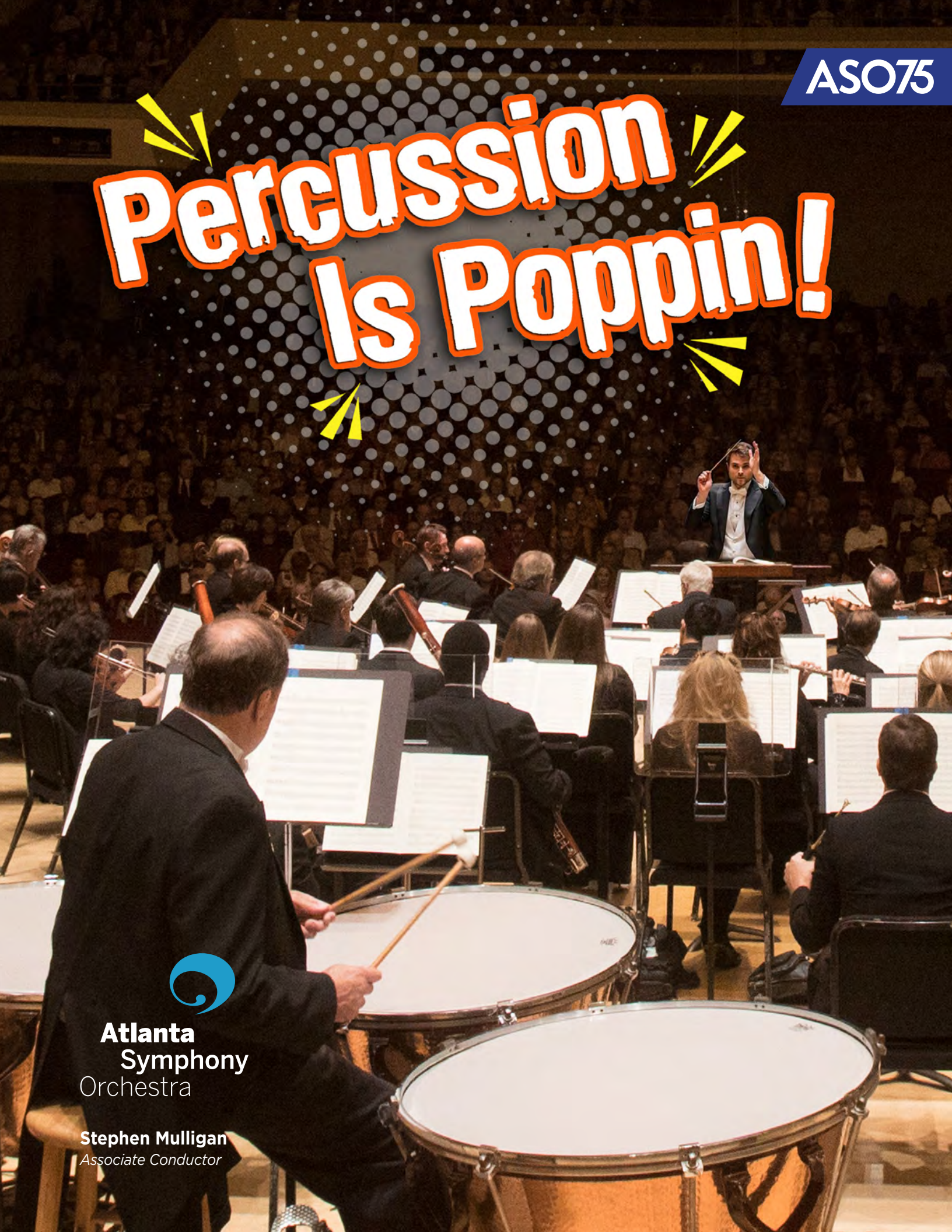


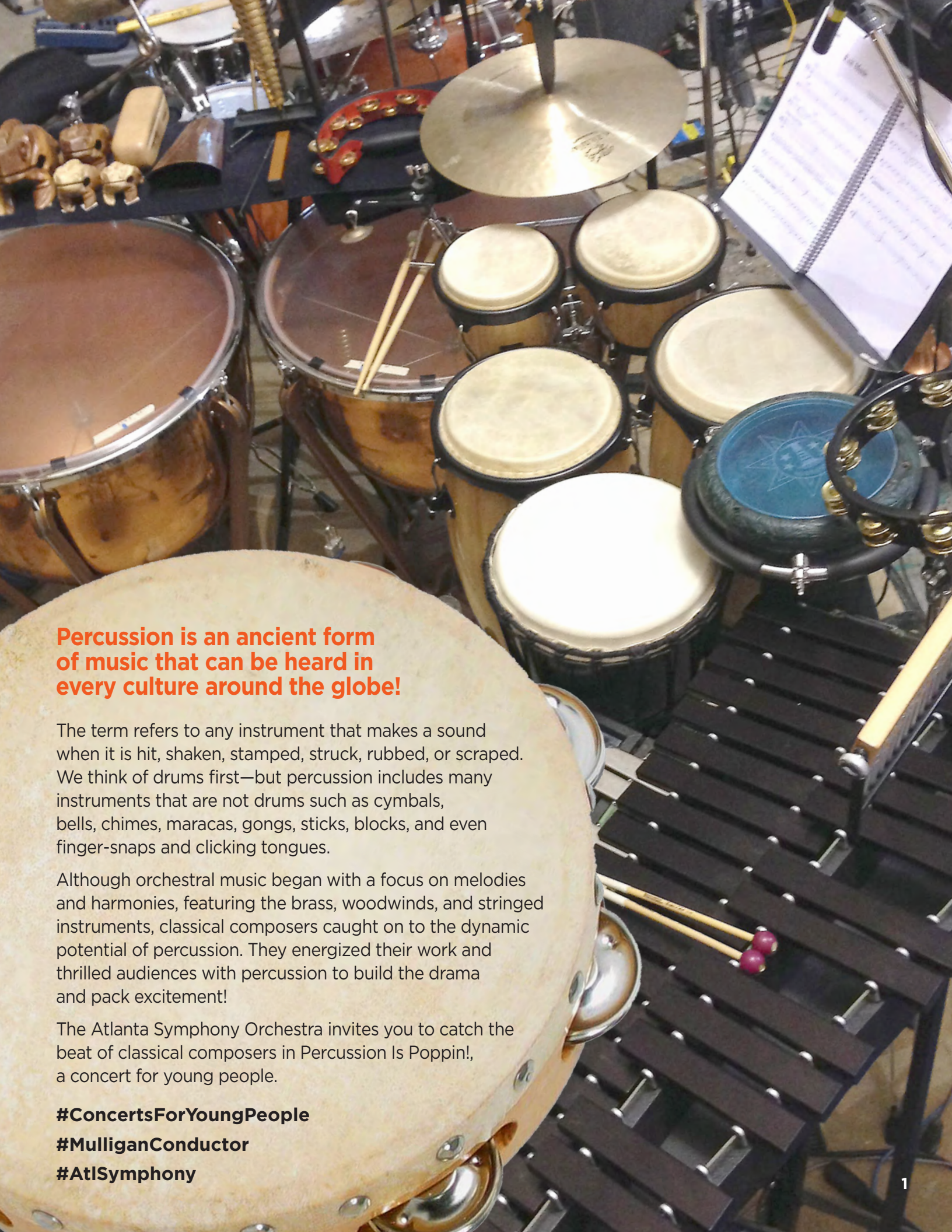
ASO75

# Percussion Is Poppin!



**Atlanta  
Symphony  
Orchestra**

**Stephen Mulligan**  
*Associate Conductor*



**Percussion is an ancient form of music that can be heard in every culture around the globe!**

The term refers to any instrument that makes a sound when it is hit, shaken, stamped, struck, rubbed, or scraped. We think of drums first—but percussion includes many instruments that are not drums such as cymbals, bells, chimes, maracas, gongs, sticks, blocks, and even finger-snaps and clicking tongues.

Although orchestral music began with a focus on melodies and harmonies, featuring the brass, woodwinds, and stringed instruments, classical composers caught on to the dynamic potential of percussion. They energized their work and thrilled audiences with percussion to build the drama and pack excitement!

The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra invites you to catch the beat of classical composers in Percussion Is Poppin!, a concert for young people.

**#ConcertsForYoungPeople**

**#MulliganConductor**

**#AtISymphony**

# Percussion in the Orchestra

The orchestra has four sections of instruments: the brass, the strings, the woodwinds, and percussion. The brass and woodwinds rely on sound created by a vibrating wind column. The strings build sound from a vibrating string. In percussion, sound is generated when an object is struck or hit.

The **percussion** section is also distinguished because it includes instruments that are *tuned* and can offer different notes, such as the xylophone or the timpani, and also instruments that are *not tuned* and have no definite pitch, such as the bass drum, cymbals, or castanets.

Another distinct aspect is that a percussionist is likely to play many instruments. The trumpet player won't switch to the tuba and a violinist won't switch to the stringed bass. A percussionist, however, is likely to play many instruments in one piece of music—and that could include the timpani, snare drum, bass drum, tomtom, congas, timbale, chimes, cymbals, gongs, triangle, sleigh-bells, cowbells, egg-shakers, maracas, or tambourine.



## Ludwig van Beethoven

German composer **Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)** [pronounced LOOD-vig VAHN BAY-toh-ven] is a musical giant who got started as a child by standing on the piano bench to reach the keys. Little Ludwig seemed to know he was headed for greatness because he practiced piano through the night and into the morning. At age 10, he gave his first public piano performance. At 11, he quit school to pursue a full-time musical career. In his early twenties, Beethoven began composing music—and eventually, he became the greatest composer of his time.

Beethoven's greatest hits include *Moonlight Sonata*, *Für Elise*, "Ode to Joy," and his famous Fifth Symphony. You might not recognize these titles, but you're sure to know the melodies. You hear them today in movies, television, cell phone ring tones—and orchestral concert halls.

Beethoven knew he was talented and wasn't afraid to tell everyone. He famously told a wealthy prince, "There are and there will be thousands of princes. There is only one Beethoven."

## Beethoven, Symphony No. 9, Movement II, "Molto Vivace"

Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, the last complete symphony that he wrote, is widely considered one of music's great masterworks. It is best known for its finale, inspired by a poem called "Ode to Joy." Apart from its beauty, the entire symphony is also admired for its statement about how people bounce back and lift themselves up.

The second movement is a "scherzo"—which is Italian for "joke"—but in music, the term means a short, energetic, vigorous and playful work, full of mischief. "Molto vivace" means "very fast and lively" in Italian.

# Percussion in the Orchestra



In the 12th century, the timpani originated as a simple kettle-shaped drum with a warm, dark, rich tone, mostly used outdoors. Soldiers in the Ottoman Empire would attach timpani to horses in their cavalries. Armies announced their arrival on the battlefield with a trumpet and a timpani. Emperors, dukes, lords, and other high-ranking individuals would travel with a timpani to signal their important status. As a result, the musicians who played the timpani got treated very well!

By the 18th and 19th centuries, classical composers brought the timpani into the symphonic sound of their orchestral works. The timpani typically appeared in pairs or larger sets, with different diameters among the drums tuned to different pitches. As many as four to eight timpani drums would be lined up at the back of the orchestra. Today, the modern timpani has evolved into a suspended kettle with a foot-clutch used to tune the surface of the drum.

The timpani bowls are made from copper or sometimes fiberglass. The heads are made from animal skin (originally goat) or synthetic materials. The timpani is played with a wooden mallet with a felt-covered head. Mallets range from soft, medium, to hard. Softer mallets work for drum rolls. Harder mallets are better for quick rhythmic passages.

Ottoman Empire timpani from 1714.



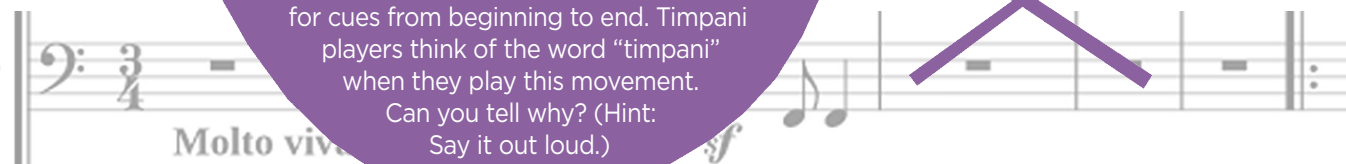
## Percussion is Poppin! in Beethoven

The scherzo in Beethoven's 9th Symphony is significant to percussion because rhythm really drives the music—and because the work features the timpani. In this work, Beethoven delivered the most complicated composition for the timpani that had yet been written. Beethoven instructed for the timpani to be tuned to a full octave interval. He also composed loud solo passages for the timpani throughout the movement. You'll see the timpanist prepare for cues from beginning to end. Timpani players think of the word "timpani!" when they play this movement.

Can you tell why? (Hint: Say it out loud.)

Quite famously, Beethoven was completely deaf when Symphony No. 9 premiered. He was known to rely on the sound vibrations in the floor to sense the progress of his music. Imagine the vibrations coming off the timpani!

Timpani in F



# Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky



Russian composer **Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)** [pronounced Peter Ily-itch Chai-COW-ski] began piano lessons when he was only 5 years old. As a young man, he considered going into the law but then decided to devote himself to his ambitions as a composer. Once he did, success came quickly for Tchaikovsky. His entertaining, tuneful music is full of feeling and drama in a way that captured audiences.

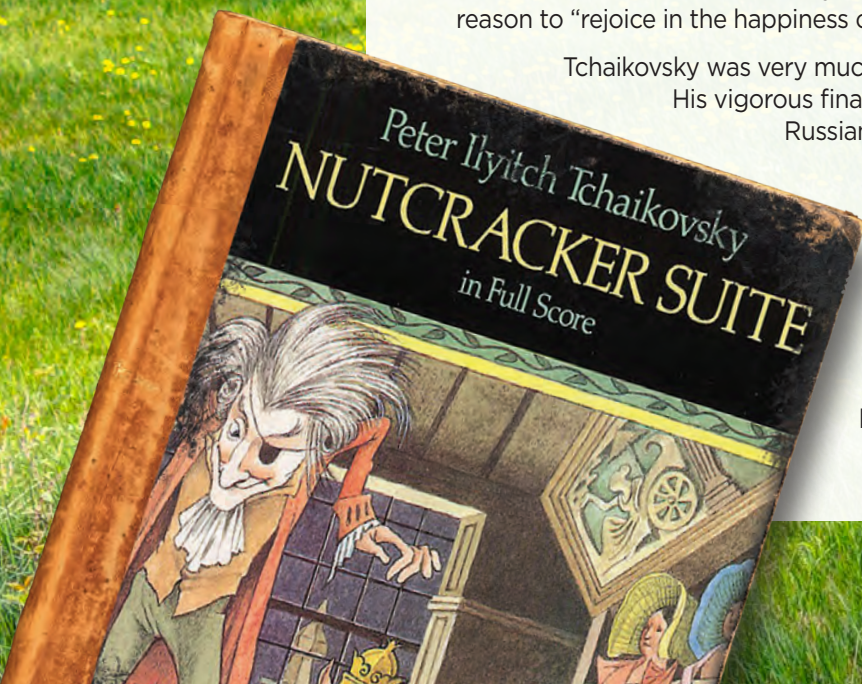
Tchaikovsky also had a commanding ability over musicians with his impressive harmonies and colorful orchestrations. In addition, he had a unique ability to write a whole lot of music, over 169 works in all—and a wide variety; symphonies, operas, ballets, suites, concertos, cantatas, overtures, and songs. You might already be familiar with his music for *The Nutcracker*, a holiday favorite.

## Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 4, Movement IV (Finale)

Tchaikovsky is known as a Romantic composer—but “romantic” didn’t mean hearts and flowers. Instead, “romantic” means artwork that deals with big ideas, such as passion, heroism, patriotism, or devotion. Tchaikovsky’s 4th Symphony, for example, is his “Fate” symphony, with dark chords in the opening movement that hang “over our heads like the sword of Damocles.” By the fourth and final movement, however, Tchaikovsky has found hope and a reason to “rejoice in the happiness of others.”

Tchaikovsky was very much a man of his people.

His vigorous finale uses a traditional Russian folk song, “In the Field Stood a Birch Tree” to encourage his listeners to respond with a sense of patriotism. And his glorious orchestration sounds like fireworks.



## Percussion Is Poppin! in Tchaikovsky

Tchaikovsky certainly uses a “punchy” attack on percussion to add excitement and drama to the climax of his symphony.

Typically, a cymbal-crash is accompanied by a boom on the bass drum. The high loud accent combines with a low loud accent to create a super-satisfying “crash-bang-wallop!” Listen to hear if the cymbal-crash and the bass drum’s boom don’t sound together!



**CRASH!**



**Cymbals** are the big noisemakers of the orchestra. Their sound is used to create drama, suspense, and excitement.

Their shape is simple; two metal discs, usually bronze. They can be quite small or extremely large. To create sound, one cymbal is struck against the other, or else sticks, mallets or brushes are used to hit one or both cymbals. Large cymbals make a louder sound with a lower pitch—and they also hold the sound longer.

In an orchestra, cymbals are used in pairs, known as “crash cymbals.” Each cymbal is held by a strap set in the center bell. Striking them together creates a “crash.” If the composer wants the sound to “vibrate,” the percussionist crashes the cymbals and holds them outward to prolong the sound before pressing them against his or her body to silence them.

# Antonín Dvořák



Czech composer **Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)** [pronounced di-VOR-zhak] was born the son of the village butcher in Bohemia. Bohemia is a historical country in Central Europe that was a province of the Austrian Empire and has now been absorbed into the Czech Republic. Dvořák was known as a man of the people, patriotic, pious, and a family man. As a composer, he was known for weaving the folk melodies of Bohemia into his orchestral work.

Dvořák had been composing for more than twenty years when he finally got his big break. An important composer named Johannes Brahms took Dvořák under his wing so that his work would reach a larger audience.

## Dvořák, Carnival Overture

In the 1890's, audiences were eager to hear "program music"—works that used music like "paint" to depict a particular setting or event. Dvořák's *Carnival Overture* does just that. It depicts the lively high spirits of a street carnival full of barkers and vendors, with crowds of people, laughing and dancing—and a pair of young lovers.

While Dvořák was composing *Carnival*, American cultural leaders recruited him to come to America and work with American composers on elevating the reputation of American orchestral music. The premiere performances of *Carnival* marked Dvořák's farewell concert in Europe—and also his first "welcome to America" appearance in New York.



### Percussion Poppin' in Dvořák

Dvořák's *Carnival* kicks into gear with a flurry of timpani, triangle, cymbals, tambourine and more tambourine. Dvořák means to arouse and overwhelm us in the same way that a street carnival might. Listen for that tambourine!

**TING!**

You might remember the triangle from kindergarten rhythm band!

The **triangle** is a small metal bar bent into a triangle. Tap it with a metal stick and it rings. The size of the triangle affects its pitch. The size and thickness of the metal stick can change the sound the triangle makes.

What's the big deal? To composers, the triangle offers a sound that is simple, pure, uncomplicated and still beautiful. The simple nature makes it all the more clear and powerful and that's why important classical composers such as Mozart and Beethoven introduced it into their work—and why other composers followed their example.



## Maurice Ravel

French composer **Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)** [pronounced Moe-REESE Ruh-VEHL] was born to a music-loving family. He was admitted to the famous Paris Conservatory when he was only 14. His conservatory teachers were shocked by his new ideas and his experimental approach to music—but audiences loved it.

In the 1920's and '30's, Ravel was among the first composers to use new recording techniques to bring his music to a wider public. He wasn't a remarkable pianist or conductor but as a great composer, he was a shrewd businessman. Even today, he remains the most popular of French composers. He once said, "the only love affair I have ever had was with music."

## Ravel, Laideronnettes from *Mother Goose Suite*

Ravel's *Mother Goose Suite* contains five French tales set to music. "Laideronette, Empress of the Pagodas" tells the story of a child-empress who sits in her bath while little people (pagodes) play tiny percussion instruments about her. To create this effect, Ravel relies on the xylophones.

## Ravel, Feria from *Rhapsodie Espagnole*

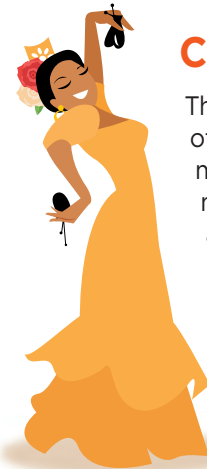
Ravel's *Rapsodie espagnole* (the "Spanish Rhapsody") is an orchestral work that was close to his heart. As a Frenchman, Ravel was fascinated with Spain. He was born in the French Pyrenees, only miles from the Spanish border. His mother was Basque and grew up in Madrid. Spanish was spoken and sung in his childhood home.



While Ravel did not actually visit Spain often in his lifetime, he captures the spirit of Spain in his *Rapsodie espagnole*. It comes across in the melodies and the Latin rhythms but especially in the fiery spirit of the percussion, especially the castanets.

### Clickety-clack!

The **castanets** are a percussion instrument often heard in Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese music, among others. A pair of concave shells made from hard wood is held together by a string on one edge. One pair is held in each hand and used to produce clicks and rattles as rhythmic accents. You often see them used by flamenco dancers to accompany their dancing.



### KAT-A-LING!

The **xylophone** takes its name from the Greek language for "wood sound." Wooden bars arranged like piano keys are struck with a mallet. The quality of the pitch can change by using hard or soft mallets and by hitting the bars in different ways.

The bars are attached to metal tubes where the sound vibrates, making the xylophone sound like a bell.



The **marimba**, the **vibraphone**, and the **glockenspiel** are all related to the xylophone—but each has a different sound quality depending on the way it is constructed, the material used, and the way it is played.



### Tammmmmm!

The **tam-tam** is a large, flat-faced gong that has not been tuned to a specific pitch. It has no raised dome at its center and a shallow rim, if it has a rim at all. It is struck with a mallet or a "beater." When the tam-tam is struck, it releases a low note of indefinite pitch followed a shimmering crash.

# Now You!



## Bring it!

1. Get yourself some percussion. You could use actual drums or another kind of percussion instrument. You could also use buckets, wooden boxes, spoons—or any kind of object that you can hit, shake, stamp, strike, rub, or scrape.
2. Pick one of the works performed by the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra in the Percussion Poppin! Program—and let yourself be inspired. Put together a rhythm that copies that classical composer's rhythm—or come up with your own variation—or make up something completely fresh that works!
3. Borrow someone's cellphone and film yourself performing your rhythm on your percussion instruments. Be sure to record the sound! You can get your teacher or a classmate—or your parents, family, or friends—to help!
4. Email your recording to [tiffany.jones@atlantasmphony.org](mailto:tiffany.jones@atlantasmphony.org)
5. Win a chance to have your video featured during the pre- and post- concert presentations at Percussion is Poppin'!

## Make Your Own

### Tin Can Drum

#### Items you will need:

- tin cans of various sizes
- balloons
- popsicle sticks, pencils, or chopsticks
- rubberbands or tape
- scissors

1. Remove the labels from the cans and make sure they're clean, dry, and free of any sharp edges.
2. Cut the round top off of the balloon and stretch it over the opening of the can.
3. Secure the balloon with a rubberband or tape.
4. Decorate your drum with washi tape, colored paper, or paint. Your drum is now complete!
5. For drumsticks, use popsicle sticks or pencils. Or, try chopsticks. They're much longer and make terrific drumsticks.

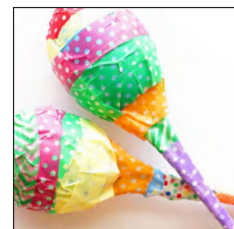
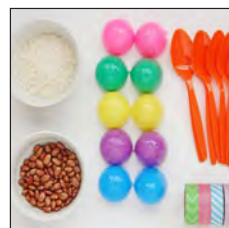


### Plastic Spoon Maracas

#### Items you will need:

- plastic spoons
- plastic eggs
- washi tape (various patterns)
- dried beans, rice, seeds and/or pebbles

1. Start by filling the plastic eggs with your choice of noise-making items: dried beans, rice, pebbles, sunflower seeds, or popcorn kernels. Try mixing!
2. Place two of the spoons together with the heads facing each other. Grab the washi tape and begin wrapping it tightly around the handles of the spoons.
3. Gently open the heads of the spoons slightly and place a filled egg inside.
4. Wrap your egg and spoons together with the tape, beginning around the seam of the egg. Wrap the tape 2-3 times around the seam to make it secure.
5. Continue wrapping the head and handle of your maraca with more tape. You can alternate with different washi tape patterns to make your maraca handles more colorful. Your set of maracas are finished!





# Atlanta Symphony Orchestra

404.733.4871 | ASO.ORG

## Education & Community Engagement Staff Listings

### Elena Dubinets

*Chief Artistic Officer  
Atlanta Symphony Orchestra*

### Tiffany I. M. Jones

*Managing Producer of  
Education Concerts*

### Kaitlin Gress

*Manager of the Atlanta Symphony  
Youth Orchestra*

### Ruthie Miltenberger

*Manager of Family Programs*

### Niki Baker

*Family Programs Assistant*

### Ryan Walks

*Manager of the Talent  
Development Program*

### Tyrone Webb

*Manager of Education and  
Community Programs*

## Support Music Education

The Atlanta Symphony Orchestra thanks the following organizations for their support of our Education and Community Programs. The support of these corporations, foundations, and individuals is invaluable in helping us reach and educate diverse communities.

### The Coca-Cola Company

Georgia Power Foundation, Inc.

Georgia-Pacific

Porsche Cars North America, Inc.

Publix Super Markets Charities

Sage

WarnerMedia

## With Deepest Gratitude



Major support is provided by the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs.



This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.



This program is supported in part by the Georgia Council for the Arts through the appropriations of the Georgia General Assembly. GCA also receives support from its partner agency, the National Endowment for the Arts.



Major funding is provided by the Fulton County Board of Commissioners.

