

Percussive Notes

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2010 Hall of Fame

Jack DeJohnette

Stanley Leonard

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Welcome Julia Gaines

By Rick Mattingly

I am happy to welcome Dr. Julia Gaines as the newest member of the *Percussive Notes* editorial team. With this issue, Julia assumes the role of editor for the Selected Reviews area. Her duties include assigning the material we receive to the appropriate reviewers, editing those reviews, and coordinating activities between the PAS intern who receives materials from publishers and then sends it out to reviewers, the Editor of *Notes* (me), and Managing Editor/Graphic Designer Hillary Henry.



Julia's background has prepared her well for this position. She is Assistant Professor of Percussion at the University of Missouri School of Music and has been very active in PAS for quite some time, having served as a member of the College Pedagogy Committee, as President of the Missouri PAS chapter, as a member of the PAS Board of Directors, as Secretary of the Executive Committee, and as a reviewer for *Percussive Notes*.

On behalf of PAS, I would like to thank Jim Lambert for his many years of service to PAS, *Percussive Notes*, and especially to the Selected Reviews section. He became reviews editor in 1983, and then served as Executive Editor of PN from 1986 to 1995, during which time (and after) he continued editing reviews. He continues to contribute to that section through his own reviews.

I would also like to thank the many PAS interns who have assisted with reviews over the years. Every six months, a new intern has to learn the job quickly in order to keep things flowing. I especially want to thank our current intern, Kristen Klehr, and our previous intern, Christina "C. J." Jordan, who kept things running smoothly during the transition between Jim and Julia.

I know that Julia shares my belief that the reviews we run of new percussion literature, method books, videos, and recordings are among the most valuable services we offer through *Percussive Notes*, and she brings a renewed commitment to providing our membership with perceptive, honest reviews that will help students, teachers, professional players, and hobbyists find materials that will help them get the most from their chosen art form.

With that in mind, we are looking to expand our staff of reviewers. If you feel that you have a good knowledge of percussion literature and instructional material, whether in one area or several, please contact Julia at publications@pas.org. PN

DISAGREES WITH RATING

In the September 2010 issue of *Percussive Notes*, the reviewer of my snare drum solo, "Control Freak," rated the level of difficulty as III+. Having communicated with James L. Moore, its Permuis publisher, and Roy Burns, dedicatee and PAS Hall of Famer, we all agree that the piece should be appropriately graded VI. My purpose in writing the piece was to challenge and provide solo recital repertoire for very advanced players. While I would agree that there might be more difficult level VI snare drum solos to play than "Control Freak," I think that the III+ rating is way under the difficulty level. I base this upon the snare drum ratings in the New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) solo festival manual where solos such as John Pratt's "Syncopating The Single Drag" and a couple of solos by Tom Brown, to mention just a few, are rated grade VI yet are not as difficult to execute, at the metronome marking given, as "Control Freak." I also feel that rating a solo like "Control Freak," which is just plain hard to play, a III+ somewhat misrepresents the piece and might possibly diminish interest in it by serious, advanced snare drummers looking for a challenging work.

—Murray Houllif

THE REVIEWER REPLIES:

My rating was based on the following observations: The challenges of the piece stem out of figuring out how to play the hemiola figures and from learning similar sticking patterns in the context of a variety of rhythmic figures. Once these issues are learned, the performer has to apply the concepts to only a handful of additional rhythmic patterns. While these repeat appearances are "spiced up," they only contain one additional element, such as flams or double strokes. It is a very logical and almost exercise-like approach to learning a complicated rhythmic pattern.

While it is in no way a detriment to the piece, the step-wise progression of rhythmic complexity and accent disbursement is predictable and straightforward. This type of sequential approach is one that drum corps members, for example, have been exposed to and familiar with for several years. Likewise, the method of superimposing the same sticking pattern across a variety of rhythmic groupings is equally familiar to high school and college marching drum line performers.

Here are some thoughts about "Control Freak" as compared to some familiar snare drum literature and their corresponding ratings from previous PN reviews:

"Kim" by Asbell Masson is rated V based on the extreme variety of beating spots required, playing on rim, stick clicks, and the use of a drum pad. Additionally, a wide variety of rhythmic groupings are required of the performer. The duration of this piece is around five minutes. "Prím" by Masson is rated VI+ due largely to the extremely intricate rhythms that are contained within, along with the seven-minute performance length.

Advanced Etudes for Snare Drum by Keith Aleo is rated IV+ to V because of performance at all dynamic levels and in very rapid tempi, rhythms with intricate subdivisions (including problematic patterns such as dotted sixteenth/thirty-second-note figures), and the use of a wide variety of meters, including etudes with changing and alternating meters, and multiple beating spots required of the performer.

While "Control Freak" does contain challenges, I do not feel it is more difficult than other familiar solos such as the ones cited. Also, with a performance time of around two minutes, "Control Freak" is not as taxing as solos by Masson, which can last as long as seven minutes.

If I were asked to give the piece a different rating, the highest I would go would be a IV+, but I would still recommend it for the same audience: "high school solo competitions, college juries, or rudimental percussion study."

I agree with Mr. Houllif's views that this piece is "a challenge," but I would like to add that "very advanced players" are not the only type of player that would be able to handle it. I believe "Control Freak" is a very worthy solo, appropriate for a large audience, contains variety, and is challenging. I hope my feelings are communicated clearly in my review, and are not completely dependent on my rating.

—Joshua Smith