

# MASSACHUSETTS PERCUSSION NEWS

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- May



[www.pas.org](http://www.pas.org)

### **Percussive Arts Society Mission Statement:**

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

## A CONVERSATION WITH ARMAND ZILDJIAN

*Mr. Zildjian is one of the most influential musical-instrument manufacturers of the century. His family has created high quality cymbals for 400 years. He has pioneered countless innovations in product technology. He formed strong bonds with artists such as Buddy Rich, Papa Jo Jones, Louis Bellson, Steve Smith, and Vinnie Collaiuta to develop new cymbal sounds. Mr. Zildjian has recently received the Modern Drummer Editor Achievement Award in Montclair, New Jersey.*

MPN: How has *Zildjian* been able to maintain such high product standards over the years?

AZ: First of all, I used to pick out all the cymbals years and years ago. We set a standard that we only sent good products out. If there is any question of the quality, it is removed. If you don't have the quality, it'll bite you in the end.

MPN: What is important to your customers and artists?

AZ: Two things. Either giving them the sound they want or creating a new sound that we hope they're going to like. We've been very successful at that. We listen to great artists and try to create the sounds they describe. In addition, our own R & D Department creates new sounds. There are nineteen drummers in the factory in Norwell, Massachusetts. We have R & D meetings and no product is introduced without being thoroughly tested by everyone. The staff must agree that this new product is something we should be doing.

MPN: How does *Zildjian* help with music education?

AZ: My daughter is the C.E.O. now and she has given quite a few grants to schools. We've given grants to the *Manhattan School of Music, Berklee College*

*of Music, and University of Massachusetts.* We've awarded many grants through the *Percussive Arts Society.* We feel that music education is very important.

MPN: How has technology changed the way you do business at *Zildjian*?

AZ: Our volume of what we consider to be "perfect cymbals" is somewhere in the ninety-six percentile and sometimes higher. Years ago, when I was first working there, the percentage of "perfect cymbals" coming through production was more like fifty-five to sixty percent. We have a Vice President of Manufacturing who came from the automotive industry and he knows the modern aspects of business. We have improved our consistency dramatically. We are very proud of that. We have won awards for creating good products and efficient manufacturing.

MPN: How have musicians changed over the past twenty years?

AZ: There are many more musicians nowadays. It is expanding rapidly. There are more types of musicians like hard rock, rock, jazz, concert artists, and marching musicians. Today's players are very hard working and eager to play. Years ago, I used to select cymbals for the big players like Buddy Rich, Gene Krupa, and Louis Bellson. Remo Belli was the drummer for Billy May's band. We had the pros choosing cymbals like Count Basie's band and Duke Ellington's band. The big thing that they had that we don't have today is they had a chance to play because there were far less of them. In the big band days, there were a lot of opportunities to play. The one-nighters are an example. Nowadays, it is not as easy to play publicly. All these kids who want to play are frustrated. They'd love to get a gig to play someplace. 🎵

**VISIT US ON THE WEB**

Our Massachusetts Chapter of PAS has its own web site.  
<http://www.pas.org/chapters/massachusetts>

Thom Hannum,  
 Mass. Chapter President

**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. All past issues are available.

**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:**

Reach the Editor at  
[scottsnow123@aol.com](mailto:scottsnow123@aol.com)

## **THE ALLOY ORCHESTRA: LIVE PERCUSSION PERFORMANCE WITH SILENT FILMS**



*The ALLOY ORCHESTRA is a three man musical ensemble, writing and performing live accompaniment to classic silent films. Working with an outrageous assemblage of peculiar objects, they trash and grind soulful music from unlikely sources. Performing at prestigious film festivals and cultural centers in the US and abroad, Alloy has emerged as possibly the best and best known silent film accompanists in the world. To date, the Orchestra has scored the music for 15 feature length films and shorts that they perform in repertory at museums, festivals and movie theaters. Films include: The Lost World (US, 1925), Metropolis (German, 1926), Nosferatu (German, 1922), and Steamboat Bill Jr. (US, 1927). This fall, Alloy will tour with their new score for Douglas Fairbanks' color masterpiece, The Black Pirate (US, 1926). The members of the Cambridge group include: Roger C. Miller, Ken Winokur, and Terry Donahue.*

MPN: How does the general public benefit from watching classic silent films?

KW: Well, "benefit" is an interesting way of putting it. Silent films are completely entertaining. The comedies are hysterically funny and the dramas can be very moving and powerful. People benefit from them in the same way they benefit from any art. It makes them feel better and perhaps forget their troubles for a few hours.

MPN: What innovations in percussion have the Alloy Orchestra made over the years?

KW: Frankly, I wouldn't say there is any

innovation. (laughs) We have a different compilation of objects than anyone else I know. After Harry Parch, Tom Waits, and a hundred thousand other people who work with noise experiments it's pretty hard to be completely innovative. I suppose what is innovative is the way we combine a non-traditional style of music and adapted it to silent films, which people find a little unusual. Even though silent films often used heavily percussion-oriented scores with lots of sound effects, it is something that has been forgotten over the years. People were pretty much relying on the tinkling piano.  
 MPN: So, you gravitated towards percussion because it was used prevalently in silent films?

KW: It worked the other way. I'm a percussionist, I have been since I was a kid and so has Terry Donahue (the other percussionist in Alloy). Both of us worked for many years prior to doing silent films with junk metal, found objects, and unusual percussion instruments. We began doing this without a lot of forethought. We were asked fairly casually to put together a score for Metropolis (myself and the keyboard player Caleb Sampson) and I've always enjoyed playing in multi-percussionist groups like Latin, African, and funk groups. I immediately thought it would be interesting and fun, especially for the film *Metropolis*, which is a very mechanistic film to bring in a second percussionist. Once we did that and it was very successful, we started looking for other films that we could apply our talent. (cont)

We've had to be fairly selective about the films we've chosen. Not every film is crying out for two of the three musicians to be percussionists. We look for films that seem appropriate to our particular instrumentation.

MPN: What do you see in a film that would make you think that your instrumentation would work?

KW: The obvious stuff is action. Whether it is storms, fights, or gunshots. The slapstick comedies seem to really almost ask for a percussion adaptation. We're learning more over the years. After having done quite a bit of this and not wanting to just repeat ourselves over and over again we're learning how to be a little bit more creative about how to apply our percussion to films that you might not normally think of as being suitable and obvious. At the same time, we are learning to play some other instruments. Terry is working pretty hard on his accordion playing and I'm learning to play the clarinet. I might say at this juncture that if there was anything I regret of my youth, it was sitting back there in the drum section in my junior high school band ignoring the music theory they were trying to teach us. I didn't think it was applicable to us at that point and I'm certainly sure at this point that I should've been paying more attention.

MPN: Do you think artists like Spike Jones and the sound effect players of the fifties have influenced your group?

KW: Absolutely. Spike Jones more than anyone. Terry tells the story of how he would sit home as a kid and yearn to be a radio sound effect player. The *Alloy Orchestra* was the opportunity that presented itself for him. Spike Jones is unbeatable; he is the master in his adaptation of percussion instruments to play parts that you wouldn't expect. The melodic bell tree comes to mind. Also, he incorporated very unusual instruments that you wouldn't normally think of as musical. He is inspirational. He's also damned funny. The musicianship in his group is just unbelievable such as the yodeling guy and you almost can't believe that people could do this. They were so precise and so spot-on and it's not just the other guys. Spike Jones is at the forefront of most of these things. He was a soloist, as well as, a director.

MPN: He must have been a fantastic rehearser of the group.

KW: He must have been. The music was so precise. Now, the other thing is that he played the same songs over and over again for decades

and by that time you should be pretty good at them. I think his group was pretty intact. A lot of the soloists you see and hear were with him for a very long time.

MPN: How have you drawn from the music of other cultures?

KW: Lots! I have actually spent more time studying Latin and African Music than I have Western Music. They are the true leaders in multi-percussion. Just the intricacy of how they can put together parts and not repeat themselves and not overlap but fit between each other, working with different timbral qualities and different rhythmical concepts such as poly-metrics. They are absolute masters of that.

I studied djembe with Ibrahima Camara. I went to Puerto Rico for a while and studied with a conga teacher there and I did a variety of other things like informal groups and dance classes.

MPN: And you are able to apply these experiences into your own compositions?

KW: I began as a snare drummer and began doing some orchestral work in high school and quickly started playing drumset then quit for a while mostly because I didn't have a place to practice my drumset. So, I gravitated back to being a percussionist because it was a little easier to control volume-wise. I moved to Boston twenty-two years ago and studied with a guy who called himself Conga Jim and on Friday nights we'd go into his basement and we had a little drum group. He took his influences from Latin, South-American, and many others. He was very iconoclastic and he would try to develop things in his own fashion. And he is the one that made me start thinking about how percussion could inter-react and inter-relate and not be repetitive. I'm sure that comes from the Latin and African music.

MPN: Do you think using the percussion palette allows you more freedom than if you were a brass trio and composing film score music with a brass group?

KW: Every style of music has its own recommendations and freedoms and in some ways our palette, as broad as it is, and great for all the sound effects is a little bit restricted. We get around that by the use of the synthesizer. He can play any sound imaginable through samples. Actually, it's quite difficult to work percussion into romantic and subtle sections of films. We tend to do a lot of rolling on gongs, cymbals, and drums to fill time. We use them almost melodically since we have six or seven cymbals and gongs (continued on page 4)

**ARTICLES WANTED!**

All 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](mailto: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 continue to develop this newsletter.

that are relatively tuned and five different tom-toms and bass drums. You can actually play them pretty melodically. We tend to do quite a bit of that. Not to mention, horse shoes or zithers that are out of tune. We play with a lot of relatively-tuned instruments and make melodies out of them.

MPN: Who are some current directors and composers that are interesting to you?

KW: Danny Elfman is always wonderful. He is a synthesizer player and he tends to score his music with a lot of orchestral instruments. I met him once. He was doing a spot at a radio station in Colorado when we were there and he was remarkably friendly and kind of open to our music. Carter Burwell is another composer that I really enjoy. He did *Three Kings* and a lot of other films. Neither of these composers are what you would say inspirational, they are not doing what we do, you can't really look at them and say I can imitate that sort of thing but they are different and unusual and very creative and they have a lot of different styles that they draw from.

MPN: So, they establish a mood for you?

KW: Absolutely. If a soundtrack artist is not good at establishing a mood he can destroy a film in a few seconds. Music is so critical to any film silent or contemporary. I don't think people realize how much of the information they get from the music. The music has a tendency to explain what the director is thinking. It is often foreshadowing what's going on just a little bit. You get the audience into a mindset and the film follows along.

MPN: Do you try to get into the director's mind when you compose a film score?

KW: Of course, all the directors that made the films we work with are dead at this point. So, there is no way of claiming that we know what they were thinking but it is always our effort. Every time we score a film we watch it together and we specifically watch it scene-by-scene trying to get some sense of what the director was trying to get across. In some ways, especially the silent films, it's not always as obvious as it might seem. Some of them are actually quite subtle. The music really helps to convey the emotional quality that is going on in the film.

MPN: How would you say an audience experiencing great art can translate that into adding creativity to their own lives?

KW: Good question. That's a question I haven't been asked before. You know, everybody is creative. Drumming is one of those things that everyone can do. I was hanging around with a two year old the other day and he started banging on a piece of Tupperware with a wooden spoon and he was doing it absolutely in rhythm! He was two years old, he had no idea what he was doing, and he was spot on. I was playing along with him and he was astounded. It was the same kind of realization you get when you are in a beginning drum group when you say, "Wow, we're making music here." He recognized that immediately. People tend to lose that because they get intimidated with the process of making music because they see professional musicians. But a really good piece of art inspires people if not to go out and actually bang on that Tupperware with a wooden spoon at least to think about how

music works and how other people are creating music. And I think that fulfills an important and very basic need for people.

MPN: Do you think creativity is encouraged in our society?

KW: I think creativity is actively discouraged. Throughout my childhood, people were trying to get me to do very specific things like reading, writing, and arithmetic. I had interests and talents in music, film, and photography and they tried to squash that. Not intentionally, but by putting so much pressure on the other aspects, they really created a situation where it was very hard to continue to be creative in school. I've always resented that in my own life and others. Anything you can do to break out of that mold and allow people's innate creativity to emerge is very important.

MPN: What's coming up for the *Alloy Orchestra*?

KW: We're taking our first cross-country tour this September through November. It's just short of thirty dates within a couple of months. We've done limited trips to the Mid-West but this is the first cross-country. Normally, we fly places. We'll do a single gig then fly home. It is very inefficient. It takes several days and lots of money to get it together. It's nice because you can do really big shows that way but it cuts out doing a show at a slightly less wealthy venue. This is going to allow us to play in a lot of places that we haven't been able to play before. So, specifically we are going to premiere our new film, *The Black Pirate*, by Douglas Fairbanks at the Telluride Film Festival in Colorado and then almost immediately we're going to Los Angeles where we're going to perform at the Academy of Motion Pictures, which is the folks who bring us the Oscars. So, we're pretty excited about that. We've never been there and have done moderately little work in Los Angeles. Actually, Los Angeles has been strangely un-responsive to our work and everyone else has been strangely responsive. We can't exactly explain it. There are people in the film industry who are successful who don't feel any need to be in Hollywood. I'm very comfortable being here in Boston. The community here is filled with talented and inspirational artists.

MPN: Is there anything else you'd like to say about the silent film genre?

KW: Most of us have a stereo-typical preconception of what they're going to be. For example, a *Keystone Cops* comedy is what many people think of when they consider silent films. There is a very wide range of films from the most amazingly weird Avant-Garde films to the most perfect dramas and beautiful romances to the slapstick comedies. It is a much broader field than people recognize. We're doing our best to present those works of art. 🎵

*Interview by Scott Snow*

# ON TOUR WITH *BLAST!*

## A CHAT WITH FEATURED SOLOIST NICK ANGELIS



©2002 BLAST! Nick Angelis on the right

*Nick Angelis has performed with drum and bugle corps such as the Satellites, Spartans, Boston Crusaders, Santa Clara Vanguard, Star of Indiana, and Blue Knights. He won the Drum Corps International Individual Rudimental Snare Drum Contest in 1992. He was a part of the 1993 Star of Indiana Percussion Section that earned the DCI High Percussion Award. Nick went on to teach drum corps such as: the Blue Knights, Troopers, Spartans, Boston Crusaders, and Crossmen. Nick was a featured performer in "Brass Theater" of Bloomington, Indiana. He is currently a featured snare drum soloist with the Tony and Emmy-Award Winning Broadway Show, "Blast!".*

MPN: Your snare drum solo has evolved to an incredible level. How are you able to communicate so powerfully with audiences of *BLAST!*?

NA: It is an unusual art form to perform a rudimental snare drum solo. I like showing mainstream audiences, as well as, people involved in marching programs that the snare drum can be played with expression and passion, as a musical instrument. I have learned that the more I give, the more the audience will give.

MPN: What advice would you give to young players who can play their music accurately but want to move to the next level and really perform?

NA: I have always found that experiences in my life have allowed for different levels outside the technical aspects of music. Many people do great things when they are influenced by scenarios, day-to-day life, and international events both positive and negative that have impacted them in a way that hadn't previously. This is how we all grow. Music, plays, movies, art, and architecture are all idioms that are affected from these factors in life.

MPN: You get to perform in many famous venues. What are the most memorable stages on which you have performed?

NA: Sometimes the most memorable are in cities you wouldn't expect. We were in Des Moines, Iowa and thought we wouldn't have responsive crowds but ended up being unbelievably alive.

Then there is my hometown of Boston at the Wang Center that brought sellout crowds with many friends and family. The most memorable stages would have to be The Apollo Theater in Hammersmith in London and The Broadway Theater on Broadway and 53rd in New York City. Everyday was surreal in that we were in the theater mecca of the world. Our stage door was across from David Letterman's. That's hard to forget!

MPN: Describe a typical day on tour with *BLAST!*.

NA: Every week is different. I guess a "typical" week would be arriving at the theater on Tuesday around 1:30pm and go through a light and sound check rehearsal until 5:30pm then we have an hour for dinner and come back to the theater for preparation for an 8:00pm show. The show ends around 10:00pm. From Wednesday through Friday, our call at the theater provided no rehearsals, would be 6:00pm allowing for us to do activities in the different cities such as sight-seeing, workout, or whatever you want. For weekends, we are to be at the theater at 12:00pm for a 2:00pm show with a few hours in between before the night show. After Sunday's night show, we pack and leave on Monday morning either by bus or plane to our next destination.

MPN: Can you sense when you are moving an audience emotionally and is there a back and forth relationship with the audience during your solo?

NA: I have learned that on any given night I may be required to turn it up several notches. On some nights, the show may be a little flat so as a soloist, I feel that it is my responsibility to generate energy. I have gotten to the point that I can feel within seconds how much I have the crowd in my hands and how far I can take them. It's all in the tempo or pacing with my playing or acting that gives me a chance to make the audience react at different levels of excitement. Sometimes it doesn't matter what I do. Sometimes, I can't get them to react the way I would like but when I can it is very special for both the audience and myself. 🎵

*Interview by Scott Snow*

## CAVALIERS WIN DRUM CORPS CHAMPIONSHIPS IN MADISON WISCONSIN



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Here are the results of this summer's DCI World Championships:

**1. Cavaliers:** 99.15 Set a DCI record for highest score on finals night, as well as, semi-finals on their way to an undefeated season with an original production by their design team entitled, "Frameworks." Captured their fourth championship and second in two years.

**2. Blue Devils:** 97.30 Production was entitled "Jazz-Music Made in America," Included music from "Ragtime," George Gerswin's "I Got Rhythm," and "Channel One Suite."

**3. The Cadets:** 96.75 Won high percussion for the second year in a row playing a 9/11 inspired production called "American Revival," which included music from "Times Square," "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy," and "America the Beautiful."

**4. Santa Clara Vanguard:** 95.65 Production entitled "Sound, Shape, and Color," included music from "Trivandrum" by Gordon Henderson, "Symphony No. 2" by Howard Hanson, and "Symphony for Organ and Orchestra" by Aaron Copland

**5. Phantom Regiment:** 92.40 Performed classical works by Dmitri Shostakovich which included "Symphony No. 10, Mvt. 2, Piano Concerto No. 2 Mvt. 2 and Mvt. 1," followed by "Symphony No. 7—Leningrad, Mvt. 4."

**6. Boston Crusaders:** 92.40 Performed their show "You are my Star," based on famous American quotes, which included the music "Appalachian Spring" by Aaron Copland, "You are my Star" by Robert Seeley, and "The Music of Artie Shaw." The corps ended the show with a human flag that stole the hearts of all in attendance.

**7. Bluecoats:** 91.50 Performed their show "Urban Dances" with music by Christopher Brubeck, Bjork, and Micheal Daugherty. Powerful jazz music that was inspired by life in the city.

**8. Glassmen:** 91.00 Their show, "Odyssey" included music from the "Millennium Symphony" by Michael Kamen, and

"Javelin" by Michael Torke, a piece which was written for the Atlanta Summer Olympics.

**9. Crossmen:** 89.10 Crossmen continued its jazz tradition with "Heat of the Day" by Pat Metheny, "Candle in the Window" by Linda Eder and "Strawberry Soup" by Don Ellis. The production was entitled, "The Signature Series."

**10. Spirit:** 85.45 Spirit's 2002 repertoire included music from "Easter Symphony-3<sup>rd</sup> Mvt.," The show was entitled "Darkness into Light." The show also included material by Mark Fifer and Clint Gillespie.

**11. Magic of Orlando:** Won the Division 2 championship with music from "The Wind and The Lion." This corps returned from inactive status this year.

**12. Seattle Cascades:** The corps performed in its first finals with production "City Riffs" with music from "On the Town," "Jeremiah," "Simple Song," "Mass," "Prelude, Fugue and Riffs," and "Make our Garden Grow." All music by Leonard Bernstein.

*Review written by Joshua Szymanski*

*Joshua Szymanski is a student at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst where he is a member of the award-winning Minuteman Marching Band. He arranges for the Silver Knights Drum and Bugle Corps, as well as, various high school marching ensembles. Joshua can be emailed at: [jbosox2001@hotmail.com](mailto:jbosox2001@hotmail.com).*

## PERCUSSIVE NEWS

- Congratulations to the members of the 2002 Cadets Percussion Section and Staff for winning the High Percussion Award at this year's Drum Corps International World Championships in Madison, Wisconsin. Percussion staff members Tom Aungst, Neil Larrivee, and Jamie Eckert are all Massachusetts PAS Chapter Members!
- The Java Hut in Worcester is proud to present the "*Java Hut Drum Circle*." The group meets on the first and third Fridays of each month at 7:30-9pm. First meeting is September 20, 2002. 1073A Main Street, Worcester, MA 508-752-1678. All levels welcome! Excellent way to have fun and meet new people.

## EVENTS CALENDAR

- Skullers Jazz Club (617-562-4111): Jeff "Tain" Watts September 4-5
- UMASS, Amherst (413-545-2511): Multi-Bands Concert (Showcase of UMASS Performance Ensembles)
- NESBA Marching Band Dates: 9/28 East Bridgewater; 10/5 Melrose; 10/13 Dartmouth; 10/19 Swansea; 10/20 Weymouth; 10/26 New Bedford; 11/2 Finals in Peabody. Visit [www.nesba.org](http://www.nesba.org).
- MICCA Marching Band Dates: 10/5 Preview Gardner; 10/6 Preview Peabody; 10/12 Shepherd Hill; 10/13 Methuen; 10/19 Wakefield; 10/20 Norwood; 10/27 Finals in Framingham. Visit [www.miccamusic.org](http://www.miccamusic.org).
- The Alloy Orchestra performs their original soundtrack for *The Black Pirate (1926)*. November 9, 2002 at the Northampton Film Festival, 413-582-1832.



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**Drum Workshop** - [www.dwdrums.com](http://www.dwdrums.com)

**Evans** - [www.evansdrumheads.com](http://www.evansdrumheads.com)

**GroverPro** - [www.groverpro.com](http://www.groverpro.com)

**Innovative Percussion** - [www.innovativepercussion.com](http://www.innovativepercussion.com)

**Mapex** - [www.mapexdrums.com](http://www.mapexdrums.com)

**Pearl Corporation** - [www.pearldrums.com](http://www.pearldrums.com)

**Percussive Arts Society** - [www.pas.org](http://www.pas.org)

**Remo** - [www.remo.com](http://www.remo.com)

**Silver Fox Percussion** - [www.silverfoxpercussion.com](http://www.silverfoxpercussion.com)

**University of Massachusetts Music Dept.** - [www.umass.edu/music/](http://www.umass.edu/music/)

**Vic Firth Inc.** - [www.vicfirth.com](http://www.vicfirth.com)

**Yamaha** - [www.yamahadrums.com](http://www.yamahadrums.com)

**Zildjian** - [www.zildjian.com](http://www.zildjian.com)

## **AND CONTRIBUTORS:**

**Alloy Orchestra** - [www.alloyorchestra.com](http://www.alloyorchestra.com)

**BLAST!** - [www.blasttheshow.com](http://www.blasttheshow.com)

**Drum Corps International** - [www.dci.org](http://www.dci.org)