

Illuminating Silent Voices: An African-American Contribution
to the Percussion Literature in the Western Art Music Tradition

by

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ABSTRACT

Illuminating Silent Voices: An African-American Contribution to the Percussion Literature in the Western Art Music Tradition will discuss how Raymond Ridley's original composition, *FyrStar* (2009), is comparable to other pre-existing percussion works in the literature. Selected compositions for comparison included Darius Milhaud's *Concerto for Marimba, Vibraphone and Orchestra*, Op. 278 (1949); David Friedman's and Dave Samuels's *Carousel* (1985); Raymond Helble's *Duo Concertante for Vibraphone and Marimba*, Op. 54 (2009); Tera de Marez Oyens's *Octopus: for Bass Clarinet and one Percussionist (marimba/vibraphone)* (1982). In the course of this document, the author will discuss the uniqueness of *FyrStar*'s instrumentation of nine single reed instruments--E-flat clarinet, B-flat clarinet, alto clarinet, bass clarinet, B-flat contrabass clarinet, B-flat soprano saxophone, alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, and B-flat baritone saxophone, juxtaposing this unique instrumentation to the symbolic relationship between the ensemble, marimba, and vibraphone.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES.....	v
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Focus of Study	2
The Composers	3
2 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: BRIEFF HISTORY OF EARLY MALLET PERCUSSION AND POPULAR MUSIC	5
Prominent Xylophone Players	7
Pioneers of the Marimba.....	9
3 COMPOSERS AND SELECTED PIECES.....	13
Darius Milhaud	12
Concerto for Mar. and Vib. and Orchestra, Op. 278 (1949).....	13
Dave Samuels.....	14
David Friedman.....	15
<i>Carousel</i> (1985)	15
Raymond Helble	16
Duo Concertante for Vib. and Mar., Op. 54 (2009)	17
Tera de Marez Oyens	18
Octopus: for Bass Cl. and one Perc. (mar./vib.)	19
Raymond Ridley.....	19
<i>FyrStar</i> (2009).....	20

CHAPTER	Page
4	COMPARISONS OF TECHNIQUES USED IN FOUR WORKS FOR MARIMBA AND VIBRAPHONE..... 21
	Compositoinal Elements between <i>Carousel</i> and <i>FyrStar</i>23
	Strokes in Motion30
	<i>Octopus</i> and <i>FyrStar</i> : Winds and Marimba32
5	CONCLUSION..... 37
	REFERENCES 39
APPENDIX	
A	INTERVIEW LETTER 41
B	INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES 43
C	FYRSTAR (2009) LIVE RECORDING (DMA RECITAL) 48
D	FYRSTAR (2009) FULL SCORE..... 49

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1.	Samuel and Friedman, <i>Carousel</i> , mar. and vib., m. 1	24
2.	Ridley, <i>FyrStar</i> , clarinet section, m. 12-13.....	25
3.	Ridley, <i>FyrStar</i> , Moving Forward, winds and mar., m.50-51	26
4.	Ridley, <i>FyrStar</i> , Moving Forward, glock., vib., mar., m. 66	27
5.	Ridley, <i>FyrStar</i> , Moving Forward, winds, mm. 66	28
6.	Ridley, <i>FyrStar</i> , Brisk, winds, m. 184.....	29
7.	Stevens, <i>Method of Movement</i> , ex. 177-178	30
8.	Ridley, <i>FyrStar</i> , Atmospheric, mar., m. 14	31
9.	Ridley, <i>FyrStar</i> , Atmospheric, mar., m. 66	32
10.	Marez Oyens, <i>Octopus</i> , eight pitches	34
11.	Marez Oyens, <i>Octopus</i> , bass cl. and marimba	35
12.	Marez Oyens, <i>Octopus</i> , bass cl. and marimba	35
13.	Ridley, <i>FyrStar</i> , preliminary material, winds, m.1-4	36

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The keyboard or mallet percussion instruments function very much like all of the other melodic instruments in the world. The xylophone, marimba, and vibraphone are keyboard percussion instruments, which consist of a mounted row of bars, metal or wood, graduated in length. There may be different tuning systems but for the most part, these instruments play melodies and chords, and have made major contributions in western art music

The twentieth century saw the birth and development of many new works for mixed ensembles featuring soloists from each instrument family, i.e. woodwinds, brass, strings and percussion. The percussion area includes drums, and other non-pitched instruments, and pitched mallet percussion instruments of which the xylophone, marimba and vibraphone hold great importance and are at the heart of this work.

The ratio of percussion literature to the other instrumental families in the orchestra was disparaging, but “composers began to find increasingly that percussion instruments were the musical and expressive equals of other instruments in the orchestra.”¹ Thusly, composers began to combine multiple-percussion instruments together to form a palette of organized sounds. Steven Schick described these multiple-percussion sounds, “as different instruments that consist of several individual instruments arranged for one percussionist as a

¹ Steven Schick, *The Percussionist's Art: Same Bed, Different Dreams* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 2.

single poly-instrumental unit.”² The earliest examples of works for a single player playing multiple-percussion instruments in a small mix ensemble: Igor Stravinsky’s *Histoire du Soldat* (1918); Darius Milhaud’s *La Création du Monde*, Op. 81a (1922-1923), *Concerto for Percussion and Small Orchestra*, Op. 109 (1929-1930), *Concerto for Marimba, Vibraphone and Orchestra*, Op. 278 (1947), and Bela Bartok’s *Sonata for Two Piano and Percussion*, Sz. 110, BB 115 (1938).

The author’s interest to introduce more percussion works within the literature base, and secondly, to also contribute to the number of pieces written by African-American composers, was peaked while under the tutelage of Dr. Mark Sunkett. The research resulted in forming the Amari Percussion Duo and commissioning Raymond Ridley’s *FyrStar* (2009).

Focus of the Study

The purpose of this study is two-fold; 1) Is to introduce an original composition *FyrStar* (Firestar) (2009) by Raymond Ridley, and 2) to identify the important commonalities between *FyrStar* (2009) and Darius Milhaud’s *Concerto for Marimba, Vibraphone and Orchestra*, Op. 278 (1947). The author’s purpose is to champion the work by Ridley. As for the instruments used, it is the author’s intention, to consider only the use of marimba and vibraphone in a duo setting. There are compositions, from the mid-twentieth century, which use multiple-

² Steven Schick, *The Percussionist’s Art: Same Bed, Different Dreams* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 16.

percussion instruments. This author specifically focused on percussion instrumentation that uses marimba and vibraphone in a small mixed ensemble.

The following list includes examples of compositions, which inspired other composers to write for marimba and vibraphone in a concert setting. The important element here is the concept of collaboration between composer and performer and how the act of collaborating has helped expand the percussion repertoire. The works considered in this comparative study are: *Concerto for Marimba, Vibraphone and Orchestra*, Op. 278 (1947) by Darius Milhaud, *Carousel* (1985) by David Friedman and Dave Samuels, *Duo Concertante for Vibraphone and Marimba*, Op. 54 (2009) by Raymond Helble, and *Octopus: for Bass Clarinet and One Percussionist* (1982) by Tera de Marez Oyens.

Darius Milhaud's *Concerto for Marimba, Vibraphone and Orchestra*, Op. 278 (1947) was the first appearance, of a percussionist combining marimba and vibraphone on the concert stage. The concerto has become the benchmark for other composers to use both the marimba and vibraphone in a performance setting.

The Composers

David Friedman's and Dave Samuel's, *Double Image Duo*, was the first professional marimba and vibraphone duo. *Carousel* (1985), one of the duo's original compositions, a standard in the percussion literature.

Raymond Helble's is known for his association with Leigh Howard Stevens. The collaboration between Helble and Stevens revolutionized the marimba. Their

association has placed Raymond Helble's compositions in the percussion literature. The composition *Duo Concertante for Vibraphone and Marimba*, Op. 54 (2009) and *FyrStar* (2009), the technical demands of performing both pieces is examined.

Tera de Marez Oyens's compositional output includes chamber music and song cycles, and in the 1960s, she experimented with the tone poem and electronic music. *Octopus: for Bass Clarinet and one Percussionist (marimba/vibraphone)* (1982), the compositional device of indeterminacy is a primary characteristic of the work. The author will discuss the interaction between the bass clarinet and percussionist.

CHAPTER 2
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: BRIEFF HISTORY OF EARLY MALLET
PERCUSSION AND POPULAR MUSIC

The xylophone or *strohfiedel*³ was known in Europe at least as early as 1511. The xylophone, “was very much an instrument of the itinerant musician until the 19th century, when it rose to prominence as a solo instrument and garnered the attention of Mendelssohn, Chopin and Liszt, all of whom spoke of the expertise of Michael Guzikow a Polish Jew.”⁴

Michael Jozef Guzikow was one of the first xylophone virtuosos during the mid nineteenth century. From 1834 to 1837, he performed extensively throughout eastern and western Europe. Mendelssohn even accompanied him at the piano in several performances, and publicly declared that he liked the xylophone as well as any other musical instrument. Guzikow’s performance career was brief, as he died in 1837, at the age of thirty-one. His performances, throughout Europe, brought this folk instrument, the *strohfiedel*, to the concert stage.⁵

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries, the xylophone became prominent in the percussion section in orchestras, and in popular music.

The early orchestral uses of the xylophone were in Saint-Saens’ *Danse Macabre*

³ Also known as the “wood and straw” was the early xylophone that consisted of a series of tuned bars of wood or other material that would produce a musical sound. There could be from twelve to seventeen bars, or as many as twenty-five, tuned to a basic scale. Rebecca Kite, Keiko Abe: *A Virtuositic Life: Her Musical Career and the Evolution of the Concert Marimba* (Virginia: GP Percussion, 2007), 128.

⁴ Randell Eyles, “Ragtime and Novelty Performance Practices” DMA paper, Catholic University of America, 1989. In PAS On-line Research Journal (accessed March 15, 2012).

⁵ Rebecca Kite, Keiko Abe: *A Virtuositic Life: Her Musical Career and the Evolution of the Concert Marimba* (Virginia: GP Percussion, 2007), 152.

(1874) and *Le Carnaval des Animaux* (1886), where the xylophone provided additional melodic material.

After the invention of the phonograph, it was discovered that the xylophone recorded better than other instruments. This had a major impact on the popularity of the xylophone. On August 26, 1889, A. T. Van Winkle made the first Edison xylophone recordings on a two-minute long brown wax cylinders. These recordings were placed in the coin-slot machines designed for taverns, penny arcades, and phonograph Taverns,⁶ In the 1890 North American Phonograph Company catalog. William L. Cahn explains further:

“Since it had been found from the beginning that coin-slot machine patrons were not willing to waste their pennies on poor sounding records, the xylophone had somewhat of an advantage in that it tended to record very well, a fact which can be easily demonstrated simply by listening to any acoustic recording.”⁷

Emile Berliner’s gramophone, though patented in 1887 was not sold until 1895, was the first disc-recording device. It soon became apparent, that the disc format had better sound quality, was more easily stored, and cost less to produce than the wax cylinder. In 1912, Edison invented the Diamond Disc Phonograph that used vertically cut grooves to record.”⁶

Due to the advancement of recording in general, many xylophone players were beginning to record during the early part of the twentieth century. In a 1917 catalog of recordings for sale by Victor Records, the xylophone was the fifth most

⁶ coin-slot machines were design for exhibits, taverns, penny arcades, and phonograph parlors. Randell Eyles, “Ragtime and Novelty Performance Practices” DMA paper, Catholic University of America, 1989. In PAS On-line Research Journal (accessed March 15, 2012).

⁷ William L. Cahn, “The Xylophone In Acoustic Recordings (1877–1929),” *Percussionist* 16 (Spring/Summer 1979): 135.

popular instrument (after the violin, accordion, piano, and cello) with thirty-six recordings listed for sale.⁸ The typical compositions included polkas, gallops, marches, waltzes, and light classical music—like the *William Tell Overture*, *American Patrol*, *Carnival of Venice*, and *Mockingbird Fantasy*.⁸

The multiplying number of xylophone artist of the early twentieth-century played a major role in introducing the xylophone to the concert stage. In 1922, the invention of the radio granted more opportunities for the xylophone, and provided the means for pioneers to highlight the instrument.

Prominent Xylophone Players

The artists, who began their careers between 1900-1930, grew up in a culture where listening and performing music was a part of everyday life.⁹ Many artists of this period received national recognition due to the work they did on the radio. The most popular xylophonists, of the day were George Hamilton Green, Harry Breuer, and Yoichi Hiraoka.

The popular artists listed are known for playing ragtime music. This style of music was highly rhythmic with syncopated melodies and were the result of black performances on plantations, They were in essence “appropriated” by white musicians in the blackface minstrelsy period. Beginning around 1840, instrumental forms such as the cakewalk evolved. Finally a type of music descended from all these original forms and more (British marching forms), whether ragtime song, piano rag, string bands. Which of these actually came first

⁸ Rebecca Kite. *Keiko Abe: A Virtuosoic Life: Her Musical Career and the Evolution of the Concert Marimba*, (Virginia: GP Percussion, 2007), 151.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 153.

may never be known. By 1893, ragtime was a recognizable genre in American music.

George Hamilton Green was a talented performer of ragtime, jazz, and classical music. His experience in improvisation, and being armed with a repertoire of over three hundred classical transcriptions, popular, and ragtime melodies, gave him a prime position in the recording industry as a virtuosic performer. Green began his recording career with the Edison Company in 1917, recording two classical selections: Wagner's *Tannhauser March* and Suppe's *Light Cavalry Overture*.

Composers began to write for specific xylophone artists. With his musical training on the violin, Harry Breuer taught himself how to play the xylophone. The beginning of his xylophone career started during the 1920s with a solo appearance for the Roxy radio broadcast studio companies.¹⁰ Breuer was a talented arranger and composer, and in the 1950s and 1960s recorded several albums that inspired another generation of mallet keyboard players. One of these players, influenced by the albums of Breuer, was Keiko Abe. While Green loved to improvise within his xylophone performances, Harry Breuer did not improvise at all, but his compositions were very popular. They included: *Bit O'Rhythm*, *On the Woodpile*, and *Back Talk*.¹¹

Yoichi Hiraoka, a self-taught xylophone player, began his xylophone training by reading books that his family purchased for him. He learned how to develop

¹⁰ Rebecca Kite. *Keiko Abe: A Virtuositic Life: Her Musical Career and the Evolution of the Concert Marimba* (Virginia: GP Percussion, 2007), 154.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 155.

his playing technique, by adapting classical literature to the xylophone and playing along with piano accompaniment. In the 1930s at the age of twenty, Hiraoka was hired by NBC radio in New York City, but due to World War II, he and his wife were forced to return to Japan. While in Japan he continued his career, and in 1962, his family moved back to the United States. In 1965, American composer Alan Hovhaness wrote *Fantasy on Japanese Woodprints* Yoichi Hiraoka.¹¹ The piece incorporates elements of ragtime with using fragments of melodies from popular ragtime tunes, incorporating contrasting moods and evoking a majestic setting

The pioneers of the xylophone put into motion the interest to promote mallet keyboard percussion instrument to a wide array of audiences. Their passion to elevate the xylophone, to the concert stage, would inspire the next pioneers to elevate the marimba to an even higher level. Moreover, the association between composer and performer would continue with the modern day pioneers of the marimba.

Pioneers of the Marimba

The marimba took center stage after the gradual decline in popularity of the xylophone. In the 1930s and 1940s, Clair Omar Musser was a marimba teacher, a solo marimbist, a conductor, composer, arranger, promoter, instrument designer and for about eight years, a marimba manufacturer, and is clearly an important figure in popularizing the instrument.

In 1930s, J.C. Deagan hired Musser based on the notoriety of his efforts to pioneer the marimba. In 1933, he collaborated with organizers of the 1933 “Century of Progress Exhibition (Chicago World’s Fair).¹² The organizers of the event wanted a unique idea to present to audiences; Musser remembered watching the Hurtado Marimba Orchestra performing in the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco (San Francisco World’s Fair).¹² Organizers agreed on the suggestion by Musser, and so, he began to organize a one-hundred piece marimba orchestra for the event. Musser would later organize another marimba orchestra for the 1933 World’s Fair performance, and arranged for a group of fifty men and fifty women to perform in Albert Hall in London for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the coronation of King George V.¹³

The first marimba compositions, by marimbists, were designed as pedagogical or etude pieces for beginning students, and well suited for the concert stage. The collaboration between composer and the marimbist established the first marimba pieces. As mentioned previously, Jack Conner and Darius Milhaud Concerto for Marimba and Vibraphone, Vida Chenoweth and Robert Kurka Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra illustrate how the collaboration between the selected individuals was essential to the growth of percussion literature.

As one the most influential marimbist during this time, Vida Chenoweth was responsible for a myriad of compositional works for the marimba. A strong

¹² Rebecca Kite. Keiko Abe: A Virtuositic Life: Her Musical Career and the Evolution of the Concert Marimba (Virginia: GP Percussion, 2007),168.

¹³ Ibid.,169.

advocate of the marimba, her intentions were only to focus on compositions that were specifically for the marimba. The two works that Vida Chenoweth premiered were the *Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra*, Op. 34 by Robert Kurka, and the *Concertino Para Marimba y Orquesta* by Jorge Sermientos in 1957. In 1959 at Carnegie Hall, she premiered the *Concerto for Marimba and Orchestra*, Op. 34 by Robert Kurka, with the Orchestra of America, on a concert series based on compositions by American composers. The *Concertino Para Marimba y Orquesta* by Jorge Sermientos won the composition competition, that Vida Chenoweth organized, and was premiered in Guatemala in 1960, and the United States in 1964.

CHAPTER 3

COMPOSERS AND SELECTED PIECES

In this chapter, the biographical information and a brief explanation about the selected pieces used in comparison to Raymond Ridley's *FyrStar* (2009) are discussed. This section will provide brief insights into the compositional styles, influences, and the selected major works that have impacted the continued development and expansion of the percussion literature. The biographical information about Raymond Ridley is included in this section, along with the origins of *FyrStar* (2009).

Darius Milhaud (1892-1974)

With parents who were amateur musicians, Darius Milhaud began playing duets with his father at the age of three, took up the violin at the age of seven, studied harmony with a local teacher, and also discovered his calling for composition during the same time. In 1909, he went to Paris to study at the Conservatoire and stayed there until 1915. His use of polytonality, which later became a characteristic in the compositional style of Milhaud, began with his composition *Les Chéphores* that same year. While at the Conservatoire he studied violin with Berthelier, orchestral playing with Dukas, harmony with Leroux, fugues with Widor, and with Gédalge, counterpoint, composition and orchestration.

Milhaud's studies with Gédalge would have a major impact on his compositional technique. In 1912, his association with Paul Claudel, who was the French Ambassador to Brazil, allowed Milhaud to immerse himself in Latin-American dance forms compelling him to compose *Le Boeuf sur le toit* (1919).

Starting in the 1920s, Darius Milhaud's traveled to the U.S.A., and became influenced by the jazz medium while visiting various nightclubs in Harlem. The influence of jazz had a major impact on Milhaud's compositions. Milhaud's signature work *La Création du Monde* (1923) is one of the prominent works that demonstrated his interest in jazz.

By the early 1920s, Darius Milhaud was an influential composer and a member of 'Les Six.' The journalist Henri Collet coined the term 'Les Six; inadvertently establishing Darius Milhaud's compositional career. Milhaud spent the years 1940-1970 partially in the United States teaching on and off at Mills College in Oakland CA. In 1947, Jack Connor commissioned Darius Milhaud to compose *Concerto for Marimba, Vibraphone and Orchestra*, Op. 278 (1949). On February 12, 1949, the *Concerto for Marimba, Vibraphone and Orchestra*, Op. 278 (1949) by Darius Milhaud was premiered by the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, with Jack Connor as the soloist, and Vladimir Golschmann, conducting.

Upon his return to France, after its post-war liberation, Darius Milhaud was appointed professor of composition at the Paris Conservatoire.¹⁴ *Concerto for Marimba, Vibraphone*, Op. 278 (1949) was the first orchestral work that used the combination of instruments shown in its title.

Dave Samuels (1948)

Dave Samuels has established himself as one of the premier vibraphonist and marimba artists on the scene today. Dave Samuels is known for his virtuosity and his creatively imaginative mallet playing. As a graduate of Boston University, Samuels received a degree in psychology, and studied with Gary Burton at Berklee College of Music for two and a half years while performing with Pat Metheny and John Scofield. In 1974, he gained international exposure by touring and recording with Gerry Mulligan.¹⁵

In 1979 he started playing periodically with Spyro Gyra, and by 1986, he became a full-time member of the group. During this time, the band was named the number one Contemporary Jazz Group of the 1980s by Billboard magazine. Samuels was voted “Best Vibe Player” by Jazziz magazine (1987, 1990, and 1989), and “Best Mallet Percussionist” by Modern Drummer magazine (1987, 1989).

¹⁴ Deborah Mawer, *Darius Milhaud: Modality & Structure in Music of the 1920s* (University of London, 1991), 1.

¹⁵ Dave Samuels. 2012. <http://www.allmusic.com/artist/dave-samuels-p121673/biography> (accessed on January 15, 2012).

In 1977, Dave Samuels co-founded the group Double Image with David Friedman. This unique combination of two mallet players on marimba and vibraphone received international acclaim. Dave Samuels produced a solo album called *Living Colors* in 1988. This album displays his composition and playing skills, and spent six weeks at number one on the Radio & Records Contemporary Jazz chart.¹⁶

David Friedman (b.1944)

David Friedman is an internationally renowned vibraphonist, marimbist, composer, and jazz educator. In 1977, Friedman co-founded the vibe-marimba quartet, Double Image. The Friedman-Samuels combination was the impetus for compositions specifically written for marimba and vibraphone. As a jazz educator, Friedman has been the head of the jazz department at Hochschule der Kunst in Berlin, Germany since 1989. He is the author of *Mirror from Another*, a collection of pieces for the vibraphone, and the widely used *Vibraphone Technique, Dampening and Pedaling* (1973). One of his creative musical accomplishments is a solo mallet recording using multiple vibraphone and marimba overdubs, which superimposes richly diverse layered sound scapes.

The Double Image Duo's collaboration began to produce new percussion literature for the vibraphone and marimba. One of those pieces, *Carousel* (1985), a jazz composition that personifies the momentum of a carousel, started as an improvisation between the two performers. The performer's command of

¹⁶ David Samuels. *Contemporary Vibraphone Technique: A Musical Approach* (CPP/Belwin, Inc. Miami, FL., 1992), 4.

technique coupled with stellar musicianship, made the performance of *Carousel* (1985) different each time. The duo finally decided to have an exact performance construct of the piece, resulting in the written composition available today. The initiative to finally compose *Carousel* (1985) allows percussionists of both the jazz and classical music mediums to play the piece.

In the summer of 2002, Friedman and Bobby McFerrin collaborated to celebrate the official tenth anniversary of the jazz department of the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, in part because Mr. Friedman has dedicated his career to teaching and supporting the endeavors of each of his and other jazz students.

Raymond Helble (b.1949)

Raymond Helble was born on February 3, 1949, in New Jersey. At the age of ten, he taught himself composition and was conducting by the age of twelve. Even though Helble received no formal training in composition, he was accepted to the Julliard School of Music, Manhattan School of Music, and Eastman School of Music. While at Eastman he studied alongside great musicians and composers such as: Wayne Barlow, Warren Benson, Samuel Adler, and Joseph Schwantner; and his conducting studies were completed with Willis Page and Walter Hendle.¹⁷

Helble is known for being able to write in virtually any style of western art music. While attending Eastman, he met Leigh Howard Stevens and their collaborations together produced a large body of works, which have since

¹⁷ Baxter, Jillian. 2004. Raymond Helble, Grand Fantasy in C Major, James Campbell, Tangents, Camille Saint-Saens, Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso for Violin and Piano, Op. 28, Michael Burritt, Timeless, Master's Thesis, Belmont University.

become standards in percussion repertoire. His compositional style is meticulous in design, resulting in compositions that are technically challenging for marimba players.¹⁸

Percussionists, chamber groups, choral groups, and orchestras perform Helble's music all over the world, and he has received ASCAP awards every year since 1990.¹⁹ Raymond Helble currently resides in Lebanon, Missouri with his wife; where he continues to compose and arrange for the Lebanon High School Marimba Orchestra and other commissioned projects.

Commissioned in 2009 for Dr. Matt Henry and Thomas Zirkle, Helble's *Duo Concertante for Vibraphone and Marimba*, Op. 54 (2009) was premiered in the spring of 2010 by the Amari Percussion Duo. This work was written for advanced players with strong four-mallet technique. The style of the piece is often referred to as neo-baroque-esque; "In order to achieve this notion, the marimba and vibraphone parts are written so that they are equal to show case the advance technical facility of both players."²⁰ In order to perform this piece both players must not only understand the four stroke types but be able to execute them as well. This technique requires the players to build the necessary strength in the arms, forearms, wrists, and fingers, as developed by Leigh Howard Stevens. The Leigh Howard Stevens grip, has it's origins, and is adapted

¹⁸ Mostly Marimba, 2010. <http://www.mostlymarimba.com/composers/composers-fj/803.html?itemid=27> (accessed January 5, 2012).

¹⁹ Classical Composers. 2012. <http://www.classical-composers.org/comp/helble> (accessed January 6, 2012).

²⁰ Raymond Helble. e-mail message to author access January 1, 2012.

from the Musser grip (developed by Clair Omar Musser) and the Burton grip (developed by Vibraphonist Gary Burton).

The specifics of the strokes and how they relate to Raymond Helble's piece and Raymond Ridley's piece are discussed in detail in Chapter 4. Moreover, to gain a better understanding of how important these stroke types are one must compare the technical demands of the two pieces. Raymond Helble compositions written for Leigh Howard Stevens, became the standard in the development of Stevens' grip. Leigh Howard Stevens premiered his approach to technique in 1976 at the first Percussion Arts Society Convention in Rochester, New York. This period, in percussion history, established Leigh Howard Stevens as one of the great revolutionaries of the marimba, as well as insuring Raymond Helble's compositional contribution to percussion literature.

Tera de Marez Oyens (b.1932-1996)

Tera de Marez Oyens was a Dutch composer, who was originally born as Woltera Gerharda Wansinka. Her works included chamber music and song cycles; in the 1960's, she experimented with the tone poem and electronic music. Pieces such as: Sound and Silence (1971) and Mixed Feelings (1973), are some of the pieces that utilized the tone poem. She studied at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam where she majored in piano. While at the Conservatorium she discovered her passion for composing while working on her first piece. Soon after, she began writing for young groups. In 1977, she became an instructor at the conservatory in Zwolle. Her lessons focused on developing the student's

own style of composition. After the death of her second husband, she dedicated the rest of her life to being a full-time composer.

In 1982, *Odyssey of Mr. Goodevil* was written; a few years afterwards in 1988, she contributed pieces to the international cello competition in Scheveningen, and in 1989, she was composer in residence at Georgia State University in Atlanta, GA. She wrote over 200 works, many commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Culture and various broadcasting networks. In 1995, she was asked to write a piece, called unison for the 50th anniversary of the United Nations.²¹ *Octopus: for Bass Clarinet and one Percussionist (marimba/vibraphone)* (1982), was commissioned by Henri Bok and Miguel Bernat of Duo Contemporain.²² The title, *Octopus*, alludes to the combination of eight specific pitches played throughout the piece.

Raymond Ridley

Raymond Ridley (b.1978) is a native of Middle Tennessee graduating from Franklin High School, and later attending Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU). While majoring in clarinet performance at MTSU, he had studied with Dr. Todd Waldecker, head of MTSU School of Music's clarinet studio, Daniel Lochrie, Bass clarinetist of the Nashville Symphony Orchestra, and world renowned jazz clarinetist Eddie Daniels. In 2000, while at MTSU, Mr. Ridley won the Phi Mu Alpha composition competition, igniting his passion as a composer.

²¹ Helen Metzelaar. "Tera de Marez Oyens", Grove Music Online ed. L. Macy.

²² Henri Bok Home Page. 2006. <http://www.henribok.com/> (accessed January 18, 2012).

For the last 10 years, Raymond has been a freelance teacher and performer in TN, as well as, arranging and composing on the side.

Commissioned in the spring of 2009 by the Amari Percussion Duo, Ridley's *FyrStar* (2009) is the first work, for marimba and vibraphone duo and nine single reed. The compositional design of *FyrStar* (2009), is discussed throughout chapter four.

CHAPTER 4

COMPARISONS OF TECHNIQUES USED IN FOUR WORKS FOR MARIMBA AND VIBRAPHONE

The intent in this chapter is to show the various components in the creation of the pieces used in this study and how they parallel the creation of *FyrStar* (2009). Each of these will demonstrate the use of similar if not the exact processes in the commissioning, composing, and premiering of the selected works. The effort here is to position *FyrStar* (2009) in the company of other major works for marimba and vibraphone.

The *Concerto for Marimba, Vibraphone and Orchestra*, Op. 278 (1949) by Darius Milhaud, was commissioned by Jack Conner in 1947. The first performance of the Concerto, premiered by Jack Conner in 1949, was accompanied by the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra. The *Concerto for Marimba, Vibraphone and Orchestra*, Op. 278 (1949), was not as quickly embraced as part of the marimba literature. The technical facility required throughout the work was challenging, the published music was expensive, and the solo part was not separated from the piano reduction.²³

Jack Conner's music training began as a jazz drummer in his hometown of St. Louis, Missouri. In 1935, he signed up to be a part of the Musser's second marimba orchestra, and after the International Marimba Symphony Orchestra tour, he went into the Navy to attend the Navy School of Music. While at the school he began focusing intensely on playing jazz vibraphone.

²³ Rebecca Kite. *Keiko Abe: A Virtuoso's Life: Her Musical Career and the Evolution of the Concert Marimba* (Virginia: GP Percussion, 2007), 176.

On September 27, 1950, Conner became the first marimbist to play a solo recital in New York City at Town Hall, accompanied by Edwin McArthur on the piano. The program included transcriptions and music specifically written for the marimba. After Milhaud's *Concerto for Marimba, Vibraphone and Orchestra*, Op. 278 (1949), Conner selected Milhaud to write the second concerto because of his interest in Milhaud's music, knowing that Milhaud wrote an earlier concerto work for percussion.

Conner speculated that Milhaud would probably be open to the idea of collaborating with him. Milhaud's response to Conner was that he felt that marimba would not be well received by audiences,²⁴ Conner traveled to Mills College in Oakland, California, where Milhaud was teaching, to convince Milhaud to write the piece for him. Conner played Bach on the marimba and some jazz vibraphone, and other examples that Milhaud requested. Milhaud accepted Conner's request after hearing him play. Conner described the style of the concerto as being, "a sort of French version of Latin Jazz," Conner viewed this as a reflection of the music material he performed for Milhaud.²⁴

Darius Milhaud was very specific with the timbres he wanted. He facilitated these differences by indicating precise mallet types in fourteen different places in the three-movement work. In the middle of the first movement, Milhaud specifies the use of the hands *without mallets) in (m. 54-59). Conner admits to ignoring this indication when he performed it, as the sound did not project adequately.

²⁴ Kathleen Sherry Kastner. *The Emergence and Evolution of a Generalized Marimba Technique*. American Conservatory of Music, 1971. In PAS On-line Research Journal (accessed March 15, 2012).

The meticulousness in experimenting with various timbres, demonstrates Milhaud's curiosity in exploring the possibilities of the marimba and the vibraphone.

Ridley's *FyrStar* (2009) is a single movement work, with five contrasting sections: Atmospheric, Moving Forward, Brooding, Quick, and Brisk. The preliminary twelve measures, foreshadows the thematic and rhythmic motives used throughout the piece. Furthermore, each section gradually accelerates, exemplifying a crescendo, leading to the zenith of a phrase.

FyrStar was the result of extensive collaboration between Raymond Ridley and the author of this document, Darrell Irwin Thompson. This collaborative process extended into the development and treatment of thematic material and the performance techniques required in its performance.

Compositional Elements between Carousel and FyrStar

Dave Samuels and David Friedman, founders of the Double Image Duo, have developed compositions to introduce skills to percussionists who are not familiar with playing jazz so that they may begin to acquire these skills, specifically improvisation. The title *Carousel* (1985) alludes to the nostalgic experience of an individual riding a carousel. The intervallic relationship between the vibraphone and the marimba, and the repetitive rhythm functioning as the thematic material for the piece, creates the cyclical imagery and the feeling of riding a carousel.

In the introduction of *Carousel* (1985), the piece starts on the sixth scale degree (B-natural of a D major scale). In the marimba and vibraphone, both parts use the traditional pentatonic scale, with the vibraphone arpeggiating complementary tetra chords a fourth and fifth above the marimba, and together these two instruments form a diatonic set (Figure one).

Bm(11)

3 1 1 3 1 3 1 1

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Vibraphone and Marimba. Both are in 4/4 time. The Vibraphone part is in the treble clef and plays a sequence of eighth notes: B4, D5, F#5, G5, A5, B5, A5, G5, F#5, D5, B4. The Marimba part is in the treble clef and plays a sequence of eighth notes: B3, D4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, A4, G4, F#4, D4, B3. Above the Vibraphone staff, the chord is identified as Bm(11) and the fingering 3 1 1 3 1 3 1 1 is indicated. The Marimba staff has a slur under the first four notes and another slur under the last four notes. Both parts have accents (>) on the first and fourth notes of each measure.

Figure 1. Samuels and Friedman, *Carousel*, mar. and vib., m. 1.

The rhythm in *Carousel* (1985) is a vital component in creating the image and feeling of riding a carousel. In the marimba and vibraphone parts, the sticking pattern in Figure one, create this swing feel (accents one and four). If the performer uses a jazz-like approach to sticking and creates a stronger accent on beat four, one conjures the image and feeling of a carousel.

In *FyrStar* (2009), Ridley describes the imagery as this way:

I wanted a name that would evoke "shininess", a "Spectacle". What is more of a spectacle and Shiny than a Star in the sky! Because the piece is a gradual accelerando, "fyr" (the old English word for Fire) seemed most appropriate. A grand fire starts out with the unified flicker of a match and ignites from there into a blazing "inferno". The heat (fire) of *FyrStar* increases throughout the work as the tempo and rhythmic intensity is enhanced. I first saw this

word from a comic book character from my youth and it always resonated with me.²⁵

The feeling of a blazing “inferno” occurs periodically throughout the piece. The woodwinds provide the foundation for these intense moments. The nine single reed instruments achieve this effect with staggered entrances, the blending of three or more instruments within the clarinet or saxophone section, or all the instruments combined together. The beginning stages, before the FyrStar ignites, consist of slow gradual entrances by the winds. Suddenly a louder dynamic change, as shown in Figure two, Ridley displays the clarinet section’s gradual crescendo; then the sudden burst of sound on the unison B-flat on beat four.



Figure 2. Ridley, *FyrStar*, preliminary material, clarinet section, m. 12-13.

²⁵ Raymond, Ridley, e-mail message to author, September 9, 2009.

In *FyrStar* (2009), the use of call-and-response, polyphonic textures, and jazz-like elements are in the middle of the piece. The composer does not mention this in the score or part. With a greater “swing-like” or jazz-like interpretation in various sections, it would be easy to illustrate this point. More specifically the performer could swing the eighth notes and eighth note triplets. In “Moving Forward,” there is interplay between the winds and the soloist. Here the marimba plays the principal theme.

The image displays a musical score for measures 50 and 51. It features three staves. The top staff contains a melodic line with a slur over measures 50 and 51, and a dynamic marking of *p*. The middle staff contains a rhythmic accompaniment with eighth notes and eighth note triplets, also marked with *p*. The bottom staff shows a marimba part with a wavy line indicating a tremolo effect in measure 51. Measure numbers 50, 51, and 52 are indicated at the beginning and end of the staves.

Figure 3. Ridley, *FyrStar*, Moving Forward, winds and mar., m. 50-51.

The melody and the call-and-response technique used between the marimba and vibraphone player begins in m. 46 and ends at m. 66. The arrival of the crescendo at m. 66, mirrors the crescendo at the beginning of the piece, and

is a unison engagement of sound by the ensemble and the marimba. The feel throughout this particular section of “Moving Forward” (Figure three), should also incorporate the jazz swing feel. In Figure four, the glockenspiel and vibraphone are in unison with the ensemble and should also consider using the jazz like interpretation.



Figure 4. Ridley, *FyrStar*, Moving Forward, glock., vib., and mar., m. 66.

The eighth notes and the eighth-note triplets should groove, and hang back slightly in time. The vibraphone first plays the interpretation of the triplets, in m. 66, on beat two, starting in m. 66. In Figure five, the wind parts, in m., 66 display the eighth-note groupings as above. One should think, “Doo-bah” with the first note being slightly longer. With the eighth note triplet, the third note is longer and accented, and the eighth-note triplets are felt as “do-do-BAH.”



Figure 5. Ridley, *FyrStar*, Moving Forward, winds, m. 66.

In Figure six, the use of polyphonic textures occurs at the end of the piece where the winds are divided and play in different rhythmic groupings.



Figure 6. Ridley, *FyrStar*, Brisk, winds, m. 184.

The piece ends contemplatively, with the entire ensemble in separate registers, on an A-flat major (9, #11, and 13th) chord.

The advancements in mallet keyboard technique provide the means to continue to push the envelope of the possibilities for mallet playing. At the same time, and through this collaboration, both the author and composer continued their pursuit to expand the percussion literature. The technical aspects of *Duo Concertante for Vibraphone and Marimba*, Op. 54 (2009) and *FyrStar* (2009), encompass the use of the Stevens' technique,

Strokes in Motion

The Method of Movement establishes the foundation a player will need to execute passages in both *FyrStar* and *Duo Concertante* efficiently. The ease of mobility, clear understanding of how to execute each individual stroke, and the fluidity which comes with mastering these techniques while playing various passages will allow players to perform most advanced technical pieces. The *Duo Concertante for Vibraphone and Marimba*, Op. 54 (2009) is a clear example, presenting new challenges to the player. The collaboration between Raymond Helble and Leigh Howard Stevens paved the way for the compositional output for many composers for marimba. Helble's association with Stevens provided an incontrovertible insight into the myriad playing possibilities with Steven's technique.

The technical demands in *Duo Concertante for Vibraphone and Marimba*, Op. 54 (2009) are in Raymond Ridley's *FyrStar* (2009). The double vertical stroke is a primary stroke type used when playing the marimba. A marimba piece may require the right hand and left hand to make adjustments for interval changes. In Figure seven, exercises 177 and 178 are examples for practicing double vertical strokes while changing intervals.



Figure 7. Stevens, *Method of Movement*, ex. 177-178.

In *FyrStar* (2009), in measure fourteen the right hand and the left utilize the exercise 177 and 178.

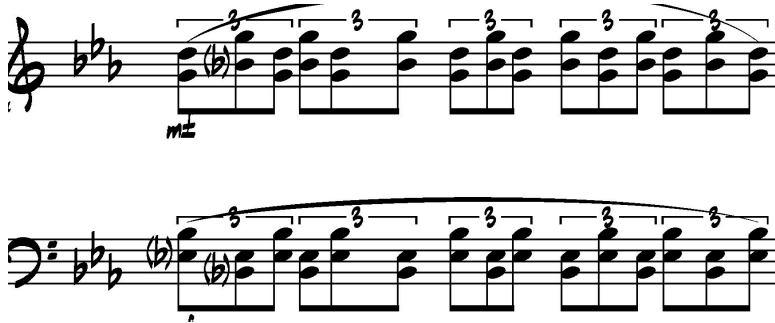


Figure 8. Ridley, *FyrStar*, Atmospheric, mar., m. 14.

In Figure eight, the player encounters a challenging right hand passage. The challenge for the player is to initialize the double vertical stroke in motion, while the forearm provides the momentum to get to the correct notes. The hands will internalize how each interval feels when the notes are played.

The player first places the mallet head on the bars to become accustomed to each interval. The player should aim for the edge of the bar. Afterwards, the player should start with the minor sixth and move to the perfect fifth interval.

Next, the player should internalize the hand position while moving from the minor sixth and perfect fifth slowly to figure out the transition from note-to-note.

The playing approach is to improve note accuracy.

According to Nancy Zeltsman, “keeping the mallets low will allow for quick adjustments and note accuracy.”²⁶ Supple wrists will provide necessary

²⁶ Nancy Zeltsman. *Four-Mallet Marimba Playing: A Musical Approach for All Levels* (Hal Leonard Corporation, 2003), 140.

assistance to play m.14. The movement, of the wrist, will have the same resemblance of the lateral motion of windshield-wipers.

The left hand will utilize the same motion as the right hand, and will play slightly off center of the bar. The left hand is on the upper panel of the marimba, but the challenge is the bar space in-between the two and three note groups of the upper panel. The position of the left hand will allow the torso to remain centered and relaxed while playing m. 14. The same motion in m.14 is necessary in to playing the passage in m. 66. This time the left hand incorporates the right hand procedure used in m.14.



Figure 9. Ridley, *FyrStar*, Atmospheric, mar., m. 66.

The Helble and Ridley pieces, share other performance problems which *Method of Movement for Marimba with 590 exercises* (1994) and *Contemporary Vibraphone Technique: A Musical Approach Book 1* (1982) address. For more detailed descriptions for these techniques it would be most helpful to become familiar with these two resource books.

Octopus and *FyrStar*: Winds and Marimba

The beginning of the twentieth century; exploring new and various sounds was of interest to composers. In the wind instrument family, the flute was widely

explored with works like, Debussy's *Syrin* (1912), Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* (No. 7, 1912), was continued with works like *Density 21.5* (1935).²⁷ by Varèse. There was great interest in the various effects on the flute i.e. flutter tonguing, microphones, and slapping of the keys, and the use of playing and vocalizing sounds at the same time. Quartertones and glissandi were commonly used in jazz playing.

The opening of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924), is commonly associated with the clarinet. The glissandi effect, and the composition commonly associated with the use of the clarinet, was introduced by the solo clarinetist of the Paul Whiteman band in the first rehearsal of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924). The flexibility and the sonority of the sound became widely used by Stravinsky in his *Three Pieces for Clarinet, Histoire du Soldat*, and the *Ebony Concerto*.

New playing techniques started to develop for clarinet, as players began exploring the possible sounds. The composer and performer collaborating together provided the means to develop the compositional process. Tera de Marez Oyens *Octopus: for Bass Clarinet and one Percussionist (marimba/vibraphone)* (1982), is the result of the composer and performer collaborating to construct a piece specifically for the performer. In this instance the piece was composed for the musical group "Duo Contemporain." The use of bass clarinet with marimba and vibraphone is a rare instrumentation. Henri Bok, the bass clarinetist for Duo Contemporain, is one of the most prominent bass

²⁷ Glenn, Watkins. *Soundings: Music in the Twentieth Century* (Wadsworth/Thompson Learning, 1995), 628.

clarinet soloists in the world today, and has devoted his life to expanding the bass clarinet repertoire.

The six-movement work, *Octopus: for Bass Clarinet and one Percussionist (marimba/vibraphone)* (1982), moves from sparse textures and rhythmic density between the bass clarinet and the percussionist, with the textures gradually more dense, then lessens and finally, the return of spare textures as both players' sound slowly dies away. The design of *FyrStar* (2009) is the gradual change of instrument texture, by implementing more or less instruments into passages, or rhythmic density. *Octopus*, uses eight pitches that are played throughout the piece (Figure nine).

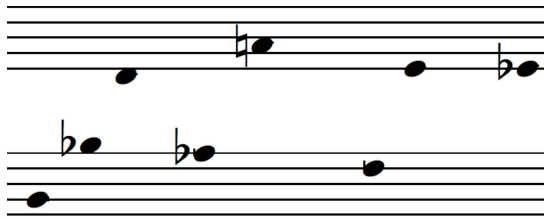


Figure 10. Marez Oyens, *Octopus*, eight pitches.

In the performance notes the composers mentions that the F[#] and C[#] in the piece are extra notes from the original eight notes.

The timbre of the bass clarinet and mallet percussion instruments, provide the striking sonority for this piece. If one considers the four parts of a sonic event, to fall into the basic categories of ADSR (attack, decay, sustain and release) it is clear that the high transients (high amplitude "attacks") of the marimba and the vibraphone easily overwhelm the relatively soft attack transient of the clarinets. However, the clarinet is capable of providing a strong "sustain" and delicate, nuanced "release" which, unlike the mallet percussion, can be extended to great

length. In this way, the composer wisely takes advantage of the complementary natures of the mallets and reeds, by frequently creating brilliant tone clusters in the mallets with haunting, lingering sonorities.

In Figure ten, C^{#4} is played by the bass clarinet; followed by the bass clarinet and percussionist playing a unison attack.



Figure 11. Marez Oyens. *Octopus*, bass cl. and mar.

The overlapping of the eight-note pitch set, provides opportunities for the bass clarinet and the percussionist to merge their sounds together. In Figure eleven, the marimba and the bass clarinet overlap in their sound, and attack together in unison on their own specified note.



Figure 12. Marez Oyens, *Octopus*, bass cl. and mar.

In *FyrStar* (2009) the end of the first movement ends with a subtle piano and gradually fades away. The staggered entrance on a B-flat, by the wind instruments, creates this mass of sound. When all nine instruments sound at once. Their timbre produces a dissonant sound.

SLOW QUARTER NOTE = 70-76

SLOW QUARTER NOTE = 70-76

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SLOW QUARTER NOTE = 70-76

Figure 13. Ridley, FyrStar, preliminary material, winds, m.1-4.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The use of percussion, from its former setting as harmony enhancers or sound effect producers for theatrical works, became of interest to composers. The exploration in percussive instrumental sounds by composers began the development of percussion literature. The relationship between composer and performer from the exploratory process, lead to compositional works specifically designed for the soloist. The result of these collaborations, allows the performer to demonstrate his or her approach to playing, musicianship, as well as giving the composer cutting edge resources for content. Vida Chenoweth and Jack Conner are prime examples of the interaction between composer and performer. The contributions by Vida Chenoweth and Jack Conner, display the possibilities in technical development and emerging musical styles.

The expansion of percussion literature resulting from the compositional demands on the performer was monumental. Well informed composers required new technical approaches to perform newer works. The collaboration between Stevens' and Helble revolutionized the marimba. New techniques provided the means to allow the mallets to freely function as single units.

The influence of jazz became of major interest to composers. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, Europe was presented with jazz, the American art form. The vibraphone is most likely the best-known instrument associated with jazz. Dave Samuels and David Friedman's command of the jazz medium, creatively explores and develops pieces on stage. *Carousel* (1985)

began organically, and evolved differently each time. The duo's decision to make *Carousel* (1985) accessible for percussionist to perform expanded the literature in diversified the available styles.

The single reed timbre blends well with the marimba and vibraphone. *Octopus: for Bass clarinet and one Percussionist (marimba/vibraphone)* (1982), uses an uncommon combination of instruments. The single reed sound is comparable and compatible with the warmth and depth of the sound of the marimba and the brilliant sound of the vibraphone. The use of vibraphone, marimba and nine single reed instruments is an instrumentation that is new to the percussion literature. The timbres, jazz components, and creative orchestration by the other composers discussed in this document are clear indications of the validity of *FyrStar* (2009) by Ridley to be included as a part of the percussion literature.

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INTERVIEWS AND CORRESPONDANCES

Correspondence with Raymond Helble, March, 2010.

Interview with Raymond Ridley, September, 2009.

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APPENDIX A
IRB INTERVIEW LETTER

*Illuminating Silent Voices: An African-American Contribution to the Percussion Literature
in the Western Art Music Tradition*

Date 10/11/2011

Dear Interviewee

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Dr. Mark Sunkett in the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts in the School of Music at Arizona State University. I want to send you interview questions that pertaining to the commission piece *FyrStar (2010)* that you wrote for the Amari Percussion Duo in the spring of 2010.

I am inviting your participation, which will involve answering the questions listed in the document. You have the right not to answer any question, and to stop the interview at any time.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty.

The purpose of the interview is to obtain your thought process and any musical or other influences that may help to compose *FyrStar*. Moreover, there are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team: Dr. Mark Sunkett by phone 480/965.5508 or e-mail Mark.Sunkett@asu.edu, and Darrell Thompson by phone 480/353.6479 or e-mail dithomp1@asu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6798. Please let me know if you wish to be part of the study.

By printing and signing your name below, you agree to participate in this process. You may stop participating anytime during this process. Thank you for your time and I am excited to begin the interview process with you soon.

Raymond Ridley
print your name

Raymond Ridley
sign your name

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES

The location where you grew up, how has that influenced on your compositions?

I grew up in Franklin, Tennessee (TN) that is a mere 30 minutes from Nashville so, I was exposed to a number of genre from an early age. Because I grew up in the church my father pastors, my most heavy influence was gospel music, spirituals and old Dr Watts Hymns. I cannot forget how much influence the "easy listening" radio station had on me as a kid!

Who were some of the individuals who influenced you to do music?

My mother, Lillian Ridley, was my first influence. She was the pianist and choir director of Round Hill M.B. church (the same church that my father the Reverend George W. Ridley pastors). She has always had amazing abilities that some people must go to school for years to attain. My Sister Fatima E. Foster was the next most important influence. Once she was old enough, she took on the responsibilities of the church choir, both playing and directing. I must make mention of Mr. Vines who was my 4th grade music teacher. He got me interested in wind instruments through learning Recorder with him. I was always so fascinated by the various sizes and voices in that instrumental family.

The individuals mention are they still involved in how your compose music? If so, how has this made an impacted to your compositional style?

Through the years, my sister introduced me to some very interesting harmonies and "unorthodox" modulations that I still use to this day. Whenever I want to get out of a modulation "rut," I always call upon her improvisational skills as well as, her understanding of complex harmony to move me forward. My mother has always been moved, physically, by music. When it makes her feel good she will "bop" her head and sways her body back and forth. This led me to compose, music that makes the audience "feel." I hope that the auditory experience evokes an instinctive physiological response from my music.

How did you develop an interest in composition?

From a very young age, I was always fascinated with a composer's ability to pull beautiful sounds from the chaos that is possible, with all the notes available to us. I started to notice that little things that I added to recordings, I play along with, made me think, "Well, that sounds cool!"; why didn't the composer include this...?" Eventually, I started to arrange and transcribe music for wind band, which led me to composing in the same medium. [My interest in composing for wind band], were all of the colors and timbres that were possible in wind bands that attracted me to compose for this group first.

What composers have influenced the way you compose, and why did these composers affect your compositional development?

The composers that most influenced me from most to least would be: Gustav Holst, Stevie Wonder, Percy Grainger, Stephen Reich and Billy Strayhorn.

Holst's ability to write so transparently for large orchestras, while not being afraid to include rarely used instruments such as the Bass Oboe or Alto flute (The Planets) to evoke a specific Timbre has definitely led me to create "new" tonal mixtures and to the use of near-obsolete instruments to get the sound I want.

Stevie Wonder's unapologetic use of Maj7ths always caught my attention. Mr. Wonder has to be one of the major reasons I love and make much use of the M7 so frequently.

Like Holst, Percy Grainger's ability (although centered around the wind band instead of the orchestra) to compose in a very transparent manner was always of interest to me. In addition, his love of the single reed blend spoke to me, and the instruments, I perform on regularly.

Mr. Reich's minimalist music, with its elegant repetition and ability to morph to a new section effortlessly, always reminded me of many forms of music from the African Diaspora. His music creates this atmospheric fantasy world. Wonderful stuff! He also calls upon "unusual" instrumentation.

Billy Strayhorn's ability to arrange so profusely while keeping uniqueness was special to me. Some of his melodies still are not surpassed in their Melancholy quality and complex way they are built. His melodies flowed so easily yet, when you look at them on page, many of his motives went "wildly" from key to key!

As a clarinet player, how has this allowed you to establish a unique voice compositionally?

Well First, The clarinet is, in many ways, three voices in one instrument. Performing on the instrument has forced me to always consider the character/timbre of each specific note on each specific instrument and the emotion that will evoke. The clarinet family is a huge group, ranging from the soprano tessitura all the way down to Contrabass. Experimenting with this large instrumental group has led me to unapologetically compose along familial lines: Even when writing for a large wind band I try my best to maintain kindred timbres i.e., melodic/harmonic lines being shared throughout the range of the instrument family. For example, I may give the clarinet section (from E-flat all the way to contrabass) the melody and spread it across four or more octaves instead of the usual blending of various instruments across the ensemble. Because of the clarinet's vast dynamic range and differing personalities, I call upon any instrument I compose for to be very expressive.

How did you come up with the title?

I wanted a name that would evoke "shininess", a "Spectacle". What is more of a spectacle and Shiny than a Star in the sky! Because the piece is a gradual

accelerando, "fyr"(the old English word for Fire) seemed most appropriate. A grand fire starts out with the unified flicker of a match and ignites from there into a blazing "inferno". The heat (fire) of FyrStar increases throughout the work as the tempo and rhythmic intensity is enhanced. I first saw this word from a comic book character from my youth and it always resonated with me.

Throughout your musical development what were someone of your major influences and why?

Attending church had a lasting influence on my music. Gospel music has always had the ability to call upon, not only the spiritual aspect of worship but also caused a physical reaction. This genre's ability to create and increase palpable energy in a room always spoke to me. Though I have yet to compose a Gospel tune, with each tune I write, I am looking to affect my audience in a similar spiritual, mental, physical and emotional way.

Being involved in Wind bands most of my life has definitely affected my compositional outlook: All of those disparate tone qualities working together to create "one" sound were always magical to me! Unlike the orchestra, this ensemble could be put in motion outside (movement and music again!), because of its immense volume potential; could just as easily produce a breathtakingly translucent pianissimo in an indoor setting that rivals any philharmonic.

Oddly enough, vocal a capella groups have had a huge impact on my music: I was always surprised by the human voice's ability to blend so effortlessly and tune so "perfectly" when involved in very close harmonies. I seek this (and have found it) with wind instruments.

What composers have influenced your style of writing?

Ron Nelson has been a major influence in my style especially, when it comes to composing for winds. He was never afraid of calling upon virtuosic playing--to get his point across. He has a flare for layers on top of layers while still allowing for clarity between those layers. It never sounds jumbled or chaotic! Minimalist composer Phillip glass and his repetitive, methodical writing style are trance inducing. There is an interesting darkness to his music while still feeling familiar and somewhat "easy" on the ears

What inspired you to focus on composition? Who were your mentors while developing your own voice?

I was inspired by the fact that EVERY culture on this planet had its own unique way of communicating to the world through music. Yet, they are all speaking to the same

five senses that human beings work with! I wanted to be a part of writing in that "language".

Dr Lynn Hutcheson (former composition instructor at MTSU, deceased) had a huge influence on me even in high school. He always pushed me to write what I heard in my head/heart instead of trying to fit into preset ideas and what others thought of as "good" music. Not everyone is going to like my music but I am writing for those who want to hear Raymond Ridley, not some copied knockoff of great composers of the past!

Terry Jolley (former assistant band director at MTSU) always gave me, and still does give me great advice on how to proceed in the business end of things.

W.E.B. DuBois, coining the phrase the “talented tenth,” and of ‘double consciousness’, during your musical studies, was there time, you felt, as though a part of your heritage was excluded? If so, in what way did this have an impact on your future development as a composer?

I did notice that certain aspects of my playing ability and sound that I may have picked in a “non traditional” way had to be almost suppressed in order to fit the mold. Many of the traditions I brought from the church did not fit so easily within the classical world. It definitely made me more adamant about whatever I wrote would be authentic to the sounds that I want to hear. I love playing others works because I hope they are writing who they are into the music--I compose from that standpoint.

In the prologue in Robert Ellison’s book, the *Invisible Man* (1952), Ellison writes, “I am an invisible man...I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me.” How would you relate Ellison’s statement, to the exposure of African-American compositions, to audiences and in schools of music?

First, I get the since that African American classical compositions definitely do not get nearly enough exposure. Part of it could be the composers themselves not getting their music to certain audiences, but another aspect that plays into black Classical music getting out there is overall acceptance from the entire classical community. Not that “acceptance” is a requirement: If more and more persons of color choose to prolifically compose classical music, a critical mass [audiences] would have no choice but [experience performances compositions of African-America composers] to occur [regularly].

APPENDIX C

FYRSTAR (2009) LIVE RECORDING (DMA RECITAL)

FyrStar (2009) live recording is attach as supplemental material.

APPENDIX D

FYRSTAR (2009) FULL SCORE

FyrStar (2009) full score is attach as supplemental material.