

Steven Snowden

Mobbing Calls

Flute and Percussion

Mobbing Calls

Commissioned by
Kristin Hayes and Eric Peterson

Approximate duration: 11 min.

1 - Finches 2 - Bluegills 3 - Meerkats

Program Notes:

One of the things that I find really interesting about flute/percussion duo is that their traditional roles of musical expression within larger ensembles seem to be on opposite ends of the spectrum. While the flute is typically associated with delicate lyricism, percussion is often charged with conveying rhythmic aggression. When Eric and Kristin first approached me about writing a piece for them, I immediately knew that I wanted to subvert those expectations. However, rather than trying to simply reverse those associations, I wanted to explore ways of combining extra-musical inspirations that composers have traditionally assigned to these instruments. Historically, the flute has been closely associated with birdcalls and percussion has been a symbol of conflict. I thought a union of these two disparate concepts could prove to be particularly interesting.

On the surface, these two subjects seem to have very little to do with each other, but after surfing Wikipedia for a while, I came across a uniquely aggressive behavior exhibited by a seemingly innocuous bird, the finch. When an outside threat to their young is perceived, the adults will sound an alert to other finches in the area. This mobbing call triggers an organized response in which the predator is repeatedly attacked until it eventually retreats. After a bit more research, I found a few other animals that exhibited a similar response to predatory threats and was inspired to make this a multi-movement work based upon the behavior of three very different animals. The mobbing behavior of finches is meant to deter and distract the threat, in which the adults take turns dive-bombing and flying into the face of the predator. Bluegills will band closely together in order to make themselves appear to be a larger animal and gradually nudge the threat out of their territorial waters. Meerkats employ an organized two-pronged approach against cobras, with individuals taking turns to taunt the snake and dodge its strikes, while the rest of the group attacks it from behind.

Percussion Notation Key

The diagram illustrates the notation for various percussion instruments and techniques, organized into two systems. The first system includes:

- trashcan lid:** Represented by an asterisk (*) on a treble clef staff.
- metal mixing bowls:** Represented by a series of notes on a treble clef staff.
- sizzle cymbal:** Represented by an asterisk (*) on a treble clef staff.
- wood block:** Represented by a square symbol on a treble clef staff.

The second system includes:

- opera gong:** Represented by an asterisk (*) on a treble clef staff.
- water bowl:** Represented by a circle with a horizontal line through it on a treble clef staff.
- crotales:** Represented by a note with a sharp sign (#) on a treble clef staff.
- whistle written pitch (in any octave):** Represented by an asterisk (*) on a bass clef staff.
- metal pipes:** Represented by notes on a bass clef staff, with two groups labeled '1' and '2'.

Additional techniques are indicated by text labels: "with bow" and "struck with mallet" are shown on a treble clef staff, and "with bow" is also shown on a bass clef staff.

Percussion equipment required

Three octave vibraphone
Two short metal pipes
Five metal mixing bowls
Sizzle cymbal
Chinese opera gong
Woodblock
Two Crotales (G and G#)
Trashcan lid

Mallets etc.

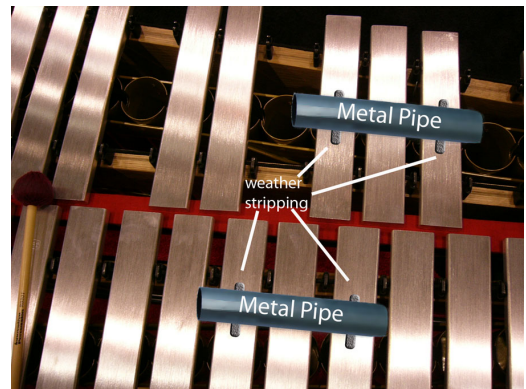
Three soft mallets
Two medium soft mallets
Two medium hard mallets
Two hard mallets
Bass bow
Three marbles
Kick pedal

Percussion Performance Notes:

Metal pipes:

These are used only in mvt. 1 and don't necessarily need to be pipes, so long as the resulting sound is metallic and does not produce a sustained ring. If pipes are used, they may need to be stuffed with paper or foam so that they don't ring beyond the rhythmic value of an eighth note. ("clank" rather than "ding") The pipes should be placed on the vibes as indicated in this diagram and will need to rest on some kind of foam or rubber. This will keep them from rolling off of the vibes and prevent them from knocking against the bars of the vibes when struck. The pipes are indicated by X noteheads and their pitch location indicates the area upon which the pipe is to be struck.

The spike articulation above the X noteheads simply serves to make them more visible at a glance and further distinguish them from notes that are played on the bars of the vibraphone.



Water bowl:

This technique is achieved with a medium to large metal mixing bowl, three marbles and a small amount of water. The bowl should be held with fingertips around the flat surface of the bottom of the bowl and gently tilted in a circular motion so that marbles move around the bottom of the bowl while remaining partially submerged. This will produce a subtle sloshing as well as a somewhat unpredictable pitch bend effect in the sound emanating from the bowl itself.

In this example, the bowl should be tilted so that the marbles slowly roll for the duration of beat two, beats four and one of the next bar and beats three and four of the last bar. (corresponding to the duration of the dashed line)



At measure 16 of mvt. 2, more speed is added to the marbles so that eventually leave the water and ride on the inner wall of the bowl around measure 19. (It's ok if not all of the marbles make it up to the inner wall) At this point a steady speed is maintained so that the marbles continue their trajectory on the inner wall of the bowl. From measure 30-32, the speed should be gradually decreased so that the marbles slowly settle to the bottom of the bowl.

Metal mixing bowls:

Five metal mixing bowls are required for mvts. 2 and 3. I've found that generally, the cheaper and flimsier the bowls are, the better they sound for this context. In mvt. 2 they are played with the rim up so that they produce a sustained tone. It's possible that they may sound best when

struck on the inner wall, but striking them on the rim may also produce satisfactory results. In mvt. 3 they are played with the rim down and struck on their flat surface. (where they would normally sit if used for their intended purpose... like making a cake or something) Care should be taken in this movement not to overpower the flute. It may be necessary to use very light mallets.

Chinese opera gong:

This gong should be fairly small in order to not totally overpower the flute and it should be hung from a stand. It should also produce a characteristic pitch bend when struck in the center at an mf dynamic and above.

Mouth wah:

This effect is achieved by opening and closing your mouth over the vibrating bar. The air inside your mouth will resonate sympathetically with the overtones of the bar and produce a kind of wah-wah guitar pedal effect.

Crotales:

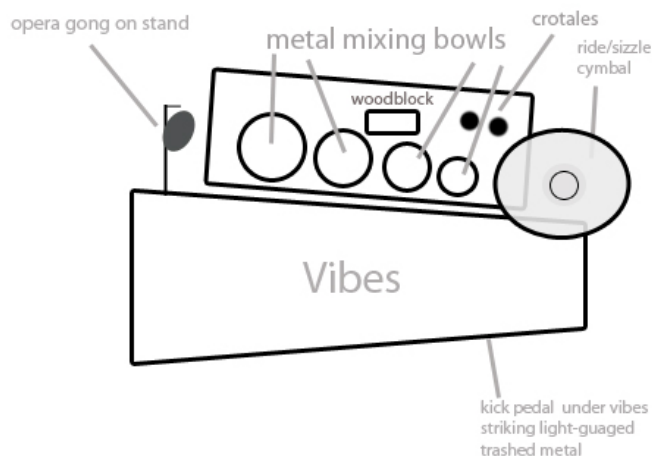
Only two Crotales are required for this piece (G and G# of the upper octave). Rather than being mounted on stands, they can be played while sitting on a flat surface.

Whistling:

If the player is unable to whistle, these notes (at the end of mvt. 2) can be bowed on the vibraphone.

Trash can lid with kick pedal:

This can be any kind of "noisy" metallic sound produced using a kick pedal. Its timbre should be similar to that of a beat up trash can lid with no sustained ringing.



Here's one possible percussion setup that may help facilitate the use of multiple instruments in mvts. 2 and 3.

Full Score

Steven Snowden

Mobbing Calls

Mvt. 1 - Finches

Mobbing Calls

1. Finches

Steven Snowden

$\text{♩} = 60$

Restrained yet
foreshadowing
extreme aggression

fltr.

Flute

mf 3 *ffp* *ff* *ff* *p* *ff* *pp*

Vibraphone

med. soft mallets

dead stick

pp *ff* *pp* *ff* *pp*

Detailed description: This block contains the first six measures of the piece. The Flute part starts with a quarter rest, followed by a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) marked *mf*. The next measure has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (C5) marked *ffp*. The third measure has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (D5) marked *ff*. The fourth measure has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (E5) marked *ff*. The fifth measure has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (F5) marked *p*. The sixth measure has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (G5) marked *ff*. The piece ends with a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (A5) marked *pp*. The Vibraphone part has a quarter rest in the first measure, followed by a quarter note (G4) in the second measure marked *pp*. The third measure has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (A4) marked *ff*. The fourth measure has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (B4) marked *pp*. The fifth measure has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (C5) marked *ff*. The sixth measure has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (D5) marked *pp*. The Flute part includes a *fltr.* (flute trill) over the first measure of the second system.

10 Shrill, Incessant $\text{♩} = 138$

Fl.

tr *mp* *p* *pp* *ff*

Vib.

p *mp* *p* *ff*

hard mallets

Detailed description: This block contains measures 7-10. The Flute part starts with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note (G4) marked *mp*. The next measure has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (A4) marked *p*. The third measure has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (B4) marked *pp*. The fourth measure has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (C5) marked *ff*. The piece ends with a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (D5) marked *ff*. The Vibraphone part has a quarter rest in the first measure, followed by a quarter note (G4) in the second measure marked *p*. The third measure has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (A4) marked *mp*. The fourth measure has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (B4) marked *p*. The fifth measure has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (C5) marked *ff*. The piece ends with a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (D5) marked *ff*. The Flute part includes a *tr* (trill) over the first measure of the second system.

Fl.

Vib.

hard mallets

Detailed description: This block contains measures 11-14. The Flute part has a quarter rest in the first measure, followed by a quarter note (G4) in the second measure. The third measure has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (A4). The fourth measure has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (B4). The fifth measure has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (C5). The sixth measure has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (D5). The piece ends with a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (E5). The Vibraphone part has a quarter rest in the first measure, followed by a quarter note (G4) in the second measure. The third measure has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (A4). The fourth measure has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (B4). The fifth measure has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (C5). The sixth measure has a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (D5). The piece ends with a quarter rest followed by a quarter note (E5). The Flute part includes a *tr* (trill) over the first measure of the second system.

13 3

Fl.

Vib.

13 3

Fl.

Vib.

15

Fl.

Vib.

15

Fl.

Vib.

17

Fl.

Vib.

17

Fl.

Vib.

19

Fl.

Vib.

19

Fl.

Vib.

4

22

Fl.

Vib.

25

Fl.

Vib.

mf ————— *f* ————— *ff*

27

Fl.

Vib.

Red.

29

Fl.

Vib.

32

Fl.

Vib.

35

Fl.

Vib.

37

Fl.

Vib.

p

tr

39

Fl.

Vib.

ff

p

tr

p

ff

41 (tr) *p* *p* *tr*

Fl.

Vib. *mf*

43 (tr) *ff* *mf*

Fl. *ff* *mf*

Vib. *ff*

44 *ff*

Fl. *ff*

Vib.

Full Score

Steven Snowden

Mobbing Calls
Mvt. 2 - Bluegills

Mobbing Calls

Mvt. 2 - Bluegills

Steven Snowden

Mysterious, curious ♩ = 56

multi. #5 * no vib.



Fl.

* Multiphonic fingerings come from James Pellerite's *A Modern Guide to Fingerings for the Flute*

RH water bowl

Perc.

LH bow and soft mallet

Vib.

Ped. (sempre)

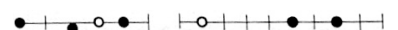
multi. #2



Fl.

(quarter-tone trill) *tr*

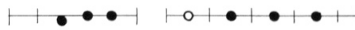
multi. #42



Perc.

Vib.

multi. #56



Fl.

* gradually increase speed so that marbles ride on the inner wall of the bowl

Perc.

Vib.

Mobbing Calls
Mvt. 2 - Blugills

19 **20** ord. vib.

Fl. *p* *mp* *pp* *p*

* maintain speed so that marbles continue to ride inner wall

Perc.

Vib.

25

Fl. *mp* *pp* *n* *mp* *n* *p* *mp*

tr

Perc.

Vib.

30

Fl. *n* *pp* *mp* *pp* *p* *n*

* stop adding momentum to marbles. Allow them to settle to bottom of bowl

* maintain steady and slow circular motion once marbles settle at bottom of bowl

Perc.

Vib.

37 Placid
no vibrato (match tone with vibes)

36

Fl. *p*

Perc.

Vib. *p*

Mobbing Calls
Mvt. 2 - Bluegills

43

Fl. *mp*

Perc.

Vib. *mp*

51

Fl. *mf* *pp*

Perc.

Vib. *mp*

increasing vibrato

53 **mysterious, ritualistic**
fingering B, but slowly bend pitch to A# and back to B
(doesn't need to be exactly in time)

set down water bowl

Pick up 1 med soft mallet and 1 hard mallet for RH

switch LH to 2 med. soft mallets

56

Fl. *ppp*

Perc.

Vib. *p*

(quarter-tone trill) *tr*

(quarter-tone trill) *tr*

n *p*

Mobbing Calls
Mvt. 2 - Bluegills

60 (tr)

Fl. *n p slithering mp p pp p mp pp*

Perc.

Vib.

63 suddenly gleaming

timbre trill*
(*ref. Crumb
Vox Balanae)

Fl. *f f*

Perc. *ff mf ff mf*

Vib. *mf*

65

Fl. *p mp f ff*

Perc. *ff mf*

Vib.

Mobbing Calls
Mvt. 2 - Bluegills

68 cantabile, adrift in the eddy

67

Fl. *f* *>mf* *f* *<ff* *>f*

Perc. *ff* *mf*

Vib. *f*

70

Fl.

Perc.

Vib.

73

Fl.

Perc.

Vib. *mp*

Mobbing Calls
Mvt. 2 - Bluegills

77 **79 placid**
no vib.

Fl. *pp* *p* *n* *p*

Perc. *mp* *p* *pp*

Vib. switch LH to bow *p* *n* *p* whistle (no vibrato) whistle

82

Fl. *n* *p* *n* *n*

Perc.

Vib. *n* *p* *n* *p* mouth wah

Full Score

Steven Snowden

Mobbing Calls
Mvt. 3 - Meerkats

Mobbing Calls

Mvt. 3 - Meerkats

Steven Snowden

Thorny ♩ = 102

Flute

f

med. hard mallets

Percussion

f

Vibraphone

f

4

Fl.

p *f*

6

Perc.

Vib.

p *f*

7

Fl.

Perc.

Vib.

9 14

Fl. *mp* *f*

Perc. *p*

Vib.

11

Fl.

Perc. *f*

Vib. *f*

14

Fl. *p* *ff* *p* *ff* *pp*

Perc.

Vib. *p* *ff*

Jet Whistle 17

15

18

Fl. *pp* *mp* 3

Perc. *p*

Vib. *mf*

24

22

Fl. *pp* *ff* *pp* *mp* *pp* pizz. tongue

Perc.

Vib. *mp* *p*

27

Fl. *ff* *ff* *pp* *mp* pizz. tongue

Perc.

Vib. *mf*

♩ = 82 Coy

34 (← ♩ ♩ = ♩ →)

31

Fl. *pp* *p* *pp* *mp* *ppp*

Perc. *p*

Vib. *mp*

37

Fl. *mp* *pp* *mp* *pp* *mf* *p*

Perc. *p*

Vib. *mp*

44

Fl. *f* *mp* *ff* 6

Perc. *f* *p*

Vib. *f* *mp*

17 48

Fl. *fltr.*

Perc.

Vib.

pp *f* *p* *mf*

choke

53

Fl.

Perc.

Vib.

pp *mf* *p* *ff* *p* *ff*

harmonic trill

dead stick

p *ff* *mp*

Ped.

58

Fl.

Perc.

Vib.

pp *ff*

63

Fl.

Perc.

Vib.

ff

mp

18

68 Slightly Deranged

66

Fl.

Perc.

Vib.

f

mp

p

69

Fl.

Perc.

Vib.

Becoming Aggressive

71

Fl. *mf*

Perc.

Vib.

73

Fl. *f*

Perc. woodblock

Vib.

74

75 Antagonistic, funky ♩ = 123

Fl. *ff*

Perc. *ff*

Vib.

76

Fl.

Perc.

Vib.

20

* Finger a low B, but overblow to produce highest note possible.
 The resulting sound should be shrill and percussive with unfocused pitch.

79

Fl.

Perc.

Vib.

16

84

Fl.

Perc.

Vib.

87

21

89

Fl.

Perc.

Vib.

92

Fl.

Perc.

Vib.

pp

pp

pp

96

Fl.

Perc.

Vib.

mp

f

mp

f

mp

f

100 22

Fl. *ff* *f*

Perc. *ff* *f* *p*

Vib. *ff* *f*

104 105

Fl. *p* *mf*

Perc. *p*

Vib.

23

Musical score for measures 110-114. The score is for three instruments: Flute (Fl.), Percussion (Perc.), and Vibraphone (Vib.).

- Fl.:** Measures 110-114. The flute plays a melodic line with various articulations (accents, slurs) and dynamics. The dynamics are marked as *f* (measures 110-112) and *ff* (measures 113-114). The key signature has one flat (B-flat).
- Perc.:** Measures 110-114. The percussion part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Dynamics are marked as *mf* (measures 110-111), *f* (measures 112-113), and *ff* (measure 114). There are also some rests and specific percussion notations.
- Vib.:** Measures 110-114. The vibraphone part consists of rests in all measures.

Measure numbers 110, 111, 112, 113, and 114 are indicated at the bottom of the staves.

Musical score for measures 115-118. The score is for three instruments: Flute (Fl.), Percussion (Perc.), and Vibraphone (Vib.).

- Fl.:** Measures 115-118. The flute part features a melodic line with accents and slurs. Dynamics are marked as *ffp* (measures 115-116) and *fff* (measures 117-118). A *fltr.* (flute trill) is indicated above the notes in measure 117. Measure 118 ends with a trill-like flourish.
- Perc.:** Measures 115-118. The percussion part features a rhythmic pattern. Dynamics are marked as *ffp* (measures 115-116) and *fff* (measures 117-118). A *choke* instruction is present above the notes in measure 118.
- Vib.:** Measures 115-118. The vibraphone part consists of rests in all measures.

Measure numbers 115, 116, 117, and 118 are indicated at the bottom of the staves.