

Mississippi State University

Scholars Junction

College of Education Publications and
Scholarship

College of Education

10-1-1995

John Bergamo's Four Pieces for Timpani: A performance guide

Robert J. Damm

Mississippi State University, rdj6@msstate.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsjunction.msstate.edu/coe-publications>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Damm, R. J. (1995). John Bergamo's Four Pieces for Timpani: A performance guide. *Percussive Notes*, 33(5).

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Education at Scholars Junction. It has been accepted for inclusion in College of Education Publications and Scholarship by an authorized administrator of Scholars Junction. For more information, please contact scholcomm@msstate.libanswers.com.

John Bergamo's *Four Pieces for Timpani*: A Performance Guide

By Robert J. Damm

FOUR PIECES FOR TIMPANI, written by John Bergamo in 1961, was first published in 1963 by Music For Percussion. It is dedicated to Max Neuhaus, who premiered the work on his bachelor's recital. Bergamo and Neuhaus were colleagues at the Manhattan School of Music for five years, where Bergamo studied with Fred Albright and Paul Price. Bergamo had been exposed to Elliot Carter's timpani pieces: similarities include the use of a variety of mallets to bring out the character of each piece, the exploration of various striking places on the drumhead to produce different sound qualities, and the appearance of the "X" to indicate hand dampening. Readers interested in comparing Bergamo's *Four Pieces...* with Carter's *Eight Pieces...* are referred to Patrick Wilson's interview with Elliot Carter in *Percussive Notes*, October 1984, Vol. 23, No. 1.

Four Pieces For Timpani is a frequently performed work in the solo repertoire. Its contrasting movements, from free to furious, allow the performer an opportunity to display both musical expression and virtuoso agility. It is well within the reach of talented high school students and makes an excellent undergraduate performance piece.

In preparing this work for a recital, many aspects of the piece seemed unclear, so I telephoned Mr. Bergamo and talked to him about some of the performance problems I encountered. Others who are considering this work for performance may benefit from the following solutions and suggestions.

TUNING

The composer stated that the tuning of the drums is only a suggestion; the specific pitches are subject to the performer's judgment, though the intervals must be maintained. The pitches indicated in the music and the resulting intervals are as follows:

- | | | |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| I. Recitative | F, A, B, D | (M3, M2, m3) |
| II. Perpetual Motion | F, A, B, D | (M3, M2, m3) |
| III. Elegia | F, G, Ab, Cb | (M2, m2, m3) |
| IV. Finale | F, G, Ab, Cb | (M2, m2, m3) |

FOUR PIECES FOR TIMPANI

by John Bergamo

Copyright © 1963 by Music For Percussion, Inc.
All Rights Reserved. Used by permission.

The accidentals in the third movement, although omitted in the fourth-movement manuscript, are to be maintained.

It is important to keep in mind the standard sizes and approximate ranges of the timpani:

32" D-A

29" F-C

26" Bb-F

23" D-A

For contrast and effect, the second movement might be tuned to the upper range

College Music SYMPOSIUM

JOURNAL OF THE COLLEGE MUSIC SOCIETY

VOLUME 33/34 - H. Lee Higgins, Editor

- Michael B. Baker*
Lessons from a World: Balinese Methods of Applied Music Instruction and the Teaching of Western Arts Music
- Laurie Hatal and Kay Norton*
Women Choral Conductors at the Collegiate Level: Status and Perspectives
- Ednaheh Seyer*
Deconstructing McClary: Narrative, Feminine Sexuality and Feminism in Susan McClary's *Feminine Endings*
- Suzanne A. Criss*
Beyond "Bach-Centurism": Historiographic Perspectives on Johann Sebastian Bach and Seventeenth-Century Music
- Gene Tranter*
An Analytical Approach to Seventeenth Century Music
- Matthew Brown*
Composers' Revisions and the Creative Process
- Catherine Nolan*
Reflections of the Relationship of Analysis and Performance
- Murray Dimes*
Schoenberg on the Modes
- Daniel Headlam*
Sketch Study and Analysis: Berg's Twelve-Tone Music
- Suzanne Nef*
Schoenberg's Theoretical Writing after the Harmonielehre: A Study of the Published and Unpublished Manuscripts
- James Bennett*
Fluidity in Paul Simon's *Graceland*
- Jeffrey Perry*
A "Requiem for the Requiem": On Stravinsky's *Canticum*

Betsy Sell and Ann Durr
Cyclical Implications in Aaron Copland's *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson*

Carl Caspary
Harmonic Behavior in *The Rite of Spring*

Gary Pater
Analyzing Improvised Jazz

BOOK REVIEWS

Introducing American Folk Music / David Willoughby

Women and Music: A History / Carol J. Oja

Samuel Barber: The Composer and His Music / Thomas Warburton

Members of The College Music Society receive a subscription to the *College Music Symposium* as a benefit of membership. Annual membership in the Society is \$37 (regular); \$42 (joint); \$25 (student); \$22 (retired). The *College Music Symposium* is available to non-members and institutions for \$25 per issue.

To join or subscribe, please contact:

The College Music Society
202 West Spruce Street • Missoula, MT 59802
Phone: 406-721-9616

College Music Symposium is a refereed journal which welcomes articles from all areas of the college, conservatory, and university music teaching profession. We are particularly interested in articles that (1) present important issues within the profession, broadly construed, and (2) illuminate teaching at the post-secondary level. We encourage a collaborative approach in which a single problem is looked at from a variety of viewpoints and, in some cases, will seek out qualified respondents for subterranean articles. Submissions and correspondence should be addressed to:

College Music SYMPOSIUM

Anne Dhu McClucas, Editor-in-Chief
1225 School of Music
University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403-1225

using these pitches: A \flat , C, D and F. In order to maintain the specified intervals and stay within the ranges of the drums, the lowest selection of pitches that would work for the third and fourth movements are A \flat , B \flat , B and D.

MOVEMENT I: RECITATIVE

According to *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, a recitative is "a type of writing, normally for a single voice, which follows closely the natural rhythm and accentuation of speech, without necessarily being governed by a regular tempo or organized in a specific form" (Sadie, 1980, v.15, p. 643). This type of writing is sometimes used in instrumental music for dramatic effect because it can offer a sense of spontaneity. In this movement there are no barlines to inhibit the performer's sense of freedom. The composer pointed out that this movement should be "musical, but not necessarily rhythmic."

Fairly hard mallets should be selected for clear articulation of the 16th- and 32nd-note passages. It is important to note the difference between trill and tremolo: tr ♯ (trill) indicates a rapid alternation of a given pitch with the diatonic second above it. The composer advises the performer to start and end the trill on the upper drum. Tre ♯ (tremolo) indicates to roll on one drum. All muffling is indicated with an "X" as is used in vibraphone dampening.

The length of each fermata is relative to the dynamic of the passage, the number of drums ringing and, especially, the acoustics of the performance hall (see Examples 1-3).

The musical examples in this article are taken directly from the score.

Example 1/In the first line, the 8th rest with the fermata might be interpreted as a half rest.



Example 2/In the fourth line, the quarter note with the fermata might be interpreted as a dotted half note.

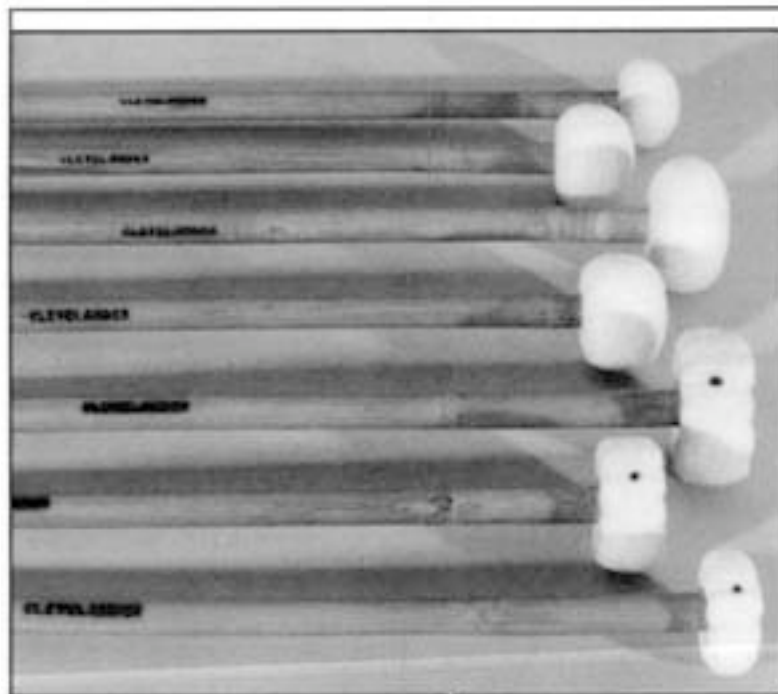


Example 3/In the fifth line, the 8th rest with the fermata might be interpreted as a whole rest.



MOVEMENT II: PERPETUAL MOTION

This movement is typical of the *moto perpetuo* in that it is a rapid piece that proceeds from beginning to end with notes of the same



"DESIGNED AND HAND SEWN BY TIMPANIERS. THE FINEST TIMPANI STICK YOU'LL EVER USE ... GUARANTEED"

Paul Yancich is Timpanist of the Cleveland Orchestra.

NEW FROM CLEVELANDER DRUM CO.

"EASILY THE BEST TIMPANI STICKS I'VE EVER USED."

BILL HANLEY—Timpanist, Vermont Symphony Professor, University of Massachusetts—Amherst.

"GREAT SOUND, GREAT FEEL, GREAT BAMBOO ... I LOVE 'EM."

JACK BRENNEN—Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, Associate Timpanist

"THESE STICKS PROVIDE THE PITCH AND CLARITY I NEED IN EVERY SITUATION."

TIMOTHY ADAMS—Timpanist, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra.


Contact Paul Yancich
THE CLEVELANDER DRUM CO.
1371 OAKRIDGE DRIVE
CLEVELAND HTS, OH 44121
(216) 691-9152

World Class Instruments
built by and for professionals



value, in this case 8th notes, facilitated by the absence of barlines. Familiar examples of the perpetual motion are the finale from Weber's *First Piano Sonata*, Mendelssohn's op.119 and Paganini's *Allegro de concert* op.11 for violin and orchestra (Sadie, 1980, v. 12, p. 648).

Mallets for "Perpetual Motion" should be thin dowel rods or rattan sticks in order to produce the particular timbre the composer had in mind. Taping the end of the sticks with moleskin will alleviate harsh contact noise. Tuning the drums to the top of their range and striking the heads near the edge tends to draw out the harmonics called for in this movement. It is important that the note groupings are clearly defined by placing a slight accent on the first note of each grouping, as in Example 4.

The symbol  indicates to strike the center of the head. The accents in the sixth line, according to the composer, are with the non-moving line to make it balance with the moving line, which naturally draws the attention of the listener (see Example 5).

The quarter rest in the seventh line should be read as a fermata in order to give time to muffle all the drums before continuing with the last section of the movement (see Example 6). Be sure to let the drums ring in the fermata at the end of this movement, shown in Example 7. Muffle only where the composer has marked an "X."

MOVEMENT III: ELEGIA

The composer intended this movement as a contrast to the others. Very soft mallets should be selected to help achieve the desired *sempre tenuto* character. This movement requires four mallets be-

Example 4 It is suggested that note groupings are defined by a slight accent.



Example 5



Example 6



Example 7



Example 8



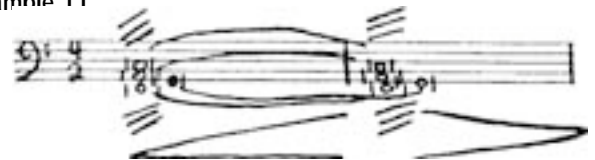
Example 9



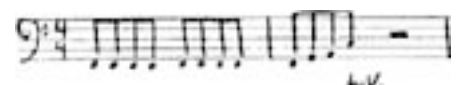
Example 10



Example 11



Example 12




Example 13



D. Picking, crafters of custom, hammered copper tympani shells for percussion specialists throughout the world.

The pure sensitivity and response of Picking Symphonic Tympani Shells have fulfilled the exacting demands of percussionists for over a century. They are hammered, solid copper (not spun), and shaped to customer specification. A treasured instrument in famous orchestras worldwide (listing available), Picking shells are much admired for beauty, tonal quality and longevity.



D. Picking & Co.
119 S. Walnut St.
Bucyrus, OH 44820
WRITE OR CALL FOR INFORMATION
(419) 562-6891

cause the performer is asked to play chords (see Example 8). It may be helpful to use mallet-dampening technique to muffle in the third measure of the third line, since all fingers are needed to hold the mallets, as shown in Example 9. The arpeggio in the seventh line may be played quite openly in the context of the mood of this piece (Example 10). The roll in the last line may be played as a ripple roll or a hand-to-hand tremolo (see Example 11).

MOVEMENT IV: FINALE

The "Finale" is to be played as rapidly as possible, "with barbaric

ferocity." The first phrase is indicated L.V. (*laissez vibrer* or let vibrate), which directs the performer to use no muffling in this movement (see Example 12). Since the tempo is so rapid, this lack of muffling allows more concentration on rhythm and tone production. The "Finale" is especially challenging because of the many double stops, as seen in line five (Example 13).

The composer specified that this movement relates to the drive and energy associated with Max Roach's bebop drumming. He recommends felt staccato mallets because he warns that wood may sound too "pounding." Wooden mallets, however, may be appropriate in order to make this movement sound more like a drumset solo.

Four Pieces For Timpani is well received by audiences and rewarding to perform. It is hoped that this guide clarifies the composer's intentions and provides helpful information

to anyone considering this piece for performance. PN



Robert J. Damm is instructor of Music Education and Percussion at Mississippi State University. He earned his M.S. from the University of Illinois and is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of North Texas.

PN



MADE IN U.S.A.

**GMS Symphonic Series
Concert Snare Drums**

The GMS Drum Co. is proud to introduce their new line of concert snare drums. These snare drums are built with the same pride and quality as all GMS products.

The Symphonic line of snare drums, was developed to give the concert player drums that were specifically designed to handle the demands that the concert stage brings. Whether it be standard repertoire, or modern composition, the Symphonic line can handle the task.

Through the unique snare system, snare assemblies can be interchanged quickly and easily to give the player the response and sensitivity that he or she demands.

After much research, and top player input, GMS developed unique snare combinations, to give the player complete control of both dynamics and precise articulation. All snares are controlled by one throw-off with individual height and tension adjustments on both the throw-off and butt sides.

Several different snare assemblies in many different configurations, are available for all of the drums in the Symphonic line.

Available in 5", 6.5", and 10" depths.

COME SEE THE NEW SNARE DRUMS, AND OTHER GMS PRODUCTS AT PASIC '95

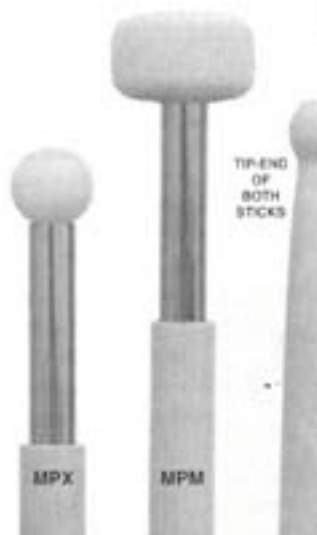
BILL WANSE
(Principal Percussion -
Phoenix Symphony Orchestra)
Satin Texture Coated
DRUMHEAD
developed by
AQUARIAN

"This is the best coated head ever. It is easy and fast to tune and it has a full, musical and sensitive sound. It's simply the best."

AQUARIAN ACCESSORIES
714-632-0230
1140 N. Tustin Ave.
Anaheim, CA 92807

Two Classics: John Beck and Regal Tip

Regal Tip introduces their new Opus series of percussion accessories with two John Beck multi-percussion mallets. MPX - xylophone, triangle, drumstick. MPM - mallet, triangle, drumstick.



For more information write or call toll-free: 1-800-358-4590

REGAL TIP™
481 Hyde Park Blvd., Niagara Falls, NY 14301

Incomparable sound.
Unbelievably portable.
The best of both worlds.

Stotz Cable Timpani

A DIVISION OF REPAIRCUSSIONS

**The intelligent alternative
to chain.**

"I used the Anheier cable system in the Cleveland Orchestra for 39 years. I'm glad they are available again for today's timpanists."

Cloyd Duff

For a free brochure:

Brian Stotz (716) 436-7630
22 Jemison Road, Rochester, NY 14623

OBERLIN

Where
Percussionists
Perform



"These days developing percussionists need all the performing experience they can get. The trouble is that most music schools give their best performing opportunities to their graduate students.

Because Oberlin is a conservatory exclusively for undergraduates, I can promise you that every student will perform... often! And in a variety of ensembles such as the widely acclaimed Oberlin Percussion Group, the Oberlin Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra, Wind Ensemble, Contemporary Music Ensemble and Opera Orchestra. Plus abundant opportunities to play chamber music, jazz and electronic music.

To find out why Oberlin is the place to put into practice what you practice, write or call us today and ask for details on our 1996 - 1997 percussion auditions.

Michael Rosen
Professor of Percussion

*For information,
please contact:*

**Michael
Manderen**

**Director of
Admissions**

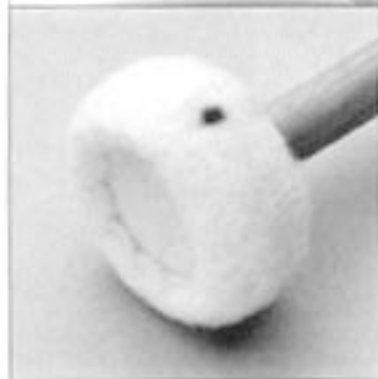
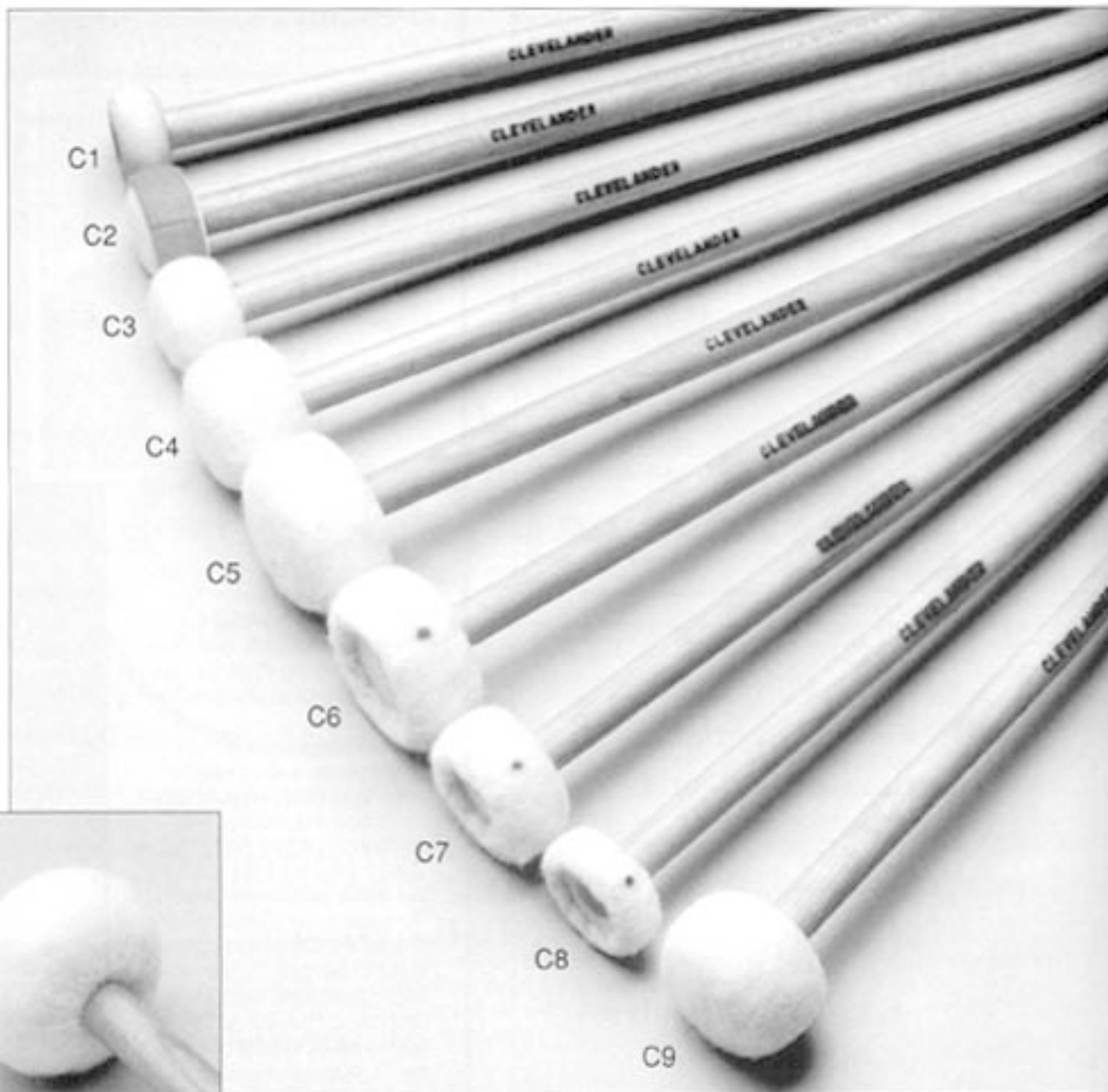
**Oberlin
Conservatory of
Music**

**Oberlin, OH
44074**

216/775-8413



TURNUED HANUDEL TIMPANI STICKS



Designed for a great sound and feel. We've shifted the weight from the handle to the contact point resulting in a very focused, ringing, projecting sound.

CDC C1 WOOD - WOOD CORE
CDC C2 ULTRA HARD - FELT CORE
CDC C3 SMALL CLASSIC BALL - WOOD CORE
CDC C4 MEDIUM CLASSIC BALL - WOOD CORE
CDC C5 LARGE CLASSIC BALL - WOOD CORE
CDC C6 LARGE CARTWHEEL - FELT CORE
CDC C7 MEDIUM CARTWHEEL - FELT CORE
CDC C8 SMALL CARTWHEEL - FELT CORE
CDC C9 ROLLERBALL - FELT CORE

Hand-matched cherry handles, precision hardwood and felt cores, the finest European luthiers, hand-sewn

*"Designed and built by timpanist.
The best sounding timpani sticks
you'll ever play."*



Contact Paul Yarnick
THE CLEVELANDER DRUM CO.
1371 OAKRIDGE DRIVE
CLEVELAND HTS., OH 44121
(216) 991-9152

World-Class Instruments
Built by and for professionals

Paul Yarnick is a Timpanist at
The Cleveland Orchestra