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SELECTED SOLO MARIMBA MUSIC OF RAYMOND HELBLE: A GUIDE FOR
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A DOCUMENT APPROVED FOR THE
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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ABSTRACT

This document examines the pedagogical and historical importance of Raymond Helble's solo marimba music. Selected titles include *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* Books One and Two (1983), Preludes for Marimba Nos. 1-3 (1971), Nos. 4-6 (1973), Nos. 7-9 (1981), Nos. 10-12 (1999), *Theme with Six Variations* (1981), *Toccata Fantasy in E-flat Minor* (1980), and *Grand Fantasy in C Major* (1973). By studying the music, I show how Helble's compositions can be used to promote mature musicianship marked by excellent technical skills, attention to detail, and creative performance practices. The pedagogical aspect of this document exposes the technical and musical challenges of the selected works and illustrates their application to Helble's advanced pieces. The performance aspect of this document illustrates the parallels between Helble's pieces and works of other classical composers, including performance practices, to provoke a thoughtful interpretation of the music. This document demonstrates that Helble's music for solo marimba illuminates the connection between technical competence, historical knowledge, and musical expression.

CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to illustrate Raymond Helble's contribution to marimba literature through an investigation of the compositional features found in his études, preludes, and solos to document their pedagogical value and importance to the field. The material is viewed from two perspectives: that of the pedagogue and that of the performer. A study of selections from Helble's études, found in the two-volume collection *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* (1983), illustrates the ways in which the pieces introduce the marimbist to many techniques found in advanced solo works. A study of selections from Preludes for Marimba Nos. 1-3 (1971), Nos. 4-6 (1973), Nos. 7-9 (1981), and Nos. 10-12 (1999) demonstrates Helble's contributions to the technical capabilities of the marimbist. Additionally, the study demonstrates how Helble's solos – *Theme with Six Variations* (1981), *Grand Fantasy in C Major* (1973), and *Toccata Fantasy in E-Flat Minor* (1980) – realize a compositional style capitalizing on the expressive capabilities of the instrument, while simultaneously exposing the student and professional to the compositional characteristics of common practice composers. Throughout the study, the author strives to demonstrate how Helble's marimba compositions “uplifted the marimba repertoire to a level of extreme significance demanding virtuosic techniques and a rare musical sensitivity.”¹

¹ Mario A. Gaetano Jr., “Four Mallet Technical Exercises,” *Percussive Notes* 18 No. 1 (Fall 1979): 70.

Need for the Study

Raymond Helble (1949) attended the Eastman School of Music, during which time his teachers included Samuel Adler, Warren Benson, and Joseph Schwantner, among others. As a student, he became friends with percussionist Leigh Howard Stevens, for whom he wrote his first two catalogued pieces Preludes Nos. 1-3 (op. 1, 1971) and *Grand Fantasy in C Major* (op. 2, 1973). Many of Helble's works have been in continuous print since publication and he has won ASCAP awards every year since 1990.² Additionally, Helble's percussion ensemble music is performed at international events such as the Percussive Arts Society International Conventions. Raymond Helble's solo marimba music is an important addition to the professional literature as well as the pedagogical repertory for intermediate marimbists. No other study exists that discusses the direct application of his études to his solo pieces. As will be seen in chapter 2, a number of experts in the field of marimba performance believe Helble's virtuosic music to be influential; however, at the present time, a pedagogical study of Helble's marimba music is lacking. Helble's contributions to the field of marimba composition are often cited through his professional-level works, *Grand Fantasy in C Major* and *Toccata Fantasy in E-Flat Minor*, but the unique aspects of his music are equally evident in his intermediate-level works. Helble's two collections of études, *The Well-Tempered Marimbist Books One and Two*, and his solo piece for the intermediate player, *Theme with Six Variations*, contain music that not only demonstrates Helble's capacity to compose stimulating music with a chameleon-like ability to replicate

² Biographical information can be found at the composer's website: *Raymond Helble – Composer*, <http://www.rhelble.com> [accessed December 2, 2013].

historical styles and forms, but also prepares the student for the challenges presented in his more difficult solo pieces.

Limitations of the Study

Helble's total output for marimba includes four solo works, two concertos, fifteen preludes, two books of études, and several chamber pieces.³ The current study examines selections from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* Books One and Two, selected preludes, *Theme with Six Variations*, *Grand Fantasy in C Major* and *Toccata Fantasy in E-Flat Minor*. The reasons for restricting the works to be studied include ease of access to the published score for performance, relative importance, and relevance to the study. All of the selected works are published and easy to obtain. While the concertos and chamber pieces are also published, they do not fit in the current study of solo music and appear to be less important to the development of the medium.⁴ The two books of *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* offer a wealth of material representing Helble's writing for the student marimbist and the pedagogical value thereof. Selections are chosen from the twenty-four études to highlight the most illuminating characteristics. Helble's fifteen preludes include some extremely influential pieces. For example, Prelude No. 1 is possibly the first piece to include a "one-handed roll," uses "reverse stickings," was Helble's first commission for marimba, and marked the beginning of Helble's professional relationship with marimbist Leigh Howard Stevens, a relationship that

³ Michael Bump, "A Conversation with Raymond Helble," *Percussive Notes* 45 No. 5 (October 2007): 14. Information on Preludes 13-15 found at the *Classical Composers Database*, <http://www.classical-composers.org/comp/helble> [accessed January 2, 2013].

⁴ Evidence for the importance of Helble's compositions can be found in chapter 2.

resulted in many more commissions over the years.⁵ Selections from the preludes are chosen on the basis of technical innovation and pedagogical value. Preludes Nos. 13-15 are omitted because they are currently in progress. Helble's three published solo works are included for a number of reasons. His *Theme with Six Variations* is composed of seven short movements on a theme, each imitating the compositional style of an important classical composer.⁶ The work is suited for upper-intermediate players and has pedagogical value not just from a technical or musical perspective, but from an historical perspective as well; namely, the work gives students an opportunity to perform in styles with which they may have little first-hand experience. *Grand Fantasy in C Major* and *Toccata Fantasy in E-flat Minor* represent Helble's most ambitious writing for the solo marimba and are included as examples of advanced applications of the techniques learned through the études. Additionally, they are often cited as historically important works for the marimba and are under-represented in the current academic literature.⁷

Design of the Study

The current study is in three parts. Following a survey of relevant literature, the first part includes pedagogical analyses of selections from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist*. The second part comprises discussions on selected preludes. The third part begins with a performance analysis of *Theme with Six Variations* and moves on to

⁵ More information regarding Stevens and Helble can be found in chapter 2.

⁶ The composers represented are Schubert, Mozart, Beethoven, R. Strauss, Chopin, Wagner and Dvořák.

⁷ Evidence is cited throughout chapter 2.

include *Grand Fantasy* and *Toccata Fantasy*.⁸ The final chapter summarizes and draws conclusions about the importance of Helble's marimba music and its importance to the field of marimba pedagogy. The term "pedagogical analysis" is an analysis of which the goal is to determine the challenges and growth opportunities associated with each selected étude. Points of discussion include stroke type, arm/hand motion, tempo, harmony, length, and marimba-specific techniques. As a result of the analyses, teachers will be able to make informed decisions about curricular use of Helble's études. A similar analysis of the selected preludes follows.

Part three of the study features a performer's perspective on the three solo works: *Theme with Six Variations*, *Grand Fantasy* and *Toccata Fantasy*. Focus is on stylistic considerations and interpretive options. Percussionists are rarely afforded the opportunity to perform the music of composers from before the twentieth century. While timpanists and orchestral percussionists play Romantic era music and, to a lesser degree, are exposed to the Classical composers, their performing experience with a particular composer's music is arguably less intimate than that of the string and wind players'. The percussionist's performance experience with the solo literature of the common practice period is especially limited. While transcriptions provide a viable option for the keyboard percussionist, limitations of range, texture, sustain, and other technical considerations drastically reduce the number of available works from which to create transcriptions. Helble's three published solo works provide an opportunity for the marimbist, intermediate as well as advanced, to learn about the stylistic traits of the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic periods. As mentioned previously, *Theme with Six*

⁸ For the remainder of the study, *Grand Fantasy in C Major* and *Toccata Fantasy in E-flat Minor* will be referred to as simply *Grand Fantasy* and *Toccata Fantasy*.

Variations explores the compositional characteristics of seven major composers. Similarly, *Grand Fantasy* is written in the style of early Romantic composers and *Toccata Fantasy* in the style of the late Baroque. Specific aspects of each piece are discussed in relation to stylistic traits from the representative time period or composer. Scholarly writing on the performance practices of each time period and composer is applied to each piece to give the performer, teacher, and student a greater understanding of the imitated styles.⁹ As a result, performers, teachers, and students will be better able to make informed decisions regarding interpretive choices and possible performance practices. Following the discussion of stylistic considerations, Helble's *Grand Fantasy* is examined in relation to Leigh Howard Stevens's *Method of Movement for Marimba* (1979, revised 1990 and 2005). In his text, Stevens, for whom many of Helble's pieces were written, gives a detailed discussion of marimba technique and includes more than 500 exercises. Because Stevens shared his technical ideas and innovations with Helble while Helble was composing pieces such as the preludes and *Grand Fantasy*, parallels between Helble's works and Stevens's text abound. The comparison between *Method of Movement for Marimba* and passages from *Grand Fantasy* is included to demonstrate the relationship between technical execution and musical expression. Additionally, information gathered through interviews approved by the OU Institutional Review Board with Raymond Helble and Leigh Howard Stevens is presented to provide further useful information.¹⁰

⁹ See Bibliography for specific texts.

¹⁰ Interview Transcripts can be found in the Appendices to this document.

CHAPTER TWO:
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The majority of information regarding Raymond Helble's contributions to marimba literature and pedagogy can be found in *Percussive Notes*, the Journal of the Percussive Arts Society. Several of the nation's top performers and teachers have contributed articles and reviews to *Percussive Notes* describing Helble's music as exemplary material for teaching new techniques and styles. Additionally, interviews and articles found in *Percussive Notes* introduce the student to historical aspects regarding the development of the marimba repertory due to Helble's long relationship with Leigh Howard Stevens.

The most enthusiastic endorsements of Helble's music as pedagogically relevant to the marimba student can be found in literature reviews. Lisa Rogers describes *Theme with Six Variations* as a "masterpiece that every advanced four-mallet player should add to his or her repertoire."¹¹ She goes on to say that the piece provides the student an opportunity to learn about performance practices of the common practice period as well as the historical importance of the represented composers. In a review of Preludes Nos. 10-12, Rogers states that the preludes should be required material for all marimba students.¹²

Karen Ervin describes the first three preludes as examples of a new style of composing for the marimba developed during the 1970s that was "serious, advanced,

¹¹ Lisa Rogers, "Review of *Theme with Six Variations*, Opus 15, by Raymond Helble," *Percussive Notes* 41 No. 6 (December 2003): 60.

¹² Lisa Rogers, "Review of Preludes Nos. 10, 11, 12, by Raymond Helble," *Percussive Notes* 41 No. 2 (April 2003): 80.

[and] musically conceived.”¹³ As for Preludes Nos. 4-6, she points out that they require the student to have a strong sense of control over the mallets.¹⁴ Neil DePonte, in his review of *Toccata Fantasy*, points out that the piece is written “*expressly* for the marimba” in a neo-Baroque style, which is a rarity.¹⁵ [Emphasis in original.]

While literature reviews provide the reader with information about specific pieces, other sources demonstrate Helble’s contribution to the field of marimba composition more generally. For example, Helble’s preludes and solos are often mentioned in articles discussing a range of issues from the history of the instrument to technical innovations and virtuosic elements. In his article, “Four Mallet Technical Exercises,” Mario Gaetano points out that Helble contributed to a rise in marimba repertoire placing a high demand on the performer in terms of technique and musicality.¹⁶ He notes that contemporary marimba music, such as Helble’s, requires a high level of control over mallet independence and rhythmic accuracy as well as an awareness of harmonic and melodic balance. Similarly, in his introductory material for an article discussing the development of the independent roll, Gary Cook states that the contributions of Helble, and a handful of other composers, were essential steps in the evolution of modern marimba literature.¹⁷ In the same article, Cook suggests world-class performers were also important to the growth of the repertoire through their performances of new, innovative literature. Among those artists mentioned by name is

¹³ Karen Ervin, “Review of Preludes for Marimba Nos. 1, 2, 3, by Raymond Helble,” *Percussive Notes* 16 No 2 (Winter 1978): 42.

¹⁴ Karen Ervin, “Review of Preludes 4, 5, 6, by Raymond Helble,” *Percussive Notes* 17 No. 1 (Fall 1978): 37.

¹⁵ Neil DePonte, “Review of *Toccata Fantasy in E-Flat Minor*, by Raymond Helble,” *Percussive Notes* 20 No. 2 (1982): 74.

¹⁶ Gaetano, 70.

¹⁷ Cook, 56.

Leigh Howard Stevens, whose performance at the first Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC 1976) included Helble's *Grand Fantasy*. Cook further illustrates the important relationship between Stevens, Helble, and the development of advanced four-mallet techniques in his article on the history of the PASIC conventions.¹⁸ Cook points out that Stevens used a revolutionary technique, known as the one-handed roll, in his PASIC performance of Helble's First Prelude. Stevens himself mentions the technique as innovative in his article about rolls and roll notation found in the fall 1980 issue of *Percussive Notes*.¹⁹ The frequency with which Helble's music is mentioned in articles primarily dealing with pedagogical issues illustrates how his technical innovations are recognized by leading teachers and performers as integral to the development of the repertory.

Helble's music also receives mention in articles that discuss more general ideas about marimba playing. Greg Giannascoli, for example, writes that students should be patient in their marimba studies.²⁰ He states that students need a strong foundation, built on technical exercises and pieces of the appropriate difficulty, before tackling larger, more complex works. He cites *Toccata Fantasy* and *Grand Fantasy* as examples of long-term projects that students should study only after a substantial amount of time is devoted to technical mastery and simpler pieces. The current study builds on Giannascoli's suggestion and presents Helble's own études as possible material for

¹⁸ Gary Cook, "The Evolution of PASIC," *Percussive Notes* 49 No. 4 (July 2011): 21.

¹⁹ Leigh Howard Stevens, "Marimba Clinic – Rolls and Notation," *Percussive Notes* 19 No. 1 (Fall 1980): 61.

²⁰ Greg Giannascoli, "Patience on the Road to Accomplishing Long-Term Marimba Goals," *Percussive Notes* 39 No. 3 (June 2009): 47-49.

students to study in preparation for professional-level literature such as the Preludes for Marimba Nos. 1-12, *Toccata Fantasy* and *Grand Fantasy*.

Another category of related literature includes interviews conducted with both Helble and Stevens. Michael Bump's "A Conversation with Raymond Helble" provides a wealth of information about the composer.²¹ The interview includes biographical information as well as information related to the compositions. As a boy, Helble was initially influenced by Wagner, Beethoven, and Brahms and was later introduced to Mozart and J. S. Bach. Helble states that he gained an interest in twentieth-century composers such as Stravinsky and Bartók, but that his own composing is grounded in Beethoven, Mozart, and Bach. His first experience with percussion was through a childhood friend, who happened to be Saul Goodman's nephew.²² As a student at The Eastman School of Music, Helble became friends with Leigh Howard Stevens when Stevens played on Helble's composition recital. Stevens asked Helble to write a piece for him in the early 70s, which would become *Prelude for Marimba No. 1*. Initially, Stevens thought the piece was unplayable, but worked through it and even made some suggestions regarding range and notation. Clearly, Helble's music was pressing the technical limits of the instrument right from the start. As Stevens put it, "no one [had] ever done anything like this before."²³ Additionally, Helble himself credits the pieces written for Stevens as a starting point for his percussion composing career. The interview eventually leads to a discussion of specific pieces, beginning with the preludes. According to Helble, Preludes Nos. 1-3 are serial; Nos. 4-6 are "vaguely

²¹ Bump, 12-14.

²² Saul Goodman was a long-time timpanist with the New York Philharmonic.

²³ Quoted by Helble in Bump interview.

serialized, suggestive of atonal lines and non-harmonic movement;”²⁴ Nos. 7-9 are more traditional in form and tonality; and that all nine are connected by the techniques that were initiated by, and for a time unique to, Leigh Howard Stevens. The final three preludes, Nos. 10-12, are described as the most approachable, with modest difficulty “by today’s standards.”²⁵ The interview also includes insights into Helble’s percussion ensemble music and his ideas about music composition in general.

Articles about, and interviews with, Leigh Howard Stevens also serve as examples of Helble’s importance to the field. Lauren Vogel Weiss quotes Stevens commenting that commissioning was a way to get new, well-written music for the instrument.²⁶ She provides a list of the pieces Stevens commissioned, which includes many of Helble’s works. Additionally, she mentions Stevens’s other major contributions to the field including his publishing company, Marimba Productions, Inc., and his definitive technique text, *Method of Movement for Marimba*. An earlier interview conducted by Lauren Vogel Weiss²⁷ contains information regarding Stevens’s early career and his premiers of Helble’s works. A third interview with Stevens, conducted by She-e Wu, includes Stevens discussing his own philosophies about music and performance.²⁸

Helble’s music represented in academic writing is mostly confined to his pieces for large ensembles. For example, Christine Conklin’s study of published marimba

²⁴ Bump, 13.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Lauren Vogel Weiss “Leigh Howard Stevens,” *Percussive Notes* 44 No. 4 (August 2006): 20.

²⁷ Lauren Vogel, “An Interview with Leigh Howard Stevens,” *Percussive Notes* 21 No. 1 (October 1982): 66-70. Lauren Vogel Weiss is also published as Lauren Vogel.

²⁸ She-e Wu, “Interview with Leigh Howard Stevens,” *Percussive Notes* 36 No. 5 (October 1998): 56.

concertos provides an annotated entry for Helble's *Concerto for Marimba*.²⁹ Additionally, Helble's *Dragons of Wyckham* is given a brief overview in Andrew Dancy's study on marimba solos with wind band accompaniment.³⁰ Several documents mention Helble's best-known percussion ensemble piece, *Diabolic Variations*. Studies written by Lance Drege, Scott Harris, and James Cameron each discuss the importance of the work and its place in the percussion ensemble canon.³¹ Other documents in which Helble's music is discussed include Shana L. Habel's "History of the Modern Dance Program at the University of Utah: 1968-1989,"³² Doug Smith's "A Guide to Composing Works for Voice and Marimba Intended for a Single Performer,"³³ and Darrell Thompson's "Illuminating Silent Voices: An African-American Contribution to the Percussion Literature in the Western Art Music Tradition."³⁴

Much of the current academic literature regarding Helble's music deals with only a small portion of his output for marimba. Additionally, no source exists that

²⁹ Christine M. Conklin, "An Annotated Catalogue of Published Marimba Concertos in the United States from 1940-2000" (DMA Document, University of Oklahoma, 2004).

³⁰ Andrew Lance Dancy, "David R. Gillingham's Concerto No. 2 for Marimba: A Transcription for Marimba and Chamber Ensemble" (DMA Document, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2008).

³¹ Lance Mitchell Drege, "The University of Oklahoma Percussion Ensemble Commissioning Series and Percussion Press, 1978-1999: An Examination of its History" (DMA Document, University of Oklahoma, 2000). Scott Holden Harris, "Identification and Analysis of Selected Large Percussion Ensemble Works Composed between 1970-2000" (DMA Document, University of Oklahoma, 2003). James Scott Cameron, "Trends and Developments in Percussion Ensemble Literature, 1976-1992: An Examination of Selected Works Premiered at the Percussive Arts Society International Conventions" (DMA Document, University of Oklahoma, 1996).

³² Shana L. Habel, "History of the Modern Dance Program at the University of Utah 1968-1989" (MA Thesis, University of Utah, 2010).

³³ Doug Smith, "A Guide to Composing Works for Voice and Marimba Intended for a Single Performer" (DMA Document, University of Arizona, 2011).

³⁴ Darrell Irwin Thompson, "Illuminating Silent Voices: An African-American Contribution to the Percussion Literature in the Western Art Music Tradition" (DMA Document, Arizona State University, 2012).

focuses on *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* as applied to marimba pedagogy or on the performance options for his works as related to composers of the common practice period. The current study aims to serve as a resource for students, teachers and performers interested in studying Helble's works for solo marimba.

CHAPTER THREE:
PREPARING FOR THE SOLOS

The Well-Tempered Marimbist Book One

The Well-Tempered Marimbist is a collection of twenty-four études in two volumes, each containing twelve pieces. Despite the reference to Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*, the études do not follow Bach's Prelude and Fugue formula, nor do they imitate the music of Bach's time. Helble's goal was for the beginning marimbist to learn more about style and form than simply technique. Helble noticed that percussionists generally lacked the "rich background of piano, organ, string and woodwind players."³⁵ Subsequently, each étude features a different key and form. In fact, the "beginning" student is expected to display a strong understanding of marimba technique right from the start. As such, the collection is perhaps better suited for a second-year student, rather than an absolute beginner.³⁶ As will be explored below, the student will gain a better appreciation of the marimba's musical capabilities and learn to think critically about the technique, sound production, phrasing, and listening skills needed to mold exciting performances. Additionally, the author intends to show direct application of the lessons learned from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* to Helble's advanced solos.

Before discussing the musical benefits of studying Helble's études, let us consider the prerequisite skills. First and foremost, the player must be well-versed in the stroke-types defined by Leigh Howard Stevens in his seminal text *Method of Movement*

³⁵ Author's interview with Raymond Helble. Appendix A, page 143.

³⁶ Helble himself recognizes the difficulties within the collection. See interview with author in Appendix A, page 142.

for *Marimba*.³⁷ Helble's études not only require control over the basic stroke-types, they necessitate nearly constant combinations of stroke-type in each hand as well as juxtaposition of different stroke-types between the hands. Of the four stroke-types defined by Stevens – Single Independent, Single Alternating, Double Vertical, and Double Lateral – two or more are used in ten of the twelve études. (It should be noted that two of the études are playable with only two, rather than four, mallets; however, both études could also be performed holding four mallets and, if included, also require more than one stroke-type.) Furthermore, seven of the twelve études require ease of skill with three of the four stroke-types and eight of the études feature passages that require frequent stroke-type changes in rapid alternation.

To understand the discussion of stroke-type, consider the definition of each stroke and its application to Étude 6 from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist Book One*. The Single Independent stroke can be defined as one mallet in one hand striking a bar through the use of a rotary wrist motion. The Single Alternating stroke involves both mallets in one hand hitting in alternation, again using a rotary wrist motion. The Double Vertical stroke features both mallets in one hand moving at the same time to strike two notes simultaneously on the keyboard through an “up-and-down” wrist motion. Lastly, the Double Lateral stroke begins with an “up-and-down” wrist motion and ends with a rotary motion, which results in both mallets in one hand striking two notes at different times.

Example 1 shows just how comfortable the player needs to be with each stroke-type to perform the études in *The Well-Tempered Marimbist*. Numeric indications have

³⁷ For the remainder of this document, *Method of Movement for Marimba* will be referred to as *Method of Movement*

been added for a possible sticking choice and aid the reader in visualizing the wrist motions. The mallets are numbered 1-4 from left to right in the player's hands.

The image shows a musical score for keyboard percussion in 4/4 time, measures 11-14. The score is written on a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. Above the treble staff, mallet numbers (1-4) are written above notes to indicate sticking. Dynamics include *p dolce* and *f*. The bass staff has fingerings (1-2) written below notes.

Example 1: Helble, “Alla Marcia” from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist Book One* (stickings added by the author), mm. 11-14. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

Speaking for the right hand only, beats one and two of m. 11 (the first in the excerpt) use Double Vertical strokes, followed by a Single Independent stroke for the second eighth note of beat two. Beat three requires a Double Vertical stroke, with another quick Single Independent before two final Double Verticals in beat four. Measure 12 proceeds as follows: Double Vertical, two Single Independents with one mallet, two Single Independents with the other mallet and, finally, four Single Alternating strokes. Measure 13 includes four Double Verticals, a Single Independent, and two Single Alternating strokes. Lastly, the succession of Double Vertical, Single Independent, two Double Vertical, and four Single Independents is found in m. 14. While the preceding description appears rather complicated by itself, one should keep in mind the left hand adds further complications. Additionally, each change in wrist motion also includes a change in pitch as well as frequent, slight interval changes. Clearly, the player must negotiate many changes in wrist motion and lateral motion, all while presenting a coherent musical phrase and balancing the relative volume between the left and right hands.

Ten of the twelve études require the performer to display a high level of manual independence. The player must be able to perform different stroke types in each hand while at the same time moving in contrary, oblique, and parallel motion laterally along the keyboard. Measures 5-8 from Étude 9, “Barcarolle,” require mostly oblique motion between the hands, with moments of contrary motion (beat two into three of m. 6) and parallel motion (beats one and two of m. 7).



Example 2: Helble, “Barcarolle” from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist Book One* (sticking options added by the author), mm. 5-8. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

While the independence on display in example 2 takes the form of melody with accompaniment, six études in the collection, half the pieces in the volume, include some element of counterpoint. Counterpoint not only requires a developed technical facility, but also the musical maturity and awareness to address the needs of two moving lines. Étude 4, “C-sharp Minor,” features a melodic bass line throughout the piece. In example 3, one can see how the bass line is juxtaposed with the right hand melody.



Example 3: Helble, “C-sharp Minor” from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist Book One*, mm.7-8. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

The performer must be able to control each hand independently regarding lateral motion, velocity of stroke (volume), and stroke-type (in this case just Single Independent and Single Alternating).

One particularly challenging technical aspect of four-mallet marimba playing is known as “elbow shift.” When the player holds two mallets in one hand, the mallet heads, which strike the bars, are generally side-by-side. To strike a natural key and an accidental at the same time, one must shift the elbow laterally to change the mallet angle relative to the keyboard. For example, to play a major third C–E diad in the right hand, the player’s forearm is perpendicular to the keyboard and the mallet heads are side by side, with mallet number 3 on “C” and number 4 on “E.” However, to play a minor third C–E-flat, the elbow must shift away from the player’s body so mallet 4 can move “ahead” of mallet 3 and up to the E-flat. Example 4 illustrates two situations from Étude 1, “Allegro Moderato.”

The image shows two musical examples, 4a and 4b, from a marimba étude. Both are in 2/4 time and B-flat major. Example 4a (measures 11-12) shows a right-hand melody of eighth notes (C4, E4, G4, A4) and a left-hand accompaniment of eighth notes (C3, E3, G3, A3). Example 4b (measures 30-31) shows a right-hand melody of eighth notes (C4, E-flat4, G4, A4) and a left-hand accompaniment of eighth notes (C3, E3, G3, A3). Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-4 below the notes.

Example 4a: mm. 11-12

Example 4b: mm. 30-31

Helble, “Allegro Moderato” from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist Book One*. (Sticking option added by the author.) Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

In example 4a, the player begins with both elbows shifted in, close to the player’s body, to facilitate mallets 1 and 4 playing on the lower, “white-key” manual while mallets 2 and 3 play on the upper, “black-key” manual. In the following measure, the mallets all switch manuals so the elbows must shift away from the player’s body. Similarly, in

example 4b, the right-hand mallets switch positions from mallet 4 on the upper manual and mallet 3 on the lower manual in m. 30 to mallet 3 on the upper manual and mallet 4 on the lower manual in m. 31; therefore, the right arm must perform an elbow shift from close-to-the-body to away-from-the-body.

The tedious breakdown of stroke-type and motion given above is intentionally thorny. It should be clear that, although Helble’s Book One études are brief and appear simple, a considerable amount of study of marimba technique is advised before attempting *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* to assure successful, healthy learning and development. Because the player must display control over the basic stroke-types and combinations thereof, the bulk of prerequisite study should be centered on Stevens’s *Method of Movement*; however, the absolute beginner may not have the patience, or maturity, to seriously study repetitive technical exercises before learning a musical composition. Additionally, some would question the validity of an “exercise-only” course of study for more than a lesson or two. Plenty of resources are available to provide the student with entertaining and challenging music without the technical complexity of *The Well-Tempered Marimbist*. For example, consider the following excerpt from Mark Ford. “Fry,” from Ford’s *Marimba: Technique Through Music*, utilizes only Single Independent strokes. The upper voice is played by mallet 3, in the right hand, and the lower voice by mallet 2, in the left. (See example 5.)



Example 5: Ford, “Fry” from *Marimba: Technique Through Music*, mm. 5-8. Innovative Percussion, Inc. Used with permission.

Similarly, Nebojša Jovan Živković's *Funny Mallets I* offers many pieces using only a few stroke-types. "Sizilianisches Lied," for example, only requires Double Vertical strokes in almost exclusively oblique motion between the hands. Once a student can execute the basic skills of four-mallet keyboard playing and has experience applying them to music, that student will be better prepared for a successful experience with Helble's études. Ideally, the pieces will provide a vigorous challenge that encourages the student to grow technically and musically without causing unnecessary frustration due to lack of preparation.

After examining the études in the first volume of *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* and concluding the collection is not suited for teaching basic concepts of marimba technique, one next asks how the collection should be used in the further development of, for example, a second-year student. First of all, as Helble intended, the collection provides short, concise studies of different styles and compositional techniques.³⁸ Pieces in Book One include a chaconne, march, hymn, barcarolle, contra-dance, a scherzo in five, and a through-composed prelude (titled "Senza Misura"). Five of the études are built from irregular phrase-lengths, while the rest present regular phrase-lengths and some degree of repetition. Additionally, six études feature variations of phrases or motives, which challenge accurate memorization skills and encourage a variety of interpretive choices. The student, therefore, will develop a level of sophistication in their playing and thinking about music. Rather than approaching four-mallet marimba playing simply as a way to achieve melody and accompaniment on the instrument, Helble's compositions provide developing percussionists a chance to experience the

³⁸ Author's interview with Raymond Helble. Appendix A, page 142.

marimba as a keyboard instrument capable of fully-voiced, contrapuntal music that is interesting to listen to and rewarding to perform.

As with any collection of études or exercises, or any other teaching tool, the teacher must decide the proper use for each student. While the études present many new challenges to the student, each étude is relatively short and generally presents only one or two technical or musical concepts. As a result, the student is able to mature without becoming overwhelmed. A teacher could, for example, assign each étude from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* in succession to build a strong foundation. Another option is to examine the student's weaknesses and assign études to address individual needs. In his article "Patience on the Road to Accomplishing Long-Term Marimba Goals," Greg Giannascoli stresses the importance of learning appropriate literature that challenges, but does not overwhelm, to best grow as a musician.³⁹ Helble's études are ideal for challenging a student while at the same time preparing them for long-term goals, such as Helble's own *Theme with Six Variations*, *Grand Fantasy*, and *Toccata Fantasy*.

To illustrate the many ways *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* is useful in preparing for learning Helble's solos, let us examine several direct comparisons. A notable feature of Étude 1, "Allegro Moderato," is the active bass voice. The left hand rarely repeats a note; instead, Helble utilizes a bass line, the contour of which serves to add interest and excitement to the melody. Example 6 illustrates one such passage.

³⁹ Giannascoli, 47-49.



Example 6: Helble, “Allegro Moderato” from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* Book One, mm.12-16. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

To emphasize the variety of contrary and parallel motions, as well as the sixteenth-note motion in the bass, the performer must have control over the relative volume of each note. Placing stress on the sixteenth-note figure in the left hand of m. 13 will add interest to the repeated melodic figure in the right hand. Additionally, a slight emphasis on the first two eighth notes of m. 14 will bring attention to the contrary motion. Similar manipulation of relative volume can be used to emphasize the counterpoint in *Toccata Fantasy*. For example, in mm. 3-4, the performer should shape the bass notes carefully to provide contrast to the repeated three-note figures in the right hand. (See example 7.)



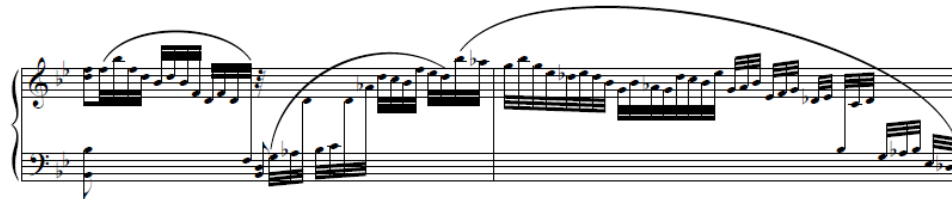
Example 7: Helble, *Toccata Fantasy*, mm. 3-4. Marimba Productions. Used with permission.

Étude 3 in Helble’s collection can be played using two mallets rather than four; however, the use of four mallets provides the student with an opportunity to work on Single Independent and Single Alternating strokes while holding the mallets at close intervals. (See example 8.)



Example 8: Helble, “Moto Perpetuo” from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist Book One*, mm. 8-9. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

Close-interval passages are also found in *Toccata Fantasy*. The passage shown in example 9 is most-easily performed by holding the mallets at the interval of a second or third and executing Single Alternating and Single Independent strokes.



Example 9: Helble, *Toccata Fantasy*, mm.30-31. Marimba Productions. Used with permission.

Étude 4, “C-sharp Minor,” has parallels in *Theme with Six Variations* as well as *Toccata Fantasy*. As discussed above, the étude is structured on a ground bass; therefore, the student must learn to play a repeated figure in conjunction with a melodic line. (See example 10.)



Example 10: Helble, “C-sharp Minor” from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist Book One*, mm.1-4. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

Similarly, *Toccata Fantasy* repeatedly requires the player to execute a short motive in one hand against a contrary melodic idea. In example 11, the performer can create

excitement by grouping the right-hand notes according to the beaming and using the left-hand to drive a longer phrase.



Example 11: Helble, *Toccata Fantasy*, mm.63-66. Marimba Productions. Used with permission.

The second example from “C-sharp Minor” directly relating to a solo piece is found in mm. 9-10. The player is required to perform a “one-handed roll,” wherein mallets 3 and 4 alternate rapidly enough to create the illusion of sustain. The one-handed roll must be connected despite a fairly large leap. Additionally, the player should seamlessly connect the rolled notes with the unrolled notes to present a coherent musical line. (See example 12.)



Example 12: Helble, “C-sharp Minor” from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist Book One*, mm. 9-10. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

For comparison, example 13 shows a passage from the Chopin variation of *Theme with Six Variations* in which the player must execute a smooth, connected one-handed roll alternating with non-rolled notes.



Example 13: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Variation IV, mm. 5-8. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

“Moto Perpetuo,” Étude 5 of the collection, most directly relates to *Grand Fantasy*. Much of “Moto Perpetuo” utilizes Double Vertical strokes in both hands, which requires the player to control all four mallets while rapidly changing pitches and intervals in addition to moving the hands in parallel, oblique, and contrary motion. Example 14 illustrates a representative passage.



Example 14: Helble, “Moto Perpetuo” from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist Book One*, mm. 4-12. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

The passage shown in example 14, and others like it, also requires the player to negotiate frequent moves from the upper to lower manual. Similarly, Helble’s *Grand Fantasy* includes several passages of Double Vertical strokes in both hands, although not exclusively as in the case of “Moto Perpetuo.” For example, consider mm. 118-127 below.



Example 15: Helble, *Grand Fantasy*, mm. 118-127 (127 incomplete). Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

When performing passages such as those found in examples 14 and 15, the player should pay special attention to the relative volume of each hand. The passage from *Grand Fantasy* includes several repeated chords, which will become static unless performed with forward motion. The performer should consider Helble's phrase markings and dynamic indications when creating an interpretation of the passage. Two of the many possible options for creating musical drive depend on slight changes in volume. If the performer emphasizes each downbeat, relative to dynamic level, the repeated quarter notes will naturally push toward the downbeat, resulting in a sense of forward motion. Another option, perhaps performed in tandem with the first, is to translate the phrase markings as outlines for crescendo/decrescendo pairs. For example, crescendo until the middle of the phrase marking, then slightly decrescendo. The result will be a musical line that breathes with each small idea.

Although the piece is only twenty measures, *Étude 6* of Book One includes compositional techniques found in both *Grand Fantasy* and *Toccata Fantasy*. Titled "Alla Marcia," the étude features an accompaniment marked by repeated notes. (See example 16.)



Example 16: Helble, “Alla Marcia” from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist Book One*, mm. 7-10. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

The repeated bass notes pose a challenge in terms of balance. The performer must carefully control the volume of the left hand so as not to overpower the melody; however, the scalar motion of the accompaniment can also be used to add excitement. Furthermore, because the bass notes imply the harmonic structure, the player can create interest by emphasizing the chord changes. While mm. 206-218 of *Grand Fantasy*, seen in example 17, contain Single Alternating strokes in the bass, rather than the Single Independents and Double Verticals found in the “Alla Marcia” example, the passage requires comparable attention to balance and phrasing between melody and an accompaniment featuring repeated notes.



Example 17: Helble, *Grand Fantasy*, mm. 206-218. Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

The rapid changes in stroke-type found in Étude 6 (see example 18) are also common in Helble’s *Toccata Fantasy*. (A complete discussion of the passage in example 18 is given in conjunction with example 1 beginning on page 16 above.)

Example 18: Helble, “Alla Marcia” from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist Book One*, mm. 11-14. (Sticking options added by the author.) Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

Consider example 19, which presents mm. 90 and 101. In m. 90, the player must execute Double Vertical and Single Independent strokes independently and in alternation while simultaneously negotiating interval changes. The difficulty level increases in m. 101, which requires changes in both hands and includes a one-handed roll to perform the trill on beat one.

Example 19a: Measure 90

Example 19b: Measure 101

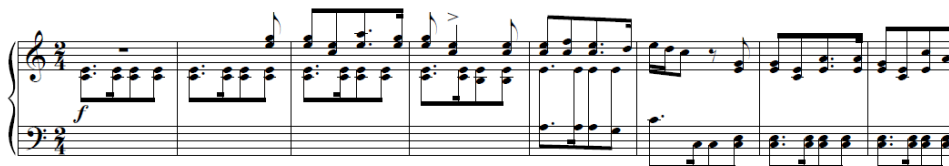
Helble, *Toccata Fantasy*. Marimba Productions. Used with permission.

The next pair of examples demonstrating how *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* serves as a preparatory tool for Helble’s marimba solos comes from Étude 8, “Vivo.” The étude is marked by a repeated rhythmic figure in the accompaniment and a limited number of rhythmic figures in the melody. Throughout the étude, the player must find ways to hold the listener’s attention even though the rhythmic, and in some cases melodic, content of the étude is rather repetitive. (See example 20 below.)



Example 20: Helble, “Vivo” from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist Book One*, mm. 21-29. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

Additionally, both hands must make rather quick moves laterally on the keyboard. In the case of the left hand, this includes moving from one manual to the other. The interval content is composed mostly of thirds and fourths, which helps develop control of Double Vertical strokes at small intervals. Variation VI from *Theme with Six Variations* necessitates many of the same skills. (See example 21.) The variation utilizes a limited rhythmic vocabulary and many close-interval Double Verticals in both hands.



Example 21: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Variation VI, mm. 1-8. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

Étude 9 from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* also correlates to *Theme with Six Variations*. For example, several passages in the étude present a melody in parallel thirds or sixths with slur markings. (See example 22.) The player learns to control Double Vertical strokes in legato phrases, which can be challenging due to the angular nature of the stroke. When a player strikes the keyboard with both mallets in one hand, the tendency is to add unnecessary force to the stroke, which disturbs an otherwise legato passage.



Example 22: Helble, “Barcarolle” from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist Book One*, mm. 9-11. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

The opening movement from *Theme with Six Variations* is peppered with similar passages. Example 23 shows mm. 5-8, in which the right hand performs parallel sixths almost exclusively.



Example 23: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Theme, mm. 5-8. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

While the passage from *Theme with Six Variations* does not include phrase markings, the skills learned from studying “Barcarolle” can, and should, be applied to the movement to give the melody a sense of connection.

The penultimate étude in Book One, “Contra-dance,” is written in duple time, but the pulse is to the eighth note (78-82 beats per minute) rather than the quarter note. Subsequently, the piece is perceived in a moderately fast four, but predominantly uses small note-values in the melody, mostly sixteenth notes and thirty-second notes. While young players are sometimes intimidated by small note-values, assuming they signal high-speed performances, the student of “Contra-dance” will learn that note-value is always relative to pulse. Additionally, many of the melodic lines, and some contrapuntal lines in the accompaniment, require one mallet to execute quick Single

Independent strokes in scalar passages. (See example 24.) Whether the performer uses mallet 3 or 4 depends on the particular passage. In the given excerpt, the author suggests using mallet 4 exclusively until the Double Vertical stroke on beat two of m. 4 requires both mallets 3 and 4.



Example 24: Helble, “Contra-dance” from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist Book One*, mm. 1-4. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

The skills learned through studying “Contra-dance” are frequently employed in Helble’s *Toccata Fantasy*. Example 25 presents two passages; one illustrating small note-values (example 25a) and the other showing rapid scalar passages performed with Single Independent strokes (example 25b).



Example 25a: Helble, *Toccata Fantasy*, mm. 80-81. Marimba Productions. Used with permission.



Example 25b: Helble, *Toccata Fantasy*, mm. 86-87 (sticking option added by the author). Marimba Productions. Used with permission.

In both cases, *Toccata Fantasy* requires a great deal of control with regards to balance, phrasing, and mallet motion, control that can be learned through studying Helble’s étude.

The final étude in Book One, “Poco Scherzando,” is notable for the prominence of specific articulation markings. For example, Helble notates slurs, staccato indications, a *sforzando*, and combinations thereof. Example 26 shows three excerpts illustrating the attention to articulation required.



Example 26a: Measure 1 Example 26b: Measure 12
Helble, “Poco Scherzando” from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist Book One*. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.



Example 26c: Helble, “Poco Scherzando” from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist Book One*, mm. 17-18. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

That Helble would include such specific articulations in études designed for percussion students, speaks to his knowledge of the instrument. While young students often overlook the sonic capabilities of the instrument beyond loud and soft, and in some unfortunate cases even the distinction thereof, Helble demands a more mature consideration of sound production. A fuller discussion of the performance of such articulations is included in chapter 5, but at this juncture it is important to note, unreservedly, that the marimba is quite capable of creating subtle differences in articulation. By learning how to shape such subtleties, the student of *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* will grow not just as a technician of marimba movement, but also as a well-informed musician capable of critical thinking and listening.

Consider examples 27, 28, and 29. Each shows a similarity to the articulations found in example 26 in that they require the performer to make subtle distinctions between each note to effectively portray the music.



Example 27: Helble, *Grand Fantasy*, mm. 211-218. Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.



Example 28: Helble, *Toccata Fantasy*, mm. 55-56. Marimba Productions. Used with permission.



Example 29: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations – Variation V*, mm. 3-4. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

In example 27, the player must make a distinction between the staccato rolls of the first and third figures and the “normal” rolls in the final figure. Additionally, rolled notes and non-rolled notes, staccato notes and “normal” notes, must all be considered within the context of the phrase markings. The selection from *Toccata Fantasy*, example 28, includes tenuto indications, which are too often ignored in marimba music. The player must find a way to draw attention to the tenuto notes while simultaneously balancing the other note-groupings and clearly delineating the three separate voices. To make the passage understandable to the listener, the player must carefully select the

angle of attack, playing zone, relative volume, and stroke velocity of each mallet, all of which may change from one note to the next. While the excerpt from Variation V, example 29, does not contain the same variety of articulation markings, it does require similarly intellectual preparations. Most importantly, the player must develop a clear aural image of the intended sounds. Appropriate questions include: should there be a gap between the first rolled note and the second, non-rolled, note? How should one distinguish the slurred notes from those without slurs? What is the best way to crescendo the final two eighth-notes while still connecting them? This last question is particularly vexing. Generally speaking, when a loud note follows a softer note, the audience will perceive the notes as less connected than if a soft note follows a loud note. The theory says if a note is played at the same volume as the previous note's sustain they will sound connected. (This idea will be further discussed in chapter 5.) Clearly, the player must think creatively to present a compelling musical statement, a skill that develops with patience and the guidance of a competent teacher. Helble's articulation markings in the études and solos encourage the player to pay attention to fine details regarding sound production.

Ultimately, the concepts and skills presented in Helble's études could be learned through the study of just about any music. Teachers should always push students to carefully consider each sound produced in terms of small- and large-scale statements. Helble's études are especially helpful, though, because they provide explicit cues promoting aural awareness such as detailed articulations, slurs, and phrase markings. Consequently, critical thinking becomes automatic in the student's learning process, resulting in players concerned with tone and sound production instead of the

stereotypical “drummer on a keyboard” concerned solely with rhythms and pitches. Additionally, because Helble’s études so plainly cultivate the skills found in higher-level solo pieces, young marimbists may be more willing to work their way through preparatory études before tackling solo repertoire beyond their ability level. As a result, the student will not only have more successful performances as they grow, they will also be better equipped to learn more challenging music such as *Theme with Six Variations*, *Grand Fantasy*, and *Toccata Fantasy* when the appropriate time comes.

The Well-Tempered Marimbist Book Two

In many ways, the second volume of *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* is a continuation of the first. For example, the technical skills developed in Book One are found throughout Book Two. Helble’s compositional style is similar and comparisons can be made between the études and Helble’s solo pieces. On the other hand, the études do offer a few new elements worth discussing. One notable difference is that the études in Book Two are longer and more challenging. Several études in Book One feature some degree of counterpoint and independence between the left and right hands. Book Two features more intricate counterpoint, sometimes at quicker speeds, which requires even greater control and delicacy. A student who achieves command of the études in both volumes of *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* will have a strong foundation on which to build a respectable repertoire of high-level literature. Given the similarities, a complete exposition following the format of the discussion on Book One above is superfluous; instead, only those technical and musical skills new to Book Two will be explored below. Topics include issues of style and form, an expanded vocabulary of

musical terms, and performance issues as related to *Theme with Six Variations*, *Grand Fantasy*, and *Toccata Fantasy*.

As with each étude in Book One, the études of Book Two present contrasting forms and genres. While some are repeated in Book Two, others are new to the collection. For example, titles from Book Two include “Da Capo Aria,” “Polonaise,” “La Chasse,” “Barbarian Dance,” “Nocturne,” and “Ariette.” Forms or genres that make repeat appearances include “Toccata,” “March,” and two preludes. Particularly noteworthy are the “Da Capo Aria,” “March,” and “Ariette.” “Da Capo Aria,” the Étude 2, is written in the traditional form with a *Da Capo* indication after the last printed measure and *Fine* after the initial statement of the A section. Helble could have simply used the title “Aria” and written out the final strain of the melody, rather than using the *Da Capo* indication. By using the full title and traditional notation, Helble provides an opportunity for the teacher to explain the historical significance of da capo arias. The teacher could have the student listen to a number of operatic arias in conjunction with learning the étude to become more familiar with the genre. Vocalists frequently sing operatic arias, even from a young age. Pianists might easily be exposed to the repertory as accompanists. Even string and wind players have a better chance at performing in an orchestra for an opera production than do percussionists, especially student percussionists. Many operas require just one percussionist, which lessens the likelihood of getting the opportunity to perform famous da capo arias. Helble’s étude gives the young marimbist firsthand experience with the genre. Additionally, Helble does not use the shorthand *D.C. al Fine*, but instead spells out *Da Capo* at the end of the piece. In the author’s experience, it is not uncommon to find young percussionists who can explain

the instruction *D.C. al Fine* without knowing what the “D.C.” abbreviates. Helble’s notation further solidifies the connection between the form and the genre.

Étude 5 in Book Two is a march, a style which is also used in Book One. One major difference in the two marches, however, is that the étude in Book Two, titled simply “March,” features a developed trio. The march in Book One is indeed ABA form, but each section is only a few measures and the entire étude is in the same key. “March,” from Book Two, features a twenty-seven-measure trio. Additionally, the trio modulates from the opening key of G minor to C major. As a result, the student gains a fuller understanding of the march as a genre, rather than just exploring the stylistic traits. As with “Da Capo Aria,” the teacher could assign listening tasks for the student to become familiar with marches and typical march forms. A second noteworthy aspect of the étude is Helble’s *Fine* indication in the final measure. At first glance, the marking seems superfluous, but it actually provides a teachable moment. The teacher can take the opportunity to explain to the student that marches often feature repeats of large sections. By including the *Fine*, Helble implies that no section is to be repeated.

The final étude of the collection is titled “Ariette.” The student will likely assume the term is related to *aria*, but is less likely to know more about the term. The étude, therefore, is another example of how Helble encourages further musical growth beyond just playing the instrument. The teacher should direct the student to look the term up in a respectable music dictionary. *Grove Music Online* provides a detailed, but concise, article on the history of the term.⁴⁰ While the term has suggested different

⁴⁰ David Charlton. "Ariette," *Grove Music Online*, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/01236> [accessed August 16, 2013].

characteristics and uses throughout different time periods, the student will be able to find clear connections in Helble's étude. For example, the piece follows a simple AABB structure, a characteristic outlined in the *Grove* article. "Ariette" is also longer than "Da Capo Aria" found earlier in Book Two, reflecting David Charlton's assertion that ariettes of the 18th century "represented a license to let music expand at the expense of the text."⁴¹ The étude is a clear example of how Helble successfully engages young marimbists with a variety of styles, forms, and genres to promote musical maturity.

Book One of *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* contains a few terms that may be new to the student. For example, one may find need to look up *spianato* or *simplice*. Book Two of the collection increases the technical and musical difficulties, but the collection also includes a variety of terms not commonly found in pedagogical marimba music. Each of the following terms is found in Book Two: *Grazioso*, *Tempo d'Polonaise*, *La Chasse*, *Ruvido*, *Tornando al Tempo*, *Deciso*, *Doloroso*. Some of these terms, such as *ruvido* (rough) and *tornando* (from the verb *tornare*, meaning to return) may require a literal translation beyond a standard music dictionary. The teacher can use these terms to encourage students to always familiarize themselves with every aspect of a given composition, not just the pitches and rhythms. Additionally, the student who learns to translate text into musical meaning will, through a teacher's reinforcement, likely continue to do so throughout their life. Attention to textual details will benefit those who go on to tackle higher-level repertoire. Helble's *Toccata Fantasy* includes text such as *come prima*, *come sopra*, and *ad libitum*. Perhaps the most interesting text is found in *Grand Fantasy*. Examples include *Anfang*, *Hurtig*, *Fröhlich*,

⁴¹ Ibid.

Guisto, Lieblich, Légerment, Soupirant, Klangfarbe, Schleppend, and Enchaînez.

According to Helble, the more colorful terms in *Grand Fantasy* were added by Leigh Howard Stevens before publication, which the player might have guessed by the parentheses around select expressive text.⁴² Even though Helble himself did not pen every word of text found in the score, diligent translation provides ideas for interpretation even if not mandates for performance. *The Well-Tempered Marimbist*, beginning with Book One and continuing in Book Two, gives ample opportunity to instill good habits in the young marimbist. A student who learns to define all text found within a score will grow intellectually and be better suited for future, self-guided learning.

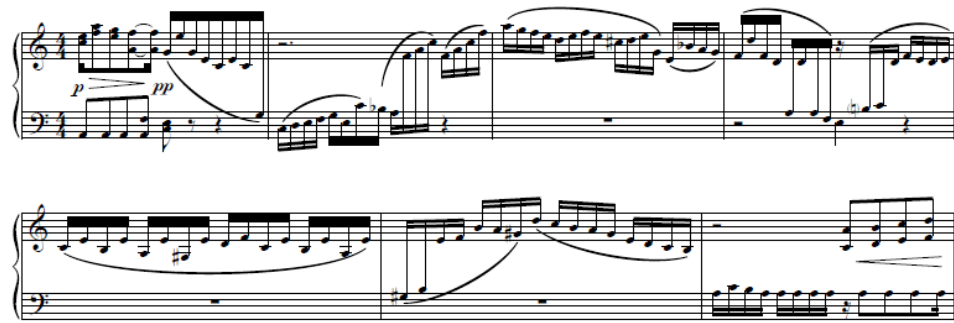
As previously mentioned, Book Two is in many ways a continuation of Book One. Many compositional traits outlined above can be seen in the second collection, such as quick changes in stroke-type, hand-to-hand independence, and a variety of accompaniment textures. The études in Book Two, however, are longer and the technical difficulties are increased through tempo, voicing, and rhythm. Additionally, just as Book One is seen to have direct application to Helble's solo pieces, Book Two features several new technical and musical elements found in *Theme with Six Variations, Grand Fantasy, and Toccata Fantasy*.

One device conspicuously missing from Book One is the use of florid scales and arpeggios so commonly found in marimba music.⁴³ Étude 1 from Book Two, however,

⁴² Author's interview with Raymond Helble. Appendix A, page 141.

⁴³ Études 3 and 10 from Book One could be used to fill this whole; however they differ from "Toccata" from Book Two in that they are entirely composed of running scales and arpeggios and, as such, do not require four mallets. Additionally, "Toccata" requires performing florid lines as an interruption to four-voiced phrases.

includes a flourish of running sixteenth-notes as transitional material. Example 30 shows the passage under consideration.



Example 30: Helble, “Toccatà” from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist Book Two*, mm. 28-34. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

The player must negotiate scales and arpeggios with four mallets, cover a wide range of the instrument, communicate the slur markings to the audience, and continue with Double Vertical strokes at the end of the excerpt. *Toccatà Fantasy* includes a similar passage wherein the player must negotiate a rapid passage of running sixteenth notes across a fairly wide range, which culminates in Double Vertical strokes. (See example 31.)



Example 31: Helble, *Toccatà Fantasy*, mm. 82-84. Marimba Productions. Used with permission.

Étude 3, “Polonaise,” is noteworthy because it is the first étude in either book that includes a change in key signature within the piece. Études from Book One all rely

on accidentals to tonicize distant keys. “Polonaise,” by contrast, begins in G-flat major, moves to D major, and returns again to G-flat major. “March,” Étude 5, also includes key changes; beginning in G minor, moving to C major for the trio, and returning. With regards to Helble’s solo material, it is interesting to note that two solos lack any written key signature change, while one features several explicit key changes. Each movement in *Theme with Six Variations* uses only accidentals, rather than a notated change in key signature. One could suggest the lack of explicit key changes is because each movement is rather short and distant keys are only briefly explored; however, *Grand Fantasy* presents a different situation. While brief passages away from the tonic key of C major do occur in the work, there are also lengthy passages in foreign keys, such as G major, C minor, and E major. In contrast, the 135 measures of *Toccata Fantasy* include nine written key signature changes, although brief tonicizations through the use of accidentals are also present.

“March,” from Book Two of *The Well-Tempered Marimbist*, features two additional new elements: the use of hemiola, and a “new” stroke-type. Measures 80-85, shown in example 32, feature several beats of conflicting subdivisions. In m. 81, on beat two, the right hand plays eighth-note triplets against eighth notes in the left hand. Three measures later (mm. 84-85) the roles are reversed and the left hand has triplets against the eighth-note melody in the right hand.



Example 32: Helble, “March” from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* Book Two, mm. 80-85. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

To perform the passage effectively, as well as other passages of hemiola in the étude, the performer must learn to control two subdivisions at the same time. One method begins with finding a common factor of each subdivision. For example, eighth notes and eighth-note triplets can both be superimposed on sixteenth-note triplets; therefore, if the player thinks sixteenth-note triplets and plays the eighth notes on every third partial and the eighth-note triplets on every other partial, a perfectly spaced hemiola will result. Unfortunately, this line of thinking can create a robotic, stale character to each line. Once the student learns the basic subdivision relationship, the next step is to perform each line in the character of the subdivision in terms of agogic emphasis.

Helble’s *Grand Fantasy* also requires control of the basic 3:2 hemiola found in “March.” In example 33 below, a steady eighth-note triplet pattern accompanies the eighth-note-based melody.

Example 33: Helble, *Grand Fantasy*, mm. 98-103. Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

The hemiola figures in “March” serve to prepare the student for passages found in *Grand Fantasy* such as example 33.

The “new” stroke found in “March” is known as a Multi-Lateral stroke. Helble’s étude is not the first piece of music to use the stroke, but rather “March” marks the first appearance of the stroke in either book of études; therefore, the stroke is a new technique for students studying *The Well-Tempered Marimbist*. As discussed above, a Double Lateral stroke creates two attacks through one hand motion. The player throws both mallets in one hand toward the keyboard at the same time, but adds a turn of the wrist to make one mallet hit before the other. A Multi-Lateral stroke takes the idea one step further by adding one or more extra wrist motions to sound additional notes. For example, a Double Lateral stroke in the left hand either produces mallet 1 striking followed by mallet 2 or vice versa (1→2 or 2→1); however, a Multi-Lateral stroke adds one or more strikes (1→2→1 or 2→1→2 or 1→2→1→2 etc.) all still from one vertical hand motion. Measures 14-15 from “March” serve as an example.



Example 34: Helble, “March” from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* Book Two, mm. 14-15 (sticking option added by the author). Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

Here, each group of three sixteenth notes in the accompaniment is executed with one vertical hand motion and two additional wrist turns. The player must learn to control a specific number of wrist turns independently of vertical strokes, a technique that evolves from the basic “vertical-throw-plus-wrist-turn” motion of the Double Vertical stroke. An instance of the Multi-Lateral stroke in Helble’s solo repertoire is found in the Mozart variation of *Theme with Six Variations*. (See example 35.) In contrast to the

passage in example 34, mm. 30-31 of Variation I require Multi-Lateral strokes in the right hand and, in m. 30, alternation between two sticking choices (4→3→4 and 3→4→3).



Example 35: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Variation I, mm. 30-31 (sticking option added by the author). Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

Multi-Lateral strokes are also discussed in Stevens’s 25th Anniversary Edition of *Method of Movement*. Stevens states that the Multi-Lateral stroke is different enough from the four basic stroke-types outlined in his method to justify a new category of hand motions; however, he considers the stroke outside the realm of his own text.⁴⁴ As such, the 25th Anniversary Edition of *Method of Movement* does not contain exercises to develop the Multi-Lateral stroke. A student interested in studying a series of exercises devoted to the Multi-Lateral stroke is directed to Kevin Bobo’s *Permutations for the Advanced Marimbist*.⁴⁵ Bobo includes not only exercises isolating the Multi-Lateral stroke, but also exercises combining the stroke with Single Alternating strokes and Double Lateral strokes. Unlike Stevens’s method book though, Bobo’s collection does not include a detailed description of each stroke-type to help the student learn the correct motions.

⁴⁴ Stevens, *Method of Movement for Marimba: 25th Anniversary Edition*, 25.

⁴⁵ Kevin Bobo, *Permutation for the Advanced Marimbist* (Asbury Park, NJ: Keyboard Percussion Publications, 2007).

Étude 6 in Book Two of *The Well-Tempered Marimbist*, “Barbarian Dance,” features a rapid eighth-note accompaniment. Throughout most of the étude, one hand plays rapid Single Alternating strokes against a melody in the other hand. In the opening phrase, seen in example 36, the right hand alternates between F-sharp and C-sharp.



Example 36: Helble, “Barbarian Dance” from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* Book Two, mm. 1-4 (Sticking added by the author). Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

The player must take care to keep the eighth-note pulse absolutely steady to ensure rhythmic accuracy between the hands. Additionally, the player learns to move one hand laterally along the instrument while keeping the other hand stationary. Initially, the player may not find the task difficult, but the independence becomes more difficult when one must reach across large distances or negotiate elbow shifts. Example 37 below shows a passage from *Toccata Fantasy* in which the player must hold the left hand steady over octave B-flats while reaching the right hand up the keyboard to play a moving line.



Example 37: Helble, *Toccata Fantasy*, mm. 33-34. Marimba Productions. Used with permission.

The passage is further complicated by requiring the player shift back and forth between an “elbow-in” position and an “elbow-out” position to accommodate all the accidentals. As such, the player cannot just leave the left arm perfectly still, but must learn to isolate the left hand while moving the upper arm and torso. Helble’s “Barbarian Dance” serves to prepare the student for such challenges.

One final point of interest found in Book Two is not a technical or musical issue, but rather one of notation. The one-handed roll is a standard technique in many of Helble’s pieces; in fact, it has already been discussed above and will return in the course of the current study. The penultimate étude of Book Two, however, uses a different notation for the technique. Previous études requiring a one-handed roll simply use the traditional “three-slash” notation and, as such, it is up to the player to recognize when only one hand is available to perform the roll. The traditional roll notation is used in *Grand Fantasy*. (See example 38.)



Example 38: Helble, *Grand Fantasy*, mm. 215-218. Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

In Helble’s “Nocturne,” seen in example 39 below, the roll is notated with an “S” shape on the stems of each rolled note. Again, the player has no choice but to perform a one-handed roll, but the notation is worth noting as a new feature for the student.



Example 39: Helble, “Nocturne” from *The Well-Tempered Marimbist Book Two*, m. 3. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

Ironically, neither form of notation conforms to what has become the most common method for notating different types of roll textures. In the fall 1980 issue of *Percussive Notes*, Leigh Howard Stevens puts forth a notation system for clearly marking roll-types.⁴⁶ Example 40 presents his version of three common roll types: The Traditional Roll (1), the One-Handed Roll (2) and the Double Lateral Roll (3).



Example 40: Notation for three common roll types as found in “Marimba Clinic” by Leigh Howard Stevens.

The Traditional Roll (1) is accomplished by alternating left- and right-hand Double Vertical strokes and is notated with three slashes on the stem of the rolled notes. The

⁴⁶ Leigh Howard Stevens, “Marimba Clinic – Rolls and Notation,” *Percussive Notes* 19 No. 1 (Fall 1980): 60-61.

One-Handed Roll (2), as discussed above, is performed by rapidly alternating the mallets in one hand and is notated with an elliptical shape on the stem of the rolled notes. Finally, the Double Lateral Roll (3) is performed with alternating Double Lateral strokes, creating a rapid flourish of all four notes striking independently, and is notated with an “S” shape on the stem of the rolled notes.

Book Two of *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* was written in 1983, three years after Stevens’s article. While one cannot assume that Helble would have reason to read every, or in fact any, issue of *Percussive Notes*, it is surprising that his close relationship with Stevens did not result in his adoption of Stevens’s roll notation. In the following decades, the method for notation would be adopted by many other composers. Today, most marimbists know the difference in notation without requiring performance notes with each piece. (Stevens does, though, include performance notes and roll notation in some pieces published by Marimba Productions Inc., such as *Toccata Fantasy*.) One take-away for the student of *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* is that although notation for marimba, indeed for percussion in general, is becoming more universal, slight differences still exist. Additionally, what is today thought of as typical was once novel and needed codification. After all, other methods for roll notation are possible. In *Toccata Fantasy*, Helble includes a trill over a moving line. (See example 41.) The performer must, therefore, perform a one-handed roll for the trill while playing the other line with the left hand.



Example 41: Helble, *Toccata Fantasy*, mm. 98-100. Marimba Productions. Used with permission.

The Well-Tempered Marimbist clearly has much to offer teacher and student. A diligent student will master several technical skills applicable to the solo repertory, learn about many different styles and forms, develop a mature understanding of sonic nuances, as well as build a strong foundation on which to stand when preparing to perform more challenging pieces. While the études are not appropriate for the true beginner, once a student has spent a year or so with Stevens's *Method of Movement* and has successfully learned simpler pieces, *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* will serve as interesting and exciting preparatory material to expert-level literature.

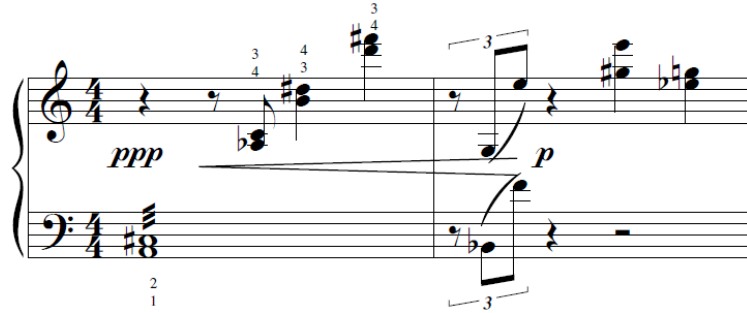
CHAPTER FOUR:
THE PRELUDES

No study of Helble's solo marimba music would be complete without a discussion of his Preludes for Marimba. While the études in *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* prove quite challenging for the beginning student, they were nonetheless intended to be study pieces; the Preludes, however, are much more difficult and are better suited as recital pieces for advanced undergraduate students or graduate students. The preludes are included here to demonstrate their value to the modern marimbist; namely, they provide an opportunity for players to explore musical challenges that demand critical thinking and listening skills.

While *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* contains many different styles, the Preludes Nos. 1-3 offer a contemporary style missing from the études: the 12-tone system. The first five beats of Prelude No. 1 (all of m. 1 plus the first beat of m. 2) outline the row on which the piece is structured.⁴⁷ The row is difficult to discern because it never appears without two or more pitches sounding together, but according to Robert Bridge the prime form is: A – C-sharp – C – A-flat – B – D-sharp – D – F-sharp – B-flat – G – E – F.⁴⁸ (See example 42.)

⁴⁷ A full analysis of the Prelude is found in: Robert Bridge, "An Analysis of Raymond Helble's 1st and 2nd Preludes for Marimba," personal web page hosted by Onondaga Community College, <http://myhome.sunyocc.edu/~bridger/morepages/subpages/helbleoneandtwopaper.pdf> [accessed August 29, 2013].

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.



Example 42: Helble, Prelude No. 1, mm. 1-2. Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

Bridge also points out that Helble uses the row to structure the different sections of the piece. The first twelve measures feature full statements of the row, while mm. 13-17 only use fragments. The final section, mm. 18-22, returns to full statements of the row.⁴⁹ While Helble also uses a change in tempo and relative volume to indicate the three sections, the player could emphasize the row fragments by creating shorter gestures and phrases. Knowledge of the 12-tone structure, along with the technical ability to execute one's intended phrasing, will aid the performer in meeting the musical challenges found in the prelude.

Prelude No. 4 provides a clear example of the connection between musical demands and technical execution. In mm. 7-8, a relatively long, slurred figure is juxtaposed against an angular, chromatic accompaniment. (See example 43 below.) The player must, therefore, find a way to execute the right-hand line so that it sounds connected rather than as punctuation to the running sixteenth notes below.

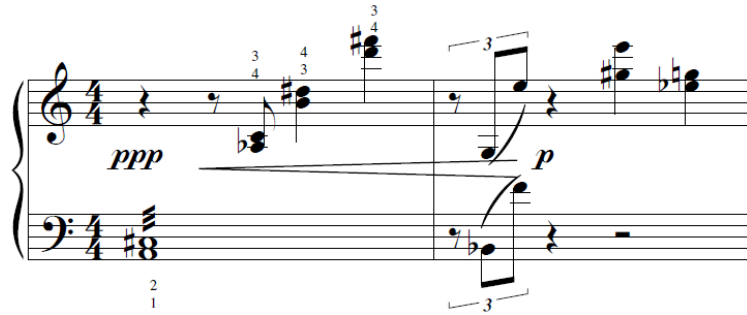
⁴⁹ Ibid., 4.



Example 43: Helble, Prelude No. 4, mm. 7-8. Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

One solution is to perform the upper line with rather large, fluid arm motions and the lower line with smaller, pointed motions. By doing so, the performer visually separates the two lines and the audience will likely interpret the separation audibly as well as visually. The performer solves a musical problem with a technical solution. Indeed, musical and technical issues are often two sides of the same coin. Technical exercises give the player facility to perform any passage of music exactly as desired. Students who attempt to play pieces beyond their skill level are often frustrated when they cannot execute a passage as imagined. The music comes across as stale or uninspired because the technical deficiencies prohibit creative music-making. The études in *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* address the musical/technical dichotomy head-on. Many of the études appear quite easy at first glance because they are short and, generally, involve a limited number of rhythmic and melodic ideas; however, as is seen in chapter 3, the student must use a well-developed technical arsenal to effectively perform the études. The preludes, while still rather short, achieve musical goals through a broader range of technical skills than does each étude in *The Well-Tempered Marimbist*.

Consider again the opening statement of Prelude No. 1 in example 44. Helble presents the prime form of the tone row, but does so with a series of thirds.



Example 44: Helble, Prelude No. 1, mm. 1-2. Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

To sustain the A/C-sharp roll in the left hand, the right hand must play the next three pairs of notes. The lateral distance between each pair, in addition to the elbow shifts required to navigate the upper and lower manuals, makes executing the passage extremely challenging. The solution, as indicated by the mallet numberings above the pitches, is to perform the A-flat/C pair and the D/F-sharp pair in the reverse sticking position. For example, with the A-flat/C pair, the player moves the right elbow around to the front side of the instrument and plays the A-flat with mallet 4 and the C with mallet 3. The B/D-sharp pair is played normally and the process is reversed to play the D/F-sharp pair.

While the player could conceivably play these three pairs of notes without the reverse stickings, it would require very fast shifts across a huge lateral span, increasing the likelihood of inaccuracies. Ironically, utilizing the more unusual technique makes the passage a bit more manageable and provides a greater chance of accuracy. In a 12-tone composition, accurate execution of the first statement of the row is important to give the listener a chance to hear one of the basic structural units. The opening measures of Prelude No. 1, therefore, serve as a clear example of how technique is connected to musical goals. Furthermore, the musical goals in this case were arguably influenced by

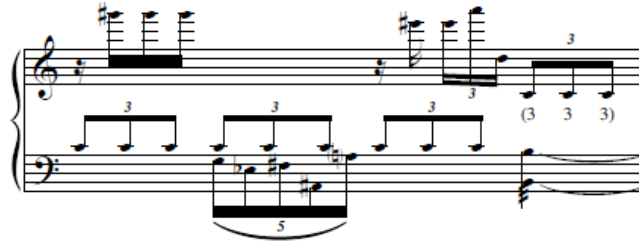
technical possibilities. Leigh Howard Stevens, for whom the piece was written, recalls spending a considerable amount of time showing Helble the new techniques he was developing, which included the one-handed roll and reverse stickings.⁵⁰ Helble was able to capitalize on Stevens's new techniques in the composition of the opening statement of the tone row. Incidentally, the passage from *Grand Fantasy* in example 45 is also simplified by the use of reverse stickings. Just as with example 44, the unusual method of moving one arm to the far side of the instrument actually reduces a certain amount of lateral motion, which gives the player a few extra moments to insure accuracy.



Example 45: Helble, *Grand Fantasy*, mm. 215-216 (additional stickings added by the author). Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

Other difficulties of the preludes include complicated subdivisions, hand crossings, and extreme reaches across the instrument. Measure 11 from Prelude No. 1 includes four different subdivisions. As seen in example 46 below, the player is required to execute sixteenth notes, sixteenth-note triplets, and a group of quintuplet sixteenth notes all against a steady eighth-note triplet pulse.

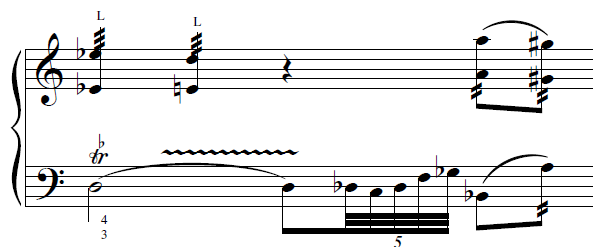
⁵⁰ Author's interview with Leigh Howard Stevens. Appendix B, page 148.



Example 46: Helble, Prelude No. 1, m. 11. Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

Obviously, the precise subdivisions will sound jumbled without the technical ability to control each hand independently. Additionally, the technical execution must be tempered by a musical sensibility to manipulate volume and phrasing so as to articulate the changing subdivisions clearly. Whether or not the listener can hear each subdivision as notated, the performer should take great care to show the listener that the subdivisions are in fact changing, however slightly.

Prelude No. 5 features a half-step trill several times throughout the piece. Occasionally, Helble includes complimentary material above or below the trill, requiring the player to cross the right hand over the left, or vice-versa. Example 47 reveals one such instance. The trill is played with the right hand, continuing from the previous measure, and the player must reach over with the left hand to play the first two beats of m. 2. In this case, crossing the hands allows the player to sustain the trill without a break while playing the upper notes.



Example 47: Helble, Prelude No. 5, m. 2. Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

The previous examples all require a specific technical skill. The efficacy of each musical statement, therefore, is achieved through critical analysis of hand and body motion. In the following examples, a critical analysis of sound production is necessary to execute the extended techniques.

The discussion of *The Well-Tempered Marimbist Book Two* above dealt with different roll types; however, example 48 below deals with transitioning from one roll-type to another without a break in sound. In the opening of Prelude No. 2, Helble asks the player to begin the sound using the Double Lateral roll and gradually switch to a traditional roll.⁵¹ The notation is annotated with a footnote explaining the process in text.



Example 48: Helble, Prelude No. 2, mm. 1-2 (partial). Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

When performing this passage, the player must listen carefully to mask the switch from one type of roll to another. Rather than simply picking a spot and switching roll-types, the performer can blur the distinction by gradually shortening the distance between each mallet-strike of the Double Lateral strokes until they become Double Vertical strokes and, in turn, a traditional roll. Interestingly, *Toccata Fantasy* requires a similar switch, except in reverse. Example 49 shows m. 132, in which the player begins with a

⁵¹ Helble uses the term “Musser Roll” to describe what is today known as a Double Lateral roll.

traditional roll and switches to a Double Lateral roll to ease performing the eighth-note Fs unrolled. In this case, the Double Lateral roll is indicated with an “S” shape on the note stems.



Example 49: Helble, *Toccata Fantasy*, m. 132. Marimba Productions. Used with permission.

Also in Prelude No. 2, Helble notates “dead strokes,” in which the player holds the mallet on the bar after the stroke to dampen the sound. The technique is notated using a “+” above the note. (See example 50.) In m. 2, dead strokes are used in contrast to the smooth, connected sound created by the roll.



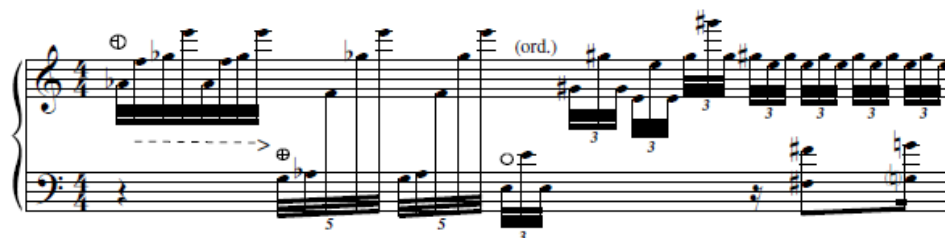
Example 50: Helble, *Prelude No. 2*, mm. 1-2. Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

In Prelude No. 9, however, dead strokes are used in combination with ordinary strokes (notated with the “o” symbol below the notes). The player must alter his strokes accordingly, based on aural scrutiny, to create the desired effects. (See example 51.)



Example 51: Helble, Prelude No. 9, mm. 5-7. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

One final extended technique is drawn from Prelude No. 5. Helble asks the performer to alter the sound of the instrument by manipulating where each bar is struck. The marimba bar is most resonant when struck near the center. Additionally, the center of the bar will activate the fundamental as the most prominent pitch. As one moves the striking area towards either end of the bar, resonance decreases and harmonic coloration increases until the nodal point is reached. The nodal point activates the most overtones and essentially no fundamental pitch. The passage in example 52 involves gradually moving the striking zone from between the center and node (⊕) to directly on the node (⊕) and then abruptly returning to the middle of the bar (⊙).



Example 52: Helble, Prelude No. 5, m. 5. Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

As a result, the sound gradually becomes angular and harmonics overtake the fundamental pitch. Suddenly, on beat three, the harmonics give way to a rich, resonant fundamental tone. To perform the passage effectively, the player must carefully adjust the striking area according to visual and aural cues.

The marimba is a simple instrument with regards to basic sound production. Anyone can make an acceptable sound by striking the bar with an appropriate mallet. Basic sound production does not require the fine motor skills of a wind or string instrument; however, the simplicity of basic sound production masks the multitude of subtleties at the disposal of the practiced marimbist. Helble's preludes expressly call for the player to explore differences of roll speed, stroke, striking zones, phrasing, and other aspects of body mechanics. It would be naïve to suggest Helble's compositions are the only sources for such explorations, but the lessons learned from their study are invaluable. Lisa Rogers, in a review of Preludes Nos. 10- 12, suggests that Helble's preludes should be required for all marimba students.⁵² Leigh Howard Stevens points out that no other composer was writing music as complicated at the time.⁵³ Whether 12-tone, atonal, or tonal, it is Helble's counterpoint and voice-leading that demand such precise control over stroke-type; furthermore, the counterpoint often serves as the impetus for the use of innovative techniques such as reverse sticking, hand crossing, and one-handed rolls. Stevens emphasizes counterpoint as especially important in Helble's contribution to marimba literature:

The main thing is that Helble's marimba music was often *contrapuntal*. Really only the Fissinger Suite (1950) had made a stab at that in the past, and it was only a stab . . .⁵⁴

As discussed in chapter 3, Helble's *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* is an excellent place for the student to begin exploring issues of technique with regards to

⁵² Lisa Rogers, "Review of Prelude Nos. 10, 11, 12, by Raymond Helble," *Percussive Notes* 41 No. 2 (April 2003): 80.

⁵³ Stevens quoted in Michael Bump, "A Conversation with Raymond Helble," *Percussive Notes* 45 No. 5 (October 2007): 12.

⁵⁴ Author's interview with Leigh Howard Stevens. Appendix B, page 150.

stroke-type, sound production, counterpoint, and phrasing. The student will learn that, while basic sound production on the marimba is quite simple, creating a unique, developed voice on the instrument requires critical thinking and listening skills. The Preludes expand such skills to professional-level literature. A player who has practiced dead strokes or switching roll-types will have a deeper understanding of sound production on the marimba. For example, that a specific piece lacks differentiation in roll notation does not prohibit the player from using different roll-types for expressive ends; or perhaps a performer will find an effective use of dead strokes in a piece that does not explicitly call for the technique; maybe a player finds that reverse stickings or a one-handed roll will ease performance of a particular passage. In all cases, complete control of physical motion and a broad knowledge of the marimba's capabilities, which are absolute necessities in the performance of Helble's Preludes, produce a more engaging experience for both player and audience. Teachers and performers should not overlook Helble's Preludes because of their age or difficulty, lest they deprive themselves of a historically important set of pieces that still have much to offer the modern marimbist.

CHAPTER FIVE: PERFORMING AND TEACHING THE SOLOS

The following chapter examines the interpretive options available to the performer of Raymond Helble's three advanced solos: *Theme with Six Variations*, *Toccata Fantasy*, and *Grand Fantasy*. As seen in chapter 3, the solos require a plethora of technical skills and musical considerations, which the student can develop through the study of *The Well-Tempered Marimbist*. Additionally, the pieces demonstrate Helble's ability to reproduce the stylistic traits of several composers from different historical eras. While the aural characteristics of the pieces stay true to the represented composer or time period, Helble's hand is apparent in the expectations placed on the performer. Namely, the player must approach the marimba as a contrapuntal instrument such as a piano or even full orchestra. If *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* introduces the student to a contrapuntal, many-voiced style of composition for the marimba, the following three solos represent an advanced level of achievement in orchestration for a single performer.

To perform any piece of music effectively, the player must pay attention to every phrase, shape, and articulation; in short, every note. Helble's music is no exception. The following discussion intends to illuminate some of the most interesting aspects of the pieces and provide suggestions for interpretation. Because the pieces resemble compositional styles of well-known composers, the study focuses on an examination of the traits and performance practices of such composers and time periods. Such research will, hopefully, expand the marimbist's expressive range and aid

in the performance and teaching of Helble's *Theme with Six Variations*, *Toccata Fantasy*, and *Grand Fantasy*.

Theme with Six Variations

Unlike some of the other pieces discussed in the current study, Helble's *Theme with Six Variations* was not written for a commission.⁵⁵ Helble wrote the piece as a tool for marimbists to learn about playing in styles absent from the "typical percussion music of the time."⁵⁶ To do so, Helble composed each of the seven sections (theme plus six variations) in the style of a different composer from the Classical and Romantic periods. In an interview with the author, Helble describes how he chose the particular composers represented in the work thusly:

There are 15-20 composers I can mimic very well. Well enough, in fact, that few people could tell the difference between the historical composer and my "brand X" version. The composers chosen for the piece were those I thought would make the best contrasts for the variations, while remaining familiar to the audience. For example, a contrast between Mozart and Haydn, Schumann and Brahms, Cherubini and Beethoven, etc., entail too close a similarity to the lay listener to be clear.⁵⁷

The composers represented in the piece are Schubert, Mozart, Richard Strauss, Beethoven, Chopin, Wagner, and Dvořák. Although Helble intended the piece to be performed in its entirety, the following discussion will explore select variations from the work. The Mozart, Beethoven, and Dvořák variations will be omitted because, in the author's view, these are composers with whom the student is likely to have a higher degree of familiarity. The popularity of Mozart

⁵⁵ Although it is dedicated to Lauren Vogel Weiss.

⁵⁶ Author's interview with Raymond Helble. Appendix A, page 145.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 144-145.

and Beethoven results in their inclusion in music classes throughout primary and secondary schools. As for Dvořák, pieces such as his Slovanic Dances have been arranged for concert band and include a number of percussion parts, giving young players a chance to perform the works. By contrast, works by Schubert, R. Strauss, Chopin, and Wagner are performed relatively infrequently by young players and feature fewer percussionists. Hopefully, by focusing on these four variations from Helble's work, the current study will enlighten percussionists to less-known compositional styles.

Theme – à la Schubert

In her essay, "Franz Schubert: A Pianist's View of the Consummate Composer of Lieder," Susan Duehlmeier writes "[m]any of Schubert's solo compositions may be described as lieder with accompaniment."⁵⁸ Because Schubert's legacy is so intimately tied to his lieder, it makes sense to begin our discussion of Helble's theme by relating its most song-like elements to Schubert's lyrical traits. Konrad Wolff, in *Masters of the Keyboard*, states that performers of Schubert's music must stress long lines and emphasize melodic direction over beat strength.⁵⁹ Just as a vocalist would be less concerned with strict adherence to rhythmic absolutism, the performer of Helble's theme should strive for connection and lyricism, rather than agogic emphasis, when presented with a long phrase. For example, slur markings are sparse in mm. 20-23, but

⁵⁸ Susan Duehlmeier, "Franz Schubert: A Pianist's View of the Consummate Composer of Lieder," in *The Pianist's Craft: Mastering the Works of Great Composers*, ed. Richard Paul Anderson (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 68.

⁵⁹ Konrad Wolff, *Masters of the Keyboard: Individual Style Elements in the Piano Music of Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin and Brahms*, Enlarged Edition (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 175.

the performer should be cautioned against playing the rest of the phrase too vertically. Instead, care should be taken to create a single line over the three measures.



Example 53: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Theme, mm. 20-23 (m. 20 partial). Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

The sudden *forte* marking in m. 21 is a slight interruption, but by under-emphasizing the degree of dynamic contrast and playing with delicate articulation, the performer can connect the entire line to imitate Schubert's lyrical style.

To further illustrate the opportunity for song-like performance, consider example 54. The phrases ending in m. 4 and m. 20 conclude with a similar figure except that they land on different beats of the measure.



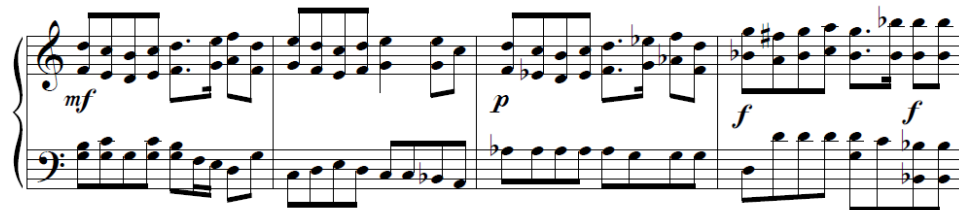
Example 54: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Theme, mm. 4 and 19-20. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

Wolff states that one should phrase to the end of the line, regardless of the beat on which it falls. Rather than emphasizing the final note, he claims, the player should release the final note as if at the end of a vocal line.⁶⁰ Connection between the

⁶⁰ Wolff, 174.

penultimate and ultimate notes can be achieved on the marimba by slowing the roll speed and adding a slight diminuendo into the final note, or perhaps by leaving the roll out altogether and playing the final note quite soft indeed. Either technique will create the illusion of connection between the final two notes and, in turn, give a gentle “falling-away” feeling to the final note of the phrase in imitation of a voice.⁶¹

One final illustration of how Helble’s Theme allows the marimba student to explore the vocally-inspired traits of Schubert’s style is found in example 55 below. The vertical nature of the passage as it is seen on the page should not be heard in its realization. Instead, as Duehlmeier suggests, the performer should emphasize the linear quality of the line.⁶² By concentrating on the linear aspect of the figures, one can execute the passage as a four-measure phrase with direction instead of a succession of stagnant chords.



Example 55: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Theme, mm. 5-8. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

Clearly, if the marimba student studies the performance practices of Schubert’s vocal and vocally-inspired compositions, he will increase his own interpretive options. While a strictly Schubertian realization of Helble’s Theme is certainly not the only option, and some would question if possible at all, an understanding of Schubert’s style

⁶¹ A more detailed discussion on the delicacies of marimba articulation can be found under the *Toccata Fantasy* heading beginning on page 90.

⁶² Duehlmeier, 71.

can add to the variety of ideas needed to create an exciting performance. A deeper appreciation of Schubert’s style will come from score study and listening. For example, the third piece from Schubert’s *Six Moments Musicaux*, No. 3 (D. 780, 1823-28) in F minor, contains figures in thirds and sixths similar to Helble’s variation.

Other elements of Helble’s Theme relating to Schubert’s style are harmony and structure. In the most general terms, Wolff claims that Schubert’s music is relatively conservative with regards to harmony, rhythm, and form.⁶³ Helble’s Theme could easily be described in a similar way. After all, the movement uses simple rhythmic figures featuring eighth and sixteenth notes and their dotted cousins. Additionally, only the middle section of the movement deviates from the tonic of C major. (See example 56.) In fact, these measures can even be seen as a small-scale parallel to Schubert’s tendency towards what Susan Wollenberg refers to as an “unsettled” second theme.⁶⁴

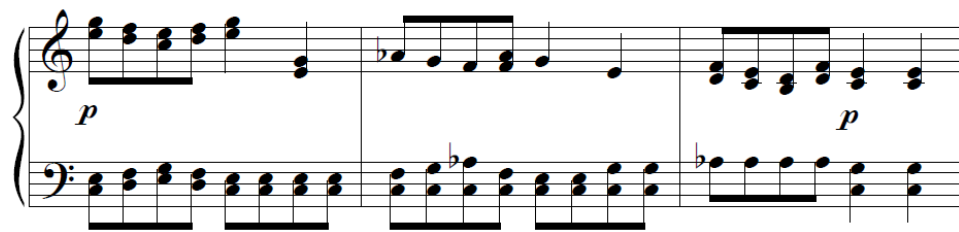


Example 56: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Theme, mm. 9-15. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

⁶³ Wolff, 185.

⁶⁴ Susan Wollenberg, *Schubert’s Fingerprints: Studies in the Instrumental Works*. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2011), 101.

One final harmonic technique found in Helble's Theme that bares resemblance to Schubert is the substitution of chords within a progression. According to Wollenberg, Schubert was interested in the juxtaposition of major and minor chords and substituted minor-mode chords in expected major positions.⁶⁵ For example, in Helble's Theme, mm. 25-27 present a cadential progression. (See example 57 below). Of note, however, is the mode of the subdominant. Rather than F major (IV), Helble substitutes F minor (iv) in much the same way Wollenberg describes as common to Schubert. To accentuate the unexpected progression, the player can emphasize the melodic and harmonic A-flats found in m. 26 through a stronger articulation and increased volume.



Example 57: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Theme, mm. 25-27. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

Before moving on to other variations in Helble's composition, let us consider a few elements of structure and expression as they relate to Schubert. Wollenberg states that disruption of serene moods is common in Schubert and that his music is characterized by builds in tension that then "erupt."⁶⁶ Throughout his Theme, Helble writes several subito dynamic changes and *sforzandos* during sections marked *piano*. For example, mm. 9-15 (example 53 on page 64) show a steady build interrupted at the end of m. 10, leading to a climax in m. 12. The *sforzandos* resemble Wollenberg's description of Schubert's intensity and "destructive, musical outbursts" found in his

⁶⁵ Ibid., 40.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 161.

miniature forms.⁶⁷ Example 56, on page 66, also illustrates a statement made by Wolff in *Masters of the Keyboard*. According to Wolff, Schubert was influenced by German philosophy emphasizing movement over substance. In his view, Schubert used transitional material as a representation of “becoming.”⁶⁸ Wolff states that Schubert commonly used transitional material to build to a climax followed by a “letting-go” to serve as a structural marker. Measures 14 and 15 of Helble’s Theme (example 56 on page 66) demonstrate the “letting-go” from the climax of m. 13 as a transition into the A’ section and the close of the movement. The performer could emphasize the figure by playing the *forte* in m. 13 a bit louder than similar markings in the movement and by adding a slight *rallentando* to m. 15, perhaps even a small pause before the pick up into m. 16, which begins the A’ section.

A fitting place to end the discussion of Helble’s movement “à la Schubert” is the final four-measure figure. Wollenberg states that Schubert was fond of occurrences of three.⁶⁹ Measures 25-28, as seen in example 58 below, contain two groups of three. First, the rhythmic motive in m. 25 is repeated in both m. 26 and m. 27. Secondly, the final C major chord is sounded three times in succession in the final two measures. The ultimate C major chord also serves to unify the piece. The opening movement of Schubert’s A-major Sonata (D. 959, 1928), does not reach a conclusive tonic cadence until the end of the piece, which Wolff cites as a method of unification.⁷⁰ In Helble’s movement, the final cadence, although not a perfect authentic cadence, is the most complete cadence of the work. Other cadences end away from tonic or use incomplete

⁶⁷ Ibid., 179-181

⁶⁸ Wolff, 178-179.

⁶⁹ Wollenberg, 211.

⁷⁰ Wolff., 182.

triads. As a method of illustrating the importance of the cadence to the listener, a performer should highlight the harmonic motion through increased volume and a slight hesitation. Additionally, the player could stretch final three iterations of C major to indicate closure.



Example 58: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Theme, mm. 25-28. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

Variation II – à la R. Strauss

Variation II in Helble’s work is in the style of Richard Strauss. Since many young musicians likely know Strauss mainly through study of his tone poems, such as *Don Quixote* (1896-97) or *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (1895-96), it is fitting to compare the movement with the stylistic traits evidenced by the tone poems. Denis Wilde provides a thorough discussion of musical characteristics common to Strauss’s works in *The Development of Melody in the Tone Poems of Richard Strauss: Motif, Figure and Theme*.⁷¹ Wilde states that themes are often homophonic in their first setting and that Strauss was fond of substituting a leap of a seventh instead of stepwise motion.⁷² Example 59 below shows the opening four measures of Helble’s variation. Helble presents the theme in a monophonic setting, doubled at the octave, the simplicity of which mirrors Strauss’s homophonic settings. In fact, Strauss’s *Ein Heldenleben* (1897-98) also begins with a monophonic setting.

⁷¹ Denis Wilde, *The Development of Melody in the Tone Poems of Richard Strauss: Motif, Figure and Theme* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellon Press, 1990).

⁷² *Ibid.*, 331, 376.



Example 59: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Variation II, mm. 1-4. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

Strauss's technique of leaping by a seventh rather than continuing in scalar steps is seen in m. 2. The player has several variables through which importance can be placed on the Fs. The player could play the note significantly louder, but such a surprise might interrupt the descending line. Because the note is marked as a roll, the player could use roll speed to intensify the note. By playing the Fs with an increasingly-fast roll speed, the performer can create more energy in the note without getting louder than the marked *piano* and without creating too much disruption to the melodic line.

While the upward seventh within a descending scale is a rather specific melodic tool, Wilde also states that Strauss generally favors leaps up followed by descending lines.⁷³ As an example, mm. 12-13 contain several upward leaps followed by descending steps. (See example 60 below.) Emphasis on the leap/step contour can be generated by playing the upper notes rather strongly and the descending notes more legato.

⁷³ Ibid., 323.



Example 60: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Variation II, mm. 12-13 (partial). Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

The above examples focus on melodic characteristics; however, harmonic elements in Helble's variation also reflect Strauss's stylistic traits. According to Wilde, Strauss rarely repeated measures.⁷⁴ Similarly, Helble's variation does not repeat a single measure. Instead of restating themes, Strauss often presented thematic figures with different harmonizations.⁷⁵ If one compares mm. 5-7 with mm. 14-16 of Helble's variations, a parallel technique is found. (See example 61 below.) Each group of measures basically states the same melodic figure, but the second statement is changed in m. 14, which briefly focuses on A-flat major before moving to C major on beat three. Additionally, both m. 15 and m. 16 include one interval change. Beat two of m. 15 sounds a perfect fourth in the left hand, in contrast with the minor sixth of m. 6, and beat two of m. 17 passes through C, in contrast to C-sharp in m. 7. The techniques described by Wilde and found in example 61 are backed up by Walter Werbeck, who states Strauss varied melodic and harmonic aspects of his themes and differentiated themes by varying interval content.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Ibid., 380-381.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 326.

⁷⁶ Walter Werbeck, "Richard Strauss's Tone Poems," in *The Richard Strauss Companion*, ed. Mark-Daniel Schmid (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 131.



Example 61a: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Variation II, mm. 5-7. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.



Example 61b: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Variation II, mm. 14-16. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

The final chord in m. 8 of Helble’s variation is composed of the pitches F-sharp, C, G-sharp, and D-sharp. By respelling the C enharmonically to B-sharp, the chord is recognizable as a dominant seventh chord on G-sharp, which is expected to resolve to C-sharp major (or minor). (See example 62.)



Example 62: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Variation II, mm. 8-9 (partial). Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

Instead, the resolution is to C major. Helble accomplishes the resolution by holding the C and by treating the F-sharp, G-sharp, and D-sharp as leading tones, each moving by a half-step to a chord-tone of C major. Werbeck describes a parallel characteristic in Strauss’s music. He states that Strauss used multiple leading tones in his progressions,

which creates an environment wherein any sound could be followed by any other sound.⁷⁷ Although Helble does not mark the final chord of m. 8 as a roll, the player could consider adding a roll, making the unexpected resolution more dramatic and the written crescendo more effective.

One last interesting similarity between Helble's variation and Strauss's compositions is found by comparing the last measure of the piece with the opening phrase. Example 63a shows the opening phrase, which uses both A and A-flat, suggesting an unsettled tonality. Example 63b, the final measure of the variation, illustrates how the tonality is left unresolved by including the A-flat in an otherwise clearly C major figure.



Example 63a: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Variation II, mm. 1-4. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.



Example 63b: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Variation II, m. 18. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 136.

Denis Wilde describes how Strauss intentionally leaves the tonal conflict of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* unresolved.⁷⁸ Whether or not Helble was using tonal conflict for the same reason as Strauss, recognizing the device will help the player create an engaging performance of the variation. The player can choose between emphasizing the A-flat to bring attention to its appearance or underemphasize the pitch and clearly articulate the major triad. The A-flat is important because, as Werbeck states, “every tone should signify something...to the listener.”⁷⁹ He even quotes Strauss himself, “whatever [the composer] wants to communicate needs to be clearly envisioned in his mind.”⁸⁰ Since it is the performer’s job to present music to an audience, he would do well to create an equally clear vision in his own mind before performing a work. Strauss’s words help the performer remember the importance of creating a mental image when preparing a piece. Whether or not a student follows any specific performance suggestion presented above, by studying Strauss’s characteristics one will develop a deeper understanding of a great composer and, in turn, be better prepared to create a mental vision for the piece, leading to an imaginative, well-informed performance.

Variation IV – à la F. Chopin

In the introduction to his authoritative text on Chopin’s musical style, Gerald Abraham states that it is “becoming more and more generally recognized that intelligent interpretation is practically impossible without thorough knowledge of a composer’s style.”⁸¹ For the performer of Helble’s work then, it is important to recognize Chopin’s

⁷⁸ Wilde, 374.

⁷⁹ Werbeck, 113.

⁸⁰ Richard Strauss as quoted in Werbeck, 113.

⁸¹ Gerald Abraham, *Chopin’s Musical Style*, (1939; repr., Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1980), vii.

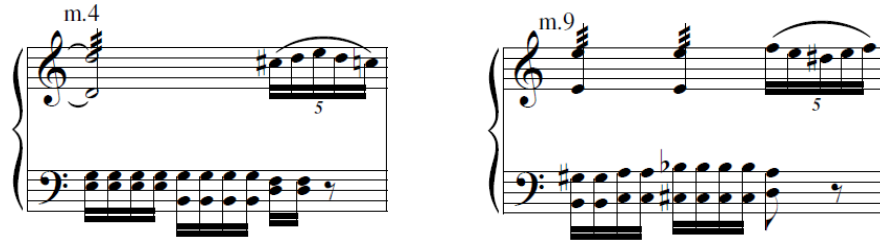
style and search for similarities in Helble's variation. Abraham cites uneven phrase lengths as a common characteristic of Chopin's small lyrical forms.⁸² He also points out that the final A section of an ABA form is frequently shortened.⁸³ Both characteristics are found in Helble's variation. The phrase lengths are irregular, comprising phrases of four, five, five, three, and a two-measure codetta, and the final A section of the ABA variation is shortened from four measures to three.

Abraham discusses Chopin's harmonic and melodic pitch content at length. Traits include diatonic melodies, grace notes, and ornaments that are more florid than simple scalar passages, harmony that is basically diatonic with some chromatic alterations, and frequent use of seventh chords as well as suspensions and passing tones.⁸⁴ One can find examples of each characteristic in Helble's variation. The melody is entirely diatonic, with the exception of one note. Measure 6 includes an F-sharp (in the key of C major), but the pitch is part of a diminished seventh chord, one of Chopin's favorite chromatic alterations. Additionally, both the first A section and the B section contain embellishments. Example 64 below shows two embellishments found at the end of phrases that go beyond simple scalar figures by including chromatic pitches. Helble also includes grace notes as melodic embellishments.

⁸² Ibid., 28.

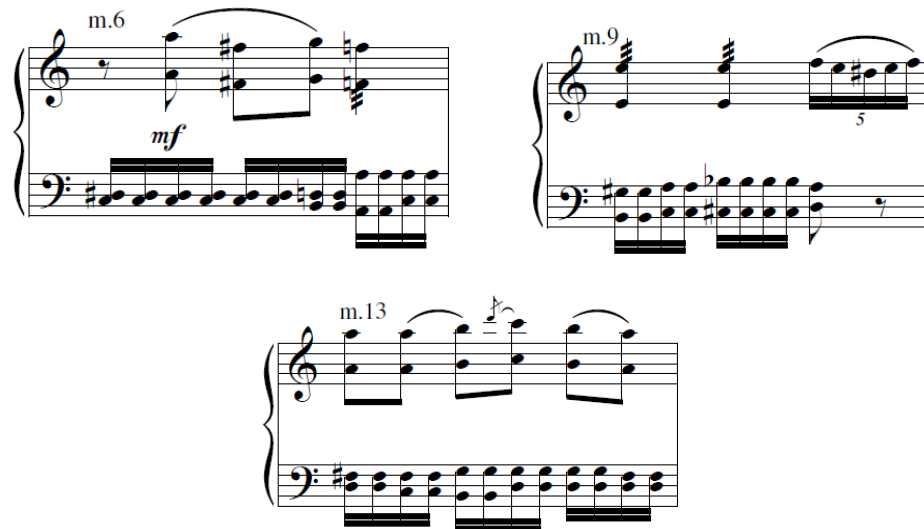
⁸³ Ibid., 46.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 68, 70, 77, 79, 85.



Example 64: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Variation IV, mm. 4 and 9. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

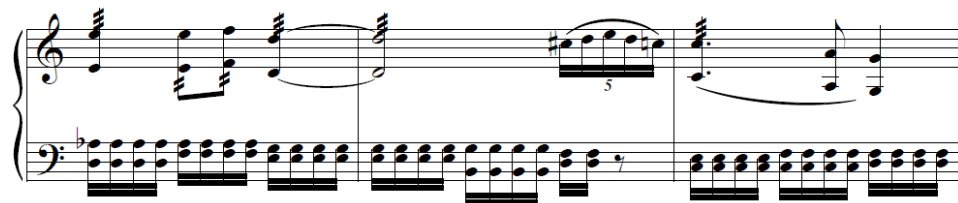
Lastly, Helble’s harmony is largely diatonic with chromatic alterations creating diminished seventh chords and chromatically altered triads. (See example 65.)



Example 65: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Variation IV, mm. 6, 9, and 13. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

Many other authors have presented descriptions of Chopin’s musical traits. A complete survey of Chopin scholarship is outside the realm of the current study, but a few more general style traits can be applied to Helble’s variation. In his work *Masters of the Keyboard*, Konrad Wolff agrees with Abraham’s generalization of Chopin’s

melodies as based on the diatonic pitches.⁸⁵ He also states that Chopin often creates a dissonance on the downbeat, which is later resolved.⁸⁶ Example 66a shows a pair of dissonant downbeats that eventually resolve to the tonic pitch. In measure three, the melodic E is heard over a tritone (D/A-flat) in the accompaniment. At the end of the measure, the E has moved down to D and the listener expects another step down to C, the tonic pitch, but instead the D is held over, creating another dissonant downbeat. Resolution is finally realized in m. 5 as the D moves down to C. Example 66b shows another example, in which the same idea is shortened to only two measures.



Example 66a: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Variation IV, mm. 3-5. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.



Example 66b: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Variation IV, mm. 7-8. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

In *The Cambridge History of Musical Performance*, Ian Pace lists several defining Chopinesque traits: long phrases stressing long, high, dissonant, or syncopated notes; unbroken, cantabile, lyrical lines; ornamentation without a change in tempo; a

⁸⁵ Wolff, 214.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 205.

sense of simplicity, naturalness, and spontaneity.⁸⁷ Many of these elements can be found in Helble's variation. For example, due to the slow tempo, many of Helble's phrases can reach lengths of twelve or more seconds. (Christie Perry Skousen also points out the relative frequency of long phrases in her essay in *The Pianist's Craft*.⁸⁸) Helble's B section comprises two five-measure phrases lacking a strong resolution until the last measure of the section. Helble's ornamentation, as seen in example 64 (page 76), is notated in strict groupings of quintuplet sixteenth notes. The fact that Helble did not notate the ornaments as five grace notes suggests the importance of pacing and therefore steady tempo through the figure. While the descriptors "simplicity, naturalness, and spontaneity" are by nature subjective, they can be used to describe certain aspects of Helble's variation. Helble's melodic and rhythmic languages are both relatively simple. The melody mainly features stepwise motion and small leaps and is almost entirely diatonic. With the exception of the ornaments described above, Helble's rhythmic content is restricted to quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes in the melody and only sixteenth notes in the accompaniment. As such, the rhythmic element is relatively simple. While the previously mentioned diatonic nature of the melody conveys a certain naturalness, Helble's ornaments and grace notes still provide a level of spontaneity for the performer and, in turn, listener.

For examples of more specific character traits found in Helble's variation, let us turn to the work of Francis McGinnis, whose dissertation titled "Chopin: Aspects of

⁸⁷ Ian Pace, "Instrumental Performance in the Nineteenth Century," in *The Cambridge History of Musical Performance*, ed. Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 653.

⁸⁸ Christie Peery Skousen, "Teaching Tone, Technique and Phrasing in the Piano Works of Chopin," in *The Pianist's Craft: Mastering the Works of Great Composers*, ed. by Richard Paul Anderson (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2012), 103.

Melodic Style” provides data drawn from a large sample of Chopin melodies. With regards to specific pitches, McGinnis points out that scale degree three is the most frequent high point of a phrase, while scale degree five is the most frequent low point, both of which are true for Helble’s variation.⁸⁹ Additionally, each of Helble’s phrases begin with a member of the tonic triad, often scale degree five, they reach their low point in the first half of the phrase, approach a high point by leap, and contain some sort of embellishment, all of which are common characteristics of Chopin according to McGinnis.⁹⁰ Some common characteristics found in Chopin’s melodies are absent from, or opposed by, Helble’s variation; however, one must remember that Helble’s variation is only nineteen measures long and that any attempt to find a similarly short example that includes all possible character traits from Chopin’s own output would prove difficult.

To supplement the student’s study of Chopin’s style, the following pieces from Chopin’s own output serve as examples of the previously discussed character traits. Prelude in E minor, op. 28 no. 4 (1838-39), is an excellent illustration of a long, cantabile melody. Additionally, the melody begins on scale degree five, as does Helble’s variation, and approaches the highest note by a leap, both of which are outlined by McGinnis. The opening melody of Chopin’s Nocturne in F major, op. 15 no. 1 (1830-32), is mostly stepwise and reaches its highest point on scale degree three. Again, Helble’s variation mirrors these traits. Both pieces serve as possible listening

⁸⁹ Francis Frederick McGinnis, “Chopin: Aspects of Melodic Style” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1968), 47.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 94, 42, 64, 122.

assignments the teacher could assign the student in conjunction with learning *Theme with Six Variations*.

Once the performer has recognized those elements in Helble's variation that represent Chopin's style, the player should then begin the task of developing an engaging interpretation of the movement. While Abraham's text is authoritative on Chopin's style, it offers little in the way of interpretation. Instead, one can turn to the work of Thomas Higgins, whose dissertation titled "Chopin Interpretation: A Study of Performance Directions in Selected Autographs and Other Sources" provides a wealth of knowledge with regards to performing Chopin. The dissertation deals mainly with Chopin's own playing style based on writings and other sources. According to Higgins, Chopin was known for his quiet and delicate playing, use of melodic rubato, and variety of expression, the latter of which is one point that Abraham does briefly discuss in his own text.⁹¹ A light, loosely-wrapped set of mallets will help create a similarly quiet and delicate sound. The player should also take care to perform with a light touch on the instrument. To do so, the player would benefit from an independent grip, such as the "Stevens Grip," which enables the mallets to hang loosely from the fingers. Consideration of mallet choice and grip speak to the importance of sensitivity and technical execution while performing Chopin as discussed by Wolff.⁹²

Higgins also includes more general ideas about performing classical music. In his discussion on whether the performer should aim for a historical or modern performance, Higgins points out that, while we as performers and listeners grow old and

⁹¹ Thomas Higgins, "Chopin Interpretation: A Study of Performance Directions in Selected Autographs and Other Sources" (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1966), 139, 145, 147. Also Abraham, 51.

⁹² Wolff, 200.

tastes change, the music is eternal. As such, the performer must find timeless aspects of the music and strive to bring those qualities to life.⁹³ Higgins states that Chopin never played a piece the same way twice, despite detailed directions in the score. To accomplish such a feat, Chopin eventually abandoned precise metronome markings or other directions that were too specific. As Higgins also points out, though, Chopin started with an exact realization of the score before varying his interpretations.⁹⁴

Helble gives the performer ample opportunities for interpretation, but the performer should be cautioned against too much interpretive license before first learning the score exactly. Higgins states that modern pianos often require a performance with more pedaling to match the lighter instruments that Chopin had available. Also, Higgins suggests that tempos can be altered to account for the particular resonance characteristics of each instrument.⁹⁵ Similarly, a performer of Helble's variation could consider making alterations to Helble's roll indications to account for a specific performance space or instrument. In m. 5, Helble indicates a rolled dotted-quarter-note C followed by an unrolled eighth-note A and quarter-note G all under one phrase marking.



Example 67: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Variation IV, m. 5. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

⁹³ Higgins, 364.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 357, 359.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 360-361.

Depending on the mallet choice, instrument characteristics, and room resonance, it may be difficult to achieve a sense of connectedness between the C, A, and G; therefore, one may choose to roll the unrolled notes, making them longer and clarifying the line, just as a pianist may choose to alter pedal indications to lend clarity to a passage.

Skousen's article in *The Pianist's Craft* also provides a number of observations valuable to the performer of Chopin's music and, by extension, Helble's piece.

According to her research, Chopin's instruments and style produced a relatively light tone, again pointing to the importance of proper mallet choice for Helble's variation.⁹⁶

Skousen goes on to explore other aspects of technique that add nuance to the performance. She describes how the pianist can change articulation and create tension by varying the amount each finger contacts the key.⁹⁷

The marimbist can make a parallel adjustment by changing the angle at which the mallet strikes the keyboard.

Additionally, one can change the articulation of the mallet by tightening or loosening the grip. Skousen also states that control over relative volume is of the utmost

importance. She suggests that the accompaniment is to be performed extremely softly and advises the pianist practice by making the accompaniment inaudible and slowly

increase the volume until it is just loud enough, but not overbearing.⁹⁸

To accomplish a similar feat on the marimba, the performer must first develop a fine sense of touch on the instrument and control over the mallets. Both skills can be improved by technical

studies, such as Stevens's *Method of Movement*, as well as musical studies, such as

Helble's own *The Well-Tempered Marimbist*. A final note about Skousen's article

⁹⁶ Skousen, 95.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 101.

relates to the visual aspect of performance. To make phrase lengths clear to the audience, the player can give a slight lift in the wrists to provide a visual cue.⁹⁹ One could argue that the marimba is even more visual than the piano. First, the marimbist usually faces the audience. Secondly, the lateral motion on the marimba is much greater than that on the piano, which is further exaggerated by the fact the audience generally looks along the length of the piano keys rather than perpendicularly as with the marimba. The marimbist can take advantage of the visual aspect by lifting the mallets, wrists, and arms to indicate phrasing visually, in much the same way Skousen advises the pianist.

Further ideas for an engaging performance can be found in Pace's article in *The Cambridge History of Musical Performance*. Pace states that one common feature of Chopin's music is a wide range of subtle dynamic levels.¹⁰⁰ Helble's variation differs in that he only provides two dynamic markings, but that does not restrict the performer from making choices to add variety and subtlety. A competent performance would surely include slight crescendos and diminuendos throughout the variation to make phrasing more interesting. Pace also points out that a proper Chopinesque *rubato* only applies to the melody. As such, the performer of Helble's variation could keep the left-hand accompaniment steady while offering a slight *rubato* in the right hand melody. Interestingly, Higgins suggests that the use of *rubato* is an example of how performers' choices ultimately affect the validity of their performances. He states that modern ears may have trouble accepting melodic *rubato* that results in misaligned left and right

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁰⁰ Pace, 653.

hands.¹⁰¹ The performer must decide between a historical interpretation and a modern interpretation. Because Helble's variations can be used as a teaching tool, a historical performance is suggested as a possible way to relate to the emulated composer. While Wolff claims that no composers have been successful in fully emulating Chopin's style, the preceding discussion shows how Helble's composition provides enough similarities to be of educational value to the marimba student.

Variation V – à la R. Wagner

The fifth variation of *Theme with Six Variations* is written "à la R. Wagner." Wagner's best-known works, his music dramas, are far removed from the small-scale form of Helble's variation; therefore, the student must be creative in making connections between Wagner's style and Helble's piece. Undergraduate music students often learn of the leitmotif as one of Wagner's trademark techniques. Barry Millington describes the leitmotif as associated with characters, objects, symbolism, and ideas.¹⁰² Leitmotifs return throughout the drama to illustrate changes or reminiscences of particular dramatic elements. Since Helble's variation only lasts about four minutes and is without text or program, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to create a plot-based narrative to articulate through leitmotifs. The marimbist can, however, apply the idea of remembrance to the variation. For example, several times in the variation Helble presents a figure of four thirty-second notes, which always contain half-steps and almost always precedes a leap. (See examples 68a, b, c.) Known as a grupetto, the

¹⁰¹ Higgins, 361.

¹⁰² Barry Millington, "Der Ring des Nibelungen: conception and interpretation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Wagner*, ed. by Thomas S. Grey (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 87.

figure is common in Wagner’s music.¹⁰³ For examples in Wagner’s own music, the student should listen to *Götterdämmerung* (1869-74). The performer could use articulation and tone color to present each figure in the same manner to create a memorable motive for the listener.



Example 68a: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Variation V, m. 3. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.



Example 68b: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Variation V, m. 4. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

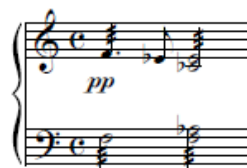


Example 68c: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Variation V, m. 9. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

One idea is to play the first note of each group rather strongly and the preceding notes less loud. Conversely, all four notes could be performed with a staccato articulation to bring them out of the texture. Either way, by playing the figure similarly in each statement, the player can give the figure importance within a particular measure or phrase.

¹⁰³ Frederick Cowen, “Richard Wagner’s Methods I. His Melody,” *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular* 37 No. 644 (Oct. 1, 1896): 651.

While the small-scale, absolute nature of Helble’s variation does not provide clues for programmatic interpretation in the style of a Wagner music drama, the player can find more elemental Wagnerian traits in the movement. The student should, therefore, listen to Wagner’s music dramas for inspiration. For example, David Poultney states that *Tristan und Isolde* (1857-59) features chromatic melodies that are “seldom tuneful.” Additionally, he states that Wagner’s continual modulations lead to an ambiguous tonal center.¹⁰⁴ In Helble’s variation, at least one accidental, frequently more, appears in all but one measure. A more specific similarity comes in the form of the so-called “Tristan Chord.” As John Daverio illustrates, the first harmony of *Tristan und Isolde* has lasting importance throughout the piece. Initially presented spelled as F – B – D-sharp – G-sharp, the chord is not only the first harmony of the work, but also coincides with the meeting of two figures: the opening melody and a chromatic ascent.¹⁰⁵ Example 69 shows the first measure of Helble’s variation, in which the first harmony is a respelled version of the Tristan Chord, with the D-sharp and G-sharp spelled as E-flat and A-flat and the B is spelled as C-flat.



Example 69: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Variation V, m. 1. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

¹⁰⁴ David Poultney, *Studying Music History; Learning, Reasoning, and Writing About Music History and Literature* Second Edition (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996), 166.

¹⁰⁵ John Daverio, “*Tristan und Isolde*: essence and appearance,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Wagner*, ed. Thomas S. Grey (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 124.

The vertical order of the pitches is different than the opening of *Tristan und Isolde*, but differences in spelling and voicing are common in Wagner as well. Daverio states that the chord is altered to accompany different moods of the drama.¹⁰⁶ In Helble's variation, the chord appears in m. 3 along with the first *forte* marking of the movement, this time transposed to C – E-flat – G-flat– B-flat. (See example 70.)



Example 70: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Variation V, m. 3. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

Helble already indicates the chord is *forte*, but the player could further emphasize the harmony by altering the tempo, roll speed, or roll type. The performer should watch or listen to *Tristan und Isolde* for further ideas about performance options.

Once the performer has recognized those aspects of Helble's variation that share similarities with Wagner's music, one must decide how to perform the piece. Clearly, the marimbist lacks the orchestral resources, staging cues, and text present in Wagner's music dramas; however, the player still has the responsibility to create an interesting performance. A study of Wagner's own thoughts on performance will prove useful in broadening one's interpretive horizons. Robin Stowell states that Wagner considered the conductor responsible for communicating expressive and interpretive choices to the performers through a wide dynamic range and flexibility with tempo and meter. Continuing, he asserts that Wagner thought melodies should be approached with a

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 126.

rubato singing-style, free from meter and tempo.¹⁰⁷ As a conductor of Wagner’s music, Richard Strauss even went so far as to alter the tempo abruptly on specific figures within a phrase or measure.¹⁰⁸ Wagner himself stated that singing a melody helps one get a feel for tempo and gives soul to a musical performance.¹⁰⁹ As one’s own conductor, the solo marimbist will find plenty of opportunities in Helble’s variation to alter tempo and disguise meter for dramatic effect. Examples 71 and 72 present two such passages.



Example 71: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Variation V, mm. 1-4. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

Example 71 shows the first four measures of the variation. Measure 4 presents an opportunity for stretching and pushing the tempo. The rolled sixteenth notes on beat two should be drawn out slightly, allowing the player to execute a few more strokes on each chord and, in turn, smoothly connect the group. The player can then play the thirty-second notes rather quickly, perhaps emphasizing the first of the group, to create the illusion of connection. Lastly, the performer can build suspense by extending the

¹⁰⁷ Robin Stowell, “Case Study: Richard Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*,” in *The Cambridge History of Musical Performance*, ed. Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 717.

¹⁰⁸ David Breckbill, “Performance Practice,” in *The Wagner Compendium: A Guide to Wagner’s Life and Music*, ed. Barry Millington (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 354.

¹⁰⁹ Richard Wagner, *Wagner on Music and Drama: a Compendium of Richard Wagner’s Prose Works*, selected and arranged, with an introduction, by Albert Goldman and Evert Sprinchorn, translated by H. Ashton Ellis (New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1964), 301.

length of the final two notes of m. 4. If desired, adding rolls to the final two pitches will give the player another tool for creating drama. Rolls would allow the player to add tension and color through roll speed and mallet placement.

Example 72 below shows the final four measures of the piece. Although Helble marks only two dynamic levels and no tempo alterations, the passage seems ripe for additions. For example, the player could expand the dynamic range by leading up to *fortissimo* on beat two of m. 9 followed by a gradual diminuendo to the end. Additionally, the final measure could be enhanced by relaxing the tempo and extending the final fermata.



Example 72: Helble, *Theme with Six Variations* – Variation V, mm. 9-12. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

To emphasize the importance of balance between Helble’s indications, historical performance practices, and personal interpretation, let us consider the following statement from Wagner: “pure adagio can not be taken slow enough.”¹¹⁰ On the contrary, Helble indicates his variation as “Adagio, ma non troppo,” implying that it is possible to play his variation too slowly. Clearly, the performer has a choice to make regarding tempo. The combination of Helble’s indications, an introduction to Wagner’s tendencies, and a well-developed personal vision serves the performer in crafting a memorable musical event. Indeed, regardless of specific performance practice suggestions given for each variation, Helble’s *Theme with Six Variations* need not

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 305.

become simply a representation of historical practices. The piece should instead be seen as a tool to expand one's expressive capabilities through learning about important composers.

Toccata Fantasy in E-flat Minor for Marimba Alone

Unlike his *Theme with Six Variations*, Helble's *Toccata Fantasy* was not written to explicitly mirror the compositional style of a specific composer. Instead, Helble combines elements from Baroque-era composers with modern aesthetics to create a work that is unique in the marimba literature. Also unlike *Theme with Six Variations*, *Toccata Fantasy* is most definitely not appropriate for the developing marimbist. The player is required to display a wide range of virtuosic technical skills, while at the same time negotiating complex counterpoint, drastic dynamic contrasts, and other musical considerations. Although the piece is not suited for a developing player, *Toccata Fantasy* nonetheless offers the performer many opportunities to learn about what may be an unfamiliar style. Neil DePonte claims that *Toccata Fantasy* is important in the marimba repertory, in part, because it is written "expressly for the marimba" in a neo-Baroque style.¹¹¹ As mentioned previously, the number of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century works utilizing percussion is relatively small; therefore, percussionists often get fewer opportunities to perform Baroque-era music than do wind and string players or vocalists. Whereas the discussion of *Theme with Six Variations* looked to information on specific composers for interpretive options, the current discussion takes a broader scope by comparing *Toccata Fantasy* to one composer of early toccatas, Girolamo Frescobaldi, and one composer of later toccatas, J.S. Bach. The performer will then be

¹¹¹ Neil DePonte, Review of *Toccata Fantasy in E-Flat Minor*, by Raymond Helble, *Percussive Notes* 20 No. 2 (February 1982): 74.

able to synthesize stylistic traits and performance practices from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with personal ideas to create an engaging performance of the piece.

In his work titled *The Organ Works of Bach*, Hermann Keller states that toccatas written before Bach's life featured "widely-spaced chords, intermingled with running passages."¹¹² Continuing, Keller writes that Frescobaldi moved beyond simple chord progressions to include bold dissonances in his toccatas, which began to include fugal sections throughout.¹¹³ David Poultney offers a complimentary list of stylistic traits including rich suspensions and other dissonances, "rhythmic discontinuity" stemming from tempo alterations responding to a passage's affect, and a chromatically enhanced harmony.¹¹⁴ Andre Pirro's text, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Organist and His Works for Organ*, also includes introductory material discussing early toccatas. Pirro quotes Frescobaldi's own writings with a list of suggestions for toccata performances: tempo should not be strict, but should begin slowly with a gradual increase in tempo; trills should be performed in rhythm independent from the accompanying notes and should include a prolongation of the final note; phrases should also include a prolongation of the final note; cadences should be drawn out; and passages featuring eighth and sixteenth notes should not be performed at too brisk a speed.¹¹⁵ Before continuing with a comparison between *Toccata Fantasy* and the music of J.S. Bach, let us consider how Frescobaldi's performance suggestions can be applied to *Toccata Fantasy*.

¹¹² Hermann Keller, *The Organ Works of Bach: A Contribution to their History, Form, Interpretation and Performance*, translated by Helen Hewitt (New York: C.F. Peters Corporation, 1967), 29.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Poultney, 88.

¹¹⁵ Andre Pirro, *Johann Sebastian Bach: The Organist and his Works for the Organ* (1902; repr., New York: AMS Press, Inc, 1978), 10.

Toccata Fantasy is full of complex counterpoint utilizing oblique and contrary motion. As such, the performer is advised to follow Frescobaldi's suggestion that passages featuring eighth and sixteenth notes should be kept to a moderate tempo. If the counterpoint in *Toccata Fantasy* is performed at a rapid pace, and especially if the tempo causes inaccuracies in pitch, rhythm, or note placement, the listener will be unable to make sense of the music. In a complex piece that lasts almost eleven minutes, the performer cannot afford to confuse the listener if he hopes to make large-scale connections or statements, lest the listener forget early ideas. Example 73 illustrates the importance of using tempo to help delineate counterpoint and rhythm.



Example 73: Helble, *Toccata Fantasy*, mm. 12-16. Marimba Productions. Used with permission.

In measures 12-16, the player must negotiate and articulate note groupings indicated by slurs and beams, manage rhythmic considerations within each hand as well as between the hands, and always show the listener which voice is the most important to follow.

Passages similar to example 73 are scattered throughout *Toccata Fantasy*, which means the performer must always consider the tempo subordinate to musical gesture and large-scale structure.

Example 74 shows a passage from *Toccata Fantasy* marked with the expression *dolce*. The inclusion of such a textual reference is important because, not only is it the

first appearance of text in the piece, it is the only expressive text suggesting a performance style. Clearly, mm. 39-46 (and continuing) are intended to show a different character from the first section of the piece. Interestingly, it is also the first passage in the piece without counterpoint.



Example 74: Helble, *Toccata Fantasy*, mm. 39-46. Marimba Productions. Used with permission.

One way the performer can emphasize the novelty of the passage is to follow Frescobaldi's suggestion to alter the tempo to match the mood. By playing these measures a bit faster than the preceding and following material, the performer can create a flowing line that is connected and sweet sounding. Additionally, the performer may choose to push and pull slightly with the motion of the lines, not to mention harmonic progression, to create tension and release. In contrast, other passages will become muddled and confused if the performer alters the tempo rather than keeping a strict pulse. The tempo in example 75 should be slower than the passage found in example 74, but should also be kept constant to clearly articulate the counterpoint and voice leading.



Example 75: Helble, *Toccata Fantasy*, mm. 85-90. Marimba Productions. Used with permission.

The final suggestion from Frescobaldi applied to *Toccata Fantasy* is his insistence that trills be performed rhythmically independent from accompanying notes. Tremolo markings appear several times throughout *Toccata Fantasy*, but example 76 shows the only trill (*tr*) marking in the piece.



Example 76: Helble, *Toccata Fantasy*, mm. 98-101. Marimba Productions. Used with permission.

The trill presents many challenges to the player. First, he must execute a rapid alteration between B-flat and B in one hand. A one-handed roll between two closely-spaced notes is challenging in itself, but the pitches are also located on different manuals, requiring the player to shift the elbow and wrist drastically inward to reach the correct keys. Additionally, the player must play the left hand melody in strict tempo to help the listener connect the passage with the opening phrase of the piece. If the trill is performed in rhythmic unison with the left hand, the listener may not be able to follow

the melodic line, which would negatively affect the motivic unity and large-scale structure.

All of the above-mentioned characteristics and performance practices provide the player a number of suggestions for interpreting *Toccatà Fantasy*. One should always keep in mind that these are merely suggestions. An engaging performance of any piece should include the performer's own voice; however, as is explored in the discussion on *Theme with Six Variations*, a study of musical styles and composer characteristics can expand the range of expressive techniques available to the performer. While a study of Frescobaldi's music provides a wealth of knowledge about early toccatas, a study of the Baroque period would be incomplete without an exploration of Johann Sebastian Bach and his music. In *Masters of the Keyboard*, Wolff provides many examples of common traits found in Bach's music. For example, Wolff claims Bach wrote frequent cadences and quick key changes.¹¹⁶ In the course of *Toccatà Fantasy*, Helble goes through twelve key changes, some lasting only a few measures. Wolff also states that Bach used "seemingly remote" keys to create an "enlarged tonality" featuring secondary dominants and other non-diatonic chords as regular members of a given key.¹¹⁷ Helble's harmonic language also uses an expanded vocabulary and wide range of keys, including such distant keys as E minor, B-flat major, A minor, B major, and E major.

Other characteristics of Bach from Wolff's text include equal section lengths and the use of texture to enhance volume. Wolff claims Bach was concerned with "proportions of length" and, by counting measures, illuminates Bach's structures.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Wolff, 14.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

Applied to *Toccatà Fantasy*, one finds sections of almost equal length. Of the ten major sections in *Toccatà Fantasy*, seven are between eleven and fourteen measures, two are sixteen measures, and one is fifteen. With regards to texture and voicing, Wolff states that, because elements of dynamic contrast such as long crescendos were difficult, Bach relied on the addition of voices to intensify the music as an extended crescendo would in generations to come.¹¹⁹ Helble also uses voicing to enhance dynamic intensity, which is especially helpful due to the relatively soft volume of the marimba itself. Examples 77a and 77b illustrate the technique of adding voices to heighten a musical swell.



Example 77a: Helble, *Toccatà Fantasy*, mm. 8-9. Marimba Productions. Used with permission.



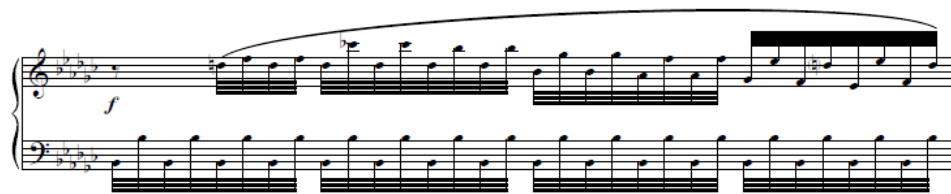
Example 77b: Helble, *Toccatà Fantasy*, mm. 89-90. Marimba Productions. Used with permission.

Example 77a also illustrates Wolff’s claims about the “interdependent” nature of Bach’s music. The passage in mm. 8-9 features many non-chord tones, marks the first extended use of four voices, includes the only departure from common time, and leads to the dominant, rather than tonic. Upon first hearing, such a dramatic statement outside the established key could be confusing to the listener because it comes so early in the piece and, after a few measures of dominant, returns to the tonic as if nothing strange ever happened. Similarly, Wolff states that in Bach “it is not possible to grasp a single

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 47.

movement...before hearing the whole work, because all the movements are interdependent, backwards and forwards.”¹²⁰ Helble’s toccata is full of dramatic departures from the home key, often featuring non-chord tones, all of which eventually return to tonic or, at the very least, motivic material from the opening phrase. Example 77a is much better understood once the listener has heard the whole piece because mm. 8-9 represent a miniaturized version of the entire work.

Wolff is not the only scholar to outline elements of Bach’s style. Hermann Keller, in *The Organ Works of Bach*, states that Bach used ornaments less frequently than some of his contemporaries and he often wrote them out.¹²¹ Similarly, example 78 shows two measures in which Helble writes out a metered tremolo rather than using the slash notation commonly found in percussion music. (See examples 78a and 78b.) In fact, when the slash notation is found in similar measures, a footnote is included referring the player to the performance notes written by the editor, Leigh Howard Stevens, which suggests the notation may have been changed by the editor rather than indicated as such by Helble.



Example 78a: Helble, *Toccatà Fantasy*, m. 33. Marimba Productions. Used with permission.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 53.

¹²¹ Keller, 50.



Example 78b: Helble, *Toccata Fantasy*, m. 128. Marimba Productions. Used with permission.

To illustrate a comment regarding phrasing, Keller includes a musical example from Bach's C-Major Organ Concerto (BWV 595), that shows a striking similarity to musical shapes found in *Toccata Fantasy*.¹²² Bach and Helble both utilize a sixteenth-note neighbor-tone figure that outlines a chord progression. Examples 79a, 79b, and 79c, found below, demonstrate the similarity in musical figures. Keller's text also provides many suggestions dealing with interpretation, to which we will return shortly, but let us first consider *Toccata Fantasy* with regards to Bach and the *Stylus Phantasticus*.



Example 79a: Musical example from Bach's C-Major Concerto (Keller, 43)



Example 79b: Helble, *Toccata Fantasy*, m. 6. Marimba Productions. Used with permission.



Example 79c: Helble, *Toccata Fantasy*, m. 104. Marimba Productions. Used with permission.

¹²² Ibid., 43.

In his essay “Bach’s Free Organ Works and the *Stylus Phantasticus*,” Friedhelm Krummacher outlines the many ways in which Bach’s music reflects the *Stylus Phantasticus* from the early Baroque. He cites the Prelude and Fugue in A Minor (BWV 543) as well as the Prelude in D from BWV 532 as specific examples.¹²³ The list of characteristics for the *Stylus Phantasticus* includes the alternation of free and fugal sections, which gives the fantasy the feeling of an underdeveloped fugue.¹²⁴ Krummacher quotes Athanasius Kircher’s description of the fantasy as a style that is unrestricted by the contemporary constraints of harmony and form and teaches the “ingenious joining of harmonic sections and fugues.”¹²⁵ Additionally, Krummacher cites Bach’s Fantasia in G Minor (BWV 542) as an example of how Bach furthered the style. According to Krummacher, Bach extended the harmonic language of the North Germans through episodes of imitation.¹²⁶ While *Toccata Fantasy* does not contain any strict fugues, example 80 illustrates the idea of alternating free sections with imitation.



Example 80: Helble, *Toccata Fantasy*, mm. 65-69. Marimba Productions. Used with permission.

While mm. 65-68 prepare the cadence in m. 68, the final three eighth-note Gs clearly foreshadow the imitation in mm. 68-69. Additionally, the four entrances of the imitated figure – three eight-notes followed by two descending sixteenth-notes – each

¹²³ Friedhelm Krummacher, “Bach’s Free Organ Works and the *Stylus Phantasticus*,” in *J.S.Bach as Organist: His Instruments, Music, and Performance Practices*, eds. George Stauffer and Ernest May (Bloomington, IN.: Indiana University Press, 1985), 167.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 160-161.

¹²⁵ Kircher quoted in Krummacher, 162.

¹²⁶ Krummacher, 167.

on a different pitch-level have obvious fugal implications; however, rather than the subject and answer occurring on tonic and dominant, each of Helble's entrances are separated by just a minor second (G, A-flat, A, and B-flat). Just as Bach pushed the harmonic expectations of his day, Helble manipulates fugal expectations to create an "ingenious joining of harmonic sections and fugues."

Once those aspects of the piece reminiscent of the Baroque have been identified, the player must ask to what extent the performance practices of the period should be imitated. The player should not feel constrained to those performance suggestions listed below; instead, one should consider all styles and viable options to create an engaging, personal interpretation. Bach is often considered the quintessential representative of the Baroque and, as such, his style will be used to present performance options for *Toccata Fantasy*.

Returning to Konrad Wolff's discussion of Bach, in *Masters of the Keyboard*, many examples of performance practices could easily be applied to *Toccata Fantasy*. He states that articulation should be related to melodic motion. For example, diatonic passages should be performed with a legato touch, triadic passages non-legato, and chromatic passages "super-legato."¹²⁷ He further states that the differentiation between legato and staccato notes can make note-groupings more apparent and, in turn, aid in the phrasing of a passage.¹²⁸ For advice on how to achieve this effect on marimba, one can turn to Leigh Howard Stevens's new text titled "The Marimbists' Guide to Performing

¹²⁷ Wolff, 25. This idea is also stated by Keller in *The Organ Works of Bach*, 56.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

Bach.”¹²⁹ Although the text is specifically directed at playing the music of Bach, the ideas presented within can be applied to all music. Stevens points out that the idea of a legato connection on the marimba can be deceiving. Students often hear that connection is achieved by playing absolutely smooth and even notes. Unfortunately, the nature of the marimba will actually create the opposite effect. The human voice, wind instruments, and string instruments can create legato through sustain. The connection is created by matching a note’s attack to the sustaining sound of the previous note. On the marimba, the sustain dies so quickly that notes of the same attack-volume will sound louder than the previous sustain and, therefore, disconnected. The illusion of sustain is achieved by playing a note at the same volume of the preceding note’s *sustain* rather than the preceding note’s *attack*.

Inge Rosar’s discussion of articulation in “Problems of Chance: Performing the Keyboard works of Bach on the Modern Piano” compliments Stevens’s idea nicely.¹³⁰ She claims that articulation is more than the simple legato or staccato sound of each individual note, but instead comes from the differences between notes. Emotional content, therefore, is derived from the choices made regarding the relationship between each note. She demonstrates, using the toccata from Bach’s Partita No. 6 in E Minor, BWV 830, how the performer can use articulation to bring out important lines of

¹²⁹ Leigh Howard Stevens, “Marimbists’ Guide to Performing Bach,” in *Johann Sebastian Bach: Six Suites for Marimba (Original Six Suites for Violoncello solo) BWV 1007-1012*, Transcribed for marimba by Leigh Howard Stevens, edited by Dominik Sackmann (Asbury Park, NJ: Keyboard Percussion Publications, 2012), 17.

¹³⁰ Inge Rosar, “Problems and Chance: Performing the Keyboard Works of J.S. Bach on the Modern Piano,” in *The Pianist’s Craft: Mastering the Works of Great Composers*, ed. by Richard Paul Anderson (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2012), 20.

counterpoint.¹³¹ By playing the secondary line with a neutral, static articulation and the primary line with varied articulations, the performer can clarify the counterpoint.

Turning to *Toccata Fantasy*, to articulate Helble's phrase markings in mm. 57-58 clearly, the player can follow Wolff's guidelines by using a legato touch for the step-wise motions and a more staccato touch for the leaps. (See example 81.) To create the legato effect, one should keep Stevens's principles in mind by making sure the attack of each legato note matches the previous sustain.¹³²



Example 81: Helble, *Toccata Fantasy*, mm. 57-60. Marimba Productions. Used with permission.

Measures 59-60 provide a problem to the player. The running sixteenth notes, found in the right hand of m. 59 and the left hand of m. 60, seem to be a perfect chance to apply the principles of note groupings and articulation discussed above. The performer could easily accentuate each group of three by playing the notes staccato-legato-legato; however, one could argue that the opposite line in each measure is in fact

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Unfortunately, if one follows this rule literally for each note in a long passage of legato notes, the volume would soon reach near-zero due to the rapid decay of the marimba. One way around this is to create the illusion of connection by exaggerating the connection of the final few notes. For example, in a string of legato notes the first few would be equal in volume and the last few would taper to match the decay/sustain of each note. Since the listener will most likely notice the *change* in articulation, the connection will be retroactively applied to the whole line by the listener's inner ear.

more interesting. If so, one should consider Rosar's suggestion to play the sixteenth notes in a rather uniform manner and the opposite line with varying articulations to draw attention to the eighth-note line. Clearly, *Toccata Fantasy* provides the performer with many opportunities for interpretive decision-making. While one's own creativity could surely suffice in developing an engaging performance, the study of relative performance practices can help broaden one's understanding of certain musical figures and expand the range of expression for a given interpretation.

Dynamic contrast can also be used to clarify counterpoint and relative importance between sections. Keller states that Bach's generation was concerned not just with pure volume, but with "dynamic intensity."¹³³ Just as an organist can use registration to create passages of varying intensity, the marimbist can use mallet choice, sticking, and bar placement to change the tone color of the marimba. For example, the final three measures of the piece provide several opportunities for the player to use tone color for dramatic effect, assuming the chosen mallets are up to the task. (See example 82 below.)

Marimba mallets with a soft to medium-hard rubber core and a tightly-wrapped yarn covering usually provide only one tone color regardless of the velocity used to strike the instrument; therefore, such mallets are referred to as "single-toned." Conversely, "two-toned" and "multi-toned" mallets are capable of producing different tone colors depending on the stroke velocity. To achieve the change in tone color, the mallets often feature a very hard core, various layers of rubber, and a loosely-wrapped yarn outer layer. When the player strikes the bar with a low-velocity stroke, only the

¹³³ Keller, 47.

yarn and rubber layers activate the bar, which creates a mellow tone. If, however, the player strikes with more velocity, the hard core comes into play and the tone becomes more aggressive. Additionally, the player can use grip strength to the same effect. The more stiff the player's grip becomes, the more the core will be heard in the resulting sound. In mm. 133-134, seen in example 82, the performer will most likely want to bring out the moving line more than the sustained notes; however, since these are the final measures, neither voice can get too soft without reducing the dramatic effect of the ending. If the player has chosen multi-toned mallets, he can simply strike the moving notes with greater velocity and a tighter grip to give the line intensity.



Example 82: Helble, *Toccata Fantasy*, mm. 133-135. Marimba Productions. Used with permission.

In the final measure of the piece, the editor has marked the two chords with different roll techniques. The first, a Double Lateral roll, results in many attacks, but a bit less sustain between each attack. The second, traditional roll creates fewer attacks, but more sustain between each attack. By changing the roll-type, the player can change the character and “dynamic intensity” of the two final chords without having to increase volume. Additionally, the player can alter their grip to intensify the final chord, thereby adding interest to the end of the piece.

Once the performer has made decisions regarding small-scale interpretive questions, the next step is to see how those decisions can relate to the large-scale structure of the piece. *Toccata Fantasy* includes many sections of differing characters.

We have already discussed, for example, how the performer can use changes in technique to achieve a more connected, “dolce,” character when needed. In the *Stylus Phantasticus*, according to Krummacher, individual characteristics of each section show the progression of a piece.¹³⁴ Tempo can serve as a tool to delineate sections. Wolff states that the opening subject of a Bach fugue should be played without rubato or other interruptions.¹³⁵ While *Tocatta Fantasy* is not a fugue, one can still make use of the idea by playing the opening subject in strict tempo. As a result, the listener will associate a strict tempo with the character of the opening when similar sections arrive. Throughout the piece, therefore, the strict character of the opening theme can be used as a marker to, in Krummacher’s terms, “show the progression of the piece.” Perhaps not coincidentally, Leigh Howard Stevens, in “The Marimbists’ Guide to Performing Bach,” stresses the importance of conservative tempos and suggests that the first measure can serve as a touchstone for the tempo of an entire piece.¹³⁶ If the opening tempo is strict and not too fast, just as Frescobaldi suggests eighth- and sixteenth-note melodies should be, then increasing the tempo for connection or broadening the tempo for clarity of smaller note-values can emphasize different characteristics of each section and, in turn, provide the listener with a comprehensible structure for the piece.

Comprehension is especially important in a piece as long and intricate as *Tocatta Fantasy*. Advice from Widor and Schweitzer regarding performing Bach’s music should, therefore, be applied to Helble’s work: “The player should have in mind

¹³⁴ Krummacher, 169.

¹³⁵ Wolff, 26.

¹³⁶ Stevens, “The Marimbists’ Guide to Performing Bach,” 11.

the listener who is perhaps hearing the piece for the first time.”¹³⁷ While the quote above directly speaks to choice of tempo, it can be applied to all aspects of *Toccata Fantasy* discussed thus far. Keeping the tempo reasonable, paying special attention to articulations and note groupings, clearly emphasizing important lines, and presenting a plainly recognizable structure all contribute to a more enjoyable, understandable experience for the listener; however, all the interpretive choices in the world are only as worthwhile as the player’s execution. The player must cultivate proper techniques, critical thinking and listening skills, and make compelling mallet choices if he hopes to communicate complex musical ideas. As seen in chapter 3, Helble’s own music can serve as preparatory material for *Toccata Fantasy*.

A captivating performance relies on a strong mental image of all aspects of *Toccata Fantasy*, which requires attention paid to pitch, rhythm, counterpoint, contour, and a host of other elements. Stevens states that most percussion students spend most of their time being evaluated on issues of rhythm and precision on snare drum. Additionally, beginning literature for the marimba frequently focuses on technique as much, if not more than, musical development.¹³⁸ Unfortunately, this ideology sometimes encourages the percussionist to focus on technical precision and rhythmic execution throughout their development, to the detriment of other musical aspects such as phrasing, articulation, voicing, and balance. To prevent a myopic approach to Bach, Stevens suggests a serious study including reading and “selected active listening.”¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Widor and Schweitzer as quoted by Keller, 49.

¹³⁸ Stevens, “Marimbist’s Guide to Performing Bach,” 6.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

The ultimate goal of relating *Toccata Fantasy* with the music of Bach is not to create a precisely Bach-like performance of Helble's music. After all, while Bach was certainly indebted to earlier music, he was by no means a slave to tradition.¹⁴⁰ *Toccata Fantasy* simply provides a clear opportunity to interact with historical musical styles, notably Bach's, but also others mentioned such as Frescobaldi. Exploring all possible options and applying chosen ideas to *Toccata Fantasy* will ultimately produce a more exciting experience for the listener and performer.

Grand Fantasy in C Major for Solo Marimba

Raymond Helble describes his first full-length solo for marimba, *Grand Fantasy*, as "Schubertian."¹⁴¹ Although it was intended as an extended work to be the centerpiece of a concert, Leigh Howard Stevens, who commissioned the piece, wanted to use the piece as a finale and, subsequently, edited it down to about eight minutes in length.¹⁴² While such historical information in itself may seem trivial, we will see below how it relates to the current study. Rather than offering a blow-by-blow analysis of the piece as it relates to Schubert's style, the following discussion offers exploration into only those elements of Schubert's style not found in *Theme with Six Variations*. Additionally, one will see how *Grand Fantasy* is a perfect vehicle for illustrating the importance of the strong technical foundation explored in chapter 3.

¹⁴⁰ Krummacher, 170.

¹⁴¹ Helble, quoted by Jillian Damitra Abraham in "Raymond Helble, *Grand Fantasy in C Major*; James Campbell, *Tangents*; Camille Saint-Saëns, *Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso for Violin and Piano, Op. 28*; Richard Tagawa, *Inspirations Diabolique*; Michael Burritt, *Timeless*" (Recital Paper, Belmont University, 2004), 2.

¹⁴² Author's interview with Raymond Helble. Appendix A, page 141-142. Also see interview with Leigh Howard Stevens. Appendix B, page 150.

Let us begin with a few general ideas about Schubert's style as characterized in scholarly writing. Konrad Wolff, in *Masters of the Keyboard*, states that tempo changes in Schubert's music are not abrupt.¹⁴³ As an example of a smooth tempo change in *Grand Fantasy*, consider example 83 below. The excerpt begins at the original tempo, half-note at 120 beats per minute,¹⁴⁴ but slows down in mm. 75-67. Measure 77 is indicated to be played with the same pulse, but the time signature has changed from cut-time to common time. Additionally, the subsequent theme displays a lighter, more legato character, to which Stevens adds the text *Fröhlich*.¹⁴⁵



Example 83: Helble, *Grand Fantasy*, mm. 73-85. Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

After studying the score to see all the details of the transition, the performer must decide exactly what to do with the passage musically. Wolff claims that with Schubert, in contrast to Classical composers, second themes are generally faster than first themes. He goes on to state that the alteration in tempo is achieved through note value and phrasing rather than a change in pulse.¹⁴⁶ Similarly, Helble's second theme,

¹⁴³ Wolff, 177-178.

¹⁴⁴ Although, it should be noted that many performers do not play the piece as fast as marked.

¹⁴⁵ "Cheerful, Joyous, Happy" It should be noted that all indications in parentheses are those of the editor, Leigh Howard Stevens.

¹⁴⁶ Wolff, 179-180.

which is marked at the same pulse as the first, suggests a change in character through time signature, voicing, contour, and phrase markings. (Compare with example 84, the opening idea of first theme.)

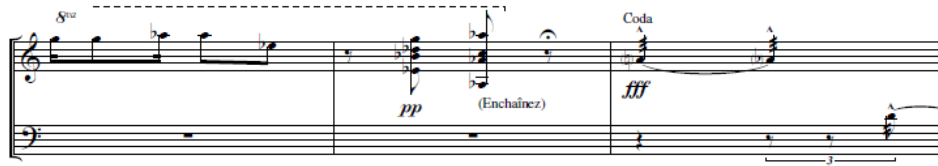


Example 84: Helble, *Grand Fantasy*, mm. 1-8. Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

The player can smoothly transition from the first theme and tempo to the second theme and new tempo by clearly slowing down during mm. 75-76 to prime the audience for a change. The performer can then begin m. 77 slightly below the desired tempo for the second theme and gently increase into the quicker pace of m. 78. The end result is a distinction between first and second themes marked by a smooth, rather than abrupt, change in tempo.

Continuing with Wolff's assessment of Schubert's style, let us turn to the coda. According to Wolff, Schubert's codas often follow a break and progress by accelerating from a slow tempo to a fast ending.¹⁴⁷ Helble's coda in *Grand Fantasy* follows an identical pattern. Example 85 below shows the break before the coda, which takes the form of an extended eighth-note rest.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 178.



Example 85: Helble, *Grand Fantasy*, mm. 262-264. Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

In the final sixty-two measures of the piece, the coda, one finds three separate *accelerando* markings, as well as the directions *abandoné e frenetico al fine* and *Prestissimo*.¹⁴⁸ The player should be careful to pace himself at the beginning of the coda. If one is to accelerate all the way to the end of the piece, one must not get too fast too quickly. Additionally, one must always be aware of the intended “top speed” so as not to lose control.

Wolff states that repeated notes or chords serving as accompaniment are common in Schubert’s music, citing *Erlkönig* as an example. Measures 98-107 of *Grand Fantasy*, example 86 below, similarly use repeated notes as a texture for the accompaniment. The performer can take advantage of the repeated-note texture to provide a forceful, driving energy. Rather than emphasizing the agogic accents, the player creates a sense of unrelenting urgency by playing every note equally strong.

¹⁴⁸ It should be noted that *prestissimo* is Stevens’ marking rather than Helble’s.

Example 86: Helble, *Grand Fantasy*, mm. 98-107. Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

One final general character trait discussed by Wolff is the idea of melodrama. He claims that one of Schubert’s methods for creating melodrama is through “rhapsodic recitatives with brief accompanying chords.”¹⁴⁹ Example 87 below illustrates a similar idea in *Grand Fantasy*. The passage, which is specifically marked *recitativo*, contains rapid runs up and down the instrument with sporadic chords for punctuation. To capitalize on the dramatic nature of the passage, the performer should push and pull the tempo and emphasize the F major chord in m. 229. Additionally, one must not forget to include a visual aspect with the performance. For example, the fluid arpeggios should be mirrored by smooth, effortless hand motions and gliding footsteps. Conversely, the left-hand punctuations in mm. 226-229 can be expressed through big, deliberate arm motions. One can create the illusion of sustain by exaggerating the rebound off beat one in mm. 227 and 228, which, in turn, will set up a greater expectation for the thirty-second note interjections.

¹⁴⁹ Wolff, 185.

Example 87: Helble, *Grand Fantasy*, mm. 219-229. Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

Moving on to more specific references to Schubert’s music, consider Susan Duehlmeier’s essay in *The Pianist’s Craft*. Speaking about Schubert’s Sonata in A Major (D. 664, 1819 or 1825), Duehlmeier lists the difficulties including scales, large leaps, control of dynamic extremes, as well as sustaining and suspending long notes.¹⁵⁰ As can be seen in the examples above, and through further study of the score, Duehlmeier’s list of difficulties could have easily been written about *Grand Fantasy*.

Other interesting similarities relate to the key. Duehlmeier writes about the first piece in *Six Moments Musicaux*, which is in C major, saying it should be performed with a “bold and joyful opening gesture – one which permeates the ‘A’ section.”¹⁵¹ Again, Duehlmeier’s statement applies equally-well to *Grand Fantasy* as Helble’s opening figure is featured throughout the piece. (See example 84 on page 109 for the opening phrase.) Lastly, she describes Schubert’s first *Impromptu* (D. 899, 1827?),

¹⁵⁰ Duehlmeier, 72.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 70.

again in C major, as repetitive and goes on to say that subtle shading of tone color is paramount for an engaging performance.¹⁵² Throughout *Grand Fantasy*, the opening theme returns several times in the same key and brief iterations in different keys are marked by the same incessant rhythmic motive and homophonic setting. A performance can be enhanced by thoughtful manipulation of phrasing; therefore the performer is advised to spend considerable practice time dedicated to articulation and tone quality, manifested through grip, stroke type, mallet placement, finger control, and mallet choice. Active listening to the cited works by Schubert can provide further ideas for expression.

Unlike the discussions above regarding *Theme with Six Variations* and *Toccata Fantasy*, which compare Helble's pieces to a variety of compositional characteristics from the composers' entire output, *Grand Fantasy* can also be studied in direct comparison with one of Schubert's best-known works for solo piano, the *Wanderer Fantasy* (D. 760, 1822). The following observations further illustrate the benefits for percussion students of studying great works by classical composers. The similarities discovered should provide a wealth of ideas to enliven one's performance. To begin, consider example 88 below, which shows the opening measures of *Grand Fantasy* and *Wanderer Fantasy*.

¹⁵² Ibid., 72.



Example 88a: Helble, *Grand Fantasy*, mm. 1-8. Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.



Example 88b: Schubert, *Wanderer Fantasy*, mm. 1-6.

Without even hearing the two pieces, one can imagine how similar the opening ideas will sound. The first two measures of *Grand Fantasy* are almost identical to the first measure of *Wanderer Fantasy*. Additionally, both themes quickly move to the dominant and use a rapid flourish to contrast the homophonic opening. Granted, the similarities are not exact references, but the piece is not intended to be a mere transcription or copy of Schubert's work. Instead, it brings to mind Schubert's style, just as the *Wanderer Fantasy* itself does not quote the theme from "Der Wanderer" (D. 489, 1816) verbatim.¹⁵³

Duehlmeier also describes how Schubert's opening figure is used to unify each section of the work. Example 89a below shows the opening of the Adagio, Presto, and Allegro sections from the *Wanderer Fantasy*, each of which clearly relates to the opening figure. (The opening of the first section is found above in example 88b.)

¹⁵³ Ibid., 80.

Similarly, Helble uses the opening figure of *Grand Fantasy* to unify different sections of the piece. Example 89b shows several themes from *Grand Fantasy* illustrating the unifying ability of the rhythmic motive. By understanding how Schubert creates cohesion between the large sections of his work, the performer of *Grand Fantasy* can apply the same ideas to make the piece more comprehensible and enjoyable for the audience.

The image displays three staves of musical notation for Example 89a. The first staff is labeled 'Adagio' and features a piano (*pp*) dynamic with a slow, flowing melody in the right hand and a steady accompaniment in the left hand. The second staff is labeled 'Presto' and shows a much faster tempo with a forte (*ff*) dynamic, characterized by a rhythmic pattern in the right hand and a more active bass line. The third staff is labeled 'Allegro' and has a moderate tempo with a forte (*ff*) dynamic, featuring a rhythmic pattern in the right hand and a more active bass line.

Example 89a: Schubert, *Wanderer Fantasy*, mm. 189-192, 245-248, 598-605.

The image displays three staves of musical notation for Example 89b. The first staff is labeled '(Elan)' and features a melodic line in the right hand with a forte (*f*) dynamic, accompanied by a steady bass line. The second staff is labeled '(Pieno)' and shows a melodic line in the right hand with a forte (*f*) dynamic, accompanied by a steady bass line. The third staff is labeled 'decresc.' and features a melodic line in the right hand with a decrescendo dynamic, accompanied by a steady bass line.

Example 89b: Helble, *Grand Fantasy*, mm. 110-113, 114-117, 127-131. Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

Before going further with musical comparisons, a comment on the scope of the two pieces is in order. Schubert's *Wanderer Fantasy* is a *tour de force* for the virtuosic pianist, lasting almost twenty minutes in length and organized into four sections, although not specified as four movements. In contrast, Helble's *Grand Fantasy* is only about eight minutes and comes off more as a concert finale than a centerpiece work. However, as already mentioned, according to Helble the original manuscript for the piece is almost twice as long, containing a slow section and a fugue. Helble's original vision was a substantial concert work, but, as Helble recalls, Leigh Howard Stevens wanted to use it as a recital closer and made the subsequent edits.¹⁵⁴ Interestingly, a single-movement piece for solo marimba lasting as many as fifteen minutes, while not unheard of by today's standards, may have reflected, for marimbists of the 1970s, the "heavenly length" that Schumann considered exceptional with regards to Schubert's works.

Susan Wollenberg's work *Schubert's Fingerprints: Studies in the Instrumental Works* proved useful in the previous discussion of Schubert's style, in Helble's *Theme with Six Variations*, and will again serve as a valuable tool in a further comparison between *Grand Fantasy* and Schubert's *Wanderer Fantasy*. She discusses how Schubert creates contrasting themes deriving from the opening material.¹⁵⁵ Example 90 below shows two such themes. (For comparison, see the opening theme in example 88b on page 114.) Example 90a is a light, linear passage that still holds the rhythmic profile of

¹⁵⁴ Author's interview with Raymond Helble. Appendix A, page 141-142. Also see interview with Leigh Howard Stevens. Appendix B, page 150.

¹⁵⁵ Wollenberg, 162.

the opening motive. By contrast, example 90b is more vertically-oriented and functions as a transition into the final portion of the Allegro section.



Example 90a: Schubert, *Wanderer Fantasy*, mm. 53-60.



Example 90b: Schubert, *Wanderer Fantasy*, mm. 138-142.

Analogous passages from *Grand Fantasy* are provided by examples 91a and b. The first, example 91a, is a cantabile melody featuring a thinned accompaniment. The second, example 91b, returns to the opening texture and rhythmic profile, but serves as a transition into the next section of the work.



Example 91a: Helble, *Grand Fantasy*, mm. 51-58. Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.



Example 91b: Helble, *Grand Fantasy*, mm. 118-127 (127 incomplete). Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

Wollenberg draws an interesting conclusion about Schubert's opening motive that, while not directly relevant to *Grand Fantasy*, provides stimulation for creative interpretation of Helble's piece. As is suggested by the title, *Wanderer Fantasy* gets its source material from Schubert's own song "Der Wanderer." Wollenberg states that the piano work shows Schubert's exceptional ability to create variations of original material.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, she claims Schubert's song style is reminiscent of poetry. For example, she cites his ability to connect "structure with expression" through such devices as "referential treatment of harmony and key."¹⁵⁷ Regarding the *Wanderer Fantasy*, the "long, short, short" motive, originally found in "Der Wanderer," reflects the dactyl meter of poetry.¹⁵⁸ That the dactylic rhythm plays such a prominent role in *Grand Fantasy* does not, by itself, suggest Helble was expressly concerned with poetic forms. In fact, he tends to think in absolute terms, rather than programmatic.¹⁵⁹ However, a basic knowledge of poetic structure can lead to a more nuanced musical performance. If, by studying the musical language of Schubert, the performer makes a connection between music and the dactyl meter, perhaps he will be more inclined to think about the punctuation, phrasing, contour, and pacing of *Grand Fantasy*. As mentioned previously, the study of performance practice and stylistic traits of a given composer should not dictate a contemporary performance, but rather provide a stepping stone towards a more-developed musical language. In the case of poetic structure in *Grand Fantasy*, the realization of similarity to Schubert's *Wanderer Fantasy* can lead to

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 235.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 289.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 233-234

¹⁵⁹ Author's interview with Raymond Helble. Appendix A, page 142.

the connection between rhythm and poetic meter and, in turn, stimulate an interesting vision of the piece.

One memorable aspect of *Grand Fantasy* is Helble's use of virtuosic flourishes as interruptions. Example 92 illustrates one instance wherein Helble violently interrupts the first lyrical theme with explosive filigree spanning more than three octaves, which, at a time when the marimba was commonly just over four octaves, nearly covers the entire available range. Interestingly, Wollenberg describes the interruption of thematic material with violent passage work as a "particular characteristic of Schubert's contrasts of mood."¹⁶⁰



Example 92: Helble, *Grand Fantasy*, mm. 51-67. Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

The performer has several tools for dramatizing the disruption in example 92. First, a slight increase of tempo during the running eighth notes would give the passage forward-motion and provide a greater contrast with the preceding lyrical material. Furthermore, alteration to grip and stroke will create a change in tone color. The lyrical

¹⁶⁰ Wollenberg, 162.

melody should be played with relaxed fingers and a low-intensity stroke, resulting in a gentle sound colored mostly by the yarn and outer layers of the mallet core. By contrast, gripping the fingers a bit tighter and making a faster stroke will give the arpeggios a brighter sound colored by the inner core of the mallets. Lastly, the player can alter the mallet's angle of attack to change the density of yarn between the bar and the mallet core. For these differences in tone color to be consistent, the player must always be accurate and precise in mallet placement on each bar. If one bar is struck too close to the nodal point during the lyrical melody, the harmonic content and resonance of that pitch will be altered in such a way as to prematurely disrupt the lyricism.

Application of the ideas presented in conjunction with example 92 relies on two important concepts of performance that marimbists of all ability-levels should keep at the top of their priority list. First, all aspects of sound affect the efficacy of a musical statement; secondly, execution of intended musical sounds and statements relies on complete control of one's instrument. With regards to the first point, percussion students of all kinds will benefit from learning about phrasing on other instruments. Knowledge of the musical styles and performance practices of great composers will help the marimbist develop ideas about phrasing and sound production, which will lead to a memorable performance. However, as has been stated many times, the important aspect is not that Helble's music should be played in a manner reminiscent of a particular composer, but that the music serves as a valuable catalyst for research. Consider the following statements from Duehlmeier:

The predictable changes from major to minor will create challenges for the performer, especially in keeping the performance fresh and appealing. Judicious use of the soft pedal may add variation and nuance.¹⁶¹

Since the accompaniment in the variation at m. 35 is orchestral in nature, the performer should take advantage of the opportunity to imaginatively vary the timbre of each line. The variation at m. 39 presents the right-hand figuration as a shimmering complement to the harmony communicated in the left hand. From the highest, most sublime sound, the movement wends its way to the darkest depths of the keyboard.¹⁶²

Unfortunately, similar statements directed at marimbists or percussionists are much less common, but Duehlmeier's ideas could easily apply to aspects of Helble's *Grand Fantasy* and other solos. Even if a performer were to disregard all aspects of performance practices found through researching Schubert's style and time period, exposure to writing and thinking about music such as Duehlmeier's is sure to inspire creative thinking. Helble's solos provide opportunities for teachers to engage their students with high-quality music, expose them to historically important composers, and, perhaps most significantly, encourage a line of thinking based on sound production, nuance, and imagination.

To execute a musical statement successfully, one needs to be in complete control. Pianists have many different resources for learning to deal with technical issues of control. For example, Czerny wrote thousands of exercises to teach students the necessary techniques for playing the music of Beethoven; however, according to Wolff, no such collection exists dedicated to Schubert.¹⁶³ Instead, he suggests students "isolate the typically Schubertian figures themselves and learn to cope with their difficulties."¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Duehlmeier, 72. Speaking in reference to Schubert's Impromptu in C Major.

¹⁶² Ibid., 82. Speaking in reference to the Adagio in Schubert's *Wanderer Fantasy*.

¹⁶³ Wolff, 161-162.

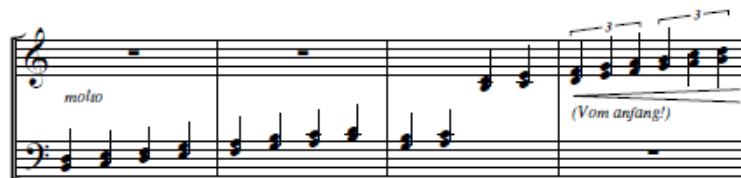
¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

While it is true that marimba students of today also have many resources, this was not always the case. When Helble wrote much of his music discussed above, the marimba student was limited to a handful of teaching materials, such as the études of Clair Omar Musser. In 1979, Leigh Howard Stevens first published his *Method of Movement*, which contains several chapters of written text on the subject of technique featuring precise pictures, but also includes 590 exercises to aid in the development of control and execution. The text, which has been revised and expanded as well as published in many other languages, is now a standard course of study for collegiate percussionists. Again, *Method of Movement* is by no means the only resource for mastering marimba technique, but it is perhaps most relevant to the current study in the way Stevens has, in many respects, “isolated the typically Helble-ian figures” so the student can learn to “cope with their difficulties.” Before considering a few examples, let us examine the connection between Helble, Stevens, and *Method of Movement*.

As discussed in chapter 1, Helble and Stevens met while attending the Eastman School of Music in the early-1970s. Their collaboration began when Helble asked Stevens to play on his composition recital. During the following years, Stevens commissioned marimba works from Helble as he was developing his ideas regarding technique, movement, and marimba performance in general. The exercises that eventually would become *Method of Movement* reflected the music Stevens was playing, such as *Grand Fantasy* and Helble’s Preludes Nos. 1-9. (Preludes Nos. 10-12 were written much later.) The reader perhaps remembers, from chapter 4, that Stevens in fact demonstrated many of his new techniques to Helble during the composition of Prelude No.1. In turn, the *Method of Movement* now serves as a tool for students to gain

better control over the types of figures required to play Helble’s music. In fact, later versions of *Method of Movement* include a table referring students to specific exercises related to popular marimba solos. Below are three such exercises with corresponding passages in *Grand Fantasy*.

The first example not only shows a connection between *Grand Fantasy* and *Method of Movement*, but also relates to an earlier example of Schubert’s style in the above discussion of *Theme with Six Variations*. While parallel thirds and sixths are a common element of Schubert’s music, the performer should often focus on the linear aspect of the passage, rather than the vertical intervals.¹⁶⁵ For example, mm. 25-28 as well as mm. 155-158 of *Grand Fantasy* should be performed with a strong sense of forward motion, leading to the next phrase. Example 93 shows the comparison between mm. 155-158 with an exercise from Stevens’s *Method of Movement*. The exercise will help the student focus on creating a smooth motion from one pair of notes to the next as is needed in the Helble excerpt.



Example 93a: Helble, *Grand Fantasy*, mm. 155-158. Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.



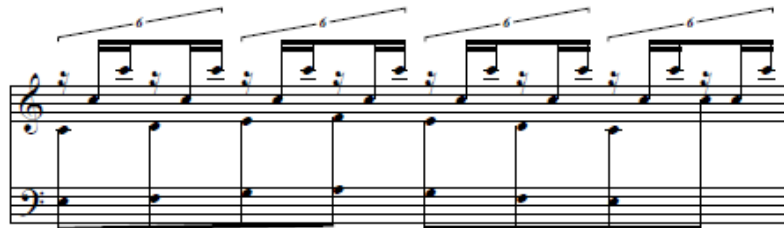
Example 93b: Stevens, *Method of Movement*, Exercise 222. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

¹⁶⁵ Duehlmeier, 71.

Measures 271-274 of *Grand Fantasy*, seen in example 94a, require the performer to execute a moving line in the left hand complemented by a stationary, repeating figure in the right hand. In fact, the performer is required to perform contrary or oblique motions, such as in the current example, for much of the piece. Stevens's text offers many exercises to aid in the development of hand-to-hand independence, one of which is found in example 94b below.



Example 94a: Helble, *Grand Fantasy*, mm. 271—274. Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

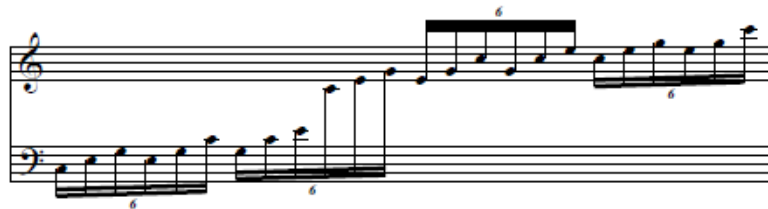


Example 94b: Stevens, *Method of Movement*, Exercise 519. Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

While the similarities between the given passages of Helble's solo and Stevens's exercises should be obvious in the above examples, one final pairing is even more striking. Example 95 below shows mm. 240-241 of *Grand Fantasy* in comparison with part one of exercise 430 from *Method of Movement*; in fact, the two are exactly alike.



Example 95a: Helble, *Grand Fantasy*, mm. 240-241. Studio 4 Music by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.



Example 95b: Stevens, *Method of Movement*, Exercise 430 (part one). Keyboard Percussion Publications by Marimba Productions, Inc. Used with permission.

In addition to practicing the given exercises as written, Stevens instructs the student to play each exercise in all keys to cultivate a better sense of control across the entire instrument. In *Grand Fantasy*, the entire section surrounding example 95a, mm. 236-249, presents the same arpeggio pattern progressing through C diminished, D major, G major, C major, A dominant-seventh, D minor, and B-flat major. It should be plainly clear that, although a student unfamiliar with Stevens's text could learn the techniques found in *Grand Fantasy* in conjunction with learning the music, a student who has studied *Method of Movement* will have already developed a certain number of skills needed to perform Helble's solo accurately.

Throughout the current study, the reader has been cautioned against using the comparisons between composers or historical musical styles and Helble's solos as a note-for-note instruction regarding an "authoritative" interpretation of Helble's music. Instead, the author has repeatedly stressed how the marimbist, student or otherwise, can use Helble's music as an impetus for historical study and musical growth. Any

information gathered through historical study is, therefore, merely inspiration for creating an engaging and rewarding performance of Helble's music.

Similarly, the connection between *Grand Fantasy* and *Method of Movement* should not suggest that Helble's solo is nothing more than a spotlight for technical fireworks. Rather, the usefulness of such a comparison lays in the ways a teacher can illuminate the connection between technique and music to the student. If the student sees technical exercises brought to life in music, they should be more inclined to spend time practicing technical skills. Additionally, with such clear examples of how to create technical exercises based on musical difficulties, the student will see that technique stems from musical necessities and will learn how to create their own technical exercises for each new musical challenge. With time, the student will come to understand that musical challenges and technical challenges are often one in the same. Helble's music, therefore, can be used to transition students into life-long independent learners by encouraging historical research and purposeful development of musical ideas as well as a thoughtful understanding of technical requirements.

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

To gain a deeper understanding of classical music, the student must be aware of more than the surface details of musical gesture. Instead, as Duehlmeier says regarding Schubert's piano works, the performer must "study the language, translate the poetry and become immersed" in the music.¹⁶⁶ Her statement could easily apply to all the composers discussed in the current study, including Raymond Helble. Helble's marimba music provides an exceptional opportunity for the student – not to mention teacher and professional – to begin a path toward a fuller appreciation of music history and performance, while at the same time cultivating a strong musical voice rooted in creativity and informed decision-making. Furthermore, through learning about Helble's innovations, influence, and contributions, the student will develop a more complete picture regarding the history of their instrument. Young percussionists will ultimately become the future innovators leading the way in percussion performance, education, composition, and artistry. Today's teachers can use Helble's music, along with the ideas presented in the current study, to inspire students toward a well-defined musical voice, an understanding of historical perspective, and an interest in self-guided learning.

The current study illustrates Raymond Helble's contribution to marimba literature and pedagogy. As seen in chapter 2, Helble's works are generally regarded as outstanding compositions in the repertory. By focusing on pedagogical uses and performance issues, one can see what makes Helble's contributions special. Consider

¹⁶⁶ Duehlmeier, 84.

the following statement from Susan Duehlmeier regarding Schubert's *Wanderer*

Fantasy:

If the measure of the importance of a work can be based on the composers who were influenced by this composition...or on the number of fine performers who have offered their own reading, this truly is a significant masterpiece in the piano literature.¹⁶⁷

By the same "measure of importance," Helble's *Grand Fantasy* surely has a place in the master works for the marimba. Helble's influence can be seen in Stevens's immensely popular text, but also in Stevens's own repeated performances of the piece from high-profile stages, such as the Percussive Arts Society International Convention, to smaller concert halls across the country. Subsequently, the piece has received many performances since its premier.

As seen in chapters 3, 4, and 5, Helble's marimba music provides a variety of challenges to the performer. Chapter 3 explores *The Well-Tempered Marimbist*, which was designed for young players. Book One of *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* develops technical skills and musical knowledge that will help players grow as musicians, but also prepares players for performing Helble's more virtuosic works. The études develop masterful control of stroke-type in either hand and between hands. Six of the twelve études feature some degree of counterpoint and each of the études exposes the player to a particular style or form including, but not limited to, a march, hymn, barcarolle, chaconne, contra-dance, and a scherzo in five. Examples of musical elements found in the études that are present in Helble's virtuosic solos include active bass lines, repeating rhythmic and melodic motives, one-handed rolls, independence with regards to parallel, contrary, and oblique hand motions, specific accompaniment styles, rapid changes in

¹⁶⁷ Duehlmeier, 83.

stroke-type, small note values, and a variety of articulation markings. Book One of *The Well-Tempered Marimbist*, therefore, prepares the student technically and mentally for the detail-oriented approach to phrasing and expression needed in more advanced literature.

Book Two of *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* offers opportunities for further growth. New styles include a da capo aria, Polonaise, barbarian dance, nocturne, and arietta. Additionally, the collection includes a variety of expressive terms to build the player's vocabulary and encourage critical thinking about interpretations. Some of the more novel terms include *Tornando al Tempo*, *Deciso*, and *Doloroso*. Just as Book One presents challenges similar to those found in Helble's solo pieces, Book Two features elements such as florid scalar passages, distant key changes, hemiolas, Multi-Lateral stokes, specific accompaniment styles, and notational issues, all of which prepare the student for Helble's advanced works. When combined, the two books of *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* offer the teacher a great deal of pedagogical material. Students will develop the technical vocabulary needed for advanced literature, learn about styles and forms, strengthen critical thinking and aural skills, as well as build a strong foundation for future musical challenges.

Chapter 4 shows how Helble's Preludes for Marimba, by contrast, are not to be interpreted as simple pedagogical works. The preludes are more appropriate for advanced players, perhaps for recital performances; however, the pieces can be used to introduce marimbists to twentieth-century compositional styles, such as the 12-tone method. Additionally, they represent an important period in the development of the marimba's repertoire. Skills that have since become standard fare for modern

marimbists prevalent in the preludes include one-handed rolls, reverse stickings, trills, complex subdivisions, changing roll-types, dead strokes, and variation in mallet placement. Consequently, the preludes encourage marimbists to think critically about their sound. Rather than focusing merely on notes and rhythms, performers of Helble's preludes develop a more nuanced understanding of interpretation and expression.

Chapter 5 explores three of Helble's pieces for solo marimba with the goal of illuminating the compositional traits of Baroque, Classical, and Romantic composers and providing possible applications to Helble's music as a way to expand the performer's expressive range and efficacy. *Theme with Six Variations* explicitly mimics the style of specific composers, giving the performer a chance to experience their compositional traits first hand. The first movement captures traits found in Schubert's music including lyricism, relatively conservative harmony, form, and rhythms, surprising interruptions of melodies, and a vocally-inspired sense of contour and phrasing. The second variation mimics Richard Strauss's tendencies toward infrequent repetition, multiple leading-tones, unsettled tonality, and ascending leaps followed by descending steps. Elements of Chopin's style found in the fourth variation include uneven phrase lengths, shortening the final A section in ternary forms, specifics of melodic content such as highest and lowest melody notes, and dissonant downbeats followed by resolution. Lastly, the Wagner variation features recurring figures, such as the gruppetto, as well as the "Tristan Chord" harmony. In addition to exploring compositional traits for each composer, the discussion presents possible interpretive choices based on historical practices. The goal of making such comparisons is not to provide a set of performance mandates for the piece, but to foster a sense of curiosity

and resourcefulness in the performer. By striking a balance between historical performance practices, Helble's indications, and personal ideas, the performer will develop a creative, intelligent musical voice.

The next solo discussed is Helble's *Toccata Fantasy*. The piece is compared to music from the early Baroque period, such as that of Frescobaldi, as well as the late Baroque period, epitomized by J.S. Bach. Similarities to the toccatas of Frescobaldi include a chromatically enhanced harmony and short fugal sections throughout the work. Performance suggestions include executing trills such that they are rhythmically independent of accompanying material, as well as tempo alterations to mirror the affectations of the piece. Additionally, passages composed of eighth and sixteenth notes should be kept to a moderate tempo to ensure comprehension by the listener. With regards to the music of J.S. Bach, *Toccata Fantasy* features parallels including rapid key changes, expanded harmonic vocabulary, and equal section lengths. Elements of the *Stylus Phantasticus* such as the alternation of freely composed sections with fugal sections and greater freedom from harmonic rules of the time period are also present. Performance suggestions include using texture to emphasize dynamic contrast, as well as the application of dynamic intensity. Just as an organist can use registration to effect dynamic interpretation, the marimbist should consider mallet choice, sticking options, grip and stroke tension, roll type, and striking area to alter the intensity of a given passage to support dynamic contrast. Additionally, the player is encouraged to keep in mind Widor and Schweitzer's advice with regards to performing ornate music: one should always keep in mind that the listener may be hearing the piece for the first time

and strive for clarity and understandability in performance.¹⁶⁸ While *Toccata Fantasy* is only within the grasp of extremely advanced players, it still offers opportunities for growth and education about a style of music often under-developed in percussion students.

Lastly, chapter 5 closes with a discussion of Helble's *Grand Fantasy*. Because Helble himself has mentioned the intention of recreating familiar aspects of Schubert's style in the piece, elements of Schubert's style are compared to *Grand Fantasy*. Characteristics include smooth tempo changes, a gradual accelerando in coda sections, repeated-note accompaniments, and the use of "rhapsodic recitative" to create melodrama.¹⁶⁹ Furthermore, the discussion outlines parallels to specific works by Schubert, notably his *Wanderer Fantasy*. Similarities include a reminiscent opening figure, use of the opening figure to unite large sections of the work, and the development of contrasting themes from the opening motive. It is suggested that the player think outside the box by relating the main theme's motive to the dactylic meter of poetry. By doing so, one is reminded to think carefully about cadence, phrasing, contour, and delivery of small- and large-scale statements. *Grand Fantasy* is also seen as a perfect vehicle for impressing upon students the connection between musical and technical challenges. To perform musical ideas in *Grand Fantasy*, or any piece of music, the player must be in complete control of their own movements, which create sounds from the instrument. The author shows the connections between *Grand Fantasy* and Leigh Howard Stevens's *Method of Movement* by comparing three passages of Helble's solo with three exercises in Stevens's book. Hopefully, the student will come

¹⁶⁸ Widor and Schweitzer speaking of Bach's music. As quoted in Keller, 49.

¹⁶⁹ Wolff, 185.

to appreciate the value of technical exercises when direct application is seen in influential pieces such as *Grand Fantasy*.

Helble's music for solo marimba is a valuable resource for historical and stylistic growth. The pieces presented in the current study represent high-quality music that inspires research of major composers as well as a deeper understanding of the nuanced sound production available to the intelligent marimbist. Helble's compositional voice is seen in the many demands placed on the performer. His music is contrapuntal and assumes a high-level of technical control. Helble composes for the marimba in such a way as to encourage attention to detail with regards to tone, phrasing, articulation, and all aspects of sound production. The performer of Helble's music soon realizes that musical challenges and technical challenges are inextricably linked. Furthermore, because of the clear connection between his music and marimba pedagogy, as demonstrated through *Grand Fantasy* and *Method of Movement*, students can gain an appreciation for practicing fundamental motions.

While the current study offers a wealth of information, further study could explore those pieces not mentioned. For example, one could focus on those Preludes for Marimba or movements from *Theme with Six Variations* absent from the previous chapters. Additionally, a similar study of Helble's chamber music for marimba and other instruments, or his marimba concerto, could prove useful to teachers and students.

With guidance from a competent instructor, the student can use Helble's output to progress from relatively simple études to advanced solos, while constantly stretching his abilities. Helble's ability to mimic stylistic traits of many composers allows marimbists, young and old, to broaden musical horizons and strengthen historical

knowledge. In turn, performers will develop an expanded interpretive toolbox and expressive range. The music encourages performers to familiarize themselves with many styles, analyze modern music for historical influences, and synthesize a personal voice by combining technical mastery with a variety of interpretive options.

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APPENDIX A:
INTERVIEW WITH RAYMOND HELBLE

The following interview was conducted through exchange of e-mails between Andrew Richardson and Raymond Helble between the dates of May 11 and September 8, 2013.

ANDREW RICHARDSON: Published interviews have already detailed the creation of your first Preludes through commissions by Leigh Howard Stevens. Can you please discuss the commissioning process for *Grand Fantasy* and *Toccata Fantasy*? Do you recall any parameters dictated by Stevens with regards to techniques, style, length and difficulty?

RAYMOND HELBLE: Only technical; Stevens was primarily interested in music that showcased his (then) new technical developments.

AR: Many of your pieces indicate edits were made by Mr. Stevens, can you please discuss the editing process?

RH: Aside from *Grand Fantasy*, Stevens's editing was limited to stickings.

AR: I read a recital paper that suggested the original score for *Grand Fantasy* was much longer than the current published version, would you like to comment on that?

RH: Stevens shortened the piece by about 40-50% (very approximate estimate.) He cut out a slow section and a fugue, and generally made some technical simplifications, but very few as I recall. He added - for reasons unclear to me both then and now - all the silly performance markings. Since he bought the piece outright, I cared little how he

changed it. He wanted, as I recall, a recital "closer," while I had thought in terms of a large concert piece - like *Toccata Fantasy* was to become.

AR: When did you first realize your marimba pieces would have such a lasting impact on the field of marimba performance and pedagogy?

RH: I had no such thoughts for at least ten years after the first nine Preludes were all published. I thought of them as concert pieces. I tend to think in terms of absolute music rather than programmatic or pedagogical works.

AR: Did the popularity of the early works influence your compositional process for the later works?

RH: Not directly...except that I honed the discipline of writing very "tight" music that serves me well in longer pieces.

AR: When composing *The Well-Tempered Marimbist*, did you give any thought about how the études would fit into the percussion student's curriculum? For example, were any of the études composed with specific techniques or musical difficulties in mind?

RH: Yes...although I completely underestimated their difficulty. I thought of them as beginner 4-mallet works. (It's OK if you laugh at this point.) Each piece is in a different key and form. I intended the educational aspect to be learning form and style more than technique.

AR: Does the published order of études match the order of composition, a progression of difficulty level or progression of skill sets?

RH: Order of composition matches order of publication in the Preludes. Not so in *The Well-Tempered Marimbist*.

AR: Was there a particular experience that inspired you to write such a collection?

RH: Nothing specific, just the general observation that percussionists - for historical reasons - did not have the rich background of piano, organ, string, and woodwind players.

AR: With regards to your comment about Mr. Stevens adding performance markings to *Grand Fantasy*, are the performance markings in *The Well-Tempered Marimbist*, the Preludes and *Toccata Fantasy* your own?

RH: Yes.

AR: Do you consider the études an important first step in the process of learning your larger works, such as *Grand Fantasy* and *Toccata Fantasy*?

RH: To a degree, yes. Aside from writing for the instrument almost as if I could play it, the issue of tightness and economy of materials figures in decisively.

AR: Have you given any thought to how the Preludes would fit into the percussion student's curriculum, if so, did your thinking change from earlier to later preludes?

RH: I did not think in terms of curriculum. Changes in my thinking musically are what influence the technical changes from Prelude 1 through Prelude 12. (Preludes 13, 14 and 15 are unpublished...I am not satisfied with them yet.)

AR: The technical demands of the preludes expose the player to many techniques found in *Grand Fantasy* and *Toccata Fantasy*, but the preludes differ from the larger solos quite dramatically in terms of style. Do you think that they could serve as a stepping stone from the études to the larger solos or are the preludes too different stylistically?

RH: My opinion is that if you can play Prelude No. 1 very well and with authority, you can play just about anything of mine or that of anyone else.

AR: How do you see the Preludes fitting into the professional repertory as opposed to the scholastic curriculum?

RH: I see them as concert pieces to be played as part of a total program with other works in other styles.

AR: Preludes 10-12 were written at a time when the 5-octave marimba was widely available, as opposed to the earlier Preludes, yet the full range of the instrument is rarely used. Can you please discuss how your compositional process was affected by the range of the instrument, if at all? Did you make a conscious decision to restrict the use of the lower octaves?

RH: Short answer: no. I just had a few more notes, making the instrument more sonorous.

AR: The online Classical Composers Database lists Preludes 13-15 as works in progress. Is this information accurate? Do you have other works in progress for solo marimba?

RH: Yes and yes. Most of my recent work has been chamber music including the marimba. See my list of works at www.rhelble.com.

AR: Returning to your published pieces, can you describe your inspiration for the *Theme with Six Variations*? How did you settle on the specific composers?

RH: There are 15-20 composers I can mimic very well. Well enough, in fact, that few people could tell the difference between the historical composer and my "brand X" version. The composers chosen for the piece were those I thought would make the best contrasts for the variations, while remaining familiar to the audience. For example, a

contrast between Mozart and Haydn, Schumann and Brahms, Cherubini and Beethoven, etc., entail too close a similarity to the lay listener to be clear.

AR: What aspects of the piece were specified to you with regards to difficulty level, length, style or any other musical considerations?

RH: Nothing was specified; this was not a commissioned work. It was piece written for fun.

AR: Did you intend for the piece to have such clear pedagogical values with relation to teaching young players about the stylistic traits of great composers?

RH: I wanted marimbists to play in styles other than the typical percussion music of the time. I also thought it an entertaining concert/recital piece.

AR: Did you intend for the piece to be performed in its entirety or as individual or groups of movements?

RH: In its entirety as a concert piece.

AR: Do you think the work would serve as an appropriate stepping stone in preparation for learning your larger solos?

RH: Possibly, but as a non-player, I am not the best judge of that. I do think it a stepping stone to the performance of quality arrangements of earlier music, and a broader sense of style.

AR: Earlier we discussed the availability of the 5-octave marimba. Are you open to performers adding notes in the lower octaves to your pieces?

RH: Yes

AR: I am specifically thinking of measure 142 in *Grand Fantasy* and measure 126 in *Toccata Fantasy*, both of which suggest the use a lower G-sharp. Are there any larger sections of any pieces that think would be better performed in a lower register?

RH: Probably yes...I prefer a heavy bass and warm sonority. I am not, however prepared to judge which passages in which pieces...the pieces you're talking about were written a long while back, and I tend not to think about them very much.

AR: Can you describe the inspiration for *Toccata Fantasy in E-flat Minor for marimba alone*? The title brings to mind Bach's Sonatas and Partitas "for Violin Alone." Was that intentional?

RH: I don't remember how the piece came to be, other than that I wanted a serious solo work to offset the lighter *Grand Fantasy*. As to the title...you clever devil...you are exactly right!

AR: With regards to all your music, but especially that for solo marimba, how far from the marked tempos, dynamics and phrasing do you think the performer can appropriately deviate?

RH: Leave the phrasing alone...unless you have some very good reason for changing it. Dynamics can always be tinkered with a bit, depending on the instrument, the player's conception, the hall or recital room, and all manner of variables that are involved with live performance or recording. I've found, through experience, that my pieces can survive - usually - as much as 8 clicks faster or slower than marked.

AR: Do your opinions change from piece to piece? For example, *Theme with Six Variations*, *Grand Fantasy* and *Toccata Fantasy* all suggest a certain musical style, but the preludes and études are, on the surface at least, more independent.

RH: My stylistic interests change, but I try to bring the same sense of craftsmanship to each piece.

AR: Do you have any advice for students who may be interested in commissioning new pieces from you or another composer?

RH: I would refer them to my web site on commissioning. Also, aside from pieces that are assigned as a student, never waste time playing music you do not admire, or feel is worthwhile. Do not play the "latest thing" just because it is the latest thing.

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW WITH LEIGH HOWARD STEVENS

The following interview was conducted through exchange of e-mails between Andrew Richardson and Leigh Howard Stevens between the dates of August 7 and September 25, 2013.

ANDREW RICHARDSON: Please discuss the history of your relationship with Mr. Helble regarding commissions. I know you commissioned the first few Preludes, *Grand Fantasy*, and *Toccata Fantasy*. Were the rest of the preludes your commissions? *The Well-Tempered Marimbist*? Can you recall any suggestions given to Mr. Helble with regards to techniques, difficulty, style or length?

LEIGH HOWARD STEVENS: I specifically requested the first Prelude use one-handed rolls and “reverse stickings”. I spent considerable time in my practice room showing Helble the “exercises” that I was developing to extend the technical limits of the instrument. We worked closely on several of the first few pieces but he soon developed a sense of how things would be executed on the instrument – he was able to visualize the positions, even when they were complicated. It was understood that this first prelude would be paid for with dinner and drinks. *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* was Raymond’s idea. He thought “easy” pieces in all the keys would be a big seller.

AR: Can you provide some background into the publishing history of Mr. Helble’s pieces? What are the reasons for the gap between when his pieces were written and the copyright dates?

LHS: Copyright is granted even when the piece has not been registered at the copyright office. In theory, it begins as soon as the work is in fixed form, i.e., written down.

Publication date can be years or decades later depending on many factors. Sometimes working on a piece (learning it, scheduling a first performance, etc.) would take years to accomplish.

AR: Many of Mr. Helble's published works indicate that you edited them. Can you please speak about the editing process? What types of changes were made from the manuscript?

LHS: I am preparing a book that will indirectly deal with this question. It is based on teaching the first nine preludes – technical suggestions for learning the music, musical points to bring out, historical notes, etc. A classic example would be in the second prelude around measure seven (doing this from memory) there is an F[#]/F sustained in the left hand. In the manuscript that interval is inverted, with the F[#] on top.

Unfortunately that makes an extremely difficult passage even more challenging as the F[#] is in the way of what the right hand is doing. All those types of changes were always discussed with Helble and his usual answer was “OK, I don't care, as long as it sounds better that way.” In my experience, the great composers were always open to these suggestions and the lesser ones very uptight about changing any golden note they wrote.

AR: Did Mr. Helble specify which notes were to be rolled?

LHS: Case by case basis – some yes, some no. You'll have to wait for the book in which I plan to try to reprint copies of the manuscripts.

AR: I read a recital paper that suggested the original score for *Grand Fantasy* was much longer than the current published version, would you like to comment on that?

LHS: It had an additional Adagio going into a Fugue. In fact it was titled “Grand Fantasy and Fugue in C Major.” It was always intended to be tongue in cheek, so Ray had no problem with shortening it for my purposes (usually an encore).

AR: How do you see *The Well-Tempered Marimbist* volumes fitting into the marimba student’s curriculum?

LHS: Yes, it certainly would be a huge pedagogical benefit for students to play through all of them like other weekly assigned “études”, but very few teachers use this resource so far. They are a bit “odd” in sound sometimes. . . .

AR: The first prelude has been recognized as the first piece written using the one-handed roll; additionally, the prelude uses reverse stickings. Can you describe some other technical innovations in the preludes that you find especially important?

LHS: The main thing is that Helble’s marimba music was often CONTRAPUNTAL. Really only the Fissinger Suite (1950) had made a stab at that in the past, and it was only a stab . . .

AR: How do you see the preludes fitting into the marimba student’s curriculum?

The technical demands of the preludes expose the player to many techniques found in *Grand Fantasy* and *Toccata Fantasy*, but the preludes differ from the larger solos quite dramatically in terms of style. Do you think that they could serve as a stepping stone from the études to the larger solos or are the preludes too different stylistically?

LHS: Stepping stones to *Toccata Fantasy*, *Duo Concertante*, the Concerto, etc. yes.

But the preludes stand on their own as great music. I am recording them now and hope to have them out in 2014. Each one is a gem in my opinion and they don’t need to be

considered as “pedagogical or academic” music – they are REAL pieces that hold the attention of the musician and audience.

AR: How do you see the Preludes fitting into the professional repertory as opposed to the scholastic curriculum?

LHS: See above.

AR: Do you see any stylistic changes in the Preludes 10-12 based on the availability of the 5-octave marimba?

LHS: Unrelated in my opinion. His style just got more and more tonal.

AR: How do you see Mr. Helble’s *Theme with Six Variations* fitting into the percussion student’s curriculum? What aspects of each variation do you feel succeed or fail at representing the stylistic traits of each composer?

LHS: Just a fun piece that has a lot of pedagogical value for percussion players who don’t ordinarily have an opportunity to play music of those composers on marimba. Actually he catches the essence of each composer to an astonishing degree.

AR: Have you performed the piece yourself?

LHS: No

AR: In what ways do you see Mr. Helble’s own compositional voice in *Grand Fantasy* as a contrast to the characteristics of the represented time period?

LHS: None – it was just for fun and because he has a talent for imitating the masters (he has studied them as you are supposed to when you are claiming you are a composer)

AR: *Toccata Fantasy* has a reputation of being one of the most difficult pieces in the solo repertoire, what aspects of the piece do you find most difficult?

LHS: To shape simultaneous lines of counterpoint with separate dynamics and phrasing. If you even know enough to try it, it then becomes the hardest thing to do.

AR: *Toccata Fantasy* seems to be performed relatively rarely, given the high difficulty level of many pieces that do get performed relatively frequently, such as *Velocities*, *Merlin*, *Kahn Variations*, and *Night Rhapsody*, why do you think there aren't more performances of *Toccata Fantasy*? Do you think the age and range of the piece cause people to overlook the piece?

LHS: It's harder (because it's TONAL and you can hear wrong notes!!) and there are no authorized recordings available . . . yet.

AR: Speaking of the range of the marimba, do you think it is appropriate to make changes to the pieces and preludes based on the availability of the 5-octave marimba? For example, *Toccata Fantasy* and *Grand Fantasy* both include measures that suggest Mr. Helble would have included a G[#] if available. Specifically, Measure 126 in *Toccata Fantasy* and 142 in *Grand Fantasy*.

LHS: Yes, after asking the composer.

AR: Do you continue to perform either of Mr. Helble's solos in your own recitals? If so, do you make changes based on available range or other reasons? If not, when did you stop performing the works?

LHS: Still do all the time. Performed Preludes 5, 4, 3, and 2 (in that order) 3 times this summer.

AR: Do you think Mr. Helble's compositions should be studied by college percussionists?

LHS: Of course.

AR: Do you have any advice for students who may be interested in commissioning new pieces from Mr. Helble or another composer?

LHS: Yes: write a nice letter and offer whatever you can! There are no rules.