ANALYSIS AND INFORMATIVE INTERVIEWS TO AID IN THE PERFORMANCE PRACTICE
OF THE CONCERTO FOR MARIMBA AND STRING ORCHESTRA BY ERIC EWAZEN

by

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Jonathan Ryan Latta
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ABSTRACT

The research found in this document will assist in a performer’s preparation of Dr. Eric Ewazen’s *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*. In order to give an informed performance of the work, it is this author’s belief that an understanding of the collaboration between the composer and the premiering artist, Ms. She-e Wu, as well as the impact Ms. Wu’s artistry had on Dr. Ewazen is paramount. Also, knowledge of Dr. Ewazen’s compositional style, reference to his other works for percussion, and an understanding of the structure of the work will assist future performers in demonstrating a well-versed and rewarding performance of the piece. This study presents insightful interviews from both the composer and the premiering artist. These interviews offer a wealth of understanding into the composition and performance of the work. The performance practice suggestions offer tools to interpret and prepare the piece. Though the *Concerto* may be a challenge for many marimbists, this author hopes that future performers find the rewards in this well-constructed and exciting work after reading this document.
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

At the end of the twentieth century composers were actively writing unaccompanied solo works, chamber music works, and concerti for the marimba. It was also at the end of the century that Eric Ewazen added a marimba concerto to the repertoire. On November 13, 1999 the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra* received its premiere by She-e Wu and the Moment Musical Orchestra of Taiwan with Paul Chiang as its conductor.

The research found in this document will assist in a performer’s preparation of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*. In order to give an informed performance of the work, it is this author’s belief that an understanding of the collaboration between the composer and the premiering artist, Ms. She-e Wu, as well as the impact Ms. Wu’s artistry had on Dr. Ewazen is paramount. Also, knowledge of Dr. Ewazen’s compositional style, reference to his other works for percussion, and an understanding of the structure of the work will assist future performers in demonstrating a well-versed and rewarding performance of the piece. In this document I will attempt to demonstrate that through analysis of the *Concerto* and interviews with the composer and commissioning artist, the information gathered will serve as a performance practice guide for Eric Ewazen’s *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*. 
CHAPTER 2 ERIC EWAZEN AND HIS CAREER

Eric Ewazen was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1954. He received a Bachelor’s of Music degree from the Eastman School of Music and went on to receive a Master’s of Music degree and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the Juilliard School. He has an extensive list of reputable teachers that include Milton Babbitt, Samuel Adler, Warren Benson, Joseph Schwantner, and Gunther Schuller.

Throughout his career Dr. Ewazen has been the recipient of many awards and honors. His works are recorded on Summit Records, d'Note Records, CRS Records, New World, Clique Track, Helicon, Hyperion, Cala, Albany, and EMI Classics. Dr. Ewazen has had recent premieres of his works given by the Charleston Symphony, Virginia Symphony, Orquesta Sinfonica de Tenerife in Spain, Orquesta Sinfonica Carlos Chavez in Mexico City, Orchestre de la Garde Republicaine in Paris, the Jeju Music Festival Wind Ensemble in Korea, and the Moment Musicale Orchestra of Taiwan.

Dr. Ewazen has been a guest at over 100 different universities around the United States and the world. He has served as a faculty member at the Juilliard School since 1980. His music is published by Southern Music Company, Keyboard Percussion Publications, Manduca Music, Encore Music, Triplo Music, and Brass Ring Editions.¹

His career continues to be a success as his works are premiered all over the world and he is being commissioned to write works well past the next few years.
CHAPTER 3 ERIC EWAZEN’S REPERTIOIRE FOR PERCUSSION

A study of Eric Ewazen’s percussion writing can add insight into his development of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*. This section of the document will review different works by Dr. Ewazen and show how they are similar to the *Concerto*.

Dr. Ewazen had previously used percussion instruments, including marimba, in many of his compositions. One example is his composition *Mosaics*, a chamber work premiered in 1993. It was composed for flute, bassoon and marimba and was written for Pat Zuber, Toni Lipton, and Greg Zuber, all of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. This piece shows Dr. Ewazen’s ability to write extensively for marimba as an active part of a chamber trio.

In the wind band arrangement of *Shadowcatcher* there is an extensive four-mallet marimba part. This piece was originally composed for brass quintet and orchestra in 1996 but soon after was arranged for wind ensemble. This author has performed the marimba part and can attest to the technical requirements needed for its performance. Through examining many of his pieces, one can see Dr. Ewazen’s commitment to writing music for the marimba that requires an understanding of its technical and musical performance.

In 1990 Eric Ewazen’s first solo work for marimba was given its premiere. The work was titled *Northern Lights* and was a large-scale work that gave hints towards the grandeur that would be the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*. Dr. Ewazen
composed the work at the request of marimba artist William Moersch. *Northern Lights* was premiered at the Juilliard School by a friend of Dr. Ewazen’s, marimba artist Gordon Stout.

The work was composed in 1989 and was originally conceived as a musical presentation of the Aurora Borealis, or Northern Lights. Dr. Ewazen writes in the liner notes for the compact disc *The Percussion Music of Eric Ewazen* that the direction of the composition changed when his mother passed away during that year. The work then took on a slightly different idea as it would also serve as homage to Dr. Ewazen’s mother. It often shifts between wistful and angry, as well mysterious and reminiscent. The composer explains the he wanted to explore many of the colors available to the marimba.

*Northern Lights* begins in D dorian mode and moves throughout many different key areas. The work uses tonal harmony but not in the same sense as the common practice period. Dr. Ewazen commonly uses modal key centers as well as harmonic progressions using major and minor chords. The work uses a marimba that requires a low F, this being the F one-and-a-half octaves below middle C also known as F2. *Northern Lights* opens with a chorale and then uses this chorale throughout the work. The chorale alternates with allegro passages full of moving sixteenth notes.² Sometimes these sixteenth notes are single notes and other times they are double stops, or two notes struck at the same time.

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*Northern Lights* was Dr. Ewazen’s first endeavor into the composition of a solo marimba work. Performers may want to study it to gain added understanding into the composition of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*. One similarity that can be shown between the *Concerto* and *Northern Lights* is the use of a chorale as connecting material.

Example 1 (mm. 1-25 in *Northern Lights*)
The chorale in Example 1 shows a common element in structure between both *Northern Lights* and the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*. A chorale is at the beginning and end of the first movement of the *Concerto*, and then makes its final return at the end of the third movement. In both pieces, the listener is given a return to the familiar chorale to give a sense of connection throughout the work.

*Northern Lights* creates a variety of different textures throughout the piece. One example would be rapid passages of repeated sixteenth notes. This texture is similar to that found in the *Concerto*. The technique used to perform these passages is also similar. The performer would use a double lateral stroke, or two strokes for one motion. Example 2 and Example 3 show these similar textures.

Example 2 (mm. 62-63 in *Northern Lights*)

Example 3 (mm. 17-19 in movement one of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*)
Another piece that will give insight to Dr. Ewazen’s approach to composing music for percussion is his percussion ensemble work, *The Palace of Nine Perfections*. In 2000 the University of Oklahoma Percussion Ensemble, under the direction of Richard Gipson, gave the premiere of the composition. The work was also dedicated to this ensemble and its conductor.

In the preface of the score for *The Palace of Nine Perfections*, Dr. Ewazen writes about the inspiration for the piece. It is inspired by a viewing of twelve adjacent scrolls by the seventeenth century painter, Yuan Chiang. The first movement depicts a procession of the emperor and his soldiers on horseback, then progressing to a faster tempo to show the horses at full gallop. The second movement shows the Palace of the Immortals, a castle shown against high cliffs and encircled with mist. The last movement tries to capture all the excitement of the entire vision. It uses aggressive percussion and exciting marimba flourishes to present the grandeur of the scrolls and the pictures they present.

*The Palace of Nine Perfections* is for a ten-person percussion orchestra. It uses a myriad of keyboard percussion instruments to include glockenspiel, chimes, crotales, xylophone, vibraphone, and marimba. There are four marimba parts with the last part being used as a bass marimba. There is also the use of timpani and two percussion
players. These players perform on temple blocks, bell tree, suspended cymbals, gong, snare drum, tom toms, and a bass drum.

Throughout the piece Dr. Ewazen uses clear forms to communicate his musical thoughts. The first movement, titled *Procession of the Emperor K’ang-hsi*, has three sections followed by a recapitulation and a brief coda. The first section is found in measures one to forty-one and is a stately beginning to the piece. There is an accelerando at the end of this section that leads to a lively second section that is performed in a bright 9/8 meter. There is a metric modulation that occurs to bring the work into a slower third section, beginning at measure 142. At measure 186 the work has a recapitulation of the first and second section. At measure 201 there is another metric modulation into a faster tempo and the rest of the movement that can be viewed as a coda.

The second movement is titled *Through Valleys of Mist*. The movement serves as the slow, majestic middle movement. It opens with half note chords that accompany a marimba melody. This gives way to a vibraphone melody at measure eighteen. After some brief transition material the movement moves into its second section at measure forty-one. This section has a texture change with a constant repeated eighth note pattern in the bass marimba part. This section reaches its climax at measure seventy-three with the loudest dynamic of the movement. The next section begins at measure eighty-four with continuous thirty-second notes in the marimbas that accompany a vibraphone melody. The movement begins to come to a close at measure 116 with a return to the
vibraphone melody found at measure eighteen. The last measures of the movement conclude with a single rolled chord.

The energetic third movement is titled Past Mountain Cliffs to the Paradises of the Immortals. The movement has an abrupt beginning after the peaceful end to the second movement. This opening section lasts until measure forty-nine. At measure fifty a second section of melody material begins with unison E-flats from all the melodic instruments. This section then turns to a development at measure eighty; this section is in 12/8 meter. After some brief transition material that is found at the end of the development, the section with unison E-flats returns. At measure 203 there is a return to the melodic material found in the beginning of the first movement. In measure 210 there begins an exciting coda that takes the listener to the end of the work.

In an interview with the author, Dr. Ewazen has stated that one way to view the Concerto and this percussion ensemble work is to see the two pieces as cousins. There are multiple similarities between these two works. One is to recognize that they both illustrate Dr. Ewazen’s use of tonal harmony, his mixture of major, minor and modal scales, to develop his melodic and harmonic writing. Another concept is in the last two measures of the second movement of the Concerto there is a rolled chord, also occurring in the last two measures of the second movement of the Palace of Nine Perfections. This soft chord then gives way to the exciting and vibrant third movements found in both pieces. Finally, one can identify a common idea of using material from the first
movement in the third movement. In the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra* the opening choral from the first movement returns before the final section of the third movement. In the *Palace of Nine Perfections* the opening measures of the piece are again repeated before the final coda of the third movement of the work.

As presented above, another way to see similarities is in the related marimba writing found in both works. In the first movement of the *Palace of Nine Perfections*, part four on marimba has descending triplet patterns as seen in Example 4.

Example 4 (mm. 98-104 in movement one of *Palace of Nine Perfections*)

This similar use of descending triplets is found in the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*. In movement three, which occurs in 6/8 meter, the marimba soloist is asked to perform descending triplets; this is shown in Example 5.
Example 5 (mm. 53-58 in movement three of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*)

In the second movement of the *Palace of Nine Perfections* Dr. Ewazen uses descending thirty-second notes. These sequences shown in Example 6 occur at very small intervals and require an attention to very accurate double lateral technique.

Example 6 (mm. 86-87 in movement two of *Palace of Nine Perfections*)

In the first movement of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra* there are many times when the soloist is asked to perform descending patterns of the sixteenth notes. In measures 187 and 189 one can see similarities to the material found in the percussion
ensemble work. Again, attention on the double laterals, as illustrated in Example 7, is required for the patterns to be performed accurately.

Example 7 (m. 187, 189 in movement one of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*)

![Example 7](image)

One last related example is found in movement three of the *Palace of Nine Perfections*. In the fourth part, the marimba again performs descending sixteenth notes. The first note of every group of sixteenth notes changes to give the line melodic shape as seen in Example 8.

Example 8 (mm. 10-11 in movement three of *Palace of Nine Perfections*)

![Example 8](image)

There is similar material found in the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*. In Example 9, measures 108 through 111 in the first movement show that the soloist also
performs descending sixteenths with a changing first note to present a melody to the listener.

Example 9 (mm. 108-111 in movement one of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*)
CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS OF THE *CONCERTO FOR MARIMBA AND STRING ORCHESTRA*

The *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra* uses classical forms in a late twentieth century composition. Dr. Ewazen’s compositional language is tonal, employing mainly major, minor, and modal scale forms to express his music. He describes himself as being “Neo-Romantic,” by this he means that he uses the tonal language of the nineteenth century composers and also uses their taste for grandeur. The *Concerto* is in three movements and lasts almost thirty minutes in performance. The movements follow a typical concerto format in that they are fast-slow-fast. The first and second movements use a Sonata Allegro form while the last movement uses an A-B-A-C-A Rondo form.

Table 1, Formal Structure of the *Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Formal Section</th>
<th>Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chorale opening</td>
<td>1-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Exposition</td>
<td>17-107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Development</td>
<td>108-196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Recapitulation</td>
<td>197-229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cadenza</td>
<td>230-258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Recapitulation of chorale</td>
<td>259-274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>275-288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Exposition</td>
<td>1-107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Development</td>
<td>108-180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Recapitulation</td>
<td>181-212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A Section</td>
<td>1-115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>B Section</td>
<td>116-216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A Section</td>
<td>217-310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>C Section</td>
<td>311-327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A Section (coda)</td>
<td>328-361</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first movement opens with a chorale. This is an original composition even though it appears to be similar to those written in the Lutheran tradition. It is in C major and presents the key center for the complete work. The chorale is found as connecting material throughout the piece, returning at the end of the first movement and then again at the end of the work in the third movement. All presentations of the chorale are found in the key of C major.

The opening chorale is followed by an Allegro Vivace section that is the character for the majority of the first movement. Example 10 shows that there are four groups of descending sixteenth notes in each measure with the melody line being found in the first of the sixteenth notes.

Example 10 (mm. 17-20 in movement one of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*)
The key area is also C major at the beginning of the sixteenth note passage, but notes outside of the key are soon added in measure nineteen. There are multiple key areas that are used during the composition. Throughout the movement the orchestra either serves as a foundation for the moving sixteenth notes by playing half notes and whole notes or the orchestra may interject melodic motives while the soloist prepares for a different musical statement.

The development section of the first movement, beginning in measure 108, acts as a development would in a Classical period work in that there are many different key areas. The section begins in the key of C-sharp major but it is not long until it moves to E-flat major in measure 130. After different key areas are quickly presented, the work arrives at E minor in measure 158 with an orchestral interlude. The soloist returns in measure 171 in the key of D major. This D major section moves quickly to B-flat major in measure 173. Finally in measure 193 the performer plays a passage in G major, this serves as a dominant chord and helps the development return to the tonic key of C major in measure 197. The development section moves through many key areas and in doing so builds the necessary tension that leads to an exciting return of C major and the opening material found in the recapitulation.

The recapitulation is followed by an unaccompanied cadenza that occurs at measure 230. The cadenza ends with a return to the chorale that again is in C major. After the chorale the ending is a brief passage from measure 275 to the end of the movement.
The tempo is marked Presto and should be performed as the fastest portion of the movement. This last section, as shown in Example 11, is a confirmation of C major with the last eight measures being pre-dominant (F major), dominant (G major) and finally ending in the tonic key of C major.

Example 11 (mm. 281-288 in movement one of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*)

The second movement of the work is the slow movement. It begins in F major, and like the other movements travels through many different key areas. The time
signature is 3/4 and the tempo marking is Andante Cantabile. The performer should strive to give the audience a sense of calm in the middle of this exciting composition. The solo marimba part opens the first five measures unaccompanied to set the texture and mood by which the strings use to play the melody in measure six. This is seen in Example 12.

Example 12 (mm. 1-11 in movement two of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*)
The orchestra enters in measure six and the soloist continues to serve as accompaniment until measure twenty-nine. At this point the marimba is in dialogue with the orchestra and then soon takes over as the primary melodic voice in measure thirty-two. The marimba part up to this point has been mainly quarter notes and eighth notes. At measure sixty-three the marimba part becomes more virtuosic. There are ascending and descending sixteenth- and thirty-second notes that are added in measure eighty-five. These flourishes help build the texture until a change in meter occurs in measure 116. The meter changes to 2/4 and the movement begins a gradual buildup to its climax. The marimba part is at its most virtuosic with cascading thirty-second notes through a gradual crescendo over a wide range of the instrument as seen in Example 13.

Example 13 (mm. 144-147 in movement two of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*)
There are many musical aspects that confirm that the climax of the second movement occurs at measure 151. The F7 chords performed by the descending marimba thirty-second notes in measures 146 to 150 function as a clear and stable dominant to the B-flat major tonality. Another aspect is that the given dynamics rise to a fortissimo for the first time. This development section, much like the development in the first movement, generates much excitement for the listener in its movement through multiple key areas as well as in its virtuosic musical material. After this climax the second movement has a return to 2/4 in measure 165 and then a final return to 3/4 and the opening material in measure 181. This time the orchestra plays the accompaniment figures and the marimba performs the melody in measure 186. The movement ends with a solemn, sustained F major chord.

The last movement of the *Concerto* is in a 6/8 time signature and possibly takes its character from one of Johannes Brahms’ *Hungarian Dances*. The tempo marking is Allegro con Fuoco which can translate to “lively with fire.” The beginning contains dialogue between the orchestra and the soloist and occurs in the key of D minor. This is the relative minor to the F major found in beginning and end of the second movement giving a connection between the two movements. This beginning is seen in Example 14.
Example 14 (mm. 1-5 in movement three of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*)

The orchestra and soloist go back and forth with syncopated rhythms within the 6/8 time signature. As with the other movements, there is a constant change in the key area as the movement is led to its second section in 4/4 at measure 116. The tempo stays the same and the marimba is given very jazzy, syncopated rhythms to perform throughout this section. One interesting color change is added at measure 165. The marimba soloist is asked to perform on the edge of the marimba bars. This is notated with “x”s in the measure instead of note heads. Example 15 shows this section and its fascinating change of color.
Example 15 (mm. 165-168 in movement three of the Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra)

The 4/4 section gently comes to a close with the marimba rolling chords, having a diminuendo as well as slowing down. The 6/8 returns in measure 202 as does the opening melodic material soon after in measure 217. As in the beginning of the movement, the key is D minor. This section moves towards a climactic return of the chorale from the first movement of the Concerto as seen in Example 16. The key has returned to the original C major and this time the chorale is at a fortissimo dynamic and takes on a very grand and heroic character.
Example 16 (mm. 311-327 in movement three of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*)

The ending of the movement is a return to the 6/8 time signature but this time the key stays in the C major from the beginning of the work. There is a sense the work has come full circle with the return of the chorale as well as the C major key area.
CHAPTER 5 INTERVIEW WITH ERIC EWAZEN

One powerful tool in gathering beneficial knowledge about a piece is to conduct interviews with the composer. Obviously this is sometimes difficult if the composer is hard to reach or no longer living. Fortunately Dr. Eric Ewazen was gracious enough to give of his time to complete the following interview. The answers in this interview are very informative and give great insight into the commission and composition of his Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra.

JL: How would you describe yourself as a composer? Feel free to tell about different stages you have gone through in styles of composition and please highlight the styles you feel are present in the Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra.

EE: My music is in a Neo-Romantic/Neo-Impressionist style. The reason I say that is my use of the modes and scales, pentatonic and such are commonly used by Debussy and Ravel. The aesthetic of big broad lines, dramatic gestures are right from the Romantic period. With the marimba concerto it is so completely based on traditional forms, Sonata Allegro for the first movement, and a three part A-B-A Rondo form for the final movement, and a similar idea for form for the second movement, I also label this Neo-Classic. The work that I listened to a great deal when writing the Concerto was the Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto, hence the types of arpeggiated gestures found in my piece. As a student I studied all different approaches to writing. I think that is important for a composer to have the different languages at their command. When I was a
student, I literally switched from style to style with each succeeding piece I wrote until graduate school, when I studied with Milton Babbitt for 4 years. He was insistent that I choose whatever musical language I wanted to write in while studying with him but I purposefully wanted to see his approach to his forte, serial composition, so I spent most of the 4 years writing in 12-tone technique. After I graduated, I returned to writing in a more tonal but chromatic style, by the mid-1980s I was writing completely in the Neo-Romantic style, which has been my voice pretty much ever since, sometimes more or less tonal, but always having this "traditional" affinity.

**JL: What factors were involved in the commission of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*?**

EE: She-e Wu had approached me about writing a concerto for her. Initially, she had played my piece, *Northern Lights*, which the conductor Paul Chiang heard in Taiwan. He conducted the orchestra Moment Musicale in Taipei, and he asked her if I could turn that piece into a concerto for her to play with the orchestra. When She-e spoke to me, we came up with the idea of my writing a brand new piece, instead of an arrangement, and that became the piece. Paul was delighted to hear I'd be writing a new piece. He was able to secure funds for that composition and to fly me over to Taiwan for the premiere of that work.
JL: Please describe any outside artistic influences that effected the composition of the Concerto.

EE: The way I wrote the Concerto was to listen, as I said, to the Tchaikovsky from an analytical viewpoint, combined with getting together with She-e, so I could hear her play in person. This is much in the same way I went to Toronto in the summer 2007 to hear the members of the percussion ensemble Nexus play, and meet with me individually before I began to write a concerto for them. Her playing, with her special expressive approach, was an influence on the piece and it made me want to create those nice long lyrical lines. As I wrote the piece I would read through completed passages with her, and get her feedback and response to what I was writing. In general I always got a positive response that I was going in the right direction. I would get so inspired by hearing her play it, getting me excited about continuing on with the piece! There was only one time I did make a substantial change to the composition. In the middle section of the last movement, when it goes into that nice jazzy section with its syncopations, that originally wasn't there. I had gone to a 4/4 time, but it was much more straight ahead. When She-e played through that part, I could tell it was just something that wasn't working, it felt ordinary, and I could also sense that she wasn't as enthusiastic about that passage, as she had been about every other passage I had showed her ahead of time. So I went back to the drawing board and sure enough ended up with one of the coolest sounding sections of the entire concerto!

There were really no other outside influences, although being written for a
Taiwanese orchestra, it was pointed out to me that the opening chorale theme (which is original) is built primarily on a pentatonic scale. That was coincidence. The piece was genuinely written as absolute music, not programmatic.

**JL:** What attributes of the commissioning artist, Ms. She-e Wu, did you hope to capture in the composition?

**EE:** Her virtuosic approach to playing, her wonderfully expressive approach, and her sense of excitement and exhilaration. I wanted to write a grand piece reflecting her bubbly, intense personality. I got together with her and heard her play *Northern Lights* as well as music by Eric Sammut, and was so taken with her approach. Afterwards we simply had dinner, and her infectious, joyful personality was what I wanted to capture in the music as well.

**JL:** What sort of and how much communication did you have with Ms. Wu during the composition of the *Concerto*?

**EE:** We got together during the writing at least 3 times, each time with her playing what I had written up until that time, with me accompanying her on the piano version of the piece. When I came up with the 2nd movement opening, I was so excited about it; I called her up and played it over the phone for her!
JL: What might be another way that Ms. Wu directly influenced the composition of the work?

EE: One additional thing to the other points I made in previous questions, was that I spotted that She-e was really smart! She knew music inside and out; as a percussionist, marimbist, as a pianist, and as a teacher. Consequently I had the feeling that she would really be able to communicate a huge, difficult work with great understanding, and also great panache!

JL: Let us now review the piece in its separate parts. Let us begin by the chorale found at the beginning of the work. How did you compose this chorale and what factors influenced its composition?

EE: I had written several pieces that opened with a slow introduction—my piano trio, my viola sonata, trumpet sonata, bass trombone concerto, and Ballade, Pastorale and Dance for Flute, Horn and Piano. This is modeled after those Classical pieces (like the Beethoven Symphony #7, with a slow introduction before a nice big Sonata Allegro form. My procedure when I compose is to simply improvise at the piano. I knew I wanted the piece to begin in the key of C major which allowed me to frequently use the low C (two octaves below middle C) which was not available when I had written for marimba in previous years. I loved that low sonority so that was the only conscious decision I made prior to the improvisation.
JL: The chorale seems to serve as connecting material throughout the work, as it returns at the end of the third movement. What made you decide to bring back the chorale in the third movement and how do you feel this decision affects the shape of the entire work?

EE: I borrowed this device from Bartok with his Chiastic form, the way he uses the arch in his music. There is something so satisfying about the return home after a big, long several movement journey. I remember the first time I encountered this in Bartok's 4th String Quartet. I thought it was wonderful to bring the piece full circle. I had done that in a few previous pieces, most notably my piano quartet, and my Trio for Violin, Trumpet and Piano. I have had people comment to me how the return of the opening material at the end makes the music so striking. The chorale for me was so important with regard to key, resonance and grandeur, that I loved the idea of bringing it back at the end but not soft as in the beginning, rather huge and heroic.

JL: You have described yourself as a “Neo-Romantic” composer. Did this self description help you to generate the form of the work? More specifically, did you plan before you began to write the piece to use traditional forms such as Sonata Allegro and Rondo?

EE: The forms I would say are my love of the classical roadmaps that composers have
used ever since whether in works like the Barber’s piano sonata or Schoenberg's 4th String Quartet. In that sense my music is influenced by Neo-Classicism. But the basic overall sound of my music involves big, resonant chords, lyricism, melody, and strong dramatic gestures, which I label Neo-Romanticism, in the sense that Prokofiev's concerti, aesthetically are Neo-Romantic, but structurally are often Neo-Classic. So for me it's a combination of both.

**JL:** How do you feel the use of these forms effects both your composition and the listener?

EE: These great formal structures are roadmaps that composers use so they are not constantly reinventing the wheel. It is so natural to have a piece that presents a theme, contrasts it with a different theme (like dark and light in painting), develops it and providing familiarity, yet growth for the listener, and a return home. This is a satisfying ingredient for any art form existing in time, whether music, or dance or even a movie. And, voila, you have Sonata Allegro form! These forms, for the informed listener, also let them spot how a composer uses some familiar forms, but puts their own individuality and stamp on it. This is much in the same way thousands and thousands of painters have painted throughout the centuries, and they are still finding unique ways in painting them, whether the old Dutch masters or Cézanne and Picasso.

**JL:** The second movement is a slow, lyrical movement yet still contains some
technical challenges. What were some of your influences for this movement? Is it common for you to still give the performer technical challenges in the lyrical movement?

EE: Sometimes my second movements are indeed not as technical but sometimes, as in the case of the Concerto, they are very dramatic. For that I sometimes use the model of works like Barber's slow movements for both his Piano Sonata and Piano Concerto. I like the feel of intensity growing from a pastorale opening.

JL: In knowing what you know about the nature of the marimba and its sound capabilities, how did you approach the lyrical second movement being that it is to be performed on a percussive marimba?

EE: The rolled chords for me lead to a pastoral sound and I have found, the marimba can play extremely legato, blending well with the strings.

JL: The third movement is in a Rondo form. How do you feel this should influence the performer and the listener?

EE: It should be playful and dance-like, and the return should sound heroic.

JL: Midway through the third movement the performer is asked to perform on the
edge of the bar. How did you come to use this technique and what do you think it adds to the overall performance of the work?

EE: I heard this technique used in a solo marimba piece by Leigh Stevens and in *Velocities* by Joseph Schwantner, both were pieces which I loved. I liked the sudden switch in color that makes the audience sit on the edge of their chair and think, "Where does that sound come from." When I used it in the third movement, the piece has been building and growing, so that is how I can top the previous gesture by adding this new sound. Brahms is one of my favorite composers and I sort of used that effect, the way Brahms will use pizzicato in his string sonatas as a sudden change of color to highlight a gesture, or provide a distinct boundary between ideas.

JL: Lastly, what musical and non-musical characteristics do you think should influence an informed performance of the *Concerto*?

EE: The performer should have fun with the work. I know it is extraordinarily difficult, but the performer should be able to be really expressive, exaggerate the dynamics, play with variety of tempi and colors so that the piece becomes a living, breathing dramatic work of art.
CHAPTER 6 INTERVIEW WITH SHE-E WU

As one can see from the interview with Eric Ewazen, She-e Wu had a large impact on the composition of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*. Ms. Wu is well-known in the percussion world for her expertise and artistry. It is not difficult to see how Dr. Ewazen gained such inspiration from her.

She-e Wu came to the United States in 1991 from her home country of Taiwan. In Taiwan she actively performed as a timpanist and percussionist. Upon her arrival in the United States she began to study at the University of North Texas where she earned her Bachelor’s and Master’s of Music degrees. Her teachers include Dr. Robert Schietroma, Leigh Howard Stevens, Ed Soph, and Tzong-Ching Ju. Ms. Wu has appeared as a solo artist at the 25th, 27th, and 30th Percussive Arts Society International Convention; Journées de la Percussion, NancyPhony Festival, perKumania festival, PercuPassion Festival in France; Bach Symposium/Bach Variation Festival, the Taiwan Connection concert at Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center; International Percussion Festival and Interamerican Music and Arts Festival Orchestra in Puerto Rico; Festival Internacional de Percusion "Ritmo Vital 2001" and the National Percussion Convention in Spain. Ms. Wu has performed as guest recitalist and clinician at universities, colleges, and conservatories in France, Belgium, Italy, Sweden, Denmark, England, Germany, as well as American music institutions like the Curtis Institute of Music, New England Conservatory, Manhattan School of Music, Northwestern University, and at "Days of Percussion"
throughout the United States. She currently serves as Associate Professor of Percussion and Coordinator of Percussion Studies at the Bienen School of Music at Northwestern University.

The following interview offers Ms. Wu’s perspective on the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*. Ms. Wu had been a very active participant throughout its composition and she has gone on to perform the work around the world. Her insight can answer many questions about how to give an informed and artistic performance of the *Concerto*.

**JL:** How is it that you came to decide to commission a marimba concerto and what made you choose Eric Ewazen as the composer?

**SW:** It happened in a pretty funny way, I was playing a solo concert in Taipei. After the concert a conductor friend of mine, Paul Chiang of the Moment Musical Orchestra of Taiwan, told me he loved my performance of *Northern Lights*. He asked if I would be interested in commissioning the composer of *Northern Lights* to write a marimba concerto for me and his orchestra. I told him I had to get back to the states to talk to Eric. Eric came down to the Jersey shore where I was living then, and I played *Northern

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Lights for him. He was very moved by my performance and was excited to write a concerto for me. That is how the Concerto got started.

JL: Did you know that Dr. Ewazen would be so collaborative in the compositional process before you commissioned the piece? How did you feel about working with a composer that collaborates in the compositional process?

SW: At that point I had known he had written this beautiful piece, Northern Lights. I asked him about this piece and his compositional process. After we talked I then played more pieces I had prepared for him and also showed him some published pieces that I thought were well-written for marimba. This added to his inspiration for the Concerto. Overall I knew that he knows how to compose for marimba and he knows what I was looking for in a concerto. If Northern Lights were a different piece I would have expected the Concerto to be different, but it was so great that I trusted him in writing a concerto. Plus, he told me that he would involve me and keep me posted in every step.

JL: What direct effects do you feel you had on the composition of the Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra?
SW: He began to write the piece right after we met. Soon he would send sections of the music through the fax, little bits and pieces. I would see these small sections, laugh and then begin to play the parts over the phone for him. He told me he got the form and ideas from listening to Mozart horn concerti. It would go on like this, him faxing different sections and I would play it for him on the phone. He told me he wanted a ballad for the second movement. I agreed and we worked through the second movement in the same way, bits and pieces at a time. I would continue to check each section that he sent. I didn’t get the whole piece until after a couple of months. In the third movement I loved the materials, 6/8, fast, and very exciting. Then the 4/4 section came and somehow I was not sure about where the piece was going. I wasn’t convinced on that section and so I told him. He then went back to work more, wrote another section and this time sent it through FedEx. He had thrown away the section that he had written previously and took a different direction. He was very excited about this version of the 4/4 section. I, too, loved the new section, it was over the top and exciting and just what I felt the piece needed. So with faxing, FedEx and phone calls we put together the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*.

JL: Let us begin to look at specific aspects of the *Concerto*. In the first movement the piece opens with a chorale and then proceeds into the fast, articulate exposition.

What type of mallet do you use to approach the different textures presented in this movement? Feel free to list brands or simply describe the type of mallet.
SW: The chorale came from the *Northern Lights* choral. I love chorales and I love rolling. I believe it was apparent from that time I played *Northern Lights* for Eric. So that inspired Eric to write the chorale at the beginning of the work. What I want to achieve with the roll is a long sustain. I use multi-tone mallets and play them at an angle. I use the tips of those elongated mallets and create a warmer sound. Please note that I use a multi-tone mallet, not a two-tone mallet. I cannot change mallets so when I get to the fast section, I use the mallets in a direct striking angle for the running sixteenth notes.

JL: *How much musical expression do you use in the presentation of the chorale?*

*Is the same expression used in each repetition of the chorale?*

SW: As a musician, I change my interpretation all the time. I play the way I think it should be played. A lot of this is not included in the piece; I make my own musical decisions. Sometimes I play sections slower and sometimes I play them faster. It all depends on if I am with an orchestra, string quartet or wind ensemble. It could also depend on the space I am in, being a recital hall or large concert hall. Also, the phrases are changeable, that is what is great about being a musician.
JL: The first movement is in Sonata Allegro form. Does your understanding of this form influence your performance of the movement? If so, how does it influence your performance?

SW: The fact that you are a musician and you know the form should influence how each section is played. Each area that returns reflects how I make my musical decisions. There are choices on tempo in the section or how I set-up each section. Sometimes I add a crescendo or a breath. One also needs to consider the group that accompanies the solo. Sometimes I talk to the conductor about these details or phrases and we work together to make the music and "the interpretation of form" happens the way we want it to happen.

JL: In recordings I have heard your performance of the first movement you add expression to the cadenza found in measures 230 to 258. What factors influenced you in your expressive nature of this cadenza?

SW: I try to treat the first movement cadenza like a "real cadenza." I enter the cadenza with the group, and then they stop. I need to be careful because if I stop with them or take a breath immediately, it will sound odd. I must go into the cadenza with the sixteenth notes with the orchestra as if this is just another repetition of the theme to lead the
audience to think this is normal. Of course right after that, I take a huge breath to make everyone realize that we are actually in cadenza. After the tension has left then I begin to add my changes in tempo and manipulate the rhythms. I also use the harmonic progressions to motivate my changes in tempi and musical directions. Overall, I try to add the expression I feel to make it sound like a true cadenza.

**JL:** The second movement is the lyrical, slow movement. What type of mallets do you use to approach this movement given that later in the movement there are also articulate passages to be performed?

**SW:** This movement is quite different than the first. I use much heavier mallets in the beginning of the movement. Those slow rhythmic patterns and rolls sound best with heavy rich mallets. Later I do change to harder single tone mallets. This allows me to play the articulate passages with the clarity I need. In the last section (recap) I change back to heavier mallets. I use an A-B-A form with the mallets to express and match the A-B-A form of the piece.

**JL:** Throughout the work, the second movement included, there are passages that require a great deal of technical facility. An example may be measures 136 to 151 in
the second movement. What technical approaches have you used to prepare passages such as this and others like it found in the work?

SW: I will say double lateral exercises, especially in the second movement. The double laterals should be practiced in small intervals in this case. I use a sequential style of playing quite a bit, 1-2-3-4 or 4-3-2-1, throughout the piece. I try to keep the sequences/stickings consistent during those busy passages as much as I can. One needs appropriate stickings to be efficient and also to avoid not looking awkward. Having the ability to play small intervals of double lateral strokes is essential, as well as playing the pattern found in the music in a musical manner. The stickings should also fit your musical approach. Finally, you must also know the harmonies, harmonic progressions and how that knowledge affects how you want to play these patterns and their required stickings and technique.

JL: Dr. Ewazen has described the third movement as a “rip-roaring rondo with a dance-like ritornello alternating with passages which are alternately jazzy and heroic.” How might this description added to your own impression of the movement influence your approach to this movement?
SW: The third movement is in 6/8. The opening statement has an agogic accent to it and that is essential to the movement. One must consider the bigger beats and pulses, the agogic accents and the syncopated rhythms. We must figure out a way to interpret the written syncopation otherwise the movement has no character. Eric must have known this as he composed the movement; the movement is dance-like but full of syncopations. The 6/8 then goes into 4/4, but the 4/4 uses dotted rhythms. In playing dotted rhythms one has to make decision on the length of any given notes. How one plays these rhythms has a direct effect on the style and spirit of the piece. Through various ways of accentuation and attention to the syncopation, I can then communicate with what I believe to be the character of the movement.

JL: Knowing that the third movement is in Rondo form, how might this influence your performance of the movement? What impressions are you trying to communicate to your listeners?

SW: This can be the same as the first movement. In knowing the Rondo form one can interpret how each section is to be played. One of my favorite sections is the return of the first movement in the third movement. (Measures 311-327) I feel extremely "free" in that section especially those long and all-over-the-keyboard arpeggios right before the
last A. I feel tremendous freedom as I play this section because it reminds me of the Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto. This helps me to prepare the last return of the A section.

**JL:** The third movement offers many technical challenges to the performer, including alternating between playing on the edge of the bar and the center of the bar, measures 165 to 175. What suggestions do you have technically to aid a performer in the preparation of this passage?

**SW:** Eric got this idea from seeing me demonstrating a piece called *Rhythmic Caprice* by Leigh Howard Stevens. In that piece there is playing the shaft of mallets on the edge of the bar. I have found that, in this work, especially when playing with a larger ensemble, that simply playing on the edge of the bar with the shaft is not loud enough to be heard. In the performance I actually play marimba shots. You have to use the mallet head and the shaft at the same time. The mallet should be held at a slight angle to get the necessary sound from both mallet head and shaft. I had to do something that would work, and this is what I found would work.

**JL:** The work is quite substantial in length, totaling almost 30 minutes of music. What techniques do you use to concentrate throughout a performance of the work
and what advice do you give to someone trying to digest and memorize that full amount of music found in the *Concerto*?

SW: You "just do it," like the Nike company slogan. If you have to play, you find a way to do it. For me, I think about the music a lot. Sufficient mental preparation is needed.

One thing that is technically challenging is the rapid shift from the low to high end back to low end of the instrument. One has be athletic about it, one has to learn how move gracefully, efficiently, and accurately. This can be really challenging and requires tremendous preparation. Mentally, I don’t find it that challenging because the work has such solid form. One should make an effort to internalize the form and the harmonic direction and this will lead to a successful performance of the piece.

JL: As the work has gained popularity and gone on to be performed by other marimbists, what advice do you have to offer to someone learning the work for the first time?

SW: I would be very careful about the tone one produces, between the rapid passages and the chorale. The mallet choice is very important. For the more technical side: master the lateral motions found throughout the piece. These are challenging and we should try not
to sacrifice our accuracy due to technical difficulty. It is important to know the direction one wants to go in regards to making music. Just because the music returns in the form does not mean it has to be played the same way all times. One should think about one's approach to each section and make these decisions present throughout the piece. Different interpretations throughout the piece will make it more interesting. Also, knowing where the music is going is absolutely necessary. All these different aspects can make a first performance of the work a rewarding performance.
CHAPTER 7 PERFORMANCE PRACTICE SUGGESTION FOR THE CONCERTO FOR MARIMBA AND STRING ORCHESTRA

This document will now make a summation of the information presented and generate suggestions for performance practice. Aspects that will be discussed include comparisons to other percussion works by Eric Ewazen, errata, possible adjustments to the piano accompaniment, and sticking permutations. In order to facilitate the discussion of stickings this author will use the below numbering system.

Figure 1, Mallet Numbering

1  2  3  4
Left Hand  Right Hand

A marimbist can gain an abundance of perspective from listening to recordings and studying scores of both Northern Lights and The Palace of Nine Perfections. Currently The Palace of Nine Perfections is recorded on the compact disc The Percussion Music of Eric Ewazen. The performance is a recording of the University of Oklahoma Percussion Ensemble and is on the Resonator Records label. This compact disc also includes a performance of Northern Lights recorded by marimba artist Gordon Stout.
Another recording of *Northern Lights* can be found on She-e Wu’s album, *Snapshot*. This album is also on the Resonator Records label. These recordings are all performed by artists that had a close connection to the composer and in the case of the University of Oklahoma and Gordon Stout; these artists gave the premiers of these works. Their recordings give a wealth of insight into the performance and interpretation of music composed by Eric Ewazen.

Along with listening to recordings, score study and performance of these works will give a valuable perspective to the performance of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*. In both *Northern Lights* and *The Palace of Nine Perfections*, Eric Ewazen employs specific patterns and techniques for the keyboard percussion instruments. In recognizing these techniques and playing them in different settings, such as the unaccompanied work or the percussion ensemble, the marimbist that performs the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra* will have an increased familiarity of Dr. Ewazen’s compositional techniques. When immersed in the works by a particular composer, one has the benefit of strong fluency with that composer’s approach to composition. Therefore this author recommends study and possible performance of *Northern Lights* and *The Palace of Nine Perfections* before beginning study of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*.

The knowledge of the form of a particular work is paramount to an artistic performance of the piece. Dr. Ewazen has used traditional classical forms to express his
music in the *Concerto*. As mentioned in the interview with the composer, he recognizes that the forms are a large part of this composition. He states that many of the great masters use the forms as to not “reinvent the wheel.” He has chosen these forms to express his musical ideas as a Neo-Classical and Neo-Romantic composer. The performer’s particular interpretation of the piece can have added insight by knowing these forms. Specific examples of this can be found throughout the piece. In the first movement the form is Sonata Allegro. The musical material found at measure seventeen is part of the exposition. In Sonata Allegro form the material from the exposition returns in the recapitulation. The recapitulation occurs in measure 197. In being aware of this information the performer can make the choice to build up into this measure with a crescendo to help the audience in recognizing the form. The performer may also make a decision to add similar or different inflections to the music in the recapitulation to that used in the exposition.

In the second movement there is an A-B-A form used by Dr. Ewazen. The first section extends from the beginning to measure ninety-one. The extensive development section, or B section, begins in measure ninety-two. The return of the A section occurs at measure 181. Ms. Wu discusses this form in her interview. She mentions that the middle development section has a great deal of difficult technical requirements. The beginning of the movement and the end of the movement are solemn and require a mallet choice that reflects this character. The middle section, with its rapid passages, requires a more articulate mallet. Ms. Wu aptly points out that a change of mallet in measure ninety-two
helps the delineation of the form for both the performer and the listener. A possible example might be that if the performer chooses to use the Innovative Percussion WU1 soft marimba mallet, then in the middle section the performer can switch to an Innovative Percussion WU2 medium soft marimba mallet. It will also aid the performer in clearly performing the rapid, articulate passages. A return to the softer mallet in measure 191 allows the movement to end in its somber nature while also giving the listener the benefit of the knowing the form.

The third movement is in a Rondo form. In knowing the A-B-A-C-A form the performer can again make specific choices regarding the inflections and character of each section. Once the performer has developed an interpretation of the A section, then that interpretation can be repeated each time the A section returns. One possible inflection may be an emphasis on the agogic accents, as mentioned by Ms. Wu in her interview. It would then be logical to make similar emphasis to these accents in each return of the A section. Conversely, when the B and C sections are performed, it adds to the overall effect if these sections have some contrast to the A section. Also, the C section of the third movement is the chorale found in the first movement. In their interviews, Dr. Ewazen and Ms. Wu describe the grand nature of this return to the chorale. Dr. Ewazen feels that his final statement of this chorale has the grandest orchestration and gives a poignant ending to the work. Ms. Wu has a particular appreciation for this return of the chorale and gives it extra volume and energy as it leads to the close of the piece. This author also recommends that special attention is given to the performance of the final
chorale as it not only helps to generate an exciting end to the third movement but also shows the large-scale connection between the first and last movements of the piece.

In the interview with Eric Ewazen he speaks of his relationship with She-e Wu. He explains that her artistry and technique on marimba had a profound effect on his composition of the work. Therefore, an understanding of Ms. Wu’s approach to marimba performance can aid the performer in preparation of the piece. A live performance is the greatest way to gain a deep understanding of a particular performer. Recordings of Ms. Wu can also serve as a valuable resource. On her compact disc, *Snapshot*, a person can hear her approach to chorales, fast articulate passages and extended musical phrases. Another recording that is obviously very important is *The Percussion Music of Eric Ewazen*. On this recording Ms. Wu performs the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*. Her interpretation of the work is displayed masterfully on this recording. In obtaining an understanding of certain inflections as well as her sense of phrasing, a performer can apply this knowledge to his or her performance of the *Concerto*.

She-e Wu’s interview discusses particular mallets to use throughout the piece. Though mallet choice is something that is quite personal and can depend on the performance venue as well as the instrument, some suggestions are given for possible mallets. She-e speaks of using a mallet that is a multi-tone mallet in performing the *Concerto*. This means that when the mallet head is struck at different angles on the marimba bar that different tones are produced. This mallet then would require an
elongated head for it to have these capabilities. There are two mallets currently available that can offer these capabilities. The first is the She-e Wu Series from Innovative Percussion, Inc. This mallet has an elongated mallet head and is currently used by Ms. Wu to give her distinctive sound in performance. A second mallet choice is the *Concerto* Series offered by the Mostly Marimba Company and is part of their Malletech mallet series. This mallet is formerly known as the She-e Wu mallet and also represents much of what Ms. Wu presents in performance. There are other mallets currently on the market that have similar qualities. It is this author’s recommendation that careful consideration is given to the mallet used and that it is one that can serve as a multi-tone mallet.

The *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra* requires a comprehensive and detailed mastery of technical elements required in marimba performance. There are two specific techniques that necessitate particular attention, the double lateral stroke and the one-handed roll. The double lateral stroke is a single motion in one hand that results in two mallet attacks on two different bars, one immediately after the other. The difficulty is that the patterns regularly occur in rapid succession, as they do throughout the first movement of the *Concerto*, shown in Example 17. An acceptable tempo for the first movement is quarter note=130. One should also note that the close intervals in adjacent mallets give added technical challenges to the passage.
Example 17 (mm. 17-20 in movement one of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*)

The right hand will play the first two sixteenth notes of this pattern and the left hand will play the second two sixteenth notes of the pattern with a mallet permutation of 4-3-2-1. Each set of sixteenth notes will repeat this pattern. Throughout the movement these patterns are seen with different intervals. It is recommended that the performer prepare for this movement with exercises that develop the double lateral motion at different intervals. The following is an exercise derived from the first beat found in the above example. In repeating each measure with a metronome, the performer will slowly build the muscle control to perform the passage above.

Example 18 (double lateral exercise)
The second technique mentioned is the one-handed roll and is shown in the music in Example 19. This technique is required often in the second movement of the *Concerto*.

Example 19 (mm. 35-38 in movement two of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*)

![Music notation](image)

Preparation on this specific technique is required to create the necessary effect of the right hand rolling the diad while the left hand performs the moving eighth-note pattern. The following exercise and ones similar to it can aid in growth of the one-handed roll. The following exercise and ones similar to it can aid in growth of the one-handed roll. Any exercise that slowly builds the coordination that facilitates the one-handed roll is beneficial.

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The *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra* has a variety of different accompaniments now available. The performer can choose to perform with string orchestra, piano, percussion orchestra or wind band. All publications are available through Keyboard Percussion Publications. The percussion orchestra arrangement was completed by Richard Gipson. It is for nine players and includes the use of bells, two vibraphones, and five marimbas excluding the soloist. It and the other arrangements serve as creative alternatives to using the piano accompaniment.

The original composition with string orchestra has many details to the string performance. The piano accompaniment does not always reflect these details. It is this author’s belief that with minor adjustments to the piano accompaniment a performance of the *Concerto* with piano can be more rewarding for the listener.
The first example is found in measure forty-five in the first movement of the string orchestra accompaniment. All string players are asked to perform pizzicato, this is not reflected in the piano accompaniment. In adding staccato markings to the piano part in the same measure the pianist will be encouraged to perform like that of a string section performing pizzicato. A similar articulation happens in measure sixty-eight in the string orchestra, it is again recommended to have the pianist perform with staccato articulation. In measure 152 of the same movement the strings have a sforzando on the second beat of the measure; this is not in the piano part. A sforzando can then be added to the piano part to help add this character to the passage.

The second movement of the *Concerto* has the string orchestra begin con sordino, or with mutes. The piano accompaniment does not reflect this instruction. One possibility is to request the pianist perform with the damper pedal during the opening section of the movement. This will add to the subdued effect desired by the composer. The mutes are removed in measure forty-nine. At the end of the movement in measure 178, the string parts ask for the mutes to be returned to the instruments. This again can be an opportunity for the pianist to use the damper pedal to help create the restrained texture found at the end of the movement.

There are also sections in the last movement that could require added articulations in the piano accompaniment. In measure fifty-four the strings perform pizzicato, the
piano part could add staccato and a dynamic change to mezzo piano. Similar material is presented two measures later in measures fifty-six through fifty-eight and measures sixty-one and sixty-two. Later there is an effective alternation between pizzicato and arco in measures seventy-six through eighty-one. The string players perform one measure pizzicato and then one measure arco. The pianist can make adjustments in articulation and volume to capture this exciting texture. Lastly, there are sections of pizzicato found in measures 219 and 220, as well as 223 through 226. These sections can also be addressed in the piano accompaniment in regards to added staccato markings. Throughout all the movements the pianist can review the string orchestra score for any other added color or textures changes they may feel are appropriate.

The Keyboard Percussion Publication of the marimba solo is relatively free of mistakes. There are only a few sections that require attention to correct an error. The typical 5.0 octave marimba only extends to the C three octaves above middle C. In measure 119 in movement one, there is a C-sharp that is three octaves above middle C. This note cannot be found on most marimbas. It is this author’s suggestion that the whole measure be transposed down one octave. This would mean that the performer would begin on the C-sharp two octaves below middle C instead of the written one octave below middle C.

In the second movement, in measure 127 there is a half note with a crescendo. There is no roll marked on this note, but in order for a crescendo to occur one must roll
the note instead of strike it. This also occurs in measure 168 of the same movement. In recordings of Ms. Wu’s performance of the work she plays a roll on these half notes. It is recommended that the performer rolls these half notes through these measures.

The *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra* is quite difficult for even the advanced marimbist. A strong performance of the work requires a careful choice of sticking permutations. These choices must not only address the technical needs but also aid in giving a good musical performance. The following examples represent some of the more challenging passages found throughout the composition. After careful consideration, this author recommends these permutations to aid in an accurate and musical presentation of the piece.

As mentioned in the above discussion regarding double laterals, the exposition of the first movement has the sticking 4-3-2-1 used throughout the passage. The advanced marimbist will recognize that this is the most efficient permutation for much of the first movement. Example 21 below shows the first example that requires attention to an alternate sticking. This being in the first movement, the tempo should be quarter note=130. This author recommends the following sticking to help avoid the unnecessary crossing of sticks and keep the passage rhythmically precise through the crescendo.
Example 21 (mm. 60-61 in movement one of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*)

Throughout much of the first movement the performer should use the double lateral stroke. There are a few occasions where the notes may be too close together and it may serve the performer to choose an alternate sticking. This is shown in measures 152 to 158, found in Example 22. At this point it would be best to alternate using mallets two and three. To further aid in the performance of this passage, it would be beneficial to begin with mallet two.

Example 22 (mm. 152-153 in movement one of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*)

The passages throughout the section found in measures 185 to 192 should be performed with the use of double laterals. There is one measure that requires special
attention. In measure 190 the performer has a descending Bb minor arpeggio and then ascends in the second half of the measure. One possible permutation is given in Example 23.

Example 23 (m. 190 in movement one of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*)

One last example in movement one can be found in the cadenza. In measures 254 and 255 the music presents F major chords and in the next measure G major/minor seventh chords. The following sticking in Example 24 can alleviate any possible cross-sticking that may occur within the section.

Example 24 (mm. 254-255 in movement one of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*)
Many of the challenges in the second movement do not develop from sticking complications. The difficult aspect of this movement comes from the need to perform the one-handed roll. There are a few exceptions found throughout the movement. The following two examples, Examples 25 and 26, are similar in that they include ascending passages in the first measure and then require a large leap down the instrument to begin the next measure. The tempo of this movement is approximately quarter note=55, therefore alternated sticking can be used throughout much of the passage. In both cases the following sticking suggestions will help make the leap down between measures.

Example 25 (mm. 63-64 in movement two of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*)

Example 26 (mm. 85-86 in movement two of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*)
Measure 159 brings to a close the climax of the movement. The performer is required to transverse over three and a half octaves in one measure. The given sticking in Example 27 allows for smoothness of motion while still accommodating the extreme leaps in the passage.

Example 27 (m. 159-160 in movement two of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*)

The A section of the Rondo third movement is comprised mostly of double vertical strokes. The intervals found for these strokes are a minor third up to the size of an octave, as seen in Example 28.
Example 28 (mm. 1-5 in movement three of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*)

The B section of the Rondo, starting in measure 116, begins with a passage that offers challenges in sticking. An acceptable tempo to have throughout this movement is dotted quarter note=120 or quarter note=120 at the l’istesso tempo. It is important to develop a sticking that is effective because the early measures of this section create the character for the whole B section. The first two measures have the stickings found in Example 29 to aid in performance.

Example 29 (mm. 116-117 in movement three of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*)
By starting the patterns found in Example 30 with the left hand, the sticking will assist in keeping the tempo as well as the rhythmic stability that is required for this passage.

Example 30 (m. 156 in movement three of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*).

The return of the A section occurs in measure 217. At the end of this section, before the C section arrives, there is a challenging segment that requires a large range of motion. In measure 297 the performer can use double laterals to execute the music but in measure 298 the performer needs to utilize what may be considered a triple lateral stroke. Brett Jones, marimbist and college percussion professor, defines the triple lateral stroke as doing a double lateral stroke but adding a third note. This is seen in the following example in the 2-1-2 and 3-4-3 motion found in the second measure.

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Example 31 (mm. 297-298 in movement three of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*)

The exciting close to the work brings about virtuosic passages for the performer. In measures 358 and 359 the performer has a rapid passage of a G7 arpeggio followed by C major arpeggios. Below is a possible sticking permutation to help bring the composition to an accurate and exciting ending. In measure 359 the sticking uses the double lateral motion 1-2-3-4 and 4-3-2-1 to stay consistent with the double laterals found throughout the work.

Example 32 (mm. 358-359 in movement three of the *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra*)
CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION

At the time of this document Eric Ewazen’s *Concerto for Marimba and String Orchestra* was approaching its tenth year in existence. Performances of the work were being given throughout the world. It is this author’s belief that this performance practice guide will give a wealth of perspectives to future marimbists. The interviews give deep insight into the composition of the work as well as its presentation. The analysis helps view the work on a large scale while still examining the different aspects of each movement. Finally, the performance practice suggestions found in the last section give helpful information in regards to preparing the *Concerto*. Though the *Concerto* may be a challenge for many marimbists, this author hopes that future performers find the rewards in this well-constructed and exciting work after reading this document. As Eric Ewazen composes more music for percussion it is this author’s wish that future research continue on the percussion writing of this talented and prolific composer.
APPENDIX PERMISSION LETTER

To whom it may concern:

I, Eric Ewazen, give permission to Jonathan Latta to use examples of my compositions in his Lecture Recital document.

Eric Ewazen
Date

11/6/05
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