

DEVELOPING A FOUR-MALLET MARIMBA TECHNIQUE FEATURING
THE ALTERNATION OF MALLETS IN EACH HAND FOR LINEAR PASSAGES AND
THE APPLICATION OF THIS TECHNIQUE TO TRANSCRIPTIONS OF SELECTED
KEYBOARD WORKS BY J.S. BACH

A Monograph

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Dedication

This paper is dedicated to Dr. John Raush. In the without-whom-this-paper-would-not-have-been-completed list, Dr. Raush's name must be on the top of page one in bold letters. His knowledge, professionalism, kindness and support have made it possible for me to complete a paper in which I take great pride.

I would like to relate four representative memories of my time with Dr. Raush that continue to motivate me to become a better musician and scholar:

- 1.) When I was stumped for a word that meant, “existing body (of materials for the training of two hands),” Dr. Raush was the one who produced the word, “canon.” It is my favorite single word in the entire paper.
- 2.) Watching Dr. Raush play timpani in the Baton Rouge Symphony (most remarkably during Stravinsky’s Rite of Spring) was an enlightening lesson in what a commanding role a timpanist may take in an orchestra. His playing lent a tangible element of stability (not to mention excitement) to the most dangerous of ensemble passages. Several members of the orchestra commented, to me after the Rite of Spring “block”, that the solidity of his playing actually made their parts less difficult and more exciting.
- 3.) His abilities as a percussionist are tremendous, but he supplements these skills with a pan-disciplinary musicianship that I find truly inspiring. His knowledge of music history and theory as well as instruments and literature outside the field of percussion is nothing short of brilliant.
- 4.) “Dr. Raush is the greatest musician, on any instrument, that I know.” This comment came from one of his colleagues in the LSU School of Music. The particular phrasing is notable for its succinctness, but the content is not at all uncommon when discussing Dr. Raush. I intend to make it my life's work to earn this kind of respect from my future colleagues.

I sincerely appreciate the privilege of having studied with Dr. Raush. I wish him the best of luck and happiness for his (finally student-free) retirement.

Acknowledgments

I am fortunate to have a very large, three-pronged, extended family. To begin, how many people are lucky enough to have six loving parents? Mom and Steve, Dad and Schafalia, Papa (Wee) and Mama (Koh) have all helped me in so many ways that I couldn't begin to relate them here. I love and respect them and wish I could spend every day with them all (which is highly unlikely as they are on opposite sides of the globe). To my siblings: Toby, Traci, Krista, Scott, Edie, Amy, Tommy, ah Ping, Le Hong, ah Pang, and Kok Yi (notice I didn't call you ah Boy); I wish to express my gratitude for teaching me about all the things that are important in life. I believe that the interpersonal skills we learn in kindergarten are honed throughout our lives and largely through our relationships with siblings—I have eleven solid, good, kind people that I can call brothers and sisters. I do have to make a particular mention of my brother Toby, who I also consider to be my best friend. Toby teaches me, subtly, in nearly every conversation, the meaning of the words self-control and diligence. He has looked to me as his “big brother” all of our life, but it is only now, as we reach our middle 30's, that he (I think) is beginning to realize the incredible scope of the effect HE has had on MY life. I thank Uncle Clarence and Auntie Mae for teaching me so many things about life. Managing money, digging a hole, chopping wood, farm-style cooking, and driving tips (the kind they would never teach you in Driver's Ed.) are just a few of the skills I learned visiting their house while growing up. Grandma Laura and Grandma Vida did everything that the greatest of grandmothers are supposed to do—either of them could be put on display as role models for the grandmothers of the future.

And the only family member who gets a paragraph to herself is the most important person in my life: my wife, Le Khin. If everyone in the world were as happy and content in their home as I am (because of this great woman), the world would be a better, and more

peaceful, place. She takes care of me, keeps me grounded in reality, and brightens my life daily in a myriad ways of which she is not even aware. I love her with all my heart, and have great difficulty imagining my life without her.

To my friends in Baton Rouge, thank you for showing me that there is more to life than a career, and for sharing that “more” with me. Cason, Cassandra, and Janeice taught me, among other things, how to hug my friends and (on a professional note) showed me, by example, the benefits of consistent daily practice routines. Charles made me a better person by getting me involved in the serious study of chess. Doran’s comments (as a fellow marimbist) were very helpful in the final stages of this study. Craig and Steph. were the first married couple (of friends) that I truly enjoyed visiting—“hanging out” and talking with you two is among my fondest memories of Baton Rouge. Aaron and Borislava: here is an immensely talented couple unlike any other I know. I’ll never forget playing chess on the giant board while eating that delicious Bulgarian food!

John Bolter and Brenda Dawson are, quite literally, lifesavers. Their counsel during my wife’s illness is directly responsible for the quality of life that I (and happily we) enjoy today. As if that weren’t enough, their hospitality and warm companionship over the years have made each trip to Baton Rouge an absolute joy. I consider them the older brother and sister that I never had growing up and I look forward to someday repaying their selfless generosity.

To Reverend Mike Aus, his wonderful family, and the people of the Lutheran Church of our Savior, my wife and I owe a debt of gratitude. Though my wife and I are not Lutheran, Reverend Aus and his congregation adopted us in our times of trouble and made us feel as if we were one of their own. Their kindness shows the best qualities that humanity has to offer. May God bless them all.

If a scholar's professional life is the sum of his experiences, and I believe that it is, then the influence of teachers and mentors is of paramount importance. Throughout my undergraduate and masters degrees, I was privileged to work with exemplary percussion teachers. The following paragraphs describe a few of the ways in which each of them has gone beyond what I ever expected, or even hoped for, from my teachers.

Dr. Mueller's conception that the marimba should be the center of training for a percussionist, truly influenced the direction of my life. It was he, and he alone, who encouraged me to pursue graduate studies and led me to believe that I could someday be a college percussion instructor. Without Dr. Mueller's meticulous instruction of marimba technique, this paper would never have been possible.

While I never studied marimba with Jeff Nearpass, his infectious enthusiasm for all aspects of percussion has helped me to retain an almost child-like enjoyment of all things percussion. My interest in ethnomusicology and organology came directly from my time with Mr. Nearpass. He also made it possible for me to attend my first PASIC a few years ago, for which I will always be grateful.

Mike Hanes helped me to mature, as a musician, beyond the limits of percussion, and helped me to assimilate that experience back into my percussion techniques. Mr. Hanes was the first to share my excitement about alternation sticking, and has actively encouraged me to pursue it ever since. The "hands-on" teaching experience I got during my time at SIU, and Mr. Hanes' leadership in processing that experience, have made me a better musician and teacher.

Humble thanks to my friends from Double Click Pte. Ltd. in Singapore. The knowledge and experience I gained while working with Double Click enabled me to produce the more-than 200 figures seen in this paper. Chok was quite brave in hiring me for a job for which (in

retrospect) I had no practical experience. That job turned out to be one that trained me to work with computers and multimedia software, not to mention giving me a chance to compose, do sound editing, teach, hire, fire, and design a curriculum. Of all these skills, only teaching and the little bit of composition, were job skills I had before joining Double Click—I will be forever indebted to Chok for the experience and knowledge he gave me. My two friends Soon Kwong and Chee Keen must also be mentioned here as they were the ones who were actually tasked with answering all of my questions. With almost superhuman patience these two shed light on my digital ignorance. I really miss the roti prata!

To the members of my examination committee, I would like to express my sincere gratitude. I realize that 200 page drafts, long-distance communications, and a “hard-headed” student like me were probably more than they bargained for, but as the process draws to a close, they continue to encourage and assist me and I genuinely appreciate their help. Dr. Kingan, as co-chair of the committee, deserves special recognition. I know that he has sacrificed precious time with his family to read and revise my early drafts and the paper is clearer and more readable for his comments.

I would like to include a special, heart-felt thanks to Dean Ron Ross for finding the words to comfort me at the lowest point of my life. He probably doesn't even remember the conversation, but when many people were at a loss to say anything at all, he found just the right words. I can't thank him enough for his kindness and empathetic compassion.

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Abstract

The goal of this study is to develop a four-mallet marimba technique that utilizes alternation within each hand on linear passages, then apply this technique to selected keyboard works of J. S. Bach. This paper provides a method of training the hands for this type of alternation and will hypothesize a conception of hand positions as a method of facing the visual/spatial logistics issues of marimba performance. A performance annotation chapter will then apply the alternation sticking, and its resultant positional concepts, to three new transcriptions of J. S. Bach's inventions and a prelude and fugue from his Well-Tempered Clavier (Book II).

The alternation technique of this study is predicated on the hypothesis that certain linear passages for the two mallets of a single hand may be played with increased stability, accuracy, and efficiency using an alternation-based sticking in lieu of the repetition-based sticking practice used by contemporary marimbists. In many passages, the player may simply apply standard two-mallet left and right sticking practices to the two mallets of a single hand. The increased stability mentioned above may also aid the marimbist's kinesthetic sense of the bars, thereby improving accuracy in one hand and freeing more of the player's visual attention for the non-linear (or "other-linear") hand. The improved kinesthetic sense can assist in sight-reading, where the player must rely on the "mind's eye" (a combination of the player's kinesthetic sense and a mental picture of the keyboard) for both hands while the eyes remain trained on the unfamiliar page.