

AN EXAMINATION OF DAVID MASLANKA'S MARIMBA CONCERTI: *ARCADIA II*  
*FOR MARIMBA AND PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE* AND *CONCERTO FOR*  
*MARIMBA AND BAND*, A LECTURE RECITAL, TOGETHER WITH  
THREE RECITALS OF SELECTED WORKS OF K. ABE,  
M. BURRITT, J. SERRY, AND OTHERS

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Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of  
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Although David Maslanka is not a percussionist, his writing for marimba shows a solid appreciation of the idiomatic possibilities developed by recent innovations for the instrument. The marimba is included in at least eighteen of his major compositions, and in most of those it is featured prominently. Both *Arcadia II: Concerto for Marimba and Percussion Ensemble* and *Concerto for Marimba and Band* display the techniques and influences that have become characteristic of his compositional style. However, they express radically different approaches to composition due primarily to Maslanka's growth as a composer. Maslanka's traditional musical training, the clear influence of diverse composers, and his sensitivity to extra-musical influences such as geographic location have resulted in a very distinct musical style. His exemplary attention to detail and sound timbres give his works an individualized stamp. The evolution of motivic gestures is the most distinctive characteristic of Maslanka's compositional process. Maslanka freely incorporates forms and structural principles of the baroque and classical periods, but these principles are not applied in a strict sense. These factors combine to produce two works that are both unique and significant in the literature for marimba. They exhibit a sensitivity to sound timbres while maintaining a mature approach to melody, harmony, and rhythm acknowledging the traditions of earlier eras.

This study examines compositional techniques, aspects of formal structure, tonality, melodic content, and marimba technique found in David Maslanka's *Arcadia II: Concerto for Marimba and Percussion Ensemble* (1982), and *Concerto for Marimba and Band* (1990). Transcripts of personal interviews provide valuable insights into Maslanka's approach to composition and other issues pertinent to the study of his compositions for marimba. Biographical information and an overview of his works that include marimba will serve as background material.

Tape recordings of all performances submitted as dissertation requirements are on deposit  
in the University of North Texas Library.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to David Maslanka for his openness and willingness to help in the preparation of this study. I would also like to thank Dr. Thomas Clark for his advice and help in completing this document. Finally, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my wife Marilyn and daughters, Devon and Allison. This project would not have been possible without their constant support and encouragement.

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University of North Texas

College of Music

presents

A Graduate Recital

**MICHAEL VARNER, percussion**

assisted by

Dr. Larry Wiley, piano • Diane Boyd, flute  
Rebecca Masters, soprano

Monday, November 2, 1992      6:15 p.m.      Recital Hall

*Raga No. 1 for Timpani* (1981) ..... William Cahn

*Fünf Improvisationen für Vibraphon  
und Klavier* (1965) ..... Koji Takeuchi

*Torse III* (1975) ..... Akira Miyoshi

1. *Thèse*
2. *Chant*
3. *Commentaire*
4. *Synthèse*

*Therapy for Solo Percussion* (1975) ..... John Serry  
*Anxieties*  
*Fantasies*  
*Aggressions*

*4 Songs from "Te Deum Tejas" for Soprano,  
Flute, and Percussion* (1981) ..... William Latham

1. *Penance*
2. *The Old Alamo*
3. *December*
4. *A Voyager*

Presented in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Musical Arts



University of North Texas

College of Music

presents

A Graduate Recital

**MICHAEL VARNER, *percussion***

assisted by

Rick Bogard, *trumpet*

Monday, November 29, 1993

5:00 pm

Recital Hall

PROGRAM

*Encounter III for Trumpet and Percussion* ..... William Kraft  
*Strategy*  
*Truce of God*  
*Tactics*

*Four Movements for Marimba* ..... Michael J. Burritt  
*Improvisation*  
*Perpetual*  
*Ethereal*  
*Mecanique*

*Ancient Vase* ..... Keiko Abe

*Suite for Trumpet and Marimba* ..... Alec Wilder  
*fast*  
*langourously*  
*with Vigor*

*Thirteen Drums, Opus 66* ..... Maki Ishii

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requirements for the degree of  
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University of North Texas  
*College of Music*

presents

A Graduate Recital

**MICHAEL VARNER, *percussion***

accompanied by  
Jeff Bair, *saxophone*

Monday, November 27, 1995                      8:00 pm                      Concert Hall

*Strike! for Solo Marimba* (1994) . . . . . George Chave

*Cenas Amerindias* (1992) . . . . . Ney Rosauero

1. *Brasiliana for Marimba and Wood Instruments*
2. *Eldorado for vibes and Metal Instruments*

*Edge (Corrugated Box)* (1991) . . . . . Bruce Hamilton

*Reflections on the Nature of Water* (1986) . . . . . Jacob Druckman

1. *Crystalline*
2. *Fleet*
3. *Relentless*

*Colloquy III for Alto Saxophone and Percussion* (1983) . . . . . Richard Willis

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requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Musical Arts

**University of North Texas**  
***College of Music***

*presents*

A Doctoral Lecture Recital

**MICHAEL VARNER, *percussion***

*assisted by*

William Klymus • Brian Lowe • Brad Allen

Jon Lee • Ian Rollins • Chris Rasmussen

Phillip Clements, conductor

Monday, August 9, 1999

5:00 pm

Recital Hall

**AN EXAMINATION OF DAVID MASLANKA'S  
MARIMBA CONCERTI:  
*ARCADIA II FOR MARIMBA AND PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE*  
AND  
*CONCERTO FOR MARIMBA AND BAND***

**PROGRAM**

*Arcadia II: Concerto for Marimba and Percussion Ensemble . . . . David Maslanka*

*Mvt. 1 ca. 80-84*

*Mvt. 2 ca. 52*

Presented in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Musical Arts

The Steinway piano is the instrument of choice for College of Music concerts.

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## CHAPTER 1

### FACTORS AFFECTING MASLANKA'S COMPOSITIONS FOR

### PERCUSSION AND MARIMBA

David Maslanka was born in New Bedford, Massachusetts in 1943. He studied at the New England Conservatory, the Oberlin Conservatory (1961-65), the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria (1963-64), and received a Ph.D. in music theory and composition from Michigan State University (1971). His principal composition teachers were Joseph Wood and H. Owen Reed. He has served on the faculties of the State University of New York at Geneseo, Sarah Lawrence College, New York University, and Kingsborough College of the City University of New York.

Maslanka has received grants and fellowships from ASCAP, the MacDowell Colony, the New York State Arts Council, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Martha Baird Rockefeller Fund for Music, among many others. His music has been widely performed in the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia, and Japan. David Maslanka's compositions are published by Carl Fischer, Inc., Kjos Music Co., Marimba Productions, Inc., the North American Saxophone Alliance, and OU Percussion Press. His compositions have been recorded on Albany, Cambria, CRI, Mark, Novisse, and

Klavier labels. For many years a resident of New York City, he now lives in Missoula, Montana.

David Maslanka's compositional style is made up of a wide variety of influences. He has commented on how profoundly his compositions have been affected by the places he chooses to live, and that those differences can be observed in *Arcadia II*, written while he resided in New York City, and *Concerto for Marimba and Band* written in Missoula, Montana. Maslanka explains:

New York City and any big city has the push and the press of too many people in a small space. Living in a big city automatically makes you develop a mental shell which protects you from the extreme external pressure. You have a filter, which allows in certain stuff and keeps out bunches of other stuff. It really is like having things pushing down on your head all the time to be in New York City. The city has its uses; it certainly changed my life but you have to hunt for mental space in New York City. Montana does precisely the opposite thing. You have to keep your mind in your head because it's very easy to get away from humanity there. You can be out all by yourself in a very large place and the mind simply floats out and away, into the hills and into the sky. Those are the differences. When you look at *Arcadia II* and *Montana Music* you can know those two differences and know some of the results.<sup>1</sup>

A further influence comes from his awareness of earlier musical periods and a wide range of popular American music he recalls from his youth. Maslanka states:

Things happen and people hear them and then these are absorbed into how you think about things and how you feel about them. I don't write rock-n-roll music. I don't write jazz and I'm not making imitations of those things. And yet the colors and feelings that those things produced in me as a child, and in fact for all of my life, are the language sources that mean something to me.<sup>2</sup>

He further comments:

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<sup>1</sup>David Maslanka, interview by author, 13, 14 November 1998, Arlington, tape recording.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



My music, because I grew up here, has an American speech, is an American speech, an American musical speech. It has all the information of the European experience because we grew up in, and were trained in that. We learn all those forms of music. That forms a background but we speak it differently. That's what's really important to me. I'm not trying to imitate anything but rather absorb into my own musical language what these things are.<sup>3</sup>

Many composers have been influential in Maslanka's works, including Stravinsky (1882-1971), Milhaud (1892-1974), Varèse (1883-1965), Bach (1685-1750), Brahms (1833-1897), Bartok (1881-1945), Chopin (1810-1849), Gershwin (1898-1937), Ives (1874-1954), Carter (1908), Partch (1901-1976), Cage (1912-1992), Sessions (1896-1985), Babbitt (1916), Wuorinen (1938), Glass (1937), and Reich (1936). This long and varied list by itself clearly suggests that Maslanka's compositional style is one based on inclusion with an understanding and respect for the works of numerous other composers.<sup>4</sup>

Maslanka has commented:

I do not write music like composer A,B,C, or D. I do not follow this school or that. But, I do have certain tonal leanings and I do write melodies and I do use the old forms.<sup>5</sup>

He particularly credits the compositions of Edgard Varèse (1883-1965) as influencing his approach to writing for percussion:

I think I became aware of percussion through Varèse when I went to Oberlin in Ohio. The wind ensemble there performed *Deserts* which is for electronic tape and wind and percussion. The qualities of sound I had never heard before. It just opened the whole notion of sound for its own sake. This is a terrific idea, which I think has been crawling into western music for a long time. It has had it's

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>J. Patrick Brooks, "An Analysis of David Maslanka's *Concerto for Piano, Winds, and Percussion*" (D.M.A. diss., University of Cincinnati, 1994), 14.

<sup>5</sup>David Martin Booth, "An Analytical Study of David Maslanka's *A Child's Garden of Dreams*" (D.M.A. diss., University of Oklahoma, 1994), 16.

blossoming in the twentieth-century, that any sound has meaning if you have it in context. Varèse was a starting point there.<sup>6</sup>

In an earlier interview he further comments:

Varèse took up where Stravinsky led in the use of sound for its own sake and in creating sound structures that had nothing to do with melody and nothing to do with traditional harmonic rhythm. He created monumental kinds of sounds. . . . But what Varèse offered was the use of percussion instruments in a way that hadn't been heard before and that opened things for me in how I thought about percussion. I still like Varèse's music a lot.<sup>7</sup>

A substantial portion of Maslanka's creative output is from commissions.

All of his works for marimba have been commissioned. He describes his approach to commissions by commenting:

I don't believe I would on my own have decided to write for marimba if I wasn't asked. I think composing proceeds from two directions. One is that the composer has stuff just bubbling in the mind which wants to happen but it isn't necessarily formed along specific lines. It's just a way of being and thinking. To me, the commission is like a rock in the pond - the pond is just lying there until somebody throws a stone in it, and this tremendous rippling takes place. So the fertilization of the moment in the mind takes place by someone asking you to write. The commission suddenly focuses your thoughts and then something forms around that point. I really love this because then there is a reason for me to come into the work, and people who have asked for it want it. That's truly important to a composer to have the music be wanted.<sup>8</sup>

A major part of Maslanka's compositional technique is "imaging" or entering a meditative state to focus on a particular subject. In interviews, he has made many references to this unique aspect of his compositional process stating:

Most often I begin my composing through an imaging process. I call it a meditative process. What it does is to allow me to enter into a dream area and

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<sup>6</sup>David Maslanka, interview by author, 13, 14 November 1998, Arlington, tape recording.

<sup>7</sup>J. Patrick Brooks, "An Analysis of David Maslanka's *Concerto for Piano, Winds, and Percussion*" (D.M.A. diss., University of Cincinnati, 1994), 16.

<sup>8</sup>David Maslanka, interview by author, 13, 14 November 1998, Arlington, tape recording.

bring that into conscious mind and then to feel the power of it, whatever it might be and to allow that to translate itself into music.<sup>9</sup>

*Variations on Lost Love* (1977) was written as a result of seeing Leigh Howard Stevens in performance:

After the performance I went away and imaged what it was to be a marimba. How does this feel to be that, and what does it sound like when it is that. Out of that came a particular piece. Any subsequent percussion piece has emerged precisely the same way.<sup>10</sup>

Sometimes the imaging takes the composition in directions Maslanka does not anticipate:

I'll tell you about *the Montana Music-Three Dances for Percussion*. I started out with a bunch of preconceived notions. I'd gone over to the percussion guy, Bob Ledbetter, at the University of Montana and he spent a couple of hours with me just making sounds and showing me instruments and things. I had just a bunch of really good ideas that were going to go into this piece. I started to write the piece and it stopped in its tracks. Every time I approached this piece, it would go just so far and stop. It didn't like what it was doing and it didn't go anywhere. When I'm stopped that cold in the process, then it's a clue to me that I haven't allowed the process to work properly. I said, "OK, what are you going to be?" The result was a piece which I would not and could not have intellectually conceived.<sup>11</sup>

While he has stated that he is definitely not a percussionist, Maslanka has an ear for the resonance and tone of the percussion instruments. Maslanka studied composition with H. Owen Reed, author of *Scoring for Percussion and the Instruments of the Percussion Section* (1969)<sup>12</sup> which is considered one of the finest texts on percussion composition, notation, and scoring. Maslanka describes his unique approach to percussion writing by stating:

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>David Martin Booth, "An Analytical Study of David Maslanka's *A Child's Garden of Dreams*" (D.M.A. diss., University of Oklahoma, 1994), 172.

<sup>11</sup>David Maslanka, interview by author, 13, 14 November 1998, Arlington, tape recording.

<sup>12</sup>H. Owen Reed, *Scoring for Percussion and the Instruments of the Percussion Section*, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969).

In earlier band and orchestra music, percussion is limited to the occasional cymbal crash, the occasional triangle, the rhythmic elements of a field drum or snare drum or bass drum, and of course timpani. Percussion sounds, for me, have as big a force as any other musical sound and I find that I use percussion not necessarily for accenting, but for its own emotional value. Percussion instruments provide a full range of emotional qualities that don't come from any place else in the ensemble. I use them that way. They become independent voices. It's not an incidental application of a color on top of another orchestration.<sup>13</sup>

Specifically discussing the marimba Maslanka comments:

I have always had a particular fascination with the basic sound quality of the marimba. . . . I sometimes fight with the instrument because it does have severe limitations. It's not a piano and it can't do what a piano does. It frankly doesn't do counterpoint very well. . . . I realize that I don't know about this instrument what the professional player knows about it or even what a very good student knows about it. What I do know is that it is a color that can move powerfully if something moves me powerfully to speak in that color.<sup>14</sup>

A more comprehensive description of Maslanka's approach to percussion and percussive sonorities can be found in interviews conducted by the author and transcribed in the appendix. By examining Maslanka's works for marimba, and in particular his two concerti, it will be seen that these factors have combined to produce a compositional style that is both distinctive and identifiable.

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<sup>13</sup>David Maslanka, interview by author, 13, 14 November 1998, Arlington, tape recording.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER 2

### OVERVIEW OF WORKS FOR MARIMBA

Although the marimba is an instrument with roots in antiquity, its acceptance as a viable artistic instrument performing serious compositions has only taken place over the past thirty years. With major innovations in range, resonance, and tone quality came a growing technical expertise. However, most recognized composers were not familiar with the instrument's newfound potential, and thus it was left to performers to develop the repertoire in order to use these advances. The few prominent composers who wrote for the instrument (Creston, Kurka, Mayazumi) applied compositional approaches that were effective for string or wind instruments, resulting in compositionally sound works that often did not present the unique qualities of the instrument. The most knowledgeable performers composed works that showcased the instrument's potential but were often not recognized for their composing. David Maslanka has written for the marimba in various settings throughout his composing career. If, for no other reason than quantity, his interest in using the marimba in composition is unique. The marimba is included in at least eighteen of his major compositions and in most of those it is featured prominently.

Maslanka identifies four different compositional periods in his life. The first began during his tenure teaching music theory at the State University of New York at

Geneseo, and continued as he moved to New York City. He calls this time an “angry, aggressive, sharply dissonant period in which I underwent a mental revolution.”<sup>1</sup>

Maslanka comments: “I often think of New York City as a pressure cooker in which everything is compacted and condensed.”<sup>2</sup> Maslanka’s first major work for marimba was composed during this period. *Variations on Lost Love*, commissioned by the New York State Music Teachers Association for young marimbist Leigh Howard Stevens, was composed in 1977 and premiered by Stevens at his New York City Town Hall concert in the fall of 1979. It is a fifteen-minute work comprised of a theme and three variations for unaccompanied 4.3 octave marimba. The title, character, and tone of the piece comes from the poem “Lost Love” by the renowned twentieth-century English poet Robert Graves (1895-1985). In the words of the composer:

The poem portrays a man so struck by the grief of lost love as to be made utterly hypersensitive to the physical and psychic experience; the minutest noises or inner stimuli become overwhelming. A person ‘opened’ in this way by grief or other profound inner turmoil is shaken out of ordinary being into hyperawareness. Although there are many minute programmatic sounds, the music does not create a parallel musical space. The music can be seen as a collection of emotional pictures, variations as it were, on the theme of loss. Some of these variations are quite sober, some mysterious, and some quite the other, even approaching playful.<sup>3</sup>

The composition is predominantly monophonic in texture, with minimal four-note chords or counterpoint and technically quite complex. It includes many features that become identifiable traits of Maslanka’s marimba compositions. Edited by Leigh

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>J. Patrick Brooks, “An Analysis of David Maslanka’s *Concerto for Piano, Winds, and Percussion*” (D.M.A. diss., University of Cincinnati, 1994), 20.

<sup>3</sup>Darren Duerden, “The Unaccompanied Marimba Literature of David Maslanka,” *Percussive Notes* 36, no. 3 (June 1998): 39-41.

Howard Stevens, *Variations on Lost Love* is one of the first marimba compositions to include extremely detailed performance notes on sticking, roll types (including the independent roll), and suggested mallets. Maslanka demonstrates his awareness of altering the marimba's sound potential by indicating to strike "on the nodes, halfway to the nodes, or center (ord.) of the bar."<sup>4</sup> A variety of single, double, and triple grace-notes requiring the double-lateral stroke are an integral part of the work. Maslanka's fondness for using allusion as a musical description appears in his instruction to "move like a soft breeze."<sup>5</sup> Though it was reviewed as "one of the best new pieces of solo marimba literature to come along in years,"<sup>6</sup> it was considered so difficult to perform that only Leigh Howard Stevens could attempt it. The work was published in 1983 and since then has been performed regularly, although it still has not been professionally recorded.

While still in New York, he met and married Alison and entered a second compositional period where he describes his music as "much more tonal, open, and clearer."<sup>7</sup> He comments:

It was the need to find a place in which to literally be taken apart, come apart, and be put back together again. That was what New York did for me . . . all the angry and difficult energy of the other pieces [works composed before 1980] transformed now to something that was a good deal more hopeful, and a good deal brighter.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>David Maslanka, *Variations on Lost Love*, (New Jersey: Marimba Productions, 1983).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Niel DePonte, review of *My Lady White*, by David Maslanka, *Percussive Notes* 21, no. 2 (January 1983), 73.

<sup>7</sup>David Maslanka, interview by author, 13, 14 November 1998, Arlington, tape recording.

<sup>8</sup>David Martin Booth, "An Analytical Study of David Maslanka's *A Child's Garden of Dreams*" (D.M.A. diss., University of Oklahoma, 1994), 49.

Upon hearing *Variations on Lost Love* at its premiere, the owner of Lone Star Percussion in Dallas, Harvey Vogel, commissioned Maslanka to write a composition dedicated to his daughter Lauren that would be “a little more accessible to the percussion community.”<sup>9</sup> *My Lady White* is a collection of three songs for solo marimba based on a related theme. Maslanka calls the individual songs “madrigals” out of his love for the sixteenth-century Italian madrigal. Maslanka explains:

There are many madrigal styles, but in general a madrigal is a brief, usually polyphonic song that addresses an emotional issue. Most often the topic is courtly love... My pieces may not be polyphonic, but they are certainly songs.<sup>10</sup>

*My Lady White* was premiered in Dallas, Texas by Lauren Vogel in 1980 and published by Marimba Productions in 1981.

The title of *My Lady White*, as well as the title of the first song, was inspired by the poem “The Book of the Duchess” by fourteenth-century English poet Geoffrey Chaucer. Maslanka writes:

The poem reflects the medieval view of the “holy feminine” as inspiration for spiritual development. Modern psychology recognizes this as an inner phenomenon while people of earlier times projected this feminine aspect of the psyche outward onto an actual living person.<sup>11</sup>

The first song is constructed of a chorale texture of sustained rolls with a low brooding timbre. The movement has an open tonal quality focused on perfect fifths and major chords. As he does in both *Arcadia II* and *Concerto for Marimba and Band*, Maslanka provides very specific information regarding balance of tones within chords. As the

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<sup>9</sup>Harvey Vogel, interview by author, 1 April 1999, telephone interview.

<sup>10</sup>Darren Duerden, “The Unaccompanied Marimba Literature of David Maslanka,” *Percussive Notes* 36, no. 3 (June 1998), 40.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 41.



movement ends, the split-member chord appears between the interval of a perfect fifth in the left hand and the highest melodic pitch in the right hand. An aspect of tonality unique to Maslanka's marimba music, this sonority appears in virtually all of his marimba music, usually as a chord that includes simultaneously a major third and minor third.

The title of the second song is *Spring...Birds Sing...A Gift of Rings*. While *Spring* and *Birds Sing* are original titles, "A Gift of Rings" comes from another poem by English poet Robert Graves entitled "With a Gift of Rings." This song is by far the most technical of the three requiring the performer to be adept at Stevens's single independent, single alternating, and double lateral strokes. The movement has a printed tempo "virtually unattainable by most marimbists"<sup>12</sup> of quarter note=184. It is made up of quick monophonic textures interrupted by gestures reminiscent of the first movement's chorale texture.

The third song, *For Pretty Alison*, was written in honor of Maslanka's wife. In it he considers her analogous to Chaucer's "Lady White" character. The composer states:

The song is a thinly textured piece, which contains a small series of more or less disconnected fragments--hints of musical expressions, which have to be allowed space for the proper musical impression to smile in.<sup>13</sup>

The simplicity of this movement can be deceiving as the performer finds independent rolls used with instances of the right and left inside mallets crossing each other as well as

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

interval spreads of more than an octave in both hands. This work has been recorded by James Moyer on his CD “*Something Old/Something New*.”<sup>14</sup>

*Arcadia II: Concerto for Marimba and Percussion Ensemble* was also written while Maslanka resided in New York City. Vogel commissioned it in 1982 for Leigh Howard Stevens to perform as a soloist with university percussion ensembles. *Arcadia II* will be discussed at length in later chapters. In an interview, Maslanka comments:

Starting roughly around 1980, when Alison and I were married, this blossoming took place which resulted in a lot of the stuff that made my reputation – *Child’s Garden of Dreams* for wind ensemble and the *Second Symphony* and then all of the other wind pieces began to arrive.<sup>15</sup>

Maslanka’s third compositional period began when he left New York City in 1990 and moved to Missoula, Montana. Comparing Montana to New York City he explains “the psychological effects here are of expansion and the simple physical size of the place.”<sup>16</sup> He further states:

You have to keep your mind in your head because very quickly you can get away from humanity there. You can be out all by yourself in a very large place and the mind simply floats out and away and into the hills and into the sky.<sup>17</sup>

Montana had such a profound effect on Maslanka that he titled a series of four compositions *Montana Music (Chorale Variations for Symphonic Wind Ensemble, Three Dances for Percussion, Fantasy on a Chorale Tune for Violin and Viola, and Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano)*.

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<sup>14</sup>James Moyer, *Something Old/Something New*, Motera Nebula Records, 1996, CD.

<sup>15</sup>David Maslanka, interview by author, 13, 14 November 1998, Arlington, tape recording.

<sup>16</sup>J. Patrick Brooks, “An Analysis of David Maslanka’s *Concerto for Piano, Winds, and Percussion*” (D.M.A. diss., University of Cincinnati, 1994), 20.

<sup>17</sup>David Maslanka, interview by author, 13, 14 November 1998, Arlington, tape recording.

The pieces are not connected thematically and are written for very different ensembles, yet a single impulse embraces all four works. It is an impulse that arises directly from the Montana land. That impulse is, I believe, the force of the Earth itself at this very special place and the force of the life this land has produced and supported over the millennia. I have experienced an urgent need to transmit this impulse in musical form.<sup>18</sup>

Maslanka comments that the impetus of his *Symphony No. 3*, written in 1991, was:

. . . in part my leaving university life and moving from New York City to western Montana. The mountains and sky are a living presence. Animal and Indian spirits still echo strongly in this land, and these elements have found their way into my music. . . have grown out of my perceptions of natural forces, especially the strong currents of old life that exists here in Montana.<sup>19</sup>

*Concerto for Marimba and Band*, composed in the fall of 1990, was the first major work written in Montana and consequently shows a very marked shift in his approach to composition. Compared to many of Maslanka's other works, *Concerto for Marimba and Band* is a more subdued impressionistic sounding work. This composition is written for the newly developed five-octave marimba, and consequently it is focused on the potential of the low timbres more than any other work to date. Reflecting his evolution toward simplicity, this work is less difficult technically than the pieces composed in New York City, but requires exacting ensemble awareness and musicality. *Concerto for Marimba and Band* will be discussed at length in later chapters.

*Crown of Thorns*, written shortly after *Concerto for Marimba and Band*, was commissioned by Richard C. Gipson for the University of Oklahoma Percussion Ensemble. In an interview Maslanka describes the circumstances surrounding the work:

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 10.

Richard Gipson at Oklahoma asked me to write a piece for him. I think it was in the middle '80's that he asked me to do this. I said I'd accept the idea of writing a piece but I just didn't know where I was going to put it in my writing and he said fine. We moved to Missoula in 1990 and we lived in a rental for most of the year until we found a place to buy and set up my workshop there which is a big, old woodworking shop. It's half of a garage. The very first piece that was composed in that workshop was *Crown of Thorns* and I said "Now I'm going to write this piece," and I sat down and it took me two weeks to write *Crown of Thorns*. It was a fast production and it came out fast. . . It has about it a very energized and joyous kind of quality.<sup>20</sup>

*Crown of Thorns* was premiered in November 1991 in Norman, Oklahoma, and has been recorded on three CDs. In the program notes Maslanka states:

The title *Crown of Thorns* is an obvious reference to Christ's "Crown of Thorns," But the name first came to me as a possible title for a piece from seeing a plant called "Crown of Thorns" at the New York Botanical Gardens. This is a rambling, thorny, desert plant from the Middle East with small, green leaves, and small, very simple and pretty red flowers. The rambling interweaving vine-like stems suggested music to me. As I meditated on the words "crown of thorns," and on the plant, and the idea of a work for keyboard percussion ensemble, the following image arose:

A darkening sky  
Seven stars are visible:  
The seven-starred halo  
The golden light  
The hands of blessing

The seven-starred halo is the crown of thorns transcended. It is the crown of highest spiritual power arrived at through the greatest depth of suffering. The imagery is Christian, but the experience transcends religion and is universal. The music is at times sober and reflective, but is, for the most part, filled with the joy and energy of liberation.<sup>21</sup>

*Crown of Thorns* is in sonata form, with clearly marked themes, development, recapitulation, and coda (explained in the composer's notes). This fourteen-minute

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<sup>20</sup>David Maslanka, interview by author, 13, 14 November 1998, Arlington, tape recording.

<sup>21</sup>David Maslanka, *Crown of Thorns for Percussion Ensemble*, (Norman, OK: OU Percussion Press, 1993).

composition is scored for a keyboard ensemble of nine players including glockenspiel, two vibraphones, four marimbas, and bass marimba. Maslanka does not include performance suggestions about rolls or sticking, but is very detailed about tempo and balance. His fondness for allusion appears in m. 320 when he instructs the vibraphone player to perform “from another space.”<sup>22</sup> There is much evidence of layering and the interlocking arpeggios that appear often in Maslanka’s music. As with the majority of Maslanka’s music, the tonality is predominantly basic major and minor chords and lyric diatonic lines. Split-member sonorities appear in *Crown of Thorns* late in the recapitulation where Maslanka places a solo lyric line on marimba with a prominent F-natural over a solid D-major chord.

Maslanka’s fourth and most recent compositional period began in 1996 with the completion of his *Mass*. This composition of almost two hours in length was chiefly sponsored by Gregg Hanson from the University of Arizona along with eight other schools. Maslanka defines this period as “a cumulative time in which the chorale has taken a central place in my thinking.”<sup>23</sup> *Song Book for Alto Saxophone and Marimba* is made up of seven short songs and represents Maslanka’s most recently completed composition for the marimba. Marimbist Dane Richeson and saxophonist Steve Jordheim of Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin commissioned this twenty-eight minute work that was premiered in November 1998. As with all of Maslanka’s recent works, it shows continued evolution toward simplicity and the influence of his

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>David Maslanka, interview by author, 13, 14 November 1998, Arlington, tape recording.

Montana environment. It is written for a five-octave marimba and has the least amount of written technical information regarding mallet selection or roll type of all his marimba works. Maslanka states that it has “no extreme technical demands, but instead is cued to single gestures.”<sup>24</sup> As is evident in many of his more recent wind compositions, two of the songs are based on chorales. Traditional counterpoint plays a large role in all of the movements. Maslanka comments on the movement’s titles:

“Song for Davy” is for me as a very young child. It is a very personal reference and has to do with getting in touch with “lost parts.” The pieces based on chorales are *Lost and Hymn Tune with Four Variations*. *Lost* is based on *Herr ich habe misgehandelt*. *Hymn Tune* is based on *Werde Munter, mein Gemüte*. Arthur Cohn was for many years in charge of the Serious Music Department at Carl Fischer. Yes, they called it the Serious Music Department! It is now the Concert Music Division. Arthur was a friend and in many ways a mentor for career things. Arthur was a force in new music in the United States for a very long time. He was still working at Fischer until very shortly before his death last year in 1998 at the age of 86. In *Serious Music-In Memoriam Arthur Cohn*, I have written a serious piece and made a small joke at the same time. *Summer Song* and *Evening Song* have no other background except that the titles seemed appropriate as I was writing the pieces.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to his major contribution to percussion literature, Maslanka also uses the marimba extensively in his band compositions. In his *Symphony No. 3 for Band* (1991), he calls for the marimba to be shared by two players and includes a part requiring four-mallet technique. The marimba is again shared in *Symphony No. 4 for Band* (1993) and calls for the marimba to be bowed with a double bass bow. In his percussion ensemble *Montana Music* (1992), a wide array of new sound potentials are explored including parts for two marimbas and a bass marimba on stage as well as an off-stage

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<sup>24</sup>David Maslanka, interview by author, 17 March 1999, telephone interview.

<sup>25</sup>David Maslanka, interview by author, 16 June 1999, electronic mail.

marimba. In addition to four-mallet techniques similar to *Arcadia II*, Maslanka requires the performers to play a prominent section “with fingers” as well as later with a cello bow. Maslanka continues his interest in the marimba in his latest work *Sea Dreams: Concerto for Two Horns and Wind Orchestra* which is composed for a large percussion section that includes two completely separate marimba parts. Maslanka comments:

The keyboard percussion instruments have a central place in all the large ensemble pieces. I tend to use a standard ensemble of vibraphone, xylophone, and marimba as something of a unit. In the more recent piece, *Concerto for Two Horns and Wind Ensemble*, there are doubles of these. There are two vibraphones, two marimbas, and of course each with its own player. They make a mallet ensemble voice in the overall ensemble.<sup>26</sup>

Maslanka writes with a solid understanding of the instrument and takes full advantage of its potential both technically and musically using gestures and tonal language from earlier periods, all the while remaining clear in structure and purpose. To date, few recognized composers have written for the marimba and David Maslanka is one of a very few who has taken the time to explore fully the instrument’s expanded potential.

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<sup>26</sup>David Maslanka, interview by author, 13, 14 November 1998, Arlington, tape recording.

## CHAPTER 3

### AN OVERVIEW OF *ARCADIA II: CONCERTO FOR MARIMBA*

#### *AND PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE*

*Arcadia II: Concerto for Marimba and Percussion Ensemble* is a thirty-six minute composition written in three movements for solo marimba and a percussion ensemble of six performers. In 1982, Harvey Vogel commissioned David Maslanka to create a work for marimba soloist Leigh Howard Stevens. Both Vogel and Stevens were familiar with Maslanka's compositions because of their involvement in the commissioning of the solo marimba pieces *Variations on Lost Love* and *My Lady White*. In an interview, Vogel states:

At the time Leigh was the only one who could perform *Variations* because of its technical aspects. Leigh was looking for a piece to tour and perform with that was of a level accessible to most university percussion ensembles. We were looking for a composition written for only standard percussion instruments.<sup>1</sup>

*Arcadia II* is the second of David Maslanka's works using the name Arcadia.

*Arcadia I* is a cello quartet written around 1980 that has never been performed. Maslanka wrote *Arcadia II* while living in New York City and teaching at Lawrence College.



Leigh Howard Stevens did not perform *Arcadia II* and, after revising it in June 1985, Maslanka brought it to the attention of Robert Hohner, Professor of Percussion at Central Michigan University. *Arcadia II* was premiered by the Central Michigan University Percussion Ensemble with Robert Hohner conducting in January 1988 at the Midwestern Band Convention in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The same ensemble recorded the piece in April 1988 at Orchestra Hall in Detroit, Michigan. The University of Utah Percussion Ensemble under the direction of Douglas J. Wolf recorded the first movement in 1991. In 1996 it was released in its entirety on the Central Michigan University Percussion Ensemble's CD *Percussion Music of David Maslanka*.<sup>2</sup> *Arcadia II* is published in the Carl Fischer Facsimile Edition Collection and is available through rental.

*Arcadia II* is composed for six multi-percussionists using a wide range of metal, skin, and wooden percussion instruments. Maslanka chose the widest possible diversity of timbres and range to provide a wealth of contrast between the instruments. Though most of the instruments are standard, acquiring the necessary numbers of some items such as gongs and cymbals can be challenging. When he revised *Arcadia II* in 1985, Maslanka altered the parts to allow for the sharing of instruments. For ease of performance, the score lists the instruments in order of appearance and prominently marks those that can be shared.

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<sup>1</sup>Harvey Vogel, interview by author, 1 April 1999, telephone interview.

Keyboard instruments:

4.3 octave Marimba (used traditionally and also bowed with a double bass bow) (Shared)  
Crotales  
Orchestra Bells (Shared)  
Vibraphone (used traditionally and also bowed with a double bass bow) (Shared)  
Xylophone (Shared)

Drums:

Bass Drum (Shared)  
Bongos  
Small Snare Drum (Shared)  
Small Tom-Tom (with wire Brushes)  
Snare Drum (Shared)  
Tenor Drum  
Tom-Toms (Shared)

Accessories:

3 suspended cymbals (used traditionally and also bowed with a double bass bow) (Shared)  
4 gongs (used traditionally and also bowed with a double bass bow) (Shared)  
2 Wood Blocks  
Anvil (Shared)  
Bell Plate  
Claves  
Crash Cymbals  
Hi-hat cymbal (Shared)  
Large Triangle (laid on table)  
Ratchet (Shared)  
Sand Paper Blocks  
Slap Stick  
Small Suspended Bell  
Small Triangle  
Tambourine (Shared)  
Tam-Tam (Shared)

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<sup>2</sup>Robert Hohner, *Percussion Music of David Maslanka*, Performed by the Central Michigan University Percussion Ensemble, Robert Hohner, Conductor, Albany Records Troy 190, 1996.

### Temple Blocks (Shared)

Unusual sound effects or instruments:

- 4 Bamboo Sticks
- 2 or more small Indian Bells
- 2 Slide Whistles
- Bull Roar

A unique aspect of the instrumentation is the use of a second 4.3 octave marimba in the ensemble. Even though the instrument has the same timbre and range as the soloist, Maslanka uses the instrument to good advantage by melodically echoing the soloist and supporting harmonic lines. Unusual effects are characteristic of this work including instruments that imitate nature sounds such as four bamboo sticks described as being “ominous clacking sound like dead branches in the wind” or small Indian bells with the description “the bell sounds emerge gradually, like fireflies in a field at nightfall.”<sup>3</sup> Other special effects include a bullroar (a large friction drum), and two slide whistles that imitate birdcalls. Maslanka is aware of the scintillating overtone timbres available from bowing metal percussion instruments and utilizes the double bass bow and cello bow on vibraphone, gongs, and suspended cymbals. More unusual and interesting is his use of the double bass bow on marimba bars in the second movement.

*Arcadia II* uses a traditional concerto form of faster outer movements surrounding a slow middle movement. “The outer movements are both in Sonata form (exposition of themes, development, and recapitulation), and the middle movement is episodic or an

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<sup>3</sup>David Maslanka, *Arcadia II for Marimba and Percussion Ensemble*, (New York: Carl Fischer, 1985).

extended song.”<sup>4</sup> Maslanka describes the form as being "as much baroque as classical"<sup>5</sup> and that it "does not in any way follow the dictates of a classic concerto."<sup>6</sup> *Arcadia II* is composed with a very seamless character in which themes and phrases overlay each other, causing a feeling of continuous forward motion. Decisive cadences or points of repose occur rarely. The composition's overall architecture displays formal balance and cyclic unity between its movements through a constant evolution of its motives, yet each movement displays its own very distinct character. Maslanka recommends that all movements be performed as a unit because of the strong thematic development throughout the work. The reappearance of themes in other movements throughout a work is a common trait of David Maslanka's compositions. In a recent interview Maslanka alludes to this by stating:

Brooks: I thought that was wonderful the way you did that in *A Child's Garden of Dreams*; how themes appearing in the first movement are regenerated in different ways throughout the entire work.

Maslanka: Right and they are all consequences of the first act . . .<sup>7</sup>

Maslanka's use of allusion and nature references to describe musical events in *Arcadia II* is almost programmatic.

From the dictionary, "Arcadia" means a pastoral district of ancient Greece, or any place of rural peace and simplicity. It refers as well to the mythic land of human origin. The title *Arcadia II* has a double intent: it is the second piece of mine with the title "Arcadia," and it is a musical prayer for the well-being of Earth and a return to an attitude of reverence for the Earth.

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<sup>4</sup>David Maslanka, CD Liner notes for, *Percussion Music of David Maslanka*, Performed by the Central Michigan University Percussion Ensemble, Robert Hohner, Conductor, Albany Records Troy 190, 1996.

<sup>5</sup>David Maslanka, interview by author, 17 March 1999, telephone interview.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>J. Patrick Brooks, "An Analysis of David Maslanka's *Concerto for Piano, Winds, and Percussion*" (D.M.A. diss., University of Cincinnati, 1994), 116.

The first movement of the Concerto arises from darkness. I have a specific memory of standing in a New Hampshire meadow on a summer evening. One by one the fireflies lit up until the darkening field was alive with their activity. The tiny opening bell sounds of this movement are the fireflies. Out of this grows a mournful bitter-sweet music, aware of death, which rises to a high intensity and then fades.

The second movement is a nature meditation. It comes directly from my walks in the woods of Inwood Hill Park in upper Manhattan. This hundred-acre wood is the last "wild" parkland in New York City. It contains original-growth trees - among them magnificent squirrels, raccoons, and a large variety of birds - pheasants, owls, cardinals, orioles, robins, doves, warblers, and woodpeckers to name a few. The occasional hawk passes through. Though faint and crowded on all sides by urban noise, the voices of nature spirits can still be heard in these woods. They suggested a music in which the human presence (the solo marimba) communes with the sounds of wind, birds, the rustling of small things, the flow of water-all represented in the ensemble. The bird calls played throughout the movement by the xylophone are from my favorite bird. With patience I was able to observe this elusive bird - smaller than a robin, light tan, sometimes a ground feeder - on half a dozen occasions, but I never learned its name.

The third movement is infused with a spirit of playfulness, light, and simple joy in the glories of nature. There is an aggressive opening theme, a serene and pastoral second theme, and extended development which rises to moments of epiphany (wind and glittering sunlight in the rustling leaves), a cadenza, and a recapitulation with the second theme coming first. The highly charged ensemble passages in fast, flowing triplets are among the most difficult - and to me, attractive - in the whole piece.<sup>8</sup>

The texture of the work ranges from light individual timbres to complex, layered timbres with each movement displaying a wide range of textures. Maslanka comments that "the ensemble writing is intricate with the solo part woven into the texture."<sup>9</sup> The choice of instrumentation and limitations of the percussion ensemble keep the sounds in a

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<sup>8</sup>David Maslanka, *Arcadia II for Marimba and Percussion Ensemble*, (New York: Carl Fischer, 1985).

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

relatively high tessitura throughout the composition, Maslanka emphasizes this range more by placing most of the solo part in the upper register of the marimba. 73% of the notes are above middle-C in the first movement, 79.5% in the second movement, and 87.5% in the third movement. The percussion ensemble offers a very wide dynamic range and often Maslanka punctuates the prevailing texture with a single sforzando accent from the wood block, slap stick, or anvil.

Layering, in this case defined as the simultaneous occurrence of either related or even totally unrelated musical material, is another compositional device often used by Maslanka. Several sections contain evolved gestures that overlay each other forming intricate counterpoint. Maslanka's compositional style is one that appears comfortable in applying classical principles of structure and counterpoint within an environment constructed using layers of seemingly unrelated musical material. His style acknowledges the past while existing in the present. Arpeggios built from basic major or minor triads are a distinctive trait found throughout much of Maslanka's wind music. He has commented in an interview that "the idea of doing the most blunt thing possible, the most astonishingly simple gesture, has a lot to do with my work in New York."<sup>10</sup> The triadic texture appears throughout *Arcadia II* sometimes interlocking with arpeggios between keyboard instruments and skin or wood timbres.

While most of *Arcadia II* can be described as tonal, it cannot always be defined as functional harmony common to pre-twentieth century music in which a primary tonal

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<sup>10</sup>David Martin Booth, "An Analytical Study of David Maslanka's *A Child's Garden of Dreams*" (D.M.A. diss., University of Oklahoma, 1994), 185.

area modulates to a dominant or secondary key region before eventually returning.

Tonality is strongly implied by the presence of major and minor triads, the implication of diatonic pitches appearing in a linear arrangement, or an inference of pitch center produced by sustained or repeated single notes. Much of David Maslanka's tonal language is based on triadic tonality set over arpeggiated figures. Sometimes a tonal center re-emerges after a period of relative obscurity, and at other times, diatonic music simply reappears at different pitch levels. The first movement consists mostly of diatonic lines with a strong emphasis on arpeggios made up of simple major and minor chords. The second movement is programmatic with the percussion instruments imitating nature sounds while the soloist and keyboard instruments perform a chorale texture. In later compositions, chorales appear prominently in many of Maslanka's works. As the movement progresses, its tonality shifts to a more angular single line approach that anticipates the third movement.

The third movement emphasizes wider intervals initially and then returns to the simpler, more conjunct expression of major and minor tonality by the end. Although *Arcadia II* is complex, it shows an evolution away from the intense clashing tonality found in his *Concerto for Piano and Wind Ensemble* (1976). Many of his early compositions, written while residing in New York City, were tonally very complex and constructed with aggressive dissonance. Though *Arcadia II* demonstrates some of that energy, it also displays a definite move toward the more open triadic style so much of his later wind music is based upon.

An aspect of tonality unique to Maslanka's marimba music is the use of the "split-member" chord. This sonority appears in virtually all of his marimba music, usually as a chord that includes simultaneously a major third and minor third. This can appear between ensemble parts or in different octaves of the soloist's part. All the aforementioned techniques replace the conventional use of functional harmony and thematic development while still supplying a familiar sense of tonality to the listener.

Rhythm plays a vitally important role in David Maslanka's music and each movement of *Arcadia II* has its own distinctive rhythmic character. Because all three movements are marked with relatively slow pacing (Mvt. 1: quarter note=80-84, Mvt. 2: ca. 52, Mvt 3; ca.86), the choice of note values produce the fast-slow-fast arrangement typically found in a concerto. The rhythms in the first movement are erratic and usually lag behind the beat which tends to give the movement a nervous energy. It is rhythmically "busy" with much counterpoint and interlocking rhythmic patterns of sixteenth notes or thirty-second notes. Ostinati are evident throughout this movement, appearing on ringing sustained instruments, usually as dotted quarter notes or greater. The second movement rhythms function on at least three different layers. The "chorale" texture in the soloist's part is based on extended long tones usually of sustained half-note value or longer. The percussion "natural effects" are busy, erratic, and pointillistic. Unique in all Maslanka's music is the xylophone part imitating a particular bird Maslanka heard in his frequent visits to Innwood Park in New York City. The performer is instructed to progress at a tempo faster than the rest of the ensemble, ignoring the conductor thus creating an aleatoric effect. The third movement is rhythmically



aggressive and strongly focuses on the primary pulse with running toccata-like sixteenth-notes and minimal rests.

Melodic gestures are perhaps one of the most prevalent feature of Maslanka's music. Most of the have themes titles have been designated by Maslanka. *Arcadia II* takes small motivic cells constructed of either a half step/whole step or its inversion and develops them in different ways throughout all three movements. Long melodies are rarely heard. The first theme, which Maslanka calls “mournful,” has striking parallels to Chopin’s lyric writing (see example 1). During an interview, Maslanka confessed “a fondness for Chopin”<sup>11</sup> while composing this work (see example 2).



Example 1. “mournful” theme (vibraphone)



Example 2. theme from Chopin’s *Fantasia impromptu* Op. 66 (transposed)

Although it is similar to the “half step/whole step” gesture heard earlier, the “kiss” theme is quite opposite in shape to the “mournful” theme and contains the notes of the popular song *As Time Goes By* from the movie *Casablanca* (see example 3). Maslanka has confirmed that he extensively used the melodic gesture “A Kiss is but a Kiss” in his

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<sup>11</sup>David Maslanka, interview by author, 13, 14 November 1998, Arlington, tape recording.

thirty-five-minute symphonic wind ensemble work, *A Child's Garden of Dreams* (1982). Quotes from other works often appear in his compositions, especially his recent ones in which he has shown a decided interest in quoting chorales.



Example 3. “kiss” theme (vibraphone)

In the second movement, Maslanka subtly introduces a theme hidden within the nature effects from the percussion instruments. He comments that “the bird calls played throughout the movement by the xylophone are from my favorite bird.”<sup>12</sup> The part sounds very much like a birdcall built around quick ornamented turns and a wide leap downward concentrating on notes outside the general tonality of the movement (see example 4). The “birdcall” theme returns as a melodic gesture in the third movement.



Example 4. “birdcall” theme (xylophone)

Two new themes that highlight a more dissonant tonality are introduced in the third movement. The “aggressive” theme is a sprawling toccata gesture built of octaves and chromatic half steps that includes the notes of the “split member” sonority (see example 5).



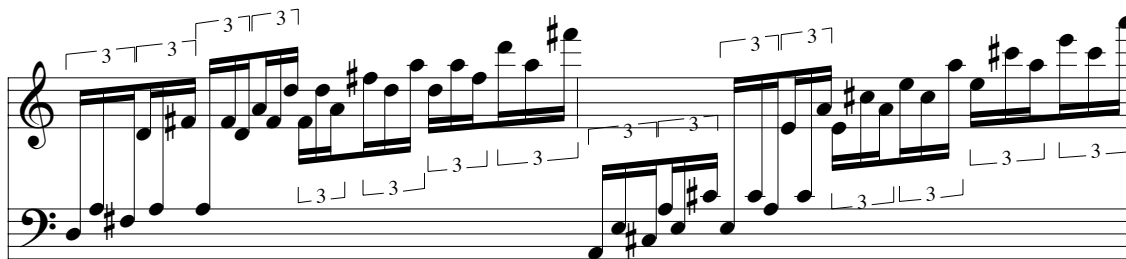
Example 5 “aggressive” theme (solo marimba)

The “pastoral” theme is much more subdued rhythmically and focuses on a “black-key” pentatonic sound (see example 6).



Example 6. “pastoral” theme (vibraphone)

A third new “rollicking” theme is more conservative, concentrating on the major and minor arpeggios that Maslanka frequently uses (see example 7).



Example 7. “rollicking” theme (solo marimba)

Even though this is a work for percussion ensemble, the prevailing sense is one of melodic line and tonality. Maslanka is fond of repeating the motivic gestures in either augmentation or diminution, using a technique similar to that of baroque composers.

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<sup>12</sup>David Maslanka, *Arcadia II for Marimba and Percussion Ensemble*, (New York: Carl Fischer, 1985).

Exact repetition of phrases or themes occurs very rarely in this work. More frequently, gestures will be evolved in a logical process. Only in the third movement, where Maslanka most closely follows the Classical period concerto architecture, does exact repetition of material occur.

Technically, *Arcadia II* is a complex work requiring a high level of ensemble awareness and rhythmic proficiency from both soloist and ensemble members. *Arcadia II* was composed to be performed on a 4.3 octave marimba, which was the standard instrument of the time. Maslanka has always been very sensitive to the balance problems of the marimba and its relationship to other instruments in the ensemble, so to avoid any problems he recommends in the performance notes: “the solo marimba part should be amplified to achieve proper balance.”<sup>13</sup> In his later work, *Concerto for Marimba and Band*, Maslanka finds other solutions to the problem of balance by exploiting both instrument tessitura and ensemble density.

Throughout the composition, Maslanka provides excellent details regarding the exact sound he is looking for and how to achieve it. Maslanka comments: “I find that for myself, to have a strict construction in which everything is pinpointed as carefully as possible allows finally for a very powerful thing to happen.”<sup>14</sup> In one of the finest examples of performance notes written by a non-percussionist, Maslanka supplies four pages of very specific information to both the soloist and ensemble members. Though a

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>David Maslanka, interview by author, 13, 14 November 1998, Arlington, tape recording.

large percentage of the information is on mallet selection and roll speed definition, he also includes instructions as detailed as the body position in relation to the instrument.

mm. 160-190 the large reaches in this section can be managed by appropriate positioning of your body. To begin, face your body toward the low register of the marimba. Your head and torso should be right above the right hand rolling. On m. 170, beat one, reverse your facing to the high register.<sup>15</sup>

Because of his work with Leigh Howard Stevens on *Variations on Lost Love*, Maslanka is aware of a wide range of idiomatic techniques that have been recently perfected for the marimba. Maslanka's compositions show a high degree of detail regarding sticking and balance of notes within chords. Possibly more than any other composer, Maslanka is sensitive to the methods of altering sound colors on the marimba through rolls. He is very detailed in his descriptions of the exact sound he is hearing including hand balance, roll speed, and roll type. For example, the following instructions are given in *Arcadia II*:

Rapid, tight roll (Mvt. 1, m. 18)  
Vary roll speed in each hand (Mvt. 2, m. 10)  
r.h. maintain steady roll speed- l.h. "cluster" rolls (Mvt. 2, m. 13)  
r.h. softer than mar. 2-l.h. Crescendo (Mvt. 2 m. 53)  
slow the roll end for emphasis (Mvt. 2, m. 82)  
as fine grained a tremolo as possible, stand out distinctively from  
ensemble (Mvt. 2, m. 107)<sup>16</sup>

David Maslanka is aware of the potential of the single-handed independent roll and uses it to good advantage throughout his marimba music. This is especially evident

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

in the second movement of *Arcadia II*. Another trait commonly found in Maslanka's marimba music is a large amount of single, double, and triple grace-note ornaments that requires the double-lateral stroke to perform. Maslanka is equally sensitive to the problem of "sticking" and often makes suggestions using the numbering system put forth in the text *Method of Movement for Marimba*.<sup>17</sup> He also regularly makes reference to the balance of notes both in individual chords and within the ensemble. Maslanka offers the following suggestions regarding balance in *Arcadia II*:

Not solo: stay underneath as support (Mvt. 1, m. 19)  
Crescendo "C" only (Mvt. 2, m. 15)  
Stand out distinctly from ensemble (Mvt. 2, m. 107)<sup>18</sup>

The next three chapters take a closer look at the individual movements with a focus on how Maslanka gives each a unique character yet transforms themes through a complex series of transformations. Maslanka's unusually detailed appreciation of percussion sonorities allows him to present a wide range of colors without overwhelming the strong tonal and melodic presence found in his music.

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<sup>17</sup>Leigh Howard Stevens, *Method of Movement for Marimba*, (New York: Marimba Productions, 1979).

<sup>18</sup>David Maslanka, interview by author, 13, 14 November 1998, Arlington, tape recording.

## CHAPTER 4

### MOVEMENT ONE

The first movement of *Arcadia II* arises from darkness. I have a specific memory of standing in a New Hampshire meadow on a summer evening. One by one the fireflies lit up until the darkening field was alive with their activity. The tiny opening bell sounds of this movement are the fireflies. Out of this grows a mournful bitter-sweet music, aware of death, which rises to a high intensity and then fades.<sup>1</sup>

Although Maslanka calls the first movement a sonata (exposition, development, recapitulation) form, it displays very few of the traits usually associated with a mature sonata. Although two primary melodic themes can be identified, the second is more a gesture than a fully developed theme. It also appears in the same key, as the first theme instead of a relative key as would be typical of sonata forms. There is no cadenza in the first movement, although one does appear in the third movement. The relative balance of the three sections does not reflect the symmetry usually associated with the Classical sonata form. The exposition is 90 measures long, with the development being 46 measures and the recapitulation being 39 measures in length. A new theme appears at the beginning of the recapitulation and there is no exact repetition of any material from the

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<sup>1</sup>David Maslanka, *Arcadia II for Marimba and Percussion Ensemble*, (New York: Carl Fischer, 1985).

exposition. Since the first movement is much freer in form, it might be more appropriately thought of as a Concertino. In his book *Concerto*, Venius refers to the concerto as not being a "master-servant" role, but "a rivalry on an equal basis."<sup>2</sup> Throughout the first movement, the ensemble and soloist share equally in the presentation of thematic material with Maslanka making frequent references to the soloist balancing into the ensemble. Maslanka has commented on the necessity to perform all three movements of this work because the themes that are introduced in the first movement return prominently in both the second and the third.

In all three movements of *Arcadia II*, Maslanka extensively uses double-bass bows on both gong and suspended cymbal, exploring a scintillating range of colors. He also writes for a rarely seen instrument he calls a "bull roar" (friction drum) at points of high intensity. He exploits the ranges of the skin instruments by putting the first appearance of the "funeral theme" on a muted snare drum in m. 2. Each subsequent appearance of this theme is scored on a lower pitched drum (tenor drum in m. 39 and bass drum in m. 89).

The first movement remains steady at a marked tempo of quarter note=80-84. In spite of the moderate tempo, a high level of rhythmic activity and an emphasis on erratic rhythms occurring off the primary pulse cause tension and nervous energy throughout most of the movement. In the recapitulation, the erratic rhythms surrender to more primary pulses that anticipate the second movement. Multiple layers of activity are

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<sup>2</sup>Abraham Veinus, *The Concerto*, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1964), 3.



evident throughout the exposition and development as melodic gestures occur above rhythmic activity that may or may not be related.

Maslanka's extensive awareness of percussion sounds and techniques allows him to compose works that are technically challenging for all members of the ensemble as well as the soloist. The soloist's part is frequently made up of constant sixteenth-notes or sixteenth-note triplets. Complex ascending sixteenth-note arpeggios containing frequent altered notes demand the utmost in precision. In one section of the development, the soloist must perform a long passage of sixteenth-notes with the four mallets intermixed and constantly changing position. Endurance becomes a factor in this ten-minute movement because of the large amount of continuous rhythmic activity and demanding arpeggios. The ensemble members' parts, while less complex than the soloist, still require them to use four-mallet keyboard technique and be very rhythmically precise on many polyrhythmic patterns.

The exposition opens with a 20-second allusion effect of small Indian bells. The composer's fondness for allusion is apparent as he describes the opening as:

The bell sounds emerge gradually and settle to a fairly constant level of activity: like fireflies in a field at nightfall: one is seen and then another and another until the field is alive.<sup>3</sup>

The first rhythmic occurrence in the movement is the "funeral" theme. This rhythmic theme is presented on a muted snare drum with the snares off, and is reminiscent of a funeral march (see example 8).

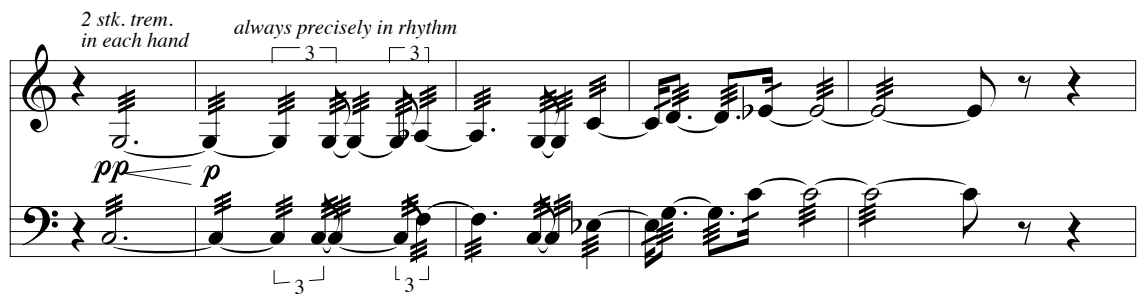
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<sup>3</sup>David Maslanka, *Arcadia II for Marimba and Percussion Ensemble*, (New York: Carl Fischer, 1985).



#### Example 8. “funeral” theme

It repeats seven times while the bells continue and fade on cue by m. 20. The soloist introduces the “mournful” theme in m. 3 accompanied solely by the muted snare drum and the Indian bells (see example 9).



#### Example 9. first “mournful” theme (solo marimba)

This theme consists of two voices using strictly diatonic pitches in the tonality of C-minor. Although Maslanka comments "always precisely in rhythm,"<sup>4</sup> the notes of the theme occur behind the beat, giving the melody a nervous energy against the drone of the snare drum's primary-pulse “funeral theme.” Maslanka requests that this theme be played with a "two stick tremolo in each hand."<sup>5</sup> Throughout the work, he is very specific about the type and texture of the rolls used by both the soloist and the members of the ensemble. In m. 13, the first three-note chord appears and Maslanka employs a

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

technique found often in his works for marimba. After the chord is established, he removes one pitch at a time, starting from the bottom, until only a single pitch remains causing the chord quality to change and creating a natural diminuendo.

Following this thinly textured introductory statement of the “mournful” theme, all members of the ensemble enter with predominantly keyboard sounds. The texture changes to thirty-second note triadic arpeggios still accompanied by the “funeral” theme, with the Indian bells replaced by an optional vocal whole note “ah” sung by the entire ensemble. Maslanka has thus far only introduced keyboard percussion sounds, except for the “funeral” theme, giving the section a very transparent melodic texture. Arpeggio gestures predominate in the ensemble as Maslanka instructs the soloist “not solo, stay underneath as support” and “use a rapid, tight roll.”<sup>6</sup> The tonality starts triadic shifting from C-minor to C-major and begins to subtly add extension tones of a sixth and seventh. The soloist concentrates on an augmented version of the “half step/whole step” theme. The stemming of the parts indicate holding four mallets and, although sticking is not marked, the inference is to phrase in groups of either two or three notes (see example 10).

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

20 *not solo, stay underneath as support*

*Solo*

*rapid, tight roll*

*Vibes*

*Mar. 2*

*mp*

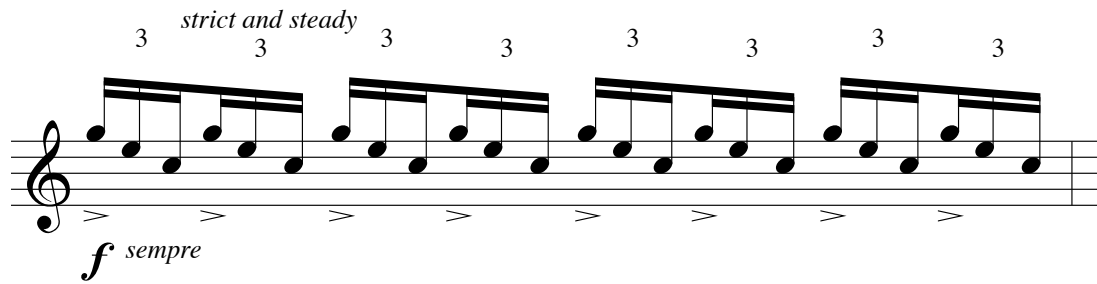
Example 10. m. 20

Maslanka is very specific about mallet selection indicating "two-tone mallets (soft at low dynamics; more pointed at higher dynamics)."<sup>7</sup> The ensemble parts are in a low dynamic range, and have varied crescendo/diminuendo points resulting in a constantly shifting texture.

In m. 39, the soloist introduces the arpeggio figures that are so prevalent in Maslanka's music (see example 11). Although not a melodic gesture, Maslanka refers to these as "a thematic element."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>David Maslanka, interview by author, 17 March 1999, telephone interview.



Example 11. arpeggio figures (solo marimba)

The ensemble accompanies the soloist with a thin texture consisting of sustained tones and ostinati reminiscent of the orchestration found in *Ionisation* by Edgard Varèse.

Maslanka often uses repetitive rhythmic patterns to conflict with the primary meter, although few of them are exact ostinati. However, a complex ostinato pattern does appear in the bass drum part beginning in m. 41 with the instruction to gradually crescendo to m. 84. Maslanka comments:

The ostinato patterns in the first movement do exist but only as far as you traced them out. I occasionally find such patterns musically useful, but I feel free to let them go when they no longer do what I want.<sup>9</sup>

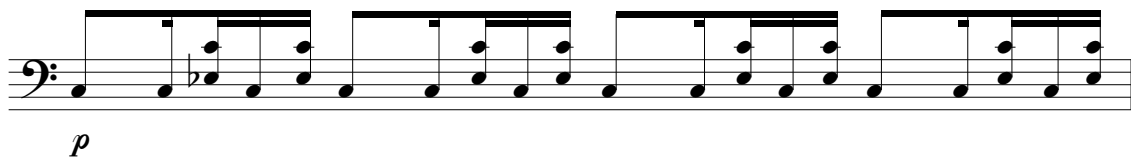
The “funeral” theme returns and descends from the snare drum timbre to a tenor drum. The temple blocks introduce a “nature effect” made up of quick erratic rhythms that anticipate similar gestures in the second movement. The arpeggios move seamlessly from the solo marimba part to the marimba 2 part in m. 53, and the prevailing texture returns to one of sustained sounds on bowed gongs and cymbals. Maslanka imitates the melodic arpeggio gesture during this section rhythmically on tom-toms. All chords are

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<sup>9</sup>David Maslanka, interview by author, 16 June 1999, electronic mail.

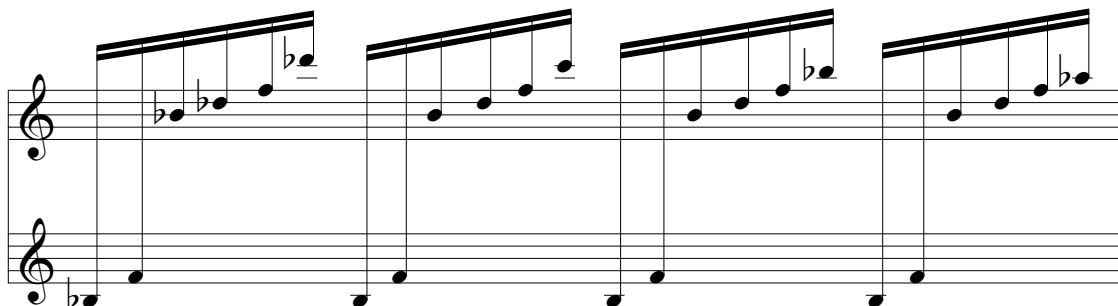
simple major or minor and develop logically, although not in the classical sense of progression from tonic to dominant.

In the final section of the exposition, the texture becomes very turbulent with a marked increase in both tonal and rhythmic complexity. The “mournful” theme is stated in the vibraphone (marked muffled) and the marimba 2 part (marked tight roll). The soloist begins with an insistent rhythmic ostinato (see example 12) but soon changes to a complex section of ascending arpeggios.



Example 12. m. 66 (solo marimba)

Although the predominant arpeggio shape is major or minor, Maslanka includes many notes foreign to the tonality including the “split member” sonority. Often these notes form a subtle descending melodic line (see example 13).



Example 13. m. 83 (solo marimba)

The overall tonality wavers between major and minor and, as the density increases, the pointillistic sound effects heard earlier, including gongs, cymbals and temple blocks, intensify. The “kiss” theme is introduced in m. 77 and almost overpowered by the dense layers of activity previously established. The “kiss” theme appearance is subliminal, entering unceremoniously in mid-phrase and being overshadowed completely by the prevailing busy texture (see example 14).

77

*Solo*

*Vibes*

*Wd. Blk.* *f* *(sm. W.B.)*

*Mar. 2*

*Ratchet Cym. Gong* *f* *Sfz* *Gong* *Sfz*

Example 14. mm. 77-78

Regardless of its humble beginnings, the “kiss” theme evolves throughout the work to become predominant by the last movement. Maslanka punctuates the prevailing texture with single sforzando accents from the wood block, slap stick, and anvil.

The development begins in m. 91 with the tonality shifting to a G emphasis and the “funeral” theme re-appearing at a lower transposition in the bass drum part.

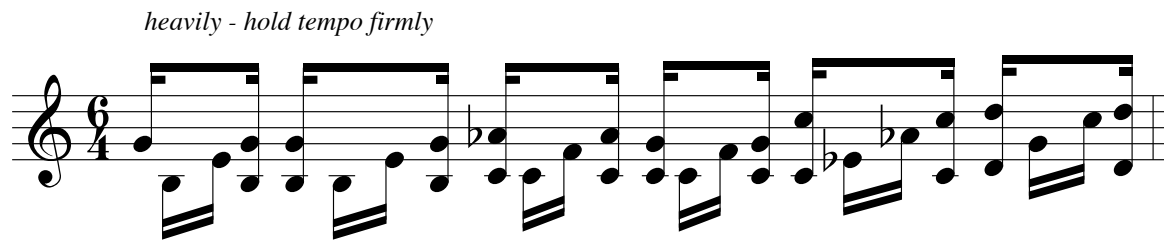
Maslanka is fond of long building sustained tones and in m. 88, a tenor drum roll enters building in intensity through m.106. Even though the predominant tonal center is G, the “mournful” theme returns at its original pitch level in the vibraphone and marimba 2 part with the soloist embellishing the theme over a G pedal. The soloist extensively develops the “mournful” theme in this section using ornamentation and increased rhythmic complexity (see example 15).

Handwritten musical score for Example 15, m. 91 development. The score is written on five staves. The first staff has a treble clef and a 3/4 time signature, with a '3' above the first measure and 'mf' below. The second staff has a treble clef and a 6/8 time signature, with '91. driving' above and 'malto' below. The third staff has a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature, with 'I.h. one metal or hard plastic mallet' and 'and one med. Vibe mallet' above, and 'f' below. The fourth staff has a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature, with 'L.h. two med. Vibe mal.' and 'dead stk.' above, and 'f' below. The fifth staff has a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature, with 'mf (do not override solo)' below. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'ff', 'p', and 'mf'. There are also handwritten annotations like 'Bull Roar' and 'crisp'.

Example 15. m. 91 development

Technically, m. 99 is one of the most difficult sections in the concerto because the sticking requires the soloist to intricately cross his mallets. Maslanka is aware of this problem and illustrates it by using stems-up for the right hand and stems-down for the left (see example 16).





Example 16. m. 99 (solo marimba)

A trait of this work is Maslanka's use of overlapping phrasing. All the parts rarely come to a breath or cadence at the same point, giving the movement a restless or nervous feeling. Although m. 106 is the culmination of this section for the ensemble, the soloist continues without pause into a difficult contrary-motion gesture and then flows directly into transitional material. The soloist's rhythm, which has been constant sixteenth-notes, changes to a more legato flowing triplet with octave notes surrounding a central rising line. The tonality of this section is deceptively simple, yet the most complex so far in the work. The soloist's tonality clashes with the ensembles' simple major sounds, resulting in a polytonal effect. To match the flowing legato of the soloist, the ensemble accompaniment that previously was layered and dense becomes sustained tones from melodic instruments with no percussive accompaniment. A powerful ensemble crescendo of unison rhythm and contrary motion occurs in m. 113 through m. 114, based on a melodic gesture that anticipates the "transitional" theme found in the recapitulation (see example 17).

The musical score for measures 113-114 features five staves. The Vibes staff (top) is in treble clef, 6/4 time, with a key signature of one flat. It begins with a melodic line in measure 113, marked with an accent (>) and a 'non. trem.' instruction. In measure 114, the time signature changes to 5/4, and the Vibes play a sustained chord with an accent (>). The Sm. Sus. cym. staff (second) is in treble clef, 6/4 time, with a key signature of one flat. It begins with a sustained chord in measure 113, marked with an accent (>) and a 'soft mallet' instruction. In measure 114, the time signature changes to 5/4, and the cymbal plays a sustained chord with an accent (>). The Sm. Sn. Dr. staff (third) is in treble clef, 6/4 time, with a key signature of one flat. It begins with a sustained chord in measure 113, marked with an accent (>) and a 'pp' instruction. In measure 114, the time signature changes to 5/4, and the snare drum plays a sustained chord with an accent (>). The Mar. 2 staff (fourth) is in treble clef, 6/4 time, with a key signature of one flat. It begins with a melodic line in measure 113, marked with an accent (>) and a 'ff' instruction. In measure 114, the time signature changes to 5/4, and the maracas play a sustained chord with an accent (>). The Orch. Bells staff (bottom) is in treble clef, 6/4 time, with a key signature of one flat. It begins with a melodic line in measure 113, marked with an accent (>) and a 'ff' instruction. In measure 114, the time signature changes to 5/4, and the bells play a sustained chord with an accent (>).

Example 17. mm. 113-114 "transitional" theme fragment

Maslanka often uses long sustained sounds to gradually intensify a phrase. Beginning in m. 113 a small snare drum quietly enters, similar to the long tenor drum roll found in mm. 88, and crescendos to peak in m. 122. The turning point of the movement is the "mournful" theme, appearing in a new key, and voiced in unison rhythm from all melodic instruments. The theme can certainly no longer be called "mournful" as it is solidly in D-major. The soloist is reminded that it is "not solo" and should be in balance with the fortissimo from the ensemble. Maslanka combines thematic gestures by seamlessly connecting the "mournful" theme with a very logical transformation directly

to the “kiss” theme in m 118. The forceful texture continues rising, reaching a peak in m. 122, and from there enters a series of sequences descending toward the lowest range of the instruments. As the melody descends, voices in the ensemble disappear leaving the soloist alone by m. 135. Maslanka inverts the “half step/whole step” gesture so prevalent throughout the work and concentrates on a descending “whole step/half step” scale.

The recapitulation begins in m. 137 and is marked by a number of things that cause it to be a relatively unclear return. An entirely new “transitional” theme, hinted at in mm. 113-114, appears in B-major (see example 18).

137. vary roll speeds 138.

plastic mal. mtr. off

Ped. sempre

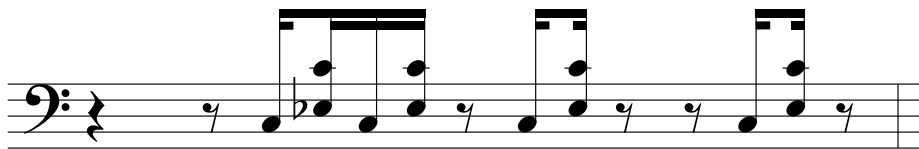
Indian Bells

O.B. solo

Indian Bells

Example 18. “transitional” theme

It is a recapitulation primarily because the Indian bells “allusion” theme, which has been silent since the first measures of the work, returns. After the constant nervous energy and the seamless phrasing found throughout the movement, the recapitulation is somewhat tentative. The sparse texture incorporates more silence here than anywhere else in the movement, and concentrates on simple rhythmic patterns. The “kiss” theme returns in C-minor with an augmented rhythm over this sparse texture. The soloist recapitulates the rhythmic ostinato from m. 65 while the ensemble keyboard instruments present a final incomplete statement of the “mournful” theme in augmentation. Maslanka makes a distinctive shift in this fragment of the “mournful” theme by transposing it up a half step, causing the “split member” sonority found in all of his mallet percussion music. As the soloist returns to the C-minor rhythmic ostinato, the ensemble’s long tones resolve from E-natural to E-flat. Rhythmic slowing continues until the ensemble finishes on a G-natural and the soloist begins subtracting notes from the rhythmic ostinato through m. 175 (see example 19).



Example 19. m. 173 (solo marimba)

The Indian bells aleatoric “allusion” continues for another 20 seconds until finally fading away.

## CHAPTER 5

### MOVEMENT TWO

The second movement is a nature meditation. It comes directly from my walks in the woods of Inwood Hill Park in upper Manhattan. This hundred-acre wood is the last "wild" parkland in New York City. It contains original-growth trees and living among them are magnificent squirrels, raccoons, and a large variety of birds including pheasants, owls, cardinals, orioles, robins, doves, warblers, and woodpeckers to name a few. The occasional hawk passes through. Though faint and crowded on all sides by urban noise, the voices of nature spirits can still be heard in these woods. They suggested a music in which the human presence (the solo marimba) communes with the sounds of wind, birds, the rustling of small things, the flow of water--all represented in the ensemble. The bird calls played throughout the movement by the xylophone are from my favorite bird. With patience, I was able to observe this elusive bird – smaller than a robin, light tan, sometimes a ground feeder – on half a dozen occasions, but I never learned its name.<sup>1</sup>

The second movement is programmatic, with the percussion instruments focusing on sound effects that represent nature and the solo marimba representing the “human presence.” Maslanka describes the form as “a song-form or episodic.”<sup>2</sup> The serene tempo of ca. 52, representing the languid meditative walk in the park, is constant throughout the movement and only interrupted by occasional quick flourishes from the nature effects. The construction of this movement is seamless, with sound sources

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<sup>1</sup>David Maslanka, *Arcadia II for Marimba and Percussion Ensemble*, (New York: Carl Fischer, 1985).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

entering and repeating rhythmically as if to begin an ostinato and then evolving to other sound colors. The overall sense is one of constantly shifting colors, motion, and insistent growth without obvious direction throughout the movement. Multiple layers of disparate gestures occur within the texture, including the “chorale” sonorities representing the “human presence” and a myriad of distinctive percussion effects. Maslanka explains that the percussion instruments represent “wind, the rustling of small things, and the flow of water.”<sup>3</sup> These sonorities function almost as an “idée-fixe” throughout the second and the third movement reminding the listener of the impact that a walk in the park had on the composer. All the themes presented in the first movement return in this ten-minute movement and develop through a range of interesting transformations.

Maslanka subtly alters the second movement’s texture away from the nervous rhythmic intensity of the previous movement and concentrates instead on long sustained sonorities extensively transformed through mallet selection. Startling dynamic shifts occur as Maslanka frequently punctuates the prevailing texture with single sforzando accents from the wood block, slap stick, or anvil. The effect is even more startling since the overall dynamic level is very low throughout this movement. Early in the work, many sounds seem to echo each other, including the temple blocks played with rattan sticks and the large wood block played with snare drum sticks (see example 20). These dry staccato effects respond to each other in erratic thirty-second note bursts.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

(Cresc. "C" only)

Solo

Claves

xyl.

Sus. Cyms.

Lg. Wd. Blk.

T.Blks.

*mp* hold steady *pp* *ppp*

*f* 6 6

*p* 3 3 *sfz*

*T.Blks. Rattan Stks.*

*Lg. Wd. Blk. Sn. Dr. Stks.*

Example 20. mm. 14-16

Long sustained tones on gong and suspended cymbal crescendo and decrescendo in seemingly random patterns representing the wind. Maslanka introduces to the texture of the movement double bass bows on gongs and cymbals as well as vibraphone bars and low marimba bars. The effect is a scintillating range of colors that are constantly shifting underneath other layers of activity. The exact detailing of the sounds Maslanka hears is

apparent in his instructions: “large tom-tom with hard felt mallet: release appropriate tension rods for maximum drop off effect.”<sup>4</sup>

Maslanka uses the xylophone to imitate a particular bird he heard regularly in the park. He refers to this effect in an interview, stating:

. . . there's a bird song in it which is the free un-metered xylophone part which is persistent throughout the movement. It is not nearly literal but something of an approximate rendition of a particular bird call which I heard frequently in that place.<sup>5</sup>

The xylophone player is instructed “faster: ca. 72; on your own, do not follow the conductor’s tempo.”<sup>6</sup> Silence is symbolized by numbers representing either four- or five-second pauses which occur regularly throughout the part. The gesture, constructed of erratic thirty-second note rhythms and ornamented wide leaps, concentrates on pitches outside the general tonality of the movement and does closely resemble a birdcall. The aleatoric aspect of this gesture is unusual for Maslanka’s style and unique in this work. The birdcalls seem to be random shapes but are actually thematic gestures that will be used extensively in the counterpoint of the third movement. Other haunting bird or animal calls are represented by a distinctive slide whistle part that repeatedly “sings” a two-note call early in the work.

The primary texture used on the keyboard mallet instruments is sustained tones, usually moving over a pedal note, or adding tones slowly outward from the instrument’s mid-range, often in contrary motion. The soloist’s texture is a chorale of long sustained

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>David Maslanka, interview by author, 13, 14 November 1998, Arlington, tape recording.

<sup>6</sup>David Maslanka, *Arcadia II for Marimba and Percussion Ensemble*, (New York: Carl Fischer, 1985).



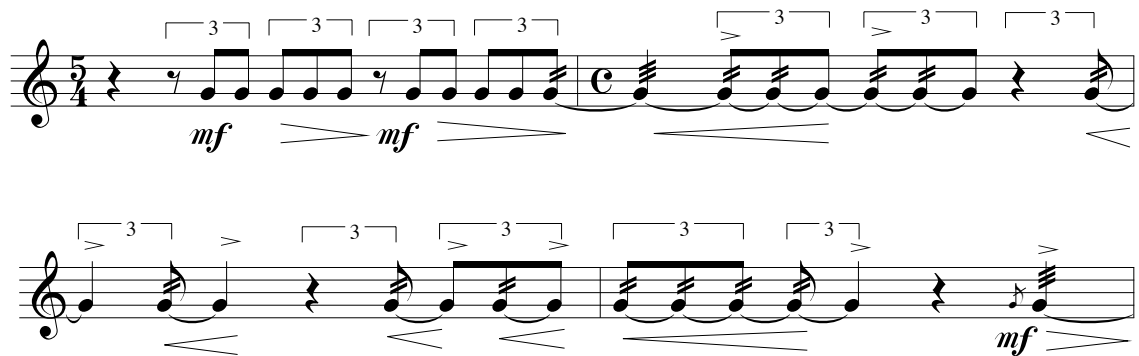
rolls interrupted by technically challenging figurations requiring reaches of more than an octave in both hands. A variety of roll types are required including the challenging use of independent rolls on closely voiced intervals or single tones. At the end of the movement, the texture dramatically shifts from the mid/low range chorale character to a monophonic high tessitura that anticipates the third movement.

In the first quiet measures, Maslanka achieves a subtle wind effect from rolls and bowed effects alternating between suspended cymbal and gong. Maslanka uses a suspended cymbal roll, eventually evolving to a gong roll, as a “wind” allusion continually throughout this movement, only stopping for brief periods (mm. 25/26 and mm. 52/53). After a short pause, the “wind” sounds are joined by the xylophone’s birdcall. The “birdcall” continues persistently until the coda. Also appearing in m. 7 and intermittently through m. 26 is a invariant slide whistle motif, which is somewhat reminiscent of George Crumb’s compositions. The “nature” sound effects enter in m. 10 with a trio of wooden sounds consisting of two wood blocks, claves, and a set of five temple blocks. These wooden sounds converse in intricate, erratic thirty-second note patterns punctuated with sforzando interruptions.

The soloist, representing the “human presence,” enters tentatively with a four-mallet chorale texture. Maslanka’s detailed instructions require the soloist to vary roll speeds in his left hand in a gesture he calls “cluster rolls” while executing a steady roll speed in the right hand. Beginning in m. 24, the “half step/whole step” gestures from m. 32 of the first movement appear in the solo marimba part and form contrary motion inward around a C pedal. Triadic major arpeggios reminiscent of the first movement

appear in the vibraphone part as more nature sounds, including a subdued sandpaper block ostinato, continually add to the texture.

The trio of wood sounds return as the layered density increases, with all parts functioning as independent sound colors rather than a unified ensemble. The solo marimba, vibraphone, and marimba 2 parts exchange fragments of the “mournful” theme in augmentation and diminution based around G-natural beginning in m.37. This is a technically difficult section for the soloist because it requires octave-interval independent rolls to transfer seamlessly from the left hand to the right hand. Technical challenges occur frequently in the individual ensemble parts as well, requiring exacting rhythmic precision and good ensemble awareness from all players. In the marimba 2 part, Maslanka incorporates the rare idiomatic effect of altering the density of a marimba roll by increasing the roll pulsation from eighth-notes to triplet eighth-notes (see example 21).



Example 21. m. 42-45 (marimba 2)

The complex multiple layering continues to grow through m. 49 where the soloist’s melodic line peaks and then resolves to a more stable open fifth chord one measure later. The tonally distinctive vibraphone line, concentrating on intervals of a sixth and seventh, obstinately refuses to join the resolution and extends the phrase

through m. 52. The vibraphone's emphasis of F-natural against the solid D-major tonality in the marimba 2 part result in the distinctive “split member” sonority (see example 22).

50

*Solo*

*ff* *dim. gradually*

*Vibe*

*f*

*Mar. 2*

*p* *cresc.* *mf*

Example 22. mm. 50-53

Beginning in m. 49, the gestures overlap as the marimba 2 part slips in and out of tonic resolution, repeating the “half step/whole step” gesture through m. 59. However, the tonality functions more in concurrently occurring layers than as chords. The soloist returns to the “mournful” theme, still in G, and develops it above a D/E-flat pedal in m. 53. Maslanka's appreciation for ensemble balance is apparent as he instructs the soloist to present the “mournful” theme “softer than marimba 2” which is still overlapping the

“half step/whole step” gesture, and then to “emerge partly”<sup>7</sup> from the texture (see example 23).

53 *softer than Mar. 2*

*Solo*

*pp* *r.h.* *l.h.* *cresc.* *emerge partly*

*Vibe*

*(mtr. 1/2)* *mf* *mp*

*Mar. 2*

*mf*

Example 23. mm. 53-55

The previous dense texture opens as the parts fade and become less complex. Arpeggios again appear in the vibraphone part as some of the nature effects return (see example 24).

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

61

Solo

Brightly

Vibe 1

D.B. Bow

*mf* Ped. . . .

Vibe 2

Xyl.

6 5

4 Cym.

3

*mf*

Lrg. Tom

Orch. Bells

3

*mf*

T. Blks

Gongs

*pp* 3

Gongs

*mp*

Example 24. mm. 61-62

A new phrase begins in m. 72 with a very sparse open texture. The soloist presents an evolved “mournful” theme, expanding slowly outward in contrary motion over a soft mid-range D pedal and arriving at a difficult three-octave mallet spread in m. 80. Seamless overlapping of phrases continues as a small snare drum adds a long roll to the texture in m. 79, making a gradual crescendo reminiscent of a similar effect from the first movement. At the peak of this intense section, the soloist and marimba 2 part present a very impassioned version of the “kiss” theme from the first movement voiced in the highest tessitura of the marimba. The theme is stated in augmentation and is further

extended with sequences (see example 25). Maslanka instructs the players to use “especially tight rolls.”<sup>8</sup>

83

*Soloist*

***ff***

*l.h. roll especially tight and fast*

***p***

Example 25. mm. 83-84 (solo marimba)

A rhythmically charged bass drum part joins the texture in m. 86. This augmented version of the “funeral” theme is its only appearance in the second movement (see example 26).

***sfz*** ***sfz*** ***sfz sfz*** *sim.*

*dead stk.*

Example 26. mm. 86-87 (bass drum)

The tutti texture begins to fade as the small snare drum sustained roll disappears and is replaced by a “wind” suspended cymbal roll. A uniquely evolved version of the “mournful” theme appears in m. 100 with a pointillistic style split between two vibraphones (one bowed and the other with a soft mallet) (see example 27). It is a soft,

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

slow, melancholy version of the theme, transposed to A, and written in the low range of the instruments, giving it an uneasy dark feeling of resignation. The “human presence” (solo marimba) is silent, and the xylophone birdcalls fade away.

100

Vibe (Bowed)

*f*

(Ped. sempre)

Vibe (Soft Vibe mallet.)

*p*

#### Example 27. pointillistic “mournful” theme

After a pause, the texture and style shift dramatically. The ensemble enters with a unison sustained bell tone gesture, hinted at in the birdcall, that anticipates its use in the third movement. The tonality here is evocative of Varese and is tonally more complex than in any previous section. The solo marimba part, which has concentrated on a predominantly chorale texture throughout the movement, returns with a poignant melodic line in the high tessitura. In addition to the texture, Maslanka alters the tessitura by voicing the soloist an octave above middle-C and keeping the part in the upper register until the final measures. The previously smooth melodic line becomes jagged with wide interval leaps of a seventh and ninth. Maslanka instructs the soloist to make the roll “as finely grained a tremolo as possible.”<sup>9</sup> The “half step/whole step” gesture appears between the crotale and the soloist’s part as a melodic shape in mm. 114-122 (see example 28).

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Solo' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Crotales'. The Solo staff begins at measure 114 with a treble clef and a 5/4 time signature. It contains a descending melodic line with half and whole steps, marked with accents and a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic. The Crotales staff also begins at measure 114 with a treble clef and a 5/4 time signature. It contains a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and single notes, also marked with a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic. The time signature changes to 6/4 in measure 115 and back to 5/4 in measure 116. The Solo staff ends with a sustained B-flat in measure 118, and the Crotales staff ends with a final struck G in measure 118.

Example 28. “half step/whole step” gesture

The soloist, using descending “half step/whole step” gestures, returns to the mid-range of the instrument over a very thin fading texture along with the intrusive punctuation gestures on wood blocks. When the soloist reaches a sustained B-flat, the melodic descent continues in half steps with the entrance of a bowed vibraphone on an A-natural, a rolled A-flat on marimba 2, and a final struck G on Vibraphone 2. The effect is one of a sustained chord cluster as the four parts fade together (see example 29).

This final “coda” section (from m. 107) acts as a balance point for the entire composition. From that point through the remainder of the composition, the approach to texture, tonality, and use of dissonance is completely altered.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.



*very slowly*

128.

*fade with vibraphone decay*

*with mallet*

*mtr. on 1/2*

*(mtr. off)*

*bowed*

*Ped.*

*mf*

*fade with vibraphone decay*

*pp - ppp*

Example 29. final measure

## CHAPTER 6

### MOVEMENT THREE

The third movement is infused with a spirit of playfulness, light and simple joy in the glories of nature. There is an aggressive opening theme, a serene and pastoral second theme, and extended development which rises to moments of epiphany [wind and glittering sunlight in the rustling leaves], a cadenza, and a recapitulation with the second theme coming first. The highly charged ensemble passages in fast, flowing triplets are among the most difficult – and to me, attractive – in the whole piece.<sup>1</sup>

Movement three is the longest of all of the movements and displays the most clearly defined classical sonata form. Whereas the first movement highlights clear melodic lines with small diatonic intervals, and the second movement portrays a chorale texture, this sixteen-minute movement aggressively displays wide melodic leaps, dissonant intervals, and overall ensemble complexity. The architecture of the movement is a very clear exposition, development, cadenza, recapitulation, and coda. This movement is the only place in the composition that Maslanka uses exact repetition to delineate the recapitulation, making the arch form much more apparent. Maslanka continues his use of expressive allusion by introducing a part for “bamboo sticks” with

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

instructions to "sound like dead tree branches in the wind."<sup>2</sup> Extensive use of long sustained suspended cymbal rolls to represent the "wind" as well as the many other nature effects developed in the second movement also occur.

The overall texture of the third movement is organized into sections of intense counterpoint and dissonance, contrasting with sections of simple triadic activity. All of the themes from the previous movements return, often in augmentation or diminution, and are layered with material that may or may not be related. This movement extensively explores interval leaps and contrasting ranges on all the instruments. In the previous movements, Maslanka takes great care in describing the balance between the soloist and the ensemble, whereas in the third movement he offers fewer written comments on this aspect. The complex layering often causes widely disparate dynamic levels to occur simultaneously. Maslanka employs rhythmically interlocking parts on both keyboard instruments and percussion regularly throughout this movement to achieve a busy toccata texture of constant chordal motion (see example 30). His later composition, *Crown of Thorns* (1991), for keyboard percussion uses the same interlocking effect extensively.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

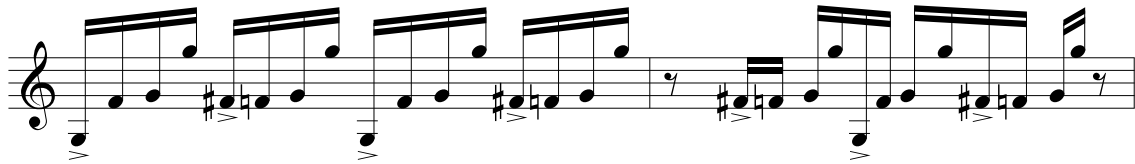


### Example 31. “split member” chord

The rhythm strongly emphasizes the primary pulse and, although the marked tempo is quarter note=86, the large amount of sixteenth-notes and thirty-second notes make it feel much faster. Maslanka achieves a nervous energy in the first movement by the extensive use of syncopated or compound rhythms to disguise the basic meter. In the second movement, he uses long rhythmic note values to promote a languid feeling of slowness and space. In the third movement, he achieves an aggressive forward drive by concentrating on solid non-syncopated patterns that emphasize the meter.

In addition to developing the themes from previous movements, Maslanka introduces three new themes in this movement. The “aggressive” theme is constructed of a leaping gesture built of octaves and chromatic half steps that move assertively in either

sixteenth notes or thirty-second notes (see example 32). These emphasize a dissonant character by resembling arpeggios of what would be highly dissonant chords.



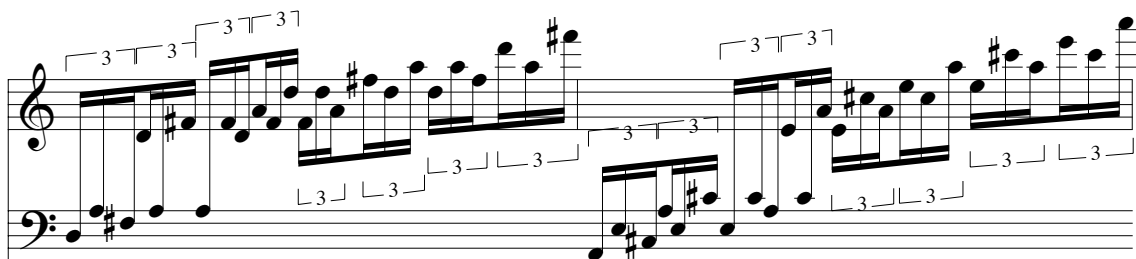
Example 32. “aggressive” theme (solo marimba)

The “pastoral” theme focuses on a “black-note” pentatonic sound and is much slower paced rhythmically (see example 33).



Example 33. “pastoral” theme (vibraphone)

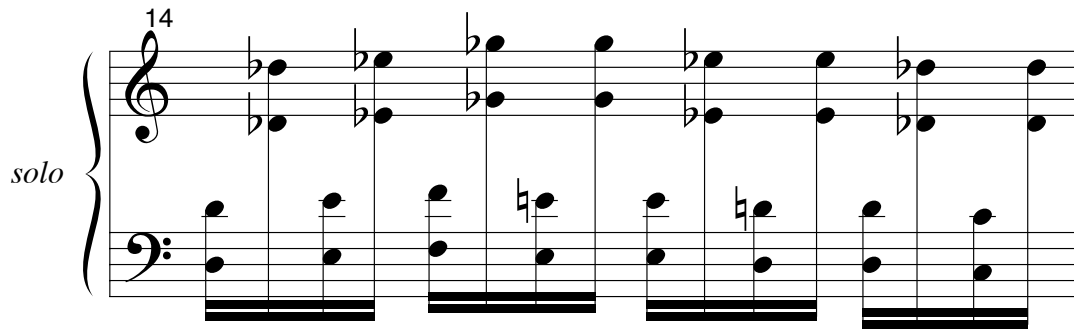
A third “rollicking” theme returns to Maslanka’s more traditional use of arpeggios emphasizing the major and minor tonality (see example 34). This theme is constructed of sixteenth-note triplet figurations that are more a gesture than a melodic line.



Example 34. “rollicking” theme (solo marimba)

A further dissonant gesture introduced in the soloist’s part is built of clashing chromatic seconds voiced in octaves and performed as unisons or as grace-note ornaments (see

example 35). Although appearing only in this movement of *Arcadia II*, Maslanka makes extensive use of this gesture in the fast section of *Concerto for Marimba and Band*.



Example 35. chromatic seconds (solo marimba)

The third movement is the most technically challenging movement of *Arcadia II* due to an extended cadenza as well as complex idiomatic techniques that include independent rolls and extensive use of double lateral grace-note embellishments. Independent roll are utilized in the cadenza to present the legato “kiss” theme in the right hand over an “alberti-bass” figuration of eighth notes in the left hand (see example 46). Most typically independent rolls appear at the interval of an octave to facilitate the side-to-side rocking motion necessary to create the constant tone of the roll. The level of difficulty is increased in the cadenza because the roll appears on single tones requiring the performer to shift his body position and close the interval between the mallets to less than is normally comfortable. The double lateral grace embellishments occur regularly as either single, double, or triple grace notes (see example 41). The “rotational” aspect of the double lateral stroke requires a relaxed motion that is difficult to coordinate as a grace note. The constant sixteenth-note or sixteenth-note triplet textures along with wider interval spreads in both hands are endurance challenges for the most advanced player.

The exposition is an agitated section made up of the layering of multiple small gestures. The soloist presents the “aggressive” theme of incessant sixteenth-notes centered on G octaves. The marimba 2 part clashes tonally by introducing a rhythmic ostinato emphasizing E-flat. The vibraphone begins with sustained five-note sonorities reminiscent of the bell-tone gestures found at the end of the previous movement. Although five-note chords are a rarity in percussion ensemble literature, Maslanka includes no comment regarding their appearance or how to execute them. The five-note chords are quartal and include the “split member” sound in different octaves (see example 36).



1.  $\flat = ca 86$

*Solo*

*firm mallets; maximum carrying power*  
*intr. off*

1 Vibes *ff*

*Ped. sempre*

2 Mar. 2 *pp cresc.*

3 Orch. Bells *ff*

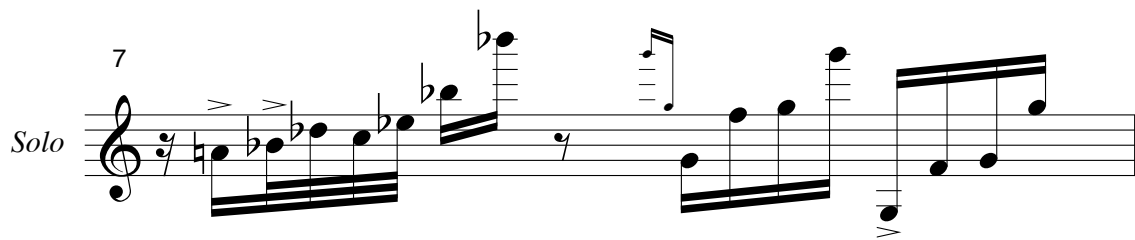
*med. felt mal.*

4 Gong 1 *mf*

5 Bamboo Stks. (2 pairs) *f*

Example 36. “split member” five-note chord

The gongs, played in the first and second movement with double-bass bows, are struck with mallets to add power and color to the vibraphone’s sustained sound. Melodic gestures such as an appearance of the “birdcall” theme interrupt the “aggressive” theme (see example 37).



Example 37. m. 7 (solo marimba)

One of Maslanka's favorite techniques is to use thematic elements in either augmentation or diminution. In m. 10, the sixteenth-note "aggressive" theme appears in diminution as thirty-second notes (see example 38).

The musical score for Example 38 is written for a soloist and several percussion instruments. The soloist part, marked 'Solo' and '(f)', begins in measure 10 with a complex chromatic second voicing in octaves. The percussion parts include:

- 1 Vibe**: A single note in measure 10.
- 2 Mar. 2**: A series of eighth notes in measure 10, followed by rests and a 'pp' dynamic marking.
- 3 xyl.**: A single note in measure 10.
- 4 Toms**: A series of eighth notes in measure 10, followed by rests and a 'p' dynamic marking.
- 6 T.BIKs.**: A series of eighth notes in measure 10, followed by rests and a 'p' dynamic marking.

Example 38. “aggressive” theme in diminution

A technical challenge for the soloist occurs when thirty-second notes leap abruptly from the highest notes on the instrument to the lowest A-natural as in m. 9. In m. 10, the soloist begins a series of complex chromatic seconds voiced in octaves appearing both as unisons and as grace-note ornaments. Additionally, the temple blocks and tom-toms enter with a persistent pattern of pointillistic gestures that imitates the melodic shape. Intensity and tonal confusion increase as the soloist switches to three

octave thirty-second notes soaring over E diminished sustained tones from the marimba 2 part and D-natural glissandi from the xylophone (see example 39).

The image shows a musical score for measures 18 and 19. It consists of four staves. The top staff is labeled 'Solo' and contains a melodic line with a 'sim.' (sustained) marking. The second staff is labeled 'Vibes' and contains a melodic line with a 'cresc.' (crescendo) marking. The third staff is labeled 'Mar. 2' and contains a sustained tone. The bottom staff is labeled 'xyl.' and contains a glissando. The measures are numbered 18 and 19.

Example 39. mm. 18-19

The next section, marked “rollicking,” is a complete change from the previous agitated texture both rhythmically and tonally. The dense layered texture of the previous section changes to one of simple accompaniment figurations on keyboard percussion instruments. Bright major chords ascending and descending the keyboard in sixteenth-note triplet patterns replace the previous polytonality. Maslanka employs overlapping phrases to enhance the seamless quality of this section. The section smoothly shifts into the “pastoral” theme by beginning the orchestra bell and snare drum phrase several counts before the end of the soloist’s “rollicking” phrase. The orchestra bell begins an erratic repetitive E-flat from mm. 28-33 that is a notated acceleration caused by rhythmic contraction of note values. Similar to the long sustained sounds Maslanka employs in

previous movements, the snare drum (mm. 29-33) and then the suspended cymbal (mm. 34-49) sustain an extended roll that is an allusion to the “wind” effect.

Beginning in m. 30, the “pastoral” theme appears in the vibraphone part and is supported by suspended cymbals that imitate the melodic shape. The soloist enters this section with no pause from the previous rhythmic activity. The phrase becomes polytonal once more with the “pastoral” theme appearing solidly in pentatonic while the soloist’s part emphasizes both the pentatonic sonority as well as D-major. Repeated E-flats in the orchestra bell part add further to the tonal layering (see example 40).

The musical score for Example 40 consists of three staves. The top staff, labeled 'Solo', shows a melodic line starting at measure 32, marked with a '6' above it, indicating a sixteenth-note rhythm. The middle staff, labeled 'Vibes', shows a series of chords, each marked with a '6' above it, indicating a sixteenth-note rhythm. The bottom staff, labeled 'Orch. Bells', shows a series of notes, each marked with a '3' above it, indicating a triplet rhythm. The Solo part is in D major, while the Vibes and Orch. Bells parts are in E-flat major, creating a polytonal effect.

Example 40. layering of tonalities

The soloist aggressively enters the section at a dynamic level of forte and overshadows the vibraphone’s “pastoral” theme which is marked piano. It then fades into balance and finally disappears by m. 35. The pentatonic “pastoral” theme is tentative at first, but grows stronger and more complex until it fades away in m. 49.

The development section begins in m. 53 with the “pastoral” theme presented in a much less serene rhythm. The unaccompanied theme appears in the solo part and is highly ornamented with D-flat grace-note patterns that function as a pedal tone (see example 41). Each of the three repetitions of the theme is enhanced with a more complex grace-note ornament.

53

55

57

Example 41. ornamentation of “pastoral” theme (solo marimba)

The “rollicking” sixteenth-note triplet arpeggios return accompanied with a more complex interlocking triplet pattern shared by vibraphone, marimba 2, and temple blocks. This section is punctuated with percussive colors on wood block, triangle, and tom-toms.

In m. 66, the technically difficult octave chromatic seconds return in an ascending pattern that lead the listener into the “birdcall” theme.

Maslanka develops the “birdcall” theme as a three-beat ostinato placed against the primary four-beat pulse of the measure. Sparse accompaniment is provided by the xylophone playing a repeated pattern of disjunct arpeggios focussed on A-flat as well as other staccato percussion effects. The “birdcall” theme is further developed in m. 73 as the xylophone and soloist reverse roles. The marimba 2 part is an inverted arpeggio that imitates and interlocks with the descending soloist’s arpeggio (see example 42).

The image displays two staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'Solo' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Mar. 2'. Both staves show measures 74 through 77. The Soloist part consists of a descending arpeggio pattern where each measure contains a triplet of eighth notes. The Marimba 2 part consists of an inverted arpeggio pattern, also in triplets, which interlocks with the Soloist's pattern. The key signature has one flat (B-flat major or D minor), and the time signature is 4/4.

Example 42. m. 74 arpeggio accompaniment

At m. 76, a dotted sixteenth-note and thirty-second note melodic gesture enters on vibraphone and is marked “intruding.” Similar rhythmic gestures appear frequently in Maslanka’s music and are developed extensively in *Concerto for Marimba and Band*. Sound effects continue as the percussion effects increase in density and become more imitative of shapes and sounds heard throughout the second movement. The ensemble continues to develop the birdcall theme through m. 85 as the soloist, marimba 2, and

vibraphone abandon their ostinati and begin interlocking imitations of the “birdcall” theme. Bass drum and cymbal punctuation join the overall cacophony as the complex imitative texture continues to intensify until abruptly interrupted by a long whimsical downward portamento on two slide whistles (see example 43).

85

*Solo*

*Xyl.*

*Mar. 2*

*Vibe*

*Sn. Dr.*

*B.Dr. w/Cym.*

*Slide Whistle*

*Slide from high to low; pitch doesn't matter*

Example 43. Layered “birdcall” themes

The next section begins with a xylophone eighth note accompaniment labeled “dry, ticking.” This pattern is reminiscent of m. 22 and uses the extreme tessitura of the instrument, which makes it sound almost sarcastic. After the accompaniment figuration is established, the soloist enters with a “teasing” classical gesture constructed of an



ornamental turn followed by a wide leap upward. Layered under these parts are the interlocking two-octave arpeggio figures based on A-flat that were introduced earlier as an accompaniment for the “birdcall” theme. The thinner, melodic texture is a relief from the previous dense counterpoint section, but the multiple layers of material derived from very disparate tonalities give this section an extremely complex polytonal sound. Maslanka imitates a baroque effect that he is fond of by presenting the “teasing” gesture on the vibraphone in augmentation in m. 91 (see example 44).

91

*Solo*

*mf*

5

*Xyl.*

3

*Mar. 2*

*ppp*

*Vibe*

5:2

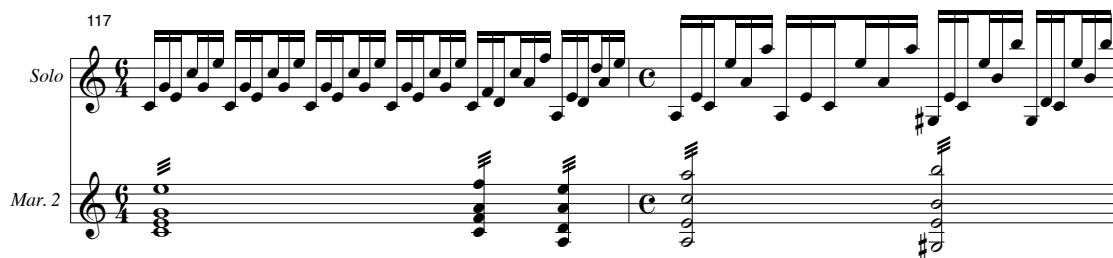
*f*

Example 44. “teasing” gesture

A few bars later, the soloist and vibraphone answer each other with the “teasing” gesture in diminution. No percussion effects intrude upon the melodic texture of this section.

The “rollicking” gestures from m. 22 return and are developed beginning in m. 104. This evolution of the gesture is presented with all of the keyboard instruments

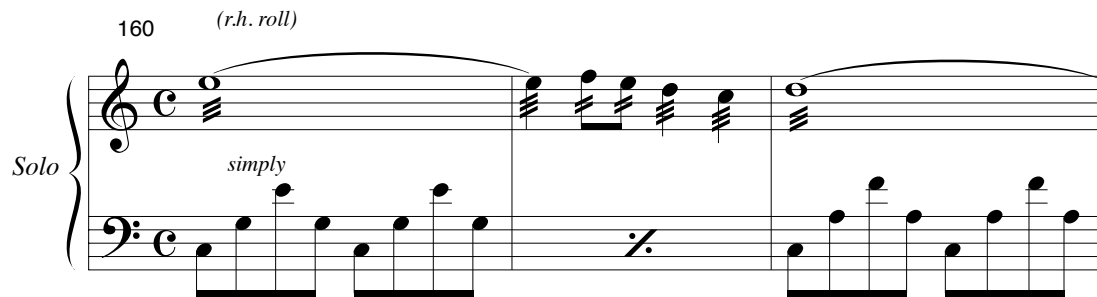
duplicating the soloist's ascending triplet sixteenth-note arpeggio texture. A very minimal accompaniment of the “wind” allusion is represented through the use of a suspended cymbal roll. The first movement's “mournful” theme returns triumphantly in augmentation over the “rollicking” arpeggio figurations (see example 45).



Example 45. layered “mournful” theme

The texture continues through m. 129 when the arpeggios begin a downward fade leading into the cadenza.

The cadenza is based on contrasting sections of the “rollicking” theme and the “kiss” theme from the first movement. The sixteenth-note triplet arpeggios explore the full range of the instrument and are predominantly major sounds that act as a smooth transition to various transformations of the “kiss” theme. The “kiss” theme is presented in various transpositions with much freedom and with the most traditional functional harmony found in the entire composition. A soft, poignant sixteenth-note fragment appears in m. 143 over an F pedal leading to a complete statement of the theme in C-major. This variation presents the theme with independent rolls in the right hand accompanied by Alberti bass figurations in the left hand (see example 46).



Example 46. cadenza “kiss” theme (solo marimba)

The theme cadences and abruptly modulates to E-flat and is then extended with cadential figurations and ornamentation. As the cadenza comes to a close, more arpeggios playfully soar across the keyboard and fade seamlessly into the recapitulation.

The recapitulation begins in m. 203 with the themes appearing in reverse order. The “pastoral” theme begins hesitantly in the vibraphone part and then continues as a chorale version in the solo marimba part. A long suspended cymbal roll (mm. 203-223) again represents the “wind.” The E-flat emphasis that was present throughout the exposition returns in the vibraphone part. The “pastoral” theme grows in intensity as more melodic instruments enter and cymbals or gongs imitate the melodic shape. The section ends with a traditional cadence in the solo marimba part followed by a brief pause.

The next section begins with an aggressive and highly ornamented version of the “pastoral” theme in diminution. The theme is presented on the xylophone accompanied by a tambourine that is played with snare drum sticks. This short transitional phrase is the fastest marked tempo in the movement (quarter note= 96) and leads immediately back to the “aggressive” theme with dissonant interlocking sixteenth-note triplets. The soloist

is silent through this transition and makes his entrance with the return of the “aggressive” theme.

Both the “aggressive” theme and the “rollicking” theme return with an almost exact recapitulation from the beginning of the movement. Some minimal changes facilitate the reverse statement of the themes. Downward arpeggios are used in the exposition (m. 27) to lead smoothly into the “pastoral” theme whereas in the recapitulation (m. 254), Maslanka extends the upward arpeggios with material quoted from the development section (m. 104). The “rollicking” gestures continue with all the keyboard instruments duplicating the ascending triplet sixteenth-note arpeggio texture. The “mournful” theme triumphantly returns in augmentation over the “rollicking” figurations exactly as it appeared in the development (m. 117).

Maslanka continues to avoid stable, clear phrase endings by overlapping the beginning of the coda (m. 281) with the ending of the recapitulation, causing a rhythmic clash between the “heavy accented and precise” sixteenth-note “aggressive” theme and the “rollicking” sixteenth-note triplets (see example 47).

290 *8va*

*Solo*

*Vibe1*

*Vibe2*

*Xyl.*

Example 47. Layered rhythmic clash

Although the soloist's "aggressive" theme is transposed to commence on C-sharp, the overall tonality is A. The vibraphone part also overlaps the phrase with four open interval A-major chords and then begins a IV-V-I cadential pattern of half-notes and whole-notes. As in the beginning, the overlaying of material with different tonal centers causes a tonal clash. The xylophone emphasizes an A pedal throughout, but the appearance of C-sharp and C-natural in the soloist's "aggressive" theme as well as D-sharp and D-natural in different octaves of the marimba 2/vibraphone part cause the "split member" sonority found throughout Maslanka's marimba music. Bass drum, suspended cymbal, and gong are used in a traditional manner to accentuate the vibraphone 1 harmonic progression. Overlapping phrases again occur in m. 289 as the vibraphone 2 part changes to sixteenth-note triplets imitating the "rollicking" gesture. Other ensemble

instruments join the arpeggios while the soloist obstinately continues stating the “aggressive” theme of precise constant sixteenth-notes. Finally relenting, the soloist joins the ensemble’s rhythm and begins a slow fading descent into a rolled fermata. In a final gesture, the soloist begins a fragment of the “rollicking” theme which disappears upward to end softly on a high A-natural. The vibraphone notes are slowly hand dampened as the open-pedal sound dwindles away.

## CHAPTER 7

### AN OVERVIEW OF *CONCERTO FOR MARIMBA AND BAND*

*Concerto for Marimba and Band* is a twenty minute single-movement composition that was commissioned in 1989 by James Bankhead for the United States Air Force Band in Washington D.C. It was premiered by the United States Air Force Band in November 1990 at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and was conducted by Steven Grimo with Randal Eyles performing the solo marimba part. This was Maslanka's fifth piece for marimba, his second marimba concerto, and his first major piece written in Missoula, Montana. Maslanka moved to Montana in July of 1990 and composed *Concerto for Marimba and Band* in a six-week time period. The style of writing shows a major departure from his earlier works demonstrating a simpler, lighter approach to texture and larger spacious gestures to match his feelings about his new Montana surroundings.

The concerto is scored for the specific instrumentation of the United States Air Force Band. The Air Force Band features three cellos and, although Maslanka comments that the cello sound is important to this piece, he has cued the part with other instruments for the convenience of bands that do not have cellos available to them. The score also

calls for the double bass to reinforce the low range. Although Maslanka often includes a piano sonority in his scoring for band or wind ensemble, he has chosen not to use that sonority here and instead exploits a variety of keyboard percussion sonorities. Varieties of impressionistic effects occur such as harp and string harmonics, stopped French horn, and the frequent use of muted brass sonorities. Although *Concerto for Marimba and Band* includes technical challenges for every instrument, the clarinet parts are especially difficult idiomatically. This can be attributed to the fact that Maslanka was originally a clarinet player. *Concerto for Marimba and Band* requires the following wind and string instruments:

(numbers of players per section are indicated in parentheses)

- Flutes (3)
- Piccolo
- Oboe (2)
  - Oboe 2 doubles English horn
- E♭ Clarinet
- B♭ Clarinet (3 sections; total 13)
- Bass Clarinet
- B♭ Contrabass Clarinet
- Bassoons (2)
- Contrabassoons
- Alto Saxophone (2)
- Tenor Saxophone
- Baritone Saxophone
- French Horns (4)
- Cornets (3)
- Trumpets (2)
- Trombones (2)
- Bass Trombone
- Euphonium (Baritone)(2)
- Tuba (2)
  
- Cello (3)
- Double Bass
- Harp



The wide array of percussion instruments used throughout the work supply the music with a wealth of provocative rhythms, accents, colors, and unique effects. The keyboard percussion instruments, including xylophone, vibraphone, glockenspiel, crotales, and chimes, contribute significantly to the melodic elements throughout the composition. Unlike his earlier *Arcadia II*, Maslanka uses timpani to reinforce the bass line of this work. His intimate knowledge of the percussion instruments is apparent in his writing parts for gongs and tam-tam. Although Maslanka takes full advantage of all the percussive sonorities available to him, the composition does not require any exotic or unusual percussion instruments. Unlike *Arcadia II*, in which Maslanka includes a marimba in the percussion ensemble, *Concerto for Marimba and Band* does not include a marimba in order to avoid conflicts with the soloist's timbre. Maslanka also does not use the double bass or cello bow on cymbals, vibraphone, gongs or marimba bars as he did in *Arcadia II*. Maslanka's familiarity with the instruments of the percussion family is apparent as he gives frequent detailed instructions on mallet selection, how to achieve each sound, and hand or pedal dampening suggestions on the vibraphone. For ease of performance, the score lists the instruments in order of appearance and prominently marks those that can be shared.

#### Timpani

#### Percussion 1

- Vibraphone
- Bass Drum
- Snare Drum (shared)
- Crash Cymbals
- 4 Tom-Toms (shared)

## Percussion 2

Xylophone  
3 Suspended Cymbals (shared)  
Medium Gong (shared)  
Sleigh Bells  
Bass Drum (shared)

## Percussion 3

Glockenspiel  
Crotales  
Tam-Tam  
Medium Gong (shared)  
4 Tom-Toms (shared)  
2 Bongos, Med. Tom-Tom, Tenor Drum (shared)  
Ratchet  
Large Suspended Cymbal (shared)  
Chimes  
Snare Drum (shared)

Compared to many of Maslanka's other works, *Concerto for Marimba and Band* is a more subdued, impressionistic sounding work. Maslanka has written:

This concerto could easily be subtitled "rhapsody" or "fantasy" because of its meditative and free-flowing quality. It is easy to describe the overall shape--an extended slow to moderate opening section, an explosive fast section, a quiet closing section. Less easy to describe are the internal workings of the piece. My concerto is a continuous exposition of a large number of melodies, all growing out of a single impulse. There is no development in the classical sense, but rather a flowing movement, a meditation which travels quietly and sometimes forcefully from thought to thought, often extremely simple, with pleasure taken in individual colors, shapes, and combinations as they appear and dissolve.<sup>1</sup>

In a recent newspaper interview, he further comments:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 9.

It's a single movement piece and moves in a very free way. There's no story to this piece. Often there's a story to a piece, but the emotional, evocative characteristics make up their own story.<sup>2</sup>

*Concerto for Marimba and Band* is much more a dialogue between the instruments of the ensemble and the soloist than *Arcadia II*. In *Concerto for Marimba and Band* there are numerous sections in which the solo voice is tacet whereas in *Arcadia II*, the soloist is highly involved in almost every measure of the work. The overall architecture of the work is a slow section followed by a fast section with a closing return to the slow section. The woodwind colors are brought forward in the slow sections while in the fast section the brass colors are featured. The melodic themes appear in different settings and are often separated by cadenza-like events scored for either the soloist or the colors of the ensemble. In *Arcadia II*, Maslanka often overlaps phrases giving the work a seamless yet somewhat nervous energy. In contrast, *Concerto for Marimba and Band* is written with very clearly delineated phrases and sections. Maslanka acknowledges how his composing has changed since his move to Montana and he has stated in a recent interview that:

There is an evolution that has taken place from one [of my compositions] to the next. . . . toward a more consonant and open kind of sound. This is carried forward even further in the new works such as *Concerto for Marimba and Band*.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Christy Wilkie, "Bass Hall Gala Celebration Concert," *Arlington (Tex.) Shorthorn*, 17 November 1998, diversions section.

<sup>3</sup>J. Patrick Brooks, "An Analysis of David Maslanka's *Concerto for Piano, Winds, and Percussion*" (D.M.A. diss., University of Cincinnati, 1994), 95.

Maslanka's approach to texture in *Concerto for Marimba and Band* is a complete departure from *Arcadia II*. He has stated: "and yet for my own writing, the older I get, the simpler and clearer the textures get."<sup>4</sup> The work is based upon large sweeping gestures of full ensemble contrasted by subtle sections using minimal instruments. The individual colors of the wind instruments are maximized throughout the work. Sustained sonorities often appear under moving melodic gestures, particularly in the most delicate sections, with pointillism frequently highlighting the colors of the ensemble.

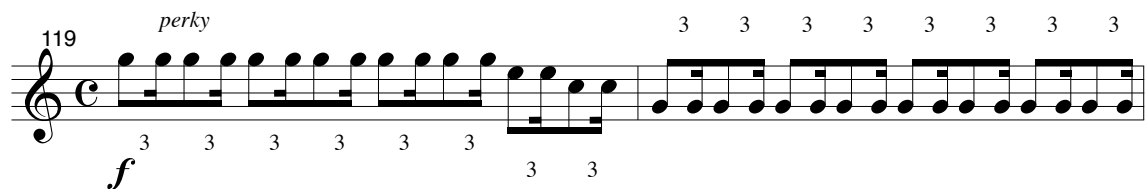
Any composer who writes a concerto is faced with the challenge of balance between a single instrument and a large ensemble. In *Arcadia II*, Maslanka was aware of the problem and suggested amplification for the soloist. In *Concerto for Marimba and Band*, he approaches the problem by exploiting both instrument tessitura and ensemble density. The soloist is often tacet when the full ensemble plays and during subtle moments, he keeps the texture very minimal and often voices the soloist and accompaniment instruments in contrasting ranges. Writing for the five-octave marimba for the first time allowed Maslanka to take advantage of almost a full octave of notes that were previously unavailable. A significant percentage of the notes in *Concerto for Marimba and Band* are in this new low range. The percentage of notes above middle-C is 38.4% which is less than half the number of notes above middle-C that were found in any of the movements of *Arcadia II*.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 93.

Although there is a preponderance of the simple major and minor triads that Maslanka uses so frequently in his compositions, much of *Concerto for Marimba and Band* uses the pentatonic tonality to fit the impressionistic basis of the work. Extensive use of chords with a ninth interval give the work a bright character. Much of the music contained within *Concerto for Marimba and Band* may be accurately described as tonal. However, its tonality is not always defined by the conventional progressions used during the common practice period.

Maslanka also takes a much clearer approach to meter in *Concerto for Marimba and Band* than he did in *Arcadia II*. The meter of *Arcadia II* is often aurally non-functional because of the heavy layering of syncopated rhythmic components and the extensive use of ostinati that conflict with the basic meter. In *Concerto for Marimba and Band*, the rhythms are much more metrically functional, and the work is clearly divided into contrasting sections of metered and non-metered events. A rhythmic gesture that Maslanka calls “perky” appears in many of his previous works and is developed extensively in *Concerto for Marimba and Band* (see example 48).



Example 48. “perky” rhythm (solo marimba)

One trait of Maslanka’s music is his awareness of precise tempo. Throughout the composition, he uses exact metronome numbers instead of traditional music terms (i.e. allegro, vivace) to describe the pacing of the work. The slow section includes many

“cadenza-like” sections that impart a spacious, open freedom to the work. The fast section, which has a challenging tempo of quarter note=180, explores a quintuple meter and develops the “perky” gesture extensively. Very little syncopation appears in the work. Instead, there are many slight changes in the overall tempo that begin slowly and increase after each cadenza-like section. These changes give the work a flowing forward motion while still maintaining the clarity of phrases.

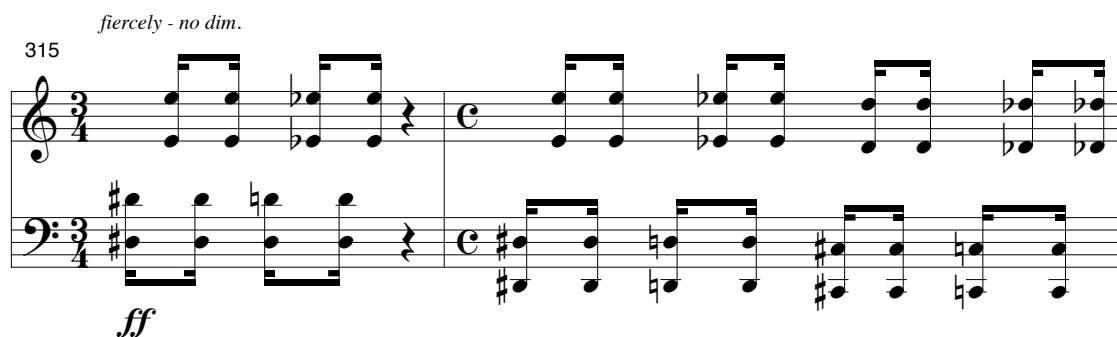
The themes used in the slow section of *Concerto for Marimba and Band* tend to be longer, lyrical melodies rather than the gestures found in *Arcadia II*. These themes are more often presented in various impressionistic settings rather than being developed. The slow section dwells on two simple “pentatonic” gestures which sound almost Native-American, and develop both as a complete theme and as fragments (see example 49).

Example 49. “pentatonic” theme and fragment (solo marimba)

A second “folk-song” theme grows out of the material from the “pentatonic” theme and is created through the use of appoggiatura-type ornaments (see example 50).

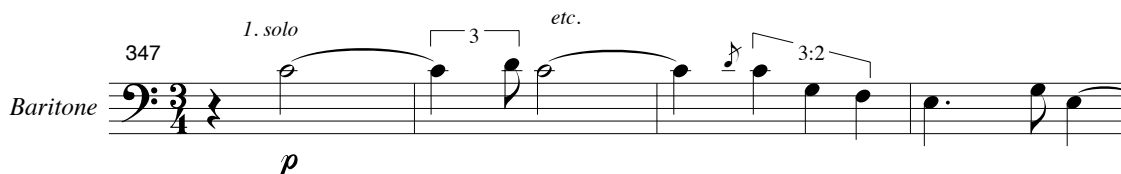


octave-spread interval in each hand, makes this figuration a challenge to execute accurately.



#### Example 52. “chromatic” gesture (solo marimba)

With the return of the slow section, Maslanka presents a lyric theme that imitates the “pentatonic” theme except in inversion (see example 53).



#### Example 53. “lyric” theme

*Concerto for Marimba and Band* is much more accessible technically than *Arcadia II*. Although it is written for a five-octave marimba, Maslanka suggests that “passages using the low octave may be adapted for smaller instruments.”<sup>5</sup> Randal Eyles, who premiered the piece, edited the solo marimba part and some minimal changes are apparent. Although the work is written for four mallets, it is primarily a monophonic



texture with occasional sections of multiple mallet work. The single grace-note ornament is used extensively in the slow section and independent rolls appear in both the left hand and right hand, even though there is generally no contrapuntal activity between the hands. Fewer of the idiomatic techniques attributed to Leigh Howard Stevens are found in this work than in *Arcadia II*. Maslanka does offer frequent specific information regarding roll speed as is seen in his instructions to the soloist:

Very fast tremolo (m. 29)  
 l.h. vary roll speeds ad lib (m. 40)  
 a furious tremolo (m. 178)<sup>6</sup>

Maslanka makes use of “pictographs” originally developed by William Kraft to define mallets of mixed hardness and to suggest hand positions in complex phrases that require the mallets to be tightly integrated (see example 54).



Example 54. “pictograph” recommending one soft, two medium and one hard mallet.

The next chapter will take a more in-depth look at Maslanka’s use of themes in different settings and his approach to composition in this single-movement concerto. Even though Maslanka uses a larger palette of instrumental colors in this work as

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<sup>5</sup>David Maslanka, *Concerto for Marimba and Band*, (New York: Carl Fischer, 1990).

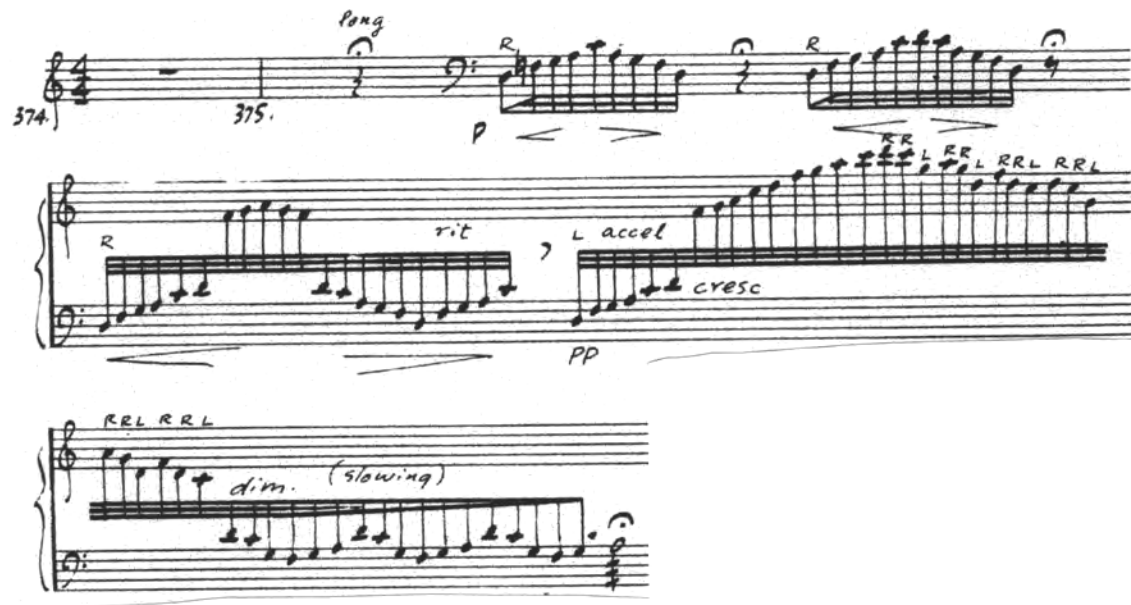
<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

compared to *Arcadia II*, his change in approach to texture and complexity, which can be directly attributed to his move to Montana, allows this work to generate a more open, simple, spacious effect.

## CHAPTER 8

### *CONCERTO FOR MARIMBA AND BAND*

The slow section of *Concerto for Marimba and Band* opens with a simple unaccompanied appearance of the “pentatonic” theme which is presented without meter by the marimba soloist. The grace-notes that appear are not only ornaments but also important diatonic segments of the motif. Over a simple half-note woodwind accompaniment, the soloist presents the complete theme and fragments of the theme through m. 10. The thematic material is revealed throughout this section in small gestures that will be developed later. All brass instruments are very subdued until m. 10 when they present an antecedent statement with mutes, accompanied by open three-note chords from the soloist. In an interlude section, the soloist presents a brief cadenza section made up of quick gestures that emphasize a modal tonality. Throughout the work, Maslanka uses non-metered interludes to establish tonality by repeating melodic shapes and progressively adding to them (see example 55).



Example 55. additive principal emphasizing pentatonic tonality (solo marimba)

The modal tonality continues as the soloist, accompanied by sparse woodwinds, begins with the "perky" rhythmic character and then descends seamlessly into the next section using a rhythmic acceleration of repeated sequential patterns. Many of the gestures introduced here will be developed in the faster section. Much of the soloist's material sounds improvisational and rhythmically free as the melodic gestures ornately emphasize the modal tonality. The "split member" tonality occurs in m. 20 as the soloist's modal line emphasizes an F-natural over a solid D-major tonality in the woodwind parts. As the solo marimba fades, the woodwinds introduce more thematic fragments, and as the tempo increases, other woodwind instruments are added to the texture. In m. 24, a secondary fragment of the "pentatonic" theme which is based on the minor-third and the whole-step occurs. This fragment, constructed of triplets in contrary

motion, is developed extensively in the faster section. A sweeping woodwind effect peaks in m. 27 and swiftly descends as the texture becomes thinner.

The soloist introduces the "folk-song" theme in m. 29 over muted brass chords. Maslanka uses the suspended cymbal here as a sustained long pedal tone similar to its use in *Arcadia II*. This is a very simple homophonic statement of the theme with the accompaniment sounds providing color. In m. 39, the soloist imitates the sweeping woodwind effect heard in m. 27 but uses a modal tonality based on a whole step and minor third. Beginning in m. 40, the soloist presents the "folk-song" theme in the right hand over a perfect fifth pedal (F-C) that is played as an independent roll in the left hand. The ensemble accompaniment here is still sparse so the soloist projects very clearly through the texture. This is followed by another sweeping effect by the woodwinds imitating the whole step and minor third gesture found in m. 39. The final presentation of the "folk-song" theme is with a woodwind chordal accompaniment over a descending bass line.

A short transitional gesture, similar in shape to the "folk-song" theme, occurs in m. 50 implying another development of that theme, but instead Maslanka changes to a new texture and a fresh theme. This "singing" theme is constructed around a leaping interval of a sixth and appears over a flowing eighth-note woodwind accompaniment. The theme appears first in the major and then is followed by a statement in the minor mode which is a further derivative of the previous "folk-song" theme (see example 56).



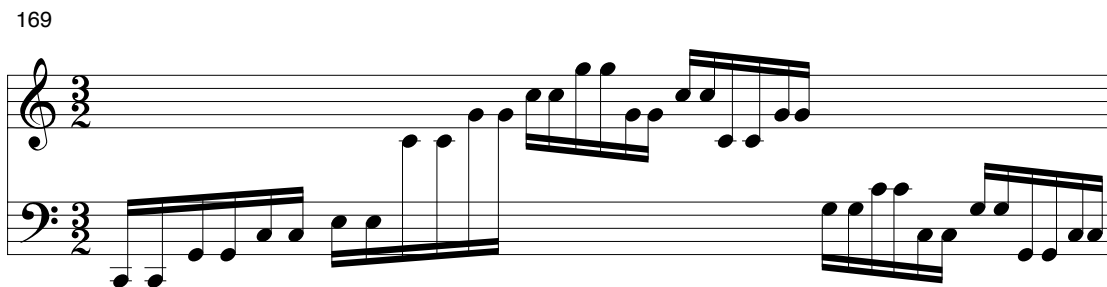
Example 56. “singing” theme (solo marimba)

The languid texture becomes more complex as Maslanka begins layering figurations resulting in a more turbulent energy and unclear tonality. In m. 84, the “singing” theme appears in the B-flat clarinet part over a modal accompaniment and also in m. 90 when a solo French horn presents the theme. The soloist layers complex, unrelated embellishments over this turbulent texture. Although the density has increased, the majority of the brass instruments are still tacet or using mutes. In mm. 99-104, the soloist’s part includes a lyric gesture that is layered over the top of dense contrapuntal rhythmic activity. Maslanka has commented that he later uses this gesture in his *Mass* which was premiered in 1996. A development of the “folk-song” theme appears beginning in m. 110 and is played by the upper woodwinds as well as the soloist. The theme is presented in augmentation with long sustained tones over a staccato eighth-note accompaniment. This development of the melody features wide, leaping gestures written over a simple major and minor accompaniment. The melody is repeated in m. 118 with the rhythm changing to the “perky” triplet pattern. Beginning in m. 133, the tutti ensemble presents light, staccato eighth notes in a pointillistic manner under a lyrical version of the “singing” theme from the soloist. At m. 141, Maslanka repeats the staccato eighth-note section embellishing it by increasing the density of notes. The soloist

abandons the lyrical theme and joins the eighth-note harmonic progression with a series of repetitive four note chords.

The transparent texture of the next section is an appropriate contrast to the relentless eighth-note texture of the previous section. The soloist and ensemble reverse roles with the soloist providing a simple chordal accompaniment to a solo flute melody that is delicately enhanced by colors from keyboard percussion instruments. Maslanka's awareness of possible balance problems is apparent here as he keeps the texture very thin and both the solo flute and vibraphone are in their upper tessitura above the solo marimba which is in its mid-range.

The delicate flute melody returns in m. 164 with a fuller woodwind texture. The solo marimba still provides accompaniment but the simple eighth notes from the previous section become double-stroked sixteenth-note triplet arpeggios moving across the full range of the instrument (see example 57).

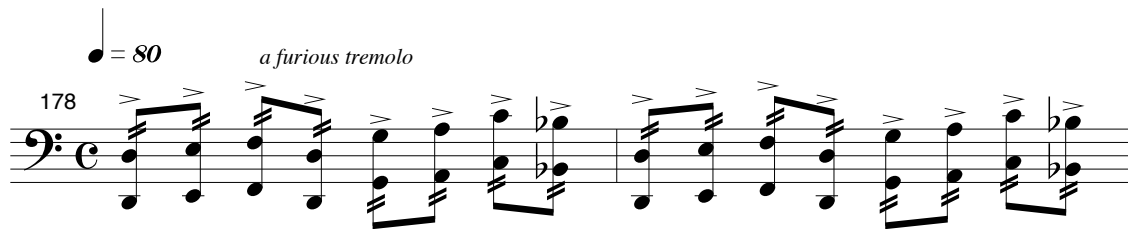


Example 57. double-stroke arpeggios (solo marimba)

This exuberant section leads the listener into another non-metered interlude that is a restatement of the “pentatonic” theme. This interlude is interrupted when light colors

from woodwinds, harp, and cello are added and it concludes with a long descending modal line to the marimba's extreme low tessitura while increasing speed to shift directly into the next section.

M. 178 is an agitated section of ascending sequences derived from a fragment of the “pentatonic” theme and is presented over the sustained chords of the ensemble (see example 58).



Example 58. m. 178 (solo marimba)

The “furious tremolo”<sup>1</sup> and the eighth-note aggressive sequence supply the illusion of a faster pace than the reserved tempo would normally indicate. The sequences reach the highest range of the marimba and slowly descend to the low range of the instrument with octave intervals. A unique “bending” effect using an “open to stopped” French horn follows the soloist’s descent over sustained long tones from the general ensemble. In a final soft dialogue between the woodwinds and the soloist, the oboe and clarinet present intervals reminiscent of the first theme while the marimba accompanies with four-mallet sustained chordal sounds.

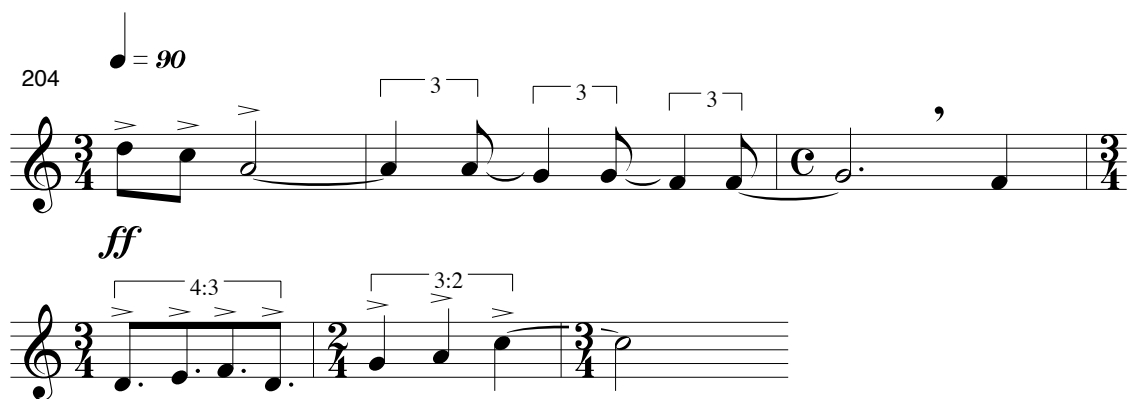
The character of the fast section is a complete change from the previous slow

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.



section. The standard four-meter slow section changes to restless five patterns while the moderate tempo becomes animated and eventually reaches quarter note=180 through a process of doubling the quarter note=90 initial tempo . The frequent non-metered interludes surrender to driving ostinato patterns. This section begins with a crescendo of ominous dark tones from the strings and low woodwinds and leads directly into an extended brass interlude which is based on the “pentatonic” theme. Notes that appear as ornaments in the original theme become primary pitches allowing the texture to thicken (see example 59).



Example 59. “pentatonic” theme (brass)

The orchestration in this section is very full and rhythmically intense. The initial tempo, while still slow at quarter note=90, is the quickest found in the composition to this point. Brass sound colors predominate while woodwind timbres are slowly added causing the texture to thicken. The percussion maintains the ominous sustained sound through m. 217 and the tempo suddenly doubles to quarter note=180 in m. 223 as the “perky” triplet figures return in a new quintuple meter pattern. The brass orchestration has now shifted from subdued, muted tones to very bright colors with the low instruments

playing in a high tessitura. A chromatically descending bass line, characteristic of many of Maslanka's compositions, enters in m. 250 and the massive tutti ensemble texture fades to individual instruments that are tinted by chime sonorities. As the predominant dynamic fades to piano, the soloist, whose entrance is marked "surprise," intrudes upon the ensemble texture. The soloist's "surprise" theme ascends from the extreme lowest note to the upper tessitura and then returns with a complex octave "chromatic" gesture. In m. 283, the soloist, strings, and high woodwinds layer long sustained tones over a pointillistic eighth-note texture similar to m. 133, and subdued muted brass sounds are liberally mixed with open brass sound colors.

In m. 315, the soloist again intrudes on the soft dynamic of the ensemble with the technically difficult "chromatic" theme. The gesture descends chromatically over the very thin, sustained texture of the ensemble. Upon arrival at the lowest range on the marimba, the quintuple meter "surprise" theme returns to again ascend the instrument. This gesture is repeated with interruptions by staccato cadential figures from brass instruments. The section finishes with aggressive tremolos marked "furious" from the soloist that imitate the descending bass line from m. 250 and are accompanied by the vibraphone over dwindling sustained tones from the ensemble.

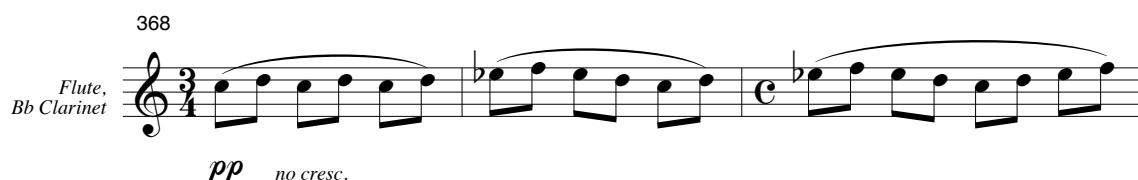
The soloist seamlessly connects the fast section and next slow section with an angry interlude marked furious and "hammered."<sup>2</sup> The material in this interlude is derived from the "pentatonic" theme and aggressively soars to the highest tessitura of the

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

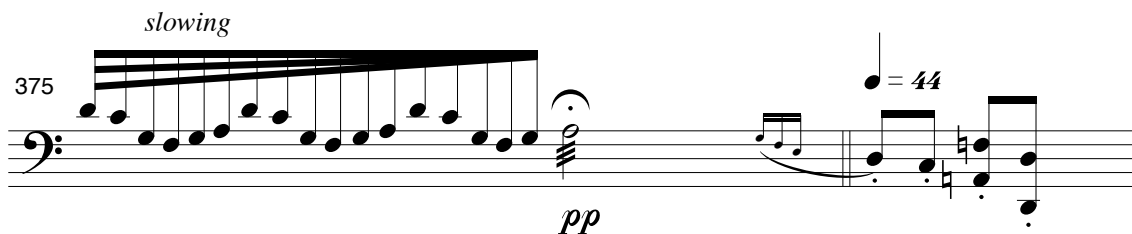
instrument using sixteenth-notes over sustained ensemble sounds. The angry spirit subsides as the “half step/whole step” pattern descends to the mid-range of the instrument and establishes a more modal tonality. Upon release of the sustained tone, the marimba uses modal shapes to ornament a repeated B-natural.

The return of the slow section re-establishes the lighter woodwind texture. The solo marimba voice is silent and a lyrical new melody, which is an inversion of the “pentatonic” theme, emerges from the baritone and tuba. The upper woodwinds softly offer a lilting accompaniment that is characteristic of Maslanka’s writing (see example 60).



Example 60. woodwind accompaniment pattern

The solo marimba softly enters and embellishes the plaintive inversion melody with subtle nuances while responding to similar gestures from the tuba and harp. A final interlude draws attention to the “split member” sonority as it weaves the D pentatonic sweeping gestures from the soloist over the solidly D-major chord from the saxophones. The prolonged “split member” sonority finally resolves with the soloist sustaining an A-natural to deliver one of the few dominant points of repose in the work (see example 61).



Example 61. m. 375 (solo marimba)

Very slow resolution gestures from muted French horns and trumpets enhance a sustained D-major chord from the woodwinds. The solo marimba and strings assert the distinctive “split member” sonority with repeated D-minor arpeggios descending to the lowest registers of the instruments (see example 62).

Example 62. final six measures

As the D-major tonality peacefully fades, a final reminder of the “split member” tonality brings *Concerto for Marimba and Band* to a breathless close.

## CHAPTER 9

### CONCLUSIONS

Both *Arcadia II: Concerto for Marimba and Percussion Ensemble* and *Concerto for Marimba and Band* display many of the techniques and influences that have become characteristic of the compositional style of David Maslanka. However, they express radically different approaches to composition due primarily to Maslanka's growth as a composer. Maslanka's traditional musical training, the clear influence of many diverse composers, and his sensitivity to such extra-musical influences such as geographic location have resulted in a distinctive musical style. *Arcadia II*, written while Maslanka resided in New York City, applies classical principles of structure and counterpoint within an environment using layers of seemingly unrelated musical material, resulting in a composition that is very complex, energetic, and restless. His style acknowledges the past while existing in the present. *Concerto for Marimba and Band*, written while living in Missoula, Montana, displays a move away from density and complexity toward spacious simple gestures and an almost impressionistic texture reflecting the openness of his new environment.

Maslanka's music combines values and techniques from virtually all historic periods to form unique textures that are identifiably his own. *Arcadia II* is a musically

and technically demanding work for both the soloist and ensemble members. The *Concerto for Marimba and Band* is technically simpler in approach but demands a higher degree of musical expressiveness. The harmonic language of *Arcadia II* is more characteristic of the twentieth century than that of the *Concerto for Marimba and Band*, although both works clearly show Maslanka's appreciation of simple major and minor chords. Although relationships exist between the two compositions, (some of them obvious and others more obscure), most of Maslanka's musical language is not expressed through means of pre-twentieth century functional harmony.

While Maslanka is not a percussionist, his writing for marimba shows a solid appreciation of the idiomatic possibilities developed by recent innovations for the instrument. His exemplary attention to detail and sound timbres give his work an individualized stamp. The evolution of gestures rather than functional harmony is the most distinctive characteristic of Maslanka's compositional process. Maslanka is fond of reiteration of gestures in the form of either augmentation or diminution, done in a manner that is similar to the baroque master composers whom he admires. Melodic gestures are perhaps the most prevalent feature of Maslanka's music. The gestures typically are reiterated in several unique but logical settings and are often transformed from their original appearance, rarely appearing as exact repetition.

These factors combine to produce two works that are both unique to themselves and significant in the literature for marimba and percussion. They are significant because they show an appreciation for the use of percussion as sound timbres similar to Edgard Varèse while maintaining an approach to melody, harmony and rhythm from earlier eras.

Maslanka's distinctive approach to composition and his solid understanding of writing for percussion instruments combines to create exciting and individual compositions that are unmatched in the field. Maslanka comments:

What is unique in my music? It certainly isn't the musical materials because my music is largely tonal, uses traditional instruments, and often uses traditional forms. I haven't invented new language elements, but my voice is uniquely my own.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>David Maslanka, interview by author, 13, 14 November 1998, Arlington, tape recording.

APPENDIX A  
MARIMBA TECHNIQUE



Although an in-depth discussion of advanced marimba techniques is beyond the scope of this dissertation, some explanation of the terminology used by David Maslanka in composing these works will provide the reader with a point of reference to facilitate a clearer understanding of the concepts discussed.

### Struck Notes

All of the struck (non-rolled) notes in the four-mallet marimba literature can be broken down into four categories of motion. These terms and techniques are attributed to Leigh Howard Stevens as set forth in his book *Method of Movement for Marimba*.<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. Single Independent Stroke

The torque of the wrist and forearm rotating the striking mallet around the unused mallet produces the single independent stroke. This motion is similar to the one used to quickly screw in a light bulb. The stroke, when correctly executed, allows

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<sup>1</sup>Leigh Howard Stevens, *Method of Movement for Marimba*, (New York: Marimba Productions, 1979).

the performer to play single or repeated notes with little or no motion in the unused mallet.

## 2. Single Alternating Stroke

Single alternating strokes consist of a discrete side to side rocking of the hand. The downward portion of the stroke of the first mallet raises the second mallet to its proper starting height. Likewise, as the second mallet descends, the first mallet is automatically raised to its proper starting position. When the speed of alternating notes increases they become either double lateral strokes or an independent roll.

## 3. Double Vertical Stroke

A double vertical stroke is one that produces two pitches simultaneously. The first problem usually encountered with this stroke is getting the mallets to strike absolutely together. Initially, there is a tendency to contract finger muscles during the stroke thereby closing the interval and causing inaccuracy.

## 4. Double Lateral Stroke

Double lateral strokes can be divided into inside motions and outside motions. These are single motions that produce two successive pitches. In general terms, the double outside stroke starts as a double vertical stroke but goes through a split second metamorphosis just as the outside mallet strikes the bar. At that point, the motion changes to a single independent stroke. The double lateral inside stroke is basically a mirror image of the outside stroke. The key to the double lateral stroke is that as the stroke begins the descent, the mallet heads are not exactly at the same distance from the bars. The mallet that is to strike second is held slightly higher than the mallet to strike first. This difference in height is enough to assure that the second mallet does not strike at the same time as the first.

## Rolled Notes

The illusion of a constant tone on the marimba is accomplished by striking one or more bars rapidly with both hands in alternation. The traditional technique for doing this is to strike the two mallets held in a single hand simultaneously. However, as a result of recent developments in marimba technique, it became apparent that an almost infinite

variety of sustained textures could be achieved by manipulation of a few basic techniques including:

- the speed of the hand alternation
- striking the mallets in different alternation sequences (1-3-2-4)
- beating spot on the bar or angle of the mallet relative to the bar
- application of various “struck-note” techniques

The “independent roll” is an example of applying the single-alternating stroke principle to a sustained tone. By increasing the speed of the side-to-side rocking motion, the tones become a constant sound. This allows performers to sustain a tone in one hand while presenting a succession of single tones in the other. Most composers leave artistic decisions as to roll texture to the performers discretion. One of the exemplary features of Maslanka’s compositions for marimba is his awareness of the wide variety of sustained textures available and his detailed instructions pertaining to use of a particular technique.

The technical difficulty of a composition is caused by a combination of factors including:

- dynamic level (height of mallets above the keyboard)
- wide interval spread between the mallets of a single hand
- quick interval changes between the mallets of a single hand
- position of the mallets above the sharps or natural keyboard
- counterpoint between the hands
- mixing multiple stroke types within a single passage

The more factors there are in a single phrase, the higher the level of difficulty. It is the performer's challenge to choose which stroke type best fits each situation without detracting from the musicality of the phrase.

APPENDIX B  
INTERVIEWS WITH DAVID MASLANKA

The following are two interviews with David Maslanka, conducted by the author. The interviews took place on two consecutive afternoons in Arlington, Texas, after rehearsals leading to the performance of Maslanka's *Concerto for Marimba and Band*. The following transcripts have been approved by the composer.

Abbreviations: DM = David Maslanka: MV = Michael Varner

#### First Interview

November 13, 1998

MV: You mention imaging in the writing of *Arcadia II*. In the *Third Symphony* you have some imaging of bison and bear and then in *Variations on Lost Love*, you comment that when you heard Leigh Howard Stevens play you imaged what it would be like to be the marimba. On *Three Dances* you make reference to the image of night time fir trees. I wondered if in *Concerto for Marimba and Band* you had any particular images in mind?

DM: You're entering into a huge area of my own thinking and that's a very large and wide open question you just asked because my whole way of proceeds from a kind of imaging. There are two ways that things happen. One is that musical ideas form and they don't have pictures on them necessarily. Most often I begin my composing through an imaging process. I call it a meditative process. What it does is to allow me to enter into a dream area and bring that into conscious mind and then to feel the power of it, whatever it might be and to allow that to translate itself into music. I'm talking hesitantly because I still, after all these years, don't know how it works. It just does. Let me ask you a question. When you compose-say we have your piece we just listened to-what happens to you in your imaging? What are your ideas?

MV: I spend a lot of time thinking of concepts I like to try to combine and particular things I'm trying to satisfy with the piece I'm writing. I approach it as a conversation where you set up a scenario and then you spend the rest of the piece resolving the issues that are set.

DM: But you do have a title on the piece.

MV: Usually the title comes last.

DM: But it does then say something to you in a non-musical sense. The title on that was 'Wind'? There's something that connects you. I'll more often start the other way around. Let me just tell you the process and then you can talk about specific images. When I'm asked to write a piece of music, and you mentioned the Leigh Howard Stevens thing about my becoming the marimba. My entering into composing is by concentrating first fully on the people that asked me to write the piece. I don't think any musical thoughts right off. If you were to commission me to write a piece, my first job would be to go off and start walking and then in the course of that walk I begin to think deeply about you. I don't know anything about you or your history or who you are or anything of that sort. What happens is that I go into my meditative mode which means that my mind moves from my consciousness into a dream space in which I ask to see Michael Varner. Then there are pathways which I take in that dream space and they take me to a place where I see you. The way in which I see you speaks to me about qualities of you - about who you are, what it is to be Michael Varner, the fundamental thing that moves you at this point. This doesn't mean that I can mind-read or know your history. Yet for whatever reason, a direct sense of what's happening in you at this time and some sense of what it is that's moving you is open to me. When I did *In Memoriam* I went through the same process. See who the people are. Once that happens, I don't really understand the connecting point between what I sense about people and what musical sound is. There is a direct link. Because I know this and because I've felt this about you, there suddenly arrives in mind a way of going about things musically. A way of making music which has to do with these issues. Now, the reasons for writing a piece of music: you might think, 'Well, I had a good idea and asked Maslanka to write a piece of music', but that's only the surface of it. You don't know why you asked me to write a piece of music. But you did it for reasons other than it would be a good idea. There are things which have to be accomplished with this piece of music and we don't know what they are. They have to do with your evolution as a person and you have intuitively felt that it is possible for your evolution as a person to proceed through this composition by me. I agree to enter into this and we move something in both of us because of the musical process. Now, how does the imagery fit into this? There are images which do arise. For instance, in the Montana music we talk about the *Three Dances for Percussion* and there are the images of nighttime, and the pine trees, and of the Holy Mother, and things of that sort. These arise and attach themselves to the music and sometimes make titles and sometimes they don't. The whole question of the quality and the kinds of images varies from piece to piece. The images are a way of expressing some qualities in the music but as you well

know the image is not the music. It's just a way of saying something about a piece as opposed to trying to really talk about it's power.

If, for instance, you are attuned to the ideas of internal imaging and that kind of inner travel, then you will go in one direction. If that's not in your experience and you're not attuned to it, then you will take note of it but then travel in a more technical line. The clear and obvious difficulties in talking concretely about certain things - I do know my process, I do know its power and how it works, and it may mean absolutely nothing to you. If it means something to you and you write about it, it may mean nothing to the reader. The best I can do is tell you what I do. I just need to say further, too, that for me this is not a matter of belief, but a matter of practical experience. The matter of belief for me is that you have to believe most of your life. You have to believe that your car is going to work in the morning and you haven't a clue about how to make it work. You have to take it on faith. You have to take on faith that the sun will come up tomorrow. You have to take all these things on faith...every, single thing. When it comes to areas which touch on religious issues, which these do, the idea of belief turns a little strange. My personal thought is that most people believe things because they've been told to believe them, as opposed to having actual experience. If someone talks to you about the Trinity for instance, someone might say, 'I believe.' Then ask 'Well, what do you believe?'. I think if you pull at a person far enough, they don't know what they believe and they don't know why they believe it, they just do. That's because they've been told to and that's the way they feel. As to what force it has on that person's life, it's hard to say. I can't say I believe simply because that's what everyone else has done. I have my own belief structure because I am a human being. I have to have that. There's no way that I could have absolute knowledge about stuff. But what I do have is the ability to look and to experience and to experiment so that if there is something that is mysterious, some feeling comes through me, some flash of intuition which I can explore it in a meditative way. It doesn't give me absolute answers but it allows me to touch the directness of the power of the thing that's being done. So you say what does that have to do with beating a drum with a stick? Just about everything. Beating on a drum with a stick disturbs the universe in a very interesting way.

MV: Does it disturb the universe positively and negatively?

DM: Either way depending on what you are doing and I'm not judging music on that basis right now. But when you make that impulse, it's an expression. The vibratory impulse which pushes something in the universe and I frankly don't think we understand at all what is pushed by music making. My own personal feeling is there is a vibratory continuum along which the entire universe is organized. If you touch that continuum at any point such as we do in our playing or music making, you create a vibration which goes through all the other levels as well. And at the same in composing and performing you are receiving information from all those other levels which we don't see or hear normally and we bring them into this space. So we have this continuous back and forth material. This is how it works for me. I have the experience over many years of not so much making up music as receiving music. The making up process is the wrestling



match that goes on between that thing which wants to come into your conscious mind and your ability to receive it. Your ability to receive it has to do with what we call composing, and that has to do with, number one, your talent and number two your training. If those two are fairly high, then you have the capacity to receive the vibration and put it into some concrete form. That's called composing but the reception part is the whole deal. What wants to be received doesn't have a whole lot to do with your preconceived notions of what you think ought to be received. You can start out a piece, as you well know having written a lot of music yourself, that with a preconceived idea. This piece is going to contain this and that, and that, and that. You may successfully write a piece that way but just as often you can be stopped because you start in on that and it doesn't want to do that. So when it stops, you say I want it to go forward but it says no. It doesn't want to go forward. Something else is being said from that source outside yourself. It is trying to tell you to do is something you're not doing yet. It isn't a matter of trying to intellectually figure it out, although your intellect and your training will give you the capacity for trying alternatives until something might fit, and then it's 'Oh, now I understand. That's supposed to go in this direction.' I'll tell you about *the Montana music-Three Dances for Percussion*. I started out with a bunch of preconceived notions. I'd gone over to the percussion guy-Bob Ledbetter-at the University of Montana and he spent a couple of hours with me just making sounds and showing me instruments and things. I had just a bunch of really good ideas that were going to go into this piece. I started to write the piece and it stopped in its tracks. Everytime I approached this piece, it would go just so far and stop. It didn't like what it was doing and it didn't go anywhere. When I'm stopped that cold in the process, then it's a clue to me that I haven't allowed the process to work properly. I said, 'OK, what are you going to be?' The result was a piece, which I would not and could not have intellectually conceived. That is three slow movements lasting almost 30 minutes for percussion instruments. It doesn't seem like it belongs together. I used some of the ideas that I had originally, but it became a very other piece as soon as I perceived what wanted to happen and allowed the mind to open up to receive - as opposed to dictating what was to happen in the music. That idea - receiving - is a really important one. It puts the intellect and the trained intellect in the circle of the personality and in the circle of the universe, as opposed to putting it in the center. It makes the intellect a functioning part. It's the conscious part. It's the part which acts as translator from the bigger space into what we realize here in our physical space. It's one member of the partnership as opposed to the whole thing. That's a very interesting discovery and it leads along those lines that you just suggested with those Eastern philosophies.

MV: You mentioned Zen in a previous interview. Have you studied Zen?

DM: Not by name, no. All my work in meditative things has been home grown entirely. I've never studied with a teacher. I've read about Buddhism and read about Zen but everything has been experimental to this point.

MV: You have made the comment that you were very influenced by big bands from your youth, and that in *Concerto for piano, Wind and Percussion* the *Miss America* theme appears. It has also been pointed out that you include the popular song *As Time Goes By*, from the movie *Casablanca*, in *A Child's Garden of Dreams*. Could you comment on your use of “quotes” from other works or genres?

DM: The only thing to be said is that there's nothing systematic here. When my mind opens to receive stuff, it's whatever is there and there's all this stuff from my childhood that is available. This is how music gets absorbed into the larger mainstream of the culture. Things happen and people hear them and then these are absorbed into how you think about things and how you feel about them. I don't write rock-n-roll music. I don't write jazz and I'm not making imitations of those things. And yet the colors and feelings that those things produced in me as a child- and in fact for all of my life, are the language sources that mean something to me. Things that have emotional force behind them. When these things come up in the context of the piece that I am writing, then they have a particular force and power, and I suddenly see 'Oh, that does come from there'. It does have its background there. So it's not a matter of consciously trying to imitate or borrow from or to have a veneer of one kind of music or another, but to absorb the thing which is available in our musical language. There's been a lot of talk over the years about what constitutes an American music. There are so many different sources, but there is an American speech. Simply contrasting English “English” and American “English” you have the dozens of ways the English speak English, then you have the dozens of ways that Americans speak English. But we all recognize American speech as being distinctly American and it happens because of lots of things-the way people have lived, the places they live in. How language proceeds out of place is something that has to be thought about very carefully and there's a bunch of powerful stuff that needs to be brought into your thinking. You've entered many thoughts all at once here. There is the intimacy of popular music in my work. This popular music speech has grown out of the American experience. We have a troubled time in popular music right now. It seems that it's in the control of financial interests as opposed to folk or soul interests. The history of popular music has always been the pulse and soul of the people, and the music comes out of the people as opposed to the music being sold to the people. So those musics which have the sense of coming out of the people and out of the place of life are extremely attractive to the people. English folk music is very attractive to people, American folk songs are extremely attractive to people and those kinds of musics such as early jazz. Very old jazz has always appealed to me a lot. The 1920's Louis Armstrong recordings and things of that sort. Old gospel music, particularly vocal gospel music. Bluegrass music. Those things that have their roots in American soil and the American experience. My music, because I grew up here, has an American speech, is an American speech, an American musical speech. It has all the information of the European experience because we grew up and in, and were trained in that. We learn all those forms of music. That forms a background but we speak it differently. That's what's really important to me. I'm not trying to imitate anything but rather absorb into my own musical language what these things are. This is forming a musical speech and musical language. It's a lifelong

experience. We tend to think of and get impressed by composers who arrive at their own speech at a young age. For instance, people who are geniuses in their teens like Mendelssohn, Schubert, Mozart, Shostakovich, and Prokofiev. You can name a bunch of others. Chopin - who at the age of 21 was writing his mature music. Richard Strauss and so on. We tend to be very impressed that these people have become themselves in a hurry. Developing a true musical speech seems to take longer for most people. In our age, the complexities that are available - the sheer number of ways to write music that are available to us now - make it very difficult to come to a center point of who you are. For a composer to be worth anything finally, that has to happen. There has to be the sense that I have arrived at who I am, this is a voice which is speaking, that is uniquely mine. I believe that I came to that in my late 20's for the first time when I began to say that I could identify a piece as being "good". It was good because it spoke my voice. The music that has happened from then to now has changed obviously and the voice continues to find out more about itself and to explore its various aspects. It is my voice now which speaks and absorbs into itself the things that are around it and then puts it out in terms of my voice. I think that's how speech works, I think that's how language works, I think that's how writers write books. Then the question comes up - what is unique in the music? It certainly isn't the musical materials because my music is largely tonal, uses traditional instruments, and often uses traditional forms. I haven't invented new language elements, but my voice is uniquely my own. That's where originality comes in: all these elements can come through a focused person, and produce something unique out of something that's commonplace with the language.

MV: What are your thoughts on composing for the marimba? Very few people have composed as much in such a wide range as you have.

DM: Every time I approach the marimba, it's with a certain trepidation because I am not a percussionist and I have never once struck a percussion instrument with serious intent. Every time I'm around percussion instruments all I can do is dabble with them and make little noises on them. When I get to talk with people who actually play the marimba well, I feel abashed because I don't know what that is. I don't what it is to play the instruments I write pieces for. I know what it is to feel the sounds, so I just have to start out there. Every time I approach the marimba it's as if I don't know anything about this instrument. I feel humbled in the face of that idea, and it is frankly weird that I have written so much that involves marimbas because of what I just said. But it keeps coming back to me, so there's something important about the marimba, that I should be asked to write for it and be attracted to it. I think what I can say about it centrally is that the sound of the instrument has a particular color, a particular soul color if you want. The same can be said about any instrument. Every instrument that I write for is approached in exactly the same way. I realize that I don't know about this instrument what the professional player knows, or even what a very good student knows. What I do know is that it is a color that can move powerfully, if something moves me powerfully to speak in that color. That's what I can say about any composing. I have come to the understanding that for me composing and musical feeling starts with the issue of color. It's starts not necessarily

with an idea about a phrase length or anything of that sort. It starts at the pure emotional level of color. The thing about color - a physical color like green in the jacket you have on. Green has nothing at all to do with time. It has to do with time as much as it is finitely located on this jacket which is defined in time and space. But the color itself is forever. When you think of green it doesn't have any time restraints on it and the same is true for the sound of the marimba. No limit on its quality. It just is. I feel the force of the marimba sound as a pure thing, as a thing which exists outside of time. Every instrumental color is precisely the same. When you open your mind to what wants to happen, these are the colors that begin to clothe the force that you feel. They have very particular qualities. I have always had a particular fascination with the basic sound quality of the marimba. Why does a person become an oboe player or a flutist? There's something in the quality of that sound that touched their soul particularly and they had to move with that basic sound for the whole of their life. The marimba seems to be that way for me. I sometimes fight with the instrument because it does have severe limitations. It's not a piano. It can't do what a piano does. It frankly doesn't do counterpoint very well. I'm always amazed that a person should choose to play an instrument with such handicaps. You have to have sticks in your hands with these wrapped ball things on the end of them. Then you have to try to accurately hit those bars which are at some distance from your hands in the order that is suggested by the music. How in the heck do you do that? But it does finally does have its limitations. I'm constantly fighting with that.

MV: So many people have commissioned you to write percussion and marimba works. What do you attribute that to?

DM: Oh, the fact that the first thing happened quite successfully. *Variations on Lost Love*, which was the first piece I wrote for marimba, turned out to be a successful piece. A lot of people played it and liked it. If the first one had not been successful, things would have turned out differently. But *Variations on Lost Love* consistently sells something like thirty to forty copies a year and that's been twenty years now. So multiply forth times twenty and it's eight-hundred. So at least eight-hundred people have purchased it and for such a piece that's a bunch. It keeps coming up again and again. I have programs in recent years from Israel, Holland, Spain, and Norway. People keep playing the piece. They see it as a high challenge to get at and to make work. Out of that comes the idea that I can write for the marimba.

MV: There's been an article written on *My Lady White* that includes some information regarding Poems by Chaucer?

DM: Yes, it's Chaucer's poem *For My Lady White*. Chaucer was of a time when female love was seen as the highest and holiest thing. It comes out of the adoration of the Virgin Mary, the adoration of the female creative, this adoration was projected onto an actual person. In Chaucer's case, his muse, if you will, was a woman whose name was Blanche. She was the wife of John of Gaunt. He was one of the important noble people of the 14th century and in the 100 Years War. Chaucer spent his life at court as

essentially an accountant and an ambassador and poetry was something he did on the side. I think he'd be quite surprised at what happened to it. In any case, he wrote a poem dedicated to Blanche called *My Lady White* and the relationship of that poem to my own sense of my relationship to my wife Alison was striking to me. I have a very strong sense of my wife in that capacity as an inspiration. She's not a musician and she is embarrassed when I say these things. She is a touchstone for my work. The parallel is there and in *My Lady White*, the third piece is dedicated to Alison.

MV: What comparisons between your marimba writing for solo literature and ensemble literature do you see?

DM: The ensemble literature takes the marimba into quite a different direction. Most often, it's not intended to show itself as a soloist in the ensemble pieces so it just doesn't do that. In my ensemble writing I tend to blend the instrument in more and use it as a coloration for other sounds. Every once in a while of course a marimba sound will show up on its own. Most often it is in context with other qualities, so it will back up or be related to woodwind sound. Certain passages obviously are very present for percussion in the ensemble pieces but I don't make the same technical demands as in the solo pieces. Some people might disagree.

MV: Is there any one piece that comes to mind of the wind ensemble literature that I could take a look at that you feel is more characteristic marimba writing than the others?

DM: Yes. The most recent piece *The Concerto for Two Horns and Wind Ensemble* contains a large percussion section that has in it 2 vibraphones and 2 marimbas. I very much put forward the mallet, percussion sound, as a thing of itself in the piece. I guess you don't know about that piece.

MV: Is that the one that was premiered on the Internet in two different places?

DM: On the one night I think we had seven premiers simultaneously. Tom Bacon, a horn player at Arizona State University, who organized the commission just got a bug and thought we'd make a big splash in the horn world. What he wanted to do was 10 simultaneously and some of it worked out. The piece got known with horn players because of that. It's a fairly small wind and brass ensemble. The number of brass players totals 18 or 19 and in addition to that there is piano, harp, and a very large percussion section. So these sounds are prominent.

MV: What would you like to say about *Crown of Thorns*? My advisors have said that it is one of the finest examples of percussion writing.

DM: I'll tell you a bit about it. Richard Gipson at Oklahoma asked me to write a piece for him. I think in the middle 80's that he asked me to do this.

MV: 1984?

DM: 1984 or something like that. I said I'd accept the idea of writing a piece but I just didn't know where I was going to put it in my writing and he said fine. We'll see whatever happens. Well, time went on and I hadn't written the piece. I got to the 1990 PAC Convention in Philadelphia where they were doing the *Concerto for Marimba and Band* with the Air Force Band. Gipson had a group there at that time performing. I went to his concert and on his program, it listed the pieces that were written for the group and also the pieces that were going to be written for the group, and my name was listed there as going to write a piece for this ensemble. I said 'uh-oh, I haven't written this piece yet.' We moved to Missoula in 1990 and we lived in a rental for most of the year until we found a place to buy. Attached to the garage at the new place is a big woodworking shop that became my studio. The very first piece that was composed in that workshop was *Crown of Thorns*. I said 'Now I'm going to write this piece.' I sat down and it took me two weeks to write. It was a fast production and it came out fast [snaps fingers], like that. As to it being one of the finest examples of percussion writing? Well, that humbles me. I'm glad that it turns out that way. It has a very energized and joyous quality. There is a quality of absolute joy about the sounds. I've always identified these sounds with Christmas somehow or other and that's one of the very few things I like about Christmas! There is a lovely, spiritual, God-like character to those sound.

MV: You can feel that in the piece. It has a wide range of emotion in it, but you can feel it's a buoyant piece.

DM: Yes it is. So that's a little bit of the story on *Crown of Thorns*.

MV: Are there any gestures that show up regularly in the marimba writing? I'll tell you specifically what I'm looking at. One of the things is how often the minor third shows up against a major chord.

DM: If you want to do analysis along those lines you're perfectly free to do so and you'll discover stuff which is there that I don't even know about. This has happened every time people have analyzed my music. They invariably come up with a theory of how the piece works which is a surprise to me. I just say, 'Oh yeah, that could be. That's a good idea.'

MV: That tonality shows up in *My Lady White*, *Arcadia II*, *Crown of Thorns*, and at the end of the *Concerto for Marimba and Band*.

DM: There are certain style preferences that go to make up a compositional voice and if people can now say that they recognize my voice, it means that there is some awareness of my familiar choices - the thing I will do because I am what I am. It's not mysterious. Every composer who gets to a certain point becomes recognizable as having

a style. And certain composer styles are well known. For instance Aaron Copland's style is unmistakable. Copland's music has open 5ths and folk elements and particular use of xylophone to highlight wind chords, and so on. You can pick off every single thing that Copland does and say these are the style elements. Or Stravinsky, whose sound is immediately recognizable. So that's what happens. I think that I have preferred sounds, preferred ways of going about things, and things which do come back again and you can point them out. The thing that you should also consider is the idea of evolution of gesture and the context. I can recognize a set of basic characters in my writing. When they show up in different pieces I recognize them as such. I'm thinking for instance of my *Piano Concerto* from 1974 – 75. The last movement is a fierce, energetic, harsh music which I like a lot. It has a terrific edge to it and that particular character of the music has come back again and again and again in various guises in various pieces. Just off the top of my head I can point it out in the last movement of the *Second Symphony*, the third movement of the *Third Symphony*, some of the jazz music of the *Fourth Symphony*, and a movement in the *Mass*. I just finished the *Songbook for Saxophone and Marimba* and one of its movements participates a bit in that quality. Every time that happens, I say 'Oh, that relates to that character.' But each time that it happens it's something else with some other aspect. A little different aspect. So if you can point out let's say the minor third against the major chord relationship. It's not simply saying that 'This piece has it. That piece has it. That piece has it.' because they all do. It's a matter of understanding its feel in the context and the fact that it's not the same from here to here to here to here. It is a way of turning a phrase, a way of dealing with the figure of speech. And since I'm talking about it, I think I must say that I've always had a particular fascination for bright sounds. It's a childlike fascination for the pretty object. So the major chord to me has always been one of those primary pretty objects. I've come through the whole compositional era where it was not the right thing to do to write major chords. This is so silly. It is so silly to have people trying to enforce esthetic principals. To have the thought police say that you can't write a major chord and still be modern. The important thing is, does that thing have force and does it say something? If the answer is yes, then it is the perfectly appropriate and right thing to do. I have particular things that attract my attention and they show up again in different pieces of my music, and maybe this element of the major chord fits into that category.

MV: I feel a connection between *My Lady White* and *Songbook*. Do you feel that as well?

DM: Your connection is very direct because *My Lady White* is subtitled *Three Madrigals for Solo Marimba*. Its basis is 16<sup>th</sup> century madrigals which are short song forms. The *Songbook* can be thought of as seven madrigals. The qualities of these pieces have about them a sense of self-containment. As I began to write the piece I realized it wasn't going to be a single long piece. Then it became individual expressions and pictures. These were indeed songs. When I'm writing that way the music tends to be more intimate. The pieces are very beautiful and do not make extreme technical demands on the instruments. Particularly they don't make extreme technical demands on the

marimba. Saxophonists might argue with me a little bit. The marimba writing is very modest and very direct. It is geared to single gestures rather than elaborate technical displays.

MV: There is an obvious reference to chorales in some of your works. Are there were any chorale or folksong references in *Concerto for Marimba and Band*?

DM: Not in either concerto, no. No references that way. The chorales do come up often. They have become a very important reference point for me. In the *Songbook*, there are two pieces that are based on chorales. What the chorales have done for me is to open up the whole idea of the evolution of a musical statement in a very short space. The chorales are between a dozen and twenty measures for the most that's it. You have a single tune which guides the whole thing phrase by phrase and then you have the intertwining of the voice parts. In the best of these chorales of Bach, you've got four beautiful melodies working in that tightly restricted style to create a harmonic fabric. It is absolutely fascinating to me to feel how these lines move together. Fascinating to the point that I do this myself. I am now taking the original melodies and making my own four part settings. I'm going back to freshman theory but at a very high level. I'm making my own small pieces in that style. I'm taking the melody and writing three other beautiful melodies to go with it. That's a terrific thing to do. Sometimes the chorales show up in my music because I find them to be very powerful. They have influence my melody writing which is now most often quite simple and direct. The chorales exist both as things that I bring into the music and as a deep background to my writing.

MV: Can you talk about style periods in your music?

DM: Certain style periods can be defined. From the beginning of my composing through roughly 1976 comprises a style period. There came a break at that point, and a lot of emotional turmoil needed to be settled.

MV: You stopped composing for about a year and a half?

DM: The last thing that I had composed fell into the *Piano Concerto* area and that was the music which had a sharply dissonant edge in it. A tremendously aggressive and angry kind of approach to composing. I came out the other side of this hiatus writing music that was much more tonal, much clearer and more open.

MV: And you were still living in New York at the time?

DM: Yes, still in New York. I stayed in New York after that until 1990 so it was most of the time I was in New York. Starting roughly around 1980 when Alison and I were married, a blossoming took place which resulted in a lot of the music that made my reputation – *A Child's Garden of Dreams* for wind ensemble and the *Second Symphony* and then all of the other wind pieces that began to arrive. *A Child's Garden of Dreams* is



quite a large leap from the *Piano Concerto*. Same composer and yet now it begins clearly to take into account the whole question of the dream world and an understanding of how I was connected to it. After that, all of this accumulates until the *Mass*, which was performed in 1996. It was composed in bits and pieces from 1990 to 1995 with a big push on it in 1995. The *Mass* winds up being a cumulative point, a cumulative statement with a large impact. From that point on, although chorales had appeared in previous pieces, the chorale now seems to take a central place in my thinking. To think of the Bach chorale, as one of the primary models in the universe is a large leap to take. But it comes back down to the thought that the closer you look at simple objects, the more complex they become. And that's absolutely true with these chorales. They seem simple enough but the deeper you go, the bigger their universe gets. They have had their place in music pedagogy - teaching theory, or counterpoint. What happens in theory classes is that people say, 'Oh God, I've got to do this' and as fast as they can, the book gets closed and put on the shelf. In my case I went through freshman theory and I put it away and it took me 30 years to get it back out.

MV: One of the subjects I'm intrigued about is the commissioning of works because that comes in so prominently in your percussion pieces. Do you feel that's an important aspect of your composing so many works for percussion?

DM: They wouldn't exist if people didn't ask me to write them. I don't believe I would on my own have decided to write for marimba if I wasn't asked. I think composing proceeds from two directions. One is that the composer has stuff just bubbling in the mind which wants to happen but it isn't necessarily formed along specific lines. It's just a way of being and thinking. To me, the commission is like a rock in the pond - the pond is just lying there until somebody throws a stone in it, and this tremendous rippling takes place. So the fertilization of the moment in the mind takes place by someone asking you to write. The commission suddenly focuses your thoughts and then something forms around that point. I really love this because then there is a reason for me to come into the work, and people who have asked for it want it. That's truly important to a composer to have the music be wanted. Every composer starts life with nobody wanting them to write anything, nobody asks anyone to be a composer. In fact, when you're young they try to discourage you. 'What do you want to do that for?' and you get discouraged soon enough anyway because it's hard work getting people to pay for music. Generally as a young composer, your music isn't developed to a high degree and so it's a scattering together of trying to get something going. At a certain point, if you manage to get through all of that, and you do manage to make a piece which is really something, someone will take notice and start asking you to write and then that relationship takes place. From the other standpoint, people who are of a different opinion think that if you are commissioned to write a piece and you actually do that, then you have somehow given away some of the purity of the compositional act and it becomes tainted by the fact that it has been touched by a person other than the composer. I don't understand that. To me, composing is messy business that's springs out of living situations and relationships.

Second Interview  
November 14, 1998

MV: You mentioned that location is an important influence in your composing. Do you have a few reflections on how location has influenced your writing for either percussion or marimba?

DM: The first pieces were written when I was living in New York City. I'll talk about *Arcadia II: Concerto for Marimba and Percussion Ensemble* because it came out of the walking that I did in the last wild place in New York City. Apart from Central Park you don't think of New York City having any open green space but in my neighborhood in Upper Manhattan there was a place called Inwood Park which was a 100 acres or more of land on top of a hill overlooking the Henry Hudson Parkway. Off to the west were the Hudson River and the Jersey Palisades. George Washington Bridge was visible to the south. There was old wood, there were trees there that were a couple of hundred years old. This whole land had been donated to New York City by the Rockefeller family with the stipulation that it never be developed. It is one of the great blessings of the city. I would walk up and there and it was something of a wild space. It had paths through it and there were still small animals - rabbits and owls and things of that sort and it was a beautiful place. In fact it's still one of my favorite places. Out of the walking I did up there, which I did very regularly, came a lot of the feelings of the *Concert*, particularly qualities I can talk about such as sunlight of various intensities as seen through tree leaves. You get various filtered kinds of light that makes beautiful combinations of green and gold. You can think of green and gold as a single unit. The second movement of the piece particularly has a nature music quality to it. There's a bird song in it - the free un-metered xylophone part - which is persistent throughout the movement. It is something of an approximate rendition of a particular bird call which I heard frequently in that place.

MV: What kind of bird?

DM: I don't know. It was an elusive bird. I only saw it once. You could hear the call but you couldn't find the bird. It was a robin size bird, brown. In any case, those were some of the qualities that came out of Innwood hill. *Montana Music*, on the other hand, written obviously in Montana, has a different feel to it altogether. Rather than talk

about the music, I think I can talk more about the places. New York City and any big city have a sense of the push and press of too many people in a small space. Living in a big city automatically makes you develop a mental shell, which protects you from the extreme external pressure. You have a filter, which allows in certain stuff and keeps out bunches of other stuff. It really is like having things pushing down on your head all the time to be in New York City. The city has its uses; it certainly changed my life but you have to hunt for mental space in New York City. Montana does precisely the opposite thing. You have to keep your mind in your head because its very easy to get away from humanity there. You can be out all by yourself in a very large place and the mind simply floats out and away, into the hills and into the sky. Those are the differences. When you look at *Arcadia II* and *Montana Music* you can know those two differences and know some of the results. Every human being is a creature of place. If you have good fortune you grow up in a single place. Did that happen to you?

MV: I lived in pretty much the same place when I was young

DM: That single place has been imprinted absolutely in your mind and it is, I'll venture to say, the psychic model that you go back to as the place of greatest familiarity. You can trace out in your mind all the paths that you took as a kid. I grew up in the same house through high school. I knew all the secrets of the backyard. I knew what the street was out front, and I knew where each house was on the block and its qualities, and so for me, looking back on it, each thing in that neighborhood, down to the trees and down to the cracks in the sidewalk, had emotional meaning for me. These things and the paths you take to school, your walks, the way you get through your neighborhood, all the secret places in your neighborhood, each of these becomes a way in which your mind is organized. I think this happens again and again and again in your lifetime especially if you stay in a particular place for any length of time. You become adapted to it. It's ways of being are your ways of being. I came to the conclusion that New York City was a possible place to live for all the people that live there because it can be grasped as a place. You get huge places that don't have boundaries to them or are diffused in some way or the other. Places where you have miles and miles and miles of the same kind of houses with no graphic differentiation from one thing to another. The mind gets numbed by that. But a place like New York City - for instance, take Manhattan. It's organization is patently clear. It is a finite island that's 11 miles long and 3 miles wide. Broadway is the primary defining street in the city and it is the radical different thing. The rest of the city is organized in grid patterns - 1st Street up to 200 and something Street and 1st Ave., 2nd Ave., Ave. A, B, C, D, and so. So you have this grid pattern but Broadway meanders through as a radical element which cuts across the area in its own way. You realize that Broadway used to be an old path. It probably used to be an animal track and then became an Indian path and then became 'the' path that people took to get up the island and then it became the main street and everything else was built around it. It becomes a psychic reference point. The same with the subway system in New York City. It's another psychic reference point. You know how the thing works. It goes from here to there, here are the stops, here are the connecting points and you learn your way through the system.

New York City is an immensely complex city, but at a certain point, you feel and understand its limits and you feel and understand its structure. That gives power to people who then feel secure within the structure. Now concerning Missoula, Montana, I talked about the openness of the place, but Missoula is a small city and at a certain point I knew its structure. It has a queer kind of structure. It has North/South and East/West streets but in the center of the residential area, for whatever reason, the city planners skewed everything 90 degrees so there is a portion of the city which is radically at an angle to rest of the city. It's one primary feature at least in that part of the town. Things like that which produce odd angles and odd intersections become important in the mind. I'm a walking person. I much prefer walking to any other kind of transportation. When you walk, you become intimately familiar with what the ground is under your feet. Whether it's dirt, whether it's pavement, what kind of pavement, the stuff that's on the sidewalk or on the path. You get familiar because you have time to look and to feel. I have my ways of walking in Missoula; the paths that I like to take, the things that I like to see, and the things that satisfy me when I go through them. I don't know if that makes any sense to be satisfied by the way in which your walk takes you and to be satisfied by repeating that walk again and again. To me it does. These elements of place and deep familiarity become the patterns out of which your mind feels free to grow, feels free to express itself. Place is vitally important.

MV: You mention Edgard Varese, as a composer who has influenced your music and some of your thinking as well as John Cage, more for his composed pieces than his aleatoric works. Who else influenced your percussion music or marimba composing? What specific compositions come to mind.

DM: I think I became aware of percussion through Varese when I went to Oberlin in Ohio. The wind ensemble there performed *Deserts* which is for electronic tape and wind and percussion. The qualities of sound I had never heard before. It just opened the whole notion of sound for its own sake. This is a terrific idea, which I think has been crawling into western music for a long time. It has had it's blossoming in the twentieth century - that any sound has meaning if you have it in context. Varese was a starting point there. Thinking of Cage, I like his percussion ensemble works from the 40's. I'm also interested a bit in the non-structured work that he's did, but. I have gone off in a different direction. I find that to have a strict construction in which everything is pinpointed as carefully as possible, that is in notation, allows finally for a very powerful thing to happen. Here's the paradox in composing: you have strict notation and you have exact things that performers are supposed to do. When they get all these exact things done exactly the way the composer says or at least as close as it can be done, then a release happens and it's a magical release. It's a change that suddenly allows the thing to flow. A flow happens and you can say something beautiful happened. It seems to be paradoxical that that happens through the use of strict barlines, and strict notations, and metronomic indications, and accents. Do these millions and millions of tiny detail things exactly right and something powerful suddenly emerges that wasn't there before. It

simply isn't an accumulation of all the things but something quite other. It's amazing. So for me, the whole idea of strict notation is really important.

Now, having said that let me say something about what's happening to my music in recent times. Sometimes you see pages that look like there's nothing on them at all. It may be just some whole-notes with some eighth-notes. There is within that notation a real sense of musical possibility. Now I sense it and I have decided that that's what it will look like and that it is going to be this simple notation. In working with performers - performers then who have become intuitive about this, having understood that this is all possible - we'll move through these simple notations and suddenly a powerful thing appears. When it does, everyone knows that it happens. It's a mystery as to how it happens, but it does happen. I'm giving more space to performers to think about things in the music. If you're given a whole note or a basic indication of a dynamic then asked to feel the rest of it yourself, you're required as a performer to go into yourself in order to understand what it is you're trying to do. I've said two opposite things here. There's a certain exactness which is required, and then at the same time liberty happens. There is a paradox in there. The paradox stated in more common terms is how we use human speech – in this case the English language. The construction of English is as demanding as any other language. Its grammatical basis is exact. You can have variations on it but in order for me to communicate to you by speech we have to have a shared knowledge of English grammar and of the approximate meanings of English words. On that extremely exacting construction, we float along. We make our verbal improvisations and we understand. You have to have that basis of language in order to have meaning. This points up one of the problems that came out of improvisational or aleatoric works. That is that language structure is allowed to dissolve. This is all done out of the idea that the composer should not dictate to the listener, that the listener should engage his own framework, or find a new one to receive that information. To my mind this can avoid the real way in which powerful communication happens – which is by the open – hearted participation of people in the same language construction, whatever it may be. The transition to being an engaged participant for performers and audience is a magical one, and it is the possibility of this magic which pulls us again and again back to music making. I have found personally that I am much more interested in making and establishing a direct contact with an audience through a language that we share. It's a gentler and easier way to bring the listener into a very full experience with a piece of music. This is a position that I have found and that I like. I'm not saying it can't be done other ways.

MV: You mentioned H. Owen Reed yesterday as being one of your teachers. He's well known for his text on percussion scoring.

DM: He was eager for percussion things and had done a lot of research. I still use his book. In earlier band and orchestra music, percussion is limited to the occasional cymbal crash, the occasional triangle, the rhythmic elements of a field drum or snare drum or bass drum and of course timpani. Percussion sounds, for me, have as big a force as any other musical sound and I find that I use percussion not necessarily for accenting,

but for its own emotional value. Percussion instruments provide a full range of emotional qualities that don't come from any place else in the ensemble. I use them that way. They become independent voices. It's not an incidental application of a color on top of another orchestration. I mentioned earlier that Varese sparked me in this direction, but Owen Reed gave me a way to develop these intuitions.

MV: You mentioned yesterday how much you enjoyed bright sounds. what are some of your favorite marimba or percussion sounds? Sonorities that come to mind when you think of percussion.

DM: In the drum sounds, I'm very partial to bass drum and timpani. They have terrific emotional qualities. A single touch of a bass drum, for instance, can just open out the bottom of an ensemble in a way that nothing else can do. That's a beautiful thing. For many years, I fought in my mind with timpani. When I first started writing ensemble pieces, I did not use timpani. I didn't know what to do with them. I liked them but I couldn't understand what to do. A bit at a time, I challenged myself on that issue and began to write much more extensive parts for timpani in ensembles. In the *Fourth Symphony* the timpani is a virtuoso part which I would really like staged as such. It would be very good for performances of the *Fourth Symphony* to have the timpanist forward rather than in the back position - to the side, but at the edge of the stage where it can be seen. What that person is actually doing as well as its force are very much at the center of the piece. I like combinations of bell sounds. The vibraphone, the crotales, glockenspiel area is very attractive to me just as sounds. I think I said yesterday that some of these sounds remind me of Christmas. Sleigh bells too. There are several pieces now that use sleigh bells. I am thinking at the moment of the very prominent passage in the *Concerto for Marimba and Band* with trumpets, xylophone, and sleigh bells.

MV: I agree, it's a very underused sound.

DM: It's underused because suddenly you have Santa Claus! It's such a highly characterized sound.

MV: It's like thinking of Spain when you hear castanets.

DM: Right. It's a sound that should be divorced from the common image and I think I have in the *Concerto for Marimba and Band*. There's no reference at all to anything having to do with Christmas and this sound is just wonderful when it happens. Tom-tom sounds - I'm much more partial to the high sounds than to the middle and lower sounds although I use them. I like the high, tight, very tight, very high drum sounds. They are very useful with the various kinds of stickings you can apply to them. Along with bell sounds, some very interesting sounds have crept in with sharp and piercing bell sounds. I've liked the anvil as a quality but I find often that it has a dullish edge to it and in a recent piece for wind band, I called for pieces of railroad track. They have a

piercing, bright, metallic sound which you can't get on the anvil. It's absolutely head splitting when you get that sound correct. It's terrific.

MV: Have you experimented with brake drums?

DM: Yes, and I haven't been terribly satisfied with what I've heard. Again you have a dull, kind of clanky quality to it, and if that's what you want, that's perfectly fine. But my ear's been moving toward the brighter, more penetrating sounds. In the piece *Hell's Gate* for three saxophones and wind ensemble there's a passage that wanted those bright percussion sounds. One of the boys in the ensemble brought in a set of large pipe wrenches which happened to have wonderful pitch and color. Same color as brake drums but much brighter. The keyboard percussion instruments have a central place in all the large ensemble pieces. I tend to use vibraphone, xylophone, and marimba as something of a unit. In the more recent piece, *Concerto for Two Horns and Wind Ensemble*, there are doubles of these. There are two vibraphones, and two marimbas. They make a mallet ensemble voice in the overall ensemble.

MV: Separate parts for Marimba I and Marimba II? Interesting. You mentioned tom-toms in regard to sticking possibilities and that's not a comment that comes up very often from composers. What did you mean by sticking possibilities?

DM: Maybe I'm not using the right word because I have no technical grounding in percussion at all. You tell me what you mean by sticking.

MV: Anything that varies from the obvious. Right, left, right, left. Stickings would be combinations of three lefts and a right or two rights and a left. Anything that would be a choice issue as to say any use of the right and left in the music.

DM: When I'm writing I'm thinking purely the rhythms that I want to hear. It does become the performer's job to figure all that out so I'm not too concerned with that technical aspect. I write what I hear in my head and so far it's either worked or they tell me it can't be done and we figure out something else to do. I'm happy to receive that. When I said "sticking" I was referring to different qualities of timbre that can be had from using different kinds of sticks or mallets.

MV: What other works for marimba had you listened to in your preparation for writing either the solo works or the concerti?

DM: Oh, what can I say? This is ancient history for me and I'm not sure I can answer that question very well. The best I can say is that I had an understanding that it is very easy to override the marimba voice and the only work that comes to mind is the Creston *Concerto*.

MV: That work comes to mind for a lot of people. It's a premier piece.

DM: There's also the Kurka *Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra* which is transcribed for winds.

DM: My preparation for writing the solo piece was hearing Leigh Stevens in concert and I can no longer tell you what pieces were performed.



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