

Introduction

In her 1989 dissertation, Andrea Splittberger-Rosen says of the clarinet-percussion duo that “[t]here are now at least 260 compositions for this combination,” and due to this staggering number, that the grouping “should be considered an emerging genre, rather than merely a miscellaneous chamber grouping.” Dozens more duos were composed between the time of that dissertation’s publication and the year 2000, furthering the proliferation of the genre. From the year 2000 to July of 2015, however, at least 137 more compositions for clarinet-percussion duo have been written, showing that the literature has truly come into its own and is continuing to grow at a rapid pace. Additionally, a number of ensembles dedicated to performing clarinet-percussion duos are currently active, with many of them commissioning new works to further expand the repertoire.

Even though the clarinet-percussion duo has grown in popularity from its inception in 1958 through the end of the 20th century, music within the genre has experienced even greater growth in the years since 2000. This is due to the increasing variety of instrumentation, tonal characteristics, diversity of composers’ nationalities, and the demand for new music created by the ever-expanding number of clarinet-percussion performing duos. This study examines the rapid growth of the genre in four sections: a history of the clarinet-percussion duo until 2000 to provide background for the ensuing years, a survey of works composed in the years since 2000, an examination of the contributions of the clarinet-percussion performing duo to the genre as a whole, and finally a discussion of two individual works and how they serve as integral parts of the repertoire. Taken together, these four sections should provide a clear picture of how the clarinet-percussion duo has developed over the past fifteen years, and hopefully give some insight into where the genre is heading.

History of the Clarinet-Percussion Duo to 2000

The clarinet-percussion duo began appearing early in the second half of the 20th century, and arose directly from another 20th-century development, the percussion ensemble. The percussion ensemble began to gain great popularity when full-time performing ensembles started to appear on university campuses in the 1950s. One such campus was the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. Teaching at Eastman at this time was composer Armand Russell. In 1958, Russell, surrounded by these innovations occurring in percussion around him at Eastman, composed the first clarinet-percussion duo, *Pas de Deux*, for clarinet and multiple percussion. Many more works would follow in the coming years.

In the 1960s, the clarinet-percussion duo as a genre was still in its infancy, and relatively few musicians were playing this repertoire. Because percussion is not an easy instrument to transport to rehearsals and performances, clarinet-percussion performing duos needed to have an easy rehearsal situation and accessible space. This logistical complication paired with a desire to collaborate led to the earliest clarinet-percussion performing duos often being married couples. For example, the husband-and-wife duo of Ron and Joan George, who began performing together in 1967, had Netty Simons compose *Wild Tales Told on the River Road* for them in 1973, along with several other pieces. It was not until 1974 that clarinet-percussion performing duos began to expand beyond the scope of married couples, when the duo Clarinet and Friend, consisting of clarinetist Phillip Rehfeldt and percussionist Barney Childs, was formed.

The amount of clarinet-percussion duo literature continued to grow through the late 1970s and 1980s, and with it grew the number of ways in which works were commissioned. At this point, the duo was well past the necessity for married couples to perform its literature, as it was becoming ubiquitous enough for well-known composers to write for the combination, and

for a variety of different people. In 1979, Donald Erb wrote his *Sonata for Clarinet and Percussion* for the contemporary ensemble Boston Musica Viva. In addition to writing music for existing ensembles, many composers who were on faculty at a college or university were composing duos for themselves and their colleagues. One such piece is David Burge's *Sources III*, composed for his colleagues at the University of Colorado.

The clarinet-percussion duo literature experienced immense growth in the 1980s and 1990s. In addition to dozens more works being written for the ensemble during this time, the genre was also undergoing changes in relation to variety of instrumentation. This period of time saw a large increase in music written for bass clarinet and percussion. Notable bass clarinet-percussion duos from this time include Ivana Loudova's *Duo Concertante*, scored for bass clarinet and marimba. Another interesting movement in instrumentation during this time was the growing number of clarinet-marimba duos. Nearly three dozen compositions for this instrumentation were written between 1980 and 1999. Among these is *Star-Fall Dances* by Frank Wiley.

The final twenty years of the 20th century also saw greater diversity in composers who were writing for clarinet-percussion duo, whom to this point had been predominantly North American men. There had indeed been a fair number of foreign composers writing clarinet-percussion duos prior to 1980, but their ranks grew greatly in the years following. For example, Australian composer Ross Edwards wrote two works for clarinet and percussion in the 1990s, *Enyato IV* in 1995 and *Binyang* in 1996. The 1980s and 1990s saw not only a shift toward more international composers writing clarinet-percussion duos, but women composers as well. A prominent example is Jacqueline Fontyn, who composed *Controverse* for clarinet and multiple percussion in 1983. The clarinet-percussion duo has developed vastly from its inception in the

late 1950s to the end of the 20th century. As we shall see, however, works within the genre would continue to grow in terms of number, stylistic variety, and instrumentation in the year 2000 and beyond.

Survey of Clarinet-Percussion Duos from 2000 to July 2015

The year 2000 can be seen as a turning point for clarinet-percussion duos. Several duos were composed in this year, including one prize-winning work and many works by non-American composers. In the year 2000, the most popular instrumentation for the duo was clarinet or bass clarinet and marimba. At least five such works were composed in this year, including Jeffrey Agrell's *Rhythm Suite* for clarinet and marimba, winner of the International Clarinet Association's 2000 Composition Competition. There were also several duos featuring multiple percussion, including *Tres Pensamientos* by Roberto Sierra, for bass clarinet and multiple percussion, which will be discussed in detail later. In 2001, the clarinet-marimba duo continued its popularity in the form of such works as *Strange Dreams* by Nathan Daughtrey. *Strange Dreams* will be discussed in detail later. Composers began to be creative with clarinet-multiple percussion instrumentation. One example is Eric Mandat's *3 for 2*, a piece in three movements in which the first movement features snare drum and marimba, vibraphone in the second movement, and eleven different instruments in the third movement. The composers of clarinet-percussion duos from these two years also hail from a variety of different countries, including Germany, Sweden, Italy, Puerto Rico, Australia, Mexico, France, Moldova, and Spain.

Varieties of instrumentation increased further in 2002 and 2003. For example, Patrick Hardish changed the percussion instrumentation drastically with *Jazz Sonorities* for clarinet and drum set. Particularly interesting about the clarinet-percussion duo music written in these two years is that there was a rise in the number of works commissioned by performers. These

included *Avérer Local* by Michael Pisaro, commissioned by the Brooklyn-based Red Desert Ensemble, and Kimmo Hakola's *Five Clips*, also for clarinet and marimba, commissioned by percussionist Jani Niinimäki. Perhaps most interesting about the works written in 2003 in particular is that many of them are less difficult than their predecessors. Nan-Yen Lin remarks about Anđelko Klobučar's *Duo for Bass Clarinet and Marimba*, composed in 2003, that it is "fairly playable and easy to read." The sudden proliferation of these types of works might suggest that the clarinet-percussion duo as a genre had gained a new kind of performer: the student.

The trend of student-oriented works continued in 2004 and 2005. *Hightide Yuletide* by Yukiko Nishimura, for bass clarinet and marimba, features simple rhythms and few difficult passages, making it accessible to younger players. Among the many other works composed in these years is *Walk the Walk* by Michael Daugherty, composed to honor Motown musicians Hunter and the Funk Brothers. National diversity of composers continued to play a prominent role in these years, as the year featured two Japanese composers, another French composer, and a New Zealander-British composer.

2006 was unique for the clarinet-percussion duo in that it was dominated by Icelandic composers. The Icelandic-German performing duo known as Duo Dualism commissioned four Icelandic composers to write works for their album *Dualism*. The four pieces, each for bass clarinet and an array of different percussion setups, provides a unique sonic character to the album. The clarinet-percussion duos composed in 2007 were quite varied. *Karkija* by Antti Auvinen, for bass clarinet and marimba, pushes the limits of what both instruments are capable of, calling upon the bass clarinet to execute extended techniques such as growling, smearing, and even shouting into the instrument, and the marimba to play with the stick ends of the mallets.

National origin of composer was diverse again in 2007, though it was largely dominated by Spanish composers—four new Spanish composers in this year combined with three in the previous years since 2000 made Spain a main hub for the composition of clarinet-percussion duos in the 21st century.

In 2008 and 2009, commissions by existing clarinet-percussion performing duos continued to make these groups integral to the composition of new music for the genre. One such work is *Cheap One Way Ticket to Candy Land* by Morten Olsen, commissioned by Spanish duo Duometrie. The work, for amplified bass clarinet and multiple percussion, is full of cacophonous moments created through use of many loud drums and the screaming amplified bass clarinet, sounding at times like a distorted electric guitar. Another work commissioned in 2008 by an existing performing duo is *Projecting Back* by Beau Mansfield, for clarinet/bass clarinet and multiple percussion, commissioned by Duo Avanzando. The clarinetist is required not only to play two instruments, but also cowbell and kick pedal. National diversity was again on display in 2009, featuring composers from Australia, Puerto Rico, the Netherlands, and yet another composer from Spain.

The years 2010 and 2011 were unique in that a larger quantity of virtuosic works were composed than in other recent years. Many of these works appear on the album *Extreme Measures II*, a collaboration between clarinetist Jean Kopperud and percussionist Tom Kolor. Works on this album include *Throat* by Mathew Rosenblum for bass clarinet, multiple percussion, and electronic sounds. Another virtuosic work from this time is *Untarnished Lucidity* by Osnat Netzer. Netzer's work was commissioned by Boston-based clarinet-percussion performing duo Transient Canvas, and it would prove to be just one of the first of dozens of works the duo would commission.

The year 2012 was incredibly fruitful for the clarinet-percussion duo, producing at least fourteen new works, almost all by commission. A large number of these were commissioned once again by Transient Canvas, who were coming into their own strictly as a bass clarinet-marimba duo. Such works included the avant-garde-leaning *Origami* by Marti Epstein. Other duos were busy commissioning works as well, such as the Florida-based Duo Rodinia, who commissioned *Duo for Bass Clarinet and Vibraphone* by Al Kovach and *Reaction* by Robert McClure, for clarinet and multiple percussion. Transient Canvas also highly active in 2013, commissioning eight of the at least nine new works written in this year. Many of them have unique aspects to their composition. For example, Victoria Cheah's *Telephone: (careless whisper)* transforms material from the song "Careless Whisper" by 1980s pop group Wham!.

Commissions continued to be the primary outlet for new clarinet-percussion duos in 2014 and 2015. Transient Canvas was once again at the forefront of this activity, commissioning several new works including *sift* by Daniel T. Lewis and *Dirty Water* by Tina Tallon, both of which are heavy on extended techniques for the bass clarinet. Duo Rodinia also commissioned two more works, *The Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage*, for clarinet and vibraphone, and *Three Situations for Clarinet and Tenor Pan* by Jamie Whitmarsh, the duo's percussionist. Another Florida-based duo, Sources Duo, commissioned *A Curtain of Stars* by Jerod Sommerfeldt, for E-flat clarinet and multiple percussion. Now that we have briefly explored the more than 130 clarinet-percussion duos written since 2000, let us now turn our attention to those performing duos which have helped to popularize the genre over the past several years.

Clarinet-Percussion Performing Duos and Their Effect on the Genre

In 1967, just a few years after the composition of Armand Russell's *Pas de Deux* in 1958, ensembles dedicated to performing exclusively clarinet-percussion duo literature began to arise.

As mentioned previously, many of the earliest performing duos were married couples, both out of a desire to perform together and out of convenience. In 1974, clarinetist Phillip Rehfeldt and percussionist Barney Childs formed Clarinet and Friend, one of the first performing duos to not consist of a husband-and-wife configuration. Duos such as this one led to the formation in 1980 of Dutch group Duo Contemporain, consisting of clarinetist Henri Bok and percussionist Evert le Mair. Duo Contemporain grew to be perhaps the most well-known clarinet-percussion performing duo to that point, commissioning a number of new works and playing at various types of venues over the world. While Duo Contemporain's reign only lasted into the 1990s, they laid much of the groundwork for performing duos to come.

One of the earliest clarinet-percussion performing duos to have success in the 21st century was Desert's Edge Duo, consisting of Arizona State University faculty Robert Spring and J.B. Smith. The duo has been performing together since 1989, performing at dozens of universities and conventions across North America. Several ensembles began to follow the lead that Desert's Edge and other groups had set out late in the 20th century. One such group was Duometrie, consisting of bass clarinetist Carlos Gálvez and percussionist Enric Monfort. Duometrie has emerged as a champion of avant-garde music, commissioning more than a half-dozen new clarinet-percussion duo works. Also noteworthy is that Duometrie was the first clarinet-percussion duo to have success solely with *bass clarinet* and percussion music, eschewing soprano clarinet entirely. Another duo, Icelandic-German group Duo Dualism, also started performing duos exclusively with bass clarinet in the late 2000s, commissioning four new works for their album *Dualism*. Another duo who commissioned works for release on an album was Duo Avanzando. Made up of clarinetist David Carter and percussionist Ricardo Coelho de

Souza, the duo commissioned five works between 2008 and 2010 for their 2011 album *Projecting Back*.

Clarinet-percussion performing duos from the 2010s have tended to release fewer recording projects, but are more active in touring and giving live performances, having the effect of introducing the genre to a larger audience. One such group is Sources Duo, consisting of clarinetist Jennifer Tinberg and percussionist Benjamin Fraley. Sources Duo has also been active in commissioning new works for clarinet-percussion duo, having four works already written for them. Many of the composers the duo has worked with have been friends of theirs, and as such, instead of monetary compensation, the composers of the works instead receive the promise of multiple performances, making the situation advantageous for both parties. Another duo with similar ideals is Duo Rodinia, made up of clarinetist Lisa Kachouee and percussionist Jamie Whitmarsh. Duo Rodinia has a similar view on commissions, highlighted by an emphasis on equitability: multiple performances are given in exchange for compositions rather than monetary compensation, as many of the composers of their commissioned works are either students or recent graduates.

The duo most responsible for exposure of the clarinet-percussion duo since 2010, at least in terms of number of commissioned works, is Boston-based group Transient Canvas, consisting of bass clarinetist Amy Advocat and marimbist Matt Sharrock. As with some of their colleagues in clarinet-percussion performing duos, Transient Canvas identifies strictly as a bass clarinet-marimba duo. With their vast network of fellow musicians and composers, Transient Canvas has been extremely successful in having new pieces written for the genre—from their inception in 2011 to July of 2015, they had already commissioned thirty new works. Like Sources Duo and

Duo Rodinia, Transient Canvas works with a variety of young composers and as such, gives performances rather than monetary payment in exchange for new compositions.

The importance of the clarinet-percussion performing duo throughout the history of the genre, and particularly since 2000, cannot be understated. Today, the genre is more popular than ever and the clarinet-percussion performing duo is more than just an accessory for which to write chamber music—it is the primary way to increase the genre’s presence, through commissions, performances, and constant growth.

Discussion of *Tres Pensamientos* by Roberto Sierra

Tres Pensamientos by Roberto Sierra is a work for bass clarinet and multiple percussion written in 2000 and consists of three brief movements. The title translated from Spanish means “three thoughts,” which is appropriate when considering that each movement conveys one basic mood and lasts only a short time. Each movement features a different instrumentation for the percussionist, but all consist of unpitched Latin instruments.

The first movement, with no title but a tempo marking of “Con precisión rítmica,” begins with a set of variations on a set of pitches in the bass clarinet paired with a syncopated accompaniment by bongos and congas. The bass clarinet’s pitch set is made up of six pitches, containing every chromatic note between G-sharp below the staff and C-sharp below the staff. The set always begins with B-flat, but is slightly altered each time. The first occurrence in m. 1, for example, features a repeated A (B-flat/A/B/C/G-sharp/A/C-sharp). The second ordering of the set, beginning at the end of m. 1 and continuing into m. 2, features a repeated B (B-flat/A/B/C/B/G-sharp/C-sharp). The third ordering, in mm. 2-3, contains no alterations of the original ordering at all, and the fourth ordering only contains three notes: B-flat, A, and G-sharp (Example 1). The set continues in a variety of permutations all the way until m. 19, when a G-

natural is introduced into the texture. From here, the previous set dissolves, and no recognizable pattern is heard through the end of the movement. However, Sierra does begin to add more new pitches into the fold. At m. 20, he introduces a D, and then F-sharp. In m. 21, he adds F and then E-flat, and finally in m. 22 he completes the aggregate by adding E-natural (Example 2). It is also worth noting that not only does Sierra complete the aggregate by the end of the movement, but also restricts it to a range of just one octave.

Moving ahead to the third movement, “Cortante,” we see contrast with the other movements in the piece. The percussion part is scored for only cowbells and congas played with sticks, giving it a harsher, more metallic timbre. The bass clarinet aids in the percussive texture by tonguing and accenting nearly every note in the movement. Another characteristic that permeates the movement is the large amount of constantly changing rhythmic subdivisions, which is evident from the movement’s outset (Example 3). It can also be seen from the first few measures that Sierra begins the movement with another six-pitch set, this time E, D-sharp, E-sharp, F-sharp, D, and G. It should be noted that none of these pitches are contained within the primary set heard in the first movement. Just as in the first two movements, Sierra once again completes the aggregate later in the movement, with B-flat, A, and B in m. 11, C in m. 12, and G-sharp and C-sharp in m. 13 (Example 4).

Because each of the three movements of *Tres Pensamientos* is less than two minutes in length, each must consist of only a few brief ideas. However, Sierra maximizes interest by giving each movement a different color through percussion instrumentation, writing challenging rhythms and leaps to maintain interest, and even unifying the whole work by way of pitch-set concepts.

Discussion of *Strange Dreams* by Nathan Daughtrey

Nathan Daughtrey's *Strange Dreams* for clarinet and marimba, written in 2001, is a work in four movements. Each movement is based upon a story by writer Brian Andreas, and Daughtrey uses the wide range of sonic possibilities of the two instruments to convey the stories' mystique through music. The work as a whole is relatively tonal, and is accessible to most audiences. While it contains difficult passages, the piece is playable by college-level students.

The first movement, "Unheard Music," begins with an ethereal introduction in which the two instruments play contrasting motives seemingly unrelated to one another. The main body of the piece begins at m. 11, when the marimba begins a four-note ostinato pattern while the clarinet plays a sustained melody (Example 5). This continues until m. 23. Daughtrey asserts in his program notes that the two switch roles toward the middle of the movement (specifically at m. 34), but how this is accomplished is quite skillful. At m. 26, the clarinet softly fades in, playing the same four-note ostinato but a major sixth higher. As the clarinet loudens, the marimba fades away, setting the clarinet up to become the accompaniment instrument at m. 34 (Example 6). This compositional technique creates a seamless transition, perhaps because of the similar timbres of the clarinet and marimba: they can take on one another's role effortlessly.

Looking ahead to the third movement, "Mermaid Song," it is perhaps the most technically challenging of the piece for both instruments, and while it has plenty of harmonic interest to offer, its construction is centered around a single motive that recurs throughout. The motive (from now on referred to as "motive X"), is first stated in the inner voices of the marimba in mm. 2-3, consisting of a move upward one whole step from the first note, back down to the original note, then descending one half step, and descending one more half step after that (Example 7). Motive X continues to be repeated throughout the movement, but rarely in the same way. For example, it appears again in the marimba in mm. 12-13 with the same pitches but

augmented rhythmically and missing the final half-step descent to G-natural (Example 8).

Motive X continues to appear in a variety of iterations throughout the remainder of the movement, but appears once more in its original form (albeit rhythmically augmented) near the end of the movement, at mm. 46-47 (Example 9). This time, however, the clarinet plays the original pitches while the marimba plays a major third below in four octaves. This allows the movement to come full circle while still maintaining an air of mystery.

It can be seen that through motivic transformations, constantly changing rhythms, and the balance of the unique timbres of the clarinet and marimba, Daughtrey is able to make a unique addition to the clarinet-percussion duo literature while still taking advantage of each instrument's characteristic tendencies.

Conclusion

After fifteen years of constant composition that produced at least 137 new works, the question of whether the clarinet-percussion duo is viable as a major chamber ensemble is no longer arguable. The real question is just how popular it will become in the coming years and decades.

Supporting the vast number of new compositions for the ensemble over the past fifteen-plus years is the large number of musicians performing the literature. This study has shown that the amount of clarinet-percussion performing duos has grown immensely since 2000, and with it the amount of new works in the repertoire and public exposure to the ensemble. Additionally, the demographic of performers of clarinet-percussion duos has shifted since the genre's inception in the mid-20th century. Many more young people are using the genre to fulfill performance careers, as opposed to just married couples and college and university professors, as was largely the case in the 20th century. This shift has also caused the demographic of composers of clarinet-

percussion duos to change as well, as many of these young performers are commissioning works by their peers and colleagues. This is a good omen for the future of the genre, as these young composers have the opportunity to continue writing for the ensemble for many years to come.

Also noteworthy is the huge amount of diversity of compositional techniques, styles, and national origin of clarinet-percussion duos written since 2000. Even just a cursory glance at the repertoire reveals a great number of both tonal and atonal pieces, different extended techniques employed in a variety of ways, and a plethora of varied instrumentations. Additionally, the fact that the composers of clarinet-percussion duos since 2000 hail from over thirty countries on five continents shows that the genre is not limited to any one part of the world—it is truly a global phenomenon.

With all of the promise surrounding the composition and performance of clarinet-percussion duos, it is safe to say that the genre is not going away anytime soon. Its continued ability to draw the interest of composers, performers, and audiences alike ensures that it will be an important part of chamber music for years to come.