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A Study of Jacob Druckman's *Reflections on the Nature of Water*, Paul Lansky's *Three Moves for Marimba*, Emmanuel Séjourné, *Concerto pour vibraphone solo et orchestre à cordes*, Joseph Tompkins, *March*, and Kevin Volans, *She Who Sleeps with a Small Blanket*

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**A Study of Jacob Druckman's *Reflections on the Nature of Water*, Paul Lansky's
Three Moves for Marimba, Emmanuel Séjourné, *Concerto pour vibraphone solo et
orchestre à cordes*, Joseph Tompkins, *March*, and Kevin Volans, *She Who Sleeps
with a Small Blanket***

A Recital Abstract Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Music

Ethan Martin

University of Northern Iowa

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This Study by: Ethan Martin

Entitled: A Study of Jacob Druckman's *Reflections on the Nature of Water*, Paul Lansky's *Three Moves for Marimba*, Emmanuel Séjourné, *Concerto pour vibraphone solo et orchestre à cordes*, Joseph Tompkins, *March*, and Kevin Volans, *She Who Sleeps with a Small Blanket*

has been approved as meeting the Recital Abstract requirements for the Degree of Master of Music

Date

Dr. Danny Galyen, Committee Chair

Date

Dr. Ben Roidl-Ward, Committee Member

Date

Dr. Daniel Swilley, Committee Member

Date

Matthew Andreini, Committee Member

Date

Dr. Gabriela Olivares, Interim Dean, Graduate College

Abstract

Ethan Martin presented a full graduate percussion recital on Friday, April 28, 2023. The recital was performed at 8:00 p.m. in Davis Hall in the Gallagher-Bluedorn Performing Arts Center at the University of Northern Iowa. Mr. Martin was accompanied by Hanna Stolper, piano. This recital was given in partial fulfillment of the Master of Music degree in Percussion Performance. The program consisted of works by Jacob Druckman, Paul Lansky, Emmanuel Séjourné, Joseph Tompkins, and Kevin Volans. This abstract contains further discussion of performed works.

Reflections on the Nature of Water, by Jacob Druckman (1928-1996)

Jacob Druckman is an American composer who received his bachelor's and master's degrees from the Juilliard School of Music. Druckman's works are heavily inspired by the works of Claude Debussy. He's known for quoting Debussy in his orchestral works such as *Mirage* (1976) and *Aureole* (1979).¹ Due to his success as an orchestral composer, the Percussive Arts Society commissioned Druckman to write a marimba solo in 1985, which resulted in the composition of *Reflections on the Nature of Water*. During this time, there was a very small catalog of solos for this instrument. The importance of this piece and the others composed for this commission cannot be understated, as prior to this, the vast majority of the works for solo marimba were written by percussionists and were pedagogical in nature. The piece was premiered by William Moersch on November 7, 1986, at the Kennedy Center.² *Reflections on the Nature of*

¹ Bret Johnson. "The Light and the Dark: Contrasts in the Music of Jacob Druckman," *Tempo*, New Series, no. 191 (December, 1994): 22.

² Jeremy Matthew Brunk, "Reflections of Debussy: A Comparative Analysis of Solo Marimba Works by Jacob Druckman and Richard Rodney Bennett," (DMA diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, 2007), 2-3, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Water contains six movements: “Crystalline,” “Fleet,” “Tranquil,” “Gently Swelling,” “Profound,” and “Relentless.” As the name suggests, the piece is evocative of water and the many forms and states that it takes on within nature.

The tonal structures used in *Reflections on the Nature of Water*, are evocative of Debussy’s compositional style which can be seen in the first movement, “Crystalline.” There are two main modes of tonality used here and in all the other movements: an octatonic group and seventh chords (major, minor, or half-diminished). The name clearly represents ice, but I feel that it is closer to specifically a glacier due to the climactic moment in measure 29. The form of this movement is in three rotations that are all consistent of the same thematic materials, each starting with the “crystal” theme which consists of quick flurries of notes in the high register of the marimba consisting of notes within the octatonic scale. The second theme consists of a rolling minor second triad with intermittent dyads which fill out a major seventh chord. The final part of each rotation is a climactic moment as described before; however, the final rotation only uses the “crystal theme” and ends on a major second dyad.

The second movement, “Fleet,” is when the piece starts to become more ambiguous as to what aspect of water that Druckman is trying to portray. This movement is through-composed and is almost entirely based on the seventh chords; major, minor, and half-diminished. The movement is comprised mostly of major/minor sevenths, which makes the half-diminished chords more effective. Groups of four notes make up most of the rhythms but in moments, such as measure 22, groupings of three are used, which creates a somewhat awkward flow. Because of this awkward flow, the sense of time starts to become somewhat jumbled, especially if the performer performs the piece at full

speed, as in American percussionist Ian Rosenbaum's recording.³ These moments of awkward flow are when Druckman uses the octatonic scale instead of the seventh chords, which is, in general, more dissonant than the seventh chords.

Movement three, "Tranquil," is a quirky movement due to the abstract nature of its form. This movement is once again through-composed but consists of three distinct sections. The first section is centered around a dyad consisting of pitch-classes A and B.⁴ with flurries of the octatonic scale happen around this. In the second section, the octatonic flurries fully take over until measure 19 where a minor seventh dyad appears. This dyad is a minor seventh with pitch-classes C# and B. This interval is the inverse of the A and B (major second) from earlier. The final section is mostly rolled notes that fit into more seventh chords accompanied with octatonic flurries. This moment foreshadows the fifth movement which also has sections of rolled chords. There is a short coda at the end starting at measure 30 where the A and B come back.

"Gently Swelling" is the fourth movement of the piece and provides a performance challenge due to the overlapping rhythms between the two hands. The left hand plays an ostinato rhythm while the right hand plays interjecting dyads.⁵ Being able to fully realize the unique 3+4+3/16 rhythm requires patience and mental strength. The form of the piece consists of two major sections, each of which cycles through three ostinato patterns followed by a climactic moment with seventh chords. After this climactic moment, both sections end with descending, arpeggiated seventh chords, the

³ Vic Firth. "Reflections on the Nature of Water (mvt 1-3) by Jacob Druckman – Marimba Literature Library," Feb 22, 2011, music performance, 9:02, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ck38fSwrQc>

⁴ Jacob Druckman. *Reflections on the Nature of Water*, Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, 1986.

⁵ Brunk, "Reflections of Debussy," 24-25.

latter of which is much more drawn out. The overall tonality of this movement is not clear throughout, but is rather improvisatory and free in nature.

The fifth movement, “Profound,” is the slowest movement of all six. There are two schools of thought for performing this movement, either with hard mallets and a fast roll speed, or soft mallets with a slower roll speed. Harder mallets allow the climactic falling motives to be more powerful and full, while softer mallets allow the rest of the piece to be more sublime. I choose to use softer mallets at the expense of dynamic range. My top mallet is slightly harder in order to play out some of the notes in the top octave of the instruments without harming the sound of rolling. The form has two distinct sections separated by a measure which repeats any number of times. This measure in between the sections is intended to sound as a roll among a total of ten distinct pitches. Both sections move around a rolling F and C dyad with other rolling notes or fast bursts that either complete a seventh chord or octatonic group. The piece then moves to split rolling chords that are similar to the third movement.

The final movement, “Relentless,” has the challenge of fully realizing the triplet rhythms which are often disjointed and sometimes lack forward motion. While the rhythms are very challenging to fully realize, the pitch content is more repetitive in this movement than others. The climax of the piece is about three quarters of the way through, where Druckman begins superimposing an eighth-note rhythm over the triplets. This movement does not have a distinctive form, but instead uses the opening triplet theme as the central idea. One other idea is first presented in measures 25-27, which is a powerful double stop on pitch-classes A, D, and G.

Due to the length of this piece, some performers opt to only perform select movements of the piece. While this may be an acceptable choice for a short recital or for an audition, I believe that players should try and avoid this as Druckman had a clear order for this piece (slow, fast slow, etc.). The intricacies in rhythm and pitch within this piece are far too complex to fully analyze here, but it should be noted that many players dedicate months or even years studying this piece in order to play it at the highest possible level. This composition is truly a milestone for solo marimba and percussion as an art form; even nearly forty years after its composition, this piece is still considered one of the greatest works for this instrument.

Three Moves for Marimba, by Paul Lansky (b. 1944)

Paul Lansky is an American composer who is best known for his electronic and computer based-music. In an interview with Joshua Cody for the *Computer Music Journal*, Lansky revealed that part of his fascination with electronic music is due to the limitations of performance and the fact that a computer will always have a level of accuracy not achievable by live instrumentalists.⁶ This allows for the composition of works that have an extreme level of virtuosity which can only be achieved without the limitations of human performance. While Lansky is most known for his computer works, he has also written many instrumental works for chamber ensemble or for a solo player.

Three Moves for Marimba, one of Lansky's instrumental works, was written and premiered by Nancy Zeltsman in 1998. The first movement, titled "Hop(2)", shows Lansky's disregard for "playability" or "idiomatic" composition, as this movement is well known for its technical demands. This difficulty is due to the wide range of the

⁶ Joshua Cody and Paul Lansky, "An Interview with Paul Lansky," *Computer Music Journal*, 20, no. 1 (Spring, 1996): 24.

instrument that is required to be played at the same time as well as the large leaps between registers. To the player, it feels more like a piano solo that is required to be played on marimba instead due to the dense chords that occur. The written tempo of the piece is marked at quarter note equals 75, but due to the mobility limitations posed by the instrument, it is common practice to perform the movement slower, around quarter note equals 65. For example, American percussionist Johnny Allen performs this piece at approximately 63 beats per minute.⁷ Because of this choice, he is able to perform the movement with a stunningly high note accuracy while still retaining the funky feel.

Hop(2) is broken up into five sections separated by rehearsal marks. The final section starts at rehearsal D and lasts to the end even though there are additional rehearsal marks. Two motives persist throughout this movement: one which is straight sixteenth notes with the sticking 1-2-3/4-2 (first seen at the very beginning), and the other being Gb-Eb-Db-Eb (first appears in measure 31).⁸ The first of these motives appear throughout the whole movement, whereas, the latter appears only in the fourth and fifth section of the piece. The five sections of the piece alternate between a quasi-C minor and Eb minor tonality. Each measure starts with a tonic chord with various different extensions and slowly moves to a chord with dominant function, and then resolves back to a tonic chord at the beginning of the next measure.

The second movement, “Turn,” is quite austere in nature, mainly due to the consistent sense of time. The movement is structured like a rondo in 3/8 time with chords landing in a repeated rhythm throughout. The form of this movement is similar to a

⁷ Vic Firth. “Three Moves for Marimba, by Paul Lansky – Marimba Literature Library,” Nov 11, 2014, music performance, 0:04, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTliXQ0GxB0>

⁸ Paul Lansky. *Three Moves for Marimba*. Milwaukee, WI: Shawnee Press, 1995.

rondo. The first 20 measure phrase, which is in D minor, is repeated two other times, once at rehearsal A, and once at the end. At rehearsal B, the piece moves to F# minor and then back to D minor at rehearsal E. In performance, this movement is quite refreshing considering the extreme difficulty of both the first and third movements. Due to its simple nature, I prefer to use very little expression and instead let the notes speak for themselves as too much phrasing can make the movement more tense and lose the sense of relaxation.

The final movement of the work, titled “Slide,” is a quick, nonstop flurry of notes with fast changing time signatures. This movement was not performed on this recital. The form is through-composed but comes back to the opening theme five times; these returns are at each rehearsal mark except rehearsal F. I don’t consider this movement a rondo like the prior movement because each iteration of this theme has many subtle changes. There isn’t a clear key to this movement; however, there is a clear tendency to move back to Ab. Motives are often repeated, transposed up or down a minor second. A good example of this is at rehearsal D, where the bass note slowly descends from Ab all the way down to the bottom C of the instrument. The primary challenge of this movement is to be able to recognize and clearly communicate all of the different time signatures. The performer can enhance this through higher stick heights and adding weight to the big beats.⁹ Due to the speed and intense technique required to perform this movement, the performance is greatly enhanced by memorization.

March, by Joseph Tompkins (b. 1970)

⁹ Brandon E. Adams. “Rhythmic Intricacies: A Study of Lansky, Delecluse, Xenakis, Koppel, and Hamilton,” (MM Thesis, Kansas State University, Manhattan, 2017), 6, <https://krex.k-state.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2097/42257/BrandonAdams2022.pdf?sequence=5>

Joseph Tompkins is a percussionist, composer of percussion music, and head of percussion faculty at Rutgers Mason Gross School of the Arts, has performed numerous productions on Broadway, and has been commissioned by the New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, and the Atlanta Symphony. He is possibly best known for his three volumes of *Nine French-American Rudimental Snare Drum Solos*.¹⁰ Tompkins' idea for the French-American rudimental playing comes from his study of Guy Lefevre's *Technique Superteure*. Tompkins incorporated the rhythms of quintuples and septuplets that Lefevre uses in *Technique Superteure* to his own rudimental writing, which eventually manifested into his first volume of rudiments.¹¹

While *March* uses his French-American style, it is not part of any of his volumes, rather this piece was written for the 2009 Atlanta Symphony Modern Snare Drum Competition. It is intended to be played in tandem with a kick bass drum which provides a steady pulse throughout. American rudimental playing is more geared toward performing combinations of the Percussive Arts Societies "40 international rudiments," whereas French rudimental playing focuses on complex subdivisions of the beat. With this in mind, this piece leans more French than American, as there are few American rudiments that are used throughout, mainly various forms of paradiddles and 7, 9, or 13 stroke rolls. Instead, *March* focuses more on using quintuplets, septuplets, and nonuplets (sometimes over the bar line) such as in measures 22 and 23, evocative of Guy Lefevre's compositions and reflects Tompkins's French rudimental influence.¹²

¹⁰ @ Percussion. "@Percussion – 249 – Joe Tompkins." September 16, 2020, interview, 8:01. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7j2P3awB_8I

¹¹ Joseph Tompkins. "French-American Rudimental Drumming: Past, Present, and Future," *Percussive Notes*, 24 (September, 2017): 24.

¹² Joseph Tompkins. *March*. New York, NY: Bachovich Music Publications, 2009.

This piece does not have a distinct form, but there are a few rhythmic ideas that appear multiple times. The clearest rhythmic motive is the opening measure of snare drum playing which is recapitulated at the end in measure 43. Another rhythmic motive is a quintuplet with an interjected 32nd note between the second and third subdivisions, which occurs in measure 19 and then again in measures 27-28.¹³ The notation system used is very modern and organic but still falls in line with standard rudimental notation, for instance, Rs and Ls clearly indicate which rudiments are being used in areas where it would be ambiguous without, and the beaming makes the divisions of beats very clear to the player. One aspect of notation worth consideration is the Z stem which is used to indicate rolls. In areas where rudimental rolls are intended, Tompkins indicates this with the rudiment written out above (7 str.). Because of the stickings in these moments, it is clear that he intends for these rolls to sound as distinct, open strokes. Many performances seem to neglect this information, choosing to play all rolls as “closed” multiple bounce strokes. In order to keep the “American” rudiment aspect of this piece, I opt to play the roll as indicated by the accompanying text.

Concerto pour vibraphone solo et orchestre à cordes, Emmanuel Séjourné (b. 1961)

Emmanuel Séjourné is a French percussionist, composer, and faculty member at the Strasbourg Conservatory. He is possibly best known for his *Concerto for Marimba*, but his *Concerto for Vibraphone* has also seen high critical acclaim. *Concerto pour vibraphone solo et orchestra à cordes*, was composed in 1999 for the Orchestre d’Auvergne’s International Vibe Competition. The piece is in two movements, the first being slower and improvisatory, and the other being faster with increasing intensity. The

¹³ Ibid.

full instrumentation requires a small orchestra consisting of 4 violins, 2 violas, 2 cellos, and 2 basses, making this piece very accessible.¹⁴ For this recital, I performed with a piano reduction of the string parts. There is also an arrangement for percussion orchestra, consisting primarily of mallet instruments and timpani.

The first movement is comprised of three sections plus an introduction and coda featuring bowing technique. The introduction features a melody to be played with the bows while the coda is a merge of the first main theme with mallets combined with bow playing and eventually ends with dyads using both bows. The first theme starts at measure 18 and recapitulates at measure 88, with the large section in between having an improvisatory feel. This improvisatory feel is created by the recognizable use of the main theme in differing levels of variation. In addition to this fact, Séjourné indicates that the player may improvise this entire section as a cadenza. The main key of the piece is clearly A major, but there are many key changes within this movement. The key changes within take advantage of common tones between these different keys, the clearest of which is at measure 50-53. In this moment, each measure starts with either D# or Eb, then the rest of the measure reflects that change in key.

The second movement begins with an instrumental introduction with the main theme introduced at measure 29. This intro also presents the tonality of this movement which is based on a C octatonic mode. There are two cadenzas in this movement, the first of which is at measure 65 and consists of a rolling dyad in the left hand with short musical moments in the right. X note heads are used here to indicate mallet dampening. The second cadenza starts at measure 156 is a vibraphone extended technique tour de

¹⁴ Emmanuel Séjourné. *Concerto pour vibraphone solo et réduction piano*. Clermont-Ferrond, France: Alfonse Production, 1999.

force. Séjourné indicates that the vibraphone's motor should be turned on at this point, the performer must use a hard plastic mallet to bend the pitch, notated by using a line through the stem. In measure 170, the player picks up a bow in the left hand and begins bowing while simultaneously bending the pitch. Two harmonics are also played by placing the plastic mallet in the center of the bar while bowing; this produces a sound which sounds two octaves higher. To conclude this section, the player rolls a chord with the inner mallets while playing melodies with the outside mallets, similar to Druckman's first movement.

At measure 118, Séjourné marks the tempo as "avec swing." I believe that he intends this moment to be played at a slower tempo and with a swing in the sixteenth notes, as Rubén Zúñiga does in his YouTube recording.¹⁵ The rest of the piece after the second cadenza progressively increases in intensity. The most forceful of these occurs at measures 221 and 251, where dissonant chords are struck in a march like rhythm. At the conclusion, Séjourné returns to A major, creating unity with the first movement.

The most striking feature of this work is the contrast in character between movements. The first movement is unabashedly tonal, then the second movement suddenly breaks that for a tonality similar to the dissonance Bartok, which tends to be less palatable for a general audience. This fact, as well as the popularity of the marimba explains how this concerto is less popular compared to Séjourné's *Marimba Concerto*. But the extended techniques present within the second movement provides a sound palette unavailable to the marimba, thus giving this piece a level of uniqueness not present in his other concerto.

¹⁵ Rubén Zúñiga. "Concerto for Vibraphone and Strings - Emmanuel Séjourné." July 28, 2016. 11:17. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRAAdeBal7U>

She Who Sleeps with a Small Blanket, Kevin Volans (b. 1949)

Kevin Volans is a South African composer and pianist who spent his latter years in Ireland. Before his time in Ireland, Volans composed a series of pieces that are considered “African Paraphrases,” because they are interpretations of African drum melodies and use distinct African methods of music making. *She Who Sleeps with a Small Blanket* is considered by many to be a member of these pieces because it uses direct quotations of music from Zimbabwe, Lesotho, and Mozambique. The instrumentation (2 sets of bongos, 2 congas, marimba, and kick bass drum) is evocative of African styles because these instruments are of Afro-Latin origin. Some claim that there is nothing distinctly African about this work other than the name which is derived from a Basotho song called “He Who Sleeps with a Small Blanket.”¹⁶

The instruments are ordered by pitch with bongos notated on the top lines and instruments descending to the kick drum which is notated below the staff. The score presents a setup which works well for the various passages, but some performers choose alternate combinations of drums in an attempt to make the piece more playable. For example, Hideki Ikegami chooses to alter the layout of the drums as well as using African drums such as dununs and djembes.¹⁷ Many performers choose to perform slower than what is written (quarter=240) because of the extreme rhythmic intensity. I elect to play the opening around 200 with future tempo changes reflecting this initial change. The notation uses stems up/down to indicate stockings; up referring to the right hand and

¹⁶ Peter Breithaupt. “Kevin Volans’s *She Who Sleeps with a Small Blanket*: an Examination of the Intentions, Reactions, Musical Influences, and Idiomatic Implications.” MA thesis, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, 2011.

https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1398&context=masters_theses

¹⁷ Hideki Ikegami. “She Who Sleeps With A Small Blanket K.Volans.” February 1, 2013, music performance, 15:56. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYKimAqBRx0>

down for the left. This ultimately creates challenges, particularly with the opening melody which is notated with many right hand double strokes. I generally find it more suitable to use an alternating sticking in this passage, while other passages, such as measure 36, can easily be played with the notated sticking.

The form of the piece is separated into 5 major sections. The first section consists of the beginning to measure 63 and presents the three main themes of the piece. The first theme (A) is made up of fast triplets in a circular motion around the drums. This theme slowly evolves until measure 23 where the second theme (B) appears; a quasi-descending eighth-note pattern. After a developmental section, the third theme (C) is presented at measure 45. In this theme, quintuples are interjected over the B theme. The second major section (measure 63-176) is a quiet section comprised of various fast groupings of triplets. At this point, there are three measures of rest for the player to switch to softer mallets, but some performers choose to continue playing half notes (as in the prior three measures) while switching mallets one hand at a time.

The third major section (measure 176-302) introduces the fourth main theme (D) which is straight eighth note dyads. After this, there is a gauntlet of straight triplets with occasional quarter note bass drum notes. At measure 229, the D theme comes back once more, this time with various subdivisions to add an improvisatory feel. Theme C returns at measure 268 and is developed more than it was in its previous iteration. The fourth section of the piece begins at measure 302 and is a recapitulation of the second main section with a higher level of rhythmic variation. The final section is a coda played on the marimba which begins at measure 386. In order to imitate the sound of a traditional marimba of West Africa (gyl), performers will often tape a small paperclip to each of the

notes to create a buzz which can be seen in Tomasz Kowalczyk's YouTube recording.¹⁸ This moment is distinctly in A Phrygian with two separate melodies, one with the right hand and the other playing the grace notes with the left hand. Both melodies eventually converge on A natural at the end of the piece. Volans also asks for a different hardness of mallet for both hands which helps to keep these two lines distinct.

¹⁸ Ibid.

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2016. 19:14. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRAAdeBal7U>

presents

Ethan Martin, percussion
In a Graduate Recital

assisted by:
Hanna Stolper, piano

In partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the MM in Percussion Performance
From the studio of Matthew Andreini

Reflections on the Nature of Water

1. Crystalline
2. Fleet
3. Tranquil
4. Gently Swelling
5. Profound
6. Relentless

Jacob Druckman
(1928-1996)

March

Joseph Tompkins
(b. 1970)

Three Moves for Marimba

- I. Hop(2)
- II. Turn

Paul Lansky
(b. 1944)

She Who Sleeps with a Small Blanket

Kevin Volans
(b. 1949)

Concerto pour vibraphone et orchestre à cordes

1. A piacere
2. Energique et agressif

Emmanuel Séjourné
(b. 1961)

Hanna Stolper, piano