

MASSACHUSETTS PERCUSSION NEWS

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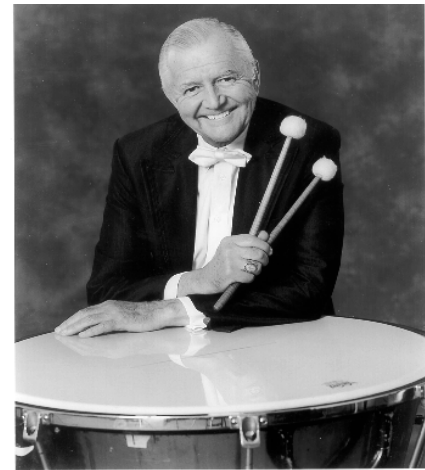
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Percussive Arts Society Mission Statement:

*The Percussive Arts Society is
a music service organization
promoting percussion educa-
tion, research, performance,
and appreciation throughout
the world.*

A CONVERSATION WITH VIC FIRTH

Vic Firth is currently in his fiftieth season with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He has influenced generations of percussionists with his playing, teaching, and method books. His company provides drumsticks and mallets to players all around the globe.



MPN: What is the most important concept to convey when starting an elementary or middle school aged student on timpani?

VF: First of all, they should have the basics of playing music. They have to understand correct solfege, they must be able to play rhythmically correct, and they've got to have some ear training to understand pitch. A lot of times you have a player that can hardly hear a perfect fourth and the next thing you know, he's playing the timpani. Meanwhile, he can't hear the notes on the drums and doesn't know how to tune.

Sometimes, you get a player on the timpani who is skilled as a drummer but has no sensitivity towards timpani, especially regarding pitch. Playing in tune and in time are the basic ingredients of any player. But there's more to it than that. The timpani player has more to do in terms of musical responsibility than the snare drummer. I don't mean to knock the snare drummer, it's simply that he doesn't have to play in tune – it's all pre-tuned.

MPN: How did you help advanced players to develop their ear training?

VF: I would hit an A on the piano then say: sing up a perfect fourth, now down a perfect fifth (G), then I'd say go up a minor third (Bb), then go up a perfect fourth (Eb), now sing down an augmented fourth which brings you back to A. Now, hit the A. In other words, pick a series of tunings that they have to do in their head (or sing aloud) but don't give them each note and see where they end up. Do they end up high, low, or

right on target? That's a good way to begin. I used to tell players: you want to practice tuning the timpani? Put on a record of the Basie Band and turn it up loud and start tuning while all that music is going on. Hopefully, it's in a completely different key than the one you have to tune and then check your tuning. In other words, you want distracting music going on around you while you're practicing tuning. The secret isn't to hear what you're doing; the real secret is to shut out what else is going on. Then it's easy to hear what you're doing. You have to take a backdoor approach to tuning. The first technique you develop is to block out pitches around you and totally ignore them. Then, when you're tuning by yourself, it's easy to hear what you are tuning. It's a matter of focusing and concentration in your brain. When I lean over to tune, I don't hear what's going on around me unless we're in the same key – then it's a help. If the orchestra is playing in D major and I have to tune in Eb major, we have a problem if I am distracted by what's going on around me.

(continued p.2)

EDUCATORS AND PDP'S

Berklee College of Music is awarding Professional Development Points to teachers who attend the Day of Percussion event at Berklee on April 6, 2002. See our web site for complete details: [Http://www.pas.org/chapters/massachusetts](http://www.pas.org/chapters/massachusetts)

VIEW THIS NEWS-LETTER ONLINE

Massachusetts Percussion News is now available online in PDF format. You will need Adobe Acrobat Reader in order to view the publication from our web site.

AREAS OF INTEREST

This newsletter needs your input on such subjects as:

- world percussion
- drum circles
- timpani
- mallet keyboards
- marching percussion
- performing
- practicing
- interviews with pros
- helpful repertoire
- listening recommendations

If you have more ideas please contact us via the chapter web site address printed below.

CONTACT INFORMATION VISIT OUR WEB SITE:

[Http://www.pas.org/chapters/massachusetts](http://www.pas.org/chapters/massachusetts)

MPN: How can high school band directors help their timpanists to reach their full potential?

VF: The problem is that the band director could be a percussionist or anything but. If he's not a percussionist, he's not going to be of great assistance. You have to have an experienced teacher who plays the instrument. The trouble with timpani players is that they end up studying with drummers. Again, I'm not knocking drummers it's just that there are many percussionists who are fine players but don't have the sensitivity towards timpani. They don't know how to derive the sound from the instrument. So, you don't get the proper guidance and instruction. That's a difficult thing for a band director. If he plays clarinet, he's probably a great teacher with the clarinets. You must try to find a teacher who can play timpani.

MPN: What do you think about the performance levels of some drum corps and indoor percussion ensembles?

VF: I go to some D.C.I. and indoor shows and I'm amazed and thrilled to watch these young people. I find it very exciting. The whole mental attitude and discipline is just awesome. I have great respect for these people and their abilities. They're not professionals, they're young students on their way up but they project confidence. I talk to these kids during breaks and I tell them I'm amazed by their ability to withstand what they go through in terms of the rehearsal times and sleeping on gym floors. I say to them: you don't realize this but this will be a guidepost for your entire life if you can put up with this and do it well, you can overcome an awful lot of obstacles in life.

MPN: What have you found college percussionists to be lacking in their knowledge of classical music and musicianship in general?

VF: First of all, I've taught for a long time and the incoming freshmen in recent years play ten times better than I did when I graduated. In terms of the level of achievement, they've had much better teachers and more exposure to good music and so on. But the thing that I find with young college players is that they are technically very advanced but nobody's taken the time to get into the finer aspects of music: production of sound, quality of sound, the coloring of the sound, placement of the sound within the framework of the music. They can all play a million notes. You can train a mon-

key to have great technique. It's what you do beyond that. That's what I find most lacking. Technique is important. You can't drive the boat without a motor. If I practiced less than eight hours a day, it was a bad day. The day before I auditioned for the Boston Symphony, I did a fourteen-hour day and that was nothing. I played more with one hand than I can with two today. I know what technique means. But it only carries you so far. So, that's their shortcoming: they don't take the next step.

MPN: Performing in the Boston Symphony Orchestra for fifty seasons is such an amazing accomplishment! How have you maintained such a high level of performance for so long?

VF: I've enjoyed it! It's a great orchestra and it sounds wonderful. Playing has always been an adventure for me. Whether it is with a dance band or an orchestra. I go there to play the best of my ability and I've continually done it. I remember one of the first pieces I played when I joined the orchestra was Brahms' Symphony Number Two and it's still just as fun to play now as it was fifty years ago. The fifty years only seemed like about twelve as a result of having a good time. If I had to do it over again, I'd probably say: yeah, it was fun I'll do it again.

MPN: What is an average day for you?

VF: Well, I'm in my office at 8am and at 9:45am I go to the symphony rehearsal that begins at 10:30am. I'm back at the office at around 1pm and then at about 4pm I go into the city, grab a bite, and play a concert. That's a normal day for me.

MPN: What is the secret to your vitality and longevity?

VF: I've been blessed with a lot of energy. I take very good care of myself – always did. I recommend that to all young players. You have to train like an athlete. You want to have everything strong. You need muscular hands, arms, brains – you need to keep sharp. If you don't keep all those things honed, you won't be a great player whether you're playing rock and roll or the Symphony Number Nine of Beethoven. I've seen a lot of good players go down as a result of bad habits. A positive attitude and a good sense of humor go a long way in this business. 🎵

Interview by Scott Snow

MARCHING PERCUSSION SPOTLIGHT: COLIN McNUTT OF THE GLASSMEN DRUM & BUGLE CORPS



Colin McNutt has instructed and arranged for the Star of Indiana drum and bugle corps and the Tony Award winning stage production, "Blast"!, both from Bloomington, IN. He has also written and instructed for the Crossmen drum and bugle corps from Newark, DE. He has served on the faculty of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, where he is an alumnus and received degrees in Music Education and Classics. He is currently the percussion designer and caption head for the Glassmen drum and bugle corps from Toledo, OH. Colin McNutt is a very respected percussion arranger in today's marching activity. He is a clinician and consultant for the Avedis Zildjian Co., Pearl Corporation, REMO Inc., and Innovative Percussion.

MPN: Can you describe your role at the Glassmen Drum & Bugle Corps?

CM: I am the Percussion Director and Arranger for the Glassmen. Although, one must keep in mind that I have an incredible staff of people that really make everything happen. I would describe my role as a manager. I try to make sure that the members of the Glassmen have everything they need to be successful.

MPN: What repertoire is the corps performing this summer?

CM: The show design is made up of music from two pieces. The first is a work from Michael Kamen titled "The Old Moon in the New Moon's Arms."

The other work is "Javelin" by Michael Torke.

MPN: What type of musical demands will this show require of the performers?

CM: The work by Michael Kamen is very demanding from an ensemble standpoint. Many times, the battery percussion will be segmented musically and visually with each section performing a different counterline in the music. The front percussion (pit) generally outlines one of the musical responsibilities. So, the members of the pit have to listen back to the particular battery section they are coordinated with. I think the hardest part of having such a segmented approach is not only the timing responsibilities, but also dynamic balance. It is so hard to create perfect balance in these segmented forms.

The Torke piece has a completely different set of challenges. The role of the percussion is a secondary one to the brass. In this piece, the battery and pit outline wind parts and support the voice leading from the brass scores. Here, I wanted the battery to disappear and blend with the winds - imitating the various length of note that wind players so easily create.

MPN: How did this year's music affect how you designed the technique program?

CM: The technique program is very much influenced by the music. We always try to do the exercises in three categories: 1. Basic Grip and Stroke, 2. Rhythmic Accuracy, 3. Chops / Endurance. (cont. p.4)

ARTICLES WANTED!

Much of the material in this issue was submitted by our members. If you have something you'd like to see published in Massachusetts Percussion News, you are encouraged to submit it to our editorial staff for consideration.

MASSACHUSETTS PERCUSSION NEWS ARTICLE DEADLINES

Submissions for publication in Massachusetts Percussion News must be in the hands of the editorial staff no later than one month before publication.

DEADLINE PUBLICATION

August 1 September 1

December 1 January 1

April 1 May 1

Submissions via email are preferred. Please send articles and event information to scottsnow123@aol.com and attach images / files individually. Hard copies can be sent to Scott Snow, PO Box 269, Charlton, MA 01507.

ANY SUGGESTIONS?

The intent of this newsletter is to bring together people in Massachusetts that teach and or perform percussion. Email the editor with ideas so we can further develop this newsletter.

We always play with the aid of a metronome and work all varieties of tempo and dynamics. We will re-use some of the very basic exercises but make sure that we work tempos that the show revolves around. For instance, the Kamen has a large amount of material at 192 beats per minute so 192 is an endurance goal for us in the winter. We will work exercises up to 220 to build that endurance and control.

Also, some exercises will be composed from figures out of the show. Usually, our flam exercise works this way. By the time we reach the summer tour, much of the basics program turns into the show music. We always do chops though. Even all the way to the last show of the year. We will do things like 250 count rolls leading from the left hand.

MPN: What expectations do you have for your players?

CM: Perfection - musically and personally. If the group can work effectively as a team, they will play great!

MPN: What do you think audiences will enjoy about the show this summer?

CM: I think the audience will like the energy level of the Kamen and the percussive variety. I think the Torke will produce a powerful musical effect, which people will recognize and hopefully enjoy.

MPN: There are a lot of young players in Massachusetts that have extraordinary potential. What should young players practice so they can reach their full potential?

CM: I think getting a well-rounded percussion education is the key. Many of the battery players are studying marimba and concert percussion in college. Many of the pit performers are great drumset players and played quads in high school.

MPN: What makes an ensemble great?

CM: To me, it starts with the pencil and paper. If I organize the sounds effectively, then the performers will have a chance to

be successful. Clarity in the written arrangement has the most effect on the success of the ensemble.

MPN: There are a lot of high school band directors who are presenting competitive marching band shows in Massachusetts. What advice can you offer them regarding the full ensemble on the field (winds, brass, battery percussion, and front ensemble) and what rehearsal techniques create a cohesive package?

CM: A long-term plan and a short-term plan will help. You must know what you are trying to get done with the group and in what time frame.

Once an organized game plan is in place, it is vital to have the entire staff involved. They must understand the schedule and their roles.

Finally, I would make sure that ensemble rehearsal is just that – an integrated rehearsal that involves all elements of the show (visually and musically). I would recommend covering all objectives in a visual setting, as well as, a sectional setting first. Now, you put all of the elements together in the ensemble setting. The performers are now set up to really refine and improve the production as an ensemble.

MPN: Do you have any rules for how you stage your marching battery on the field?

CM: My rule is to let the music dictate the staging. If the snares are playing a melody with the trumpets, I make sure they are staged together. This sounds simple, but it's amazing how many times you don't see the drill staged to the music. Generally, I try not to have the full battery in front of an element of the winds that will create a balance problem. If the group is not that experienced, I would generally have the battery staged behind the winds so a forgiving listening situation can be achieved. ♪

Interview by Scott Snow

MEET THE ROLAND HAYES PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

The Roland Hayes School of Music is fed by the John D. O'Bryant and Madison Park High Schools in Boston, MA. The school teaches courses in chorus, band, strings, guitar, jazz combos, theory, computer technology, and percussion ensemble.

Gregory Gazzola is currently the Program Director at the Roland Hayes School of Music in Boston, MA where he directs musical studies in brass, woodwinds, strings, vocal, piano and percussion. Mr. Gazzola directs and arranges music for the Roland Hayes School of Music Percussion Ensemble that gained national recognition in 2000 & 2001 by placing fourth and second in the Winter Guard International Championships. He has taught beginning through advanced levels of percussion studies at various schools and colleges for over twenty years throughout Ohio, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and the New England States. Mr. Gazzola performed with the Air Force Band of Liberty from 1992 – 1996 and currently freelances throughout Metro Boston. His educational background includes a BM from West Virginia University, MM from Kent State University and Doctoral Studies at Boston University.

MPN: How long have you been teaching at Roland Hayes School of Music?

GG: Five years.

MPN: How many players are in your ensemble?

GG: Twenty.

MPN: What is the repertoire for this year's concert division indoor show?

GG: Groan Men Counting – David Garibaldi, Daddy's Gonna Miss You – Yellowjackets, Chile – Oscar Lopez

MPN: What Latin styles are included?

GG: Some of the styles used in the show are Par Tito Alto, Gua Guanco Wah, Rhumba, Martillo, and Songo. We also combine a lot of styles, so at times it may be hard to categorize.

MPN: The Roland Hayes Percussion Ensemble achieved a Second Place Award in the World Concert Division at the 2001 Winter Guard International Championships. Why do you think the ensemble has achieved so much in so little time?

GG: Due to budget cuts of past years, the students in Boston have had limited exposure to music through the school system. There are a lot of musically talented students that have not had the opportunities to develop their talent. The program at Roland Hayes offers percussion students daily instruction and the ensemble provides them with an opportunity to perform. Once they are engaged in a vigorous percussion curriculum and realize their potential, they become highly motivated. The ensemble becomes a musical “family” to these students and the level of commitment of the instructors to the students and the students to each other motivates them to perform their best.

MPN: Your charts clearly show the audience what to listen to at any given moment. How do you and your staff make that happen in the show's design and scoring?

GG: When I arrange for the ensemble, I begin with a piano reduction sketch chart consisting of the melody, blocked chord harmony, and a bass voice. My next step is to create another sketch chart using the percussion ensemble voices. To ensure the melody speaks clearly, I make sure the melody is in the highest register and the supporting voices are below. I then add any countermelodies if needed.

MPN: How do you utilize the natural talents of the kids in your

show?

GG: Many of the kids are highly musical and have a natural sense of time. I select and arrange music that they will enjoy and encourage them to “feel” what they’re playing. Many of them love to move to music and do so whenever they have a chance! Last year, I incorporated a short dance piece into the show to respond to this. This year, we have a number of beginning players – I’ve arranged the music so they have parts which are challenging but are suited to their technical level. The show is designed to showoff their sense of rhythm, energy, and musicality.

MPN: What are some ways that your players become better people as a result of being in this ensemble?

GG: The kids in the ensemble learn pretty early on that the success of the ensemble depends not only on what they do themselves, but how well they support and work with each other to improve the overall performance. They all learn to show up on time and work with others to improve a section of music. They develop a high level of commitment to each other and to the group and address it when someone isn’t participating fully. In this way, the group emphasizes what it takes to make a family or community work – commitment, self-discipline, creativity, and teamwork. 🎵

Interview by Scott Snow

2002 ROLAND HAYES PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE



Back Row: Dalston Dalet, Elizer Edward, Jonathan Thomas, Johnny Powell, Tasha Bramwell, Kenneth Berry, Lawrence Jones, Henry Cobb, Oladipo Agoro

Front Row: Ashley Yancey, Eldad Edward, Rachele Callender, Rhonda Reinford, Laura McLaughlin, John Conlon, Domenic Davis, Lauren Mazurkewicc

Not Pictured: Lauren Delosh, Mervin Boswell

Directors: Greg Gazzola, Brian Eisert, Gabe Cobas

PERCUSSIVE NEWS

- ◇ Elections for the Massachusetts Chapter of PAS will take place in the next few weeks. Officers will be announced in the September, 2002 issue of *Massachusetts Percussion News*.
- ◇ UMASS Amherst hosted its first Day of Percussion on February 16, 2002 and it was an outstanding success. About 300 people attended the event. Performers and clinicians included: Thom Hannum, Colin McNutt, Brian Tinkel, and the Umass Marching Percussion Ensemble; Jeff Queen, Tim Genis, Robert Van Sice, Bob Gullotti, Umass Jazz Ensemble I, and Eduardo Leandro.

Here's what one audience member had to say about the event: "Thank you for having the Day of Percussion and for having me and my friends (the people from Lee). I can't wait until next year. If you're having it again, you should do it because it was awesome. I loved it and so did my friends. My favorite part was the snare drum guy (Jeff Queen). He was great and I also liked the three guys when they played on the table—now THAT was funny! Well, thanks again for having me I had a great time." - Kyle Anderson, Grade 6, Lee Elementary School—Lee, Massachusetts.

- ◇ Berklee College of Music presented its Week of Percussion and PAS Day of Percussion April 3-6 in Boston. Some of the outstanding performers were: Billy Hart, Mark Walker, Nancy Zeltsman, Jamey Haddad, Steve Wilkes, Dave Weigert, Larry Finn, Joe Hunt & Gary Chaffee, Yoron Israel, Ricardo Monzon, Michael Herklots, Angelmia Bachemi, Kolimba directed by Mohamad Camara, Ernesto Diaz, Neil Grover, Thom Hannum, Jeff Queen, Mike Mangini, Tim Genis, Will Hudgins, Ron Reid, Cabot and Underwood Elementary Schools, Marimba Magic directed by Sarah Tenney, Roland Hayes School of Music Percussion Ensemble directed by Greg Gazzola, Percussion Unlimited directed by Dean Anderson, and Dave DiCenso.
- ◇ M.I.C.C.A. Concert Band Festival Finals were April 5-7.
- ◇ M.I.C.C.A. Solo and Ensemble Festival is May 4
- ◇ N.E.S.B.A. Indoor Percussion Finals on April 7. Here is a list of some of the performing ensembles: Spirit of America, King Philip, Dover, NH; Case, Acton-Boxboro, Mansfield, Billerica, Salem, Peabody, Portsmouth, Blackstone, Roland Hayes, Malden, Southern Maine, Millbury, Dedham, Dennis-Yarmouth, Salem, NH; Weymouth, Everett, Shepherd Hill, New Bedford, Dartmouth.
- ◇ Winter Guard International Indoor Percussion World Championships: A very special congratulations go out to the following ensembles from Massachusetts who competed at the W.G.I World Championships in Dayton, Ohio. The Massachusetts groups that competed are Dartmouth, Roland Hayes, and Salem. WAY TO GO!
- ◇ Congratulations to the students that were chosen to perform in Massachusetts District and All-State Festivals.

Central District:

Pat Fiorillo – St. John's, Gregg Budd – Blackstone-Millville, Miles Ryan – Bromfield, Thomas Yahoub – Westborough, Jared Ganis – Blackstone-Millville, Matthew Rosenkranz – Quabbin, Melissa Bordeaux – Sutton, Philip Andrews – Wachusett Regional, Matt Koshko – Algonquin, Michael Betschart – Hopedale, Daniel Holmes – Nipmuc, Dan Dailey – Leominster, Pat McCann - Algonquin

Northeastern Sr. District:

Jason Rich—Wakefield, Bill Wurts, Keith Gentile—Billerica, Gabe Globus Hoenich—Lincoln-Sudbury, Philip McGowan—Newburyport, Jason Taylor—Masconomet, Nicholas Lawrence—Salem, Maddie Child—Wellesley, Stephen Naso—Everett, Andrew Korajczyk—Woburn, Greg Slavucci—Watertown, Brian Warren—Haverhill

Northeastern Jr. District:

Sara Molander, Matthew Niermeyer, Daniel Nakash, David Heath, Stephen Aliperta, Zack Moss, Nate Martinez, Dan Boufard, Peter Rowell, Paul Lewis

Southeastern District:

Dylan Vaughan – Barnstable, Aaron Nickerson – Barnstable, Christopher Santos – Barnstable, Cory Granger – Dennis-Yarmouth Regional, Robert Doran – Duxbury, Jon Young – Duxbury, Seth Gorenstein – Needham, Stephen Wheeler – Old Rochester Regional, David Clemons – Whitman Hanson Regional, Jonathan Chapman - Hingham

All-States:

James Sullivan – Longmeadow, Sari Linson – Longmeadow, Dylan Vaughan – Barnstable, Eric McDermott – Lee, Philip Andrews – Wachusett Regional, Samuel Dent – Walpole, Pat McCann – Algonquin, Michael Betschart – Hopedale, Andy Korajczyk – Woburn, Melissa Bordeaux – Sutton, Jason Tyler – Masconomet, Jake Robinson – Frontier Regional, Jason Rich - Wakefield

- ◇ Drum Corps Shows: Beverly, MA June 30; Bridgeport, CT July 2; Bristol, RI July 3; Lynn, MA August 1; DCI Championships in Madison, WI August 6-10
- ◇ Summer Music Camps: Mobile Percussion Seminar by Thom Hannum will take place from July 19-23 at UMASS, Amherst. For information call 800-292-3758 or 413-549-4414 or visit the web site at www.percussion.org.
- ◇ Afro-Brazilian Drums & Percussion Class: Academia de Samba Quilombo is an opportunity for anyone to participate in a samba workshop. Class meets every Sunday 3-5pm in Hadley, MA. For information contact Brandon Marger at 413-585-0013, email is brandonmarger@hotmail.com.
- ◇ Drumset Recording Artist Zorro presented an excellent clinic at the King Philip Regional High School in Wrentham, MA.

EVENTS CALENDAR

- ◇ Berklee Performance Center / Water Music Mainstage (617-876-7777): Chick Corea Trio May 17
- ◇ Regattabar (617-876-7777): Joey Calderazzo Trio with John Patitucci (bass) and Jeff “Tain” Watts (drums) May 7-8; Gary Burton & Makoto Ozone May 9, 11, & 12
- ◇ Skullers (617-562-4111): Victor Mendoza Latin Jazz Quintet May 1; Spyro Gyra May 2-3; Dave Weckl Band May 7; Yellowjackets May 10-11; Bill Bruford and Earthworks May 16; Arturo Sandoval June 19-20; Michel Camilo with Horatio “El Negro” Hernandez (drums) June 28-29
- ◇ Dartmouth High School’s “Evening of Percussion” May 4
- ◇ UMASS, Amherst (413-545-2511): UMASS Percussion Ensemble directed by Eduardo Leandro May 9 at 8pm; University Chorale directed by E. Wayne Abercrombie—music including “Jabberwocky” with children’s percussion May 12 at 4pm Bowker Auditorium
- ◇ UMASS, Amherst (413-5452227): David Wolf’s Senior Recital, May 4, 4pm, Bowker Auditorium, free with reception to follow recital.
Program includes: December—Daniel Berg, Wooden Music—Rich O’Meara, Divertimento for Marimba and Alto—Saxophone-Akira Yuyama, Suite (Partita) in D Minor, BWV 997—J.S. Bach, Thirteen Drums—Maki Iishi, Stubernic—Mark Ford
- ◇ If you enjoyed any of these concerts, write a review and submit it to *Massachusetts Percussion News!*
- ◇ Have a great percussion concert? Let us know and we’ll post it here!!



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The Percussive Arts Society is a constant source of inspiration for me and has proved itself an invaluable way of staying in touch with artists and events around the world. I urge drummers and percussionists everywhere to join and start benefiting from this tremendous organization.

—DANIELLA GANEVA

The Percussive Arts Society is a music service organization promoting percussion education, research, performance and appreciation throughout the world through publications, PASIC (Percussive Arts Society International Convention) and local PAS chapter activities.

Memberships start at \$25.00 (U.S.)
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