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"Gene Koshinski's new book and collection of pieces is the book that I have always wanted to write. It is a comprehensive guide to two-mallet marimba playing, and collection of ten wonderful compositions. In part one - Foundation - he provides a solid, foundational approach to two-mallet playing, that has a ton of good, practical, and well thought out advice, as well as a sound-based approach that is exactly what I want my students to learn and know. In part two - Repertoire - there are ten fascinating compositions. I recommend you listen to all of them before you read a word of section one, close your eyes, open your ears, and concentrate on the fact that you are hearing some amazingly varied and expressive marimba music played on a beautiful sounding marimba by a great musician. Then remind yourself that it was all played with ONLY two mallets."

There is great information and music here for many different levels of players. I will personally enjoy getting to know this book and the music of Gene Koshinski for many, many years."

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**GORDON STOUT**

PROFESSOR OF PERCUSSION, ITHACA COLLEGE,  
PERCUSSION ARTS SOCIETY HALL OF FAME

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"Finally we have them all together, the excellent, energetic, and virtuoso pieces by Gene Koshinski - a masterful contribution to the contemporary marimba literature."

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**NEBOJSA ZIVKOVIC**

COMPOSER AND PERCUSSION CONCERT ARTIST,  
PROFESSOR OF PERCUSSION, KONSERVATORIUM WIEN

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"It's been really exciting to watch the explosion in four mallet marimba playing over the past several decades. During that time, though, my own passions have remained stubbornly old school. As much as I love playing four-mallet marimba, I'm still amazed at what can be done with one pair of sticks or mallets. I've been a big fan of what Gene has been doing to throw the spotlight back on the often neglected art of two-mallet playing. Two is a wonderful new addition to the field. It lays out great advice for improving your two mallet technique and his new solos will most definitely expand your idea of what's possible on the instrument."

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**TOM SHERWOOD**

PRINCIPAL PERCUSSIONIST, ATLANTA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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"Gene is truly thinking forward on a subject that too many percussionists consider spent, done, and already fully explored. While there is much discussion and development surrounding four-mallet and six-mallet repertoire, Gene beautifully reminds us of what ground we can still cover in two-mallet performance and composition. It is easy to assume that less mallets would equal less mallet music, but I am happy to tell you that there is so MUCH here. TWO is a welcome addition to our pedagogy; I am thrilled to see a platform to further develop two-mallet study. This is not only a method we need, but want."

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**CASEY CANGELOSI**

PERCUSSIONIST, COMPOSER



# TWO

## A COLLECTION OF CONCERT PIECES FOR TWO-MALLET MARIMBA SOLO

WITH A COMPREHENSIVE  
GUIDE TO TECHNIQUE AND  
PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

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PART ONE: FOUNDATION

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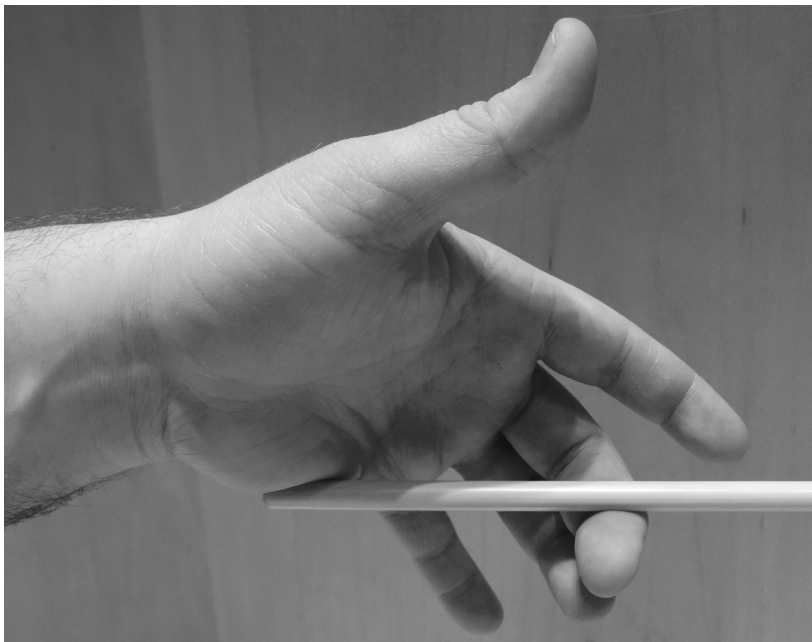
# GENERATING THE SOUND

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## GRIP

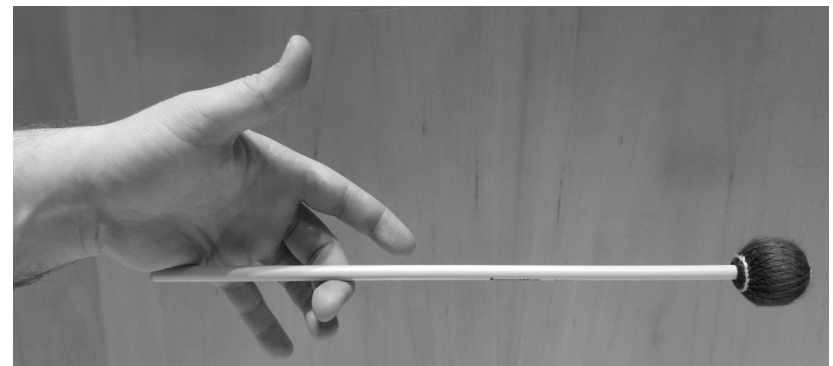
To reiterate, everyone's body is different, and the hands are certainly no exception. As an educator, I have seen a wide variety of students with vastly different hands. I always suggest to my students that they maintain the principles of my grip while trying to match my hands as closely as possible. However, one should not ignore the individualized makeup of their hands. My hands are fairly "average" in size, so the information presented here should be attainable by most without the need for much alteration.

To begin, place the mallet in your hand by resting the very back of the mallet (13" handle) at the edge of the palm and allowing the shaft to lay across the first joint of the middle finger (demonstrated in the following two pictures).

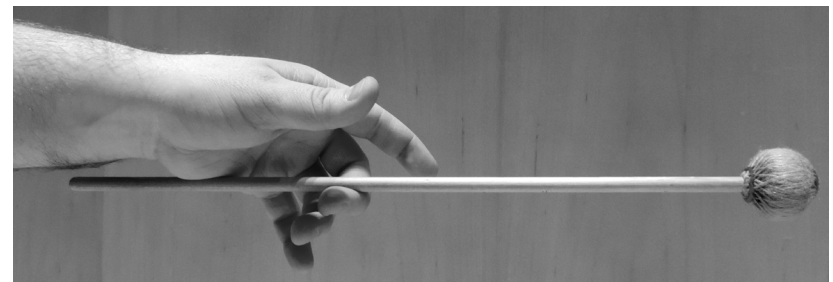


The mallet should naturally rest in this position without the need to add more fingers. This position demonstrates where the weight of the mallet is being

maintained - in the center of the hand. Of course you will feel gravity pulling down on the head of the mallet, but your middle finger should hold the key to counterbalancing the weight.



If you choose to perform with longer handles, choke up until you find a place on the stick where the mallet feels most balanced in your hand. Typically, this will be where the back edge of your palm is approximately 13" from the center of the core. This is precisely why I choose to play with 13" handles. It simply eliminates the excess shaft that extends beyond your hand. The picture below shows the open grip with a 16" handle.



It is important to note that the amount in which you choke up on a mallet may vary depending on your particular hand size, weight of the mallet core, and/or particular musical demands. On a shorter (13") handle, I usually play with the back of the mallet at the edge of the palm, however I do occasionally choke up for particular musical demands (faster passages, for example). Next, bring your index finger and

PART ONE: FOUNDATION

# EXPRESSING THE SOUND

## PLAYING AREAS

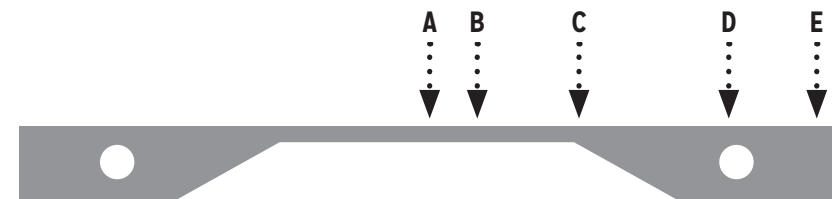
The playing area is the spot in which the mallet makes contact with the bar. This precise spot where the bar is struck directly impacts tone quality. Most other instrumentalists spend years and years working on tone production, but the fact is that for marimbists, it's relatively easy to have a good tone quality. It certainly takes time and detailed focus to define and retain a good tone quality at the instrument, but relative to many other instruments, it's a fairly straight forward process. Provided the performer has a solid understanding of proper grip and stroke, tone quality is mostly defined by where the bar is struck. Those performers that have a clear and consistent tone understand which sound is produced at each playing area. They are also active listeners at all times and strive to improve tone quality on a daily basis.

There are many places where the bar can be struck, but for me, there are five distinct options: directly in the center, slightly off-center, between the center and the node, on the node, and on the edge of the bar. The node, in this case, is the point of least vibration in the bar (the place where the cord runs through the bar). The diagram and chart to the right describe each playing spot and the sound that is produced.

All five playing spots in the chart are viable options. In the right circumstance, each of these can be the best option for a beating spot due to a particular technical or musical demand. Many marimbists, such as myself, utilize the entire range of possibilities to sculpt their sound at the keyboard. Having these five options, instead of just one or two, provides me with the opportunity to expand the expressive range of my performance.

For most of my playing, I strike the bars slightly off-center (particularly in the low register) because I prefer the slightly more focused sound. During faster passages I play the upper manual (accidentals) on the edge (the very edge) which produces a comparable tone to playing just off-center. Utilizing these two playing spots in tandem allows for the tone to remain consistent between the lower and upper manual.

There are occasions where I choose to play directly in the center, particularly in the middle and upper registers. Playing in the center all the time, particularly in the low end, may "muddy" up the sound, especially during fast passages that require rhythmic clarity. It is important to note that since the bars are so small in the highest octave, I almost always play these bars in the center. Playing anywhere else on the bars in the highest octave compromises the tone too much.



PLAYING SPOT		SOUND QUALITY
A	<b>CENTER</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complex mixture of a fundamental &amp; overtones</li> <li>• Somewhat of a "fuzzy" and "unclear" sound</li> </ul>
B	<b>OFF-CENTER</b> <i>Listen to find this spot throughout the instrument</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full &amp; rich sound</li> <li>• Provides for the most resonance</li> <li>• More focus on &amp; clarity of the fundamental</li> <li>• Generally the best playing spot</li> </ul>
C	<b>BETWEEN CENTER AND NODE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moving away from the fundamental</li> <li>• Thinner sound</li> <li>• More articulate than playing "off-center"</li> <li>• Less resonance</li> </ul>
D	<b>ON THE NODE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on harmonics</li> <li>• Lack of body &amp; fundamental</li> <li>• Very thin sound</li> </ul>
E	<b>ON THE EDGE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Comparable to playing "off-center"</li> <li>• Often used on upper manual (accidentals)</li> </ul>

## TENUTO

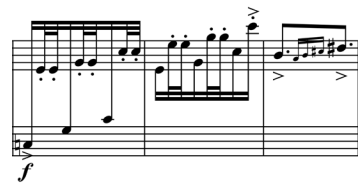
The meaning of a tenuto mark is contextual, meaning it can be interpreted differently depending on the surrounding material. It can mean that the performer should either hold the note to its full length (or sometimes longer with slight rubato), or to play the note with a slight bit of emphasis. The latter description is the one most often used in percussion literature. In this case, my typical interpretation is to add a little bit of emphasis to the note marked with a tenuto by putting a little more “weight” into the stroke. In the excerpt below, from *Prelude Nuevo*, the goal of the tenuto markings is to subtly highlight the melodic and bass line movement until a full accent is reached in measure #5.



Putting a little more weight into the stroke that corresponds to each tenuto mark will successfully highlight those notes while still reserving room for a larger expression of an accent. I perceive tenutos as existing somewhere between a normal note and an accented note.

## STACCATO

A staccato mark indicates that the length of a note should be shortened or separated. The excerpt below, from *Prelude Nuevo*, utilizes staccato marks to show the desire for very short and crisp articulations.



When I perform staccato notes, I use a high velocity staccato stroke (see “Stroke Types”) and visualize the mallet quickly pulling the sound out of just the surface of the bar.

While I mainly perform staccato notes by using a staccato stroke, I sometimes use dead strokes. A dead stroke, executed by pressing the mallet into the bar, literally shortens the note by hindering the sustain of the bar. This can be a very effective technique if used at just the right moment, but you should keep in mind that it’s a very distinct sound that, if overused, may compromise tone and one’s ability to move quickly around the instrument.

## SLUR

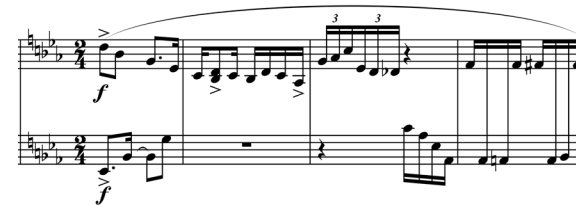
A slur in music shows a collection of notes that should be performed without separation. String players interpret a slur by taking one bow stroke for the duration of the passage. Wind players use one breath and do not tongue for the duration of a slurred passage. Slurs are also used to show a vocal line that is sung to the same syllable without re-articulation. These examples help percussionists understand the sound they should be aiming for when interpreting a slur notation.

For me, I put a little more weight on the first note of a slur (much like the initial breath of a wind player or bow stroke of a string player). For the remainder of the slur, I am conscious of connecting the material and presenting it in “one breath,” visualizing it as “one motion” or “one stroke.” I truly believe that simply thinking about it in these terms will affect the way you play it. If you can perform it in your mind, you’re likely able to perform it on the instrument (this applies to many aspects of performance). Mechanically speaking, I tend to soften up on my stroke a little and make sure the material is smooth and consistent throughout the slurred gesture. The excerpt below, from *Homage to KJ*, is a great example of a passage that would require significant thought as to how to accurately realize the slurs.



## PHRASE MARK

A similar looking notation, known as a phrase mark, shows the performer all of the notes that belong to a single phrase. This notation is a helpful marking that communicates the composers structural intent directly to the performer. The excerpt below, from *Caleidoscópico*, demonstrates the use of a phrase mark.



## STICKING

Sticking choices can make or break the accuracy of a performance. Sticking also dictates important aspects of expression such as articulation, tone quality and phrasing. When making sticking decisions, consider the options from both a technical and musical perspective and define the sticking as early as possible in the learning process (including marking it in the score). If you approach a passage with a different sticking each time, it’s similar to learning a new piece each time. In order to develop muscle memory properly, the musical material needs to be approached the same way every time.

Many young players make their sticking choices based on what’s most comfortable at the moment. My personal approach is to evaluate and decide on a sticking based on what the music calls for, not what necessarily feels comfortable to me at the moment. If there is a sticking option that is clearly the best way to approach the passage, I will practice it until it feels comfortable to me. Furthermore, it is important to make sticking decisions while considering the ultimate performance tempo.

Generally, I use alternating sticking the most in my two-mallet performance. However, I employ combinations of single, double, and even triple stroke stickings

**5** I suggest a soft mallet with a heavy weight that utilizes a rubber core, wrapped with yarn. Personally, I use Innovative Percussion, model NJZIR (Nebojsa Zivkovic signature series) with handles cut to 13 inches (measured from center of core). See “Mallet Choice” in Section 1 for additional information.

## II. “WALKIN’ ON THE WHITE”

**1** This movement requires the performer to use space/silence to help shape the written material. Proper attention to the duration of silences and varying rests underneath fermatas plays an important role in making the overall pacing of the piece coherent. In a related note, the overall pacing is up to the performer. Some gestures may move slower or faster than the marked tempo (which is merely a guideline). The performer should strive for shapes and phrases that make musical sense.

**2** **Mildly Free, Somewhat Tentative, Yet Deliberate**  
 ♩ ≈ 110

*mp*

*Whenever possible, keep mallets on the keyboard during silences*

*Rhythmic Gliss: sweep mallets between notes (mallets stay on keyboard at all times)*

For the duration of the piece, all staccato notes are to be played as dead strokes (stopping the mallet on the bar as you strike). Whenever possible, mallets should be left on the keyboard after performing a dead stroke. In measure 2 (shown above), the performer glisses between the written notes, in rhythm, without lifting the mallets off the keyboard.

**3** There are many glissandi in the piece. The performer should vary the character of the various glissandi to match the gesture(s) they are attached too. For example, use a softer/slower glissando moving toward a soft passage and a louder/faster glissando connecting to a louder gesture. A double glissando (both mallets) is indicated by two separate lines. If no clear starting note is notated, you should sneak the gliss in from the general register in which it is marked. See “Glissandi” in Section 1 for additional information.

**4** This movement has potential for a theatrical element. The performer doesn’t necessarily need to choreograph motions or become too involved in the theatrical aspect, however, subtle theatrical contributions may add to the overall impact of the piece. For example, one could use short “choppy” strokes to show the steps on the ice throughout the piece (such as measures 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, and so on). Or, the performer may want to exploit the various “falls” in the piece (such as measure 8) by choreographing a visual representation. These are just a few examples.

**5** I suggest a hard mallet with a light weight that utilizes a rubber core, wrapped with yarn or cord. It is also important that the mallet produces an effective glissando (typically a tightly wrapped mallet). Personally, I use Innovative Percussion, model RS30 with handles cut to 13 inches (measured from center of core). See “Mallet Choice” in Section 1 for additional information.

## III. “SPLASHIN’ IN THE BLUE”

**1** Much of this movement requires the performer to practice with each hand separately. Accuracy in certain measures (such as 4, 5, 8, etc) relies on the understanding of the path and motion of each individual mallet. See “Independence (Interdependence)” in Section 1 for additional information.

**2** There are many untraditional stickings throughout the movement. In all cases, the stickings merely facilitate the patterns on the keyboard and should not interrupt the marked shapes and articulation. This requires the performer to develop enough technical facility to fully control multiple strokes on each hand.

**3** **Moto Perpetuo**  
 ♩ ≈ 200

*mf*

The opening presents some difficult note accuracy issues. I find it’s best to center your body at the same specific place each time (make a note of this spot in the score). Maintaining a central reference point will allow your muscle memory to retain accurate information about your motion. In addition, I work very hard to keep my mallets as low as possible in this passage which helps streamline the path of each mallet.

**4**

*p* *mp*

B R L L R R L R L R L R L R R R B

In passages similar to this one, the tenuto marks should be performed by putting a little extra weight into the stroke - performed somewhere in between an unaccented note and an accented note. There should also be a slight focus at the beginning of each slur. See “Tenuto” and “Slur” in Section 1 for additional information.

**5**

*mf*

The grace note in measure 15 (and other similar bars) is best performed as a thirty-second note between the two sixteenth notes. The grace note itself should be played a little softer than the primary note that follows, with a slight emphasis on the beginning of the slur in beat two. This requires the performer to have sufficient control of the double stroke.

**6**

*fp*

# HOMAGE TO KJ

RHAPSODY ON THEMES AND MOTIFS FROM KEITH JARRETT'S IMPROVISATION, "PART 1," FROM HIS ALBUM *THE KÖLN CONCERT*

GENE KOSHINSKI (ASCAP)

**Broad & Expressive, with Passionate Rubato**

♩ ≈ 60

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs).  
System 1 (measures 1-6): Features a series of triplets in the right hand and a steady bass line. Dynamic markings include *ff* at the beginning and a crescendo leading to *ff* at the end.  
System 2 (measures 7-10): Includes a 7:2 polyrhythm in the right hand and a 3:2 polyrhythm in the bass. Dynamic markings include *p* and *ff*.  
System 3 (measures 11-14): Features a 7:2 polyrhythm and a 5:4 polyrhythm. Dynamic markings include *mp* and *ff*.  
System 4 (measures 15-18): Continues with triplets and a 3:2 polyrhythm. Dynamic markings include *ff*.  
Performance instructions: "Accelerando.....", "Holding Back.....", and "Pesante" are placed above the score.