

Perspectives
of
Percussion Pedagogues

Dr. Domenico E. Zarro, Ed.D.

Foreword by,
Neil Grover

Volume I

Table of Contents

Foreword	4
Introduction	6
Dr. Paul Buyer	7
James Musto	17
Daniel Kirkpatrick	25
Dr. Payton MacDonald	33
Michael LaMattina	41
Todd Ukena	47
Beth Gottlieb	59
Dr. Garwood Whaley	64
Dr. Jesus Ramirez Fernandez	70
John R. Beck	77
John S. Pratt	84
Dr. Stephen Crawford	91
Dr. Guy Gauthreaux	98
William J. Schinstine	106
Dave Mancini	114
Paul Price	121
Murray Houllif	128
Dr. James L. Moore	133
Anthony J. Cirone	144
Antonio Santangelo	152
Closing Thoughts	157
Acknowledgements	158
Additional Resources	159
About The Author	160

Foreword

Embarking on the path to becoming a successful professional percussionist is a marathon of dedication and perseverance. It demands a harmonious blend of innate talent, relentless practice, personal sacrifices, and an unyielding passion to achieve greatness.

The study of percussion can be considered one of the most diverse and expansive disciplines in instrumental music. Unlike our non-percussion counterparts (who may excel on just one or two instruments), percussionists are frequently tasked with mastering dozens of diverse instruments. Each one of these instruments demands specific techniques and sound production concepts that don't always translate to other percussion family members. As professionals, we must have these varied skill sets readily accessible (quite literally at our fingertips) and be able to seamlessly transition between them swiftly and effortlessly.

Although achieving a high level of proficiency in percussion requires years of private study, individual practice, and ensemble experience, some of the most effective learning can occur by simply listening to accomplished percussionists. Whether it's through music or by heeding the advice of those we admire, learning by listening is an excellent way to broaden one's musical perspective.

Perspectives of Percussion Pedagogues is a compilation of interviews from the blog, *The Percussion Student*, which features renowned percussionists from around the world. Within its pages, you'll find captivating and illuminating personal stories, each as unique as the personalities themselves. Pay close attention, and you'll discover a wealth of valuable information from top players and music educators embedded in this volume.

Learning from the successes of others, particularly world-class professional percussionists who embody one's future aspirations, can be an excellent method to uncover new concepts and enhance your skill set.

On behalf of the entire percussion community, I express heartfelt thanks to Dr. Domenico E. Zarro for his meticulous documentation of the stories and insights of many top professional percussionists. This extensive volume will undoubtedly become an invaluable resource for both aspiring percussion students and seasoned

professionals. After all, the tradition of learning from others is a cornerstone of the music world.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Neil Grover". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Neil Grover

PAS Hall of Fame

Founder Grover Pro Percussion

Chapter 11



John S. Pratt

November, 2020

This interview was excerpted from my CD-eBook *Music For Percussion* (2011)

On April 6, 2020 the percussion world lost John Pratt. In honor of his memory, below is an interview I conducted with him on July 13, 2009 at his Hawthorne, New Jersey home. This was the first, and only time, I met with Mr. Pratt in person, and I found him to be a very welcoming host. During our discussion, he shared with me his early years studying with Norm Peth; his time with the Hellcats; and his inspiration for composing the numerous rudimental solos our profession has come to admire and love. The highlight of the day was when he requested that we play some rudimental works together. This was something that I was not expecting. Yet, on his kitchen table he had set-up a couple of practice pads, sticks, and a stack of music. I have to admit, I was a little nervous at first. But once we started playing, I began to feel that I was no longer with a legend, but with another colleague who just loved talking about drumming. I shall always remember that day with great fondness, and I hope this interview conveys to you his incredible contributions to the percussive arts.

John Sterling Pratt's achievements in rudimental drumming are numerous. So much so that his peers inducted him into the Halls of Fame of the World Drum Corps, the Percussive Arts Society, the New Jersey Drum Corps, and the American Patriots Rudimental Drummers Club. Born on January 13, 1931 in Seneca Falls, New York, his love for rudimental drumming emerged During World War II when he attended community parades that promoted civic and national pride.

My interest in Rudimental Drumming began about the time of the attack upon Pearl Harbor that dragged the United States into World War II...It was the parades of that time that made my spine tingle, especially the drums in our American Legion Drum & Bugle Corps. I walked the street whistling their bugle melodies and tried to imitate the thundering of their drums on a metal wastebasket in my bedroom, which I turned upside down for the purpose of playing on it. At that time, I remember telling my mother that I no longer wanted to continue taking piano lessons, and when she sadly asked why, I told her I couldn't carry a piano in a parade. Shortly afterward, I began taking music lessons on the drum at school, and loved it. I soon became addicted to listening to Sousa marches and whistling them as I walked down the street. By the time the War was over, I was hopelessly addicted to drumming, and have been consumed by it ever since. (*J. S. Pratt PAS Hall of Fame Induction Speech, November 15, 2002*)

clubs and teaching individual students the Traditional Rudimental Drumming Art can we help to preserve the historic legacy which was passed on to us and hopefully should be passed on to the current generation as well. (*Ibid*)



When did you begin studying music?

My mother started me on piano lessons with a friend of hers at about the age of 8 until I was 12 years old. Because of Pearl Harbor, the bands, the parades, the bond drives, I just felt I had to play the drums. One day I was practicing the *Blue Danube* on the piano, and I got so angry with myself for missing one note that I just slammed my hands down on the piano keys and I walked out of the house. My mother followed me with her car trying to find out why I was so upset. I told her what happened, and more so that I couldn't play a piano in a parade. She never made me take a piano lesson after that.

Who were your primary teachers?

I only had one: Norman Peth. I studied with him until I qualified to obtain my certificate from N.A.R.D. in 1949. Norm was called to return home to Ohio by his father to work, so I was left without a teacher. But, I had gone so far with Norm that I had to use it. This all occurred around my senior year of high school.

Who impacted your musical growth the most?

Him, Norman. No question about it. He gave me lessons for \$2.50 and I stayed and stayed, and sometimes I would have supper over at his house. Then we'd get off on a tangent and play duets together. He was so glad to help me. He enjoyed working with me and he enjoyed my interest. It was just wonderful having a guy like that as a teacher. He is now 84 and we still keep in touch.

Which drummers have inspired you the most?

Other than Norm, it would be the Swiss Drummers, Alfons Greider and Dr. Fritz R. Berger. Alfons was a student of Dr. Berger, and while Alfons was studying at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital, working on a cure for cancer, he and I would get together to perform. Dr. Berger, I believe, was the man who wrote out the notation for all of the Swiss Rudiments. There were of course others who have written books about this topic, but Dr. Berger was the top authority on this subject.

Did you ever expect to have a career as a drummer?

I had no designs to do that. I just liked to drum. I went into the Army in November of 1949, because of the draft. As I was taking my basic training, it was found out that I played a musical instrument. After information was collected on me, it was recommended that I go to band school following basic training.

How did your career at West Point come about?

The barracks master at the band school said I would be foolish not to try out for the military band. He thought I was the best he ever heard put on a military drum. He said I could fly up and take an audition and that they had a band like Sousa used to have. They have a rudimental drum section, trumpets and fifes. He said I'm sure you'd love it. So I went up and auditioned, and when I was through at Fort Knox, I was transferred to West Point. Suddenly I had a job, so I hung on to it and I started writing parts for the field music. It was really nice and I enjoyed it. Before long I started to amass a whole bunch of material in pencil written on paper bags; you name it.

What motivated you to begin composing?

Well I started writing stuff when I was in high school. I did a drum solo. I learned to read music from Norm. So I started making little pieces of music; a lot of them, I couldn't even tell you where they are now. As time passed, the works became larger and fancier. I just threw the old stuff away one time. That happened when I got out of basic training and went to the band school, I decided that I had to do something better than this. When I was at West Point, I would go into the rehearsal rooms as the first one there and the last one out. I would just practice and experiment and then I started writing all this stuff; I guess to show my skill with a pen. A lot of people who saw my early solos like the way I notated and how neat it was.

How would you describe your compositional approach?

I sit down to write and it just comes out. Sometimes I have a song in mind; maybe a church hymn, a band march, or a song that can be made into a march. While I sing, or whistle the melody, I develop a rudimental composition that can coincide with that melody.

Do you compose with a specific grade level in mind?

No, I just write as nastily as I can write. That's with everything I ever wrote.

Chapter 19



Anthony J. Cirone

September, 2021

A member of the prestigious Percussive Arts Society, and Modern Drummer Magazine Halls of Fame, Anthony J. Cirone is equally renowned for his work as a performer, educator, composer, and editor. He received his Bachelor of Science, and Master of Science degrees from The Juilliard School where he studied with the legendary Saul Goodman. Upon graduation, he was offered the position of Percussionist with the San Francisco Symphony by Maestro Josef Krips. Mr. Cirone's 36-year tenure with the San Francisco Symphony had him perform under the musical directorship of: Seiji Ozawa, Edo DeWaart, Herbert Blomstedt, and Michael Tilson Thomas; as well as under the baton's of acclaimed guest conductors: Leonard Bernstein, Igor Stravinsky, Aaron Copland, Eugene Ormandy, Kurt Mazur, Rafael Kubelik, and James Levine.

As an educator, Mr. Cirone was a Professor of Music at San José State University where he Chaired the Percussion Department, conducted the Percussion Ensemble, and taught Fundamental Literature and Techniques, Percussion Pedagogy, and Notation/Computer Music Typography. He was also on the faculties of San Francisco State University, Stanford University, and The Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University where he Chaired the Percussion Department.

A prolific composer, Mr. Cirone received a Special Distinction Award from the ASCAP Rudolf Nissim Composition Contest for his orchestral work entitled: *Pentadic Striations*. His more than 100 published titles include his seminal book, *Portraits in Rhythm*, a worldwide standard for training percussionists; as well as his many other textbooks, symphonies for percussion, sonatas, a string quartet, and his works for orchestra and concert band.

Formerly the Percussion Consultant/Editor for Warner Bros. Publishing Co. (*now Alfred Music Publishing*), he is presently the Executive Editor of Percussion Publications for Meredith Music Publications. Moreover, he has designed two signature snare drum sticks for the Malletch Corporation, and is a clinician for the Yamaha Corporation, the Avedis Zildjian Cymbal Company, and the Remo Drum Company.



When did you begin studying music?

I began taking Snare Drum Lessons at seven years old. I had a private lesson

Did you have a specific goal?

I was always interested in teaching. No matter how much I became involved as a free-lance musician, I always continued to teach. After a few years at The Juilliard School, I began to study all the great European Composers and I learned how to compose music in such a classical environment. Early on, I realized that the wealth of musical directives that composers placed in their music such as: cresc, dim, accel, rit, fermatas, staccato, tenuto, G.P.; plus all the dynamics from ppp to fff; and tempo indications like, allegro vivace, largo molto, adagio, lento, and presto vivo; and character words like, morendo, espressivo, dolce, maestoso, assai, and animato, could not be found in the percussion books I was using to teach snare drum. At that time we were lucky to see a forte or piano, and maybe an Allegro. This inspired me to compose *Portraits in Rhythm - 50 Etudes for Snare Drum* which included much of the above. Most recently, I added all my personal interpretations and phrasing to the notation of the original book; as conductors do when rehearsing musical scores for an orchestra. Besides following the directions of the composer, conductors constantly adjust dynamics and interpret the musical directives, as well as add their own phrasing to the music. I always encourage my students to do the same. I call this new book *The Advanced Edition of Portraits in Rhythm*.

Do you focus on a specific area of percussion?

Professionally, when I joined the San Francisco Symphony in 1965, I played all the mallet parts. Years later when one of my students joined the orchestra, Jack Van Geem, who is a marimba virtuoso, took over the mallet parts and I played snare drum for many years. After our cymbal player retired, I finished my career playing cymbals. Because of *Portraits in Rhythm*, I concentrated on snare drum whenever I gave clinics and master classes.

Who impacted your musical growth the most?

Without question Saul Goodman. Everything I first learned about phrasing, rhythm, interpretation of musical directives, and articulations was during my six years of studying with him at Juilliard. During my 36 years with the San Francisco Symphony, every rehearsal was a master class for me. Performing under so many different conductors, each one had something personal to add to the interpretation of music. So I felt my education never really ended.