Rediscovering a forgotten voice: The percussion ensemble music of Johanna Magdalena Beyer

Thomas James Nevill

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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UMI®
REDISCOVERING A FORGOTTEN VOICE: THE
PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE MUSIC OF
JOHANNA MAGDALENA BEYER

by

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Bachelor of Music
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1998

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A doctoral document submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Doctor of Music Arts Degree
Department of Music
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May 2005
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Dissertation Approval
The Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

March 30, 2005

The Dissertation prepared by

Thomas James Nevill

Entitled
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Johanna Magdalena Beyer

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Musical Arts

Examination Committee Chair

Examination Committee Member

Examination Committee Member

Graduate College Faculty Representative
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Following the impact of the Futurist movement and machine music of the early 20th century, curious attention to percussive sounds as significant musical and compositional avenues achieved not only recognition of usefulness, but also attained a legitimate status among American composers who were intrigued by its intrinsic timbres. By the 1930s, these compositional pioneers began to compose new and exciting pieces with the intention of providing a heightened awareness of rhythm and sound, as opposed to merely accentuating harmony and melody. In particular, The West Coast Group, a group of composers and performers on the Pacific coast, began to write and perform such music. Among the members of this group was Johanna Magdalena Beyer.

This document will explore the percussion ensemble music of Johanna Magdalena Beyer in an effort to reveal the historical significance of her percussion compositions, as well as provide a general
musical examination through updated editions of each percussion ensemble work. While she lived a reclusive life and little is known about it, only one of her works was published while she was living. It is evident that her compositions for percussion ensemble were among the relatively few pieces written at the time, and more importantly, that remain available for study today.

This document will be divided into two main parts. In order to provide the historical setting for Beyer’s works, the first part will explore the events that contributed to the advent of the percussion ensemble in the 1930s. This part will also present some of the little known biographical information of her life. The second part will contain information obtained from the musical analysis of her six pieces for percussion ensemble composed from 1933 to 1939.
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PREFACE

The purpose of this document is to not only provide some insight into the percussion ensemble music of Johanna Magdalena Beyer, but also to include the first and only updated collection of all six of her percussion ensemble scores. Each individual work has been thoroughly edited and copied from the original manuscript using modern instrumentation and part-writing practices. All musical examples throughout this document have been extracted from these editions, located in the Appendix.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my mentor and teacher Dr. Dean Gronemeier for his never ending support and guidance over the past six years. Many thanks are also extended to Dr. Alfonse Anderson, Prof. Anthony LaBounty, Prof. Thomas Leslie and Dr. Jeffrey Koep, for participating in yet another committee. I also would like to thank my parents, Tom and Diane Nevill, for always being there for me. A special thank you also goes to my wife, Becky, for her continuous support. Finally, I would like to dedicate this document to my daughter, Abigail, who never lets a day go by without making me laugh.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE OF THE 1930s:

THE RISE OF THE WEST COAST GROUP

During the 1930s, experimental composers set out to popularize the concept that noise is the fundamental component of the human musical experience. This approach to musical sound was a natural continuum of the Italian Futurist movement prior to World War I and the Machine Music of the 1920s, when the percussion ensemble became the logical medium for such experiments. As a "reaction" against Romanticism and Impressionism, these composers encouraged a creative atmosphere conductive to experimentation by incorporating the use of Eastern materials, Latin-American music, jazz and an unconventional use of instrumentation through such limitless use of percussion.

The true roots of sound experimentation can be traced back to the Italian Futurist movement when Luigi Russolo made a grand attempt to convince the world of his futuristic ideals about music. Although he considered himself a painter, not a musician or composer, Russolo ultimately rejected the notion of traditional harmony and preferred dissonances found in the everyday sounds of life. In his manifesto, The
Art of Noises (1913), Russolo maintains that the ranges of traditional musical instruments are too limiting and "we must break out of this limited circle of sounds and conquer the infinite variety of noise-sounds." As a result, he began to develop new instruments to satisfy his desire to hear beyond the timbres that already existed. This brought into fruition some of the most extraordinary musical experimentations during the early twentieth century through what he called his noise intoners, or "intonarumori."

Devising a way to recreate the sounds of the city, the clatter of motor driven automobiles, the bustle of a crowded street and even the battlefield, Russolo created these intonarumori under twelve different systems of noise generation; the howler, the roarer, the crackler, the rubber, the hummer, the gurgler, the hisser, the whistler, the burster, the croaker and the rustler. These box-like machines contained an internal membrane that produced the noise while a side lever controlled the pitch and timbre as a hand crank provided the power.

By 1914, Russolo gave the first public performance of his noise instruments with three compositions, or "network of noises," The Awakening of a City, Dining on the Hotel Terrace and The Meeting of Automobiles and Airplanes at the Teatro dal Verme in Milan. This particular performance ended in complete chaos as the Futurists in attendance hurled themselves into a defiant audience expressing its response to the cacophony of noise to which it had just been exposed.
Later that year, there were twelve additional performances of the intonarumori at the London Coliseum in which, according to Russolo, 30,000 attendees heard the “music of the future.” Other accounts were not as well substantiated.

While the start of World War I caused the postponement of these noise experiments and ultimately their demise, the influence of Russolo cannot be overlooked. His radical yet groundbreaking ideas on creating a new concept of tonality is clearly evident in the mechanistic ballets and other instances of machine music that followed during the 1920s. This veneration of noise sustained through to the next generation of composers that sought to prolong the exciting new timbres inherent in such percussive devices.

The most illustrious musical example of this era, perhaps due to its notorious composer being referred to as “the bad boy of music,” is found in the instrumentation of the musical score, *Ballet mécanique* (1924), by George Antheil. Scored for eight pianos, one player piano, four xylophones, glockenspiel, horns, bells, anvils, many drums and two airplane propellers; *Ballet mécanique* ultimately began the transition of the percussion section into a serious, stand alone chamber group while at the same time providing it a valuable public awareness. As the percussion section continued to gain mainstream acceptance, serious composers of large works also began to expand their use of percussion
instruments and "effects." The end result was that the percussion section became a stand-alone entity in its own right.

The landmark occasion for the launching of the percussion ensemble took place at the 1933 world premier performance of *Ionisation* (1931), by Edgard Varèse, in New York. This is the first time in history that a piece of music was written for and performed as a representative of music strictly for percussion ensemble. Scored for thirteen players and forty percussion instruments, *Ionisation*, genuinely marked the legitimacy of percussion music as a form of musical expression while also gaining an acceptance and somewhat of a fascination amongst the preceding generation of percussion composers. As a result, an increasing number of composers began to experiment with unusual combinations of percussion sounds for music that did not rely heavily on pitch and harmonic relationships, but rather on rhythm and timbre.

Under the auspices of *Ionisation*, members of one particular group of percussionists and composers, known as the "West Coast" group (due to their geographical location on the west coast of the United States) began to exchange their own, new ideas on percussion writing and techniques. Of this group, the best known composers were Henry Cowell, a member of the percussion ensemble for the premier of *Ionisation*, Lou Harrison and John Cage. Others members of this group included William Russell, Gerald Strang, Ray Green and Johanna Magdalena Beyer. When combined, this collective group of composers
represented a majority of the small body of known works for percussion ensemble that were composed during the 1930s. The following is a list of the known works composed from 1933 to 1939 for percussion ensemble.

1933
José Ardévol, *Estudio en Forma de Preludio y Fuga*
John Becker, *Abongo*
Johanna Beyer, *Percussion Suite*
William Russell, *Fugue for Eight Percussion Instruments*,
William Russell, *Three Dance Movements*¹¹

1934
José Ardévol, *Suite, para 30 Instrumentos de Percusión*
Henry Cowell, *Ostinato Pianissimo*

1935
Johanna Beyer, *IV*
John Cage, *Quartet*
Harold G. Davidson, *Auto Accident*
William Russell, *Percussion Studies in Cuban Rhythms*

1936
Gerald Strang, *Percussion Music for Three Players*
Ray Green, *Three Inventories of Casey Jones*
William Russell, *March Suite*

1937
William Russell, *Made in America*

1938
John Becker, *A Dance*
John Becker, *Vigilante*

1939
Johanna Beyer, *Three Movements for Percussion*
Johanna Beyer, *March for 30 Percussion Instruments*
Johanna Beyer, *Percussion Opus 14*
Johanna Beyer, *Waltz for Percussion*
John Cage, *First Construction in Metal*
John Cage, *Imaginary Landscape #1*
Henry Cowell, *Pulse*
Henry Cowell, *Return*
Lou Harrison, *Fifth Symphony*
Lou Harrison, *Bomba*
Lou Harrison, *Counterdance in Spring*
Endnotes

1 The Futurist painter/musician Luigi Russolo played a revolutionary role in the incorporation of noise and environmental sound into modern music.

2 Works written to sound like machines.


5 Russolo sustained significant head injuries during WW I.

6 The Art of Noises, p. 12.

7 Ibid, p. 33.

8 Works for ballet that included music to portray the sounds of machines: Age of Steel (1924) by Serge Prokofiev, Skyscrapers (1924) by John Alden Carpenter and H.P. Horsepower (1927) by Carlos Chavez.

9 Even Ritmica No. 5 and Ritmica No. 6 (1930) by Amadeo Roldan were from a collection of six pieces in which the first four were scored for flute, oboe, clarinet bassoon, horn and piano.


11 now known as Four Dance Movements.
CHAPTER TWO

JOHANNA MAGDALENA BEYER:
LIFE AND MUSIC

Johanna Magdalena Beyer stands among the relatively small number of composers to first write for the medium of percussion ensemble as it began its rise during the 1930s. Although her pioneering efforts remain historically significant, for the most part her percussion music has been completely overlooked, a forgotten voice as very few of her works have been performed. Certain conclusions can be drawn about her percussion ensemble music through their analysis and comparison, however, a small amount is known about who she was. She seemed to have been somewhat of a mystery to those who knew her, leading one to only speculate as to why she led such a lonely persona solely based upon the personal and artistic battles she ensued.

Johanna Magdalena Beyer was born in Leipzig, Germany on July 11, 1988, where she also began her study of music theory and piano. Her first visit to the United States was interrupted in 1914, due to the onslaught of World War I, and she returned to Germany to be with her family. By 1924, she returned permanently to America to further her music studies as she enrolled at the Mannes College of Music in New
While there, Beyer began studying music composition with the likes of Ruth Crawford, Charles Seeger and Henry Cowell. Under the noticeable influence of these mentors, Beyer's compositions begin to employ a concentrated effort on formal design, a constant reminder of her dedication to experimentalism and modernism.

By the little known accounts, those associated with Beyer describe her as self-conscious and awkward, a persona that undoubtedly contributed towards her anonymity. She was also in a seemingly constant struggle for recognition in a modernist musical ideology dominated by men. For this reason, she frequently signed her scores J. M. Beyer, which was most likely an effort to disguise her gender. Her reclusion is a logical answer to why only one of her works was ever published during her lifetime.

Beyer died on January 9, 1944, at the age of fifty-six due to a battle with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, or "Lou Gehrig's disease." The cause of ALS is unknown but the known result is a progressive and fatal weakening of the muscles and nervous system. She is buried at the Kensico Cemetery in Valhalla, New York and left behind no family. For a more detailed perspective about Beyer's life and other works, see the groundbreaking article "Total Eclipse: The Music of Johanna Magdalena Beyer, An Introductory and Preliminary Checklist," by John Kennedy and Larry Polansky in the Music Quarterly, 80 (4): 719-778, Winter.
Although Beyer was an important contributor to the history of the percussion ensemble, many questions remain about her life and music. She composed a variety of music, a majority of which still remains unknown. A complete collection of Beyer's manuscripts can be found in the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, American Music Collection and in the Fleisher Collection of the Free Library of Philadelphia. The following provides a list of these additional scores:

*Ballad of the Star Eater* (1934) for soprano and clarinet.

*Bees* (no date) for piano.

*Clusters* (1931 and 1936) for piano.

*The Composer's Forum-Laboratory* (1937) for chorus and piano.

*Cymab* (1937) for orchestra.

*Dance* (no date) for violin, viola, violoncello and bass.

*Dissonant Counterpoint* (no date) for piano.

*Four Pieces for Oboe and Bassoon* (1939) for oboe and bassoon.

*Elation* (1938) for band.

*The Federal Music Project* (1936) for chorus.

*Winter Ade: German Folksongs with various versions* (1936?) for piano.

*Fragment* (1937) for chamber orchestra.

*Gebrausch-Musik* (1934) for piano.

*Have Faith!* (1936-1937) for soprano voice and flute.

*The Main-deep* (1937) for chorus.
March (1935) for clarinet, 2 cornets, percussion (cymbal and drum), violin 1, violin 2, and violincello.

Movement for Double Bass and Piano (1936) for bass and piano.

Movement for String Quartet (1938) for violin, viola, violoncello and bass.

Movement for Woodwinds (1938) for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon and double bassoon.

The People, Yes (1937) for chorus.

Piano Book (1936) for piano.

Prelude and Fugue (no date) for piano.

Quintet for Woodwinds (1933) for flute, oboe, English horn, clarinet and bassoon.

Reverence (1938) for English horn, soprano saxophone, alto horn in E flat, timpani and bass drum.

The Robin in the Rain (1935) for chorus and piano.

See-saw: Study (1936) for piano.

Six Movements for Oboe and Piano (1939) for oboe and piano.

Sky Pieces (1933) for soprano and piano.

Sonata for Clarinet and Piano (1936) for clarinet and piano.

Sonatina in C (1943) for piano.

Geneva (1938) ballet for orchestra.

Music of the Spheres: Movement for Three Electrical Instruments (1938) for three undesignated instruments.

Quartet, Strings, no. 1 (1933-1934) for strings.

Quartet, Strings, no. 2 (1936) for strings.
Quartet, Strings, no. 4 (no date) for strings.

Suite for bass clarinet and piano (no date) for bass clarinet and piano.

Suite for Clarinet (no date) for clarinet.

Suite III for Clarinet and Bassoon (1933) for clarinet and bassoon.

Suite for Piano (1939) for piano.

Suite for Violin and Piano (1939) for violin and piano.

Symphonic Movement I (1939) for orchestra.

Symphonic Movement II (1941) for orchestra.

Symphonic Opus 3 (1939) for orchestra.

Symphonic Opus 5 (1940) for orchestra.

Symphonic Suite (1937) for orchestra.

Three More Pieces for Oboe and Piano (no date) for oboe and piano.

Three New York Waltzes (1936) for piano.

Three Songs (1933) for voice, percussion and piano.

Three songs for Soprano and Clarinet (1934) for voice and clarinet.

Trio for Woodwinds (no date) for flute, oboe and bassoon.

Waltz (1931) for piano.
Endnotes

2 Ibid, p. 720.
3 New York Public Library Catalog Container List
CHAPTER THREE

PERCUSSION SUITE

The first of Johanna Magdalena Beyer's six works for percussion ensemble was composed in 1933 under the title, *Percussion Suite*. Although there is no evidence of this piece being published, the original manuscript contains seventeen pages that had been printed on a clear and final copy. The manuscript style of the score for *Percussion Suite* is somewhat unique in that it is the only one of the manuscripts she wrote for percussion not printed on hand-ruled paper. In addition, each instrument is scored on five-line, four-space staves as opposed to her other percussion ensemble pieces, discussed in later chapters, where each instrument is scored on a separate line. Consisting of three contrasting movements, *Percussion Suite* is written for ten instruments and can be performed by five players. The score utilizes standard percussion instrumentation with each movement sharing similar timbres.

The first movement is scored for Chinese blocks (2), triangle, tambourine, cymbal and bass drum. The total length is eighty-one measures and there is a marked tempo of quarter note is equal to seventy-two beats per minute. Although this movement begins with a
time signature of 4/4, a sense of movement is created as it meanders through the time signatures of 3/4 and 5/4. The dynamics range from *pianissississimo* on the final bass drum note to a crescendo that extends beyond *forte* in measure sixty-six.

The texture of the first movement is sparse and calls for a muffled bass drum which sets a quiet, ambient mood for the entire composition. The somewhat primitive, ostinato-like repetition of the bass drum is interjected by the other instruments with rapid bursts of rhythm fragments that progressively become more active.

There are three distinct, four-measure themes that occur in this movement and each one varies throughout to create a sense of form that can be compared to a loose interpretation of a rondo. These sections will be referred to as A, B and C (Example 1 -3).

Example 1, A Section (measures 6 - 9)

![Example 1, A Section](image)

Example 2, B Section (measures 10 -13)

![Example 2, B Section](image)
Example 3, C Section (measures 15 – 18)

As the movement unfolds each section repeats as a variation of the original with the A section appearing four times, the B section appearing five times and the C section appearing three times. A further variation of the themes occur when alternating measures of material from the C section and B section appear as a final restatement prior to the coda (Example 4).

Example 4, Alternating C and B sections (measures 52 – 59)
New, transitional material in the form of a 5/4 measure (Example 5) occurs throughout the movement.

Example 5, 5/4 Transitional Material (measure 14)

This material appears a total of six times, each a variation of the original. The coda begins at measure sixty-one and consists of material extracted from the A section.

The second movement is scored for xylophone, triangle, tambourine, cymbal and bass drum. The use of xylophone is unique in that this is the only time that a keyboard percussion instrument is used by Beyer in any of her percussion ensemble pieces. There also is an indication to use triangle beaters on the cymbal that creates a simple contrast to the subtle timbre of the other instruments. This movement is thirty-two measures in length and does not deviate from the marked tempo of quarter note is equal to seventy-two beats per minute. The
dynamics range from piano to forte and the time signature is 5/4 throughout.

The form of the second movement is theme and variation. The original theme (Example 6) appears in the xylophone and begins on beat two of measure four.

Example 6, Melodic Theme of Movement II (measures 4 – 5)

The theme consists of atonal material that is made up of nine beats utilizing a combination of duple and triple beat subdivisions. An argument can be made for the use of the twelve-tone method in creating this melodic material; however, it does not appear in a strict sense of the twelve-tone process.

The first variation of the theme begins at measure nine and expounds upon the original by adding four more beats of melodic material with duple, triple and asymmetrical divisions of the beat (Example 7).

Example 7, Variation One (measures 9 – 11)
The second variation begins at measure fifteen and consists of material from the first variation. Slight change does occur as particular notes have been shifted to different octaves (Example 8).

Example 8, Variation Two (measures 15 – 17)

The third variation begins at measure twenty and continues with the employment of octave displacement. It further adds variation through the addition of five beats of new material that include an even greater asymmetric division of the beat (Example 9).

Example 9, Variation Three (measures 20 – 23)

The fourth and final variation (Example 10) begins in measure twenty-four. This variation contains the first two eighth notes of the theme but adds variety by the inclusion of a glissando. This process is repeated in measure twenty-five by using the second and third eighth
notes from the theme followed by a glissando. The variation continues in measure twenty-six with the same material found in variation three.

Example 10, Variation Four (measures 24 - 29)

The third movement is scored for Chinese blocks (2), rattle, triangle, castanets and tam tam. This movement is the longest of the three, totaling ninety-eight measures with a marked tempo of eighth note equals one hundred beats per minute. The time signature is 6/8 and the dynamics range form pianissississimo to forte.

The form of the third movement is also theme and variation. The theme (Example 11) begins at measure one and lasts five bars. This theme occurs in its original form again in measures fifty-seven through sixty-one.

Example 11, First Theme (measures 1 – 5)
There are eleven total variations of this theme with the final variation encompassing the most complex in rhythmic activity and fullness of timbre (Example 12).

Example 12, Final Variation (measures 78 – 89)

The compositional style of *Percussion Suite* sets the tone for the remaining percussion ensemble pieces composed by Johanna Beyer during the 1930s. Combining simple processes and a modernist sensibility, the percussion ensemble remained the ideal medium for her commitment to experimentalism; evident in the percussion ensemble works to follow.
CHAPTER FOUR

IV

The most significant musical composition that Johanna Magdalena Beyer composed is her 1935 piece for percussion ensemble modestly entitled, *IV*. This piece warrants such recognition as it is the only piece of her music that was published during her lifetime. In an edition dedicated to only percussion ensemble music, *IV* appeared in Henry Cowell's New Music Orchestra Series 18 (1936) among other not so well known composers.

Chronologically, *IV* is Beyer’s second attempt at writing for percussion ensemble and shows evidence of a furthering commitment to experimentalism by scoring it for nine unspecified instruments. Totaling forty-eight measures in length, this is the shortest of her works for percussion ensemble and appears in a final, clear manuscript. The time signature is 7/8 with a tempo marking of eighth note is equal to one hundred forty-four beats per minute with a dynamic range of *piano* to *forte*. An overall sense of movement is created throughout by a constant fluctuation of tempo.

Although no specific timbres are called for in the score, formal structure is evident as a theme followed by five variations. Arguably
primitive in its content, a recognizable eight measure theme (Example 13) contains an understated network of syncopated, poly-rhythmic and fugue-like processes.

Example 13, Theme (measures 1 – 8)

Following the entrances of lines five, six, seven and eight, as well as being visually evident by the inverted pyramids they create across the pages of the score, a fugue-like element is utilized. As a result, an interesting poly-rhythm is created through syncopated accent patterns of odd-grouped figures. Line five consists of a seven note grouping repeated eight times, line six consists of a two note grouping repeated twenty one times, line seven consists of a three note grouping repeated ten times and line eight consists of a five note grouping repeated three times. Interpreted as part of the fugue-like structure, line nine consists of a double-dotted half note repeating at the beginning of each measure, a subtle reminder of the irregular seven eight time signature. This entire
fugue-like element is repeated exactly in each variation, acting as a platform for the remaining lines to stand upon and explore further rhythmic opportunities.

The first variation (Example 14) occurs at measure nine with new material in the form of a four measure rhythmic statement in line one. Lines two, three and four offer a simple reinforcement to the ostinato contained in line nine. At measure sixteen, lines three, four and five contribute new rhythmic material in the form of sixteenth notes to be later restated in the final variation.

Example 14, First Variation (measures 9 – 16)

The second variation (Example 15) begins at measure seventeen with a unison rhythm in lines one, two and three that is a direct restatement of material from the first variation. Line four introduces an additional rhythmic motif, consisting of three sixteenth note triplets that
will be restated in the final variation in combination with the sixteenth note motive found in the first variation.

Example 15, Second Variation (measures 17 – 24)

The third variation (Example 16) contains material in line one similar to the preceding variations with an exception for the addition of an eight note on count seven that provides more rhythmic interest. The entrance of line two in the sixth measure reveals an additional fugue-like texture. The rhythmic material for this entrance is an exact repetition of the material found in the four bar rhythmical statement of the first variation.
The fourth variation (Example 17) consists of a combination of rhythmical material borrowed from the previous variations. An additional fugue-like texture occurs as lines one, two, three and four make their entrance in the third, fourth and fifth bars respectively.
The fifth and final variation (Example 18) is a continuation the preceding variation in order to maintain the integrity of the fugue-like material in line one, two, three and four. The end result is an extensive blend of texture as the two fugue-like sections grind together. In contrast, the final starkness is achieved in the last measure of line five as six solo notes are performed.

Example 18, Fifth Variation (measures 41 – 48)

IV is the most remembered and most often performed percussion ensemble work that Beyer composed. Not only did this piece gain exposure as it being the only piece of hers that was published while she was alive, but also the level of experimentation achieved in this work cannot be overlooked. The exploration in rhythmic processes and the use of unspecified instrumentation in this particular piece further reinforces her commitment to modernism.
CHAPTER FIVE

THREE MOVEMENTS FOR PERCUSSION

The third, and only other multi-movement work for percussion ensemble written by Johanna Beyer, is her 1939 composition entitled, *Three Movements for Percussion*. Dedicated to John Cage, this work marks the first of her percussion ensemble pieces that are written on hand-ruled manuscript paper and feature each instrument being scored on an individual line. The entire composition requires fourteen standard percussion instruments and the first movement calls for five players, the second movement four players and the third movement nine players.

The first movement, titled *Restless*, is scored for triangle, wood block, tambourine, snare drum, timpani and gong. This movement totals one hundred fourteen measures and is marked with a tempo of quarter note is equal to one hundred four beats per minute with a time signature of 3/4. Employing similar compositional devises found in her other percussion pieces, this movement consists of rhythmic themes, or motives, that tend to vary throughout. The movement begins with a three measure, dotted-half note theme played on the tam tam (Example 19). This three measure theme returns a total of five times throughout the movement, acting as transitional material.
Example 19, Tam tam Theme (measures 1 – 3)

The next four measures of the first movement also consist of more thematic material (Example 20). This material is made up of the use of a call and response between the snare drum and timpani which culminates in the fourth measure, as a fermata on count three. This same thematic material is found throughout the entire movement and in various forms.

Example 20, Additional Theme (measures 4 – 7)

The third and final theme of the first movement makes its first appearance in measure forty-six and consists of a four-against-three polyrhythm between the triangle, woodblock and timpani (Example 21).
This polyrhythm occurs throughout the movement and in slight variations.

Example 21, Polyrhythm (measure 46)

The second movement, titled Endless, is written for woodblock, cymbal, lions roar and bass drum. A sharp contrast to the first movement and an obvious exploration into stark minimalism, Endless is centered on a repetitive eight bar pattern of soft quarter notes in the wood block, that subtly rise and fall, supported only by delicate bass drum notes (Example 22).

Example 22, Woodblock Ostinato (measures 1 – 8)
Totaling seventy-six measures, without the noted directions to repeat the entire movement from the beginning, the woodblock and bass drum ostinato occurs a total of eight times, perhaps representing the endless ticking of time. The other timbres provide subtle contrast to the hypnotic ostinato, only briefly interrupted by a few measures of rhythmical variations (Example 23). The tempo of *Endless* is marked quarter note equals ninety-six beats per minute; however, an underlying sense of movement is created by the use of a *rallentando* at the end of the ostinato.

Example 23, Variation of Ostinato (measures 59 - 71)

The third movement, titled *Tactless*, utilizes the most instrumentation of the three movements through its use of triangles (2), E-flat bell, wood blocks (2), cymbals, tom tom, snare drum, lions roar
and bass drum. The time signature is 5/4 and strays only with five measures of a 6/4 time signature. Consisting of seventy-five measures, *Tactless* provides the richest texture of the three movements by employing the simultaneous use of multiple compositional devices. The most obvious of which, the tom tom ostinato, (Example 24) occurs throughout the entire movement and provides the foundation for which the entire movement is built upon.

Example 24, Tom tom Ostinato (measure 1)

```
\[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{Example 24, Tom tom Ostinato (measure 1)}
\end{array} \]
```

The use of a three-note, over the bar line figure (Example 25) in the bell part occurs on four occasions and provides some interesting and contrasting polyrhythmic activity as it coincides with the tom tom ostinato.

Example 25, Over the Bar line Figure (measures 17 – 18)

```
\[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{Example 25, Over the Bar line Figure (measures 17 – 18)}
\end{array} \]
```
A final textural element in movement three is created by the use of a four-against-five polyrhythm (Example 26) which occurs throughout the movement in the bass drum part.

Example 26, Polyrhythm (measures 64 – 65)

Three Movements for Percussion again demonstrates Beyer's focus on process and the development of rhythmic ideas. Each movement continues to signify her commitment to modernism while further encompassing the compositional styles she consistently utilizes in her percussion ensemble music. The remaining pieces she composed for percussion continue with this process.
CHAPTER SIX

MARCH FOR 30 PERCUSSION INSTRUMENTS

The original manuscript of *March for 30 Percussion Instruments*, dated July 2, 1939, is the first in what appears to be a “trilogy” of similar works Beyer composed for percussion ensemble during that year. True to her manuscript style, the score is on hand-ruled paper with each instrument notated on a separate line by instrument, not performer. The score contains only the notes to be performed and rests have often been omitted, thus making it quite difficult to read. Written on four pages, the entire composition totals one hundred sixty-six measures and is noted as having a performance time of approximately four minutes. The tempo marking is ninety-six beats per minute and the dynamic range is *pianissimo* to *fortissimo*. The original manuscript contains one dynamic “staff” along the bottom of the score that each instrument is to follow.

Although scored for thirty percussion instruments that are written on thirty separate lines, the piece can be performed by eleven players. The instrumentation includes triangles (3), high-pitched metal bowls (2), Chinese wood blocks (3), rice bowls (4), dragon’s mouth, tambourine, tom toms (4), cymbals (2), anvil, temple gongs (4), gong, snare drum,
bass drum, thunder sheet and lions roar. This is the only percussion score of Beyer's that uses rice bowls, an anvil, temple gongs and a thunder sheet. The use of rice bowl is somewhat unique in regards to standard percussion instrumentation. However, the most unique characteristic of this composition is the time signature of four and a half beats per measure. Somewhat enigmatic in its title, a march with four and a half beats per measure leads one to believe that Beyer had a sense of humor.

The form of *March* uses Beyer's familiar compositional practice of theme and variation. In this case, the theme consists of a simple one measure rhythmic motive that gradually becomes more active as the piece unfolds (Example 27).

Example 27, Rhythmic Theme (measure 5)

Each variation of the theme (Examples 28 – 32) consists of not only added rhythmic material, gradually filling in the measure with beats, but also consists of subtle additions in texture as the piece culminates.
Example 28, Variation One (measure 10)

Example 29, Variation Two (measure 20)

Example 30, Variation Three (measure 23)

Example 31, Variation Four (measure 26)

Example 32, Variation Five (measure 30)
The most dramatic moment occurs when the restatement of the theme is followed by a restatement of the variations in measures forty-five through fifty-six (Example 33).

Example 33, Restatement of the Variations (measures 45 – 56)
This restatement of the rhythmic theme makes its return while the variations are added in one measure increments as the texture gradually thickens towards a climactic tutti, *fortissimo* crescendo in measure fifty-six. This is followed by a short coda section that decrescendos into a lull of sound. The final five measures carry the piece to a close in a last attempt to bring back variation five, three and six (Example 34).

Example 34, Coda (measures 62 – 66)

Overall, *March for 30 Percussion Instruments* incorporates the compositional process of theme and variations that have been found in her previous percussion ensemble pieces. Although this work is similar in design to her previous works for percussion, new ideas continue to find their way into the remaining few pieces.
CHAPTER SEVEN

PERCUSSION OPUS 14

The second of the “trilogy” pieces Beyer composed for percussion ensemble is entitled *Percussion Opus 14*, and is dated August of 1939. The score is similar to that of March and Waltz in that it is written on hand-ruled paper with each instrument written on a separate line. As with her other scores, the score to *Percussion Opus 14*, contains only the notes that are to be played and frequently leaves out the rests. Written on three pages, the work totals one hundred fifteen measures and is indicated as having the duration of approximately four minutes. The time signature is three-four and the tempo is marked at one hundred four beats per minute with a dynamic range of *pianissimo* to *fortissimo*.

The instrumentation of *Percussion Opus 14* is also similar to her other percussion ensemble works and consisting of a triangle, high pitched metal bowls (2), dragon’s mouth (4), tom tom, cymbal, anvil, gong, snare drum, bass drum, timpani (2) and lions roars. Although scored for fifteen instruments on fifteen separate lines, the piece can be performed by ten players.
The form of *Percussion Opus 14* can be realized as a two-part binary (A B) with a coda. The A section consists of a seven bar phrase that begins in measure one (Example 35).

Example 35, Theme from A Section (measures 1 – 7)

The remaining thirty-three measures of the A section are made up of small rhythmic fragments taken directly from the first seven measures distributed among the various instruments. The use of an ostinato, another familiar compositional tool used by Beyer, occurs in the bass drum part throughout this section providing a quiet undercurrent of sound.

The B section arrives at measure forty with an indicated change in tempo and a subtle change in texture. The tempo is now changed to quarter note is equal to one hundred twenty beats per minute and the
texture has changed into a more driving ostinato as the metal bowls and dragon's mouth are added to the timbre of the bass drum (Example 36).

Example 36, B Section Ostinato (measures 40 - 46)

The B section continues as it arrives at a fermata on count three of measure seventy-one following a prolonged crescendo (Example 37).

Example 37, Fermata (measures 69 - 71)

This build is released into a slight rhythmical variation of the ostinato in the temple blocks part (Example 38).
Example 38, Ostinato Variation (measures 72 – 77)

The repetition of the ostinato settles back in for the remainder of the B section as the small rhythmic fragments continue to add simple punctuation.

The coda begins at measure one hundred (Example 39) occurring as a slight variation of the A section.

Example 39, Coda (measures 100 – 107)

The coda lasts sixteen measures and at the seventh measure makes an exact restatement of the first seven measures of the piece. As
this restatement of the A section ultimately fades away into the final measure, a delicate last restatement occurs in the triangle and metal bowls (Example 40).

Example 40, Final Measure (measure 115)

The use of a two part form is unique only to Percussion Opus 14, in that this is the only one of her six percussion ensemble pieces that makes use of it. Throughout her percussion ensemble pieces, Beyer adheres to a formal sense of form as a foundation for her experimentation.
CHAPTER EIGHT

WALTZ FOR PERCUSSION

The last of the "trilogy" pieces is Waltz for Percussion, composed in December of 1939, also appears to be the last percussion ensemble piece ever written by Beyer. Continuing with the manuscript style of Beyer's other percussion ensemble works, the score is on hand-ruled paper and neatly written. The notation of each instrument on a separate line is nothing new or unique for Beyer; however, brackets do appear for the first time around groups of instruments to imply that they are to be performed by only one player.

Remaining consistent to her style, only the notes to be performed appear on the score while rests have often been omitted. Written on three pages, the piece totals one hundred six measures and is indicated as having the duration of approximately four minutes. The tempo is specified and marked as quarter note is in the region (ca.) of ninety-six beats per minute and there is not a designated time signature. The dynamics range from pianissimo to fortissimo.

The instrumentation is similar to that of March for 30 Percussion Instruments and Percussion Opus 14, (the other "trilogy" pieces) with the score calling for triangles (2), bell, dragon's mouth (temple blocks), tom
tom, cymbal, gong (tam tam), timpani and bass drum. The triangles are specified as “high” and “low” and there are no specific pitch designations for the timpani, only “high” and “low.” The gong and cymbal have an indication to be played “with soft sticks.”

Waltz, although similar in timbre, length and overall musical style as the other works in the “trilogy,” does not stray from the compositional techniques that have been employed in her previous percussion ensemble pieces. The use of a five-measure ostinato (Example 40), found in the tom tom part is a compositional device found in her other works.

Example 40, Tom tom Ostinato (measure 1)

Throughout Waltz, this ostinato repeats a total of twenty-one times and functions as a completely independent voice from the rest of the instruments. The remaining instruments have identifiable themes (Examples 41 through 47) that are used in combination to create additional rhythmic themes and textures. These rhythmic themes appear throughout the piece in their original form or with slight variations of the original.
Example 41, Triangle Themes (measures 3 and 31)

1.  
   \[\text{Diagram of triangle theme}\]

2.  
   \[\text{Diagram of triangle theme}\]

Example 42, Bell Themes (measures 4 and 32)

1.  
   \[\text{Diagram of bell theme}\]

2.  
   \[\text{Diagram of bell theme}\]

Example 43, Temple Blocks Themes (measures 6 and 50 – 51)

1.  
   \[\text{Diagram of temple blocks theme}\]

2.  
   \[\text{Diagram of temple blocks theme}\]

Example 44, Cymbal Themes (measures 1 and 31)

1.  
   \[\text{Diagram of cymbal theme}\]

2.  
   \[\text{Diagram of cymbal theme}\]

Example 45, Tam tam Themes (measures 1 and 59)

1.  
   \[\text{Diagram of tam tam theme}\]

2.  
   \[\text{Diagram of tam tam theme}\]
Example 46, Timpani Themes (measures 1, 6–7 and 10–11)

1. 2. 3.

Example 47, Bass Drum Themes (measures 1 and 7)

1. 2.

The overall form of Waltz can be realized as binary, encompassing two contrasting sections with the addition of an introduction and a coda. The introduction (Example 48) is only five measures long and is used to state the tom tom ostinato previously mentioned.

Example 48, Introduction (measures 1–5)
The cymbal, gong, timpani and bass drum provide support to the tom tom ostinato through a shimmering roll section. The triangle and bell provide contrast and color to the roll and acts as the first statement of their themes. The introduction transitions into the first section with the only fermata found throughout the entire piece.

The first section begins, a tempo, with a four-against-three (4:3) polyrhythm that is the rhythmic foundation of this work. The polyrhythm is stated for the first time at measure six in the temple blocks and tom tom voices, respectively (Example 49). This figure is repeated throughout the piece until the penultimate measure.

Example 49, Polyrhythm (measures 6 – 7)

![Example 49, Polyrhythm (measures 6 – 7)](image)

The four-against-three polyrhythm is further reinforced by the accent and phrasing of the triangle and the addition of a dotted quarter note rhythm in the cymbal part (Example 50) that exposes more of a
“two beats per measure” feel as opposed to the indicated triple feel of the indicated meter.

Example 50, Enhanced Polyrhythm (measure 57)

The second section begins at measure thirty-five and consists of twenty-nine measures that include a four-measure introduction. This “introduction” occurs in measures thirty-one through thirty-four and is essentially a repeat of the first two measures of the second section (Example 51).

Example 51, Introduction to Second Section (measures 31 – 34)
The second section continues with similar rhythmic patterns and at measure sixty-three, the entire twenty-nine measure second section repeats exactly, excluding the four measure introduction.

The coda begins at measure ninety-one with a performance marking of accelerando and crescendo poco a poco to indicate a build in both volume and tempo to the apex of the dynamic fortissimo, the loudest point in this work. This fortissimo sustains for three measures under the auspices of a ritardando. As if attempting to take its last breath, the coda continues with an accelerando of thematic material from the first two sections and culminates into the final beat played on a solo bass drum at pianissimo (Example 52).

Example 52, Final Three Measures (measures 104 - 106)

Although the last of Beyer's six works for percussion ensemble, Waltz continues to stay true to the compositional style and processes
found throughout her percussion ensemble music. The use of an ostinato, theme and variation, and simple repetition define the essence of early percussion ensemble writing and the commitment these composers had to experimenting with the concept of noise.
PERCUSSION SUITE

Johanna Magdalena Beyer
Edited by Tom Nevill

TEMPEL BLOCKS

TRIANGLE

TAMBOURINE

CYMBAL

BASS DRUM

T. BL.

TRG.

TAMB.

CYM.

B. DR.

a tempo

\( \text{\textcopyright 2005} \)
Percussion Suite

T. Bl.

TRGL.

TAMB.

CYM.

B. Dr.

\( \text{f ritenudo} \quad \text{pp} \quad \text{a tempo} \)

\( \text{mf} \)

\( \text{pp} \)

\( \text{mf} \)

\( \text{mf} \)

\( \text{mf} \)

\( \text{mf} \)
all notes performed an octave higher
THREE MOVEMENTS FOR PERCUSSION
I. RESTLESS

Johanna Magdalena Beyer
Edited by Tom Nevill

TRIANGLE
WOOD BLOCK
TAMBOURINE
SNARE DRUM
TIMPANI & GONG

TRGL.
W. BL.
TAMB.
S.DR.
TIMP.

2005
II. ENDLESS

WOODBLOCK  CYMBAL  LIONS ROAR  BASS DRUM

soft stick  pp  pp  pp  pp

W. BL.  CYM.  L. R.  B. DR.

soft stick  s.mpio  s.mpio  s.mpio

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Coda

II ENDLESS

W. BL.

CYM.

L. R.

B. DR.

rallentando molto

morendo

ppp
III. TACTLESS

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Edited by Tom Nevill

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MARCH

JOHANNA MAGDALENA BEYER
EDITED BY TOM NEVILL

2005
MARCH
MARCH
MARCH

[Sheet music notation]

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Percussion Opus 14

JOHANNA MAGDALENA BEYER
EDITED BY TOM NEVILL

2005
Percussion Opus 14
Percussion Opus 14

TRG.
M. BW.
T. BL.
T. T.
CYM.
ANV.
G and L. R.
S. DR.
B. DR.
TIMP.

stringendo rad.

stringendo poco a poco
WALTZ

JOHANNA MAGDALENA BEYER
EDITED BY TOM NEVILL

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