LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Impressionist Composition Techniques in Modern Percussion Literature

A Master’s Lecture Recital Project submitted to

The Faculty of the School of Music

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Master of Arts in Music Education

by

David Scott Strait

Lynchburg, Virginia

April 2023
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APPROVED BY:

Thomas Paul Goddard, D.M.E., Committee Chair

Joshua Carver, Ph. D., Thesis Reader

Dr. Stephen Müller, Ph. D., Dean
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this lecture recital was to explore the substantive contributions of impressionist composition techniques in contemporary percussion literature. Research was conducted by means of harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic analysis of contemporary works for solo marimba, marimba and electronics, and snare drum and electronics, as well as background research on composers of those works. Percussion composers Russell Wharton, Ivan Trevino, and Ian T. Jones utilize modern technology in their compositions as well as compositional techniques stemming from the Impressionist movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In Impressionist composition, musical elements such as texture, non-pulsatic rhythm, and extended harmony are utilized to create a soundscape that convey emotion, mood, and setting. The successful communication of these impressions is also reliant upon shared cultural experiences and understanding, a phenomenon inherent to both the constructivist learning theory and the semiotic theory of signs, icons, and indices created by philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. Semiotics was applied to musical context by Thomas Turino, a professor of musicology and anthropology in Music as Social Life. The works of Wharton, Trevino, and Jones are examples of modern percussion literature that accesses constructivist ideas, Impressionist techniques, and musical indices promulgated by western popular culture to convey emotional and imageable meaning.

Keywords: composition, percussion, impressionist, extended harmony, film scoring, marimba, snare drum, constructivism, semiotics
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

Impressionism in Art and Music

The label, “impressionism,” is rooted in a development in visual art in late 19th century.\(^1\) In this style, painters such as Claude Monet eschewed the detail and realism prevalent in art following the Humanist movement and the Enlightenment in favor of works that presented a comparatively vague impression of a scene, an atmosphere, or an emotion. Their works featured few details and were instead composed of familiar but indistinct shapes, contrasting colors, and no clear delineation between subject and background.\(^2\) These impressionist paintings were at first derided by critics mistaking the intentional lack of detail and clarity for poor technique.

A shift toward a broader perspective and less detail in music was met with the same criticism and, as a result, the same label. “Impressionism” was first applied to music in a critique of Claude Debussy’s compositional technique: “a strong feeling for color in music which, when exaggerated, causes him to forget the importance of clarity in design and form.”\(^3\) In the works of Debussy and Monet, much of the interpretation is left up to the listener and observer. This requires familiarity with the subject being depicted, whether it is a scene or an emotion, as well as a modicum of flexibility with structure, definition, and detail.

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\(^2\) Ibid.

In impressionist music, the shift in perspective from object to scene and from creator to observer relies on four broad principles: non-adherence to classical structure; use of extended harmony and dissonance for color rather than harmonic progression; reduction or obfuscation of harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic motion; and exploration of texture and timbre as composition techniques. Impressionist works consistently display a departure from classical structure in favor of a freer stream-of-consciousness composition style. Composers such as Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, and Frederic Chopin utilized extended harmonies as a vehicle for color and emotive content rather than strictly adhering to classical harmonic conventions. Additionally, these composers made use of scales and modes outside of major/minor tonality to disrupt harmonic tendencies and expectations. Finally, the use of non-pulsatic rhythm frequently occludes the meter or pulse of the music.

**Composer Background**

Four composers of modern percussion literature were chosen for this recital and research project due to their inclusion of these four impressionist composition techniques. Ian T. Jones, composer of *Meditation*, utilized a free and indeterminate structure for his composition. His use of loops and repetition of ostinati to create a composite musical atmosphere illustrates the shift of perspective from detailed subject to vague impression. Jones also frequently changes modes in each of the short, repeated motifs in *Meditation* which occludes melodic motion and harmonic progression.

In *Spur*, composer Ivan Trevino explores extreme changes in timbre and texture in the piece’s accompaniment rather than harmonic progression to create a sense of structural motion. Further illustrating his intent to create an atmosphere of reflection and memory, Trevino composed the final section of *Spur* with non-pulsatic rhythmic motifs in stark contrast to the
driving tempo and clear meter of the preceding phrases. These short motifs are derived from the works of French composer and percussionist Jacques Delécluse. This presents the listener with an experience-accessed interpretation of the work: those who are familiar with the Delécluse etudes will more readily decode the meaning and intent of the music than those who are not.

Russell Wharton composed *Metro* to display the modern world’s technological and urban achievements as “both awe-inspiring and deeply frightening.” Wharton makes use of extended harmony as a color tool throughout this composition, but most notably utilizes changes in timbre to signal the emotional framing of modern cities. By creating timbres readily associated with dystopian future-themed films of the 1980s and 1990s, he communicates his intent by directly accessing listeners’ ingrained musical indices. Wharton also connects his work to impressionist art ideals in *Metro*’s video accompaniment which features broad, sweeping, indistinct, and vibrantly colored metropolitan scenes which are presented without clear subjects. The opening sequence is comprised of blurred headlights, passing cars, and city lights devoid of detail but recognizable due to the audience’s shared experiences. This is followed by finely rendered cityscapes that, despite their clarity and detail, are without clear or obvious subjects. These scenes also feature a flattened perspective that obscures the separation of foreground and background, leaving the viewer with a broad impression of an urban atmosphere.

*Archipelago* by Paul Bissell contains many of the melodic ideas common to impressionism. Melodic motion in this work is frequently obscured using modal and chromatic melodic lines that disrupt the expectation of resolution. Bissell also uses ornamentation and rhythm to create a sense of wandering in *Archipelago*’s melodic content. The passing of melodic

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responsibility between marimba and flute elicits an impression of shared experience and understanding without adherence to major and minor tonality, conventional melodic resolution, or harmonic progression. In this way, Bissell crafts intricate melodies that provide the listener with the impression of shared exploration and travel without a predetermined destination.

**Underutilization in Music Education**

Works for solo percussion similar to the examples explored in this recital project are not widely represented in current percussion curricula, particularly in higher education. The National Conference on Percussion Pedagogy’s 2014 “Marimba Performance Standards” publication for secondary school levels four and five list marimba literature composed primarily between 1950 and 2001. Several works are transcriptions of music dating back to the 17th and 18th century, and the most recent outlier in the repertoire list was published in 2011. Excluding the outlier, this represents a gap of thirteen years between the most recent publication date of the NCPP’s suggested literature and that of the performance standards document. Viewed as an average, the age difference is significantly larger.

Notably absent from the list of suggested repertoire include marimba solos featuring electronic accompaniment or the use of electronic looping. While these were new technologies with limited accessibility in the late 20th century, this is generally no longer the case. These works cannot comprise the entirety or majority of a curricular literature recommendation publication but should be included as they afford the solo percussion performer the opportunity

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6 Ibid.
to practice and perform with inerrant accompaniment using musical styles and technology of interest to secondary-age students.

The University of Central Florida repertoire list for undergraduate students specifies which percussion works “represent significant examples of solo and chamber works worthy of study at the collegiate level.” This publication lists more than two hundred works for solo and chamber percussion. Of this selection, six are composed for percussion and recorded accompaniment in the form of cassette tape and compact disc. Five of those compositions are for multiple percussion and only one is composed for marimba. None utilize modern accompaniment technology such as digital audio workstations (DAWs) or looping hardware.

Underrepresentation of literature for percussion, and particularly marimba, with electronic accompaniment in collegiate repertoire may have a deleterious effect on the proliferation of this genre into secondary education curriculum. The question, then, is whether the technology involved in, musical content within, or educational applicability of these compositions truly renders them insignificant and unworthy of study at the collegiate level, or if these selections are omitted due to unfamiliarity among higher education faculty and administration. The reasoning is dependent upon the faculty’s preference for praxial or aesthetic philosophies of music education; while the praxial educator will tend to valuate music based on its applicability, the aesthetically minded faculty member may show preference to repertoire with established history and perceived intrinsic musical value.

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7 “Performance Repertoire (Selected),” curricular publication at the University of Central Florida, 1.
8 Ibid., 61-64.
Purpose and Significance

Many works in modern percussion literature feature electronics, contemporary composition techniques, and elements of popular music and film scoring. As a result, contemporary percussion literature is often framed as a genre outside of western classical art music and discounted in education compared to established, transcribed works by classical and baroque composers or literature composed in the style of those composers. However, music incorporating techniques and technology characteristic of modern popular and program music may hold significant educational value due to their integration of contemporary genres with which students hold familiarity, technology that can provide a wide variety of artistic expression and accompaniment options, and techniques unique to percussion performance. The purpose of this project is to explore and illustrate in an applied recital the connection between modern percussion literature and impressionism and determine the extent to which technical development is facilitated by its use in the classroom.

By investigating the musical legitimacy and educational value of modern percussion works by composers such as Ivan Trevino, Paul Bissell, Russell Wharton, and Ian T. Jones, this project aims to provide music educators with information regarding modern percussion compositional styles and their pedagogical utility. These works may also provide educators with the means to incorporate technology into performance classes and to explore both traditional and electronics-assisted composition in impressionist styles with their students. While electronic composition and electroacoustic music are seen as departures from western art music composition, they hold many similarities with impressionist composition. The impressionist focus on building a soundscape using static harmony, exploration of timbre and texture, and
occlusion or omission of traditional melodic and harmonic ideas are also characteristic of electronic composition.

Questions and Hypotheses

This study will explore the types and prevalence of impressionist composition techniques found in modern percussion literature. This will involve an analysis of both the performed content of the work and the electronic accompaniment. The primary research question of this thesis entails which specific impressionist composition techniques are found in the works of Trevino, Wharton, Bissell, and Jones, and what the composer intended to convey with them. These composers may have utilized extended harmony, non-pulsatic rhythms, ambiguity of tempo and meter, and changes in timbre and texture to convey their music’s intended meaning.

Further, this project will investigate cultural reasons for the adoption of impressionist ideas in percussion music, film scoring, and other program music genres. Musicologist and anthropologist Thomas Turino posits that cultural formations such as generalized western culture develop commonly understood and recognized musical icons and indices. Therefore, this project will also address a secondary question: to what extent do Trevino, Wharton, Bissell, and Jones access familiar musical indices in the form of compositional ideas and expressive techniques to imply an impression of emotion, setting, or imagery? While techniques employed to create these musical works may have roots in 19th-century Impressionism, musical signs present in their compositions may exist in contemporary popular music, particularly in the genre of film scoring.

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Research and Recital Plan

The research involved in this lecture recital project will be conducted through textural, structural, melodic, and harmonic analysis of the works to be performed. These compositions will also be explored to ascertain their applicability to specific learning objectives in percussion performance education. The intent of the research is to determine whether impressionist composition techniques and practices are evident in four contemporary compositions for percussion and to what extent and whether the selections serve determinate educational functions.

Research findings will be summarized in a presentation accompanying the recital repertoire. Salient points of analysis and explanation of the composer’s intent will be presented for each piece following its performance. This is to minimize contamination of the meaning constructed by audience members during the recital. The constructivist lens through which this project is designed requires that the learner – in this instance, the audience member – be permitted to construct their own interpretation of meaning based on shared and individual experiences as well as social norms and behaviors associated with each listener’s cultural cohorts and formations.

Chapter Summary

Contemporary percussion compositions, particularly those with electronic accompaniment, requisite technological equipment, or publication dates within the past fifteen years are often omitted from college repertoire deemed worthy of study. This project is designed to assess why this occurs, and whether these compositions may serve educational and expressive purposes sufficient to be considered worthy of collegiate study or use in secondary education. An exploration of education implications of such compositions may illustrate their usefulness in
secondary education, and analytical determination of their impressionist heritage may provide perspective on their expressive, artistic, and aesthetic value as well as their perceived legitimacy and study-worthiness.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

This lecture recital study will utilize constructivism as an epistemological and theoretical framework. Constructivism in education refers to both a learning theory and an epistemological view.\textsuperscript{10} While based upon theories by Piaget, constructivism does not have a single, central theorist but rather a collection of views and authors with “common principles.”\textsuperscript{11} The epistemological view tends to focus on the formation and interpretation of knowledge and construction of meaning while a learning theory centers on the acquisition of knowledge by the learner and more directly informs classroom best practices. Constructivist epistemologist David Jonassen posited that interpretation of reality (“events, objects, and perspectives”) are different from one learner to the next.\textsuperscript{12} This view of knowledge as an internalized interpretation rather than a concrete external “abstract entity” necessitates experiential learning and active engagement while highlighting the necessary differences in meaning constructed by different learners.\textsuperscript{13}

Constructivist learning theorist Jackie Wiggins also noted that while constructivist philosophy informs practice it “is more about a way of being than an approach.”\textsuperscript{14} Educational technology researchers Thomas M. Duffy and David H. Jonassen explained that while this

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[11] Ibid.
\item[13] Shrively, “Constructivism,” 129.
\item[14] Ibid.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
epistemological view is a descriptive rather than prescriptive theory, the “artifacts” – instructional designs – are “an implicit expression of our theory of learning.”\textsuperscript{15} Acknowledging and leveraging the differences in meaning constructed in experiential learning under this epistemology can aid music educators in facilitating growth in social-emotional learning competencies (self-awareness and social awareness) in the classroom. This study and lecture recital will provide further examination of one possible artifact of constructivist theory in music education.

As viewed through the lens of constructivist epistemology, interpretation of musical meaning is dependent on the learner’s background and experience. Much as the constructivist view encourages meaning-making by the learner, constructivist music education should encourage each student to construct emotional and imageable meaning based on musical examples. Students with musical training or accessible technology can also create musical ideas representative of emotional or contextual prompts. As the meanings and musical artifacts created will necessarily differ between students, the sharing of these disparate meanings and products will illustrate the diverse perspectives and backgrounds indigenous to the modern music classroom. This study will provide educators with samples of these diverse constructed meanings evinced by narrative responses collected from secondary students and educators.

Related Literature

A review of the literature in the area of emotional interpretation in music supports three foundational concepts upon which this study is based: (1) music can be successfully encoded

with emotional meaning by a composer or artist, (2) emotional meaning can be decoded by the listener with the success rate being dependent on both listener demographic and “depth” of the emotion intended by the encoder, and (3) emotional and imageable responses are dependent on the listener’s background, experience, and cultural formations. Through the lens of the constructivist view on knowledge and meaning, emotional meaning in music is constructed by both the composer/performer (the encoder) and the listener (the decoder) based upon their respective personal and cultural associations.

As encoded emotions diverge from basic, commonly understood musical indices, more variation is found in decoded emotional content. Impressionist composition techniques are one such set of possible musical signs. These techniques are pervasive in western culture and provide commonality across diverse individual and cultural points of view. Impressionist techniques are also common to modern marimba literature where the music conveys specific emotions or imagery. The purpose of this lecture recital and qualitative study is to assess the continued contributions of impressionist composition techniques in modern marimba literature in conveying a composer’s intent to an audience. While audience members hold diverse backgrounds and varying musical literacy and training, they belong to common cultural formations in respect to popular culture, particularly modern popular music and film scoring.

Interpretation of Musical Meaning

Emotional responses to music have been studied qualitatively. Music researcher Mitch Waterman studied both the implicit and explicit responses to music in a 1996 study of emotional encoding and decoding. Explicit responses are defined in his study as “recall and recognition”

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events identified by the participant. Implicit responses were measured by detecting changes in emotional state apparent in self-report responses “without conscious awareness” on the part of the respondent. He collected quantitative data in the form of the number of emotional responses the participants experienced. Waterman also acquired qualitative data by means of interview responses.

To explore differences between musically trained and untrained listeners and between trained musicians listening to their own performance or another’s, Waterman conducted three experiments. The first measured emotional responses of thirty listeners, both trained and untrained, listening to recorded musical examples. The second experiment was conducted under the same criteria one year later with eight of the original thirty participants. Waterman then recorded the same qualitative and qualitative information from two pairs of instrumentalists performing duets.

Waterman found that trained and untrained listeners did not differ in quantitative measurements of emotional events in the musical examples. Untrained listeners reported a greater variation in qualitative responses describing these events than trained musicians. Trained musicians more familiar with the genres presented responded with a narrowed and more congruent range of emotions. Waterman suggests that the disparity in qualitative responses between trained and untrained musicians may be a result of differences in memories associated with musical excerpts. One example provided explicitly in his report is an untrained listener’s response to an Antonio Vivaldi excerpt. Her interpretation was anchored in the image of

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17 Waterman, “Emotional Responses,” 54.
18 Ibid., 53.
19 Ibid., 64.
“travelling through the countryside in an open-top car,” which she embellished with descriptions of trees passing above her and feeling wind in her hair.\textsuperscript{20} This was congruent with an automobile advertisement being aired at the time that depicted driving down a country road which utilized the same musical extract as background music. Waterman’s qualitative findings support the hypothesis that musical meaning and emotion is linked with personal and individual background and experiences: “the complexity of understanding mood, memory, be it explicit or implicit, and their relationship with one of many musical extracts is only likely to be accessible in the context of the individual.”\textsuperscript{21}

Alf Gabrielsson and Patrick N. Juslin, psychology faculty members and researchers at Uppala University in Sweden, studied the association between specific musical characteristics (tempo, dynamics, articulation, phrasing, etc.) and emotional content.\textsuperscript{22} Waterman’s study and that of Gabrielsson differed in performance methodology and recorded data. Waterman’s research involved a single live music performance and recorded listeners’ responses, whereas Gabrielsson recorded musicians’ application of different performance techniques to musical examples and the resulting changes in listener interpretation. Gabrielsson’s qualitative design focused on encoding of emotional meaning in performance practice rather than in compositional technique. Performers were instructed to perform short excerpts while expressing the emotions “’happy’, ‘sad’, ‘angry’, ‘fearful’, ‘tender’, ‘solemn’, as well as ‘no expression.’”\textsuperscript{23} The listeners were a mixture of musically trained and untrained participants. The participants were instructed

\textsuperscript{20} Waterman, “Emotional Responses,” 63-64.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 66.


\textsuperscript{23} Gabrielsson and Juslin, “Emotional Expression.” 72.
to record, on a scale of one to ten, the amount of each of the aforementioned qualities present in each performance. This way the listeners were provided with emotional vocabulary and expectations prior to listening to the examples and limited to numerical responses for the purposes of quantitative data collection.

This study revealed that decoding “basic” emotions such as happiness, anger, and sadness encoded by live performance was more frequently successful than that of more complex emotions such as solemnity.24 Gabrielsson also discovered that a performance intended to carry “no expression” was readily decoded by listeners. This study illustrates the effectiveness of music to convey specific, basic intent using commonly accepted performance practices applied to simple monophonic melodies.

The findings of Waterman and Gabrielsson supported the hypothesis that emotional meaning is constructed by the individual and that emotional decoding is colored by background and culture. In the case of Waterman’s respondent identifying Vivaldi with a drive through the country and emotions associated therewith, the meaning constructed is a result of prior experience and a phenomenon Turino refers to as “indexing.” Indexing results when a person experiences a musical sign and an event simultaneously and the two become associated in the mind of the participant.25 Turino specifically mentions advertisements and jingles as examples of musical indexing.26 “Mass indexing” is also evident in media: “even very young children immediately recognize the musical sounds (indices) that communicate that a scary part is coming

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25 Turino, Music as Social Life, 8.

26 Ibid.
in a movie, because they have heard such sounds accompany scary parts before.”27 Children as young as five years can distinguish “happy” from “sad” based on observation of tempi, and children six to eight years old are influenced by mode as well. 28

This mass indexing by Western media, as well as culturally accepted and recognized musical norms (“happy music” is fast and in a major tonality, for example) scaffold emotional decoding of basic emotions within our cultural formation. Turino explains that cultural formations are pervasive sets of accepted habits and understandings that create baselines of commonality across diverse cultural backgrounds and identities.29 American society is an example of a cultural formation which gives listeners the ability to decode basic emotional content in music despite the individualistic nature of creating meaning.

Impressionist Composition Techniques in American Music

Gabrielsson and Juslin found that the performers in their study tended to use similar performance techniques to express the requested emotion. This similarity in encoding techniques is the result of similarities in training and experience among the musicians. Impressionist composition techniques pioneered by Claude Debussy are found in two highly popular music genres: film scoring and jazz. This illustrates Turino’s concepts of mass indexing among media consumers in America.

Music theorist, professor, and author in the field of film scoring Frank Lehman conducted a study of John Williams’s compositional techniques in iconic films featuring U.S. Presidents.

When scoring the film *Born on the Fourth of July*, composer John Williams utilized changes in texture, consonance and dissonance, and motivic melody to evoke emotional response and foreshadow events in the film.\(^{30}\) Williams utilized “musical codes associated with distress or conflict (dissonance, dense polyphony, electronics)” as well as distorted Copland-influenced Americana when scoring for *JFK* and *Nixon*.\(^{31}\) The successful decoding of these intents is grounded in American film tradition dating back to the 1940s and the “Americana style” established by Aaron Copland, who was in turn a student of impressionist composer and educator Nadia Boulanger.\(^{32}\) This establishes the presence and successful communication among both impressionism and musical indexing in the American film industry.

Jazz pianist, composer, and arranger Sergio Pamies found evidence of Debussy’s compositional style in modern jazz compositions.\(^{33}\) Jazz pianists access the impressionist techniques of modal melodies, dissonance as color rather than harmonic impetus, and a departure from classical harmonic progressions. More specifically, Bill Evans employed Dorian modality, major seventh chords, and quartal harmonies in “So What” and parallel triadic motion in “When I Fall in Love.”\(^{34}\) Debussy’s influence on three pre-eminent jazz pianists, “Bill Evans, Herbie

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\(^{31}\) Ibid.


\(^{33}\) Sergio Pamies, “Deconstructing Modal Jazz Piano Techniques: The Relation Between Debussy’s Piano Works and the Innovations of Post-Bop Pianists,” in *Jazz Education in Research and Practice* 2, no. 1 (Spring, 2021), 77, https://doi.org/10.2979/jazzeducrese.2.1.06.

\(^{34}\) Pamies, “Jazz Piano Techniques,” 79, 84.
Hancock, and McCoy Tyner is very significant because their legacy can be heard in almost every jazz pianist thereafter.”

Another area in which encoding of emotional meaning is paramount and popular among young Americans includes video game scoring. Gina Zdanowicz, a composer and faculty member at the Berklee College of Music, notes that inspiration in composition is often actually a product of “associative memory.” Zdanowicz advises game composers to utilize modal and motivic melody writing, whole-tone scales, chromaticism, and extended harmonies and directly references contributions by “impressionist composers like Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel.” As an example of impressionism evident in video game scoring, this author’s students reliably mistake Erik Satie’s Gymnopaedies for a theme from the game Minecraft based on its structure and melancholy attributes; this is both evidence of impressionism in this modern genre and of successful mass indexing on the part of the gaming industry.

Standard Contemporary Marimba Literature

Current literature has explored impressionist techniques employed by modern marimba composers Keiko Abe and Jacob Druckman. Performer and Arkansas Tech University percussion educator Kae Hashimoto Reed wrote about Keiko Abe’s compositional methods and interviewed the composer during the study. During the 1960s, keyboard percussion such as the xylophone and marimba were utilized primarily in popular music. Abe sought to establish the marimba as a classical solo instrument and did so by commissioning and composing solo

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37 Zdanowicz, Game Audio, 170-77.
literature for the marimba. While composing “The Song of Trees,” Abe established a motive for the “aged tree.” This motivic melody as well as her use of unconventional harmony, unresolved dissonance as coloring, and non-pulsatic rhythm are evidence of impressionist influence in her work.

“The Song of Trees” was composed with the intent of conveying the imaginary abstraction of a great tree. In “Memories of the Seashore,” Abe attempted to encode the despair over an increasingly competitive and violent world assuaged by the imagery of human troubles as grains of sand on a shore and the unchanging motion of ocean waves. Both works are intentionally indirect, complex, and abstract, which are paradigmatic elements of Japanese culture. Directness in Japan is at times considered “impolite or rude,” and condescending to a listener. The Japanese saying, “reading the air,” conveys the importance of nonverbal communication and understanding a conversation’s intent without explicit clarification of details. Reed explains that “both participants in the conversation expect the other to anticipate the intended meaning by ‘reading the air’ without a need to say everything, so that the communication moves smoothly.” In this way, meaning is continually being constructed by the listener, both in conversation and when listening to music, with the expectation that cultural norms and shared experiences will allow accurate decoding of intent.

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39 Ibid., 41.

40 Ibid., 21.

41 Ibid., 6-8, 15.

42 Ibid., 13.

Composer Jacob Druckman was more directly influenced by the works of Claude Debussy. “Reflections on the Nature of Water” encode the nature of water’s physical states using techniques similar to those found in Debussy’s “Preludes.”

Druckman explicitly names Debussy and Igor Stravinsky as his inspirations in the program notes of “Reflections.” He utilizes extended colorful harmony, motivic melody, and rhythmic obscurity similar to that of Debussy’s works. Each movement of “Reflections on the Nature of Water” is intended to convey one facet of water’s nature: “Crystalline,” “Fleet,” “Tranquil,” “Gently Swelling,” “Profound,” and “Relentless.” These encoded meanings are abstractions as well, though more directly communicated than those of “The Song of Trees.”

Chapter Summary

The literature surrounding the conveyance of musical meaning has indicated that emotional meaning is encoded by the composer or performer and decoded by the listener. Waterman found that detection of the presence of emotional content was consistent and successful among listeners with diverse backgrounds in music but that the interpretation of that content varied. Gabrielsson and Juslin found that when scaffolded by provided emotional criteria and vocabulary, basic emotional meanings were constructed correctly.

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46 Ibid., iii.

intended by the performer) reliably but more complex or abstract emotional concepts were more difficult to evoke.\(^{48}\)

When considering the theories of musical indexing and cultural formation posited by Turino, basic emotional meanings are correctly decoded due to shared experiences, expectations, and understandings. This is evident in the film industry where the works of Aaron Copland have provided listeners with musical vocabulary to express Americana and patriotism. These musical indices from the 1940s are utilized in and reinforced by more recent titles such as *JFK*, *Born on the Fourth of July*, and *Nixon*.\(^{49}\)

The compositional style of Claude Debussy provides a long-standing set of musical indices and encoding practices that are pervasive in western culture and its classical music tradition. This qualitative study and lecture recital were intended to fill the gap in literature exploring the effectiveness of impressionist compositional techniques in modern percussion literature to convey emotions and imagery to the listener.

\(^{48}\) Gabrielsson and Juslin, “Emotional Expression,” 87.

\(^{49}\) Lehman, “Scoring the President,” 3.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY OF THE RECITAL

Research Design

This lecture recital utilized an applied research design. This design was selected to demonstrate composition techniques in modern percussion literature that access impressionist processes that encode emotions and imagery. An applied research project is appropriate for this study as it was intended to explore the contemporary use of impressionist composition techniques to convey meaning. The research addressed practical application, and the researcher’s role was integrated into the study.⁵⁰

The lecture recital was accompanied by qualitative data which explored the composers’ intent as determined by program notes, previously recorded and published interviews, and performer interpretations of each piece. Qualitative data collection was most appropriate for this as it focuses on meanings held or created by composers and performers of the music.⁵¹ As the independent variables were static and no experiment was conducted, there was no control group nor participants and the study was pre-experimental in design.⁵² The lecture recital is an applied performance project with an action research design.⁵³

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⁵⁰ Nathan Street, “Non-Parametric, Applied, and Mixed Methods Research” (handout in MUSC 650 at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, Summer 2022).


⁵² Creswell, Research Design, 170.

Recital Performance and Commentary

The presenter will begin the recital with an explanation of background knowledge necessary to understand the topic. This will include a brief synopsis of impressionist art and music generalities as well as composition techniques common to impressionist music. Educational background information will also be presented, to include constructivist learning theory, musical indices and semiotics as posited by Turino, and a comparison of praxial and aesthetic approaches to music education.

Ian T. Jones’s *Meditation* will be presented first, followed by commentary and analysis. This work will be used to explore structural indeterminacy, improvisation of structural and harmonic content, and shared cultural indices of meditation and awareness. The use of looping technology to create self-accompaniment and layered improvisation will also be addressed during this commentary. Ivan Trevino’s *Spur* for snare drum and electronic accompaniment will be performed second. *Spur* and its subsequent discussion will illustrate the use of textural and timbral changes, rather than harmonic, to drive structure and communicate meaning. The presenting researcher will also discuss the contrasting combination of pulsatic and non-pulsatic rhythmic elements that convey the composer’s intent regarding a shift from contemporaneous awareness to contemplative reflection.

The third solo work to be performed is Russell Wharton’s *Metro* for marimba and electronic accompaniment. This work may provide insight into the use of modal melodic elements, extended harmony utilized for color, and timbral shifts that access shared cultural associations to convey the composer’s intent regarding advancements in civil technologies. The recital will close with Paul Bissell’s duet *Archipelago* for marimba, multiple percussion, and flute. The discussion of this work will precede its performance to allow for a musically
culminative end to the recital. *Archipelago* is the only work to not utilize technology for accompaniment and is instead a comparatively more conventional work. However, elements of modal melody, structural asymmetry, fluid transitions from tonal to atonal domains, and impressions of ideas and emotions rather than clearly and directly interpreted meanings may provide a means of tracing impressionist lineage to this composition.

**Chapter Summary**

Care must be taken in this recital to both prepare the audience with sufficient foreknowledge to understand the subject matter and avoid coloring interpretation of the musical examples. The recital will begin with an explanation of terminology and concepts surrounding impressionism, praxial and aesthetic philosophies, semiotics, and educational constructivism. The first three musical selections, *Meditation, Spur,* and *Metro,* will be followed by commentary and analysis, whereas the final piece in the recital, *Archipelago,* will be preceded by its discussion. Commentary on each work will involve compositional practices and educational applications.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Meditation by Ian T. Jones

Musical Analysis

Impressionist music is known in part for its departure from classical structures. This is exhibited clearly in Meditation as composer Ian T. Jones leaves much of the structural decision-making up to the performer. While the piece is presented in three sections, the song length and the rate of progression through each section are improvised and indeterminate.

The opening of Meditation features the establishment of a sixteenth note-based ostinato which, while pulsatic at first, provides no indication of time signature or phrasing (Figure 4.1). The simple ostinato develops into a more complex set of patterns at a rate determined by the performer. Each individual pattern is of differing length. Further, the later patterns utilize a differentiation between left- and right-hand phrase lengths to elicit a sense of unease by degrading any sense of meter. In the seventh measure of the section, the right hand repeats an ascending four-note phrase while the left hand descends in groups of three notes. While the phrase is comprised entirely of sixteenth notes, any change in balance between the hands as improvised by the performer creates the impression an eighth note pattern in the right hand as written or a triplet pattern in the left hand at a slower perceived pulse.
As the performer reaches the end of the tenth measure of the piece, he or she is instructed to regress through the patterns at a rate of their determination. The section concludes by returning to the original ostinato pattern, representing the clearing of the mind as one prepares to meditate. As the perceived metric dissonances clear, listeners can identify again the sixteenth note pulse of the work in the ostinato upon which the second section will build.

The looping section of *Meditation* is presented to the performer as eight independent floating measures (figure 4.2). These measures are to be recorded and looped back in any order, at any dynamic level, for any length of time, and in any combination as determined by the performer. This allows for improvisation in structure, texture, phrasing, and volume. The indeterminate nature of this section is key to communicating both the composer’s intent and the performer’s interpretation. *Percussive Notes* contributor Joshua D. Smith expresses that “it is
easy as an audience member to get ‘lost’ in the aural atmosphere that is created when these pitches blend, morph, and shift from one pattern to another, and complement each other while creating pulsing harmonies.” This intent to create an atmosphere, mood, or soundscape rather than a linear performance is another foundational tenet of musical impressionism.

Figure 4.2. Looping section of Meditation by Ian T. Jones (Portland, OR: Tapspace Publications, 2022).

Meditation concludes with a section that dissolves any sense of rhythm. The player trills between two notes with one hand while performing a melodic line devoid of prescribed rhythm with the other. This dissolution of pulse and rhythm represents arrival in a state of inner peace and a brief respite from the pace and bustle of daily life. This is further highlighted by a change in texture. The thick and harmonically active but ambiguous second section is replaced by an

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atmosphere with no implied harmony or pace and a modal melody that imparts no direction. The entirety of the looping section also takes place on the natural notes of the instrument, and when

Figure 4.3. Final section of Meditation by Ian T. Jones (Portland, OR: Tapspace Publications, 2022).

rhythm returns to the work in the final phrase it appears on the node of the A-flat key (figure 4.3). This creates both a perceived dissonance and a very thin sound. The impression elicited is of reality impinging on the edge of the meditative state. The trilling ostinato dissipates, leaving
only the driving sound of the A-flat crescendo signaling the performer and listener’s return to consciousness.

**Educational Implications**

*Meditation* presents an educational opportunity in both technical and expressive performance. The first section of the piece requires the performer to maintain steady tempo and rhythm while demonstrating exceptional hand-to-hand independence. The combination of three-note and four-note patterns in the left and right hands respectively, coupled with an indeterminate phrase length, creates demand for limb independence as well as intense concentration. This stresses the musician’s mental tenacity as he or she must think ahead and plan a phrase transition while maintaining steady ostinati of differing lengths.

The looping section is less technically demanding in contrast, and instead focuses on developing patience, expressiveness, and sensitivity to balance and dynamic control. Accuracy remains paramount, however, as any performance error occurring during the recording of a loop will be repeated ad nauseam for the remainder of the section. The freely improvised nature of this section is juxtaposed with the driving major second ostinato recorded and looped at the onset. As a result, strict maintenance of tempo and rhythmic accuracy are necessary to prevent phasing between the ostinato, loops, and live performance. In this way, *Meditation* may also provide an opportunity to develop listening and ensemble awareness skills despite being a solo marimba composition.
Musical Analysis

*Spur* for solo snare drum and electronic accompaniment differs from the other works performed in that the performer does not provide melodic or harmonic content to the piece.

![Musical notation](image)


Despite this, the accompaniment for *Spur* contains little in the way of harmonic or melodic composition. Rather, Trevino utilizes changes in texture and timbre to encode meaning. *Spur* is divided into three sections. The first is reminiscent of the works of percussionist and composer Jacques Delécluse and is pulsatic in nature. As in Delécluse’s *Douze Etudes*, no. 1 (Figure 4.4), *Spur* presents frequent shifts between duple- and triple-based interpretations of meter, sixteenth note to sextuplet hand speed changes, and ruff and drag ornamentation (Figure 4.5).
The accompaniment throughout the first section of Spur is rhythmically subtle but pulsatic. Trevino utilizes low, synthesized voicing in monophonic texture to create a pulsing soundscape without clear harmonic direction. As the phrase climaxes, triadic harmony is introduced and the synthesizer voice crescendos to a caesura. The overall impression of this first section is of music and performance practice influenced by Delécluse, an interpretation that relies heavily on familiarity with his etudes. Decoding of the composer’s intent is dependent upon the constructivist philosophy of building knowledge based on existing experiential learning.

Spur’s second section is marked by a change in timbre and texture in the accompaniment and a lengthy buildup to thirty-second note phrases performed by the soloist. The addition of electronic hi-hat, distorted snare and bass drum, and faster rhythmic passages reflect contemporary percussion practice and performance seen in popular and electronic dance music. This section is energetic and features a steady, driving tempo.
Trevino ends *Spur* with a change in the performer’s timbre and the accompaniment’s texture and rhythmic clarity. The performer is instructed to disengage the snares, and the accompaniment track dissipates to simple harmony presented without the rhythmic pulsation present in the rest of the piece. Elements of the first section’s accompaniment fade in and out as if echoing, and the snare drum soloist performs one- and two- measure phrases from a selection of Delécluse etudes (Figure 4.6). The composer’s intent in this phrase is to elicit an impression of remembrance and reflection on the works and contributions of Delécluse. The excerpts are disconnected by measures of rest and extend beyond the measure structure, creating another impression of an echo disassociated from time. While the Delécluse etude quotes are decidedly rhythmic, their placement begins to obscure the meter and their remarkably low dynamic level throughout effectively reinforces the idea that they are echoes of Jacques Delécluse.

**Educational Implications**

*Spur* is effectively a study in finesse and rhythmic accuracy. The opening and closing sections feature intricate flam, ruff, and drag ornamentation requiring awareness of and flexibility in hand pressure changes. The pervasive shifting between duple and triple
interpretations of 6/8 time draws on the performer’s familiarity with complex meter and polyrhythmic structure, and these sections are primarily executed at dynamic levels of mezzo piano and below, which requires heightened dynamic control and fine motor skills.

The middle section builds on the soloist’s understanding of thirty-second note placement within the measure, which is exposed by several off-beat attacks. The rhythmically active accompaniment of electronic drum set instruments requires excellent vertical alignment and rhythmic integrity. Finally, the ceaseless stream of thirty-second notes throughout the phrase with constantly changing stickings requires the performer to exhibit the same finesse, hand pressure flexibility, and fine motor control of the opening phrases in a different context. This directly and effectively connects skills needed for orchestral, solo, rudimental, and drum set performance with a common technical thread.

*Metropolitan* by Russell Wharton

**Musical Analysis**

*Metropolitan* is an exploration of the emotions surrounding our current pace of technological and civil advancement using metropolitan cityscapes and scenes as a conveyance. Composer Russell Wharton noted that today’s sprawling metropolises can be both “awe-inspiring and deeply frightening,” ideas which are both expressed in *Metropolitan*. Wharton utilizes techniques common to film scoring in creating this soundscape. Passages intended to convey impressions of unease or fear feature dissonance as an unsettling color and electronic timbres to frame a dystopian future. In films such as 1982’s *Blade Runner*, sawtooth wave electronic instruments with low frequency oscillation establish a futuristic setting. This type of sound synthesis was

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55 “Metro,” Tapspace.
pioneered in the 1950s and 1960s, yet the sounds generated by these sixty-year-old processes are still recognized as indications of futuristic scenes and advanced technology. Similar soundscapes are utilized in the 2017 science fiction series Robert Dick’s Electric Dreams. These prolific shared cultural indices allow Wharton to access commonly interpreted meanings to create the desired atmosphere in Metro.

Figure 4.7. Excerpt 1 from Metro by Russell Wharton (Portland, OR: Tapspace Publications, 2021).

Dissonances in the opening phrases of Metro are achieved primarily through close harmony in the accompaniment (Figure 4.7). These sustained seconds do not resolve, a technique common to film scoring of the same atmosphere. The major second dissonance continues into the next section but is presented an octave lower and contained within a major harmony (Figure 4.8). The wide harmonic voicing in the marimba and steady pulse in the accompaniment create
an impression of vast scale and awe while still maintaining the unease associated with the unresolved dissonance.

Figure 4.8. Excerpt 2 from *Metro* by Russell Wharton (Portland, OR: Tapspace Publications, 2021).

The second section of *Metro* frames metropolitan life as frantic and bustling rather than broadly ominous. This is achieved through driving rhythmic ideas situated within odd meters and interrupted by duple interjections in otherwise triplet-based phrases. Though this section is pulsatic, the pulse is both relentless and unpredictable, leaving the listener grasping at fragments of meter and temporal understanding. The impression elicited is that of a rushed, unsteady, and stressful existence.

A sudden shift into an atmosphere of optimism is marked by a change in tempo, a steady meter, a key change, and clear major tonality (Figure 4.9). The phrase begins with the familiar major second sustained dissonance, but it is revoiced shortly as the root of a major triad. Triadic major harmony without harmonic extension continues throughout the phrase and a definitive
rhythmic pulse is added via electronic hi-hat, giving the impression of reaching steady footing, clarity, and understanding or enlightenment.

Figure 4.9. Excerpt 3 from Metro by Russell Wharton (Portland, OR: TapSpace Publications, 2021).

**Educational Implications**

Metro serves two primary purposes in an educational setting: development of four-mallet technique and training rhythmic integrity across multiple meter changes. The repeated arpeggios in sections C, D, and J require a substantial amount of consistency and are effectively an etude in four-mallet permutation technique. Several common permutations are featured, utilizing double-lateral and triple-lateral strokes. Subsequent phrases require the execution of these same permutations with scalar interjections, requiring the performer to switch between lateral and independent motion.

The frequent meter changes in Metro, occasionally to odd and complex meters such as 7/16, 5/16, and 12/16, help the percussion student to develop a sense of rhythmic consistency
independent of meter. The ability to maintain steady eighth or sixteenth note rhythms through changes in meter is a vital skill in modern percussion, both in the orchestral and popular music realms, and continued execution of this type of phrase with an inerrant accompaniment may be an effective way to train this skill.

Archipelago by Paul Bissell

Musical Analysis

Archipelago is the only composition in this recital to feature a second performer rather than electronic accompaniment or electronically assisted self-accompaniment. A duet for flute and percussion, Archipelago utilizes both pitched and unpitched percussion instruments to create stark changes in texture and timbre. The structure of this piece is distinct in separation but does not feature symmetry or adherence to classical form. This creates an overall impression of changing scenes, as if visiting the similar but individually disparate islands of an archipelago.

Figure 4.10. Opening phrase of Archipelago by Paul Bissell (Corpus Christi, TX: Go Fish Music, 1997).
The opening phrase immediately displays three fundamental techniques from impressionism: quartal harmony, close dissonance used for color rather than harmonic impetus, and melodic content devoid of clear tonality or harmonic direction (Figure 4.10). While this phrase features chromatic melodic ideas more closely related to atonal modern music and explosive use of multiple percussion instruments, a contrasting later section instead utilizes sustained extended harmonies and a more consistently modal melody (Figure 4.11). Bissell composed *Archipelago* with several such abrupt shifts in texture and timbre to elicit an impression of spontaneous travel and changes of scenery.
The scenes presented in *Archipelago* exhibit the impressionist convention of prioritizing atmospheres and scenes above delineated subjects. However, clear melodic responsibilities are shared between performers in this composition. While this could tend to create a subject focus, Bissell obscures the individuals by using short phrases, harmonically ambiguous melodies, and conversational exchanges of melodic material between the performers. This creates an impression of shared travel experiences. The pairing of two individuals, rather than the two individuals themselves, becomes the focal point of the piece.

**Educational Implications**

Whereas *Spur, Meditation, and Metro* provide opportunities for growth as a solo percussionist in both technical and expressive means, *Archipelago* is most educationally applicable as an exercise in communication. The frequent changes to tempo and meter, coupled with unmetered phrases and ubiquitous mid-measure entrances, require the performers to be intimately familiar with each other’s musical and performance tendencies. Further, the performers are required at many points to visually communicate cues, phrasing, dynamic changes, and intent using non-verbal means such as breathing, eye contact, and body language.

One likely limitation to educational use for *Archipelago* is its unique instrumentation. A wide variety of percussion instruments are required, and the work is composed for a percussionist and flutist that are comparable in skill and experience. Given that neither instrument is clearly accompanying the other in this duet, *Archipelago* would require coordination between percussion and flute faculty if integrated into applied studies.

**Chapter Summary**

All four musical selections analyzed for the purposes of this recital show indications of impressionist composition techniques and methods. Jones’s *Meditation* exemplifies structural
and harmonic indeterminacy to elicit an impression of progression through a meditative state and exploration of oneself. Trevino’s *Spur* effectively utilizes changes in texture and rhythmic density, as well as elements of pulsatic and non-pulsatic rhythm, to create contrasting but related atmospheres of contemporaneity and contemplative reflection. In *Metro*, Wharton accesses shared cultural indices stemming from the film industry to encode futuristic scenes and emotions of both awe and trepidation using timbral elements and extended harmony. The sole work composed for more than one performer and without electronic support, *Archipelago*, is comprised of many short, distally related sections representing a chain of small islands. Bissell utilizes chromatic and modal, and therefore harmonically ambiguous, melodic fragments passed between performers to create an atmosphere of a shared journey without a clear destination.

Each of these compositions serves a necessary and identifiable educational purpose. *Meditation* appears to target hand independence, mindfulness, expressivity, and mental tenacity, *Metro* is best utilized to develop and reinforce technical proficiency and rhythmic integrity. *Spur* uses contrasting styles for snare drum to hone fine motor skills and finesse, two skill sets that Trevino situates within the modern rudimental and classically influenced orchestral snare drum genres. While *Archipelago* is an excellent composition for developing non-verbal communication and duet techniques, its unique instrumentation renders it less applicable to reliable curricular use in secondary or higher education.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this applied project was to evaluate the presence and effectiveness of impressionist composition techniques in modern percussion literature. Four works for solo marimba, solo snare drum, and multiple percussion with flute were explored for this purpose. Educational applications for each of the four compositions was also evaluated. The criteria for this educational evaluation were direct educational implication and potential incorporation into secondary and higher education programs.

Summary of Findings

Impressionist Composition Techniques

Analysis of four modern compositions for percussion confirmed the continued use of composition techniques established during the impressionist era. Examples of extended harmony, occlusion of melodic and harmonic motion, utilization of texture and timbre as compositional tools, and the presence of both pulsatic and non-pulsatic rhythmic elements were identified throughout these four musical selections. All four impressionist elements were evident in each piece analyzed, though the extent to which each technique was accessed differed by composer.

In Meditation, Spur, Metro, and Archipelago, the composer’s intent to create an atmosphere or generalized scene was apparent. This was exhibited as a setting, a mental state, an emotion, or a combination of the three. Meditation primarily explored and elicited impressions of changes in mental state, while Metro and Archipelago convey meaning in the form of temporal or geographical settings, respectively. Spur, in similar fashion to Meditation, explored changes in awareness from contemporaneity and present focus to reflection and remembrance.
**Constructivism and Musical Indices**

As all four compositions contained elements of impressionist composition techniques but varied in their overall effectiveness, the utilization of musical indexing was also considered. Two of these compositions also rely heavily on musical indices shared by potential listeners to ensure accurate decoding of emotional and atmospheric intent. *Spur* will elicit more predictable and meaningful interpretation from percussionists familiar with the etudes by Jacques Delécluse as direct quotes from these etudes are embedded within the work. While the overall mood created by the piece may be decoded by most listeners, only those who have exposure to *Douze Etudes* will understand the context in which these scenes are presented. This is supported by the findings of Jonassen that perspectives, interpretations, and reactions to the same stimuli can vary from one learner (or listener) to the next.\(^{56}\)

*Metro* utilizes established timbres and textures common to film scoring to suggest the scale of, and apprehension induced by, the sprawling metropolitan areas of humanity’s uncertain future. By composing the accompaniment track using synthesized sounds reminiscent of popular media involving dystopian futures, Russell Wharton triggers shared cultural ideas reinforced by the entertainment industry. Successful film composers such as John Williams and the mononymous Vangelis, who scored *Bladerunner*, routinely access musical indices to convey meaning.\(^{57}\) These indices, as explored by Thomas Turino, have seen widespread and effective use in the entertainment and advertising industries due to their ability to permanently link images, emotions, and settings to music.\(^{58}\)

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\(^{56}\) Jonassen, “Constructivistic Learning,” 29.

\(^{57}\) Lehman, “Scoring the President,” 1-3.

\(^{58}\) Turino, Music as Social Life, 7-8.
Wharton chose to encode comparatively simple emotions – fear and awe – which are more readily decoded by listeners according to Gabrielsson and Juslin.\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Meditation} by comparison is intended to convey the more complex ideas of self-exploration, mindfulness, and inner peace. As subjectively interpreted by the researcher as a listener, \textit{Metro} is generally more successful in accurate communication of its emotional content, while \textit{Meditation} is more openly interpreted by the listener. However, this same characteristic of \textit{Meditation} may be effective in assisting a listener’s meditative practice or that of the performer.

\textit{Archipelago} does not appear to access cultural indices in a significant way, and as such does not convey clear emotional or imageable meaning as effectively as \textit{Metro}. This further supports Turino’s theories on musical indices as effective tools for communicating the composer’s intent. As noted by Waterman, the composition may hold a comparable amount of emotional or imageable loading for many listeners, but the variation in interpretation of that content will be more significant when memory or experience is not accessed.\textsuperscript{60}

Significance

This project provides both insight into the usefulness of modern percussion literature in music education and information that can be utilized for its advocacy. While the selections performed in this recital contain many elements common to film scoring, popular music genres, and electronic music, these elements are descended from impressionist composition ideals. As they combine tested compositional techniques from recognized impressionist exemplars with effective musical indexing and content relevant to students, modern percussion compositions are

\textsuperscript{59} Gabrielsson and Juslin, “Emotional Responses,” 87.

\textsuperscript{60} Waterman, “Emotional Responses,” 54.
both modern creations and a legitimate extension of the western classical music heritage. While questions of both longevity and pedigree will continue among aestheticist music educators, many of these modern compositions are aesthetically effective, musically meaningful, and of excellent quality.

For the praxial educator, direct application to learning objectives will be paramount. While transcriptions of Johann Sebastian Bach and Amadeus Mozart are highly prevalent in percussion education, contemporary compositions developed specifically for percussion instruments are more applicable to percussion pedagogy. Further, as western music education shifts from an aesthetic foundation to a praxial point of view, more literature is being developed with application, rather than aesthetic value alone, in mind. As a result, the perceived gap between etude and literature continues to close. *Metro, Spur,* and *Meditation* are each highly focused technical studies and effective pieces of percussion literature. The outlier, *Archipelago,* is an excellent lesson on duet approach and communication between performers but falls short on percussion-specific technical training other providing experience in managing multiple percussion instruments and may also be logistically difficult to incorporate into most programs.

Finally, the issue of technology in music education must be addressed. Each of the electronically accompanied compositions requires a different level of technological investment. *Spur* requires only a playback device and headphone splitter for effective performance. *Metro* is best performed with a digital audio workstation, laptop computer, and audio interface, and the optional video accompaniment requires the use of a projector or other display. The most complex of the three, *Meditation,* necessitates access to and proficiency with looping technology and processes. However, rather than a limitation, these technological use cases should be incorporated as learning objectives. Electronics are now commonplace in music performance,
particularly in popular genres, as well as composition, content creation, and music publication. “Technology has changed how people create music. Composers can produce film scores from their home studios. Musicians can play for fans around the world through livestreamed performances. Songwriters can record albums and release them on digital distribution and streaming platforms without ever landing or signing a record deal.” 61 Future educators must receive adequate training in music technology to prepare their students for active participation in the music industry. By blending technology education with applied studies, institutions of higher learning can teach the use of electronics in potential contexts rather than in a divorced music technology course.

Limitations

The primary and most potentially influential limitations of this study are threefold: (1) due to the applied performance nature of the recital, the study was limited in scope; (2) as no participants were involved for the purposes of data collection, listener interpretation of these selections was not recorded; and (3) bias on the part of the researcher/performer is unavoidable. While these concerns can be partially mitigated, further research will be required to fully implement findings in an educational setting or to generalize the results across instrumental domains. The first limitation will require further investigation into the breadth, availability, and quality of compositions in the vein of this recital’s repertoire. While the absence of participant data in this project limits the perception of effectiveness to the performer, sufficient data is available in current literature to support the effectiveness of musical indexing and impressionist techniques in a variety of music genres.

The issue of researcher bias both influences the findings of the study and supports the constructivist position and the theory of musical indexing. The performer is a percussionist, performer, and consumer of entertainment media, and as such has developed personal preferences for and understanding of certain musical styles and compositional devices. The researcher’s applied education has also included studies of Douze Etudes, increasing the perceived value and effectiveness of Delécluse echoes in Spur. While efforts were made to remain objective in the pursuit of this study, personal bias has necessarily affected the choice of representative musical selections and interpretations of effectiveness and value. The researcher also has experience teaching music technology at the secondary level and has developed a philosophical position regarding the importance of technology in music education. Researcher interest in electronic music production and performance has similarly implicitly affected interpretation of the results.

Recommendations

While this study provides impetus to begin discussion of implementing contemporary percussion literature in higher education, more research is needed before generalized implementation should be applied. The extent to which similar literature is employed throughout percussion education is not known. A study dedicated to determining the percentage of university percussion programs that support, recommend, or require study of modern percussion literature and solo literature than incorporates electronics should be conducted. Second, while university faculty attitude toward this type of literature is inferred through research into conference and university publications, a direct survey of college educators may further support or contradict this inference. The beliefs and attitudes of potential students should also be ascertained. Research should be conducted into levels of interest in performing literature twenty-
five years old or newer and works that utilize electronic accompaniment, compared to interest in older compositions that are unaccompanied or feature traditional accompaniment, among secondary school percussionists. Finally, a cost analysis should be completed to determine actual costs to implement electronic accompaniment and digital audio workstation integration into secondary percussion education.

**Conclusion**

Music education has been predictably slow to adapt to new technologies and ideas. This is due in part to the aesthetic legacy of music education, and in part to difficulties in vetting new literature and acquiring and training educators in new technologies. However, if the role of the educator in today’s student-centered and objective-driven classroom is to inspire, equip, and prepare students for futures in music performance, production, composition, and education, percussion pedagogy must adapt and modernize. While electronically accompanied percussion and the most recent publications should not replace classical repertoire and established standard literature, their inclusion in teacher education is paramount. Just as scholarly research should include recently published sources as well as established literature, universities may benefit from encouraging or requiring the inclusion of at least one composition newer than ten years old or that incorporates electronic accompaniment. Pedagogically driven composition and electronic instruments are no longer experimental genres of music. These are the current iteration of western art music, worthy of collegiate study and pedagogical consideration.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDICES

Appendix A: Defense Decision Form


Defense Decision

The thesis Advisor and Reader have rendered the following decision concerning the proposal decision for
David Scott Strait
on the Thesis
Impressionist Composition Techniques in Modern Percussion Literature
as submitted on April 17, 2023

X Full approval to proceed with no proposal revisions.
The document should be prepared for submission to the Jerry Falwell Library.

Provisional approval pending cited revisions.
The student must resubmit the project with cited revisions according to the established timeline.

Redirect of project.
The student is being redirected to take ETHM/MUSC/WRSP 689 again, as minor revisions will not meet the expectations for the research project.

4/17/23
Print Name of Advisor  Signature  Date

4/17/23
Print Name of Reader  Signature  Date