



HARTFORD
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NOVEMBER 2019

Prelude



MASTERWORKS #2:

BRAHMS & HAYDN NOVEMBER 15 - 17, 2019

While our Masterworks title evokes 18th century images, this concert includes an exciting musical adventure into the 21st century. In the last 60 years, orchestral percussion has exploded into the modern-day percussion ensemble, as exemplified by our featured guest artists, the Percussion Collective, performing a thrilling new concerto for percussion and orchestra, co-commissioned by the Hartford Symphony Orchestra.



Glockenspiel and crotales

While the human voice was undoubtedly the first musical expression, percussion instruments such as stones, sticks and logs were almost certainly the next step in music's evolution.ⁱⁱⁱ Despite its ancient roots, modern day orchestral percussion is a relatively new phenomenon that arose in the latter half of the twentieth century.

In Western music, the kettledrum (or today's timpani) is viewed as the grandfather of percussion,^{iv} having likely arrived in Europe via the Middle East with the crusaders of the 12th and 13th centuries.^v But modern percussion instruments are much broader, and have their roots in all the world's cultures. Ancient Egypt's military long drums were ancestors to the modern



Janissary Corps

snare, and the triangle's ancestor, also from Egypt, was a sistrum (a metal arch with several crosspieces that had suspended metal disks).^{vi} Cymbals originated in Turkey around the 1st century. The modern timpani owes its heritage to the Janissary Corps of the Ottoman Empire.^{vii} Southeast Asia contributed the xylophone and Africa contributed the marimba.^{viii} From China we have bells, gongs, chimes and wooden clappers.^{ix} By the 3rd century B.C.E., Chinese records document more than 80 different percussion instruments.^x

In Europe, the kettledrum was used in the music of royal processions, in the religious compositions of Bach and Handel, and in the

opera orchestra of Lully, its first known scoring.^{xi} In Western music, the instruments of the percussion section of the orchestra reflected the evolving trends of each era. Haydn and Mozart occasionally used bells, rattles and snare drums, and Beethoven used bass drums, crash cymbals and triangles.^{xii} For the most part, orchestral percussion consisted largely of rhythmic accents and exotic background flourishes^{xiii}, but, slowly, things began to change.

In the mid 19th century, the orchestrations of Hector Berlioz increased the use of percussion. His *Symphonie Fantastique*, composed in 1830, brought crash cymbals, large bass drums, tenor drums, kettledrums and church clocks into the orchestra.^{xiv} It was Berlioz who first created a percussive group within the larger symphonic orchestra, and most of his works called for two timpanists playing eight kettledrums.^{xv} His *Requiem* (1837) called for eight timpanists to play 16 kettledrums!^{xvi} Aside from Berlioz, composers such as Rimsky-Korsakov (Russia) and Manuel de Falla (Spain) began using percussion more broadly.^{xvii}



Timpani

In the early years of the 20th century, increasing interest in rhythm led to the enlargement of the percussion section, but during the first World War, something new came onto the scene: Europe discovered American jazz. Jazz introduced an entirely new style of percussion, and jazz made an impression on composers such as Stravinsky and Ravel.^{xviii} As scoring for percussion emerged from its origins in operatic compositions, composers recognized that percussion instruments in symphonic music opened new possibilities, including the unique ability to contribute realism through sound effects.^{xix} Imagine listening to an *American In Paris* without the signature "taxi horns" played by the percussion section!

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Sistrum, ancestor to the triangle

But it was not until the 1960's that the earlier 20th century trends exploded. Suddenly, critical and notable changes were happening, namely: 1) the expansion of what was defined as a "percussion instrument" and the regular inclusion of 'found' instruments (such as brake drums), 2) an increasing call by composers for specific effects, 3) the inclusion of the marimba and vibraphone, along with an increased demand for difficult and important mallet parts and sophisticated mallet technique, and 4) an increased demand for expanded timpani range and tuning techniques.^{xx} While other orchestral families remained relatively stable over the last hundred years, the expansion of percussion is astounding. No wonder it has been said that percussion is the ONLY orchestral section that can boast of truly phenomenal physical growth and musical development over the past century.



Sistrum in ancient Egyptian relief

Not only have we seen the general acceptance of broader use of percussion by both audiences and composers, but new techniques are now demanded, including the technique of bowing crotales^{xxi} and vibraphone bars, extreme rages of tuning for timpani, and extended new techniques for timpani such as the glissando.^{xxii}

There is now increased experimentation by composers, who recognize the broad range of possibilities inherent in a wide selection of sounds. The role of percussion has changed dramatically from occasional accompaniment to an integral and indispensable section of the orchestra.^{xxiii} While widespread acceptance of percussion was initially slow, the field has now exploded, with avenues that have yet to be explored.

More and more, symphonic music is not western but world music. The influx of African and Latin-American sounds and instruments in orchestral works has become an exciting and familiar phenomenon, and percussion techniques from other continents are being explored and taught to students in conservatories as a matter of course, something that was unheard of in the mid 20th century.^{xxiv} Today, virtuoso techniques

on percussion have become mandatory, and percussion is finally being liberated from the role of occasional support or a splash of color.^{xxv}

We are witnesses to living history: an era of percussion renaissance. Proof of these exciting developments includes the creation of marimba repertoire, the development of multi-percussion soloists and the demand for commissions by many new percussion groups.^{xxvi} Percussion is now the basis of contemporary concert music, often characterized by extremely complex rhythms, and we see a much stronger emphasis on percussive sounds than at any other time in symphonic history. The heartbeat of the orchestra is no longer hidden, but in full view, leading the way.

The excitement we feel is best expressed by composer John Cage:

"Percussion music is revolution. Sound and rhythm have too long been submissive to the restrictions of nineteenth century music. Today we are fighting for their emancipation. Tomorrow, with electronic music in our ears, we will hear freedom. At the present stage of revolution, a healthy lawlessness is warranted. Experiment must necessarily be carried on by hitting anything - tin pans, rice bowls, iron pipes - anything we can lay our hands on. Not only hitting, but rubbing, scraping, making sound in every possible way... What we can't do ourselves will be done by machines which we will invent."

Join us!

Please join the Hartford Symphony Orchestra for ***Brahms & Haydn, November 15 - 17, 2019***, and be a witness to history, as well as an active participant in the percussion revolution envisioned by John Cage and so many other musical pioneers!



WONDERING HOW THE MUSIC WILL SOUND?

Try HSO'S Listening Guide, with links to the pieces you'll hear on our concert stage – and more!

Enjoy Gustav Dudamel conducting Brahms' *Variation on a Theme of Haydn*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BRu7CMg6wSs>

Haydn's Symphony No. 103 in E-flat major, the "Drum Roll" with Mogens Woldike conducting the Vienna State Opera Orchestra:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-cXFXLjWVFW>

Aria from Drum Circles, by Christopher Theofanidis, performed by Sam Um:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9xE3J4HWzS8>

Yearning for more percussion? Try these recommendations!

The expressive and intensely emotional *Symphonie Fantastique* by Hector Berlioz:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sK-D9IpmclQ>

A sample of music by The Percussion Collection, Robert van Sise, Artistic Director:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wXqq0EI_ksU

Acclaimed film and orchestral composer, Tan Dun, experiments with all types of percussion – including paper, as seen in his Paper Concerto:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JSdTDkAEnhw>

New arrangements for percussion include Maple Leaf Rag for piano, marimba and vibraphone:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yo7OISTdU6U>

An arrangement of Rimski-Korsakov's *Flight of the Bumblebee* for Marimba, composed and performed by Claudio Santangelo:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8b2GKp70LzU>



Dame Evelyn Glennie, world famous percussionist



Bongo drums, in performance



Marimba, in performance

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FALCETTI PIANOS

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Casey's
Classics

Want the best recordings of the pieces you'll experience on the concert program? Coleman Casey, HSO's dear friend, Director Emeritus and beloved in-house audiophile, offers his recording recommendations of selections featured in our upcoming Masterworks Concert.

Brahms's magnificent *Variations on a Theme of Haydn* have never been more beautifully performed than by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Herbert von Karajan, who spent a lifetime revisiting the great orchestral canon of Brahms (DG).

Haydn's Symphony No. 103 is one of the masterpieces that constitute the composer's so-called "London Symphonies." Although there are many wonderful period-instrument performances of these great works, Sir Colin Davis's traversals with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam have stood tall in the review of classic recordings (DECCA).

Christopher Theofanidis's *Drum Circles* has yet to be recorded commercially, although YouTube features a version which is perhaps the best way to enjoy this piece, as the visual impact is such an important part of the overall effect.



REFERENCES

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- iv. <http://www.scena.org/lsm/sm9-3/histoire-en.htm>
- v. Ibid.
- vi. <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=dfa95765f4364b92a08881e4e21bd48c>
- vii. Ibid
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- xi. <http://www.scena.org/lsm/sm9-3/histoire-en.htm>
- xii. Ibid
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- xvi. Ibid
- xvii. Ibid
- xviii. Ibid
- xix. <https://www.pas.org/docs/default-source/thesisdissertations/kellerre.pdf>
- xx. <https://www.pas.org/docs/default-source/thesisdissertations/kellerre.pdf>
- xxi. Crotales, sometimes called antique cymbals, are small tuned brass disks, each about 4" in diameter, affixed in a line, and usually played with mallets.
- xxii. Ibid
- xxiii. Ibid
- xxiv. Ibid
- xxv. Ibid
- xxvi. Ibid