Abstract

Title of Dissertation: PERFORMANCE PRACTICE FOR PERCUSSION IN FRENCH BAROQUE OPERA
Michelle Humphreys, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2008

Dissertation directed by: Professor Gregory Miller
Department of Music

This performance-based dissertation is comprised of five recording projects. These recordings represent an exploration of the use of percussion in operatic music of the French Baroque era. The primary focus of this work is on the interpolation of percussion parts for works for which none were composed or notated.

The five projects include three full-length operas, one program of operatic excerpts, and one program of French marches and mascarades that illustrate some of the source material that informs the rest of the recordings. Three of the projects are studio recordings and two are recordings of live performances. They are presented here in the order in which they were recorded.

The recorded material is the primary document for this dissertation; this supporting document serves to guide the listener through the recordings and to provide additional information about each project.
PERFORMANCE PRACTICE FOR PERCUSSION

IN FRENCH BAROQUE OPERA

by

Michelle E. Humphreys

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts 2008

Advisory Committee:

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Generally, Baroque composers did not include any percussion parts in their operas, with the exception of timpani. But it has become increasingly common for conductors and artistic directors to choose to add percussion, and these types of projects are the main focus of this dissertation. In these instances, they collaborate with a percussionist who they entrust with interpolating a part for a given work.

There are few sources from the Baroque era to consult for information about this type of work. The two main sources are André Philidor’s 1705 collection of Marches for oboe and drums, and Thoinot Arbeau’s *Orchesography*, a dance treatise from 1589, which is probably the oldest extant example of notated music for drums. One other source from the 1520’s, Pistofilo’s *Il Torneo* has some notated military beats, as well, but it’s primarily a book on military practice and sword fighting.

*Orchesography* provided examples of embellishments, rolls, and rudiments that were known in late 16th-century France. There are almost a countless number of rudiments that are familiar to modern drummers, so having source from this era was of great value. Having clear instructions about commonly used patterns provides parameters, indicating what to play, as well as what not to play.

The Philidor collection was an invaluable resource. The individual pieces of the collection were composed by several different composers, which did not offer great variety, but did suggest a consensus on French military drumming, at least in the court of Louis XIV. There were many opportunities in both *Armide* and *David et Jonathas* for playing in the military style, and the music from the Philidor collection was a perfect starting point. It is much more varied and interesting than the military pieces in *Orchesography*, and a better fit chronologically.

Note: In the recorded document, material not containing percussion has been kept to a minimum. The recordings of *Armide* and *Zelindor* are not yet commercially available, and they were made available for this project with restrictions regarding use of material beyond that which includes percussion. Consideration was given to provide a musical context for each segment, however. In cases where percussion is played in several places during one large track, the entire track has been presented.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all of the talented musicians who have been my percussion teachers over the years: Dale Rauschenberg at Towson State University, John Beck at the Eastman School of Music, and my three teachers at University of Maryland, Tony Ames, Rebecca Kite, and John Tafoya.

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I would like to thank Professor Greg Miller for his guidance on this project and for chairing my committee, Debbie Kuckuda for her administrative genius and compassion, and Antonino D’Urzo for his time and expertise as primary recording engineer for my project. Thanks also to Lee Hinkle for playing on the Philidor signals with me.

I am profoundly grateful to my parents, Connie and Bill Humphreys. I could not have dreamed of attaining this goal without their love and encouragement. Thank you for believing in me.

And finally, thanks to my partner, Monica Reinagel, who has shown me that any dream that can arise over coffee can be achieved with time, labor, and love.
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CD 1

Tracks 1 – 14

_Armide (1686)_ Jean-Baptiste Lully
Performed/recorded: February 2007
Performers: Opera Lafayette (Ryan Corrick Brown, conductor) and the
New York Baroque Dance Company (Catherine Turocy, Artistic Director)
Location: University of Maryland, Dekelbaum Concert Hall
Estimated Naxos release date: Fall, 2008

**Instruments:**

16X16 wooden, rope-tensioned drum
Heads: calfskin
Manufacturer: Premier of England
Made in 1976, this drum is a replica of the “1776 King George of England” drum

14X14 metal, rope-tensioned drum
Heads: calfskin
Manufacturer: French, unknown

10” tambourine
Head: calfskin
Jingles: Beryllium copper
Manufacturer: Grover Pro Percussion

Finger cymbals
Manufacturer: Zildjian

**Notes:**

Surviving manuscripts for this work contain no percussion parts. A 1993 recording of
_Armide_ (Philippe Herreweghe, conductor), with percussion performed by Marie-Ange
Petit, served as a reference and jumping-off point for our reading of the piece, which
evolved through collaboration with the conductor and choreographer and in rehearsal
with the whole ensemble.

Although the work was presented as a concert opera, the production featured
choreographed dances and stylized pantomime. As is typical, I was asked to play
percussion in the dance movements, as well as in movements that were martial in character. The choreography of the dances dictated the tempo and to a certain extent the character of the percussion used in performance. For the studio recording process, many of the dance movements were taken at a brighter tempo, which subtly changed the character of the percussion parts.

To a listener accustomed to modern orchestral or operatic repertoire, the percussion may seem surprisingly loud relative to that of the rest of the orchestra. Although we have no way of knowing what the balance between percussion and other instruments would have been in the 18th century, this does illustrate the featured role that percussion has come to play in current historically-informed performance practice.

The smaller French drum is used primarily in the more rhythmic dance and martial movements. The large English drum is used for a-rhythmic interjections and effects. Finger cymbals are used to color and punctuate quieter, lyrical sections, and often represent sorcery and bewitchment.

Track 1: Act I, Scene 3 Marche
Instruments: 14X14 drum
Timing: 3:33

Track 2: Act I, Scene 3 Sarabande, Choir et Rondeau
Instruments: tambourine, 14X14 drum, finger cymbals
Timing: 5:49

Track 3: Act I, Scene 4 Vite
Instruments: 14X14 drum
Timing: 1:51

Track 4: Act I, Scene 4 Entr'acte
Instruments: 14X14 drum
Timing: 0:41

Tracks 5 and 6: Act II, Scene 2 Prelude
Instruments: 16X16 drum
Timing: 1:46

Tracks 7 and 8: Act II, Scene 5 Prelude
Instruments: 16X16 drum
Timing: 1:20

Track 9: Act III, Scene 4 Prelude
Instruments: 16X16 drum, tambourine
Timing: 8:00
Track 10: Act III, Scene 4 Entr’acte
Instruments: tambourine
Timing: 0:37

Tracks 11: Act IV, Scene 1 Air
Instruments: finger cymbals
Timing: 1:15

Track 12: Act IV, Scene 1 Gavotte, Canaries
Instruments: 14X14 drum, tambourine
Timing: 4:34

Track 13: Act IV, Scene 1 Air reprise
Instruments: finger cymbals
Timing: 0:30

Track 14: Act V, Scene 5 Prelude, final Prelude
Instruments: 14X14 drum
Timing: 3:00
Tracks 15-27

*Le Trophee* (excerpts) (1745)

*Zelindor* (1745)
Francois Rebel and Francois Francoeur

Performed/recorded: February 2007  
Performers: Opera Lafayette (Ryan Corrick Brown, conductor) and the  
New York Baroque Dance Company (Catherine Turocy, Artistic Director)  
Location: Strathmore Music Center/Rose Theater at Lincoln Center, New York  
Estimated Naxos release date: Spring, 2009

**Instruments**

24X14 wooden, rope-tensioned drum  
Heads: calfskin  
Manufacturer: Harms Historical Percussion

12X12 wooden, rope-tensioned drum  
Heads: calfskin  
Manufacturer: Harms Historical Percussion

11” Tambourine  
Head: calf  
Jingles: nickel-silver combination and brass  
Manufacturer: Cooperman Hand Drums

Finger cymbals, brass  
Manufacturer unknown (made in Egypt)

20” and 21” timpani, based on Baroque model  
Head: calfskin  
Manufacturer: Rebecca Kite (GP Percussion)

Wind machine  
Materials: canvas, wood, wire  
Manufacturer: John Crocken

**Notes:**

This project represented the modern-day premier of *Zelindor*, and therefore is the first attempt by a contemporary percussionist to interpolate a part for it. In our performance and recording, the opera is preceded by dance music from Rebel and Francoeur’s *Le Trophee* (1745). Timpani parts exist for the *Prelude* and *Airs*; tambourine parts were interpolated in the *Gavottes.*
Like Armide, the opera was presented as a concert opera with choreography by the New York Baroque Dance Company and, again, the choreography dictated tempi for many of the movements that use percussion.

In general, a restrained, conservative ethic was favored by the conductor for this project, in contrast with the more assertive style of Armide. You may notice in the recording softer dynamics for percussion and a more blended sound.

The tambourine used in this recording is a different instrument than that used in Armide. The broader diameter of the drum and smaller, thinner jingles approximate the more rustic sound of an Italian tamburello. When Zelindor first becomes visible in the libretto, a wind machine evokes the supernatural quality of this moment. In movements where the conductor desired a more specific pitch than can be provided by long drums, baroque timpani were used.

Track 15: Dances from Le Trophée Prelude
Instruments: timpani
Timing: 0:45

Track 16: Dances from Le Trophée Airs 1 & 2 and Fanfare
Instruments: timpani
Timing: 2:13

Track 17: Dances from Le Trophée Gavottes
Instruments: tambourine
Timing: 2:00

Track 18: Zelindor Overture
Instruments: wind machine
Timing: 3:13

Track 19: Scene 3 Passeped and couplets
Instruments: finger cymbals
Timing: 1:52

Track 20: Scene 3c
Instruments: wind machine
Timing: 1:00

Track 21: Scene 4a Prelude pour les Génies élémentaires
Instruments: timpani
Timing: 1:28
Track 22: Scene 4a *Air pour les Gnomes et Ondins*
Instruments: 12X12 drum
Timing: 1:09

Track 23: Scene 4a *Air pour les Sylphes, et Salamandres*
Instruments: finger cymbals
Timing: 1:30

Track 24: Scene 4c *Air Gay*
Instruments: tambourine
Timing: 1:10

Track 25: Scene 4c *Minuet, Choeur, Minuet II*
Instruments: finger cymbals
Timing: 5:06

Track 26: Scene 4c *Bourrees*
Instruments: tambourine, 12X12
Timing: 1:27

Track 27: *Finale – Air Gay*, conclusion
Instruments: tambourine
Timing: 1:08
CD 2

Tracks 1-11

Marches from *Marches et Batteries de Tambour...avec les Airs de Fifre et de Hautbois à 3 et 4 Parties* (1705), Andre Philidor, ed.
*Mascarade des Amazones* (1700)
*Mascarade du Roy de la Chine* (1700)
Andre Philidor

Recorded: February 2007
Performers: Meg Owens, oboe; Chris McFarlane, bassoon; Annie Loud, violin; Leslie Nero, violin; Lee Hinkle, second percussion.
Location: University of Maryland, Gildenhorn Recital Hall

**Instruments**

Timpani
Heads: calfskin
Manufacturer: Rebecca Kite (GP Percussion)

24X14 wooden, rope-tensioned drum
Heads: calfskin
Manufacturer: Harms Historical Percussion

12X12 wooden, rope-tensioned drum
Heads: calfskin
Manufacturer: Harms Historical Percussion

11” Tambourine
Head: calf
Jingles: nickel-silver combination and brass
Manufacturer: Cooperman Hand Drums

Turkish antique cymbals
Manufacturer: unknown

**Notes:**

Facsimile manuscripts by the 18th-century composer and editor Andre Philidor represent some of the only primary source materials for playing styles and conventions for percussion during the French baroque period and are a valuable source of information for creating percussion parts for French baroque opera.
A collection of 18th-century military and ceremonial music (Marches et Batteries de Tambour...avec les Airs de Fifre et de Hautbois a 3 et 4 Parties) provides notated examples of percussion music that are more soloistic in nature, but still closely associated with the wider musical trends of the day. There also exist scores for several mascarades (short theatrical pieces performed as entertainment during royal balls) composed by Philidor, for which some percussion parts have been notated.

The following recording project includes several examples from these manuscripts, incorporating both notated and improvised percussion. Featured in this project are bell-shaped Turkish-style cymbals similar in style to instruments often seen in 18th-century art and iconography. A soft, clangy sound and short decay are characteristic of this instrument.

Marches (1705)

Track 1: Le Retraitte (Andre Philidor)
Second drum played by Lee Hinkle
Instruments: 12X12 drum, 24X12 drum
Timing: 0:45

Track 2: Le Drapeau (Andre Philidor)
Second drum played by Lee Hinkle
Instruments: 12X12 drum, 24X12 drum
Timing: 0:29

Track 3: Marche de Timballes faie par Philidor Cadet (Jacques Danican Philidor)
Instruments: Baroque timpani
Timing: 2:24

Track 4: Marche de Timballes pour les Gardes du Roy (Claude Babelon)
Instruments: Baroque timpani
Timing: 3:26

Mascarade des Amazones (1700)

Track 5: Marche
Instruments: Baroque timpani
Timing: 1:48

Track 6: Combattons
Instruments: Baroque timpani
Timing: 1:34

Track 7: Entrée Drapeau
Instruments: 12X12 drum
Timing: 1:49

Track 8: *Gigue en Suite*
Instruments: tambourine
Timing: 1:02

Track 9: *Entrée*
Instruments: 12X12 drum
Timing: 0:48

*Mascarade du Roy de la Chine* (1700)

Track 10: *Marche*
Instruments: 12X12 drum
Timing: 1:26

Track 11:
Instruments: antique cymbals, 12X12 drum
Timing: 1:50
Tracks 12-16

Stormy Weather (excerpts from Baroque opera)
Performed/Recorded: April 2008
Performers: Ars Antiqua (Mark Kramer, Artistic Director)
Location: Chappaqua, NY

Instruments

24X14 wooden, rope-tensioned drum
Heads: calfskin
Manufacturer: Harms Historical Percussion

Wind machine
Materials: canvas, wood, wire
Manufacturer: John Crocken

28” bass drum
Heads: calfskin
Manufacturer: Ludwig & Ludwig

Notes:

Howling winds, rolling thunder, and violent earthquakes feature prominently in many operatic works of the Baroque era; even in the absence of actual meteorological events in the text, storms of the soul were frequent hazards faced by the characters of Baroque opera. Literal representations of weather events such as Tonnerre (thunder) from Rameau’s Hippolyte et Aricie, and Orage (storm) from Rameau’s Platée, provided a sense of excitement, even fear, and were part of the spectacle of the production. The machinery devised to create these effects was, in some cases, highly ingenious. As a guest artist with Ars Antiqua, I was given an opportunity to explore some of this repertoire from baroque opera in a chamber setting.

TRACK 12: Rinaldo (1711): Preludio and Furie Terribili (George Frideric Handel)
Instruments: bass drum, 24X14 drum
Timing: 3:14

TRACK 13: Hippolyte et Aricie (1713): Tonnerre (Jean-Phillippe Rameau)
Instruments: bass drum, 24X14 drum
Timing: 1:23
Track 14: Alcyone (1706): Tempest (Maran Marais)
Instruments: wind machine, 24X14 drum, bass drum
Timing: 2:00

Track 15: Platée (1745): Orage (Jean Philippe Rameau)
Instruments: wind machine
Timing: 2:30

Track 16: Hercules (1744): Where Shall I Fly? (George Frideric Handel)
Instruments: bass drum, 24X12 drum, wind machine
Timing: 2:00
David et Jonathas (1688)
Charpentier
Performed/recorded: May 2008
Performers: American Opera Theater (Tim Nelson, Artistic Director)
Location: Georgetown University, Gonda Theater/Brookly Academy of Music

Instruments

24X14 wooden, rope-tensioned drum
Heads: calfskin
Manufacturer: Harms Historical Percussion

12X12 wooden, rope-tensioned drum
Heads: calfskin
Manufacturer: Harms Historical Percussion

9 1/8" Riq
Heads: fish skin
Jingles: Hand-hammered brass
Manufacturer: Cooperman Hand Drums

Wind machine
Materials: canvas, wood, wire
Manufacturer: John Crocken

Finger cymbals, brass
Manufacturer unknown (made in Egypt)

Notes:

This final project involved creating a percussion part for a fully-staged production. The conductor/director desired a very present sound from the percussion instruments, and was interested in adding percussion to as many sections as possible. There is a recording of this work (performed by Les Arts Florissants, William Christie, conductor), with Marie-Ange Petit as percussionist, which, unlike her recording of Armide, includes very little percussion – only occasional timpani.

For this production, I used no timpani. The wind machine used in the prologue once again evokes the supernatural, as the sorceress calms the winds and the thunder. An Egyptian frame drum is featured in the instrumental dance movements that punctuate the staged action. The use of gut snares on the two drums produces a noisy buzzing which may be jarring to the unaccustomed ear but was relished during the Baroque.
Track 17: Overture
Instruments: 24X14 drum
Timing: 1:30

Track 18: Prologue, Scene 3
Instruments: wind machine
Timing: 0:40

Track 19: Overture – Act I
Instruments: 24X14 drum
Timing: 1:27

Track 20: Act I, Scene I
Instruments: 12X12 drum
Timing: 0:58

Track 21: Act I, Scene 4
Instruments: 12X12 drum
Timing: 0:23

Track 22: Act I, Minuet
Instruments: finger cymbals
Timing: 1:01

Track 23: Act II, Chaconne
Instruments: riq
Timing: 2:25

Track 24: Act III, Scene 1
Instruments: 12X12 drum
Timing: 0:50

Track 25: Act III, Gigue
Instruments: riq
Timing: 1:38

Track 26: Act IV, Scene 3 “Courons, courons”
Instruments: 12X12 drum, backstage
Timing: 6:26

Track 27: Act IV, Rigaudon, Bourrée,
Instruments: 12X12 drum, riq
Timing: 1:15
Track 28: Act V, Scene 1
Instruments: 12X12 drum
Timing: 0:53

Track 29: Act V, Scene 6
Instruments: 12X12 drum, 24X14 drum, finger cymbals
Timing: 5:56
Bibliography


A dance treatise in name, this was first published in 1589. It includes detailed descriptions of the drums used in military music, explanation of the techniques employed in their playing, and an explanation of their importance in military operations. Arbeau considered martial dance to be on a similar plane with recreational dance. This text is the first one known that has notated rhythms for the drum. It includes nearly every combination of minims, crotchets, and quavers possible in an eight beat sequence, and also shows drumbeats in triple meter. The written-out drum parts for the popular dances of the late Renaissance are the only example available for such information. Because the book is written as a dialogue between Arbeau and a fictional former student, there is much amusing and enlightening commentary on the times, revealing Arbeau’s complaints about society, his vast wealth of knowledge on a great variety of subjects, and his humor. It is of special value because of this very feature - the warmth of the presentation makes more extraordinary the experience of reading about this subject in a book published in the late 16th century.


This is the definitive guide to instruments used in western orchestral and art music to 1970. The chapters are organized by both time and place, including “The Origins of Percussion,” “Percussion Instruments of China and the Far East,” “Medieval and Renaissance Europe,” and “Techniques of Contemporary Percussion.” Blades begins his discussion of the tabor in the medieval period, and throughout several chapters, brings the discussion through the Renaissance and up to 1970. Contains very specific information about the construction of the various instruments, and has beautiful plates of images mentioned in several texts, but not shown, such as Rembrandt’s *Night Watch* and Fra Angelo’s *Christ Surrounded by Angels*. This a great source for following the evolution of percussion instruments.


This source includes some of the more frequently encountered works, such as the Rosslyn Chapel angel with tabor, but also has less frequently encountered works. Blades discuss the techniques implied by some of the clearer images, like Rembrandt’s *Night Watch*, and makes some interesting suppositions about technique based on the various works.

The fictional Capriol's revenge comes at the hands of James Blades, who interviews Jeremy Montagu in this staged, but useful, article. Of particular interest are the end of the article (p. 91) when Montagu alludes to the connection between the names of percussion instruments in Europe and what those names imply about the techniques with which they were played, as well as the sounds they made. Montagu takes advantage of this somewhat casual format to make some well-educated guesses about the technical prowess of 15th- and 16th-century drummers – very interesting.


This short, but densely packed text is divided into two parts. Part I (History) is by Blades, and Part II (Description and Technique) by Montagu. Both sections will be useful in looking for history and the construction of Renaissance and Baroque, Part II is an interesting look at playing techniques, as Jeremy Montagu has spent a great deal of time bringing historical accuracy to the modern explorations of this centuries-old art. Much of his writing on side drum and tabor playing is applicable today in snare drum pedagogy.


Organized by classifications of instruments, this text includes drums under membraphonic instruments. A chapter on the subject of classification (as a general term) sheds light on the process from an historical perspective, and includes a discussion of instrument classification in cultures other than European. In the chapter on the classification of instruments, Galpin provides a look at the history of the drum in terms of its inclusion in musical treatises as an instrument. The writing on drums is useful from an etymological standpoint, particularly as regards regional differences in terminology.


Lully, Jean-Baptiste, Thésée, Orchestra of Boston Early Music Festival, conducted by Paul O'Dette and Stephen Stubbs. CPO Records, B000Q7ZKH, 2007, compact disc.

Divided into four chapters (Early Middle Ages, Crusades, Hundred Years War, and Renaissance), this is a fabulous look at the history of instruments throughout these eras. It is not as segregated by instrument as most sources, but it takes an integrated approach that I believe offers a fuller understanding of the subject matter. Montagu has selected some beautiful examples of art to illustrate the instruments. This is an excellent source of information for instrument authenticity with respect to eras, and rhythmical practices.


Although there are some inaccuracies in this text, it does offer a different perspective on some aspects of tabor and percussion history. Some of the non-musical history offered as a parallel discussion to the history of drumming is interesting, and provides a better sense of context. It includes a section on history, individual chapters on each class of percussion instruments, and chapters on acoustics and jazz.


This is an excellent companion to Andre Philidor’s manuscript, *Marches et batteries de tambour...avec les airs de fifre et de hautbois*. Dr. Sandman presents well-researched interpretations on instrumentation, instruments, and musical interpretation.

Peggy Sexton, who writes under the pen name “Tabourot,” is a performer and scholar of early percussion performance and instruments, and has independently published this text, as well as one on early timpani.