Challenges of Technique and Interpretation: a Performance Guide to Selected Works by Kevin Bobo

Benjamin Bailey Seabury

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CHALLENGES OF TECHNIQUE AND INTERPRETATION:
A PERFORMANCE GUIDE TO SELECTED WORKS BY KEVIN BOBO

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in
Performance
School of Music
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DEDICATION

For my daughter, Penelope Quinn Seabury.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This document, and this degree, would not have been possible without the help, guidance, and encouragement of many people.

To my major professor, Dr. Scott Herring, thank you for your support and encouragement throughout this degree.

To Dr. T. Adam Blackstock, without your guidance I would not be where I am today. I am forever indebted to you for instilling a passion for percussion, pushing me to be the best I can be, and for introducing me to the music of Kevin Bobo.

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ABSTRACT

Kevin Bobo is an American percussionist and composer whose compositions for marimba consistently expand the technical and musical potential of the instrument. Performance of Bobo’s marimba works requires the performer to utilize specific performance techniques that are departures from standard practices. This study looks in-depth at technical and interpretive challenges present within three works for marimba by Bobo, and provides the performer with detailed explanations and exercises to assist with the performance of the included works. *The Odyssey, According to Penelope*, and Three Etudes are works for solo marimba, while *Prayer for the Broken* is a duet for two marimbas. Each work is distinctive in its harmonic makeup, melodic motifs, and rhythmic patterns. Additionally, each piece explores distinct technical challenges, all of which showcase the breadth of Bobo’s compositional style, justifying their inclusion in this study. Through this study, the author aims to provide percussionists with a greater understanding of his music, thus demystifying it and encouraging increased performance of Bobo’s works.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Kevin Bobo is arguably one of the most important and influential percussionists of our time. He is consistently active as a performer, educator, and clinician. Bobo’s contributions to the marimba solo and chamber percussion repertoire have not only pushed the technical boundaries of percussionists, but also explore completely new techniques creating new sonic, textural, and timbral possibilities.

As a performer, Bobo is in high demand for guest-artist concerts, clinics, and master classes both across the United States and internationally. As a composer, his credits encompass a large collection of music in the field of percussion, ranging from solo repertoire, duets and small ensemble chamber music, a concerto for marimba and orchestra, and percussion ensemble with choir. As an educator, Bobo has taught at some of the finest academic institutions in the United States, including the University of Kansas, and is currently Professor of Percussion at the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University. Additionally, many of Bobo’s students have gone on to become successful professional percussion teachers with successful percussion programs.

The percussion works of Bobo are performed regularly, and the premier soloists and percussion ensembles in both the United States and abroad often program his

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keyboard percussion solos and chamber works. In addition, acclaimed performers, consortia, and ensembles regularly commission music from Bobo, including The James Madison University Percussion Commissioning Project, T. Adam Blackstock, Liam Teague, Indiana University Percussion Ensemble, and the Troy University Percussion Ensemble.

1.1 JUSTIFICATION AND NEED FOR THE STUDY

Kevin Bobo has a very distinct compositional style. Bobo is a percussionist himself, but one would not instantly recognize this fact by studying his compositions. His music does not fit the mold of that composed by the “percussionist/marimbist-composer”: it does not restrict the performer’s hands to specific manuals of the keyboard, or incorporate repetitive, basic, four-mallet permutations, or connect the hands in terms of either rhythmic or harmonic structure. Bobo’s music is idiomatic, exploiting movements and sticking permutations that fluidly travel the length of the keyboard and employ musical patterns that, once familiar, fit comfortably within the player’s hands. His music is technically challenging, often using quick permutations (e.g., double-laterals, triple laterals, single alternating, and double-verticals) that are most easily achievable with the Leigh Howard Stevens four-mallet technique.²

Kevin Bobo’s compositions for marimba consistently expand the technical and musical potential of the instrument. Performance of Bobo’s marimba works requires the performer to utilize specific performance techniques that are departures from standard

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practices. As a result, most percussionists are not familiar with these advanced techniques and will require additional assistance, explanation, and exercises.

This study will look in-depth at the technical and interpretive challenges presented within selected passages from the following marimba works of Kevin Bobo: *Prayer for the Broken; The Odyssey, According to Penelope*; and Three Etudes. Each work is distinctive in its harmonic makeup, melodic motifs, and rhythmic patterns. Additionally, each piece explores distinct technical challenges, all of which showcase the breadth of Bobo’s compositional style, justifying their inclusion in this study. Three Etudes and *The Odyssey, According to Penelope* and are works for solo marimba, while *Prayer for the Broken* is a duet for two marimbas.

Though Bobo is a high-profile composer, educator, and performer, little scholarly work has been written about Bobo’s music or compositional characteristics. While some of his works are programmed frequently, there are others that have yet to break into the canon of the most frequently-performed works. Many of these works contain techniques and compositional approaches that are not only innovative, but also have pedagogical implications. The percussion community would benefit from this recorded research, compositional technique analysis, technical explanation, and practice exercises. The study suggests that the works presented within are of ample musical and technical quality such that they should hold a greater position of prominence in the repertoire of modern percussion performers and educators. The primary objective of this document is to analyze, explain, and provide practice assistance for several of the most difficult passages of Bobo’s music that require the performer to develop extended technical and interpretive vocabulary in performance. Through this, the author aims to provide
percussionists with a greater understanding of his music, thus demystifying it and encouraging increased performance of his works.

1.2 Literature Review

The websites www.percmaster.com and info.music.indiana.edu provide basic information regarding Kevin Bobo’s music and his career. One primary source is Bobo’s four-mallet marimba technique book, *Permutations for the Advanced Marimbist*, published through Keyboard Percussion Publications. In this method book, Bobo exhausts any and every possible permutation that a marimbist could encounter while playing with four mallets. Each of these combinations is then put through a process called downbeat displacement. Downbeat displacement, often referred to as gridding, is a concept that gained popularity in the marching percussion realm, in order to become more familiar with a difficult passage or rudiment. In this process, the performer plays the passage as written, then plays the passage starting on the second note and concluding with the first note, then starting with the third note and concluding with the second, and so on until the performer is once again playing the passage as written. This method book will provide valuable assistance in writing exercises to accompany many of the techniques and passages shown in this document. Sarah E. Smith’s dissertation, “The Development of the Marimba as a Solo Instrument and the Evolution of the Solo Literature for the Marimba” provides valuable insight into the evolution of the solo

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marimba genre, and the impact that this development has on modern composers. As mentioned earlier, there is little scholarly research written about Kevin Bobo’s music. Bobo music does appear in Joseph Millea’s dissertation, “Composing for the Marimba: Tools and Techniques for Composers,” which outlines the many different possibilities of textures and techniques available to the composer when composing a piece for marimba. In this document, an example from Bobo’s composition Ezekiel’s Wheel, for Marimba and Tenor Steel Pan, is shown, showcasing one of Bobo’s unique compositional techniques. In this piece, Bobo utilizes a triple lateral stroke in the right hand, while separating each triple later with only a single independent stroke in the left hand. This technique is a prime example of the techniques that Bobo employs in innovative ways to compose for the instrument. While it does not talk about Bobo’s music or compositional process directly, Colin Hill’s dissertation “The 10,000-Hour Threshold: Interviews with Successful Percussionists” contains an interview with Kevin Bobo concerning his practice habits throughout his career, and the impact he thinks said habits have had on his success. This document helps to provide invaluable insight into performance practice considerations for his music. Kendra McLean’s dissertation, “Improving Note Accuracy and Tone Consistency on Marimba through the Practice of Four-Mallet Chorales,” encourages the incorporation of four-mallet chorales into the daily practice of marimba.

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players in order to improve note accuracy and tone production.\(^9\) This document is valuable in assisting how to organize information regarding practice techniques for the marimba. Kyle M. Forsthoff’s dissertation, “Challenges of Technique and Interpretation in the Percussion Music of Fredrik Andersson: A Performer’s Analysis” is an analysis of Andersson’s music, showcasing the unique compositional voice that Andersson achieves within the percussion realm.\(^10\) This document is helpful to the writer of this study, demonstrating how a successful document of this type should be organized and the scope that this document should encompass. Similarly, Joshua D. Smith’s dissertation, “Extended Performance Techniques and Compositional Style in the Solo Concert Vibraphone Music of Christopher Deane,” explores the unique compositional style of Christopher Deane and the extended techniques incorporated in his music.\(^11\) This document also provides a valuable insight into the proper organization and scope of this type of study. Karlton L. Scott’s dissertation, “Musical and Technical Challenges in Selected Vibraphone Works of Ney Rosauro,” also evaluates passages in Ney Rosauro’s vibraphone music that are musically and technically difficult.\(^12\) This document is also beneficial to this study, providing insight into possible organization, and providing a baseline of the style and depth of the technical exercises to be included in this study.

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\(^9\) Kendra Mclean, “Improving Note Accuracy and Tone Consistency on Marimba through the Practice of Four-Mallet Chorales” (DMA diss., The University of Arizona, 2015). ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.


1.3 Design and Organization of the Study

This study will include six chapters, a bibliography, and appendices. Chapter One will consist of an introduction, justification and need for the study, literature review, methodology, and design and organization of the study. Chapter Two will provide detailed biographical information on Kevin Bobo, valuable information regarding the compositional process and techniques of Kevin Bobo, and will include a list of his compositional output. This chapter will be based heavily on a one-on-one interview to be conducted with Kevin Bobo.

The following three chapters (Chapters Three through Five) will individually address each of the works listed above. These analyses are not intended to be thorough examinations of the construction or musical development of the pieces, and because of this, do not address every aspect of the music. Instead, these chapters will focus on specific challenges that are unique to each work as well as an in-depth look at possible solutions to these challenges. Information regarding said challenges and the possible solutions have been compiled from correspondence with prominent performers familiar with the music of Kevin Bobo, recordings from the composer that are available, and my considerable personal experience commissioning and performing this music.

The final chapter, Chapter Six, will detail how the challenges in Bobo’s music are unique in the solo and duo marimba repertoire, and are worthy of further study, and increased performance. This chapter will also identify additional areas where further research will enrich future performance and understanding of Bobo’s music.
CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 BIOGRAPHY OF KEVIN BOBO

Kevin Bobo was born on September 20, 1974. He credits much of his musical development to his parents, both classically trained pianists, stating that he and his brother were “fed a very steady diet of classical music from an early age.”\(^{13}\) Bobo’s musical journey started at age four, when he started playing the violin. From this early age his parents had him enrolled in lessons, and were encouraging him to practice daily. His father practiced with he and his brother thirty minutes a day each, which he did not care for at the time, but now acknowledges how much of a positive impact that has had on his musical career. During this time, his family moved from Kansas to a small town in Missouri where there was little to no string activity. As an example of how serious his parents took their children’s musical upbringing, they would drive he and his brother two-and-a-half hours one-way just so that they could take violin lessons every Saturday.\(^ {14}\)

Bobo’s journey in percussion started when he was nine years old when his parents allowed him to take snare drum lessons with Al Sergel III, who was the Director of Band at Northwest Missouri State University. These lessons were only supposed to be for the

\(^{13}\) Kevin Bobo, interview with the author, February 22, 2019.

\(^{14}\) Ibid.
summer, but his parents quickly noticed that they did not have to encourage him to practice snare drum, and allowed him to continue (while still playing violin, of course). Drum set was incorporated a year or two later, and Bobo discontinued the violin at age twelve.\textsuperscript{15}

Later that same year, Leigh Howard Stevens, world-renowned marimbist and Malletech founder, came to the small town of Maryville, Missouri to perform a solo concert on marimba. At the recommendation of his teacher, Bobo attended to the concert, and was able to meet Stevens afterward. It was after this concert that Bobo decided he wanted to play marimba. As luck would have it, Tom Wubbenhorst came to Northwest Missouri State University as a sabbatical replacement for Sergel. Wubbenhorst, a student of Leigh Howard Stevens, introduced Bobo to the four-mallet technique that was so enthralling during Stevens’ recital. At Wubbenhorst’s suggestion, Bobo purchased Stevens’ \textit{Method of Movement}, a guide to holding four-mallets using Stevens’ technique.\textsuperscript{16} Like many twelve-year-olds might, Bobo did not read the thirty-plus pages of introduction thoroughly explaining the grip and its intricacies, and instead immediately started playing the exercises located later in the book. Bobo credits many of the “bad habits” that he developed while working out of this book as cornerstones that define his technique (such as comfortably reaching large interval in both hands).\textsuperscript{17} During his high school years, he was under the direction of Lee Snyder, who unbeknownst to Bobo was a student of Clair Omar Musser. While Bobo never studied marimba with Snyder, he

\textsuperscript{15} Kevin Bobo, interview with the author, February 22, 2019.
\textsuperscript{17} Kevin Bobo, interview with the author, February 22, 2019.
credits Snyder with providing him a fantastic musical foundation, allowing him many opportunities he would have otherwise not had.

During his undergraduate degree at Wichita State University, Bobo studied percussion with J.C. Combs. While there, he also studied with Walter Maze, a theory professor and composer Bobo cites as having an important impact on his compositional career.\(^{18}\) While at WSU, Bobo composed many of his early works for marimba, including *Rhythmic Jambalaya*, *Balaphuge*, and part of the *Seven Days*. Bobo then went on to receive his Master’s of Music at Ithaca College, studying under internationally renowned composer/marimbist and Percussive Arts Society (PAS) Hall of Fame member Gordon Stout. The years studying with Stout undoubtedly made a lasting impact on Bobo both as a performer and as a composer.\(^{19}\)

As a performer, Bobo is an internationally acclaimed marimbist and percussionist. He has presented solo recitals, concertos and clinics at many universities and percussion festivals across the United States, and on five continents.\(^{20}\) He has been invited to perform at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC) on multiple occasions, the most recent being a Keyboard Showcase Concert in 2011. He has recorded three solo marimba discs, *Marimba Jambalaya* (1998), *Chronicles* (2006), and *Boboland* (2010).

Professionally, Bobo served as the Assistant Professor of Percussion at the University of Kansas from 2003 to 2007. Currently, Bobo serves as Professor of

\(^{18}\) Ibid.
\(^{19}\) Ibid.
Percussion at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, a position he has held since 2007.\textsuperscript{21} As a composer, his works have been performer all over the world, and are frequently included in required repertoire of many international competitions. He has written works for a variety of instrumentations, including solo, percussion ensemble, mixed chamber, and solo percussion with orchestra.

2.2 COMPOSITIONAL STYLE AND TECHNIQUES OF KEVIN BOBO

The compositional style of Kevin Bobo is a unique voice in the percussion world. Bobo’s music is tonal and consonant, with flashes of playful ornamentation and dissonance. Bobo’s compositional output for marimba at the time of writing this document can be classified into three different periods. The first period encompasses his early works, most of which were written during his undergraduate and Master’s degrees. Bobo refers to this era as his “Smadbeckian” era. This term pays homage to the percussion composer Paul Smadbeck, many of whose works are very clearly pattern based and permutation based, moving these permutations around the marimba. Some of the works from this era include, \textit{Balaphuge}, \textit{Rhythmic Jambalaya}, and \textit{French Flies}. These compositions were primarily composed at the marimba, rely heavily on various lateral stroke permutations, and focus on pushing the technical boundaries of the performer. The overlapping lateral strokes can be clearly seen in his work \textit{Balaphuge} for solo marimba, shown in Example 2.1.

The second period of Bobo’s music comes from the time he spent freelancing (1999-2003). This “Freelance” era marks a shift in his compositional process. In this period, he became less concerned with the technical aspect of the music, and more concerned with the melodic and harmonic content as well as the overall direction of the piece.\textsuperscript{22} During this period, Bobo composed \textit{Two Fountains, Seven Days,} and \textit{Marriage of the Lamb,} to name a few. Bobo has stated that Impressionist music has had a profound impact on his compositional style, specifically the music of Claude Debussy.\textsuperscript{23} This impact of this compositional period can be seen throughout this era, specifically \textit{Two Fountains,} as seen in Example 2.2.

\begin{example}
\textit{Balaphuge} mm. 1-8
\end{example}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Balaphuge.png}
\caption{Example 2.1 \textit{Balaphuge} mm. 1-8}
\end{figure}

\textit{Balaphuge} by Kevin Bobo
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\textsuperscript{22} Kevin Bobo, interview with the author, February 22, 2019.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
The final era encompasses all works from 2003 to the writing of this document, including *Ella Babella McMella Barbarella, Elements, and The Odyssey, According to Penelope*. This era is where his compositional voice came into full effect, and shows the full capabilities of Bobo’s compositional prowess, from flashy to delicate and everything in between. In 2003 Bobo composed his first piece for percussion ensemble, which marked a shift in his compositional process. Up until this point, he had primarily composed his pieces while at the marimba; in 2003 he moved away from this. Bobo also states that he did not want the computer to dictate or determine the direction of his music either.

“I felt like my hands and my ears were always going to the same place. I felt like the only way I’m going to grow as a composer and really a performer too, at least playing my own music, was to step away from the instrument and start trying to compose away from the instrument. I wanted to let my ear determine where the music went. I now actually get a lot of ideas from when I’m jogging—thinking of
phrases, melodies or chord progressions. If I can remember what it was by the
time I get to work, then it was a good idea and worth remembering.”

*The Odyssey, According to Penelope*, to be addressed in detail later in Chapter 4,
represents much of the culmination of his writing style to this point through the
incorporation of many different techniques and styles.

The percussion ensemble writing of Bobo is also unique relative to other music
for the percussion. Many of these works employ innovative techniques, and are written
for a wide variety of instrumentations. While these works are not the focus of this
document, many of the techniques that Bobo has employed in his solo marimba works
appear in his works for percussion ensemble. For example, the pitch bending effect from
“Lament” from the Three Etudes, discussed in detail in Chapter Three of this document,
is also seen in his work for four marimbas, *Musée*. Bobo states that while “Lament”
utilizes the pitch bending effect well, *Musée* perfects it. This effect is shown in Example
2.3, with the pitch bending effect notated with brackets around the notes.

Example 2.3 *Musée*, mm. 149-154

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24 Ibid.
In addition to his works for percussion ensemble, Bobo has a growing list of works for marimba duo: *Prayer for the Broken*, *Drifting*, and *Peas and Carrots*. Bobo states that he believes the marimba duo is the “best medium” for exploring the possibilities of the marimba, and feels that this is the easiest music for him to write. With two players, the compositional possibilities open up considerably.

### 2.3 List of Compositional Output

**Table 2.1 List of Kevin Bobo Published Compositional Output**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Instrumentation</th>
<th>Commission Notes</th>
<th>Publication Company</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<td><em>Triangulum</em></td>
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<td>PercMaster Publications</td>
<td>2017</td>
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<td>Sabrina Vasquez and The Wichita State University Dance Department.</td>
<td>PercMaster Publications</td>
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Table 2.2 List of Kevin Bobo Unpublished Compositional Output

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<td>Percussion Duo</td>
<td>Commissioned by Dr. Adam Blackstock and the Troy University Percussion Ensemble</td>
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<td>Adventures of Eli</td>
<td>Solo Marimba</td>
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<td>Domestic Birds</td>
<td>Percussion Orchestra</td>
<td>For the Indiana University Percussion Ensemble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drifting</td>
<td>Marimba Duo</td>
<td>Commissioned by the BluHill Duo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swarm</td>
<td>Percussion Quartet</td>
<td>Commissioned by the University of Northern Iowa Percussion Ensemble</td>
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<td>The Corner of Disappearing Names</td>
<td>Choir, Piano &amp; Percussion Quartet</td>
<td>Commission by Dr. James Brown and the Troy University Collegiate Singers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Architecture of a Dream</td>
<td>Concerto for Marimba &amp; Wind Ensemble</td>
<td>Consortium led by Messiah College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origins and Expansions</td>
<td>Concerto for Steel Pan &amp; Wind Ensemble</td>
<td>Commissioned by Liam Teague and Dr. Wally Park.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apple Tree</td>
<td>Choir and Percussion Quartet</td>
<td>Commissioned by Franklin Jennings, Christina Torez, Tesfa Wondemagegnehu, and Edward Rothmel</td>
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<tr>
<td>House of Mirrors</td>
<td>Mixed Winds, Percussion, Harp, &amp; Keyboard</td>
<td>Commissioned by Dr. John Lynch and the University of Georgia Wind Ensemble</td>
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CHAPTER THREE

THREE ETUDES

Three Etudes consists of three short movements, “Tori’s Waltz,” “Lament,” and “Pendulum.” These Etudes were not conceived as a set of pieces, but rather were grouped together over time. When asked about the title of this group of pieces, Bobo replied, “What do you do when you can’t think of anything to call something, you call it an etude.”

Bobo composed the first movement “Tori’s Waltz” during his Master’s degree at Ithaca College. This movement was originally planned to be the second movement of another piece, Gordon’s Bicycle, but was later replaced. “Tori’s Waltz” explores many difficult techniques on the marimba that will also be discussed in Chapter Five, therefore they will be omitted here.

“Lament,” the second movement of Kevin Bobo’s Three Etudes, consists entirely of rolled passages, and explores a variety of roll techniques available on the marimba. The roll techniques that are implemented are: ‘traditional’ rolls (i.e. double vertical rolls or single independent rolls), ‘double lateral’ rolls, and ‘independent’ rolls. One additional roll technique that is not specifically a roll type, but a way in which to play a roll, is the glissando technique that is prevalent in this movement and other Bobo works. This technique in particular is distinctive to the writing of Bobo, and is described by the

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26 Ibid.
composer as follows: “Glissandos should be played as lights rolls, rather than a scraping of the mallet across the bars. . . the performer should strive to produce a sound as close to the bending of pitch as possible.”27

This glissando technique was inspired by the composer’s interaction with Gordon Stout’s “Etude No. 1.”28 There is a specific section of the piece, near the mid point, that to Bobo’s ear, sounded as if the pitches were almost bending together, despite the fact that there are no rolls whatsoever in the piece. One can hear this illusion of pitch bending on Stout’s recording of this piece, due to the resonance and reverberation in the hall of the recording. This phenomenon of pitch bending intrigued Bobo, inspiring him to experiment with the technique during his Master’s degree.29 Through this experimentation, the glissando effect expanded from just the double vertical strokes that are seen in Stout’s “Etude No. 1” to the variety of roll techniques that are present in “Lament.”

“Pendulum” is the third and final movement of Bobo’s Three Etudes. This movement places great emphasis on the lateral stroke techniques of the performer, specifically left hand lateral strokes. This movement came about simply out of necessity, as a way for Bobo to improve his technique and dexterity on the marimba. Bobo found that while there were many different pieces that explored the lateral stroke techniques primarily in the right hand, far fewer works explored those same techniques using primarily the left hand.30

29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
3.1 **Musical and Technical Considerations in “Lament”**

The *glissando* effects that are present in this movement appear in a variety of ways, using many different roll techniques mentioned above. The first of these is in the second measure, with implementation of a *glissando* in a single independent roll, or a roll between two singular mallets of opposite hands. Example 3.1 shows this notation with a straight line connecting the two notes between which Bobo desires a *glissando*.

Example 3.1 Single Independent Roll *glissando* in Lament,” m. 2

![Example notation](image)

Three Etudes, *Lament* by Kevin Bobo  
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The *glissando* here is achieved by first rolling on the B natural note, then quickly, but gently, striking every note ascending the keyboard to Eb (C, C#, D) before continuing the single independent roll. The key to successfully achieving the *glissando* effect in this instance is to not over play the notes in between the B-natural and the E-flat. Over playing these notes will result in the C, C-sharp, and D sounding like they are a triplet-based pick-up to the Eb, and the effect will be lost.

The second type of *glissando* effect in “Lament,” utilizes grace notes within a single independent roll. Example 3.2 shows this notation: a traditional roll notation, and grace notes within the left hand.
Example 3.2 Grace Note *glissando* in “Lament,” m. 2

This technique is applied to many of the same concepts discussed in Example 3.1, with the major difference being the left hand is the sole contributor to the glissando effect. The performer will start with a single independent roll alternating strokes between the left hand on Eb and the right hand on A. Then the performer’s left hand will shift positions, lightly tapping the E-natural while ascending to F, all while continuing to alternate with the A-natural in the right hand. This process repeats through to the end of the bar, with the left hand moving between Eb, and F, and the right hand changing without a glissando effect between A and C.

This technique is expanded upon in measure 4, implementing all four mallets in a double vertical roll, while producing the *glissando* effect within just the inner mallets, mallets 2 and 3. This notation is shown in Example 3.3.
Example 3.3 Double Vertical Roll *glissando* in “Lament,” m. 4

The *glissando* effect here is achieved solely through the use of the inner most mallets, mallets 2 and 3 respectively, while the outermost mallets stay on their respective notes throughout. The first thing to consider in this section is mallet positioning on the marimba; without this the performer will find it very difficult to achieve the desired effect. Figure 3.1 shows the proper alignment of all four mallets.

Figure 3.1 Mallet Positioning in “Lament,” m. 4

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This technique is achieved by performing a traditional double vertical roll. The performer should maintain the outermost mallets on their respective notes (Db and F), and move the inner two mallets between C and D. Using the mallet positioning shown in Figure 3.1 will enable the performer to move seamlessly between the C and D, while executing the grace note *glissando* on C# with the left hand. Mallets 2 and 3 will both start in unison on C, and then both move to D, with the grace note played quickly before starting the unison roll on D. This grace note is to be performed just like Example 3.2, lightly tapping the C# while switching notes to the D. Exercise 3.1 below is a strategy to work on the intricacies of this technique. This exercise breaks down the exact moment when mallet 2 moves from C, to C#, to D in a sixteenth note fashion, while also incorporating the double vertical stroke in the right hand changing from C-F to D-F. Working on this exercise will assist the performer in creating fluidity of motion while executing the grace note *glissando* technique within a double vertical roll.

**Exercise 3.1 Double Vertical *glissando* exercise**

This grace note *glissando* is expanded upon once more in measure 5, continuing into measure 6. Here, the roll technique implemented is an independent roll, or ‘one-handed roll’ as it is often referred to. The right hand is playing an independent roll on a
dyad between F and Ab, and the left hand, specifically mallet 2, plays a grace note lightly and quickly on F# while the right hand changes notes to a dyad between G and Bb. Bobo notates this technique with a circular shape on the stem of the note, as shown in Example 3.3.

Example 3.4 Independent Roll glissando in “Lament,” m. 5

This process repeats once more to move the right hand to A and Db. This technique continues throughout measure 6, alternating between the right hand and left hand each performing independent rolls, with the opposite hand executing the grace note glissando effect.

Body positioning and mallet positioning is very important to execute this glissando effect correctly. The performer will want their right elbow to be away from the body, with their right hand/arm pointed toward the lower end of the marimba, as if it is running parallel to the support rails of the marimba. This will allow mallets 3 and 4 to play comfortably on the off-center playing positions on F and Ab, respectively, while not interfering with the mallet 2 of the left hand playing the grace note. Figure 3.2 shows an example of this body positioning.
In order to achieve fluidity on this technique, the performer must first have complete control of an independent roll. An in-depth explanation of the independent roll is available in Chapter 5 of this document, along with exercises to assist with building the independent roll. In this instance, it is important to analyze exactly which order the notes need to sound in order to achieve a *glissando* effect from F to G and G to A. For a true *glissando* effect to be achieved here, the notes F, F#, and G need to be struck in immediate succession. This translates to mallets 2, 3, and 2, respectively. This means that the independent roll in the right hand will pause briefly after mallet 3 has struck the F, allow the F# to be played with mallet 2, and then quickly resume starting with mallet 3.

Exercise 3.2 is a breakdown of one way to practice this sequence of notes. This exercise will need to be played quite slowly at first, to ensure that the notes are played in the correct order, and *glissando* effect will be achieved. Once this exercise is comfortable
to the performer, they should then begin adjusting the weight with which they strike the grace notes, to begin to smooth out the desired *glissando* effect.

Exercise 3.2 One-Handed Roll *glissando* exercise

![Glissando Exercise](image)

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The final *glissando* technique that Bobo implements within “Lament” appears in the last measure. Here, he uses the double lateral roll, or ‘Musser’ roll as it is sometimes referred, descending the marimba to unison roll on A. This notation is marked with an ‘S’ on the stem of the note, as shown in Example 3.5.

Example 3.5 Double Lateral Roll *glissando* in “Lament,” m. 15

![Double Lateral Roll](image)

Three Etudes, *Lament* by Kevin Bobo
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While it is not clearly marked in the score, the performer should play this passage with one hand on each manual of the marimba. Though either configuration will work, the more practical approach places the right hand on the upper manual of the instrument, with the left hand on the lower. In this instance, the right hand starts with mallet 3 on G# and mallet 4 on Bb, and the left hand starts with mallet 1 on A natural and mallet 2 on Cb. The performer then plays a standard double lateral roll, starting with the outside mallets, as shown in Exercise 3.3. The glissando here should last the entirety of a half note.

Exercise 3.3 Double Lateral Roll

This section is difficult to achieve a true glissando effect throughout the descending roll. It is imperative that the performer plays the notes strong enough to resonate, but lightly enough to eliminate as much contact sound as possible. The listener should not be able to hear each of the bars being struck individually. To assist playing the marimba lightly with little to no contact sound, the performer should angle their hands so that mallet is striking the bar with the softest portion of the mallet. This process is shown in Figure 3.3.
The performer should also be conscious of the gap that is between the F# and the Eb in the right hand while descending. This will require the performer to seamlessly adjust the interval they are holding while they are performing the double lateral roll. Correct execution of this double lateral roll *glissando* will result in a wash of sound, in which the listener will not be able to distinguish specific pitches. The only pitch that should be clear is the A natural that the descending line finishes on. It is important to also note that Bobo distinguishes that the roll on the A natural should be played as a traditional roll, meaning that this will not be a single independent roll. This roll is ideally played between mallet 2 and mallet 3, in order to minimize the amount of contact noise created by the mallets. This entire double lateral *glissando* effect is repeated twice more in measure 15, with a marked decrescendo to *niente* and a *ritardando*. This repetitive sequence should be almost inaudible by the conclusion of the measure.
While all of the previously mentioned techniques and exercises are crucial to achieving the desired glissando effect, perhaps just as crucial is the choice of mallet. Bobo suggests the performer use a very soft mallet, such as the Malletech Michael Burritt MB0, which is the softest available mallet in the Michael Burritt signature series. This mallet produces a great amount of fundamental pitch from the marimba bar, while also creating minimal contact noise when the mallet strikes the bar, especially at lower dynamic levels.

3.2 Musical and Technical Considerations in “Pendulum”

“Pendulum” opens with an alternating double lateral stroke in the left hand, with a single independent mallet 3 in the right hand. Four measures later, Bobo adds double laterals in the right hand, offset by one sixteenth note. These opening measures can be seen in Example 3.5. This pendulum motion is the central theme of the movement, although some additional lateral permutations are present.

Example 3.6 Alternating and Overlapping Lateral Strokes in “Pendulum,” mm. 1-7

Three Etudes, Pendulum by Kevin Bobo © Copyright 2006 by Keyboard Percussion Publications Reprinted by permission

This opening permutation of alternating double laterals in the left hand is not inherently difficult in concept, but Bobo complicates the motion by placing mallet 1 and mallet 2 a major second apart. Adding to this, Bobo layers the right hand using the same lateral strokes in an overlapping manner, offset by one sixteenth note. To further complicate this, mallets 3 and 4 of the right hand are also set at a major second apart. Lastly, the written dynamic for the initial entrance of the overlapped lateral strokes is marked \textit{ppp}. Lateral strokes at tight intervals can be a very difficult technique to master for a marimbist of any caliber. Overlapped lateral strokes on a tight interval, at a very soft dynamic, increases the difficulty level significantly.

To gain the technical ability to perform these small interval overlapped lateral strokes, the performer must first have a concrete knowledge of the rotation in the wrist associated with these strokes. The performer can then slowly begin to integrate various technical exercises to develop the technique. Each of these exercises in this section will be from Bobo’s marimba technique book, \textit{Permutations for the Advanced Marimbist}. Throughout these exercises, the concept of ‘downbeat displacement’ is implemented, which Bobo describes as follows:

\begin{quote}
“Take for example, a paradiddle. Note that when it is spoke, ‘Par-a-did-dle,’ it contains four syllables. Hence four different downbeat variations are possible. Now start the work on the second syllable and the result is ‘A-did-dle-par.’ Continue the process two more times and the result will be ‘Did-dle-par-a’ and ‘Dle-par-a-did.’ The word then recycles itself when displaced a fourth time.”
\end{quote}

Practicing with this method of ‘downbeat displacement’ helps facilitate the performer’s fluidity while playing the selected permutation. Also of note is the notation

\begin{flushright}
\end{flushright}
used in these exercises. Bobo uses a “‘grid-style’ system of notation where each individual mallet is assigned its own line on the staff,”\(^{33}\) as seen in Figure 3.3. This notation grants more freedom to the performer while practicing these permutations, allowing them to play each permutation in a variety of positions and intervals.

Figure 3.4 Mallet Assignments in *Permutations for the Advanced Marimbist*

![Diagram showing mallet assignments in a grid-style notation]

*Permutations for the Advanced Marimbist* by Kevin Bobo  
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The performer should practice the permutation-based exercises in this chapter and others at a variety of intervals. First, the performer should play at a comfortable interval (i.e. a fourth, or a fifth), then moving inward chromatically until they reach a minor second. This process should also be repeated, moving outward chromatically to an octave or, if possible, an even greater interval.

In regards to playing small intervals, such as minor seconds, Bobo has a very specific process and technique.

“It is important to never hold the interval that you are playing [when playing small intervals]. Meaning that if you are going to play a double lateral mallet 3 to mallet 4, like a C to a D major second, you should not hold the mallets one whole step apart. You should actually hold them a fourth apart and swing mallet 3 to mallet 4 to where your wrist kind of hooks, your right hand kind of hooks a little bit, almost like a forehand. Then, if it is mallet 4 to mallet 3 the other way, it would be like a backhand. If you can master knowing how to move your entire hand in order to execute the technique at a wider interval, you can get more sound and play faster.”

In this process of holding a larger interval in the hand than you are playing, it is imperative that the performer is executing a proper wrist rotation during the lateral stroke. Failure to properly rotate the wrist while performing these lateral strokes is not recommended, and if done incorrectly, could lead to injury.

Before attempting to play the overlapped permutation found in “Pendulum,” the performer must develop control of the double lateral permutations in a variety of settings. The first of these is double laterals moving in the same direction, as shown in Exercise 3.4, then double lateral strokes moving in alternating directions, as shown in Exercise 3.5.

Exercise 3.4 Double Lateral Permutation exercise from *Permutations for the Advanced Marimbist*, section VII, exercise A.

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34 Kevin Bobo, interview with the author, February 22, 2019.
Exercise 3.5 Double Lateral Permutation exercise from *Permutations for the Advanced Marimbist*, section VII, exercise E.

Once the two previous exercises are comfortable, the performer can then move to overlapping the lateral strokes, as seen in “Pendulum.” There are two issues that can arise when lateral strokes are overlapped. First, for each hand, the recovery time for the first lateral stroke before moving to the next alternate lateral stroke is reduced by half. The performer should be conscious of this, and reduce any excess motion that could hinder the alternating lateral strokes in each hand from flowing smoothly and freely. Second, the overlapping of the permutations also results in two double stops played between mallet 2 and mallet 4, and mallet 1 and mallet 3, respectively. The result of this overlapping lateral permutation often leads to the resultant rhythm sounding unnecessarily busy, due to the double-stops being played as grace notes or flams, rather than true double-stops. To address this, the performer should strive to have both mallets in these double-stops hit their respective marimba bar as close to the exact same time as possible. This is simple in concept, but difficult in execution. Exercise 3.6 shows a breakdown of the overlapping lateral permutation.
Exercise 3.6 Overlapped Double Lateral Permutation exercise from *Permutations for the Advanced Marimbist*, section XII, exercise I.

Measure 46 of “Pendulum” presents another lateral stoke permutation that is worth noting. Here, the left hand is playing alternating single independent strokes, while the right hand is playing alternating triple lateral strokes. The manner in which these strokes are combined is a distinct compositional element of Bobo’s music, and one that is seen in a variety of his works, some of which are also included in this document. Triple lateral strokes, to most players, are naturally easier when starting with mallet 2 and mallet 3, the inside mallets, using the sticking 2-1-2 or 3-4-3, respectively. The performer must first be comfortable playing both types of triple lateral strokes in both hands. Exercises 3.7 and 3.8 show an inside triple lateral permutation, as well as an outside triple lateral permutation, respectively. It is also helpful for the performer to be comfortable playing alternating triple lateral strokes in both hands, as seen in Exercise 3.9. This technique is found in measure 59.
Exercise 3.7 Triple Lateral Permutation exercise from *Permutations for the Advanced Marimbist*, section VIII, exercise A.

Exercise 3.8 Triple Lateral Permutation exercise from *Permutations for the Advanced Marimbist*, section VIII, exercise B.
Once comfortable with all variations of the triple lateral stroke, the performer can move to playing the resultant rhythm from measure 46. Exercise 3.9 is a breakdown of this lateral permutation. Eliminating any excess motion in the triple lateral stroke of the right hand is imperative to performing this permutation with success. The right hand has only one sixteenth note to recover and start the alternate triple lateral stroke.
Exercise 3.10 Triple Lateral/Single Alternating Permutation exercise from *Permutations for the Advanced Marimbist*, section X, exercise A.

In addition to all of the technical considerations presented here, the performer should also choose a mallet of considerable hardness in order for the articulation of these intricate overlapping permutations to be heard by the audience. Malletech’s Kevin Bobo KB11 mallets are a great choice for this. These mallets are constructed with a plastic core, with layers of rubber and latex, wrapped in a durable nylon string. These mallets have a heavier weight than most mallets, but that allows the performer to get a great fundamental tone from the marimba bar, even at low dynamics. This weight also helps to facilitate the lateral strokes found in this piece.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE ODYSSEY, ACCORDING TO PENEOPE

The Odyssey, According to Penelope is in five movements: “Afternoon at the Park,” “Toddling Waltz,” “Babble Songs,” “Naptime Prelude,” and “Run Amok Rondo.” This piece is dedicated and inspired by Bobo’s daughter, Penelope Joy Bobo, not the Greek character. The five movements are meant to show different images throughout childhood to which both children and parents can relate. When composing this piece, Bobo initially set out to create medium difficulty children’s songs, but then he received a call to have a Showcase Concert at the 2011 Percussive Arts Society International Convention in Indianapolis. Upon receiving this phone call, Bobo recalls, “The piece took on an entirely different direction, becoming this ridiculous thing that nobody can play.”

The first movement of The Odyssey, According to Penelope is entitled “Afternoon at the Park.” This movement is very light-hearted in character, with the majority of the movement occurring in the upper register of the marimba. The primary challenge throughout this movement comes from the independence that is required of each hand.

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Bobo also challenges the performer with small interval single alternating strokes in the right hand.

The second movement is entitled “Toddling Waltz.” As the title suggests, this movement features a waltz-like theme that appears multiple times throughout the movement, depicting a small child attempting to walk. This movement involves many techniques that will challenge the performer not only technically but musically as well. While many of Bobo’s pieces challenge the performer technically, this movement in particular will push the small interval control of the performer to new limits, while also implementing other difficult techniques simultaneously.

The third movement, “Babble Songs,” depicts the babbling of young children as they are first learning to speak. The depiction of this ‘babbling’ is accomplished through the right hand playing constant sixteenth note single alternating strokes, while placing the melody in the left hand. The performer’s endurance will be challenged with this movement.

The title of the fourth movement, “Naptime Prelude,” suggests that this movement will be a gentle lullaby, one that would help a small child calm down for a nap. This assumption could not be further from the truth. Instead, Bobo chose to depict the “pre-nap battles” with his daughter. While this movement is the shortest of the piece, it packs quite a punch, constantly accelerating through to the end. The independence required in this movement is substantial, and true to form, there are many instances of small interval lateral techniques. Bobo ends this movement with a

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rambunctious section of double vertical strokes in both hands that will present quite the challenge to the performer.

“Run Amok Rondo” is a sprint from start to finish for the performer. This movement roughly follows a semi-traditional rondo form with alternating episodes. The primary episode of this movement, encapsulating the energy of a toddler running at full speed around the house, implements very small interval repeating double vertical strokes. This alternates with a “quasi-ragtime” episode that is considerably slower. The third episode is meant to imitate a calliope, utilizing a similar technique to one seen in “Pendulum,” a single independent stroke in the left hand, with repeating 3 – 4 – 3 triple lateral strokes in the right hand. The movement, and therefore the entire Odyssey ends in a flourish of notes, implementing many different lateral permutations that push the performer to their technical and physical limit.

4.1 Musical and Technical Considerations in “Afternoon at the Park”

The primary challenge throughout this movement is the independence required of each hand: the left hand primarily plays an accompaniment role, while the right hand contains the majority of melodic line. The separation of hands for an entire piece or movement is not something common in marimba literature written by percussionists. Additionally, the recurring melody in this movement involves moving sixteenth notes, thirty-second note pickups, and also a one-handed trill in the right hand between C# and D natural. The middle section of this piece also includes an extended melodic line in the right hand involving tight interval lateral strokes. These techniques require the performer
to have great command of many different permutations, such as quick triple lateral, right-handed independent rolls, and extremely small interval lateral strokes.

The technical challenges of this movement appear quickly, with the difficult right-hand melodic line mentioned above starting in m. 2. Body positioning and mallet positioning are both very important to execute this measure properly. The performer will want their right elbow to be away from the body, with their right elbow pointed toward the upper end of the marimba, as if their forearm is running parallel to the support rails of the marimba. This will allow mallet 3 to comfortably play on the ‘natural’ notes, while mallet 4 is on the ‘sharp’ notes. This positioning is further complicated by the left hand accompaniment here, which is playing over a full octave lower than the right hand. While this body and mallet positioning is most comfortable to the performer with the right forearm generally in front of their torso, the right forearm will have to be away from the torso, in order for the left hand to reach the lower octave notes during this phrase.

Example 4.1 Right Hand Melodic Line in “Afternoon at the Park,” m. 2

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The thirty-second note pickup into beat three of measure two is accomplished by the performer executing a triple lateral stroke in the right hand, with the sticking 3 – 4 – 3. This triple lateral stroke is complicated by the semi chromatic nature of the melodic line here. In order to best execute this stroke, the arm must move simultaneously with the triple lateral stroke. Taking into account the body positioning mentioned earlier, the arm is pointing down the marimba, in line with the support rails. Therefore, the performer will want to imagine pulling their arm, from the elbow, in a straight line up the keyboard, which will help execute the B – C# – D triple lateral stroke.

In mm. 6-9, the left hand contains the melodic line, while the right hand is playing a rising accompaniment. This left hand line is quite tricky due to the intervallic leaps, as well as the step-wise motion, and the way in which these figures are placed on the marimba. Here, the performer should use the two mallets in their hand to their advantage, and not solely rely on mallet 2. An effective sticking for this passage is shown in Example 4.2.

Example 4.2 Left Hand Melodic Line in “Afternoon at the Park,” mm. 6-7
Starting in m. 20, the right hand plays a very intricate melody containing single alternating strokes written as thirty-second notes only a major second apart, while the left hand plays only a repeating eighth note E, as seen in Example 4.3.

Example 4.3 Single Alternating Stroke Right Hand Melody in “Afternoon at the Park,” mm. 20-22.

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The first thing of note here is that the left hand, while continuing to play steady eighth notes throughout, is available to assist the right hand. Utilizing mallet 2 sparingly, while mallet 1 plays the eighth note pulse helps to make this passage substantially easier. The suggested sticking incorporating mallet 2 of the left hand within the right hand melody is also shown in Example 4.3. Mallets of the opposite hand are marked with parenthesis, for clarification.

As with all lateral strokes, it is imperative that the performer be mindful of the rotation of the wrist involved in the single alternating stroke. The rotation of the wrist back and forth in a smooth and unobstructed motion will greatly assist in the successful mastery of this lateral stroke type. As in previous chapters, exercises from Permutations for the Advanced Marimbist assist in developing this technique. Exercise 4.1 works on
this single alternating stroke with hands separate, while Exercise 4.2 works the stroke with both hands playing together. In order for the performer to properly execute a single alternating stroke at an extremely small interval, as seen here in the thirty-second note passages, the performer must first have control of this stroke at a comfortable interval, i.e. a fourth or a fifth. As in previous chapter’s exercises, the performer should start at this comfortable interval, moving inward toward the minor second, and outward to an octave.

Exercise 4.1 Single Alternating Permutation exercise from *Permutations for the Advanced Marimbist*, section VI, exercise A.

Exercise 4.2 Single Alternating Permutation exercise from *Permutations for the Advanced Marimbist*, section VI, exercise B.
This melodic motif in the right hand occurs twice more, mm. 24-27 and mm. 31-34. Both of these instances, while similar to mm. 20-22, contain longer passages of single alternating strokes. The performer should implement the same techniques shown for Example 4.3, utilizing the left hand, specifically mallet 2, to help efficiently execute the passages.

Another important consideration for the performer, in addition to the technical exercises and challenges presented above, is mallet choice. The performer should choose a mallet of considerable hardness for the upper three voices: mallets 2, 3, and 4. This will enable the performer to execute the intricate thirty-second note phrases with ease. Malletech’s Kevin Bobo KB14 mallets are a great choice for this situation. For the lowest voice, mallet 1, the performer should choose a mallet slightly softer than those in the other voices. Choosing a mallet in this way will enable the performer to have distinction between mallet 1 and the remaining mallets, as well as allowing mallets 1 and 2 to blend easily when needed. Malletech’s Kevin Bobo KB11 mallets would work well here, and blend with the right hand mallets suggested above.

4.2 Musical and Technical Considerations in “Toddlng Waltz”

This movement depicts the attempts of a small child learning to walk through dotted rhythms of many varieties, which are to be played with a slight swing throughout, not strictly as notated. Short, quick trills are frequently used and generally played with a triple lateral stroke, to emphasize the uneasiness of a child learning to walk. Both of these thematic elements appear in the first few measures, as seen in Example 4.4. The performer will want to keep the triple lateral stroke very short, as to keep the rhythmic
integrity of the sixty-fourth notes as written. To facilitate this stroke, the performer should angle their right arm so that the mallets are facing toward the end of the marimba, with the mallet shafts running parallel to the support rails of the marimba.

Example 4.4 Dotted Rhythms and Triple Lateral trill in “Toddling Waltz” mm. 1-2

![Example Music]

The passage in mm. 9 and 10 will require much attention from the performer. This passage, while possible playing repetitive single independent strokes, is much more attainable when utilizing the sticking shown in Example 4.4. The double lateral strokes shown here will allow the performer to move more freely through the intervallic jumps, while also allowing for an accurate interpretation of the dotted rhythms with more of a swing feel. Exercise 4.3 assists the performer in gaining facility of the alternating double lateral strokes seen in the second measure of Example 4.4.
The first true waltz is felt in mm. 17-18, with the left hand playing the large beats of a 5/8 measure and the right hand playing the upbeats. The very next measure, this is interrupted by a repeating dotted figure in the left hand. For this passage, the performer should utilize the sticking shown in Example 4.6. This will require the performer to position their left hand and arm in such a way so that mallet 1 is playing G, while mallet 2 is playing F#, which is actually a half step lower. To accomplish this, the left elbow will be quite close to the body, while the forearm and wrist are pointing directly toward the bass end of the marimba, allowing the mallet shafts to run parallel to the support rails.
of the marimba. While this may seem counterintuitive, utilizing this sticking will create continuity within the dotted figures present elsewhere in the figure, as well as contribute to a more relaxed sound through this passage. This same concept is applied in measure 30, as seen in Example 4.7.

Example 4.6 “Toddling Waltz” m. 19

Example 4.7 “Toddling Waltz” m. 30

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The overlapping of lateral strokes appears for the first time in this movement in measure 54. Here, Bobo utilizes the $3 - 4 - 3$ triple lateral stroke overlapping with the $2 - 1 - 2$ triple lateral stroke by one beat, shown in Example 4.8. While this is a common compositional technique of Bobo’s, the dotted rhythm here complicates the fluidity of the stroke, increasing the difficulty. In order to correctly play this overlapping permutation in a dotted rhythm, the performer must master the permutation in a straight rhythm, as seen in Exercise 4.4.

Example 4.8 “Toddling Waltz” m. 55

Exercise 4.4 Overlapping Triple Lateral Strokes Exercise from Permutations for the Advanced Marimbist, Section XIV, Exercise B

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The final page of “Toddling Waltz” starts with a ‘cadenza-like’ measure in which the performer plays a series of descending dyads. These dyads alternate between the intervals of a major sixth (played with mallets 2 and 3) and an octave and a major sixth apart (played with mallets 1 and 4). This passage does not lie well on the marimba and will require slow and deliberate practice from the performer. Practicing this passage one hand at a time, as well as one beat at a time will also greatly benefit the performer.

Example 4.9 “Toddling Waltz” m. 59

The performer is required to play nearly the entire range of the instrument in this movement, while also playing passages that require defined articulation. With this in mind, the performer should choose a mallet that can blend well in a graduated set. Just as in the first movement, it is recommended that the performer use a graduated set from Malletech’s Kevin Bobo series of mallets. KB14’s for mallets 2, 3, and 4, and a KB11 for mallet 1.
4.3 Musical and Technical Considerations in "Babble Songs"

Bobo employs extensive use of the single alternating stroke in the right hand, with varying single independent, double vertical and double lateral strokes in the left hand during the opening section of “Babble Songs” (m.1-75). During this section, the notation aids the performer by delineating each hand to separate staves, the right hand in the upper stave, and the left in the lower stave. This is an important distinction, due to the fact that the left hand will actually begin on a Db, one half step higher in pitch than the right hand on a C natural.

Mallet 3 remains on C for the entirety of the section, while mallet 4 helps to provide the melodic content, playing dyads in conjunction with mallet 2. In the right hand, the interval shifts during the single alternating strokes, ranging from a major second to a major seventh, will require much attention from the performer to correctly and efficiently execute the passage. An excerpt from these opening measures is shown in Example 4.10.

Example 4.10 Single Alternating Stroke Right Hand Melody in “Babble Songs,” mm. 5-9
While the previously shown, Exercises 4.1 and 4.2, are very helpful with learning the single alternating stroke, they focus on that one stroke type alone. This passage in “Babble Songs” will require more attention to incorporate the left hand single independent strokes and double vertical strokes seamlessly into the right hand single alternating strokes. Exercise 4.5 provides the performer with single alternating strokes in the right hand and single independent strokes in left hand using mallet 2. The performer should strive to make the blend between mallet 2 and mallet 4 as even as possible. Exercise 4.6 builds on this concept by adding a double vertical stroke in the left hand on every large beat, with a single independent stroke on every up beat. The goal is the same here: blend between mallets 1, 2, and 4.

Exercise 4.5 Single Alternating Right Hand with Single Independent Left Hand

Exercise 4.6 Single Alternating Right Hand with Single Independent/ Double Vertical Left Hand
Another challenging technical section appears from mm. 103 to 122. Here, Bobo writes a constant stream of sixteenth notes in the treble clef, leaving the performer to discover the best way to accomplish this. The best approach starts with a single independent stroke from mallet 2 on the D, and incorporates a triple lateral stroke with mallets 3 – 4 – 3 in the right hand on E – G – E, respectively. In addition to this, the melody is located in the bass clef, and is to be played with mallet 1. An excerpt from this section is shown in Example 4.11.

Example 4.11 Triple Lateral Stroke Right Hand with Single Independent Left Hand in “Babble Songs,” mm. 103-104

The difficulty of this section primarily comes from the sixteenth notes located in the treble staff. As with many of the permutations found in Bobo’s music, the triple lateral stroke here is written at a small interval. The performer must have complete control over this repeating triple lateral stroke in the right hand in order to blend this with the single independent stroke in the left hand. Exercise 4.7 places this permutation at a comfortable interval for each hand, allowing the performer to focus on the movement of
the lateral stroke in the right hand, while also allowing the performer to focus on the blend with the left hand.

Exercise 4.7 Triple Lateral Right Hand with Single Independent/Double Vertical Left Hand Exercise

Bobo further complicates this section by adding a rising line to mallet 4, as well as adding an eighth note line in mallet 1, as shown in Example 4.12. While these additions may seem miniscule, the combination of these permutations presents a significant increase in difficulty from the preceding excerpt. Exercise 4.8 also adds these same elements, while placing the permutations at more comfortable intervals for the performer.

Example 4.12 Triple Lateral Stroke Right Hand with Single Independent Left Hand in “Babble Songs,” mm. 111-114

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Mallet selection for this movement is crucial. The performer must be able to play the entire length of the instrument at some point during this movement. Clear and precise articulation is needed for many of the intricate permutations, while there are instances of rolls that are written at pianissimo. The performer will want to play with a graduated set of mallets for this movement, providing a soft bass mallet for the low register, while also having the articulation needed for the higher register. Malletech’s Grand Soloist Graduated Hard Set works well for this, consisting of a GS7, two GS13s and a GS16. This line of mallets features a medium-tight wrap, using a durable synthetic yarn around a rubber core. This combination of materials provides not only the clarity, but also the warmth of sound needed for this movement.

4.4 Musical and Technical Considerations in “Naptime Prelude”

This movement challenges the performer through the use of grace notes and ornaments in the right and left hand at small intervals, but also through a tricky section of unison double verticals in both hands set over an octave apart from each other. This grace note figure first appears in the right hand in the opening measures, as seen in Example 4.13.
Example 4.13 Grace Notes in Right Hand in “Naptime Prelude” mm. 2-3

In this passage, there are two separate techniques shown: a double lateral stroke grace note, and a triple lateral stroke ornament. In both instances, the performer should strive to ensure that the primary note of each ornament is the emphasis of the stroke (the D of the double lateral and the second F of the triple lateral). The nature of these figures being set at small intervals only increases the difficulty. In order to increase facility at small intervals, the performer should utilize Exercise 4.9, which focuses on individual strokes at the major second interval. For this entire exercise, the performer should strive to get as true of an independent stroke as possible.

Exercise 4.9 Small Interval Control Exercise from “Kevin Bobo Daily Four-Mallet Warmup”
Generally speaking, Bobo keeps the hands written in separate staves in this movement, but there are a few instances where utilizing the opposite hand will greatly increase the accuracy and comfort of a passage. The first example of this is in measure 4, as seen in Example 4.14. Here, the performer could easily interpret this to be played entirely with the left hand, and while that is technically possible, it is quite difficult. The right hand is completely free to help in this measure following the quarter note on beat one. With this in mind, utilizing mallet 3 to help during the ascending dyads is preferred. This alternate sticking is also shown in Example 4.14. This concept can also be applied to mm. 7, 11, 15, 16, 46, 47, and 48, respectively.

Example 4.14 Left Hand Passage with Right Hand Assistance in “Naptime Prelude” m. 4

Measure 17 introduces a different grace note technique than discussed earlier. The grace notes are not executed as a true inside double lateral stroke, but instead executed as a flam, much like the performer would use on a snare drum. The right hand must alternate this grace note technique with a single independent stroke during this passage, as shown in Example 4.14. The use of this flam technique rather than the lateral technique enables
the performer to more easily execute the grace notes at their written interval of a minor second.

Example 4.15 Grace Notes in Right Hand in “Naptime Prelude” m. 16

To accomplish this flam technique, the performer must focus on the preparation of the mallets before the stroke is initiated. The mallets in the right hand must start at different heights off of the marimba, much like a flam on snare drum. Mallet 3 must start much lower to the marimba, as it is playing the grace note, while mallet 4 must start much closer to a full stroke. This technique is shown in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 Right Hand Flam Technique used in “Naptime Prelude”
After the flam technique is complete, the performer must quickly reset mallet 3 in order to execute a proper single independent stroke. This alternation of flam and single independent stroke will require substantial practice at an extremely slow tempo, ensuring the performer is executing the nuance of this stroke combination correctly. This technique can be applied to a later section of this movement: mm. 36 through 45, in which the left hand will also perform this flam motion.

The melodic focus shifts to the left hand in m. 18, with upbeats counteracting the right hand flam technique mentioned above. This melodic line, shown in Example 4.16 contains triple lateral strokes written at tight intervals that will require attention from the performer. The triple lateral stroke here is played with mallets 4 – 3 – 4, respectively, also known as an outside triple lateral, meaning that it starts and ends with the outside mallet.

Example 4.16 Left Hand Melody in “Naptime Prelude” m. 18

This triple lateral stroke, played between A natural and B flat, will also require the performer to carefully analyze the mallet position and body position. In order to properly execute the stroke, the performer turn their hand outward so that the mallet heads will be pointing directly at the low end board of the marimba, with the mallet shafts running
parallel to the support rails of the marimba. This will allow the performer to actually hold a wider interval in their left hand, while still playing the minor second, which will allow the performer to more comfortably execute this passage.

Figure 4.2 Left Hand Mallet and Body Positioning in “Naptime Prelude” m. 18

Measure 22 signals the start of a new section of this movement, and also utilizes an entirely new technique to this document. Here Bobo implements double vertical strokes in both hands: the right hand playing thirds and the left hand playing fifths. Each hand is also required to perform many drastic interval leaps. This technique, while not difficult in terms of the mechanics of motion, is deceivingly difficult to obtain consistent accuracy. In order to help the performer obtain better facility around the instrument while performing double verticals in both hands, Exercises 4.10 and 4.11 should be used. Exercise 4.10 requires the performer to execute the double vertical strokes in a step-wise type of motion, and is intended to assist the performer in gaining control of moving both hands at the same time, while spaced quite a distance apart. Exercise 4.11 builds on the
previous by implementing small intervallic leaps using the same step-wise type of motion. While these leaps are not as large as the written leaps in “Naptime Prelude,” this will lay the foundation for the performer to execute consistent interval shifts while playing double vertical strokes in both hands.

Exercise 4.10 Double Vertical Step-Wise Exercise #1

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Exercise 4.11 Double Vertical Step-Wise Exercise #2

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Once again, selecting appropriate mallets for this movement will help the performer efficiently execute this movement. Crisp articulation is needed for the right hand to easily execute the ornaments throughout this piece. But, due to the register in which the left hand plays, the performer will not want the same articulation here. Therefore, a graduated set of mallets is recommended for this movement: Malletech’s Kevin Bobo KB11 mallets for left hand and Malletech’s Kevin Bobo KB14 for the right hand. While graduated sets are not generally split by hand, the hands play very distinct
and separate parts for the majority of this movement, thus justifying this manner of graduation.

4.5 MUSICAL AND TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN “RUN AMOK RONDO”

For the performer, “Run Amok Rondo” is a sprint from start to finish. The opening episode requires the performer to execute repeated double vertical strokes at a major second and minor second interval, respectively. A single independent triplet appears on the pickup to beat three in the first measure, before resuming the double vertical strokes. The recommended sticking for this passage is shown in Example 4.17.

Example 4.17 Opening of “Run Amok Rondo” mm. 1-2

Small interval control is paramount to the successful execution of this passage. Here, the repeated double vertical strokes are to be played as if the performer was playing a ‘diddle’ on snare drum. With this technique in mind, the performer should strive to make these repeated double vertical strokes as even as possible, not putting extra emphasis on the first of the two strokes.

The second episode is marked as “Quasi-Ragtime.” The right hand has the melodic content, with the left hand providing accompaniment. The second iteration of the episode appears in m. 25 and presents a very similar, but substantially more intricate right
hand melody. To assist with the execution of the passage, mallet 2 should be utilized throughout mm. 25 and 26. This sticking is shown in Example 4.18.

Example 4.18 Quasi-ragtime section of “Run Amok Rondo” mm. 9-10

![Example 4.18 Quasi-ragtime section of “Run Amok Rondo” mm. 9-10](image)

Similarly, in the next measure, it appears that the right hand is required to play the entire triplet passage, but utilizing mallet 2 to execute this repeating triplet passage is recommended. Mallet 2 will play the first partial (C#) of every sixteenth note triplet figure, essentially performing a double vertical between this C# and the C#, E#, and G#, respectively, in the bass clef. This is shown in Example 4.19. This concept can also be applied later in the piece in m. 73.

Example 4.19 “Run Amok Rondo” m. 29

![Example 4.19 “Run Amok Rondo” m. 29](image)
The third episode implements a simple, but complicated to perform, permutation involving single independent strokes in the left hand with repeating triple lateral strokes in the right hand. The primary difficulty of this section comes from the speed at which the repeating triple lateral strokes in the right hand are written. The sticking, shown in Example 4.20, does not allow the performer much time to gather mallet 3 upon the conclusion of a triple lateral stroke and then prepare for the next triple lateral stroke. The performer should practice this permutation using Exercise 4.12, slowly building speed until the written tempo of dotted quarter = 57 is achieved.

Example 4.20 “Run Amok Rondo” m. 41

Exercise 4.12 Single Independent and Triple Lateral Permutation from Permutations for the Advanced Marimbist, Section X, Exercise A.
Measure 67 falls only one measure into the final section of this piece and utilizes many different combinations of lateral strokes. The difficulty of this passage lies in the third triplet grouping. Here, instead of continuing the comfortable 4-3-2-1-2-3-4 triple lateral permutation Bobo adds an additional triplet grouping of 4-3-2, making this a nine sixteenth-note phrase, while adding an additional single independent stroke in the left hand. This sticking is shown in Example 4.21.

Example 4.21 “Run Amok Rondo” m. 67

Measure 72 presents a repeating 4 – 3 – 2 triplet permutation, the same primary material as seen a few measures prior, but adds a left hand counter melody to be played with mallet 1, as shown in Example 4.22. This addition creates quite a difficult passage for the performer to master. Exercise 4.13 separates each hand to show the intricacies of this permutation. This permutation contains repetitive single independent strokes in the left hand, with intermittent double lateral strokes. This combination will take the performer a considerable amount of time to become comfortable with, and should be practiced very slowly hands apart before playing the full permutation as written.
The same concepts should be applied to mm. 83 and 84. The difference here is only that of stroke type: the right hand is playing a 3 – 4 double lateral stroke, while the left hand is playing single independent strokes with intermittent double laterals strokes 1 – 2. This is shown in Example 4.23, with a breakdown of each hand shown in Exercise 4.14.
The final two measures of “Run Amok Rondo” are a test of speed and agility for the performer. The performer should execute this passage with the sticking as shown in Example 4.24. In order to facilitate this 3 – 1 – 2 permutation at the small interval required, the performer should utilize a concept discussed earlier in this document: mallet and body positioning. The left hand here should have the mallets pointing toward the top end of the marimba, with the mallet shafts running parallel to the support rails. This will allow the performer to hold a wider interval in their left hand, therefore allowing the double lateral stroke here to be performed with more speed and accuracy.

Example 4.24 “Run Amok Rondo” m. 85

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The performer should thoughtfully consider mallet choice for this movement. The speed and articulation needed for this movement require the performer to use a light, very articulate mallet. Malletech’s Michael Burritt MB18 series mallets work well in this movement. The hard rubber core, as well as the durable poly-synthetic yarn allows the performer to achieve the articulation and clarity needed, while still getting a good fundamental pitch out of the marimba bars.
CHAPTER FIVE

PRAYER FOR THE BROKEN

Prayer for the Broken is a marimba duo commissioned by Dr. T. Adam Blackstock, Troy University Percussion Ensemble, and the Alpha Zeta Chapter of Phi Boota roota. This piece is written for one 5.0 octave marimba and one 4.3 octave marimba. This piece is unique in that it is dedicated to two individuals who have each had a profound impact on Bobo’s life, Elizabeth and Blaise. Elizabeth is a little girl who experienced traumatic abuse as a child, and Blaise is close friend of Bobo, an operatic singer who passed away at an early age from a terminal illness. Though the stories of each of these individuals do not intertwine in reality, the impact of each of these individuals is apparent in different portions of this piece. Elizabeth is portrayed in the innocent and childlike themes in the opening of the piece, and Blaise is portrayed later on, when the themes turn more romantic in nature. The title of the piece comes from the broken system, broken bones, broken homes, broken relationships, broken hearts, broken friendships, broken everything. The challenges of this piece stem from the technical difficulties in each performer’s part, respectively, and also from the musicality required of both performers to accurately execute the subtlety of the interactions between the parts.

39 Ibid.
5.1 Musical and Technical Considerations in *Prayer for the Broken*

From the initial measures of this piece, the interaction between the two parts should be carefully considered. The first measure starts with a ripple chord technique in Player 1, while Player 2 is playing a single melodic line in a much slower tempo. The rippled chords in Player 1 move both up the keyboard and down the keyboard, as shown in Example 5.1. These ripples should be played as grace notes, but should be neither too open nor too closed. Each note should be clearly audible, but the primary note of each of these ripples is the final note of each chord. For example, in the first measure, the audience should hear C – G – F – C – D as the melodic line in Player 1, as seen in Example 5.1. Simultaneously, Player 2 should strive to place each note of the melodic line in this section with the aforementioned primary note in Player 1. This same approach should be applied any instance in which this grace note ripple figure is present throughout the piece, as it moves from player to player.

Example 5.1 – *Prayer for the Broken* mm. 1-4, score

Exercise 5.1 breaks down the ripple effect in both directions, gradually decreasing the space between each note, respectively, until the notes are as close to a grace note ripple effect as possible. The performer should utilize this exercise at a variety of tempos.
to ensure that they have complete control over the technical intricacies of this motion. This exercise is placed on a C Major chord in root position, but should be applied to a variety of keys and mallet positions, which will prepare the performer for the context in which this technique is applied within *Prayer for the Broken*.

Measure 18 starts a new section of the piece, moving away from the rolled notes and ripples from the opening measures. Here, the two parts interact in a contrapuntal fashion, with Player 2 playing two distinctly different parts between the right and left hands, as seen in Example 5.2. The rising sixteenth notes in the right hand will require attention from the performer. This passage can either be played through repetitive single independent strokes in a single mallet (either mallet 3 or mallet 4, whichever is most comfortable for the performer), or this passage can be played through the implementation of a single alternating stroke. The single alternating stroke will enable the performer to more easily achieve the written tempo. The sticking breakdown for this is also shown in Example 5.2.
One of the many rhythmic challenges present in this piece appears at m. 26 – rehearsal mark ‘C’. Here, Player 1 continues the sixteenth note based melodic passage from the section prior, while Player 2 moves to an accompaniment that is based in six. Player 2 has quarter notes in the left hand, while playing the last four notes of a sextuplet in the right hand, as shown in Example 5.3. This section requires that Player 2 interpret the passage precisely in the correct subdivision. The performer should strive to ensure that the right hand starts each figure on the second subdivision of an eighth note triplet.
This same concept continues at m. 30, with the only change being that Player 2 moves to a figure based in five, not six. This quintuplet passage is much more of a challenge to execute rhythmically than the prior section based in six. Here, Player 2 should strive to make the permutation as even as possible, eliminating any rhythmic inconsistencies that could alter the interaction between the players. The quarter notes in the left hand of Player 2 also help to anchor the rhythmic complexity of this entire passage, and should be utilized as a place to which both performers can listen and ensure they are playing precisely in time with each other.

Example 5.4 – *Prayer for the Broken* mm. 30-31, score

Player 2 should be mindful of the body and mallet positioning throughout this section to ensure that their mallets are striking the bar at precisely the correct beating spot. Many of the right hand permutations are placed in such a way that the performer should maintain their body position closer to the right hand, while fully extending the left
arm to reach the lower notes of A and B, respectively. Player 2 should also be mindful of any tenuto markings that are present throughout this section, many of which appear on the weak portions of the beat, contributing further to the rhythmic ambiguity.

Measure 33 marks the beginning of a new section of the piece, consisting of the melodic line transferring between the performers. The performer who is not playing the melodic line is providing harmonic accompaniment through alternating dyads in a sextuplet-based rhythm, as shown in Example 5.5.

Example 5.5 – *Prayer for the Broken* mm. 34-35, score

It is imperative throughout this section that the performer providing the accompaniment is not overpowering the performer with the melodic line. Bobo is careful to ensure that the melodic line is always marked at least one dynamic level greater than the accompaniment. This concept proves to be a challenge with some of the sextuplet passages in this section for both performers. Many times throughout this section, Bobo
moves this sextuplet accompaniment up and down the marimba. Often this figure lies on the marimba in a way that easily conforms to the natural alternating of the performers hands, but other times it appears in ways that are not the most comfortable or convenient to the performer. Two examples of the inconvenient phrases are shown in Examples 5.6 and 5.7, with possible sticking solutions for the performers.

Example 5.6 – *Prayer for the Broken* mm. 36-37, Player 1

![Example 5.6](image)

*Prayer for the Broken* by Kevin Bobo  
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Example 5.7 – *Prayer for the Broken* m. 46, score

![Example 5.7](image)

*Prayer for the Broken* by Kevin Bobo  
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Measure 64 marks the beginning of the “romantic” section of this piece, meant to represent Blaise and his operatic singing.\(^{41}\) Bobo even notes in the score, “in a singing style” above the melodic line for Player 1.\(^{42}\) Throughout this section, one hundred percent of the audience’s attention should be toward the melodic line of Player 1. Player 2 merely serves as an accompaniment, providing a harmonic foundation for which Player 1 can be heard over. The tenuto markings in Player 2 should be emphasized every so slightly more than the rest of the accompaniment, while still maintaining the overall written dynamic marking of *pp*. Player 1 should strive to make their melodic line as close to the style of an operatic singer as possible, playing in a legato motion throughout this section will assist with this. The overall tempo of this section does not necessarily need to stay metonymically strict, allowing the performers some room for interpretation.

Measure 81 continues this aria section, with more motion in the accompaniment of Player 2, and the melodic line of Player 1. This should have a very similar mood and feel to the previous section, with slightly more movement in the part of Player 2. Player 2 should carefully consider the sticking choices of this section, allowing the tenuto marks on the first beat and the dyads on beats two and three to clearly speak, while maintaining the same feel from the previous section. This section for Player 2 is shown in Example 5.8, along with an appropriate sticking solution.

At m. 81, Player 1 begins fifteen measures of a melodic line that implements exclusively unison octaves in the upper register. This section will require much attention from the performer to achieve consistent accuracy. The performer could choose to play

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\(^{41}\) Kevin Bobo, interview with the author, February 22, 2019.

these octaves either with the inner most mallets (mallets 2 and 3), or with one hand. The method that will prove to be the most consistent for note accuracy will be the approach using the inner two mallets. This section, as the score indicates, should be extremely expressive. Player 1 should dictate the movement in this section, as they have the lowest subdivision, sixteenth notes. Player 2 once again has an accompaniment role in this section, and should carefully follow the expression, both rhythmically and dynamically, as dictated by Player 1. Communication between the performers throughout this section is paramount, ensuring that the expressive nature of this section is organic and does not sound forced.

Example 5.8 – *Prayer for the Broken* mm. 81-84, Player 2

The climax of this piece, *Furious*, begins at m. 105. Here, the performers are both playing combinations of sixteenth notes and triplet figures. Both parts are layered on top of each other, creating a near constant four-over-three polyrhythm, as seen in Example 5.9.
The melodic content in this section is carried equally between each player. Player 2 should provide a solid foundation with each perfect fifth played at the beginning of every measure. Player 1 should bring out the tenuto markings in the right hand, with a slightly larger emphasis placed on each large beat. The moving lines contained in the right hand of Player 2 should also be brought to the forefront. Throughout this section, the thick texture of polyrhythmic ideas is stretched further with the incorporation of quintuplet subdivisions and sextuplet subdivisions. These subdivisions are occasionally implemented simultaneously to create a wash of sound and tension, as shown in Example 5.10. This polyrhythmic complexity will require careful subdivision on the part of both performers. This section will require careful practice with a metronome both individually and as an ensemble for the performers. Each performer will also need to be familiar with
the structure of the opposing part, and ensuring that the rhythmic integrity of this moment is maintained.

Example 5.10 – *Prayer for the Broken* m. 119, score

Prayer for the Broken by Kevin Bobo  
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The transition in mm. 122-123 requires Player 1 to execute the ripple idea from the opening of the piece in a long-form four-over-three polyrhythm, while Player 2 maintains the same rhythmic pattern from the previous section, as shown in Example 5.11. This four-over-three polyrhythm loosely translates to the tempo of the following section; therefore it is imperative that Player 1 is accurate in their execution of this rhythm. The attention of the listener should shift from the repetitive rhythmic chords of Player 2 to the ripple motion in Player 1. If necessary, Player 1 may repeat the opening measure of the section beginning at Rehearsal L to facilitate Player 2 changing to a softer mallet for the remaining of the piece.

At m. 127, Bobo incorporates a unique style of roll technique in Player 2 in which the player is executing a traditional double vertical roll between three mallets (ie. alternating strokes of the hands between a double vertical in the right hand mallets 3 and
4, and a single independent in the left hand mallet 2). The unique addition is that the static mallet, mallet 1, plays a legato single independent stroke completely separate from the roll technique happening in the other three mallets. This single independent stroke should sound like an independent line separate from the roll in the upper three voices. This technique is shown in Example 5.12.

Example 5.11 – *Prayer for the Broken* mm. 122-124, score

![Example 5.11](image1)

*Prayer for the Broken* by Kevin Bobo  
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Example 5.12 – *Prayer for the Broken* mm. 127-129, Player 2

![Example 5.12](image2)

*Prayer for the Broken* by Kevin Bobo  
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In order to properly execute this passage, the performer will have to play a triple lateral stroke in the left hand approaching the beat containing the single independent stroke in mallet 1. This technique is difficult to master, and will require the performer to break down the exact strokes as they happen in succession. This break down is shown in Exercise 5.2. This exercise places the triple lateral technique every other beat in the first measure, then every beat in the second. This exercise will help to improve the overall feel of this technique, ensuring that the roll in the upper voices maintains a smooth character, while the single independent in mallet 1 does not sound forced, or appear out of context.

Exercise 5.2 Traditional Roll with isolated Single Independent Stroke

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The final two measures of Prayer for the Broken take quite a turn from the style of the preceding 130+ measures, as the two players combine to play a calypso at an extremely low dynamic, as seen in Example 5.13. In m. 140, Player 1 is playing a bass pattern in the style of a calypso at a pppp marking. Player 2 helps to fill out the entire calypso feel, also at pppp. The calypso is incorporated into the ending of this piece due to this style of music being the favorite of Blaise, for whom the piece is written. The playing of this calypso is meant to signify that he has finally found peace in a far off place “as if in the clouds,” hence the dynamic markings.43

Player 2 has a considerably more difficult passage here, with single independent strokes in the left hand and repeating triple lateral strokes in the right hand. This pattern should result in a constant stream of sixteenth notes. Chapter 3 of this document contains materials that address exactly this technique. The reader should refer to Exercise 3.12, specifically. To achieve this dynamic marking, the performers must both utilize very soft mallets. Player 2 should already have such mallets for the preceding section, but Player 1 will have to make a switch to a much softer mallet prior to entering at m. 138. Player 1 should note that there is only a need for two mallets, not a set of four. To assist in fading out to *niente*, the performers should gradually roll up onto the cushion of the mallet, located at the very top. The reader should refer to Figure 3.3 for an example of this. This will assist the performers in creating less sound from the marimba bars, while not having to adjust the velocity in which the bars are struck.
Mallet choice throughout this piece is incredibly important for the subtly of the writing to shine through. Player 1 should use a set of mallets that have substantial articulation throughout the upper end of the keyboard. Malletech’s Kevin Bobo series of mallets provide a great range of mallets to select from for the majority of this movement. For mm. 1-137, Player 1 should use a graduated set of mallets: a Malletech KB11 for mallet 1, and three Malletech KB14’s for mallets 2 through 4, respectively. For mm. 138-end, Player 1 should use a much softer mallet with a more loosely wrapped soft yarn; Malletech’s Concerto CN4 model works well here.

Player 2 need mallets that have clear articulation in the middle range of the marimba, and do not overpower the marimba bars at the low register. Player 2 should utilize two different sets of mallets. For mm. 1-17, and mm. 125-end, Player 2 should utilize Malletech’s Concerto CN4 model mallets. For mm. 18-121, the performer should utilize a graduated set of mallets: a Malletech KB8 for mallet 1, and three Malletech KB11’s for mallets 2 through 4, respectively.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Kevin Bobo has significantly contributed to the percussion repertoire, specifically that of solo marimba. The overarching tonality, combined with the complex permutations and flashes of playful ornamentation and dissonance provide a unique voice for percussionists to choose from when programming. As illustrated in these musical examples, Bobo utilizes a variety of permutations, extended techniques, and combinations of styles to provide a fresh approach to marimba performance.

The pedagogical implications of his music provide the performer with an unmatched understanding of the four-mallet marimba technique and its possibilities. By providing both technical analysis and exercises to accompany these challenges, it is my hope that more percussionists will be encouraged to begin the worthwhile study of Bobo’s music.

While this document explains in detail many of the aspects of Bobo’s marimba literature, further research could be conducted in respect to his other works. Bobo’s works for percussion ensemble are innovative and unique in the percussion ensemble idiom, much like his marimba literature. These works, like the works discussed in this document, provide the performers with unique technical challenges that are worthy of study.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


———. Interview with the Author. February 22, 2019.


APPENDIX A: RECITAL PROGRAMS

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
School of Music

presents

BENJAMIN BAILEY SEABURY, percussion

in
CANDIDACY RECITAL

Saturday, April 16, 2016
6:00 PM • Recital Hall

From Reflections on the Nature of Water

II. Fleet
V. Profound
VI. Relentless

Jacob Druckman
(1928-1996)

Corker
Libby Larsen
(b. 1950)

Steven Christ, clarinet

Khan Variations
Alejandro Vinao
(b. 1951)

Vertical River
Blake Tyson
(b. 1969)

Brett Landry, marimba

Asanga
Kevin Volans
(b. 1949)

Blue Ridge
Michael Burritt
(b. 1962)

Kelly Grill, marimba

Mr. Seabury is a student of Dr. Scott Harring.
This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts Degree in Performance.
presents

BENJAMIN BAILEY SEABURY, percussion

in

DOCTORAL RECITAL

Wednesday, November 2, 2016
6:00 PM Recital Hall

Variations on Porgy and Bess arr. Eric Sammut (b. 1968)

Animism Stephen Ridley (b. 1973)

Whatever’s More Gordon Stout (b. 1952)

To Varese Joe Tompkins (b. 1970)

Thief Brian Nozny (b. 1977)

Kyoto John Psathas (b. 1966)

Chase Banks, Alissa Castro, Cory High, Caitlin Jones, percussion

Mr. Seabury is a student of Dr. Scott Herring.
This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Performance.
presents

BENJAMIN BAILEY SEABURY, percussion

in

DOCTORAL CHAMBER RECITAL

Sunday, March 26, 2017
7:30 PM | Recital Hall

Okho

Iannis Xenakis
(b. 1952)

Chase Banks and Cory High, 4mner

Earth Tones
I. Ocean
II. Rover
V. Polar
VII. Volcano

Gary Ziek
(b. 1970)

Brian Bethea, trombone

Carpe Diem

Susan Powell
(b. 1971)

Dr. Scott Herring, percussion

Catching Shadows

Ivan Trevino
(b. 1983)

Cory High, marimba

Rounders

Michael Burritt
(b. 1962)

Chris Amuck, Aaron Buck, Noah O’Cain, percussion

Mr. Seabury is a student of Dr. Scott Herring. This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Performance.
presents

BENJAMIN BAILEY SEABURY, percussion

in

DOCTORAL SOLO RECITAL

Sunday, April 8th, 2018
3:00 PM | Recital Hall

Frum
Askell Masson
(b. 1953)

Long Distance
Steven Snowden
(b. 1981)
Brooklyn
Monroe
Panorama
Atlanta

Phylogenesis
Russell Wharton
(b. 1990)

From My Little Island
Robert Aldridge
(b. 1954)
I. Theme
V. Hymn
III. Dance of Passion

Kortney Seabury, dance

Mr. Seabury is a student of Dr. Scott Herring.
This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Performance.
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
School of Music

presents

BENJAMIN BAILEY SEABURY, percussion

in

DOCTORAL RECITAL

Saturday, March 23rd, 2019
7:30 p.m.
W. W. Hootie Johnson Performance Hall

Two Fountains
I  Kevin Bobo
II (b. 1974)

Three Etudes
Lament
Pendulum

Tantrum

Prayer for the Broken

Jarrell Holliman, marimba

The Odyssey, According to Penelope
I. Afternoon at the Park
II. Toddling Waltz
III. Babble Songs
IV. Naptime Prelude
V. Run Amok Rondo

Mr. Seabury is a student of Dr. Scott Herring. This recital is given in fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Performance.