an instance of the timpani taking a more leading role. The woodwinds have a simple pattern of eighth notes, which the timpani accompanies with a collection of sixteenth note patterns based on combinations of rhythmic motives from the first movement. The timpani is the only instrument with this sixteenth pattern, which reinforces the idea that Persichetti saw the timpani as an equal part of the ensemble rather than an instrument meant solely to support the ensemble.

Measure 40–44 in the first movement is another instrument collection that is not considered a standard in the wind band repertoire, especially given the time the piece was

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composed. In this area of the music, he combines sixteenth note figures in the clarinets and saxophones with the snare drum played on the rim. This creates an interesting tone color that combines the resonant wind instruments with the articulate sound of the mallets making contact with the metal rim of the snare drum. This instrumental combination is unique and another example of creating interesting colors with the entire ensemble.

The first movement contains another interesting instrumental combination. The woodwind section is complemented by triangle played with a snare drum stick. It is highly uncommon, even in modern practice, for a composer to notate for the triangle to be played by a snare drum stick. Although it is uncommon, Béla Bartók does famously notate for the triangle to be stuck by a snare drum stick in a few of his compositions. In contrast to Bartók, Frederick Fennell discusses the triangle as having only two beaters available, both of which are metal.\textsuperscript{14} This assertion by Fennell further reinforces the uniqueness of the sound of the triangle being struck by a stick in the wind band medium. The effect achieved is a less metallic sound with much more contact noise and less resonance. Persichetti was able to achieve his desired timbre by utilizing standard implements in non–traditional ways as well as combining instruments that are not traditionally combined for melodic purposes.

\textbf{Rhythm}

There are a few different ways in which Persichetti utilizes the rhythmic nature of the percussion section. The first is his use of percussion to reinforce rhythms played by the wind section. This is achieved by having percussion instruments added to either melodic figures or

\textsuperscript{14}Frederick Fennell, "A Modern Use of Percussion," \textit{Modern Music} XXIII, no. 3 (1946), 181.
impacts played by the winds. In contrast to this use, he also uses the percussion section to fill the
gaps that are left by the rhythms played by the winds. This puts the percussion playing in the
rests or moments of no sound from the other members of the ensemble. A final way that he uses
the percussion section is to provide rhythmic drive under long sustains or rhythms without
natural drive. These three varieties of rhythm use provide enough interest to the sound of the
work without eliminating the naturally powerful nature of percussion instruments.

Persichetti is strategic in utilizing the percussion section in ways that reinforce certain
rhythmic figures played by the wind band. Adding percussion to rhythmic figures adds a new
tonal color to that specific pattern. In addition, it adds strength to those notes giving them more
prominence and character. Measure 40–44 of the first movement combines the snare drum
played on the rim with sixteenth note groupings in the woodwinds. The addition of the snare
drum on the rim adds crispness to the attack of each note in conjunction with adding body to the
notes, which is created by the resonance of the snare drum. The woodwinds are also slurring
their sixteenth notes while the snare drum is much more articulate. This creates an interesting
dichotomy of sounds that not only generates interesting tone colors, but aids in the reinforcement
of the sixteenth note patterns. This can be see in Figure 1.9.
There are also instances in the Symphony, which contain low brass impacts that are further strengthened by the addition of percussion instruments. Measures 61–65 of the first movement are scattered with eighth notes falling on various partials. The low brass fall on the upbeat of beat one and then follow a pattern of impacts being separated by two eighth notes. The percussion instruments that accompany the low brass are xylophone, snare drum with timpani sticks, and timpani. The xylophone adds a higher tessitura to the collection of voices while the snare drum adds a middle range voice accompanied by the lower voicing of the timpani. The percussion adds impact to the low brass notes and provides another example of Persichetti using the percussion section to reinforce the winds. Figure 1.10 shows the percussion parts for this section.
In addition to using the percussion section to support the winds, Persichetti also utilizes the percussion section to fill in the voids left by the wind player’s rhythms. This has a dual purpose by adding additional melodic fragments to the percussion section as well as introducing new timbres to the wind band rhythmic patterns. Measures 37–39 of the third movement feature the timpani filling the space that falls between the eighth note patterns in the woodwinds. This adds to the rhythmic vitality of this section as well as adding a contrast to the eighth notes. This is a contrast to the use of the rhythms to add to the impact of the wind parts as this creates a sense of interest. This further displays Persichetti’s use of the percussion section as a means to add rhythmic and timbral interest to the wind passages. This can be seen in Figure 1.11.
In measures 116–119 of the fourth movement, Persichetti has vertically aligned, isolated attacks written for the winds. In the voids left by the winds, the triangle and the xylophone play a rhythmic pattern featuring combinations of eighth and quarter notes. This further expands his rhythmic use in the piece as well as reinforcing the rhythmic motives that he introduced in the first movement. This example is similar to his use of the timpani in the previous example. It can be seen in Figure 1.12.
A final way that Persichetti utilizes the percussion section rhythmically is to provide rhythmic direction and drive to sustained chords by the band. This helps to keep an established rhythmic pulse to the sustains. This in turn gives the chords a sense of rhythmic direction. In many instances, the rhythms used to provide this drive are variations of the rhythmic motives that he has used throughout the entire symphony. An example of this can be in the first movement in measures 276–279 as the timpani and tom–tom combine to create a rhythmic pulse for the sustained chords played by the winds. While this is certainly a more traditional utilization of the percussion section, Persichetti displays his sensitivity to the many ways in which the
percussion section can be used rhythmically, often combining many of the various styles of rhythmic presentation.

In this symphony, Persichetti masterfully utilizes the percussion section in ways that place the percussion on the same level of importance as the winds. He utilizes the percussion section to introduce interesting timbres and tone colors as well as introduce and develop thematic material throughout the work. Cossaboom says, “In general, the percussion instruments are as important as the winds to the presentation of thematic material in the process of thematic development.” In addition, Persichetti is very specific in his implement designation for various instruments throughout the work. All of these attributes combined with the extensive collection of percussion instruments display Persichetti’s affinity for the percussion and serve as a landmark piece in the evolutionary timeline of the percussion section of the wind band.

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...AND THE MOUNTAINS RISING NOWHERE
Joseph Schwantner

...and the mountains rising nowhere was composed by Joseph Schwantner, (b. 1943) in 1977. The piece was commissioned by the Eastman Wind Ensemble in 1976 and funded in part by the Composer Fellowship Grant from the National Endowment of the Arts. The piece was premiered at the College Band Director’s National Association’s conference in 1977. This piece quickly gained acclaim and has become a standard in the wind band repertoire. It is considered to be the most prominent piece in Schwantner’s repertoire. The work is dedicated to Carol Adler whose poem, Arioso, serves as the inspiration for the piece. The poem is in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 – Arioso

| arioso    | bells    |
| sepia     |          |
| moon-beams|          |
| an afternoon sun blanked by rain and the mountains rising nowhere the sound returns the sound and the silence chimes |
This work was Schwantner’s first composition for wind band. He used an extensive collection of wind and percussion instruments to create new and interesting timbres and color combinations. This expanded instrumentation features six independent flute parts, four independent oboe and bassoon parts, but only two clarinet parts. Schwantner minimized the role of the clarinet in this work for band. The full instrumentation for the work is:

- Flute 1 & 2
- Flute 3 & 4
- Flute 5 & 6
- Bb Clarinet 1 & 2
- Oboe 1 & 2
- Oboe 3 & 4
- Bassoon 1 & 2
- Bassoon 3 & 4
- Trumpet in Bb 1 & 2
- Trumpet in Bb 3 & 4
- Horn in F 1 & 2
- Horn in F 3 & 4
- Trombone 1 & 2
- Trombone 3 & 4
- Tuba
- Piano (amplified)
- Percussion 1
- Percussion 2
- Percussion 3
- Percussion 4
- Percussion 5
- Percussion 6
- Contra Bass

In addition to the expanded instrumentation, he required some wind players to play glass crystals as well as singing and whistling at moments throughout the work. This created new and interesting sounds and placed a higher level of demand for all members of the wind ensemble on the wind players. In speaking of the compositional thought for the piece, Schwantner says:
I wanted to explore ways small ensembles produce sound by giving individual musicians more to do. For example, a clarinetist might play other instruments such as crotales, triangles or crystal goblets. This idea of augmenting performers’ roles led to a similar strategy with concert band in which musicians sing and whistle. The amplified piano and large percussion section are treated equally with winds and brass and state many of the work’s primary musical elements.\(^\text{16}\)

This quote makes Schwantner’s vision for the piece clear. He wanted to ensure than the requirements for all instrumentalists were elevated while continuing to add to the musical landscape of the work. As a contrast to the Persichetti, Schwantner often uses the percussion section to play moments of impact in addition to using a much different collection of percussion instruments. Schwantner also doubles the number of percussionists used in comparison to Perischetti. All of these combine to show how Schwantner drew from previous composers to form a foundation for his utilization of the percussion section. However, he continued to innovate in instrumentation, timbres, and rhythms.

**Instrumentation**

Though Schwantner has an extensive collection of wind instruments for this piece, he has an expansive collection of percussion instruments totaling 46 instruments played by six players. This total number of percussion instruments is staggering when compared to other pieces written in the mid–twentieth century. This instrumentation nearly doubles the number of percussion instruments used in Husa’s *Music for Prague 1968*. In addition to the instruments written for percussion, he also writes glass crystals to be played by the oboe section. The percussion section commonly plays this instrument, so in a sense it can be viewed as a percussion instrument. The

effect of the crystals is that a dampened finger is rubbed around the rim of a dampened glass rim. Based on the amount of water that is in each glass, the speed of the vibrations is altered, which in turn changes the pitch produced. In addition he utilizes the amplified piano extensively throughout the work. The piano is a percussion instrument, and Schwantner uses the piano as a percussion instrument throughout the work. He also uses some traditional percussion instruments in new and interesting ways. He writes for a water gong, which is the playing of a gong while it is lifted in and out of a container of water. This affects the pitch, timbre, and resonance of the gong. He also requires cymbals, gongs and crotales to be played with a bow occasionally in the piece. This shows Schwantner’s willingness to explore many of the timbral possibilities of some of the traditional percussion instruments. The full percussion notation guide is included in Figure 2.2.
Motives

Similar to Persichetti, Schwantner uses the percussion section to introduce and develop rhythmic and melodic themes throughout the work. This can be seen in the first page of the score where he introduces the six main motives that are used in the work. The six motives are introduced completely in the percussion, piano, and glass crystals parts. The idea of introducing nearly all of the motivic material of the piece in the beginning by the percussion section is certainly uncommon at the time of its composition.
The first motive is introduced by the percussion section with a flurry of seven notes that are to be played “as fast as possible” per the instructions by the composer. The resonance that is created by these membranophones is carried over to the piano strings due to the composer’s instructions to silently depress a range of keys while holding the sostenuto pedal. In addition to the notes, the dynamics used in this motive make reappearances throughout the piece. The crescendo to fortissimo is a common effect and is often overlooked in comparison to the seven-note grouping. The introductory measures can be seen in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3 – Schwantner, Motive 1, Measure 1
The first motive makes many returns throughout the piece both in its original form as well as in fragments. An example of this can be seen in measure 37 where the membranophones play a collection of tremolos that have varying amounts of grace notes preceding each sforzando roll attack. This is a way in which Schwantner develops motive one from the original form. The fragments allude to the original form of the rhythm, but are never presented as a grouping of seven notes. The development of the rhythmic motive in the percussion section further emphasizes Schwantner’s desire to place the percussion section on an equal plane in terms of motivic presentation and development. This can been seen in Figure 2.4.
The second motive can be found in the very next collection of pitches which are played by the glass crystals. The pitch–classes that the glass crystals present are B, D, F#, E, G, A, C#. This collection of pitches can be seen in Figure 2.5. This set, as well as transpositions of this set, are used throughout the work and are often sustained while other instruments are playing. The
presentation of the glass crystals during the coda section of the work is one reason as to why
Folio makes an argument for the form to be in an arch form.  

Figure 2.5 – Schwantner, Motive 2, Measure 2

Motive three is presented in pitch by the piano, but is accompanied by a collection of
percussion instruments. At this early point in the piece, Schwantner introduces some of the
interesting percussion sounds that are unique to this piece in the wind band repertoire up until
this point. The piano plays the pitch–classes B, G, D#, G, A# followed by a tremolo between G
and A#. The percussion section plays two bowed tam–tams with a crescendo as well as two water
gongs that are lowered into the water after their initial hit. This creates a new and interesting
sound combination of the tam–tam choir with piano. This selection is included in Figure 2.6.

\footnote{Cynthia Folio, "An Analysis and Comparison of Four compositions by Joseph
Schwantner: and the mountains rising nowhere ; Wild Angels of the Open Hills ; Aftertones of
Infinity ; and Sparrows," PhD diss., 1985, abstract in 24.}
Motive four is an accompanied quintuplet played by the piano. While there is no percussion accompaniment, the glass crystals are still being sustained throughout this section. This is the only motive that is presented in the beginning section that is not accompanied by a percussion player. This is important because it shows the piano’s ability to stand on its own, but
it also reinforces the importance of the percussion and piano for the basis of the piece. The piano figure is included in Figure 2.7.

Figure 2.7 – Schwantner, Motive 4, Measure 4

The fifth motive is voiced by the piano, but is accompanied by percussion instruments. The piano utilizes the pitch–classes of D, A#, E#, A, E, C, G, F#, C#, G#. The percussion accompaniment to the piano figure is of particular interest. The vibraphones play a glissando with four mallets that are allowed to vibrate after they are played. This would possibly cover up the piano notes, which adds to the forward presence of the percussion in the introduction. In addition to the vibraphones, the water gong is also played. In contrast to the first playing of the

water gong, this time it is rolled and lifted out of the water rather than put in the water. This changes the sound of the gong, provides a new sound from a previously used instrument, and follows the ascending pattern of the piano. These additions to the ensemble further display Schwantner’s use of the percussion section as an equal contributor to the wind band. Measure five is included in Figure 2.8.

**Figure 2.8 – Schwantner, Motive 5, Measure 5**
Motive six is again presented by the piano, which introduces a new set class. The pitch classes used in the motive are Db, F, B, C, E, F# which are sustained and accompanied with a C that is repeated with a gradual slowing. The percussion instruments that accompany the piano are the tam–tams played with a bow. This reintroduces the screeching sound to the ensemble as well as reintroducing the crescendo that culminates in a sforzando. This can be seen in figure 2.9.

Figure 2.9 – Schwantner, Motive 6, Measure 12

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Throughout this work, Schwantner uses the six motives in various forms and transpositions. He uses the percussion to develop these motives as well as compliment them with creative timbres and tone colors. The first page of the score is a clear indicator that Schwantner intends for this piece to create a setting of equality for the percussion section. While the motives are certainly important, to further emphasize his consideration of the percussion section as an equal contributor, the timbres and colors that he uses throughout the piece must be discussed.

Timbres and Tone Colors

Similar to Persichetti’s Symphony, the membranophones play an important role in the percussion section for this piece. Schwantner has scored the piece for a full choir of membranophones including toms, bass drum, and timpani. He utilizes these instruments to play melodic fragments as well as to add impact and emphasis to various sections of the piece. This helps to show the cohesive evolution growing from each new piece of wind band literature and the impact on the percussion section.

The water gong is another instrument that Schwantner introduces into this work. It is a unique sound that is created by raising and lowering a gong into a tub of water after it has been struck. The origination of this sound can be traced to 1937 when the technique was used to signal water ballet swimmers while they had their heads submerged in water. The effect achieved by the water gong is a haunting sound of the sound waves vibrating through the water. At this point in the wind band’s history, it is one of the first uses of the water gong.

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Another interesting timbre that Schwantner uses extensively in this piece, is bowing on metallic instruments. One of the most commonly bowed metallic instruments is the cymbal. This effect was new to the wind band medium, but can be traced back to the early twentieth century by composers such as Varèse and Gerhard. In this work, Schwantner utilizes the bowing technique on the tam–tam as well as the vibraphone and crotales. The effect that is achieved on tam–tam and cymbal is an eerie screeching sound that pierces through the ensemble. On vibraphone and crotales, the effect is less of a screech and more of a sustained pitch that does not have the contact noise of being struck by an implement. The bowing effect is something that Schwanter uses extensively throughout the piece to enhance a musical moment as well as to signal returns of previous motives.

Schwantner is also very deliberate in his groupings of wood and metal percussion instruments. An example of this can be found at measure 35 in the score. He has the vibraphone, glockenspiel, and crotales play a collection of notes together followed immediately by the marimba and xylophone playing a collection. In this situation he has grouped the metallic instruments and the wood instruments separately and has used the two different timbres and tone colors to give a different character to the motives played by the piano. While there are many instances throughout the work where he combines the two different families, here he uses the two different materials to create varying timbres in the ensemble. This is apparent in Figure 2.10.
Schwantner and the mountains rising nowhere, © 1975 Schott Helicon Music Corp.,
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agent for Helicon Music Corp.

While Figure 2.9 emphasizes the pitched percussion instruments, Schwantner also
combines metallic instruments that are not pitched. At measure 121, he combines suspended
cymbals, triangles, tubular bells on a singular pitch, and tam–tam. This combination of metallic
instruments creates a metallic choir that provides the ensemble with the immediate contact sound
with an abundance of resonance and overtones. This is a dramatic combination of percussion instruments and is certainly a new and interesting timbre to the ensemble. This can be seen in Figure 2.11.

Figure 2.11 – Schwantner, Measure 121

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Another technique that Schwanter uses to create an interesting tonal color is the effect of a glissando. This effect can be found at the beginning of the piece. The sound is created by
holding four mallets and softly pulling the mallets across the keys of the vibraphone with the pedal depressed. Each of the notes resonates creating a wash of sound that fills the ensemble. Schwantner requests soft mallets ensuring that the contact noise of the mallets does not overpower the wash effect of the notes. It is notated in the score with a starting and stopping pitch for each hand and two crossed lines with the abbreviation gliss. This indicates to the player what technique is to be performed to achieve the effect desired by the composer.

In addition to the glissando effect, Schwanter also incorporated the use of the tremolo in various forms. He used the effect between two cymbals, two triangles, with the watergong, on a bell tree as well as between pitches on the pitched keyboard instruments. All of the uses serve a purpose that makes it independently useful. The triangle tremolo between two triangles creates an interesting timbre of ringing metallics. The triangle is thought to be one of the first purely metallic instruments to be introduced to the orchestra in 1710.\(^{20}\) The triangle is synonymous with the production of a large number of overtones, so the combination of two triangles played simultaneously would suggest that Schwanter desired a resonant metallic timbre that is filled with overtones.

It is clear that Schwantner wanted to explore the possible timbres of the percussion section. He utilizes refreshing and alluring timber combinations to create interest through the duration of the piece. This is a continuation and evolution of the work by Persichetti and shows a clear evolutionary nature to the timbre possibilities of the percussion section of the wind band. Schwantner uses new percussion instruments to the wind band as well as using new techniques

and combinations of commonly used percussion instruments to create many new percussion
timbres to the wind band medium.
John Mackey is considered to be one of the most prominent and popular composers for wind band of the twenty-first century. He has an extensive collection of works for wind band that continues to grow yearly. While he is innovative in his instrumentation, “His innovations are restricted to pitched and non–pitched percussion instruments, piano, harp and the less used members of woodwind family, such as the contrabassoon, E–flat clarinet and soprano saxophone.” He does not restrain himself to the standard percussion instrumentation and uses many instruments that are not considered to be standard. In addition, the way in which he utilizes the percussion section is unique in the aspects of rhythmic complexity and timbral combinations. Two of his early works for band standout as groundbreaking in his instrumentation and utilization of the percussion section.

*Asphalt Cocktail* was a commission by Howard J. Gourwitz as a gift to Kevin Sedatole in 2009. The piece is described by the composer as “a five–minute opener, designed to shout, from the opening measure ‘We’re here.’ With biting trombones, blaring trumpets, and percussion dominated by cross–rhythms and back beats, it aims to capture the grit and aggression that I associate with the time I lived in New York.” It is filled with many percussion instruments and places the percussion section in a prominent role throughout. Mackey uses the percussion section

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in many of the same ways that Persichetti and Schwantner did, but pushes the envelope even further with his instrumentation, technical demands, and attention to detail in regard to timbre and colors. Mackey also shares a common attribute of Varèse in that they both utilize the percussion section to mimic the industrial sounds of a big city.

**Timbres and Tone Colors**

In this work, Mackey uses a large percussion section that is complemented with a wide selection of both traditional and non–traditional percussion instruments. Although he does use many traditional percussion instruments, he places those instruments in creative combinations to create interesting timbres. In addition to the traditional percussion instruments, he uses a few non–traditional instruments including a shaker filled with nuts and bolts as well as a small metal trashcan filled with metal. The full collection of percussion instruments used is listed below.

- **Timpani (4–5 Drums)**
  - Xylophone
  - Marimba
  - Whip
  - Tambourine
  - Metal Shaker with nuts and bolts
  - Small metal trashcan filled with metal
  - Hi–Hat
  - China Cymbal
  - Upside–down 14” Mini china with 13”Trash Splash stacked
  - 4 Tom–Toms
  - Field Drum with Kevlar Head
  - Crash Cymbal
  - Splash Cymbal
  - 16” ZHT EFX Cymbal
  - Bass Drum
The pervasive collection of percussion instruments is clearly notated for the seven players in the percussion notation guide seen in Figure 3.1

**Figure 3.1 – Asphalt Cocktail, Percussion Notation Guide**

Percussion (7 players)
- **Player 1:** Timpani (4 drums, 5 if desired)
- **Player 2:** Xylophone, Marimba, Whip
- **Player 3:** Tambourine; metal cocktail shaker with nuts, etc. inside; small metal trash can filled with metal, taped shut (will be slammed to floor, sounding like a controlled crash of chains)
- **Player 4:** Hi-hat; China cymbal; upside-down 14" mini-China with 13" Trash Splash cymbal stacked inside
- **Player 5:** 4 Tom-Toms; field drum with Kevlar head; whip; metal cocktail shaker with nuts, etc. inside
- **Player 6:** 4 Cymbals: crash, Zildjian 16" ZHT EFX (or comparable), China, Splash
- **Player 7:** Bass Drum

There are many interesting timbres that can be created by the individual percussion instruments that are used in this piece. Mackey is very meticulous to notate the exact technique or implement that is to be used for any given section of the work. Not only is this helpful to the performer, but it also shows Mackey’s awareness of the timbre possibilities within the percussion section. The exploration and incorporation of these various timbres into this work create a sense
of cohesiveness to the title of the piece. The raw energy of the piece is depicted in part by the aggressive combinations of percussion instruments throughout.

One timbre that Mackey explores is the use of the “dead stroke.” The dead stroke is a technique of playing a drum or mallet instrument and pressing the implement into the instrument dampening the natural resonance of the instrument. This technique can be useful to create moments of impact that do not have the lingering resonance of a traditional stroke of the instrument. In this piece, Mackey notates the dead stroke by placing the word dead stroke over the notes as well as accompanying the notes with individual circles next to the note heads. This can be seen in Figure 3.2.

**Figure 3.2 – Asphalt Cocktail, Dead stroke**

![Figure 3.2](https://example.com/image)

In addition to the dead strokes, Mackey also uses the technique of a rim shot at moments throughout the piece. A rim shot is when the stick makes contact with the rim and the drumhead simultaneously. This creates a popping sound which cuts through the ensemble much more than just a rim click or a stroke on the drum itself. The rim shot is generally a much louder timbre

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than the other strokes of a drum and thus is most often used at the loud dynamic.\textsuperscript{24} This technique is used on various occasions throughout the work and is notated with the abbreviation \textit{r.s.} above the note which is to be played as a rim shot. The notation for the rimshot can be seen in Figure 3.3. The rimshot is used in multiple instruments including the tom–toms as well as the marching snare drum with a Kevlar drumhead.\textsuperscript{25} One instance of the rim shot in the tom–tom voice is in measure 9. This is preceded and followed by notes written solely on the drum, so it is likely that Mackey wanted to utilize the tom–tom voice in a way that did not seem redundant. This rim shot adds additional impact as well as an additional timbre to the note played by the band that has not yet been heard in the work. While Mackey is not the first composer to use the rim shot, he does expand the use of the technique in his wind band repertoire.

\textbf{Figure 3.3 – Asphalt Cocktail, Rim Shot}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{Figure3.3}
\end{center}

Mackey uses the marching snare drum for this piece, which is certainly a different timbre than is traditionally associated with the wind band percussion section. The marching snare drum is a much more articulate instrument especially when coupled with the Kevlar drumhead that is

\begin{footnotesize}

\textsuperscript{25} A Kevlar Head is a drumhead made from an extremely durable material that can sustain high tensions.
\end{footnotesize}
requested. The drum is much more articulate in part due to the high–tension drum head as well as the type of snares that are used. The snares are much tighter and make more of a snapping sound than the traditional concert snare drum. When the marching snare drum is combined with the more metallic sound of a rim shot, the result is an extremely articulate popping sound that pierces through the ensemble sound. This is a sound that is traditionally used on the football field by a marching band and is designed to for the sound to carry long distances. The move to put this instrument in a concert wind band is indicative of Mackey’s desire for specific percussion timbres.

Mackey is also keenly aware of the possibilities of the cymbals that he uses in the piece. He utilizes a number of specific implements as well as techniques to achieve specific timbres and tone colors. Throughout the work, he calls for implements that include sticks, mallets and scrapes by a triangle beater. These three implements create vastly different sounds from cymbals. The mallet is the least articulate of the implements and is often used for a crash with little initial contact noise as well as for rolls on the cymbals that are smooth. The sticks are often used for rhythmic patterns that need a clear articulation to be heard. In addition to the rhythmic patterns, Mackey uses the sticks for crashes, which produce a much more articulate initiation of the note. He also uses a metal triangle beater to play a scrape. This effect is achieved by simply scraping a metal triangle beater across a cymbal. A few factors that determine the pitch and intensity of the scrape include the pressure placed on the beater as well as the speed at which the beater is pulled across the cymbal. Measure 92 of Asphalt Cocktail features a cymbal scrape, which is notated by three slashes on the stem of the note, as well as the word scrape over the staff. This can be seen in Figure 3.4.
Mackey also utilizes a technique with the cymbals called a cymbal choke. This effect is achieved by striking the cymbal and immediately stopping the resonance by grabbing it by hand. This stops all resonance of the cymbal and provides a short burst of metallic impact. While this technique is sometimes used in other pieces of wind band literature, Mackey separates himself by his extensive use of the technique. He is able to create short bursts of interesting timbre to notes without covering the ensemble with the wash of resonance from the cymbal. He notates this by placing the staccato marking over the note and including the word “choke” over each occurrence. An example of this is included in Figure 3.5.
Another technique that Mackey uses rather extensively in this piece is the grace note. The name for the grace notes is dependent upon the number of notes that are included. Solomon asserts, “…a note with one grace note is called a flam, two grace notes is a drag or riff, and three is a four–stroke ruff.”\(^{26}\) The use of the grace notes creates an introductory sound to the primary note. This makes the abruptness of the attack not as apparent while adding additional tonal color to the beginning of each note. As opposed to pitched instruments, the grace notes in these instances do not add any harmonic change, but the grace notes do add some melodic interest when the grace notes are played on a different tom–tom than the primary note. It gives ascending or descending direction to notes that would otherwise fall on a single membranophone.

A trademark of Mackey’s music is his unique combinations of instruments and orchestration of the percussion section. This is evident from the second measure of *Asphalt Cocktail* as he plays a fortissimo impact with the percussion section that involves Timpani, Xylophone, Tambourine, China Cymbal with trash cymbal inside, China cymbal, tom–toms, Crash Cymbal and Bass drum. This collection of instruments is almost all non–pitched

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percussion with the exception of the timpani and xylophone. This creates an explosive burst of sounds that are filled with attack noise and resonances of the metallic instruments. In addition, there is the supporting sound of the bass drum and tom–tom that covers nearly the full spectrum of percussion voicing. These impacts continue throughout the piece with each one differing slightly in instrumentation. The view of the percussion score is overwhelming at first glance and adds to the value of the percussion notation guide. Figure 3.6 shows the previously mentioned impact in score format.

Figure 3.6 – Asphalt Cocktail, Measure 2

Mackey also employs a technique of layering the various timbres available to him over the course of a measure or two to build effect and create a gradual ascension in volume of the
percussion section. An example of this can be found in measure 25, which begins with tambourine, xylophone, and hi–hat. He then layers the tom–toms and cymbals followed by the timpani. This effect is lowering the voices, which are included in the percussion choir at the moment. The escalation of the layering culminates with the addition of the bass drum in measure 26. The short phrase of layering shows the deft skill that Mackey has for creating interest in the percussion section. The wind parts during these two measures are not layered to create a rise in the intensity of the music. It is the sole responsibility of the percussion section to create the musical effect in this portion of the music, which further outlines the equality in role the percussion has in this piece. This can be seen in Figure 3.7.

Figure 3.7 – Asphalt Cocktail, Measures 24–26
Mackey has given careful attention to the combinations of percussion instruments that he uses in this piece. He has written only for the percussion instruments that he feels fit within the scope of the piece rather than being obligated to include the traditional percussion instruments that seem to accompany each piece of wind band literature. In addition, he is very specific as to the implements that are to be used, as well any techniques that are to be used on any specific note. The tone colors and timbres that he is able to achieve is revolutionary for wind band and is why he is considered to be one of the most skillful composers of wind band percussion parts in the modern era.27

Rhythm

Rhythmically, John Mackey has created a very complex work that is filled with interesting rhythms that are often layered on top of each other. This is true not only for the percussion section, but also for the winds. While each rhythm independently may not seem challenging, the vertical alignment of each part certainly poses an issue initially. The complexity of the rhythms causes an increased demand for each player and is of increased difficulty for the percussion section in comparison to Schwantner and Persichetti.

Measure 198 of Asphalt Cocktail features a syncopated eighth note figure played by the timpani. The xylophone has a combination of eighth notes followed by sixteenth notes. These two rhythms are not difficult to align, but they do not play at the exact same moments in the measure. Continuing through the percussion section, the tambourine has a pattern of quarter

notes and eighth notes that is mimicked by the tom–toms with the addition of sixteenth notes.

The bass drum adds support to these figures by playing strong quarter notes on beats three and four as well as an eighth note that falls on the up beat of beat one in conjunction with the timpani and xylophone. The complexity of this measure comes from the cymbal parts. The cymbal parts included the rhythm of a quintuplet of quarter notes in the space of four quarter notes. This rhythm does not vertically align with the other parts with the exception of the initial beat.

However, the inclusion of the quintuplet harkens back to a rhythmic motive that Mackey introduced previously, so its inclusion is not outlandish. The layering of these rhythms would make it challenging for the players who are not playing the quintuplet due to the resonance of the cymbals that will be covering their own rhythmic passages. This musical excerpt is included in Figure 3.8.
Mackey’s music relies heavily on rhythm and Phillips states, “Mackey’s work emphasizes the element of rhythm and his orchestration typically utilizes the conventional instrumentation for wind ensemble with prominence placed on percussion.” One of the foundations of rhythms in Mackey’s music is his use of the ostinato. In referring to ostinati in his music, Phillips says:

Ostinati are crucial rhythmic devices used frequently by Mackey to delineate form and phrasal structure. An Ostinato is a term used for passages that repeat a musical pattern many times in succession while other musical elements are generally changing. Ostinati give Mackey’s

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There are many instances in this work where Mackey uses an ostinato figure with the winds and provides slight rhythmic alterations with the percussion section to generate interest. Measures 213–218 feature the woodwinds playing an ostinato line while the percussion section provides rhythmic alteration. The alternative percussion parts complement the rhythm being played by the winds, but provide rhythmic interest and intensity to the otherwise monotonous moment. This is shown in Figure 3.9.

**Figure 3.9 – Asphalt Cocktail, Measures 213–218**

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In this piece, Mackey is very experimental and creative with his combinations of instruments as well as the rhythmic figures he uses. His cutting edge writing in this piece is a demonstration of the rationale for his description as a groundbreaking composer for wind band percussion. He further explores possibilities in the pieces that follow, including melodic and motivic development as well as pushing the boundaries as to the percussion instruments that he includes in his scores. While *Asphalt Cocktail* provides a wealth of innovation for percussion, it is only a starting point in the journey through the music of John Mackey.
Redline Tango was written in 2004 and is one of the first major works by Mackey. Mackey describes the title by saying:

*Redline Tango* takes its title from two sources. The first is the common term of "redlining an engine," or, pushing it to the limit. In the case of this score, "redline" also refers to the "red line," or the IRT subway line (2 & 3 trains) of the New York subway system, which is the train that goes between my apartment on the Upper West Side of Manhattan and BAM, where this work was premiered.30

This piece does contain many of the same percussion characteristics as *Asphalt Cocktail*, but it was composed prior to *Asphalt Cocktail*. It was originally scored for chamber ensemble to be performed with a ballet and was titled *Breakdown Tango*. The piece was later scored for full orchestra and renamed to *Redline Tango*. Following a few performances of the orchestral version, Scott Stewart approached Mackey with a thought score the work for wind band. Phillips quotes Stewart from an interview where he says:

I contacted John and asked him what he thought of transcribing the piece for wind ensemble. He was extremely receptive, had many questions, and our relationship began! I ended up sending him six pages of suggestions for the transcription, which included basic wind ensemble instrumentation and "options," suggestions for

instrumentation (the addition of saxophones and euphoniums, for example) for various passages, including my urging to have the tango solo in the middle section played by a soprano saxophone (in place of the violin). I also suggested a number of measures to be re-barred to make the reading more navigable for the players. John sent several drafts to both Scott Weiss (at Lamar University at the time) and to me before it was ready for the premiere. As it happened, Emory was hosting the Southern Division CBDNA/NBA conference in February 2004, so we decided to do the premiere then.31

The work was Mackey’s first piece for wind band and was played over 100 times in the first three years after publication. It has grown to be one of his most popular compositions. This is in part due to the innovative instrumentation and composition for percussion that he utilizes throughout this work. He uses the percussion section to play melodic motives as well as add interesting timbres and rhythmic patterns to the ensemble.

**Timbres and Tone Colors**

Mackey utilizes a full list of percussion instruments for this piece, but interestingly omits what have often been considered standard instruments to the wind band percussion section. The omission of the concert snare drum is of particular interest. The use of the snare drum in wind band is considered a standard, which pre-dates the professional bands of the mid to late 19th century. In addition, the pair of crash cymbals is omitted which is an example of another

traditional percussion instrument that is removed from the piece. This shows Mackey’s clear vision of the percussion timbres and colors that he wants to create as well as some of the tone colors that he wishes to leave out. The full list of percussion instruments used for this piece is included below.

Hi–Hat
6 Tom–toms
Splash Cymbal
China Cymbal
Bass Drum
2 Brake Drums
Finger Cymbals
Tam–Tam
Suspended Cymbal
Xylophone
Glockenspiel
Marimba
Vibraphone
Timpani

As can be seen from the instrument list, Mackey utilizes a full compliment of tom–toms as well as many different styles of cymbals, which are not traditionally associated with the wind band. The percussion notation guide is included in Figure 4.1.
He also uses the full choir of pitched keyboard instruments with the exception of crotales and chimes. He utilizes the keyboard instruments to create interesting soundscapes throughout the work. This is one of the attributes of the work that shows the evolutionary nature Mackey’s writing. While Schwantner and Persichetti did utilize the keyboard percussion instruments, Mackey combines them in such a way that is new to the wind band medium.

In measures 28–31, Mackey combines all of the keyboard voices to create a refreshing tonal color within the ensemble. The layering combines the marimba in the middle register along with the vibraphone in the middle register. It is then layered by the xylophone in the lower register and hi–hat to create a motive with rhythmic drive and interesting timbre. This combination of instruments continues through large sections of the piece. This can be seen in Figure 4.2.
The introduction is held together with a constant use of the hi–hat. The timbres created by the varying uses of the closed and open hi–hat allow Mackey to make varying combinations to best fit the melodic movement by the winds. The hi–hat timbre courses through the entire introduction and is complemented by china cymbal and tom–toms at various moments of impact. While the hi–hat could have been used in only its closed position, Mackey was thoughtful enough to incorporate the open hi–hat to create a varying timbre. Another metallic sound that Mackey uses in this score is the brake drum. The incorporation of the brake drum as well as the use of a xylophone mallet to play the tam–tam adds to the industrial sounds that Mackey wants to recreate to fit the style of the redline train ride. Like many of the other percussion instruments, its use in this work is not the first appearance in wind band literature, but it is one of the first instances of these various instruments being used while eliminating some of the standard percussion instruments.
An interesting tonal element that Mackey adds to the pieces is the effect of allowing the keyboard percussion to play notes at random in a specific rhythmic and pitch direction. He gives direction for the player to play exact rhythm with random notes. This gives more of a timbre effect to these moments rather than a harmonic effect. The driving pulse accompanied with the random pitches adds to the chaos of the moment in the work and plays with the overtones created by the brake drum and cymbals that are being played as well. It is an instance where Mackey uses a pitched instrument as a non–pitched instrument, which contrasts the style that Persichetti used of utilizing non pitched instruments in a melodic fashion. This shows the evolutionary nature of the modern wind band percussion section by continuing to develop new sounds and utilizations of instruments. This technique can be found in measures 292–295 in the vibraphone and marimba parts. This is included in Figure 4.3.

**Figure 4.3 – Redline Tango, Measures 292–295 (Vibraphone and Marimba)**

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Melodies and Motives

The introduction of the piece provides insight into the motivic fragments that make up a portion of the piece. In an interesting twist, Mackey introduces the motivic ideas with the piano and the xylophone. This can be found in measure 9 where the piano and xylophone play a syncopated sixteenth note figure. This is then further developed two measures later in measure 11. This motivic idea makes returns throughout the pieces and is often segmented into smaller fragments. An example can be found in measure 197–198 when the xylophone and piano reintroduce the rhythmic motive following the middle section of the work. This is shown in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4 – Redline Tango, Measures 9–11 (xylophone and piano)

Mackey immediately follows these two presentations of the rhythmic motive with a version of the motive that is in the 5/8 time signature. This is a way that Mackey is able to reinforce the original motivic idea in a new way. It keeps the same idea moving without being
redundant in its presentation. This is another instance of Mackey utilizing the percussion section to present motivic ideas. This is included in Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5 – Redline Tango, Measure 13 (Piano and Xylophone)

Another important rhythmic motive that Mackey utilizes many times throughout the work is the use of a four note quarter note grouping placed in a 3/4 bar. The motive is initially introduced by the horns in measure 12 and reinforced with the hi-hat. While the motive makes various appearances throughout the work, the percussion section has a solo presentation of the motive in measure 221 followed by a repeat of the motive in the following measure with full and trumpet accompaniment. The xylophone and marimba play the motive while the vibraphone has
sixteenth notes accented at the beginning of each four note grouping and the hi–hat has quarter notes. This adds to the unique feel of the four against three subdivision in those measures. This example is included in Figure 4.6.

**Figure 4.6 – Redline Tango, Measures 221–222 (Percussion)**

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**Rhythm**

Throughout this work, Mackey utilizes the percussion section in varying ways rhythmically. One of the most common ways that he uses the percussion section is to provide rhythmic support and drive under the wind parts. The steady rhythmic pulse helps to ground the rhythmic patterns of the wind players. In many instances, Mackey has the keyboard percussion play the rhythmic ostinato patterns while the membranophones provides rhythmic support to the winds. In addition, the cymbal parts are often written to fit with rhythmic moments in the winds.
section. Echoing some of the traits of Persichetti, he uses the percussion section to fill the voids left by the winds. This constant pulse by the percussion section gives the entire piece drive and direction.

In addition to providing pulse and impact, Mackey uses the percussion section to layer interesting and often complex rhythms on top of the winds section. In many instances the rhythms are based on the original patterns, but embellished to create more interest. In measure 301, Player 3 has a tom–tom part that is based on the sixteenth note pattern played by the winds, but is embellished by filling some of the sixteenth notes with thirty–second notes. This adds to the rhythmic complexity of the composite rhythm played by the band, but adds rhythmic interest. This can be seen in Figure 4.7.

Figure 4.7 – Redline Tango, Measure 301 (Xylophone, Vibraphone, Perc. 3)

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John Mackey has continued to innovate in his use of the percussion section for wind band. While some of the techniques he utilizes are based on the techniques used by Persichetti
and Schwanter, he has also developed his own personal style of composition as well as the instrumentation he utilizes in his works. Mackey’s music is the perfect example of the ways in which the role and instrumentation of the wind band percussion section has developed and evolved over the course of time and continues to develop in modern wind band music.
CONCLUSION

The role and instrumentation of the wind band percussion section has undergone a drastic shift over the past century. Through the compositions of composers such as Bartók and Varèse, the percussion section possibilities were explored and made visible. These explorations influenced a generation of composers who began to incorporate the new and refreshing sound combinations into works for wind band. The continual and unwavering evolution of the role and instrumentation of the wind band percussion section has continued to progress even into the modern era.

Landmark composers Persichetti and Schwantner each included the percussion section as a key component of the wind band. Their ideas produced a compositional landscape where the percussion section was valued for their timbral possibilities. Modern composers such as John Mackey built upon previous work to continue to sculpt the possibilities of the percussion section. Standard instrumentation is not standard anymore and standard percussion timbres are manipulated to create a myriad of new timbres and tone colors from the percussion. Tracing key works in the evolution of the percussion section shows that the modern era for wind band is only a point in a much larger evolutionary timeline. There is no doubt that based on the strong foundation of historic composers, the future of percussion for wind band will be teeming with new and interesting ideas. The percussion section will continue to push the boundaries of tradition with unique combinations of instruments, the introduction of new percussion instruments to the wind band medium, as well as the continued development of the role of the
percussion section. The timbral, rhythmic, and instrument possibilities of the percussion section are endless and create an exciting world for wind band composers both present and future.
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