Advancing Percussion Through Composition: Part 2

Interviews with Caleb Pickering, Jamie Whitmarsh, Marco Schirripa, Francisco Perez and Mathew Campbell

By Oliver Molina

The landscape of the percussive arts continues to evolve and change. Virtuosos are pushing the limits of what is possible, new playing techniques and instruments are being developed, and instruments are being reimagined to create innovative and unique sounds. Most importantly, new compositions are being written to help move our craft forward. Promoting new music for percussion has become more commonplace in the 21st century, connecting composers and musicians across the world daily.

The May 2016 issue of *Percussive Notes* contained my article that featured several emerging percussionist-composers. This article is a follow-up to my first one and highlights percussionist-composers under age 30. This time around, I wanted to get fresh perspectives from younger minds and ears. I believe these emerging percussionist-composers are starting to add to the current musical canon. I hope they will inspire even younger percussionist-composers to write for our instruments and continue to create new and refreshing music to perform for future generations.

The composers chosen for interview are still establishing themselves but have won the PAS composition contest, started their own publishing house, have their music published through various publishing companies, have been commissioned on numerous occasions, and have had works premiered at PASIC.

Caleb Pickering is doctoral percussion candidate at James Madison University. Jamie Whitmarsh is a freelance composer and serves on the faculty at Oklahoma City University. Marco Schirripa is a doctoral candidate at Indiana University and adjunct professor at Tennessee Tech University. Francisco Perez is a doctoral candidate at the University of Kentucky and Visiting Assistant Professor of Percussion at Lamar University. Mathew Campbell is a graduate student at Oklahoma City University focusing on composition and wind conducting.

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> —Caleb Pickering

Oliver Molina: *When and how did you get your start with composing?*

Caleb Pickering: Growing up in Texas, marching band was a big part of my life. Like many percussionists, I first started writing and arranging music for drumline and marching ensembles. From there, it naturally progressed into writing for small and large percussion ensembles and for various solo instruments.

Jamie Whitmarsh: I began in middle school writing "video game music" without connection to any actual video games. Eventually, I moved on to writing and arranging for acoustic instruments, and I studied at Oklahoma City University. I also played guitar and performed in bands, which is a form of composition in itself.

Marco Schirripa: Throughout my childhood I would always be humming tunes or freely improvising on piano and drums, but I never wrote anything down or tried to write a full piece. During high school I wrote some drumline cadences and short chamber pieces and was encouraged to keep going from there.

Francisco Perez: I improvised a lot with my father when I was a child and started writing my own music at a very young age. I got into music production long before actually notating music, but the first "real" compositional training was at TCU under Dr. Martin Blessinger.

Mathew Campbell: I started composing in 2007 when I became interested in writing drumline cadences. After that, I focused mostly on percussion ensemble, then I started writing music for string orchestra and then large standard ensembles.

Molina: *What is your compositional background?*

Pickering: I mostly learned from listening and analyzing tons of music, exploring a variety of genres and idioms, and from taking advice from other composers I know. While I've arranged music for winds and strings, I primarily write for percussion solos and ensembles. I've composed works for several ensembles, such as Adams State University, University of Nevada Las Vegas, the Heartland Marimba Festival, several high schools, and various solo works for numerous individuals I've met through my career. In the past few years, I've been lucky enough to have my works performed throughout numerous universities across the nation.

Whitmarsh: I started studying composition at the

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—Marco Schirripa

collegiate level. I entered OCU as a performance major, and then applied to add the composition degree. I studied primarily with Edward Knight, who helped me develop my own compositional voice and pushed me to step outside my comfort zone to grow. After that I attended Florida State University, where my primary instructor was Ladislav Kubik; he was a great mentor and teacher. Other than that, I have taken the odd lesson or two with a lot of awesome folks over the years, and will likely always continue to do so!

I write for all sorts of instruments, which I think is extremely important as a composer. Writing for the piccolo is different than writing for the xylophone, and the perspective you gain from stretching your compositional muscles with different timbres is invaluable. I'm very fortunate to work with top-of-the-line artists and ensembles, including but not limited to Florida State University, Troy, Oklahoma City University percussion ensembles; duos such as DuO, Escape X, Sources Duo, and Duo Rodinia; performing virtuosos such as Liam Teague, Ryan Beach, and Tommy Dobbs; and orchestras such as the Oklahoma Composer's Orchestra and Taneycomo Festival Orchestra.

Schirripa: During my undergraduate study at Ithaca College I was fortunate enough to spend four years studying with Gordon Stout, so many of my percussion lessons involved working on whatever I was writing at the time. I also took formal composition lessons with a grad student at the time named Phil Richardson, who has several published works for marimba and percussion.

I attended Indiana for both of my graduate degrees, so I had another amazing percussionist/composer mentor in Kevin Bobo. Additionally, I studied formally with Jay Hurst, a composition DM student at the time, as well as Aaron Travers, who has written quite a bit for percussion, including work with groups like Third Coast.

While it's usually other percussionists commissioning and performing my music, I love writing for all instruments. I have written songs, a string quartet, saxophone quartets, music for solo wind instruments, and more. Some notable projects in the past few years include a steel pan solo for Louis Raymond-Kolker called "Portraits From a City Window," which he plays beautifully, and my multiple-percussion solo, "Thracian Rhythm," for Portuguese percussionist Vitor Castro.

Perez: Mostly percussion, concert compositions, and marching arrangements, but I've recently started writing for mixed instrumental groups with percussion.

Campbell: My compositional background consists of taking formal lessons with Dr. Joe W. Moore III at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in 2015, and currently taking lessons with Dr. Edward Knight at Oklahoma City University. I have written for most standard ensembles: wind band, symphony orchestra, SATB chorus, percussion ensemble. I have also composed for chamber ensembles such as clarinet choir, flute choir, double-reed choir, and mixed ensembles. I have composed pieces for the UTRGV Flute Choir, the UTRGV Clarinet Choir, the UTRGV Percussion Ensemble, and the UTRGV Wind Symphony.

Molina: *How would you define your compositional style?*

Pickering: I have a lot of musical interests, and my compositional style changes so much that it's hard to lock down one style. The best definition I could give is "pop-infused contemporary Neo-Romantic music for percussion." For example, I recently completed a contemporary multi-percussion duo that makes use of sections of graphic interpretation, rhythmic phasing, and melodies that carry a Bon Iver feel throughout, and at the same time I was working on a keyboard duo that contrasts more contemporary harmonies with melodies influenced by EDM and funk.

Whitmarsh: Over time, certain pieces may connect stylistically with other pieces I've written, but I strive to make each piece a new step forward. It is important for me to avoid repeating myself too much because it is the only way I can truly justify to myself that I am contributing to the greater development of composition. There are some over-arching generalizations that can be drawn. First, I tend to write goal-oriented music. Even my soundscape-type pieces tend to be goal-oriented. Goals can be huge, such as large formal arrivals, or they can be small, such as an eventual musical exhale that serves as a final musical moment. I tend to think rhythmically—not in the sense of "groove" but more in the sense of development and pacing. Rhythm is everywhere; a single note has rhythm, as does the overall unfolding of a symphony. I try to avoid broadcasting barlines in my music; I want it to sound organic.

Schirripa: In short, "dissonant video game music." I strive to produce accessible music that still challenges the player and listener. Almost everything I write has a clear focus on melody, even if it is completely atonal. I want non-musicians to enjoy it on a surface level, while the performer has something deeper to dig into, like complex harmonic schemes or large-scale motivic development. I try things like sneaking bitonality into a sensitive love scene, or writing "singable" melodies that just happen to use all 12 chromatic pitches.

Perez: I'm not sure I can pinpoint a specific style since I have so many important musical influences. From a young age, I was exposed to the wide variety of Latin music my parents listened to, then I got really into electronic music in middle school through undergrad, and I have loved exploring genres I'm unfamiliar with since. That being said, most of the "Western music" I find myself listening to on any given day falls under the minimalist umbrella—music of Steve Reich and Arvo Pärt, for example.

Campbell: My compositional style is a hodgepodge of neo-classical, minimalist, cinematic, and electronic. It's actually really hard to put myself into a box, because I'm currently thinking about how I expand my boundaries.

Molina: *Who is your role model as a composer?*

Pickering: I find a lot of influence from composers such as Shostakovich, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, and Rachmaninoff. Percussively, my current teacher, Casey Cangelosi, has had a tremendous impact on the way I approach and write music for percussion. Similarly, current great composers like Gene Koshinski and Nathan Daughtrey have had a huge impact on my writing. Koshinski's two-mallet clinic was the reason I wrote my first two-mallet marimba solo.

Whitmarsh: Obviously, my composition instructors over the years have influenced me. In particular, the process I developed studying with Edward Knight has allowed me to move forward as a composer; everything else I've learned has been built on that foundation. A composition instructor's job is so tough: You have to help students criticize their most personal expression of self, while keeping them from dipping into self-loathing from too much self-criticism, and Ed did that very well.

Schirripa: It is extremely important to me that all of my creative output is uniquely my own. I specifically try to avoid getting too attached to another musician's work, for fear of detracting from my own sense of individuality. That being said, I consider my role models to be great musicians who are truly unique. I look up to Gordon Stout for many reasons, namely his interesting compositional style. If you listen to Gordon's music, you are probably not going to confuse it with someone else's, because he is the only one whose music sounds like that. You can turn on the radio to a rock station and many of the songs sort of just blend together, but if a band like System of a Down or Green Day comes on, you immediately know who it is, because no one else sounds quite like them. I really hope people can hear my music in that same sort of way.

Campbell: Leonard Bernstein is probably the person who I look up to the most, even though Steve

Reich is my favorite composer. Reich created waves in classical music and was on the forefront of rhythmic minimalism in the American school. His works are interesting, provocative, and overall fun to play. His music never fails to satisfy my inner-percussionist's need to just play rhythms. As for Bernstein, he was an educator, conductor, composer. That template, if I could have one, would want to be the one I emulate in my life.

Molina: *What is your favorite instrument/idiom/genre to compose? Why?*

Pickering: I have a deep passion for percussion ensemble and percussion orchestra. Having the ability to layer multiple lines across different keyboard instruments is so unique to our craft that I can't help but frequently return to it. Each instrument has such a unique character throughout the different ranges, various selection of mallets, sounds, and extended techniques to use in writing. Combine this with the colors and possibilities of other percussion instruments and you have a nearly limitless palette of sound to use.

Whitmarsh: I really enjoy writing for orchestra. It's a massive ensemble capable of so many colors and characters. Similarly, I love the percussion orchestra instrumentation. So larger ensembles with capacity for sensitivity as well as grand, soaring moments.

Schirripa: I feel very comfortable writing for marimba quartet because of the nature of my musical ideas. It seems like whenever I think of something cool, there is no way I could make it work on a solo instrument, and there won't be anywhere for wind players to breathe. A marimba quartet solves all those problems by being able to play without break, and always having enough players/voices for what I want. I have also been commissioned several times to compose for unaccompanied single-line instruments, like clarinet, alto sax, horn, and steel pan. Writing these pieces was really enjoyable, and it was fun to think outside the box and see what I could produce with such a small palette.

Perez: While I enjoy writing for all instruments, I have an easier time with mallet keyboard instruments since most of my ideas stem from melodic cells.

Campbell: My favorite instrument to compose for is clarinet. This is for two reasons: my wife, Iris, plays clarinet, and the clarinet is extremely versatile and can play in several different genres and styles. The overtone series is unique, thus clarinet choir music sounds full and lush. They are the strings of the wind-instrument world.

Molina: *What is the weirdest instrument you have written for?*

Pickering: Guitar and tuned pipes. I frequently write for guitar played by percussionists. I designate the guitar be pre-tuned to the needed notes, and often plucked or struck with a mallet shaft. The guitar and pipes are both warm and rich in overtones. The combination creates an eerie, yet beautiful sound.

> If you explore what kind of music you could write and let your imagination take over, then the piece tends to show itself to you eventually.
> —Jamie Whitmarsh

Whitmarsh: I've written for theremin and high school band; also a duet for field drum/crotales and E-flat clarinet, which is a startling combination, to say the least.

Schirripa: I haven't done anything too crazy, but I did get creative with an egg shaker in my multiple percussion solo, "Thracian Rhythm." In the final movement, you use it as a striking implement on brake drum, to bend opera gong pitch, and to swirl around inside of a metal mixing bowl for an effect I think is pretty neat.

Campbell: I can't think of the weirdest instrument, but the weirdest combination I've written for was clarinet and melodica. *That* sounds unique.

Molina: *What was the first piece you composed? How has your compositional style evolved since then?*

Pickering: My first work was a quintet called "Dream of Leaves." I wrote the piece for the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and then expanded it to 11 players when they did a combined concert with a local high school. It was very rudimental and aggressive throughout. My earlier works are in this similar style of marching band meets drumset—constant grooves, strong moments of impact, and constant sound.

Like most skills, my composition has refined over time. My current music has become more meaningful through the use of more colorful harmonies and longer melodies, and it tries to express an overall theme or feeling. I'd say that my current music leans towards a more Neo-Romantic, percussive style.

Whitmarsh: The first thing I ever did was a "remix" of a MIDI file of Metallica's "Unforgiven" in Noteworthy Composer. It was awful! Most of the music I wrote was pretty awful. I think the first piece I wrote once I started studying composition was a concerto for tambourine and percussion ensemble. It was also awful! There were some good ideas in it, I suppose, but it made no sense, and was enjoyable to listen to only because of the performing ensemble and the awesome soloist, Steve Craft. There is a piece for trumpet and piano I wrote in 2007 that I reworked a few years ago, but other than that, the farthest piece back that I will show anyone was written in my fourth year of my undergraduate degree. My style has evolved a lot and is continuing to do so.

Schirripa: I wrote my first actual piece when I was 15, a short trio for xylophone, marimba, and timpani called "Angry Stuff." It was really simple but ended up being chosen as a winner of the composition contest for New York's high school All-State festival that year, and it certainly encouraged me to keep writing music.

I like to think I am a little better at composing now than when I was 15, but my style is honestly pretty similar. Back then, my music sounded like and was directly inspired by video game soundtracks. My music now is basically the same, but with 10 years of music school education and new influences.

Perez: The first piece I ever composed in notation was a marimba solo in 2007. While I still enjoy hearing it, my voice has since evolved so much to the point where I can't tell if I actually wrote it or not. The most notable transformation I underwent was during my master's study, when I intensely studied the music of Alejandro Viñao for a period of time. His kaleidoscopic concept of multiple-time, originating from composer Conlon Narcarrow, interested me greatly since various aspects carried over from my likes of electronic genres, and I began to experiment with these in pieces such as "Citadel of the Stars" and "Tesseract."

Campbell: My first piece was composed in 2007. It is called Caves. It is my quintessential example of juvenalia. My composition style has changed in every aspect but two: I still write in odd meters, and I will always write for percussion instruments.

Molina: *What is your favorite piece you have composed? Why?*

Pickering: I have a quintet titled "Post Sunrise" that I wrote in the summer of 2015. The piece is repetitive, uses very basic harmonies, a simple melody, and could easily be done by a high school group or a first-year undergraduate ensemble. I wrote the entire piece with only a pencil and staff paper from a hospital bed. I was in the hospital for two weeks and spent a large portion of time using my ear training to figure out what I wanted to hear and writing it. Because of this, it's always held a special place in my life.

Whitmarsh: I love most, but not all, of the pieces I've written, for different reasons. I wrote a solo violin piece called "Haiku Macabre" that is really dark and requires the performer to hiss at the audience. That was definitely a stretch piece for me, and I'm pleased that it turned out well. I also have a string quartet that was premiered this year that means a lot to me, as well as a work for clarinet and piano.

Schirripa: I would say my marimba quartets, "Digital Dances" and "Digital Dances No. 2." They are both essentially electronic dance music scored for

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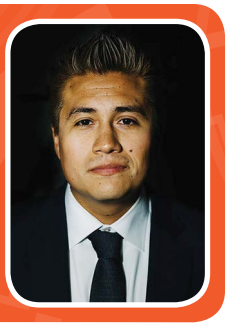
> —Francisco Perez



marimbas. People seem to really enjoy them, and to be completely honest, I sometimes listen to them for fun.

Perez: I try my best to always make my latest piece to be my favorite. I truly enjoy the difficult task of constantly elevating the efficacy of my compositions, while trying to always present something fresh and original.

Campbell: I currently have two favorite pieces that I've composed: "Into the Void" and "Perigee-Syzygy." "Into the Void" has two versions: SATB Chorus plus Percussion Quartet, and Concert Band. I love the choral piece because it won the PAS Composition Contest in 2015. I poured a ton of my heart into that piece, and I hold it very close to my heart. I like the band piece a tiny bit more since the ending is much more powerful. There's just something about a band piece that requires a loud ending when a choral piece doesn't do justice.

I composed "Perigee-Syzygy" as a gift to my wife. It incorporates my love for space, minimalism, percussion, clarinet, electronics, and new music. The work stands at 18 minutes long, and it incorporates percussion quartet and clarinet, which also triggers pre-recorded tracks, and lightbulbs. The lightbulbs, which are turned on by the performers, signify the path of the moon around the Earth before the blood moon super moon. The only red lightbulb is next to the clarinetist and signifies the point of the lunar eclipse and the climax of the piece. Needless to say, this piece has so many facets to describe. One has to experience it.

Molina: *Where do you get inspiration to compose music?*

Pickering: I find beauty in so many things, but almost all of my pieces expand from a simple germ idea. This idea may be a musical motif, a programmatic outline, or even another piece of music. My most recent project started from a simple two-beat long, half-step harmonic motion I heard in a Schubert vocal work. I was transfixed by how cool it was, so I analyzed the music to see how he used it. From there it started triggering original ideas, and now that simple two-beat Schubert harmony is a passing moment in a new large-scale marimba solo I'm working on.

Whitmarsh: Inspiration is pretty rare, honestly. More often, I leave myself enough bread crumbs to pick up later. I think it is really helpful to have a process and a plan on how to approach the piece and to explore what's possible. It's easy to get bogged down if you feel like you "have" to write a piece. But, if you explore what kind of music you could write and let your imagination take over, then the piece tends to show itself to you eventually.

Schirripa: My biggest source of inspiration is video games. It's not just about the music, however, but the entire artistic experience. Many games are an interactive combination of visual art, music, storytelling, atmosphere, and often even critical social commentary. There is so much to explore and experience.

Perez: Unfortunately, my inspiration usually never comes around until I've put in hours of unsuccessful work! A lot of my successful ideas come from toying around with a cell or motif in my head before I'm able to transfer it to paper. Also, my best ideas somehow always come around 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning. Most importantly, though, I admire composers and non-classical artists who are constantly innovating and give me new perspectives to approach music.

Campbell: I get inspiration to compose music from everywhere. I love writing music about scientific processes or subjects—namely space.

Molina: *Do you think it is a benefit or hindrance to compose for the instruments you play.*

Pickering: Being someone who writes primarily for percussion, I find it mostly as a benefit. I try to create pieces that fit the instrument's characteristic and also lies well in the hands of the performers. While I know what percussionists like to play, I also want to break away from overly idiomatic pieces to help further our craft. For example, we have so many marimba solos that revolve around a left-hand ostinato with a melodic right hand in octaves that I just don't want to write that. Nothing wrong with those pieces, I just personally want to explore different areas.

Whitmarsh: It can go either way. I love my performing experience as a composer, because it keeps me in touch with the performer who will play this piece. It prevents me from letting my imagination take me down impractical paths. At the same time, because of my compositional philosophy, I don't want to just write what feels good; it's important to me to avoid what my default settings might be. So a lot of the time, I come up with ideas on the instrument, but develop them on paper. This helps me avoid falling into the trap of doing what I already know, while grounding the piece in something that was born on the instrument.

Schirripa: I think about this often, and I've met people with polarizing opinions on the matter. I tend to avoid writing percussion music in front of a percussion instrument because I do not want my musical ideas to be limited by technical idioms. Composing solely at a marimba, for example, sometimes causes habits like writing a ton of double/triple lateral combinations, ostinato patterns, or other comfortable, idiomatic techniques. I will usually sit at a piano or my computer to write so I can focus solely on the music, employing technique only as a means to produce and control the sound, and not the focal point of the composition.

Perez: There are many pros and cons, in my opinion. Taking a look at the canon of our repertoire, most masterworks were composed by a non-percussionist. As a percussionist-composer, I sometimes have a proclivity for thinking about technical practicalities far too early in the compositional process. With this lens, it has a potential to stifle innovation if you let it. However, the repertoire of our literature is incredibly young compared to that of other instruments; the oldest percussion soloists of our time are much older than the majority of works at their disposal! It's an amazing time to be alive and add to this repertoire.

Campbell: I use it to my advantage since I know what's possible in the percussion family. I apply that advantage to all of my music whether it has percussion or not.

Molina: *What struggles and challenges have you encountered being a young composer?*

Pickering: Hands down, the largest challenge I have experienced so far is simply standing out. While coordinating a performance with people you have a connection with is a great way to get your pieces out there, we can't deny that having an online presence is practically mandatory in today's world, and while it is a mainline source to your audience, it's becoming oversaturated. There are so many good pieces being composed now, but there are also so many posts/emails/suggestions in general that it's hard to standout when you're first getting started. Add in the nonstop reposts and spam posts people are constantly doing, and it can be easy to miss the gems.

Whitmarsh: There are a lot of composers out there, with a lot of music being written. Social media makes it easy to see everyone else's successes, but you have to remind yourself that every success comes at the end of a long line of disappointments. I think it is difficult sometimes to balance the "do everything there is to do in order to be successful" with the introspection that is required to find and develop your compositional voice. Additionally, composition is a long process, and it can be easy to get lost along the way.

Schirripa: It's not the 1800s anymore, and the market for concert music is not getting any bigger, let alone the market for a very niche area of concert music. It's hard to get regular work, and for most

of us, composing is just going to be something we always do on the side that sometimes produces a little bit of extra cash. It's really important to always be open-minded about where you may find new audiences or new opportunities. Projects like my video-game music arrangements are pretty cool because other percussionists can see them as legitimate chamber works, while the fact that it's video-game music entices a much larger audience. I recently posted a new game arrangement on my YouTube channel and shared it on Reddit, in r/gaming. It got more views and "likes" in 12 hours than my other videos have gotten in five years.

Perez: The hardest challenges for me were in the beginning, trying to convince people to perform my music. In order to showcase my voice to others, I performed the majority of my early music (solos) on my own. I'm lucky to have had opportunities along the way to start having others perform new pieces on their recitals and eventually began to receive commissions from ensembles across the country. While visibility in today's world is huge, particularly with social media, finding my own sincere, unique voice was the most important hurdle I've surpassed.

Campbell: My biggest struggle is knowing that I haven't studied composition for a long time. It's kind of a self-doubt thing. I guess what keeps me going is knowing that I've received awards and performances of merit. For me, 95 percent of composing consists of self-doubt. Five percent of it is, "Just write and get over it."

Molina: *What advice would you give to other percussionists looking into composition?*

Pickering: You are qualified to write music. If you understand how music works, you have the ability to create it. It's so easy to find sheet music now; simply get ahold of a masterpiece—Bach Beethoven, Debussy, etc.—that really resonates with you, look at the first section, and try to see what they were doing in the piece. What is the melody and how does it develop? What is the harmony and how does it move? What kind of accompaniment is there? Get inside the piece, then try to write your own short etude in the style of what you just analyzed.

Whitmarsh: Study everything! It can be so easy to write percussion music only, but there is so much more to work with. You can't know what your future holds, and you need to incorporate the whole world of music into your perspective, not just our awesome corner of it.

Schirripa: Just do it. It's fun and it helps you learn more about your instrument and approach the music you play from new angles.

Perez: Composing can be hard! Getting to the point where others' thoughts on your music doesn't matter takes so much time and dedication. Regardless of how difficult it may be, however, hearing one's music as an audience member makes it all worth it in the end.

Campbell: *Write every day.* Learn about other instruments. Learn to appreciate other instruments. Learn about all styles of music. Learn about every era of music from Ancient Greece to present day. Learn as much information as you can about everything. You will approach composing for percussion and other instruments with awareness of timbre, harmony, melody, rhythm, and orchestration. When you feel like you've learned all that you can about one subject, then limit yourself. Put yourselves in boundaries for composing. Your creativity will skyrocket to put momentum into the piece of music.

I get inspiration to compose music from everywhere.
—Mathew Campbell

Molina: *Where do you see the direction of percussion composition heading?*

Pickering: The interesting thing about percussion is that we're just beginning to leave our modern infancy. Through music history we have a clear development and evolution since the Renaissance, and percussion composers are currently exploring every period simultaneously. We have contemporary percussion ensemble works, Neo-Romantic marimba solos, classically styled multi-percussion works, and everything in-between. When I was in high school my first marimba solo was "Gitano" by Alice Gomez; now, we have high schoolers playing works that would often be reserved for undergraduate curriculums. As our community and students grow, our works will continue to grow, and it's up to us as a community to explore these new works and establish what pieces will be "landmarks" for where we're headed next.

Whitmarsh: It could go anywhere. I am noticing more instances of the percussionist/composer combination popping up, and I don't think that will lessen over time. As long as we keep incorporating ideas from outside of our community and continue to interact with members of the greater musical community, we'll be just fine! My advice to the younger percussionist/composer would be to keep stepping outside of your comfort zone, to listen to a variety of music, and to keep writing. Your favorite composer didn't become your favorite composer overnight; it took a lot of time and work.

Schirripa: Our instrument area is still so new, relative to the rest of the musical world, so there is still so much room for improvement and innovation. One thing that makes our repertoire interesting is that so many people are writing and performing, but that also means we have very few true repertoire standards. Piano and violin have so many great masterworks throughout history, and we have just a handful of substantial, playable works by well-known composers. I can rattle off plenty of great pieces for clarinet and cello, but I doubt those people can name one major work for marimba or percussion.

With this in mind, I think it's important for us to keep creating music, but also to continue commissioning and building relationships with big-name, internationally renowned composers. Some of our best works are from composers of this caliber, like Druckman, Schuller, Xenakis, Stockhausen, etc. High-quality works by such artists will continue to build our legitimacy in the eyes of other concert musicians, leading to more interest in our instruments from the outside, more substantial repertoire, and simply more opportunities.

Perez: As with most "Western concert music" today, the trajectory of our repertoire has reached a delta. With modern music technology being so affordable and accessible, percussion music will continue to expand with its existing genres as well as with the integration of technology. I'm excited for our future!

Campbell: I see percussion incorporating more wind instruments over time. Juxtaposed as how older chamber ensembles usually have only one or two percussionists and many wind/string instruments, I see the opposite happening with having a percussion ensemble with one or two winds/strings.

One final note: We, as percussionists, need to learn to appreciate how to relate and play with other musicians. When we do this, we become better musicians.

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