Daniel Levitan: An Examination of Select Unpitched Percussion Chamber Works

D.M.A. Document

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Abstract

Daniel Levitan’s percussion works are performed by collegiate and professional percussion ensembles and soloists around the world. Several of his works have become standards of the repertoire for percussion chamber music, such as *Conservatory Garden*, *Septet*, and *Marimba Quartet*. Although Levitan’s percussion music is performed frequently, there is a lack of reference materials and information about his unpitched percussion chamber compositions.

This document provides a brief discussion on six of Levitan’s most performed unpitched percussion chamber works: *Trio*, *Variations on a Ghanaian Theme*, *Septet*, *Conservatory Garden*, *Canon at the Bar*, and *Eight Two-Part Inventions*. General background information, a brief analysis of points of interest, and performance suggestions are provided for each of the composition.

The purpose of this document is to serve as a reference for performers, educators, and composers seeking more information about Daniel Levitan and his unpitched percussion chamber works.
Dedication

To my nephews, D.J. and Damien
Acknowledgments

Sincere gratitude to Daniel Levitan for his time and patience as I completed this document. Your humility and love for music truly is inspiring.

I wish to thank the members of my document committee, Dr. Susan Powell, Prof. Katherine Borst Jones, and Dr. Thomas Wells for their help and support to finish this degree. I wish to also thank Dr. Russell Mikkelson and Ms. Karen Pierson for their willingness to serve on my candidacy committee.

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your musicianship and your never-ending encouragement. I could not have finished this document without your support.

Finally, I am very thankful for my family. Dad, thanks for your support and encouragement. Jenny, thank you for all your love and for being an inspiration to me because of how hard you have worked. Mom, thanks for your endless love and for your constant encouragement as I have completed my degrees.
Vita

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Major Field: Music

Area of Emphasis: Percussion Performance
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The percussion music of Daniel Levitan is performed by percussion ensembles throughout the United States and around the world. Several of his works have become standards of the percussion ensemble repertoire which is noted because of their continued success decades after their publication.¹ His compositional output is mainly focused on music for percussion including works for solo marimba, percussion chamber works of various sizes, and an award-winning marimba concerto. Levitan has also composed for string quartet, and large wind ensemble. The music of Daniel Levitan is rhythmically complex, groove oriented, and infused with different styles of world music such as Latin-American, Afro-Cuban, and Indian music.

Percussion instruments are scientifically classified by assigning instruments into one of the five main categories of the Hornbostel-Sachs System: membranophones, idiophones, aerophones, chordophones, and electrophones. Membranophones are instruments that produce sound through a stretched vibrating membrane as the snare drum, bass drum, and timpani. Idiophones primarily produce sound as the instrument as a whole vibrates (cowbell, cymbals, and triangle). Aerophones like boomwhackers and slide whistles produce sound through vibrating columns of air. The hammered dulcimer is a percussion chordophone because sound is produced by a vibrating string that has

been struck. Percussion instruments that produce sound electronically such as the malletKAT and Xylosynth are examples of percussion electrophones.² A more practical approach to classifying percussion instruments is to categorize instruments as pitched or unpitched. Pitched percussion instruments have a determinate pitch such as the xylophone, marimba, and timpani. The snare drum, bass drum, and slapstick are classified as unpitched percussion instruments because of their indeterminate pitch.

Levitan’s percussion ensemble music can be categorized into three categories: unpitched percussion ensembles, pitched percussion ensembles, and mixed percussion ensembles. This document focuses on the unpitched percussion chamber ensemble music of Daniel Levitan. The works examined include Trio, Variations On A Ghanaian Theme, Septet, Conservatory Garden, Canon At The Bar, and Eight Two-Part Inventions.

**Statement of Problem/Need for Study**

The primary purpose of this document is to serve as reference for those performing the unpitched percussion chamber works of Daniel Levitan. This document will provide directors of percussion ensembles, musicians preparing to perform the works discussed, and all parties that are considering the programming of the works discussed with a greater understanding of each piece. Prior to this document, no extensive research or analyses of the unpitched percussion works of Levitan have been written. However, a search for writings about Daniel Levitan and his music revealed a document by Gregory Lyons that comprehensively addresses the compositional approach of Daniel Levitan, and provides

an analysis of *Marimba Four Hands*.³ Levitan’s name is also mentioned in the Percussive Arts Society’s journal, *Percussive Notes*, announcing when his new works were published. Considering the frequent performance of Daniel Levitan’s music throughout the world, it is the desire of this document’s author to provide a valuable resource for the percussion community. The author’s first hand experience through performing or coaching Levitan’s works developed into a considerable appreciation and desire to learn more about his compositions. This desire was amplified when the author began his doctoral studies at the Ohio State University with Dr. Susan Powell and Joseph Krygier.⁴ They are well-versed with the music and styles of Daniel Levitan because of their experiences with performing and regularly coaching his percussion works throughout their careers. A document of this scope can assist with the preparation of a more informed performance of the complex music of Daniel Levitan by providing general information, a brief musical examination, and performance suggestions for each of the discussed compositions.

**Procedures/Methods Used**

After examining Daniel Levitan’s listing of his unpitched percussion chamber works, both published and unpublished, the author decided to include in this document the most performed works. The frequency of performance for the works was determined by the author’s use of an informal survey of twenty-two high school and university

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⁴ Susan Powell is a Professor of Music and Director of Percussion Studies at Ohio State University. Joseph Krygier is a Senior Lecturer of Percussion at Ohio State and is the co-director of the university percussion ensemble.
percussion instructors; the survey is presented in Appendix D. Musical scores for the works were purchased by the author, and a few unpublished audio recordings were made available by Daniel Levitan for the research of this document. Consultation with Levitan through phone and email conversations was used throughout the writing process, as well as limited published documents for reference. The author wanted to re-establish his experiences with the music discussed in this document and programmed *Trio, Variations On A Ghanaian Theme, Conservatory Garden, Canon At The Bar, and several of the Eight Two-Part Inventions* over four years. Additionally, the author has coached and aided ensembles with the preparation for performance of *Septet* and *Trio*.

Parameters of Study/Scope

Before the writing process of this document began, it was determined that it was unrealistic to attempt to provide an in-depth analysis of every unpitched percussion chamber work of Daniel Levitan. Therefore, it was decided to only include the most performed works as determined by the author through his survey. After initial analysis was started for this document, it was quickly realized that a complete analysis of each of the selected works would be too large to be contained in a single document. Accordingly, a brief analysis of each work is presented with the desire to provide main points of interest for readers seeking to enhance their understanding of the works. Because the works that are examined in this document are composed for unpitched percussion instruments, brief rhythmic analyses are presented in the mode of rhythmic compositional techniques, and basic musical form is decided upon by rhythmic thematic ideas instead of an harmonic analysis.
Organization of Document

To determine the comprehensive structure of the document, the order in which the works would be presented needed to be addressed. The works appear in chronological order based on the date they were composed. This proved to lend itself to a greater understanding of Daniel Levitan’s development as a composer, and provided a clear evolution of his percussion notational system. The order of the works presented in this document is as follows:

- **Trio** (1980)
- **Variations on a Ghanaian Theme** (1981)
- **Septet** (1981)
- **Conservatory Garden** (1986)
- **Canon at the Bar** (1990)
- **Eight Two-Part Inventions** (2006-2007)

Each chapter in this document examines one work and contains three sections: Background Information, General Examination, and Performance Considerations. The first section provides the date of composition, any important information related to the reason for the work being composed, the premiere performance, and program notes provided by Daniel Levitan. Instrumentation, form, rhythmic analysis, compositional techniques used, notation system development, and other points of interest are discussed in the second section of each chapter. Points covered in the Performance Considerations section of each chapter will include suggested instrument set ups and diagrams, information to aid in the choosing of appropriate instruments, rehearsal suggestions, and information to aid with the assigning of individual parts.

Although an attempt is made to present the materials for each work as consistently as possible, it was found that some flexibility is needed due to the uniqueness of each
piece. For example, while presenting a certain composition technique used in one work might warrant the appearance of many examples in the appropriate chapter, the next work discussed might use a similar compositional technique, but might not be as frequent or important as it was in the previous chapter. Therefore, to avoid excessive repetition, only significant examples of the ideas discussed will be presented.

Musical figures and examples excerpted from the musical scores and individual parts are presented in each chapter to aid with the comprehension of the accompanying text. Some of the figures used are not directly scanned from the original music, but have been inputted into a music notation software to aid with the illustration of ideas that are being discussed. The author requested permission from Daniel Levitan and Keyboard Percussion Publications to use the musical examples that appear in this document.
Chapter 2: Biography of Daniel Levitan

Daniel Levitan was born on November 30, 1953 in Geneva, New York. Levitan’s father served in the United States Air Force and his mother was a classically-trained musician. His mother studied voice at The Juilliard School and received her bachelor’s and master’s degrees. When Levitan was ten years old he began piano lessons with Mary Blue Morris. Soon he realized that he was more interested in the notes themselves and their musical properties than being able to play the notes. Practicing did not inspire him, and instead he was frequently “noodling” around and notating his musical ideas.\(^5\) Mary Blue Morris began tailoring the lessons to focus more on composition, and he began working on species counterpoint and chorales.

In 1971, Levitan began his studies in literature and creative writing at Bennington College in Vermont. Soon after beginning college, he lost interest in the literature department and developed an appreciation for the music department. He quickly changed his degree focus and started working on a bachelor’s of arts in music degree. When asked what attracted him to the music department, Levitan said, “The thing that sold me to the department was mostly composing. The tenor of the department was that everyone plays,

\(^5\) Daniel Levitan, telephone interview with the author, June 11, 2013.
everyone writes, and everybody played other people’s ensembles. It was kind of like they wanted to have a community of musicians.”

While at Bennington College, Levitan studied composition with Marta Ptasynska (composer and percussionist), Vivian Fine (composer) and Henry Brant (composer and orchestrator). In an interview, when asked about the influence of his composition mentors, Levitan said:

Probably in terms of influence, I would say more about Henry Brant. Henry was very ‘nuts and bolts.’ He had done a lot of work for radio and film scores, so his whole thing was ‘get something that you can put on the stand and they can play it.’ It was like, if you’re going to write a piece, you have to have nice legible parts, you got to put it up there, every note has to have a dynamic, and articulation, and a tempo, the page turns, you know, it’s got to be something you can put on the stand and it’s playable. If you don’t have that, you don’t have a piece of music. He wasn’t really into what style you wrote in, the musical content didn’t mean that much to him in terms of composition teaching, what was important to him was the ‘nuts and bolts.’ So your music is playable.

This method of presenting compositions can be noticed in Levitan’s Conservatory Garden, which will be discussed later in this document.

Levitan began studying percussion at Bennington College with Louis Calabro. Calabro was a self-taught percussionist and jazz drummer before he studied composition at The Juilliard School with Vincent Persichetti. While studying with Calabro, Levitan became proficient with playing marimba and timpani, and he admits to never being

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6 Daniel Levitan, telephone interview with the author, June 11, 2013.
7 Ibid.
comfortable with snare drum. Before his final year at Bennington College, Levitan decided to complete the piano technology program at North Bennet Street School in Boston, Massachusetts, a school that teaches students how to tune, repair, and build pianos. Levitan returned to Bennington College after completing the piano technology program and graduated with his bachelor’s of arts in music.

After graduating from Bennington College, Levitan moved to California for two years. He continued his percussion training by taking lessons with San Francisco Symphony section percussionist Thomas Hemphill. During his few years in California, Levitan began his studies in North Indian tabla drumming. In an interview with the author, Levitan said:

When I left Bennington, it felt like the direction I was going musically had to deal with rhythm. Even my pitched music is all about rhythm and it’s all about time. So I thought, I don’t really have a concept of rhythm, because when you study music theory, it’s all about the relationship between pitches, it’s about voices, it’s about chords, and time is really just a cyclical and repetitive thing. So you read books about music and they talk about the theory of rhythm, and they talk about the stressed beats and the unstressed beats, and it’s all very square. There is just no movement in it. It’s very straight ahead, and there isn’t much to learn about compositional devices. So I thought, okay, I should study some music that has got a point of view or framework for doing complex stuff with rhythm. I thought, tabla seems to be the thing. It’s very linear, very linear. It is kind of like their instrumental music is about a line, it’s not really about chords. You have your drone and everything is in relationship with that one pitch. The rhythmic concept is very complex, but it’s all about that time cycle that is going on.  

Daniel Levitan, telephone interview with the author, June 11, 2013.
Ibid.
After living in California for a few years, Levitan moved to New York and decided to further his rhythm and percussion studies. Levitan explained that tabla music is very horizontal and linear in nature, and now he wanted to study the vertical aspects of rhythm by learning to play Latin percussion music.  

He began taking conga lessons with Frank Malabe, who would later inspire his compositions *Perfectly Frank* and *Conservatory Garden*. Levitan currently lives in New York and maintains an active presence in the Piano Technicians Guild through writings and lectures.

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11 Daniel Levitan, telephone interview with the author, June 11, 2013.
Chapter 3: *Trio*

Background Information

*Trio* is Daniel Levitan’s first published work for an unpitched percussion chamber group. It was composed in 1980 and Levitan was inspired to write this work after a friend brought to his attention that there is a certain two-bar rhythmic motive that appears constantly in classical music.\(^{12}\)

![Figure 1. *Trio*, mm. 1-2, Players 1 and 2](image)

This work became a compositional exercise for Levitan to attempt to provide multiple variations on a single rhythm without melody or pitch, as well as an exercise for writing for percussion. The work was written for and premiered by the Chelsea Percussion Group; Levitan was also a performer in this group.

\(^{12}\) Daniel Levitan, telephone interview with the author, June 11, 2013.
General Examination

*Trio* is scored for three percussionists with small equipment setups. Player One utilizes two cowbells, Player Two requires two drums, and Player Three uses one temple block. In an interview with the author, Levitan said the following about his process for selecting the instruments used for *Trio*:

In my mental way of categorizing instruments, drums and cowbells are very similar. They have a similar amount of ‘pitchiness,’ there’s a tone and if you have two of them you can hear a melody, sort of. They also have a similar sustain and ability to damp, and a similar kind of volume. So, they make a good little thing. Then the temple block, you would never think to dampen that, but it’s a very quick and dry sound, and then boy, you have very little equipment to schlep to a gig. You have two agogo bells on a stand, a couple of drums, and block, then you’re good to go with that.\(^{13}\)

The parts for Player One and Player Two are similar in difficulty. Both parts are comprised of sixteenth-note based rhythms throughout the work, and they are the compositionally active parts. Player One and Player Two parts are notated on a two-lined staff suggesting that the lower pitched instrument of the pair is on the lower line.

![Figure 2. Trio, m. 8, Players 1 and 2](image)

The music for Player Three is notated on a single-lined staff. The part for Player Three

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\(^{13}\) Daniel Levitan, telephone interview with the author, June 11, 2013.
utilizes only quarter note and quarter rest rhythms, and only two rhythms are used throughout the piece for this part; this part provides the constant underlying beat.

![Figure 3. Trio, mm. 8-9, Player 3](image)

The only time that Levitan deviates from the two alternating rhythms of Player Three is at rehearsal letter N.

![Figure 4. Trio, mm. 105-106, Player 3](image)

*Trio* is the first time Levitan incorporates two articulations that will become standard in the rest of his works, both pitched and unpitched. The first articulation is the “x” notehead that instructs the performer to damp the instrument indicated with the hand.

![Figure 5. Trio, m. 3, Player 1](image)

This dampens the sustaining sound that remains from the instrument after it has been struck. The second articulation is the “dot over a note.”
This articulation instructs the performer to strike the instrument indicated while dampening it, which results with a short and muffled sound. The articulation symbol used for the “dot over a note” is the same symbol used for staccato notes in standard Western classical music notation, which is also similar in sound.\textsuperscript{14} When asked about the process of developing the different articulation notations, Levitan said:

I found that if you have percussion instruments with any kind of ring and you don’t dampen, then you are really shooting yourself in the foot. There is an awful lot of expression to be found in damping. Now the question is, well how do you notate that? Traditionally, it was a rest with a little circle and a cross, like for a hi-hat. That doesn’t really work, especially if you have more than one instrument. Well, an X is kind of like you’re crossing something out, like you don’t want it there anymore. It’s saying, ‘no, don’t do that.’ So, I started to use the X note head, and some people got confused because the X symbol is sometimes used for cymbals, but still I stuck with it. Then, there is a very different sound when you are damping and then you hit it so you get that ‘flack,’ that staccato sound and so I use a staccato marking. So, I found that with those possibilities I could pretty much write on paper enough to have enough texture in a rhythm that kind of matched what I was feeling and hearing. Not all of the nuances are there, but there is enough of it. I needed to have the ‘dampen,’ the ‘hit it while dampening,’ and the open tone.\textsuperscript{15}

\textit{Trio} is based on the previously mentioned two-bar rhythmic motive with the exception that Levitan removes the downbeat of the first beat of the second bar and ends

\textsuperscript{14} In Western classical music, \textit{staccato} is defined as a detached or separated sounding note.

\textsuperscript{15} Daniel Levitan, telephone interview with the author, June 11, 2013.
the motive on the fourth sixteenth note of the beat. He decided not to end on a downbeat because it was “too square for me.”

Levitan uses this two bar rhythm to create eight-measure phrases throughout Trio in a through-composed form using formal variation techniques such as imitation, truncation, and canons that will become standard to his compositional style.

After the first eight-measure introduction, Levitan uses the first measure of the two-measure rhythmic motive and removes the third downbeat. Player two begins with the main rhythmic motive on the first beat of the measure, but player two begins with the second half of the first measure. This creates a form of imitation between the parts at the half note interval.

Daniel Levitan, telephone interview with the author, June 11, 2013.
This technique of imitation is used throughout the entire work, and Levitan experiments with the length of the interval of separation, varying from half notes and quarter notes.

The passing of the rhythmic motive between parts is another common compositional technique used by the composer; this is illustrated in the figure below.

Levitan also incorporates a *tihai*, a compositional device used in traditional Indian music to emphasize cadences by repeating an odd-metered phrase three times and ending on a downbeat of the beginning of a new cycle. An example of this is found at rehearsal letter P. Levitan employs an eleven-beat cycle, and each cycle is illustrated in the figure below with a bracket.
Tihais are used frequently throughout Levitan’s compositions. Another example can be found starting on the final eighth note of measure 86 in the part for Player One.

Another example of a tihai, but on a smaller scale can be seen in measures 109 – 111, where a three-beat motive is repeated three times and ultimately ends with the last note on the downbeat of measure 111.
Another standard composition device that Levitan utilizes in many of his works for unpitched percussion is the duple to triple conversion. He takes the rhythmic motive that is in a duple-based rhythm and then uses a triple-based rhythm to present the main rhythmic motive, but maintains almost the same number of notes in the motive and does not alter the underlying beat; this momentarily forces the listener to assume that a meter or tempo change has occurred.

This compositional device is used frequently by Levitan to emphasize a climax or coda of a piece.
Performance Considerations

Careful consideration of instrument selection must be made before beginning to prepare this work for a performance. Taking into account Levitan’s view that the cowbells and drums should be similar in sustain duration and “pitchiness,” the performer must select instruments that meet these criteria. The cowbells and drums need to have enough sustain so a noticeable dampening can be heard, and sustain must not be too much because the articulation of the faster rhythms may not be clearly heard. The closeness of pitch or register of the cowbells and drums should be compared as well. Due to the passing and splitting of the rhythmic motives between parts, the author suggests that the cowbells and drums be close in register. The timbral differences of the instruments will be enough to prevent the two parts from sounding like one part. Two standard cowbells and tom toms can be used for the instruments. However, to provide a more exotic sound, African bells or almglocken can be considered for the cowbells, and perhaps other drums such as Chinese toms can be used.

Time should be spent on the selection of appropriate sticks for each instrument while taking into consideration blend, articulation, and dynamics. The author believes that the use of standard snare drum sticks may not be appropriate for this work. Although wooden sticks are very articulate and the sixteenth-note based rhythms will be clear, the amount of contact noise on the metal cowbells might become overbearing on the listener. The author suggests using snare drum sticks or timbale sticks that are wrapped with a small layer of moleskin. The rhythms will still be articulate, but the sound of the initial attack will be minimized and sound similar to the attack sound of the drums.
Several options also exist when selecting the temple block to be used. The score calls for a single temple block, but a woodblock may also be a suitable substitution. The pitch register of the block should not be in the same register as the cowbells or drums. Since the block part is providing the quarter-note pulse the entire work, the block should be lower or higher than the cowbells and drums. It might be difficult to find a block lower than the tom toms being used, but the block should clearly be heard through the texture.

The author suggests that hard or soft rubber, hard yarn, or any other similar implement be used instead of a wooden snare drum stick. When using a wooden snare drum stick on woodblocks or temple blocks, the sound may tend to be thin.

Specific sticking choices should be made to help facilitate the moving between the two instruments and the dampening required for cowbells and drums. If the instruments are set up with the lower instrument on the left, traditional right-hand lead method of sticking can be used. Right-hand lead would require the right hand to shift quickly over to the instrument on the left on the first note of the third measure, but with practice the player will become more comfortable with this sticking. This method also allows the dampening to be executed consistently with the left hand throughout this work. This will prevent any confusion and keep stickings consistent when the “dot over the note” articulation occurs. The use of double strokes will be necessary for the dampened notes followed by a regularly struck note.
Doubles should also be utilized when pairings of two accents in succession occur. This sticking for this type of motive is standard in several of Levitan’s pitched and unpitched percussion works, including *Septet* and a few *Inventions*. This sticking infuses the rhythm with style and inflection that can be easily associated with the style of Levitan’s music.

Doubles will also need to be implemented when the following motive occurs:

[Diagram of musical notation]
The author suggests the players be staged in a small arc with Player Three in the middle. This will allow Players One and Two to clearly hear the constant beat provided by Player Three.
Chapter 4: Variations on a Ghanaian Theme

Background Information

Variations on a Ghanaian Theme was written in 1981 and was premiered by the Chelsea Percussion Group. This work was inspired by a Ghanaian rhythm heard by Levitan. In an interview with the author, Levitan said:

I had gone to hear some Ghanaian music and the master drummer played that one bar rhythm, and I thought, ‘oh, that’s a nice lick’ so then I based the whole piece on that. That one bar played by the cowbells at [rehearsal letter] A, that’s the whole thing. Then at bar four, you have that same figure, but it means something very different because now it’s in the fourth bar. Then the seventh bar it feels different again because it’s also a different part of the cycle. It’s all about making variations with that.17

General Examination

This work is scored for three percussionists, each assigned one set of instruments. Player one is scored for two cowbells, player two is scored for three temple blocks, and player three is scored for two tom-toms. The instrumentation is similar to that of Trio, however, Variations on a Ghanaian Theme is scored for three temple blocks instead of one.

This work introduces a new symbol of notation that will become standard in other works written by Levitan, this is a note that is mean to be the “opposite of an accent.”

17 Daniel Levitan, telephone interview with the author, June 11, 2013.
Levitan instructs, “A note with this mark should be touched very lightly.” This is commonly referred to as a ghost note.

![Ghost Note Symbol]

Figure 17. Variations on a Ghanaian Theme, Performance Notes

In addition to this symbol, Levitan incorporates the two symbols that were introduced in Trio, the “x” notehead and dotted notehead. All three notation symbols will become standard in several of his unpitched and pitched works.

As previously mentioned, Variations on a Ghanaian Theme was composed with one rhythmic motive as the foundation.

![Motive Example]

Figure 18. Variations on a Ghanaian Theme, m. 5, Player 1

This one-measure motive is elaborated upon and becomes an eight-measure theme that will be the focus of the entire theme and variations form.
Variations on a Ghanaian Theme begins with a four-measure introduction with all three players scored in unison. At rehearsal letter A, the main eight-measure theme is first scored for Player One (cowbells). Player One is accompanied by player three (tomtoms) playing a simple accompaniment pattern. At the end of this eight-measure phrase, Player Two enters with an anacrusis into rehearsal letter B. Player Two now presents the exact eight-measure motive that was just scored for Player One. Player One is now the accompaniment for Player Two. Levitan continues this idea of passing the main motive through each player and Player Three has a complete statement of the same theme at rehearsal letter C. However, the texture is now thicker because Player One and Two are accompanying Player Three.

After all three players have stated the eight-measure theme, Levitan introduces a new rhythmic motive at rehearsal letter D that will appear throughout the work. This is a sixteenth-note rhythm that incorporates striking the instrument as normal, dampening the instrument after striking, and striking the instrument while it is dampened. This motive first appears in both Player One and Player Three parts.
Rehearsal letter E presents the original one-measure motive, and then Levitan truncates the motive and uses only the second half of the one-measure motive to experiment with pairing Player Two and Three together. Rehearsal letter F incorporates the same truncated motive, but now all three players are playing at the same time.

All of the previous sections have featured one player as the main voice for eight-measure phrases before another player becomes the featured voice. At rehearsal letter G, Player One is featured for sixteen measures. Player One is accompanied by Player Three for the first eight measures, and Player Two is added to the accompaniment for the second eight measures. At this point, Player Two and Player Three are playing identical rhythms, however, player two is in a canon separated by five eighth-notes.

Player One has the return of the dampening sixteenth-note pattern at rehearsal letter H, and Player Two and Player Three present the exact original eight-measure theme. This
leads into rehearsal letter J, where Player Two presents a new variation on the shortened motive. Levitan then truncates this motive, creating a hemiola effect.

![Figure 22. Variations on a Ghanaian Theme, mm. 3-6 of J, Player 2](image)

Player Two is featured for a sixteen-measure phrase at rehearsal letter K. Similar to the previous sixteen-measure phrase at rehearsal letter G, Levitan scores two players for the first eight measures and the third player is added for the second eight measures. The two accompaniment parts are also in a canon, this time separated by one quarter note.

As before, after the first sixteen-measure phrase at letter G Levitan presented the original eight-measure theme in the subsequent phrase. Rehearsal letter L is the phrase following a sixteen-measure phrase and therefore Player One and Three play the original eight-measure theme. Player Two is playing the same structure as the dampening sixteenth-note motive, however, since dampening temple blocks does not achieve a similar effect as on the cowbells or tom-toms, Levitan scores a lower note as a replacement for the dampered notes.

![Figure 23. Variations on a Ghanaian Theme, mm. 1-3 of L, Player 2](image)
Rehearsal letter N is the next sixteen-measure feature and is played by Player Three. This sixteen-measure phrase follows the same form as the two previous sixteen-measure phrases. Player One and Player Two are playing a canon separated by one eighth-note.

Figure 24. *Variations on a Ghanaian Theme*, mm. 9-10 of N, Players 1 and 2

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Levitan employs a compositional device that creates the feeling of a metric shift while maintaining the original theme. Rehearsal letter O at first glance appears to use unrelated material because of a steady stream of eighth notes in all three parts. However, after further investigation, Player One and Player Three are playing material that has previously been used in this work, but at an eighth-note subdivision level. Player One is presenting the exact main eight-measure theme, but at the eighth-note level, and Player Three is presenting the dampening sixteenth-note pattern also at the eighth-note subdivision level. If performed correctly, this can give the listener a feeling of converting to half time.
Four measures before rehearsal letter P, Player Three returns to rhythms of the sixteenth-note subdivisions, and Player One follows in the third measure of rehearsal letter P. Player Two is the final player to return to the sixteenth-note subdivision in the fourth measure of rehearsal letter P. The last four measures leading into rehearsal letter Q are in unison.

At rehearsal letter Q, Levitan utilizes another canon with each player separated by one measure. Each player states the entire original eight-measure theme beginning with Player One, then Player Two, and then Player Three.

All three players are in unison at rehearsal letter R, and this leads into the final phrase of this work. Beginning at rehearsal letter S, Levitan begins one final canon that is an eleven-beat phrase starting with Player One. This can also be perceived as a pseudo-tihai, because this eleven-beat phrase, or cycle, is presented three times. This eleven-beat cycle is next presented by Player Two, and then Player three. The eleventh beat of Player Three’s cycle is the final note of this work. The author labels this as a pseudo-tihai because the final three beats of the cycle being stated by Player Three are altered by Levitan to provide a unison ending.
Performance Considerations

Due to the similarities between Trio and Variations on a Ghanaian Theme concerning instrumentation, several of the performance considerations are similar for the choosing of appropriate instruments for this work. It is important that each instrument can be heard clearly when all three players are playing at the same time. The author has reviewed several recordings and live performances of this work, and for the majority of the performances the tom-toms overpower the entire group. This is usually because the tom-toms are too low and have too much sustain. The author has had success using tom-toms that are in the middle to higher range with light dampening materials, and also using tom-toms in the lower range with a significant amount of dampening materials. Performers must be cautious not to over-dampen, because the hand dampening required in this work might be lost.

The temple blocks are often lost in the blend during this work. Special consideration of which size temple blocks to use should be made. The author suggests using medium to high pitch temple blocks, this will allow the temple blocks to not be overpowered by the lower pitched tom-toms.

The author has heard a few performances of Variations on a Ghanaian Theme performed on African percussion instruments. Large gankogui African bells replace the cowbells, log drums replace the temple blocks, and djun djun drums replace the tom-toms. If using alternative instruments, it is important to ensure that the dampening gestures required in this work will remain effective.

When preparing to perform this work, the performers need to remember this is a
theme and variations work, therefore, efforts must be made to ensure that the theme and its alterations can be clearly heard. Dynamics and balance are important, and stylistic agreement is also important. When preparing this work for a performance, the author instructed his ensemble to rehearse the eight-measure theme in unison at the beginning of every rehearsal. This allowed them to agree on style as a group, and served as a reminder that this theme is the foundation of the entire work.

The author suggests that the performers are staged in score order from stage-left to right in a small arc. This will allow the audience to visually follow the passing of motives from player to player, as Levitan frequently passed a motive in sequential order. The players should be close enough to each other that they will be able to read their music off of one shared copy of the score. Because this work does not provide individual parts, but is instead in score format, several performances have been observed where each player uses four music stands or more. This is a visual distraction to the audience members, and with a small amount of planning this can be avoided. One music stand can be placed in front of the small arc of players and one score can be shared by all the players. These are the recommended page turn assignments:

- Page 1 to 2 – Player Three
- Page 3 to 4 – Player One
- Page 5 to 6 – Player Two (turn page one measure early)
- Page 7 to 8 – Player Three
- Page 9 to 10 – Player One or Player Two
- Page 11 to 12 – Player Two (Turn page while playing eighth notes)
- Page 13 to 14 – Player Three
Chapter 5: *Septet*

Background Information

*Septet* was written in 1981 for Raymond DesRoches and his percussion group. It was performed at William Patterson University with six students and Levitan playing the roto-tom part to complete the septet.\(^{18}\) About *Septet*, Levitan stated:

> Here we have Latin influence for sure. The compositional game here is kind of having a bar that has a certain stress pattern in it and then playing different figures that have that same stress pattern in it. So, there is always an underlying beat here, rather than an underlying pulse. If you’re looking at the music, you’ll see that the bars all have the same stresses in the same place, but they are all ornamented differently.\(^{19}\)

General Examination

As the title suggests, this work is scored for seven percussionists. The instrumentation can be categorized into two groups: metallic instruments and drums. The metallic instruments are the cowbells, triangle, suspended cymbal, and cabasa, and the drums are bongos, timbales, and roto-tom\(^{20}\) (these instruments are listed in score order). Levitan describes the drums as being the main voices of *Septet*.\(^{21}\)

\(^{18}\) Daniel Levitan, telephone interview with the author, June 11, 2013.

\(^{19}\) Ibid.

\(^{20}\) A roto-tom is a single-headed drum without a drum shell, and the drum can easily be tuned by rotating the counterhoop. This tuning device makes this instrument suitable for achieving specific pitches if necessary.

\(^{21}\) Ibid.
Levitan developed new notation symbols to compose this work. In addition to the “x” notehead indicating to dampen the sound, and the dotted notehead indicating to strike the instrument while dampening that were seen in *Trio* and *Variations on a Ghanaian Theme*, Levitan created a symbol to indicate pitch bending on the roto-tom. He notates this by placing an “x” notehead on a line higher on the musical staff.

![Notation Symbol](image)

**Figure 26. Septet, Performance Notes, Rototom**

This is the first occasion that Levitan scores for pitch bending in his unpitched works. This technique will be used in later works as well. As illustrated above, Levitan has two pitch bending options. When instructed to place the elbow on the drumhead between the center and rim, the pitch will rise slightly. When instructed to place the elbow on the drumhead in the center of the drumhead, the pitch will rise more than the previous notation.

Another point of interest, in regards to notation development, is the new method of notating cabasa.
The specific notation allows the performer to create the exact sounds and style of playing that Levitan intended for the cabasa.

In the program notes in the score for *Septet*, Levitan writes:

*Septet* is a solo setting for bongos and timbales, with accompaniment provided by roto-tom, triangle, cymbals, cowbells and cabasa. The opening 16-bar theme recurs, in various orchestrations, throughout the piece, setting off developmental sections; it returns in its original form just before the brief coda.

*Septet* begins with a suspended cymbal scrape (a triangle beater is scraped along the top of the cymbal) anacrusis into a four-measure introduction that features the timbales. This leads into the first presentation of the sixteen-measure theme played by all of the players at rehearsal letter A1. Each part, with the exception of the triangle player, is playing a different rhythm, but each part contains accents in unison.
This demonstrates the underlying stresses and beat that Levitan desired to be heard. Although there are several accent patterns that reappear throughout each instrument and throughout the piece, special attention should be drawn to the accent pattern of the fourth measure of the figure above. This accent pattern appears on the fourth measure of several phrases throughout the entire work, and it is frequently used as a full ensemble response to end solos or other features of smaller pairings.

Rehearsal letter B1 introduces the compositional technique of pairing groups of players together, still with similar accent patterns to the original sixteen-measure theme. The accent patterns and resulting beats that occur can possibly be recognized as a melodic line by the listener. Levitan begins to experiment with the metric “feel” of phrases by placing accents strategically in measures. For example, at rehearsal letter B3, the stressed and accented parts of the measure occur every three sixteenth-notes, which creates a feeling of a metric shift to a faster 12/8 or 12/16 time signature and then back to

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Daniel Levitan, telephone interview with the author, June 11, 2013.
a 3/4 time signature at the end of each four-measure phrase.

Rehearsal letter C1 is a restatement of the original sixteen-measure theme, and leads into a roto-tom feature at rehearsal letter D1. After the roto-tom feature, at rehearsal letter E1, the bongos and timbales play in unison the identical timbale part from the original sixteen-measure theme (with the exception of one sixteenth-note replaced by one sixteenth-rest).

Rehearsal letter F1 through F8 features the bongos and timbales, and Levitan experiments with passing rhythmic motives back and forth from bongos to timbales.
The sixteen-measure theme returns at rehearsal letter H1 with two-measure interjections during the seventh, eighth, eleventh, twelfth, fifteenth, and sixteenth measures of the theme. These interjections are similar to the feeling of a metric shift that occurred at rehearsal letter B3.

Levitan continues to experiment with different pairings of instruments and embellishments to the main theme. Another point of interest is at rehearsal letter L1, where timbales and roto-tom are paired together, and cowbells and bongos are paired
together. These two pairings trade two-measure features back and forth, which leads into rehearsal letter M.

Similar to Levitan’s *Trio, Variations on a Ghanaian Theme*, and other unpitched works that will be discussed later in this document, he uses an immediate metric modulation at rehearsal letter M. The underlying pulse remains the same, however there are now three main subdivisions per beat versus the original four main subdivisions per beat. He achieves this by marking a meter change to 9/8.

![](image)

**Figure 33. Septet, mm. 1-4 of M, Score**

Five measures before rehearsal letter O, players begin adding rhythms that are subdividing the beat with four notes versus the current three note subdivision. This hints at the return to 3/4 that occurs at rehearsal letter O.
Rehearsal letter P1 presents the main sixteen-measure theme, but this time with quarter rests in all parts at the end of the fourth, eighth, and sixteenth measures of the theme.

From rehearsal letter Q to rehearsal letter V1, Levitan adds a constant upbeat eighth-note groove in various instruments. This upbeat figure appears first with the bongos, then the cabasa, then back to bongos, and finally to the timbales.
The final statement of the main sixteen-measure theme is at rehearsal letter V1, and is followed by the restatement of the four-measure introduction this time with bongos and timbales in unison.

Performance Considerations

When selecting which instruments to use for Septet, it is important to take into consideration a few things. First, the performers must choose appropriately sized drums, and attention to their tuning is imperative. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Levitan scored the drums as the main voices of this work. He also stated that they represent the soprano, tenor, and bass. Bongos (soprano) need to be tuned higher than the timbales.

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23 Daniel Levitan, telephone interview with the author, June 11, 2013.
(tenor), and the timbales have to be tuned higher than the roto-tom (bass). Levitan instructs that the roto-tom must be ten inches or larger in the roto-tom individual part.

Second, choosing metallic instruments that have enough sustain is imperative. If there is too little sustain, the dampening effects will be lost. The author suggests that the triangle be of higher pitch than the cowbells, this will allow the two instruments to be clearly identified as individual lines when necessary.

Preparing this work for performance can be challenging because of the number of players and the sometimes thick scoring. Careful attention to dynamics will aid with the balance and blend of the ensemble. It is important to identify which parts are simply accompaniment, and which parts are being featured in sections throughout the work.

The complicated rhythmic nature of this work can lead to challenging moments for the ensemble, and the author has found success rehearsing only the accents of each part played in unison by the ensemble. This allows the performers to become more comfortable with the stressed and accented notes which collectively produce a melodic-like line. While aware of the accented lines, phrasing and direction can be encouraged based on the patterns.

Sticking decisions should be agreed upon by the timbales and bongos players. Stickings can affect the phrasing and style of the rhythms. The author has explored playing with the right-hand lead method, and has also used doubling at points to accentuate style. The figure below is the important fourth measure accent pattern that was mentioned earlier in this chapter, and it includes the suggested sticking which includes doubling when there are two accents in succession.
The author suggests that most of the phrases with several accents should use a sticking that keeps the right hand playing the accented notes and left hand playing notes without accents; this is similar to *Trio* and some of the *Inventions*. The figure below illustrates an example of this sticking pattern for the timbale player.

![Figure 36. Septet, Example of Double Sticking](image)

This can also be applied to the bongo player on several occasions throughout *Septet*.

The bongo player should be aware that the several groupings of thirty-second notes throughout this work can be played with single-alternating strokes (“singled”) instead of doubled. The marked tempo is no too fast, and this sticking can be achieved. Playing these notes singled allows the player more freedom to phrase toward the emphasized downbeat or other parts of the measure. Although it might be challenging at first, especially when there are twelve thirty-second notes in a row, it is possible with dedicated practice time; this sticking provides an inherent inflection to this part. The
timbales part has fewer thirty-second note groupings, but this can be applied to this player as well.

The author has experimented with the order of the performers positioned on stage. Performance venues are different, therefore, special consideration of the pros and cons of the acoustics of the venue is important. The following is a depiction of the setup the author has found to be most successful:

This set up allows the bongos, timbales, and roto-tom (soprano, tenor, bass) to be close to each other. Because the bongos and timbales have similar parts and are often paired together throughout this work, the author recommends this set up. However, if the bongo and timbale performers are comfortable with their individual playing, the roto-tom can be placed in the middle. This will give a clear visual path of the roto-tom to the audience, and they will be able to see the dampening and other techniques that are required of this part.
Chapter 6: *Conservatory Garden*

Background Information

*Conservatory Garden* was composed in 1986 and was dedicated to Frankie Malabe.

Levitan studied congas and Latin percussion with Malabe who was a well-known *conguero* (conga player). In an interview with the author, Levitan said:

Yes, it has obvious Latin influence, and that was because of Frankie. It’s very Latin, lots of Latin in *Conservatory*. This premiere was in Boston, and it was a memorable night for me. I’m not much of a baseball fan, but the Mets were in the world series against Boston, and we (Chelsea Percussion Group) played this in Boston on a composer’s conference concert of some sort, while the game was going on. This concert was on the last game of the series, and we came out in Mets gear! In Boston! But it was okay because the Mets were losing, and so everyone was making fun of us, but this was the famous game with Bill Buckner, where the ball went through his legs and lost them the game. So we were out after the concert and the Sox lost, and we couldn’t believe it.  

The piece was named after a section of Central Park in New York City that Levitan would walk by on his way to lessons with Malabe called Conservatory Garden. The Conservatory Garden is divided into three sections, coincidentally similar to the form of Levitan’s work. Although, Levitan admits there is no relation between the three sections of the park and the three sections of his work.

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26 Daniel Levitan, telephone interview with the author, June 11, 2013.
General Examination

*Conservatory Garden* is a quartet for unpitched percussion. It features four roto-toms (one for each performer) and a few other instruments in each set up.

Player 1
- One Roto-tom (smallest of the four)
- Two Cowbells
- Splash Cymbal
- Pair of Sticks

Player 2
- One Roto-tom (second largest of the four)
- Snare Drum
- Crash Suspended Cymbal
- Pair of Sticks

Player 3
- One Roto-tom (second smallest of the four)
- Bass Drum (kick drum)
- Hi-hat
- Pair of Sticks
- One Soft Beater (stick for bass drum)

Player 4
- One Roto-tom (largest of the four)
- Two Temple Blocks
- Ride Cymbal
- Pair of Sticks
- Pair of Hard Vibraphone Mallets

Levitan uses a notational system similar to the one used in an earlier work, *Autoclave*. However, *Conservatory Garden* utilizes fewer instruments per player, and therefore it is more accessible to the performer when first getting acquainted with this style of notation. It is the author’s opinion that the notation used is naturally intuitive and was well-devised by Levitan. The roto-tom has six methods of playing in this work, which might appear daunting, but the performer must remember that noteheads
represented by an “x” are a method of dampening with either the hand or elbow, and regular noteheads are to be struck regularly with a stick. Their position on the staff was determined by the resulting height of the pitch. Applying pressure to the drumhead to dampen with the elbow will raise the pitch and is therefore noted as such. Below is an illustration excerpted from the General Notes page available in the score for *Conservatory Garden*.

![Rototom Notation](image)

A--Damp the drum completely.
B--Play the drum open, in the usual way.
C--Damp the drum by pressing the elbow between the center and rim of the drum head. The pitch will rise somewhat.
D--Strike the drum while damping as in C above.
E--Damp the drum by pressing the elbow in the center of the drum head. The pitch will rise considerably.
F--Strike the drum while damping as in E above.

Figure 38. *Conservatory Garden*, General Notes

Although *Septet* utilizes the dampening of the roto-tom with the elbow and the result is a rise in pitch, *Conservatory Garden* is the first of Levitan’s unpitched percussion works to have a pitch-bending line that is achieved by striking the drumhead while the elbow is applying pressure to the drumhead. By adding pressure from the elbow, the pitch will rise, and the opposite effect occurs when you release pressure from the elbow. These pitch-bending lines are notated with a line above the grouping of notes that indicates if the bend in pitch should become higher or lower in pitch.
A new development in Levitan’s notation for *Conservatory Garden* is the depiction of a rim shot. A rimshot is a sound effect created by the striking of the rim and drumhead simultaneously with one stick. Traditionally a rimshot is notated by an “x” notehead with an accent mark. Because this style of notation does not coincide with Levitan’s notational system (“x” noteheads represent dampening in Levitan’s music), he created a new symbol for notating rimshots. In the notation key, the performer is instructed to strike the rim of the drum when a notehead appears on the lowest line of the staff, and to strike the drumhead when the notehead appears on the space below the staff. Therefore, Levitan uses a double notehead (one notehead on the line representing the rim, one notehead on the space representing the drumhead).²⁷

Consort is the start of *Conservatory Garden* with an Introduction Section that starts on the first measure and ends on rehearsal letter E. Then there is a repeated eight-bar theme that the

²⁷ Daniel Levitan, telephone interview with the author, June 11, 2013.
author labels as the Groove Section. This leads to the first main section that the author labeled as the A Section. Then the Groove Section reappears and leads into the B Section. After the B Section, the Groove Section is played once again, and leads into the C Section. The Groove Section appears one last time, and the piece ends with a Coda section that presents material similar to the Introduction Section.

The Introduction begins with Player I playing on the roto-tom a skeleton of what is to develop into the main rhythmic theme of this work.

![Figure 41. Conservatory Garden, m. 1-3, Player 1](image)

Although there are several notes presented at once, it is important for the performers to be aware of the importance of playing the open tones correctly. The open tones present a rhythmic melody that is loosely based on a 3-2 rumba clave.

![Figure 42. Conservatory Garden, m. 1 of A3, Player 1 Open-Tone Melody](image)

The rim clicks also should be a point of interest for performers and listeners of this work. While Player I is developing the opening motive there are moments when Levitan places
the main rhythmic motive on the rim instead of on the open tones.

Notice in the previous illustration that the complete 3-2 rumba clave is presented on the rim with accents.

After the main motive has been presented a few times on both open tones and rim clicks, Player I now begins to strike the drum while dampened more frequently and the open tones are not as dominant. The resulting rhythmic melody from the open tones becomes more playful and develops over sixteen measures (rehearsal letters A2 to B1) to the original open tone motive. This leads to the entrance of Player II.

With the entrance of Player II, the open tone melody is split between the two players. Illustrated below is a rewritten version of the composite melody.

It is also worth noting that the first two players play rim clicks in unison for every measure from the entrance of Player II until the first Groove Section except for eight
measures. These rim clicks provide another layer of an accompanying rhythm to the open tone melody that is present throughout the entire Introduction.

Player III enters after several measures of interaction between the first two parts, and now the open tone melody is heard across all three players. Similarly, Player IV enters and the composite open tone melody is divided among all four players. Below is a re-notated example of the four-player composite melody.

![Figure 45. Conservatory Garden, mm. 3-4 of D1, All Players Composite Melody](image)

The first Groove Section begins at rehearsal letter E and is the first appearance of each player’s auxiliary instruments. It is a change in timbre because of the addition of the metal instruments such as the cowbells, splash cymbal, crash cymbal, and hi-hat. The open tone melody is still present during this section, and there is an emphasis on the rumba clave through accented notes in the cowbells. This is important because this becomes the main motive of the following A Section.

The A Section begins at rehearsal letter F1 with a sudden change in texture. The parts are now lightly orchestrated, and the complete 3-2 rumba clave is played by Player IV. The clave is traded every two measures from Player IV to Player III. In this section, Levitan experiments with different pairings of players playing similar parts, and begins to divide rhythmic motives between more than one player. In the third measure of rehearsal
letter F3, the clave is split between Player II and Player III.

In contrast to the Introduction, there are no rim clicks in this section until the third measure of rehearsal letter F7, which serves as transitional material back into another Groove Section. The rim clicks are introduced sparingly by appearing only a few times in each measure and split between players. The rim clicks appear more frequently as the measures continue and the resulting pattern is the 3-2 rumba clave played in unison by all four players. This is illustrated in the below figure, and note that rim clicks are notated on the lowest line of each staff.

Figure 46. Conservatory Garden, m. 3-4 of F3, Score
While the rumba clave is being established, Levitan introduces a new two-measure open tone motive two measures before rehearsal letter F8 that is split between all four players. The illustration below is a renotated version of the composite open tone motive.

![Conservatory Garden, m. 9 of F7, Score](image)

The two measures following the illustration above do not have open tones in any part, and the focus is back on the rumba clave for two measures. The next two measures contain the same rhythm from the previous open tone motive, but the pitch order is different. The illustration below is a renotated version of the new composite open tone motive.

![Conservatory Garden, mm. 11-12 of F7, All Players Composite Melody](image)
Levitan then uses the same rhythm in the following two measures, but now in unison for all parts playing open tones.

This leads to the second Groove Section.

The second Groove Section begins at rehearsal G and is similar to the first Groove Section, with the exception that the cowbells have a rhythm different from the rumba clave. This new rhythm emphasizes the same rhythm as the previous open-tone melody rhythm.
This rhythm becomes the main rhythmic motive for the B Section.

A point of interest in the B Section is at rehearsal letter H4. Levitan creates a 7/8 metric feel while remaining in 4/4, followed by a 9/8 metric feel, and back to a 7/8 metric feel. This is clearly articulated in the part for Player II.

Below is an illustration of the same part renotated in the 7/8 and 9/8 meters.

After a third Groove Section, the C Section begins at rehearsal letter K1. This section utilizes space through implementing several rests throughout the entire group.
These rests create the feeling of a sudden pause in time and can disorient the listener and their perception of where each measure begins.

Figure 54. *Conservatory Garden*, mm. 5-8 of K9, Score

Levitan inserts longer rests as transitional material back into the final Groove Section.

Figure 55. *Conservatory Garden*, mm. 5-7 of K15, Score
The final Groove Section ends with two measures of rests after the initial downbeat two measures before rehearsal letter M1. This marks the beginning of the Coda Section. These last few measures present material similar to what was played during the Introduction, however, it begins with all four players active and one by one the players stop playing, which leaves Player I playing the original rhythmic motive alone. The piece ends with a flourish of thirty-second notes played by Players II, III, and IV on their rototom rims, followed by every player striking one final open tone.

![Figure 56. Conservatory Garden, final 3 measures, Score](image)

**Performance Considerations**

Because *Conservatory Garden* is focused on the roto-toms, it is important to choose appropriate instruments for each player. The author has observed many performances of this work where performers use smaller sized roto-toms, and the sounds that are intended by the composer are not clearly demonstrated. All four roto-toms should be different sizes, and when selecting the smallest drum to be used consideration must be made that the drum must be large enough to allow the entire hand to dampen the drum and still
allow room for striking the drum. The author suggests the use of 8”, 10”, 12”, and 14” roto-toms. Ensembles have used concert toms when roto-toms are not available, and the author believes that the sound is different than what was intended by Levitan. Roto-toms do not have extended shells, which affects the sound and resonance of the instrument. If using concert toms, it is not recommended to use double-headed concert toms or drum set toms because the dampening and pitch bending effects will not be clearly heard due to the resonant head.

Roto-toms have a unique ability to be tuned to specific pitches quickly and effortlessly. Although Levitan does not specify actual pitches for each player, consideration must be made prior to performing this work. If the pitches collectively produce a major triad that might be distracting to the audience. The author has experimented with using diminished chords and other collections of pitches that are not too similar to an easily recognized chord.

Various factors need to be considered when selecting appropriate cymbals to be used. In general, the cymbals need to have a quick envelope of sound and a clear-sounding bell. The author has found that thinner cymbals tend to produce a quicker response when struck than thicker and darker cymbals.

The author recommends the use of a smaller concert or multi-percussion bass drum with dampening material such as towels to remove some of the excess resonance. The author has also found success with using a drum set bass drum with most of the padding and dampening removed.

Levitan provides suggested set up diagrams for each player in the score and
individual parts. The score does not indicate in which order the players should appear in performance. It is common for the performers to be arranged in descending player number order from stage left to right in an arc. The author has also experimented with performers arranged in order of roto-tom pitch descending from stage left to right (Player I, Player III, Player II, Player IV).

After assigning parts to individual players, there should be a discussion of all the techniques employed for this work so the style of playing will be identical throughout the ensemble. One frequently overlooked striking technique is when players strike the rim of their roto-toms. Some players feel comfortable playing on the rim on the side away from their body, and others feel comfortable playing the rim on the side closest to their body. The latter is what the author recommends, because of the easier maneuverability between playing rim and rimshots. The style of playing the patterns that depict an “x” and dotted “x” in quick succession should be practiced as an ensemble as well.

Figure 57. Conservatory Garden, mm. 4-6 of H3, Player 1

The author plays this in a manner similar to the heel-toe method used for conga playing. The heel of the hand strikes first and remains on the drumhead, and the fingers follow and tap the already dampened drum head.

As explained in this chapter, the open tones on the roto-toms are an important
aspect of this work. Therefore, it is suggested to practice sections of this piece by only playing the open tones. This will allow the performers to work on balance, direction, and composite phrasing of the open tone motives.
Chapter 7: *Canon at the Bar*

Background Information

*Canon at the Bar* was written in 1990 and it was premiered by Doug Walter, Professor of Percussion at the University of Colorado - Boulder. This work is approximately five minutes in length and is a rudimental snare drum duo that is moderately easy. Levitan stated that this work was written to be an intellectual study where he could write a canon for rhythm. He was inspired to write *Canon at the Bar* by Bob Becker’s snare drumming, which is influenced by his own study of tabla and world music. This work creates an opportunity for listeners and performers to simply enjoy the natural interplay between rhythms and phrases.

General Examination

After approximately twenty years of developing a unique notational system for unpitched percussion, Levitan resorts back to simple standard notation. The music is printed on a single-lined staff, and standard symbols for roll rudiments are used.

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28 Daniel Levitan, telephone interview with the author, June 11, 2013.
29 Ibid.
Canon at the Bar relies on the interactions between both snare drum parts that are separated exactly by one measure. The challenge in writing this work was to create musical ideas that could occur between the two players playing identical music, but distanced by one measure. The music is only one part, and Levitan indicates where the second snare drummer is to begin playing.

The form of this work is similar to rondo form. There is an eight-measure introduction that leads into the theme of this work, which will be restated six times throughout the piece. Between each presentation of the theme there is either an eight-measure or sixteen-measure section. After the final statement of the theme, there is an eight-measure coda.

The rhythmic motive of the theme becomes the material that will be varied throughout this work.
The eight measures of the theme are restated with no alterations to the measures in this work, with the exception of the fourth presentation of the thematic material.

The theme is rhythmically modulated into a triple feel, versus the original duple feel. This is a compositional technique that Levitan uses in several of his unpitched works that are being discussed in this document including *Trio, Septet, Invention 2, Invention 5,*
Invention 6, and Invention 8. The theme in triplets contains the exact same amount of notes per beat as the theme in duple. This allows the listener to easily recognize the theme, however it is now perceived in a swing style.

The first eight measures following the eight-measure triplet theme remain in the triple feel. Levitan then transitions immediately back to duple feel rhythms at rehearsal letter O. The first measure of rehearsal letter O contains only quarter notes, which ensures there will not be any duple versus triple rhythms occurring at the same time because the second snare drum is still one measure behind playing triplets. However, three measures before rehearsal letter P Levitan introduces sextuplet-based rhythms.

Figure 62. Canon at the Bar, mm. 118-119

Rhythmic dissonance is intentionally avoided by scoring for measure 117 to contain only eighth notes. In the measure before the final statement of the theme, Levitan writes sixteenth notes which will be rhythmically dissonant with the sextuplets being played one measure behind by the second snare drummer. This is illustrated below with both players’ parts placed on top of each other.
During the final statement of the theme, the second snare drummer is instructed to skip the last measure of the eight-measure phrase. This allows for the second snare drummer to “catch up” with the first snare drummer, and this leads into the Coda. The final eight measures of Canon at the Bar might, at first, appear to be a canon where both players are separated by five quarter notes. However, after further investigation, Levitan has written an eleven-beat cycle tihai for Player One; the cycles are indicated with brackets in the figure below.
Performance Considerations

When choosing snare drums for the performance of this work, Levitan indicates only one instruction in the music: Use two drums with markedly different timbres. The author suggests using two snare drums with different sizes of depth. The performers can experiment with assigning the lower- or higher-sounding snare drum to either Player One or Player Two.

Practicing this work, it is important for the performers to match each other’s dynamics as close as possible. If one player plays a motive softer than the other, then the effect of the canon might be lost. It is also important for the stickings to be identical across parts, because this might aid in the visual representation of the canon to the audience.
Set up possibilities are limited because this work only involves two players. The author has seen performances of this work where the performers are facing each other and the audience has a view of their profiles. Visually, this allows the audience to notice mainly the similarities in the height of the sticks, but does not clearly show the effects of the stickings chosen. Therefore, the author suggests this piece should be performed with the players side by side and facing the audience. The music stands should be as low as possible or to the side, which will allow the audience a full view of the performers hands and arms. The audience will have a visual understanding both vertically and horizontally of what is transpiring in the music with this set up.
Chapter 8: *Eight Two-Part Inventions*

Background Information

Levitan’s *Eight Two-Part Inventions* were written between 2006 and 2007 after almost a fifteen year break from composing. During this period off from composing, Levitan’s main focus was on his main occupation of tuning pianos, and later his children. In an interview with the author, Levitan said:

I decided to get back into writing again. The first thing that I wrote after that period of time off was the *Inventions*. Suddenly, I found that natural, that it was just coming to me. All those pieces you’re talking about (*Conservatory Garden, Autoclave, Variations on a Ghanaian Theme*) are very intellectually constructed, way too much in my view. There is a lot of form going on and there is way too much to cling to, they’re almost like etudes on form, there is music in there too, don’t get me wrong, but the *Inventions*…that’s the music that I always wanted to write. Every note in those things comes from…I never had to think about it. I would fool around with it, and it would crystallize all by itself. I had done something to my brain during all those years off, and the payoff was writing those inventions. They were just like “yeah! That’s the music I always wanted to write!” To me, that’s the best work I’ve ever done in music. Hands down, *Inventions*, that’s it.

The *Inventions* are each dedicated to important people in Levitan’s life: Uli, Daved, Joan Arnold, Linda Moses, John Buchbinder, Steve Rifkin, Rollie Ristine, and Henry Brant.

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30 Daniel Levitan, telephone interview with the author, June 11, 2013.
31 Ibid.
General Examination

The *Eight Two-Part Inventions* are written for two percussionists and Levitan did not specify instruments to be used. Guidelines for selecting the instruments to be utilized are included with each *Invention*. Levitan indicates five parameters to be considered: loudness, sustain, pitch, pitch clarity, and attack.

The parameters are defined below exactly as they appear in the score of each *Invention*:

Loudness: In the *Inventions*, all eight instruments chosen for any given piece should have about the same loudness, but of course different *Inventions* can have different loudness.

Sustain: In the *Inventions*, the instrument on the top line, where the notes have half-ties, should have a relatively long sustain, while the three instruments on the bottom three lines should have a relatively short sustain.

Pitch: In the *Inventions*, within each player’s set the instrument chosen for the top line of the three-line staff should have the highest pitch, the instrument chosen for the bottom line should have the lowest pitch, and the instrument chosen for the middle line should be pitched somewhere in between. Furthermore, the pitches of player one’s instruments should be higher than the pitches of the corresponding instruments in player two’s set.

Pitch clarity and Attack: The more pitch clarity a percussion instrument has, the more the ear tends to hear it as the most important voice. Pitch clarity is relative: In the context of instruments such as cymbals and snare drums, which have almost no pitch clarity, instruments like cowbells, congas, or timbales seem to have very clear pitches. However, in the context of standard instruments — piano, guitar, winds, etc. — these same instruments sound unpitched.

Each player uses four instruments, and they are notated on a four-line staff. The top line is separated slightly from the bottom three lines. This aids with the recognition of the one instrument that is referred to as the “sustain instrument.”
The “x” notehead is used in the Inventions to indicate when to dampen the sound of the struck instrument. Dampened notes only appear on the sustain line for all of the Inventions. Levitan also writes for “ghost notes” in the Inventions 3-8, but instead of using his normal symbol of the small curved-line under the notehead, he employs parenthesis surrounding the note that is to be lightly struck. Below is an example of the “ghost notes” in Invention 3.

None of the Eight Inventions has an indication of tempo or dynamics. These are left up to the discretion of the performers. Depending on the tempo chosen for each Invention, the length is approximately two to five minutes for each Invention. Considerations that should be made about dynamics and tempo will be discussed later in this chapter. This style of composing is polar to the previous compositional methods of Levitan, where his music was highly detailed and specific.

In an interview with the author, Levitan said the following about the musical form of the Eight Two-Part Inventions:
The form of a traditional piece or song even is that you have a theme or a tune, then you have your way with it, and then you repeat it, and now you’re done. But for these, there is a musical germ, or phrase. This musical germ was something that I came up with when I was taking out the garbage and accidentally started banging on the garbage can, something that I banged on the sink that came to me while I was waiting for the water to heat up. It just comes to you and there is potential there. Then I don’t come back to it, I start in a time signature and it ends some place else after it has evolved. That’s the form of these. It’s especially important if you want to go into different time signatures. Every time you go into a different time signature, it’s asking a lot of the listener. They have to know if you’re playing syncopations over what they are used to, or does that now become a new thing. So to go through all that, and then come back to the original time signature? Why do you need to? The germ is that idea, and what you’re doing is having that thing that is pregnant with possibilities, and it’s like a gem. You hold it up to the light in different ways, and in each way you hold it, it shows a different facet of it. You’re exploring all the different meanings in there. It’s like setting a chorale melody with different harmonies. All of the implications that those harmonies bring out are intrinsic to the melody, and you’re just saying, “look this was in there.” This was in there even when there was no accompaniment. So, I would have these musical germs in my head all day, and I would be singing them everywhere and then suddenly I would realize, “oh, I’m in a different time signature,” or I was in a different part of the bar. I would sketch these ideas down, and then once I had enough, I would put these ideas together and form the piece. I didn’t care if it ended where it began. That was a real act of courage for me. I’m not going to end where I started. I don’t have to, so there. (Laughter)

33 Daniel Levitan, telephone interview with the author, June 11, 2013.

The remaining portion of this chapter will be addressing each Invention and the author will introduce the main motive or “germ” of each Invention. Interesting implementation of the motives will be introduced, as well as the interaction of the motive within the various time signature changes that are presented. The purpose of the following general examinations is not to provide an exhaustive list of the methods Levitan used compositionally in each Invention. The goal is to make performers aware of a few of the compositional techniques that are employed that might allow the players to have a more informed performance, and to hopefully inspire the performers to further
explore the manipulation of the motives on their own.

Invention 1

This Invention is composed with eight-measure phrases. The main motive is illustrated in the figure below.

![Figure 67. Invention 1, mm. 1-2, Score](image-url)

The motive is first stated by Player One in the first measure, and Player Two presents the motive in the following measure.

Levitan begins to move the motive to different beats of the measure. At first, the motive is presented several times on the downbeat. In the anacrusis to measure 18, the second half of the main motive now begins on upbeats for Player Two, and Player One presents the first half of the main motive starting at the end of the measure on the final upbeat. With an anacrusis to measure 19, Player One and Player Two compositely present the entire main motive that has now been shifted to the upbeat. This is notated in the figure below.
In measures 25 through 28, the motive is shifted to the fourth sixteenth-note partial of the beat. This is first presented by Player Two with a complete statement of the original motive.

Player Two presents the complete motive following Player One, and then another shift occurs. The first half of the main motive has shifted to the second sixteenth-note partial of the beat. The following figures illustrates the half motive first in Player One’s part and then Player Two’s part.
Now the motive has been placed on each of the four partials of sixteenth notes, and the motive returns back to the downbeat at the time signature change to 7/8 in measure 33. The new time signature is one eighth-note shorter than the original 4/4 time signature, and Levitan presents the main motive in its nearly identical form, with the exception of an eighth-note being removed and replaced with a sixteenth note. The figure below presents the original motive in 4/4 next to the motive in 7/8.

In measure 41, there is a new time signature change to 12/16. This time, the main motive first appears in Player Two’s part in its original form.
Because the motive is in its exact original form despite being in a time signature that contains four fewer sixteenth-notes than the original time signature, the motive continues into the second measure of the new section. The listener might interpret this as a return to the original time signature, but the sustain instrument notes for Player One indicate that the music is in a different time signature.

The time signature changes back to 4/4 (common time) in measure 57, and the main one-measure motive is presented in two measures. The first half of the motive is stated and is followed by two quarter notes. The second half of the motive is then presented and is also followed by two quarter notes. Similar to Variations on a Ghanaian Theme, Levitan writes the main motive in a half-time feel by presenting the main motive as eighth-notes instead of as sixteenth-notes starting in measure 59.
The main motive returns back to its sixteenth-note base in measures 61 through 62, and one quarter note is removed. The half-time feel returns for the next two measures, and this trading of half-time feel versus normal-time feel continues until the end of the work. One final statement of the original one-measure motive is split between both players, and this terminates this *Invention*.

![Figure 74. Invention 1, mm. 72-end, Score](image)

*Invention 2*

*Invention 2* is comprised of seven-measure phrases throughout the entire piece. The main one-measure motive is illustrated below by Player Two in the first measure of this *Invention*.

![Figure 75. Invention 2, m. 1, Player 2](image)

The first point of interest with regards to the manipulation of the main motive occurs in measures 7 through 8 where Levitan begins the motive on the fourth sixteenth-note of the original motive, and he also writes this beginning on the second beat of the measure.
Similar to Invention 1, the motive is shifted to different parts of the beat and measure throughout this Invention. He also experiments with starting on different partials of the original motive. For example, in the anacrusis to measure 18, Player One begins on the second note of the original motive, which is the thirty-second notes.

Because of the various shifting and different starting points on the motive, the listener might not be able to easily identify where the first beat of each measure occurs, however, the sustain line is constantly indicating beat one. Throughout this Invention, the main motive is truncated and split between both players.

The time signature changes to 12/8 in measure 29, and the original motive is presented identically, but in a triple-feel. The figure below illustrates the original duple-feel motive next to the new triple-feel motive.
In measure 43, the music returns to a duple-feel, but now with a 4/4 (common time) time signature. The motive is presented again with an additional beat at the beginning of the motive.

The motive is manipulated further into a 7/8 and 5/8 time signature beginning at measure 50 and at measure 57 respectively.

*Invention 3*

*Invention 3* begins in a 5/4 time signature and the phrases are of various length throughout the work. The main motive is presented in unison in the first measure with some thirty-second note embellishments in each part.
The manipulation of the motive throughout this work is more challenging to identify, but much of the material is based on the accent pattern of the original motive.

Similar to the two previous Inventions, the motive is manipulated by truncating the length, beginning on different beats of the motive, and splitting the motive between both players.

The time signature changes to 3/4, 5/4, and then 5/2. In measure 26, the time signature is 5/2 and the motive is identical to the main motive, but it is presented in a half-time feel with eighth-note subdivisions instead of sixteenth-note subdivisions. This is illustrated in the figure below.
Levitan continues to change the time signatures to 5/4, 3/2, 24/16, 15/16, 5/4, and ends the work in 4/4.

*Invention 4*

*Invention 4* begins in 12/8 and the motive is not as complex as the other *Inventions*, however, this *Invention* is rhythmically more complex as a whole. The main motive is presented by Player One in the first measure.

This motive is varied by elaborating on the second half of the motive, but the complete motive occasionally is restated throughout, although it can be difficult to identify at first. The complete motive returns in measure 4 in Player Two’s part.
The complete motive is presented again in measure 7 by Player One, but the motive begins on the fourth sixteenth-note of the measure.

![Figure 85. Invention 4, m. 7, Player 1](image)

Again, the complete motive is written in the part for Player One in measure 13, but the motive begins on third sixteenth-note of the measure (second eighth-note).

![Figure 86. Invention 4, m. 13, Player 1](image)

In measure 19, the complete motive is presented once more, but now twice as fast with a thirty-second-note base instead of the original sixteenth-note base.

![Figure 87. Invention 4, m. 19, Player 1](image)
The original motive returns in measure 25, but in measure 27 the time signature changes to 36/16, and then to 18/16, and then 9/8. Levitan continues to manipulate the second half of the motive throughout the rest of this *Invention*, and the complete motive appears in various time signatures. The final statement of the motive concludes this *Invention*, with the first half of the motive in “normal” time, but the second half of the motive is presented in half-time with eighth-note subdivisions in unison.

![Figure 88. Invention 4, mm. 51-end, Score](image)

*Invention 5*

Levitan’s *Invention 5* begins in 4/4 (common time), and contains mainly four-measure phrases with the occasional two-measure phrase throughout. The main motive of this *Invention* is illustrated in the figure below.

![Figure 89. Invention 5, m. 1, Player 1](image)

The methods used to manipulate this motive are similar to the other *Inventions*. The motive is split into two halves, written in canon, and placed on different beats of a
measure. It is easier to identify the motive and its development and manipulation in this

_Invention_ than in some of the other _Inventions._

In measure 31, the time signature changes to 12/8, and the original motive is presented in triple-feel.

![Figure 90. Invention 5, m. 31, Player 2](image)

This metric shift only changes the underlying subdivisions from duple to triple subdivisions, while the pulse remains the same. Therefore, it appears to stay in tempo, but with a slightly more swing-feel.

Another meter change occurs in measure 40, with a shift back to duple subdivisions in a 6/4 time signature. During this metric modulation, the eighth-note tempo remains constant, which means the new quarter-note pulse is faster than the original pulse at the beginning of the work. However, the pulse is subdivided into four sixteenth-notes instead of six sixteenth-notes as in the preceding section. The motive is presented by Player Two in this new time signature after a single-measure transition. This is illustrated in the figure below.
The next time signature change is in measure 49 to a 3+3+2/8. Although this time signature contains the same amount of eighth-notes as a 4/4 time signature, the emphasis of the rhythms are grouped in triple, triple, and then duple. From this measure until the end, all sixteenth-notes are noted to be swung.

The remaining time signature changes are 4/4, 12/8, and back to 4/4, but the eighth-note speed remains constant. Levitan experiments with presenting the theme with sixteenth-note subdivisions and triplet sixteenth-note subdivisions until the end of this Invention.

Invention 6

The phrase length in Invention 6 varies throughout this piece, although, there is a frequent use of four-measure phrases. The main motive for this Invention is one measure in length and is illustrated below.

The first four measures of this work are restated several times, but, similar to the other
Inventions, the motive begins on different beats in the measure. Below is an illustration of the opening four measures and a restatement of the same four measures beginning on the first upbeat of the measure.

![Figure 93. Invention 6, mm. 1-4 and mm. 5-8, Player 1 and Player 2](image1)

In this Invention, there is a direct change to a double-time feel in measure 20. The original four-measure statement of the motive appears almost exactly doubled in speed; there are a few instrument differences.

![Figure 94. Invention 6, mm. 21-22, Player 1](image2)

Later, in measure 37, there is a time signature change to 12/8. The original four-measure motive is presented in its entirety in triple-feel.
Invention 7

Invention 7 begins with a 12/16 time signature, and the entire piece is presented in three-measure phrases. The main motive is two measures in length and is illustrated in the figure below.

![Figure 95. Invention 6, mm. 38-41, Player 1](image)

Similar to a few of the other Inventions, manipulation of the motive is more challenging to identify. Levitan presents the motive in different time signatures. An example of this is illustrated below in a 6/8 time signature.

![Figure 96. Invention 7, mm. 1-2, Player 1](image)

Most of the motive manipulation occurs at the three sixteenth-note and sixteenth-note triplet level. These truncated version of the motive are placed on various beats of the
measure. Occasionally, the complete motive returns when the time signature returns to 12/16.

The final section of this *Invention* presents a nine-beat tihai, with the first cycle played by Player One, the second cycle by Player Two, and the third cycle by both players in unison.

![Figure 98. Invention 7, mm. 67-end, Score](image)

**Invention 8**

*Invention 8* is the longest of the *Inventions*, and is written in constant four-measure phrases. The main two-measure motive is in the figure below.
Figure 99. *Invention 8*, mm. 1-2, Score

The author believes the main motive is actually the accents and the composite rhythm that is similar to a Caribbean *soca* rhythm.

![Figure 100. *Invention 8*, Caribbean Soca Rhythm](image)

Levitan experiments with the manipulation of the *soca* rhythm and the accents associated with the rhythm throughout this piece in a similar style as the other *Inventions*. The author has nicknamed this *Invention* as “Variations on a Caribbean Theme.”

**Performance Considerations**

A considerable amount of thought needs to be directed toward the selection of the instruments to be used for each *Invention*. The performers must adhere strictly to the guidelines that are set by Levitan in the score. When choosing the sustain instruments, it is important to ensure that none of the other chosen instruments sustain longer than the sustain instrument; this will lose the desired effect. The sustain instrument needs to sustain long enough that an audible difference in texture will be noticed when the
instrument is dampened. This is only necessary if dampening is used in the *Invention* to be performed; not all of the *Inventions* utilize note dampening.

As noted in the guidelines, it is not necessary for both players to employ the same instruments, however, if the performers feel the interactions between the parts provide more of a melodic motive, then identical instruments can be used. For example, the author prefers *Invention 4* performers use the same instruments, but while still meeting the pitch difference requirement. When different instruments are used between each player, it is important to decide if the sustain instruments create a noticeable melody. If a sustain instrument melody is present, both players should use the same type of instrument. Here are some instrumentation suggestions that the author has found work well for the style and mood of each *Invention*:

*Invention 1* – cymbal, closed hi-hat, snare drum, drum set bass drum with pedal
*Invention 2* – bell plate, three planks of wood
*Invention 3* – small splash cymbal (must decay quickly or must not overpower other instruments since there is no dampening in this *Invention*), pair of bongos, quinto conga
*Invention 4* – triangle (no dampening), three Chinese toms
*Invention 5* – crotale (no dampening), three tuned tambourims
*Invention 6* – bell plate, three Chinese toms
*Invention 7* – small gong, 3 flower pots
*Invention 8* – cymbal (no dampening), closed hi-hat, snare drum, drum set bass drum with pedal

The author encourages the performers to experiment with various instruments, and to keep in mind that both players do not have to have identical instruments. For more examples of instrument options, the performers should listen to the recordings that were made of *Eight Two-Part Inventions* by Trey Files with consultation with Levitan. This recording is listed at the end of this document in Appendix C.
Since the *Inventions* do not indicate any *tempo* markings, the performers need to be aware of metric changes and their effects on speed and playability of the motives. For example, if *Invention 4* or *Invention 6* are played too fast, when the work transitions into a double-time feel the motives might be near impossible to play, or they might not be clearly identified.

Because the main focus of the *Inventions* should be directed toward the rhythmic motives and their manipulation through meter changes, embellishments, and beat placement, performers should be aware of balance when one has an accompaniment part versus a motive. When the motive is split between both parts, attention to the blend and balance between players should also be made.
Chapter 9: Conclusion

After examining the six works discussed in this document, *Trio, Variations on a Ghanaian Theme, Septet, Conservatory Garden, Canon at the Bar, and Eight Two-Part Inventions*, it is the hope of the author, that readers gained a greater appreciation for the unpitched percussion chamber works of Daniel Levitan. When performers comprehend what they are playing, and if their understanding of the structure increases their appreciation, this will lead to a performance with fervor that will easily be noted and interpreted by the audience. After examining these works, the author has observed that the following compositional techniques are central to Levitan’s music: duple to triple subdivision conversions of motivic material, metric shifts and modulations, style and inflection based on accents and “ghost notes,” splitting of rhythmic motives between players, *tihais*, canons, truncation and diminution of motives, and the frequent use of motives and phrases that can best be described as grooves. Understanding these key compositional techniques used in each work will lead to better phrasing, balance, and overall interpretation of any work, and the performance considerations will hopefully provide a spring board toward an easier preparation of these works. The rehearsal strategies, instrument selection suggestions, stickings, and other performance considerations provided in this document are the product of the author’s personal experience with performing and coaching these works with various groups, as well as the input from the author’s mentors who have become avid performers of Levitan’s music.
Need for Further Study

Although this document only explores a small portion of Levitan’s complete output of compositions, readers of this document will have the ability to identify Levitan’s style of writing and can employ the methods learned to enhance their understanding and performance of his other works. The author believes that even with this document and Gregory Lyons’ document written about Daniel Levitan and his music, the need for more research is justified. As mentioned in Chapter 8, the *Eight Two-Part Inventions* warrant a more in-depth analysis and research. An examination of *Autoclave* and *Marimba Quartet* would also benefit the percussion community, as well as the rest of his pitched and unpitched chamber percussion works. A future project should also address the solo compositions of Daniel Levitan, such as *Baroque Suite, Marimba Suite #2, Concerto for Marimba and Percussion Orchestra*, and *Concertino in E Flat for Marimba and Strings.*


———. Interview by the Author. Phone. Columbus, Ohio, June 11, 2013.


JM: Thank you again for agreeing to do this. I really appreciate it.

DL: Sure

JM: Pertaining to your biography, You started studying piano with Mary Blue Morris and then lost interest in piano.

DL: I was more interested in the notes than actually being able to play the notes. Practicing or working up a piece didn’t really inspire me. I was always kind of noodling around and writing stuff. So I thought, you know I think I’d really enjoy the composition side of things.

JM: When you started focusing on composition with Mary Blue Morris, what were some of the things you focused on in your studies.
DL: We started working on species counterpoint. She was pretty classically trained, so that’s kind of where you start. We did work on some chorales, but we mainly worked on counterpoint.

JM: Studying species counterpoint, did that have an effect on your writing of your *Eight Inventions for unpitched percussion*?

DL: Not much. Only in the sense that it’s a body of descriptive rules. Certainly, I’m very aware of voice leading when I’m writing stuff with pitches. Something doesn’t really sound right unless it has individual voices that lead well. That’s pretty much the same with unpitched stuff, where I feel that each part needs to make sense by itself. It almost becomes more important that all the parts become playable together, without too much anguish. You know the sort of hocketing thing they do in Java??? Where someone will play eighth notes and the other player will play the sixteenth notes in between. That kind of thing is very difficult work up to the point where it feels natural. You have to work with your partner a lot to get that…so you think as one. I’m always thinking about the individual line. It should be something that you can play and I can play, and we can play them together and they kind of work together, without us having to worry about each time we get to there and know it’s going to happen. So yeah, in that sense, the idea of individual voices, and being a complete part is definitely apart of my thinking, and probably the species counterpoint had a big impact on that as well as the four-part chorale kind of stuff.
JM: Just for some timeline clarity for me, You started at Bennington College in 1971?

DL: I think so, yeah.

JM: You were there for your first year and then switched to a BA in composition?

DL: Well, okay, it was a very small school. So you get a degree in music. I think I initially went there to study creative writing, but I kind of liked the music department and didn’t like the literature department. So I quickly switched over to music and when I got the degree, it was a BA in music, and the thing that sold me to the department was mostly composing. The tenure of the department was that everyone plays, everyone writes, and everybody played other people’s ensembles, it was kind of like they wanted to have a community of musicians.

JM: While you were there you studied composition with Marta Ptasynska?

DL: Yeah, she was kind of in that Polish school which is not a style that I’ve ever really written in. She was a great percussionist and a great person and I really enjoyed her. Probably in terms of influence, I’d say more about Henry Brant. Although, Musically, I don’t think I really saw eye to eye to him as much as I did with Marta. Marta was really in that “out there” kind of stuff, like really into the soundscape stuff, but Henry was very
“nuts and bolts.” He had done a lot of work for radio and film scores, so his whole thing was “get something that you can put on the stand and they can play it.” It was like, if you’re going to write a piece, you have to have nice legible parts, you got to put it up there, every note has to have a dynamic, and articulation, and a tempo, the page turns, you know, it’s got to be something you can put on the stand and it’s playable. If you don’t have that, you don’t have a piece of music. He wasn’t really into what style you wrote in, the musical content didn’t mean that much to him in terms of his composition teaching, what was important to him was the “nuts and bolts.” So your music is playable.

JM: Did that have an effect on your writing style, especially looking at Conservatory Garden and Autoclave with how specific you are with detailed and specific instructions, page turns, etc… When did you start getting more detailed with your writing?

DL: Yeah… You know… That’s a good question. But, do I have a good answer? I guess it had an impact on a couple of things I can think of. One being that when I write for percussion, I don’t tend to write for a huge number of instruments. It kind of goes along with my whole approach to writing music, which is that of the ideas rather than of the execution. I’m really interested in the ideas. I feel like if I have something to say rhythmically, I should be able to say it on a couple of instruments. I shouldn’t need two dozen instruments to say what I want to say. What I’m trying to say, has to do with the musical phrase. It’s kind of the thing that you hum to yourself when there are no instruments around. You know, that sort of musical tale that you tell. It wasn’t so much
about the textures. So, I kind of consciously avoided having to use a zillion instruments, because I felt that if I could say it with three instruments then that’s what I should do. Why make people schlep stuff around? So that’s kind of a part of the practical approach. Henry always encouraged me to get more *Sturm and Drang* in my music, you know, the more romantica and passionate stuff, but that has never really been what interests me in music.

JM: On that note, speaking of fewer instruments, around your time of composing there were composers like Xenakis, Stockhausen, and James Wood writing for works that used hundreds of instruments on one composition. Were you aware of their music and what they were writing for?

DL: Oh yes!

JM: Were you intentionally trying to not write like them?

DL: No. I kind of would try to write pieces like that, I just never could. It was never me, it was just dishonest. Just like atonal music, I tried to write atonal music, I was able to write some while in school, but it felt meretricious. I feel like that at some level it has to be something that I say without knowing what the structure is. It’s like when I’m saying a sentence to you, I don’t really think of the structure of it or the terms of grammar of it, I think of it in terms of what I’m trying to mean. It’s the same thing with music, if it
doesn’t have some sort of meaning to it, it’s hard for me to actually put the notes on paper. I could try to write a piece like that, but it wouldn’t come out, of course, because it’s not me. I kind of went my own way, and I didn’t know where I was going or where I was going to find myself in the world of music. It became pretty clear to me early on that I wasn’t going to be teaching, because I wasn’t really in the main stream of what was going on musically, and I was never really politically minded and didn’t really do anything for me. I also discovered that you can always get your music played by percussion ensembles. Especially back then, there wasn’t the literature out there that there is now. So, I would write it, they would play it, and that was pretty cool. When I started writing for percussion ensemble, I had an idea of what a percussion ensemble should sound like. Picture you’re in a hall and there are these drummers up there, and they start to play something that is incredibly groovy and yet incredibly intellectually stimulating and that it tells a real story. It’s like you’re listening to a great string quartet, it’s very emotional and at the same there is a story that lasts more than just a verse and a chorus. It has got a long tale to tell, and it has a real formal structure to it. I thought that’s what percussion ensemble music should be, it would have that kick that makes you want to move, but it wouldn’t just be the same thing over and over again. You’ll have an African drumming group, and they are playing a complex and incredible groove and then you’ll have someone laying a solo over that and they have little phrases they do, but you get the feeling that you’re always in the same world and you’re not really being told a story. I thought it would be interesting to write that kind of music I wasn’t hearing. I would hear percussion ensembles and they would be blatantly groovy. If you have an audience
coming in to hear a classical percussion ensemble concert, and you play some rock beat, I thought that would be fun, but you play that for eight bars and then what? Let’s do it again, and maybe add some instruments to it, but always kind of the same story being told. So I thought I could tell a story. I’ve never really felt that I’ve been too successful with it, and I don’t think I’m a really natural musician, but I’m really interested in the ideas and that’s kind of what has carried me through.

JM: Well, I think a lot of people would disagree about your last statement of not feeling you’re natural at it.

DL: Yeah… but I think it’s true. I write very slowly and I throw away a lot of stuff. It takes me a long time to come up with something that I can live with. I feel like if I’m going to spend the time to write it down, it has to be something that really has got some legs to it. Especially if someone is going to spend time with the part and really work it up, I don’t want them to go up and play it and have the audience feel that they could have played any notes and it would have had the same impression on them. Now I’m not saying it’s not legitimate because it’s perfectly legitimate, but you hear a lot of music and it the note was different, if it was a different pitch or you played it in a different time, the overall shape of the piece would really be just about the same. No one would really know. In fact, I discovered that sometimes not even the composers know, which is really kind of shocking to me. I feel like if you’re going to write it down and they’re going to take all that time to learn to play it, if they play a wrong note, everybody should know.
Which is kind of too bad too, because I’ve heard many bad performances where even the notes can be right, but the feel is wrong and it just feels awful. It’s like as if you were to hear somebody playing a Mozart something and the intonation is wrong, you feel like “this composer doesn’t know what he’s doing, this is horrible music.” You have to hear it played in tune, and then you think, “oh, this really is a nice piece of music.” I think performers like that. I think they like it when you can tell if they are playing it right or wrong. Because, then if they are playing it well, everyone will say “hey, that was nice.”

JM: When did you first start playing percussion? Was this when you were at Bennington College?

DL: Yes, I started studying mallets with a guy named Lou Calabro who was a drummer. So I took snare drum lessons too. I never felt comfortable on snare drum, but timpani I felt okay. Marimba, I got really comfortable with that. Tabla as well. But snare drum, no.

JM: Did you start studying tabla while you were at Bennington, or was that when you moved to the west coast?

DL: After I left Bennington. When I left Bennington, it felt like the direction I was going musically had to deal with rhythm. Even my pitched music is all about rhythm and it’s all about time. So I thought, I don’t really have a concept of rhythm, because when you study music theory, it’s all about the relationship between pitches, it’s about voices, it’s
about chords, and time is really just a cyclical and repetitive thing. So you read books about music and they talk about the theory of rhythm, and they talk about the stressed beats and the unstressed beats, and it’s all very square. There is just no movement in it. It’s very straight ahead, and there isn’t much to learn about compositional devices. So I thought, okay, I should study some music that has got a point of view or framework for doing complex stuff with rhythm. I thought, tabla seems to be the thing. It’s very linear, very linear. It is kind of like their instrumental music is about a line, it’s not really about chords. You have your drone and everything is in relationship with that one pitch. The rhythmic concept is very complex, but it’s all about that time cycle that is going on. It’s not a beat, it’s not like some sort of groove, it’s just a time frame that is free of implications, and it doesn’t really have a feel. So that’s going around and over that you play the most incredible, syncopated off-beats, and it’s not random. You’ll have a rhythmic phrase, and you’ll shift it by a sixteenth note, then you’ll shift it by an eighth note, then you’ll shift it by this or that, and then you’ll cut it up and play it three times. It’s always coming back, but at a different point in the beat. So you need to have that sort of cycle going in your head in order for this to make any sense. Let’s say you play a phrase that is five sixteenth notes, and you’re in some kind of four. So, if you play those five sixteenths, then you play five sixteenths, and then you play five sixteenths, the listener is going to hear it just as the same phrase three times, right? Big deal, but now as soon as you put it in context with this underlying time frame, it suddenly has a different meaning each time you play the five sixteenth-note phrase, because it’s in a different spot in this cycle. That’s what all the music is about, it’s about playing with the way the music
feels when ever it’s in a different spot in the cycle. It’s not so much like a guaguancó, that’s a recurring cycle, and there’s a definite feel going on. Everything you do is playing against that feel. You can play all kinds of stuff, but everyone is putting it in context with this pattern that has a stressed and unstressed kind of movement going on. So tabla music is completely different, where the underlying cycle doesn’t have a feel. The phrases you put on top each create a different type of feel and I loved that. I really loved that because it’s really stimulating from an intellectual stand point. It’s like the same kind of stuff you do when you’re doing counterpoint. You can take a phrase, and you can say “what does it sound like if I take an eighth note off?” Now it has a totally different meaning, and maybe you’ll tell yourself that now it doesn’t sound musical, then “AH!” you throw it out. Try it with three sixteenths, “aww, man that has a whole different flavor!” Now you have some material, and now you can start making a story and now you can start making a piece. So the tabla was very influential for me from that standpoint. The problem is keeping that rhythmic cycle in the listener’s head. So if you have a chord structure going on, then that keeps people rooted, but interestingly enough, once you start putting in pitches, that’s where people’s minds go. If you have a rhythm and there are no pitches, people will hear it as a rhythm, and as soon as you put pitches in there, the pitches take over. They totally take over your brain. It’s a real challenge to keep listener’s on track with where you are in the rhythmic cycle. If you don’t have that, you lose it. Like in Jazz, so let’s say you’re playing a tune that has changes, right? Like One Note Samba. It’s one note. So let’s say you hear a saxophone player on the street and he’s playing One Note Samba, and you don’t know the tune, so what do you hear? You hear this pitch that is
played over and over again and then at some point it goes up a fourth. It’s like “wow, that is so boring.” But if you know the tune, then mentally you are putting in the changes, and suddenly it’s very interesting, right? You like it because the context is changing. If you don’t have that context, then it’s useless and meaningless. With percussion music, if you want to avoid using pitches, you have to find some way to get the listener to hear that sort of context. Now, that’s kind of a challenge, and if you don’t have it, then you’re cutting yourself off from a great deal of things that you can do with rhythm. You’re basically confined to making gestures, or confined to making very simple patterns where it is really obvious where the “one” is.

JM: After hearing you explain that, I immediately think about your Trio. Several instances where you can clearly see a rhythmic motive and then it is shortened by one eighth note and it is repeated. You can see how that changes the relationship between the steady downbeats that are being played by the temple block.

DL: Yes. So in this piece, here I am trying to figure out what I am going to do to keep people on track. Well, one thing I can do is to have some sort of pulse, a steady quarter-note pulse, so that was this experiment. A lot of these things were just experiments to see what was going to work and what was not going to work. I had a friend that pointed out that there was a rhythmical motive that was often found in classical music (sings rhythmic motive). So I thought, well what could I do with that in terms of a piece? This was kind of like a study for me, a compositional etude for me. The cowbells and the
drums are similar, in that they have about the same amount of ring time although the
timbres are completely different. You have two pitches, and now you can make any
musical phrase with these two pitches so you’re good. The temple block is just another
timbre and it’s there so the audience can say “Oh, that’s where one is!” But, it’s not just
like “Bang, Bang, Bang,” because I start out with an empty beat. This is the starting of a
groove. You make sure the listener has the first downbeat in their mind, but you don’t
actually play it, and that is where it starts to get interesting. Well, this is pretty straight
forward, you can clearly see all the compositional devices in this piece. This one may
have a tihai. One of the big compositional tricks they do in Indian music is called a tihai.
It’s where you repeat a phrase three times. It’s used as a cadence. You play it three times,
but each time on a different spot on the beat. If you look at rehearsal letter P, that’s a tihai
(sings rhythm). It’s like a nested tihai, that triplet eighth note is the thing that is repeated
three times, the phrase is repeated three times, the whole thing is repeated three times,
and the game with the tihai is that you’re supposed to end on the downbeat. Now of
course, this phrase that is the theme ends on an upbeat. It actually doesn’t end with a note
on the page, but it ends with the note in your mind.

JM: Jumping back to your composition teachers, how about Vivian Fine? Did you study
with her much? Did she have much influence on your writing?

DL: Yeah, I did study with her. She wasn’t really a huge influence on me musically, but
I really did like her a lot. She had a very great attitude, and I probably picked up a lot
from that.

JM: As far as developing your own style of notation, did Ptasynska, Brant, or Fine have any influence on that?

DL: No, not really. Except for, that from Henry’s stand point, the music had to be fairly easy to read, and hopefully it would be something that you don’t need a whole lot of annotation for. So I quickly found that if you’re playing with very few instruments, you need to have as much variety in the sound that you can. If you’re playing a drum and you’re improvising, you can do all kinds of stuff. Let’s say you have Dave Samuels doing a solo, and a lot of the music that you’re hearing is him dragging on the beat and all sorts of other nuances, and at some point you have to decide what of this is essential to the music, because the more you try to notate all that stuff then the harder it is to learn, but the less you notate then the emptier it is in terms of music. The idea is, what are the fewest things that I can do notationally and get away with and still be expressive. I found that if you have percussion instruments with any kind of ring and you don’t dampen, then you are really shooting yourself in the foot. There is an awful lot of expression to be found in damping. Now the question is well how do you notate that? Traditionally, it was a rest with a little circle and a cross, like for a hihat. That doesn’t really work, especially if you have more than one instrument. Well, an X is kind of like you’re crossing something, like you don’t want it there anymore. It’s saying, “no, don’t do that.” So, I started to use the X note head, and some people got confused because the X symbol is
sometimes used for cymbals, but still I stuck with it. Then, there is a very different sound when you are damping and then you hit it so you get that “flack,” that staccato sound and so I use a staccato marking. So, I found that with those three possibilities I could pretty much write on paper enough to have enough texture in a rhythm that kind of matched what I was feeling and hearing. Not all of the nuances are there, but there is enough of it. I needed to have the dampen, the hit it while dampening, and the open tone. The staccato makes sense right?

JM: Yes.

DL: At first I thought, well I can just flick my stick at it, instead of using a full stroke. Hmmm, no. So with a few little footnotes, not a whole big treatise on what this means, then you’re good to go. I started out being more interested in sticking, because sticking has an affect on the feel, but it gets really hard to read all those stickings. Then everyone once in a while, you’ll find someone that decided they didn’t like what you wrote down for stickings, and they will do their own sticking and you hear it and think, “well you know what, that still sounds pretty good.” So I started getting away more and more from writing in the stickings. Then in terms of accents, I found that I needed to have three accents. I needed to have a regular note, I needed to have an accented note, and I needed to have a ghost note. I found that without the ghost note I could never write anything that actually sounded good. If I had those three, then I had enough to get good texture.
JM: For percussion, there isn’t really a set standard method of notating multiple percussion. You’re works seem to do that. If you were to go from your first Trio and progress through your timeline of works for unpitched percussion works, you would see a very consistent style of notation that gradually gets more complex, but still remains consistent.

DL: You really want to think about making a notation that is consistent, fairly easy to read, and that is not too far outside… you want to pick it right, and that’s so hard to do. At the end of the day you end up thinking, “oh, I should have notated it this way.” You’re never happy, because you want it to be conceptually consistent.

JM: In your subsequent works, you add pitch bending.

DL: Yeah! That’s only on the roto toms, and it’s because that’s so awesome. It’s just so cool to do. I had a little ensemble going on at the time. We called ourselves the Chelsea Percussion Quartet, or maybe the Chelsea Percussion ensemble, and that’s who I wrote Autoclave and Conservatory Garden for. As well as some other stuff. I started writing for roto toms, because that was one of the instruments I had. Of course, the consideration was also that we didn’t want to have to carry around a lot of equipment. So basically, Conservatory was for four roto toms, and the other stuff is just accompaniment.

JM: Now on the roto toms, you used a lot of rim shots. You have a very clever way of
notating rim shots as a double stop—one note being marked as on the rim, and the other note marked to be played on the head. Which is a rim shot, brilliant.

DL: Oh, yeah! Well, I thought, I want to write a rim shot and there is a standard way of notating rim shots, but that notation is inconsistent with my style of notation. So, I thought “well, I’m hitting the head and I’m hitting the rim at the same time.” Hitting two things with one stick. Also in terms of the key and sticking, at this point in the music the player doesn’t have anything else in the other hand, just one stick in one hand. I thought it was pretty self-explanatory, but usually a little asterisk and the words “rim shot” make it even more clear. The ideal situation would be to not have to put any instructions or keys for the player. The next best thing would be something that you can just footnote with an asterisk. Then, the big drag is to have the page of notes, but sometimes that’s the way it’s got to be.

JM: Jumping back to your interest in tabla, since tabla is such an aural tradition and not much is written down as far as music goes, did you have a hard time creating a way to notate tabla music?

DL: Tabla music is actually not as hard to notate as people think, because in that tradition they use syllables. So each syllable basically corresponds to one type of stroke. There is only a certain limited palette of strokes. You can say it and play, and you’re just going over time. So it’s not that hard to write it down, but they don’t tend to write it down,
because it’s an improvised thing, because it’s stuff you learn, and because they don’t need to write it down because they’re not playing ensemble music that needs to have a coordination of ensemble parts. The biggest advance in Western music is being able to write for a number of players, even if it’s just two, so it’s easier for them to read than it is for them to learn the parts together. If you’re playing in an African drumming ensemble, it’s probably easier for you to learn the parts aurally, because you’ll get the feel right, and it’s not that hard to coordinate the stuff. If you want an ensemble to be able to sit down to a piece that they only got last week, and play a set of lines that all sort of fit together, you’ve pretty much got to start notating. The tabla players didn’t need to do that. Why would they write down stuff like that? It’s not like they were going to sit down with another tabla player and play a complex part. Or a Gamelan orchestra, and they have a complex thing, well they just have to rehearse their butts off and that’s how they do it. In our culture, we’re looking at a group of people that are going to look at a piece fresh and work it up in a relative short period of time. Now once you can do that you have the option of making a piece of music that doesn’t exist in the air, it exists on paper. Now you’ve made a conceptual leap. Now, no longer is it in the recording or in the performance where the piece lives, now the piece lives on a piece of paper. The essence of that piece is no a pattern of sound in the air, it’s a pattern of concepts on paper, and that is amazing to me. It’s like being able to write a story. Now the story exists, not only in it through my telling it to you, but on paper. The concepts are all there, and to me that’s an incredible achievement in Western classical music. Now don’t get me started on this, but that’s what we’ve lost in our culture. The concepts are there, but they stuff
written down is… ugh… think about a Bach melody, a Brandenburg Concerto, the intellect that goes into that, the storytelling, it’s unbelievable! We just don’t have that in our culture anymore, it’s a huge loss. It’s as if we just threw books away and we can just tell stories. People are alienated from classical music because they don’t get the human storytelling that classical music can do and that notation gives you the capability of doing. The best music you can get these days is songs, bands, their doing interesting and fun stuff, but basically there is an intellectual achievement that it is incapable of having. Then you have the artists that are capable of writing, but they don’t know how to work with the material and all you really get are songs. That’s why I don’t feel like I’m a great composer or a natural composer because I don’t have the gift to do that, but I feel that I do have the insight to know “this is what we could have.” This is why I started writing percussion music, because I felt that we could have something that was very compelling rhythmically, and yet was very complex and satisfying and took up more than just eight bars. Something that went from here to there, something that told a story, something that if you took a bar out…if you dropped that bar, it would resonate and affect the whole structure. That whole structure is one thing. Just like if you dropped a chapter out of a novel, it would be gone. If I could hear concerts with that kind of music, I would go all the time. I do love the moment to moment of music, the impact of emotions, the impact of rhythm, but I do also want to be told a story.

JM: You wrote an article for Percussive Notes on tabla becoming a contemporary chamber instrument. What sparked you to write that?
DL: Oh, I don’t know. (laughter) What motivates people to do whacky stuff like that? Well I think it’s because I’m a composer, I was taking tabla lessons and I thought since I’m a composer I should write something for me and my teacher to play. It’s not going to have the same feel that a tabla solo can have. A solo for tabla will have the expression and nuance that only you can achieve by yourself and you cannot create with two people reading notes. On the other hand, two people reading notes allows you to have an overall formal shape that would be very difficult for people to do with out it being written down. So I became very interested in taking these traditional tabla solos and having them set for two tablas or three tablas, and then I thought, would you be able to put them in an ensemble. The problem with tabla is that it’s such a quiet instrument. People get really excited about all the little fancy tricks that you can do, now don’t torture the poor player by making him learn a trick that you can do, let him do what he wants and can do. So now you start to wonder why you’re even writing this down. Still, I was reading Percussive Notes and I thought I would write that… I don’t know. Now looking back, it seems kind of silly. We didn’t have Facebook back then, but we are still haunted by the things we did.

JM: Did you get any feedback from percussionists or composers about the article?

DL: Not that I can recall, but now people keep bringing up that article, so I guess that is something.
JM: Are there any composers that you feel you were heavily influenced by?

DL: Oh yeah! Well, of course Bach. Sounds to stupid even to say, right? To me, he’s has the marriage of form and musical phrases. He’s so musically rich, he’s thinking of emotion, he’s thinking of pitches, and they are so rich and they are so formally perfect at the same time. Chopin, Brahms, Beethoven, Stravinsky is incredible, Bartok, you know…all the classical composers. Not too many contemporary classical composers, I got to say. They tend to leave me cold. When they are writing melodies, it’s usually really really obtuse and you just can’t understand it. So if I’m going to listen to melodies and harmonies, I’m probably going to listen to pop music. If I’m going to be listening to something that has something going on… when I say something going what I mean is that you hear something and then your motor starts to go. It doesn’t have to be much, it can be just a simple drum part, like a drum set part, but then suddenly it just starts to smoke. I just don’t get that when I’m listening to contemporary classical music. If they put a drum set in there, it’s usually very very square. So for my rhythmic satisfaction I tend to go to The Meters in New Orleans, Dr. John, I tend to go to balafon music, pop music of all stripes. It’s stupid that it doesn’t go outside of its thing. It’s not stupid, it’s actually really refined and polished, but it’s sad that it’s locked into that one form, it can’t go out of that form and tell a long story; it tells a short and very simple story. But, if you look at nursery rhymes they are also very short, but they are very meaningful too. But, they can’t take you where a longer story can.
JM: What about pop music? Any bands that inspire or influence you?

DL: Well, I tend to like music that really moves. I like Lenine. Do you know that guy?

JM: No, I don’t.

DL: I don’t like all of his stuff, but there is one album called Lenine and I like that one.
I’ve heard the Spin Doctors do some things I’ve liked. The Red Hot Chili Peppers do stuff I love. Dr. John. It tends to be the stuff that grabs you by the collar and just… there you are. The Meters, The Meters! To me that’s just simple, but it just nails it to the floor and I love that.

JM: After you were in the West Coast, you moved back to the East Coast and that is when you started to get into Latin percussion music?

DL: So, I’m out in the West Coast and studying tabla, and I’m with my girlfriend and she wants to get into publishing. There’s no publishing in San Francisco to speak of and it’s really hard if you’re from out of town. She’s from Poughkeepsie, which is just North of New York, and I had visited New York and I hated it. I thought to myself that I would never live in New York. New York was like the heart of darkness (laughter). She said, “I’m moving to New York,” so then I guess I was moving to New York too. She found an
apartment to rent from some people that were out of town for the summer and we stayed there. I didn’t really like it, but we ended up moving to Brooklyn once we had my daughter, and now I absolutely love it. It’s my favorite, I love it, I love it, I love it. I’m so glad now to be living in New York. So that’s how I got to New York, and at this point I already had a grounding in tabla. The tabla had already soaked into my thinking in a very instinctive way. Now I wanted to be able to write vertically. If you wanted to draw an analogy, not just harmonically but melodically, I thought well African drumming, but it wasn’t really available. But there was a ton of Latin percussion in the city. That ensemble stuff is a much more limited palette of different styles, but I still took conga lessons for a while to get into that. So that’s why I did it, we were in New York and it was cheap and easy to do.

JM: You studied congas with Frank Malabe?

DL: Frankie Malabe! Yeah! What a guy!

JM: How did you meet him and work in lessons?

DL: He was teaching at Harbor Arts. He was teaching at various places. You could take the same lessons from the same teachers but at the Drummer’s Collective and you would end up playing two to three times as much. Harbor Arts was on fifth avenue around 108th street, and there was a part of Central Park called Conservatory Garden, and that’s what I
named the piece after. I actually wrote a piece for him that we played. He played solo on it, he didn’t read music, but he faked it so well! I wrote his part out, but I don’t write notes for him. I took his licks and put them down and let him improvise. I wrote him a chart with just bars and rehearsal numbers so he could follow along, and I put it up on the stand and he didn’t even open it up. I asked him if he wanted to look at it first and he said, “no, just play it.” We played it once and he listened, and then he said, “okay, I got it.” That was it, totally by ear. He’s just the sweetest and nicest guy and he could play a table and didn’t make any difference. If he wanted to show you a lick and didn’t have an instrument, he would pull up a chair and play on that it and it was amazing. It was like eating ice cream, so musical with his hands!

JM: That piece you were just mentioning, is that *Perfectly Frank*?

DL: Yes.

JM: *Autoclave* and *Conservatory Garden*, Latin influenced.

DL: Yeah. The thing I’m good at in this world is thinking. I don’t get paid for that (laughter). When it comes to music, that’s my strength, thinking. It took a long time for the lessons of Tabla music, African music, and Latin music to sink in. I never felt like I had an instinctive full grasp on it. When I started having kids, I started working full time as a piano tuner. I didn’t have time to write music. Yeah, I love to write, but I wasn’t
getting paid much to write music. People would call me up for a commission that would be for a thousand bucks, but it was going to take me six months to write it, I mean this is ridiculous and who really cares. So, I decided that I was just going to tune my pianos. Then I had my kids, and they are so musical like all kids are, and you just enjoy singing with them and all this stuff. Then coming out of that and I decide to get back into writing again. The first thing that I wrote after that period of time off was the Inventions. Suddenly, I found that natural…that it was just coming to me. All those pieces you’re talking about are very intellectually constructed, way too much in my view. There is a lot of form going on and there is way too much to cling to, they’re almost like etudes on form, there is music in there too, don’t get me wrong, but the Inventions… that’s the music that I always wanted to write. Every note in those things comes from… I never had to think about it. I would fool around with it, and it would crystallize all by itself. I had done something to my brain during all those years off, and the payoff was writing those inventions. They were just like “yeah! That’s the music I always wanted to write!” To me, that’s the best work I’ve ever done in music. Hands down, Inventions, that’s it. If there is any justice in this world and I’m remembered for anything as a composer, it’s going to be for those. I really think so. I started writing them, and I didn’t have the sustain part, the cymbal or whatever, it was just the three instruments, and I was showing that to a friend of mine. After listening, he said that he didn’t know where the one was. So then I thought, well I have to have something in there to help show that. You don’t always get it, though. You can listen to these pieces and you don’t always know where the one is, but you know enough. You know enough. You know that they work. Gosh, I
love those pieces.

(Laughter)

JM: Any other works similar to the Inventions in progress?

DL: You know someday I’m going to write some three-part inventions, if I should live so long. Right now I’m starting to work on a commission for Shakuhachi and marimba. It’s a short piece. I have this other project that I’m kind of obsessed with, a writing project. Then I have a trio I want to write, it’s for drum set, piano, and marimba. I want to write a marimba trio, and then I want to write some three-part inventions. Then I’m going to die. I don’t think I’ll write anything else after that. Those pieces I think I’m going to write. Yeah, but to me those Inventions are kind of it, they are the beginning and the end.

JM: That is pretty much all I wanted to discuss with you about your background, and now can we move on to some questions about your unpitched percussion chamber works that I am writing about?

DL: Sure.

JM: Your Trio, who did you write that for?

JM: Okay. What was the inspiration to write that work?

DL: That was this phrase that my friend Leo mentioned. (Sings two bar rhythm from the Trio) Of course there was a downbeat on the second bar and that was to square for me. So I went…(sings two bar rhythm from Trio with out a downbeat at the end). So you hear the downbeat, but you don’t play it. Then it’s just a bunch of fairly formal variations on that.

JM: Where was Trio premiered?

DL: Probably one of the Chelsea concerts, I don’t know, I don’t really remember.

JM: What was the overall reception of Trio by the audience and the performers?

DL: I don’t know. I have no memory of that.

JM: Instrument selection for that. Can you elaborate on your idea about similar duration in sound, but different timbres, etc…?

DL: In my mental way of categorizing instruments, drums and cowbells are very similar.
They have a similar amount of “pitchiness,” there’s a tone and if you have too of them you
can hear a melody, sort of. But if you only have one, you don’t really hear it as a pitch.
Cowbells and drums are like that. If there are two of them, they can be a fourth apart, a
minor third apart, or whatever. When you’re playing a single cowbell by itself, it might
be the pitch of F, then you have an ensemble that is playing in the key of G Flat or D
Major, you’re not going to notice if it is out of tune, but as soon as you have a second
one, and now you have an F and a C and you’re in D Major…that’s not going to work. So
similar “pitchiness” and similar ability to damp, and a similar kind of volume. So, they
make a good little thing. Then the temple block, you would never think to dampen that,
but it’s a very quick and dry sound, and then boy, you have very little equipment to
schlep to a gig. You have two agogo bells on a stand, a couple of drums, and a block,
then you’re good to go with that. Then if you have that for some other piece, you don’t
have to bring anything extra to the gig.

JM: If there was one or a few main points of interest that you would want any performer
to pay attention to when working on this piece, what would they be?

DL: Oh, I haven’t listened to it in a long time. It’s pretty straightforward and simple at
the beginning, then it gets more complicated as we go along, and then we throw in some
triplets just for spice at the end. There’s a little climax there at N. It’s a very straight
forward form. Eight bars and eight bars and eight bars. Now the double bars, are
important. If something different or new happens in the first bar, it is very different if it
happened in the fifth bar or the eight bar phrases. It’s almost like you have tonic and
dominant. It’s like they are almost the same, but not quite. You don’t have pitches, so
you’re cutting yourself off from a lot of potential for expression. So, if you use a large
cycle, like an eight bar phrase, it’s very common and normal to an audience, and it makes
it so that you can have things in a bigger context. So most of these pieces, the double bar
marks off the larger rhythmic cycle.

JM: *Variations on a Ghanaian Theme* uses the same instruments as the *Trio*, but now
with a few more instruments. Was this also written for the Chelsea Percussion Group?

DL: Yeah, I’m pretty sure. Similar instrumentation, right? Except now with have three
temple blocks instead of one. I had gone to hear some Ghanaian music and the master
drummer played that one bar rhythm (sings a rhythm), and I thought, “oh that’s a nice
lick” so then I based the whole piece on that. That one bar played by the cowbells at A.
That’s the whole thing. Then at bar four, you have that same figure, but it means
something very different because now it’s in the fourth bar. Then the seventh bar it feels
different again because it’s also a different part of the cycle. It’s all about making
variations with that.

JM: Do you remember the reception of this piece by your group or the audience?

DL: Yeah! We always enjoyed playing this one. But you know, this was not great music.
This was, very much, getting the job done. It was learning how to write for percussion, this is what this was all about. I liked the accompaniment figure I did in this piece. (Sings high-low-high, high-low-high “baps”) Playing with that as an accompaniment figure, that was kind of fun. Yeah, definitely fun putting that over different places in and over the bar. Always thinking about how I was going to keep the audience aware that it is in eight-bar phrases but not letting it get too square at the same time.

JM: Was the instrument selection intentionally made so they would be the same as your Trio?

DL: Yes, but more in the sense of them being obvious choices for this kind of music, so I stuck with them.

JM: In Variations on a Ghanaian Theme, this is the first time you introduce your articulation for “ghost” notes.

DL: Ah, yeah! This is when I realized that without that ghost note in that phrase (sings the one bar phrase), if you don’t have that note in there you have an empty bar. One of the things that the ghost note enables you to do is not only be expressive, but it also enables you to get the ensemble to play together. If that first player at A had a sixteenth-note rest then the eighth note, it would have been really difficult for the ensemble to play that figure. You may never hear that ghost note, but the fact that he’s playing it means
that the ensemble can play together. Without that ghost note…I’m sorry, no. On Finale, sure! It’s a robo thing, but real people don’t work that way. So the ghost notes not only help you be expressive, but they help you to line up parts.

JM: Now moving on to your Septet.

DL: Yeah, the Septet. So, here we have Latin influence for sure. The compositional game here is kind of having a bar that has a certain stress pattern in it and then playing different figures that have that same stress pattern in it. So there is always an underlying beat here, rather than an underlying pulse. The solo voices are timbales and bongos, right?

JM: Right.

DL: So a lot of times, if you’re looking at the music, you’ll see that the bars all have the same stresses in the same place, but they are all ornamented differently. This helps the ensemble to keep together.

JM: Was Septet written for anyone in particular?

DL: Yeah, this we did out at William Patterson University. This was written for Ray DesRoches and his group. He had six guys and I played the roto tom part. Yeah, we sounded great. They used to rehearse endlessly, and I would go out there every week and
we would play. Yeah, it was nice, really nice.

JM: The cabassa part in *Septet*, that was a unique and new method for notating that. How did you come up with that?

DL: Yeah, with stuff like that… what are you doing to do? I really didn’t know. So I thought, okay there are definitely two common ways to shake it. You kind of slap it with your hand and that’s your accent. It’s kind of like tablature, not like tabla, but you know, guitar tablature.

JM: Right.

DL: Rather than being a concept of music, it’s more like a direction to do this or do that. It definitely crosses over. I mean, all music is kind of like that, but some music embodies the concept more, but I feel this embodies more the physical act of playing.

JM: Now this is written for seven performers, which is more than three performers, which is more than normal with your works, so far, for unpitched percussion. Was this intentional, did you hear the work in your head for seven performers initially?

DL: Good question, I wish I could remember what was going on in my head. But, it’s still very small. If you see a stage that has this piece set up, it doesn’t take up much space at
all. Light schlepping.

JM: How was the premiere of this work?

DL: I don’t remember. I have to tell you that I’ve heard a lot of premieres in my life, and premieres are worthless. Often it’s not a good performance, and, to me, the hundredth performance…now THAT is the performance. It’s easy to premiere a piece and then it disappears. Hopefully you’re writing a piece that people are going to play again. If the players get the notes right, people tend to like my music. I think it’s usually because it’s in contrast to whatever else they are hearing in the concert. It’s just something different on the program. If they heard a program of all my music or music like it, I don’t know if it would stand out at all. But, if they’re hearing a program of a bunch of music that they just can’t grasp, and then they hear something like this and then they say “oh yeah! That was fun!” But it doesn’t really mean it’s that great a piece. The first groups of people that have to like a piece is the performers. If they don’t enjoy playing the piece you are sunk, because they won’t play it well, and they won’t play it again. They’ll be thinking, “why did I have to spend all that time working on this, forget it! I’ll never play that again.” Then they’ll be thinking, “Oh we have to play that again? Are you paying me?” So it has to be something worthy, they may have to work at it, but it has to be for a reason. They have to enjoy it, and it has to be fun to play. It can be a piece that is sad and full of anguish, but as long as it is still a good experience for the performer. In a way, that’s the bottom line. If the performers like it, then the audience is going to like it. So, I tend to
write for the performers.

JM: Instrument selection for Septet?

DL: Again, something simple. I have the metals, the triangle, cymbals and cowbell. The triangle and cymbals have sustain, so we can mess with that. The cabasa is right in the middle, so he’s keeping time. Then the bongos, timbales, and roto toms, yes they are all the skins, but most importantly, they are the ensemble, and they are the main voices. They are the soprano, tenor, and the bass.

JM: Moving on to Autoclave. The score says it was written for Ray DesRoches.

DL: Ray DesRoches, yeah. Well I think it was dedicated to him, but not written for him. Let me try to find the score. Yeah, it was dedicated to him. He played all of my stuff. It wasn’t really his kind of music, he was really into the percussion symphony, but he played all of the stuff I wrote. They would rehearse my music and it would sound great! So I started to write for him and his group because I knew it would always get a great performance. I actually wrote this for the Chelsea Percussion Ensemble, but I dedicated it to him because he meant a lot to me.

JM: How was the learning curve for the learning of all the symbols and instructions for Autoclave?
DL: Yeah… I try to make it as easy as possible to read, but you really have to get your head into this one. You have your different instruments, different sticks, and I really tried to make it consistent and easy to understand. Especially with this piece and *Conservatory*, you always have to be aware of what sticks you are using.

JM: With *Autoclave*, did *Conservatory* come directly afterward? Was there much inspiration from *Autoclave* to write *Conservatory*?

DL: I don’t remember. A lot of the stuff I didn’t even write down. Then I was putting up a website, so I needed to write stuff down. *Autoclave* was not as successful of a piece as *Conservatory* was. *Conservatory* has problems too, but *Autoclave* was…eh, I don’t know.

JM: Do you have any speculation as to why *Autoclave* was not as successful as *Conservatory Garden*?

DL: Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn’t. You know?

JM: Yes.

DL: Hmmm. Too intellectual maybe? I don’t know. I haven’t really listened to this in ages, so it’s not really in my head right now.
JM: Like you mentioned before for *Conservatory Garden*, *Was Autoclave* was meant to feature the roto toms?

DL: Basically, another quartet for rototoms, and everybody has other things too. Not an entirely successful piece, maybe overall a little too long, but if you get into the head of the piece, I think it does work.

JM: *Conservatory Garden* was dedicated to Frankie Malabe, and premiered by Chelsea Percussion Group?

DL: Yes, it has obvious Latin influence, and that was because of Frankie. It’s very Latin, lots of Latin in *Conservatory*. This premiere was in Boston, and it was a memorable night for me. I’m not much of a baseball fan, but the Mets were in the world series against Boston, and we played this in Boston on a composer’s conference concert of some sort, while the game was going on. This concert was on the last game of the series, and we came out in Mets gear! In Boston! But it was okay because the Mets were losing, and so everyone was making fun of us, but this was the famous game with Bill Buckner, where the ball went through his legs and lost them the game. So we were out after the concert, and the Sox lost, and we couldn’t believe it.

JM: Instrument selection, similar to *Autoclave*. 

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DL: Yeah, I really like the sound of the roto toms, because of the sustain, the dampen, and the pitch possibilities.

JM: *Conservatory Garden* has less instruments than *Autoclave*, and therefore requires each player to play less instruments. Was that intentional?

DL: Not really, I just wanted fewer instruments. But beyond that, no. This was definitely also written for the Chelsea Percussion Quartet, and it was a quartet, so there you go.

JM: Now, *Canon at the Bar*.

DL: Oh yeah! I’m not quite sure why I wrote that! (Laughter) I think I was inspired by Bob Becker’s snare drum stuff. Have you heard a good performance of that?

JM: Of *Canon at the Bar*? Yes.

DL: Okay, good!

JM: It was on either a junior or senior recital here at OSU.

DL: Yeah? How did it sound?
JM: It sounded pretty good. They played well, they both had done some rudimental
drumming with Dr. Powell and Prof. Krygier here at OSU, and they did pretty well.

DL: I am just curious if it worked as a piece?

JM: It definitely did.

DL: Okay great! Because you know, I’m not much of a snare drum player, and I haven’t
done much with rudimental drumming.

JM: I think they enjoyed performing it, and I enjoyed listening to it.

DL: Oh Great! Again, it was kind of an intellectual study. Write a canon, for rhythm. Bob
Becker has done a lot of tabla and world music, and transferred that to his snare
drumming, so I was kind of inspired by that.

JM: Was there a premiere performance?

DL: I think the premiere was by Doug Walter out in Boulder.

JM: Now the *Inventions*, we talked about them earlier, but I did notice that each one is
dedicated to someone.

DL: Yeah, these are all people that are important to me.

JM: Okay, were you trying to capture anything about each dedicatee and their corresponding invention?

DL: No, but they were just people that were very important to me.

JM: How did you go from being specific with the instruments and implements in Conservatory and Autoclave, to allowing the performer to choose the instruments they want to use as long as they meet the five criteria that you describe?

DL: You know the thing that I really like about Western music is the concept that is embodied on the page. I wanted to have something that if you heard a piece on completely different instruments, you would still recognize it. Like, if you heard the Art of the Fugue played on flute, cello, or organ… it is still the same piece! If you played Conservatory Garden on the piano, would it be the same piece? Mmmm, I’m not really sure, but these Inventions I wanted it to exist in a realm separate from it’s physical realization. That’s what I wanted to do. The Bach Inventions are kind of like that, they exist on a staff, and all you need to know is the relationship of the notes to the staff and the key signature, and that is the piece. That’s what I wanted, I wanted something where
the whole piece was about the relationship of the notes, and I felt like I could do that if I had four lines, a ghost note, an accent, and if I was able to dampen the sustaining instrument. Then I felt like I could say what I needed to say. I could have something that was complex enough to make music with, and yet a pure enough concept that it didn’t matter what instruments it used. Yes, it works on some instruments and not others, but you know what I mean, right?

JM: Yes.

DL: So yeah, I wanted to be able to do that with just rhythm. That’s kind of what I’ve always wanted to do.

JM: So, how do these compare to the Baroque style of inventions? Are there similarities?

DL: No, in fact they are very different. The form of these is very different. For me it was a step forward. The form of a traditional piece or song even is that you have a theme or a tune, then you have your way with it, and then you repeat it, and now you’re done. But for these, there is a musical germ, or phrase. This musical germ was something that I came up with when I was taking out the garbage and accidentally started banging on the garbage can, something that I banged on the sink that came to me while I was waiting for the water to heat up. It just comes to you and there is potential there. Then I don’t come back to it, I start in a time signature and it ends some place else after it has evolved.
That’s the form of these. It’s especially important if you want to go into different time signatures. Every time you go into a different time signature, it’s asking a lot of the listener. They have to know if you’re playing syncopations over what they are used to, or does that now become a new thing. So to go through all that, and then come back to the original time signature? Why do you need to? The germ is that idea, and what you’re doing is having that thing that is pregnant with possibilities, and it’s like a gem. You hold it up to the light in different ways, and in each way you hold it, it shows a different facet of it. You’re exploring all the different meanings in there. It’s like setting a chorale melody with different harmonies. All of the implications that those harmonies bring out are intrinsic to the melody, and you’re just saying, “look this was in there.” This was in there even when there was no accompaniment. So, I would have these musical germs in my head all day, and I would be singing them every where and then suddenly I would realize, “oh, I’m in a different time signature,” or I was in a different part of the bar. I would sketch these ideas down, and then once I had enough, I would put these ideas together and form the piece. I didn’t care if it ended where it began. That was a real act of courage for me. I’m not going to end where I started. I don’t have to, so there. (Laughter) I try not to write any wasted notes. Every note has to earn its keep, and this is especially true in the Inventions.

JM: Timeline wise, where did Dialects and the Quartet for Twenty Temple Blocks come into the picture?
DL: *Quartet* was done out at Brooklyn College. *Dialects* was for a dance company and that was in 1983.

JM: How about the tabla duets and trios?

DL: Probably the late 70s. There are a few pieces that are not listed anywhere. There’s a piece called *Fanfare for Six Players*. There’s a *Double Quartet for Two Spatially Separated Quartets*. I was just running into this stuff when I was trying to look for some of this music that we were going to be talking about. They’re not very good pieces, so don’t worry about them. (Laughter)

JM: (Laughter) Okay. Thanks so much again for everything!

DL: Absolutely! It’s been fun! I hope it was helpful.

JM: Very helpful! Thanks!
Appendix B: List of Works

**Published**


*Concerto for Marimba with Percussion Orchestra*, 1978, Mostly Marimba

*Duet* for Marimba and Vibraphone, 1979, Studio 4 Music

*Duo* for Violin and Marimba, 1987, C. Alan Publications


*Marimba Suite #2*, Marimba Solo In Four Movements, 1984, Keyboard Percussion Publications

*Recitative*, Mallet Trio—One Marimba, Two Players; and One Vibraphone, One Player, 1985, Keyboard Percussion Publications


*Trio*, Unpitched Percussion, 1980, Keyboard Percussion Publications

*Variations on a Ghanaian Theme*, Unpitched Percussion Trio, 1981, Studio 4 Music

*Variations for Vibraphone and Piano*, 1988, C. Alan Publications
In Manuscript

Autoclave, Unpitched Percussion Quartet

Concertino in E Flat for Marimba and Strings,

Concerto for Marimba with Percussion Orchestra

Conservatory Garden, Unpitched Percussion Quartet, 1986

Dialects, Unpitched Percussion Quartet

From Porgy and Bess, Marimba Quartet

Movement for String Quartet

Palisades, Large Wind Ensemble

Perfectly Frank, Conga Solo and Percussion Quartet

Quartet for Twenty Temple Blocks

Tabla Duets

Tabla Trio

Trio for Vibraphone, Marimba, and Temple Blocks

Yule Flip, Christmas Quodlibet for Marimba Quartet
Appendix C: Discography as of November 2015

**Concerto for Marimba and Percussion Orchestra**

**Duo for Violin and Marimba**

**Marimba Quartet**
Lawrence University, Dane Richeson, Patrice Michaels, David Maslanka, Andrew Frank, Daniel Levitan, and Alberto Ginastera. 1995. *LUPE percussion works by Ginastera, Levitan, Frank, Maslanka*. Appleton, Wis: Lawrence University.

**Perfectly Frank**

**Septet**

Daniel Levitan has released the following recordings for purchase through iTunes and his website www.danlevitanmusic.com:


Appendix D: Survey

An informal survey was sent via email to forty individuals that were high school percussion instructors or college/university percussion instructors; Twenty-two individuals volunteered their responses. The survey consisted of five questions:

1) Do you know of the composer Daniel Levitan?
2) Have you heard, performed, or coached any works by Daniel Levitan?
3) Which works by Daniel Levitan have you performed? (Do not include works that you have coached or heard. Also, Please Specify if you performed the works while in high school or college/university.)
4) Which works by Daniel Levitan have you programmed for your students in the past ten years? (Please specify if the works were performed by high school or college/university students.)
5) Which two unpitched percussion chamber works by Daniel Levitan do you program the most for your students?

Below is a brief explanation of the information collected from the responses:

10 responses were from high school percussion instructors
12 responses were from college/university percussion instructors

1) All 22 individuals knew about Daniel Levitan.
2) All 22 individuals have heard, performed, or coached works by Daniel Levitan.
3) Trio, Variations on a Ghanaian Theme, Septet, Canon at the Bar, Duet for Marimba and Vibraphone were performed by high school students. Variations on a Ghanaian Theme, Septet, Conservatory Garden, Canon at the Bar Eight Two-Part Inventions, Marimba Quartet, Duet for Marimba and Vibraphone, The Redwood Box, Marimba Suite #2, Baroque Suite, Marimba Four Hands, Perfectly Frank, and Autoclave were
performed by college/university students.

4) Trio - 7 high schools, 1 college/university

   Canon at the Bar - 4 high schools, 4 college/university

   Variations on a Ghanaian Theme - 8 high schools, 12 college/university

   Septet - 2 high schools, 10 college/university

   Duet for Marimba and Vibraphone - 2 high schools, 4 college/university

   Conservatory Garden - 0 high schools, 12 college/university

   Eight Two-Part Inventions - 0 high schools, 9 college/university

   Marimba Quartet - 0 high schools, 10 college/university

   The Redwood Box - 0 high schools, 2 college/university

   Marimba Suite #2 - 0 high schools, 5 college/university

   Baroque Suite - 0 high schools, 8 college/university

   Marimba Four Hands - 0 high schools, 6 college/university

   Perfectly Frank - 0 high schools, 1 college/university

   Autoclave - 0 high schools, 2 college/university

5) Variations on a Ghanaian Theme, Septet, Conservatory Garden, and Eight Two-Part Inventions were listed the most.