

BEN LEEDS CARSON

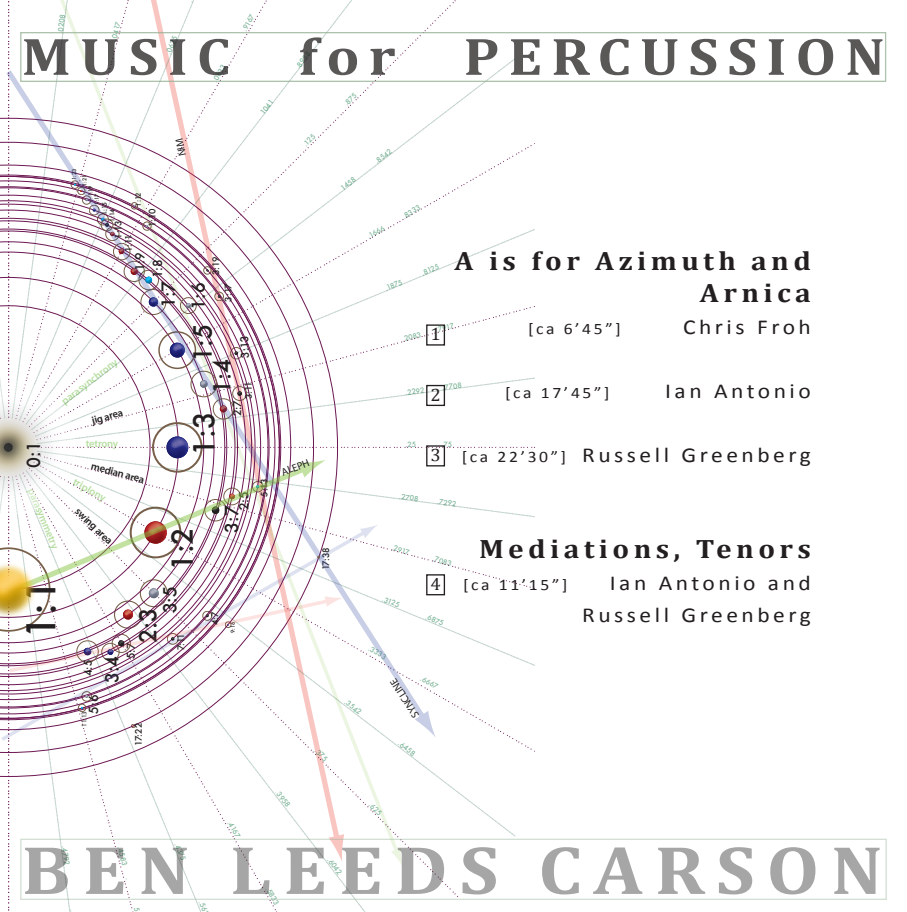
A is for Azimuth and Arnica
solo for found objects and found texts (2007)

Mediations, Tenors
duo for marimba with metal and vibraphone with wood (2008)

CHRIS FROH
MUSIC for PERCUSSION
IAN ANTONIO

RUSSELL GREENBERG
Fig. 175. - Arnica stem. Transverse section of oblongata, v, bast; o, primary cortex; y, wood-bundles; r, medullary rays; c, pith; p, oleo-resin ducts. Magnified 10 diam. (Berg).

MUSIC for PERCUSSION



A is for Azimuth and Arnica

- 1 [ca 6'45"] Chris Froh
- 2 [ca 17'45"] Ian Antonio
- 3 [ca 22'30"] Russell Greenberg

Mediations, Tenors

- 4 [ca 11'15"] Ian Antonio and Russell Greenberg

BEN LEEDS CARSON

A is for Azimuth and Arnica is a collection of six activities, written for San Francisco-based percussionist Chris Froh. A musician can prepare the activities, either in parts or as a collection; either for extemporaneous reading with improvisation, or with detailed advance planning. The activities' sequential order, and the order of specific events, rhythms, and counterpoints within each activity, is to be determined by the performer. The score presents the performer with a network of specific pathways that connect activities and events to one another using an invariant set of rhythmic ideas.

Like other familiar performance-determinate work, and like some traditional improvisation practices, "*A is for ...*" sets out to make a unique and unrepeatably context for playing and listening, dependent on the particulars of a scene. Unlike classical compositions, it has no persistence of form. But "*A is for ...*" is also meant to produce persistent identities, infinitely. In the variety of possibilities within each activity, not only the form, but the work's immediate surface—its local, behavioral identity—is also in question, excepting its rhythm. And yet every one of this composition's infinite path-driven transformations is immersed in the same world. Each accomplishes a different shape within a nearly-pulseless and rhythmically invariant world. The diagrams on the first and last page of

the score illustrate the main timespan proportions that always structure this "azimuth" of movement between the activities.

A is for Azimuth and Arnica is thus a composition only in a limited sense of the word: the sense of a "make-up", a *process in which the materials of a thing, and relationships among its materials, become what they are*. We apply that sense of the word to soil, to bodies of water, to student movements and labor forces, to animal or plant populations, and to expense accounts. (At 5-30-09 4:11p, the time of press for the first edition of this score, the top *Google Scholar* result for a quoted search for "the composition of", was Paulo Mauro's *Corruption and the Composition of Government Expenditures*¹.)

In order to go further than this, and create that more stable, music- or language-literature sense of the word 'composition'...in other words, to give it the status of an "assemblage", or "design", that connects musical ideas intentionally, one has to complete the score by reading it. Like any other "make-up" or plurality (and like compositions, in Mauro's sense), this score's identity is in its process of becoming a 'composition' (in the literary sense) of its invariant activities and passages.

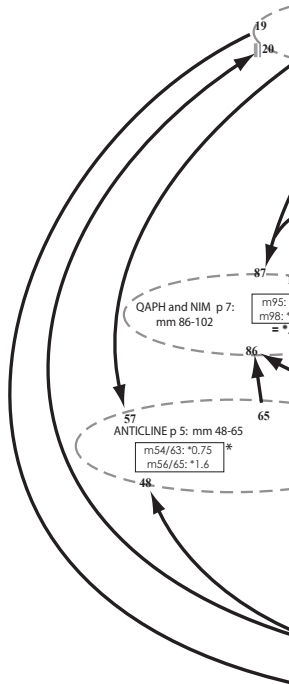
1. *Journal of Public Economics* 69 (1998) 263–279.

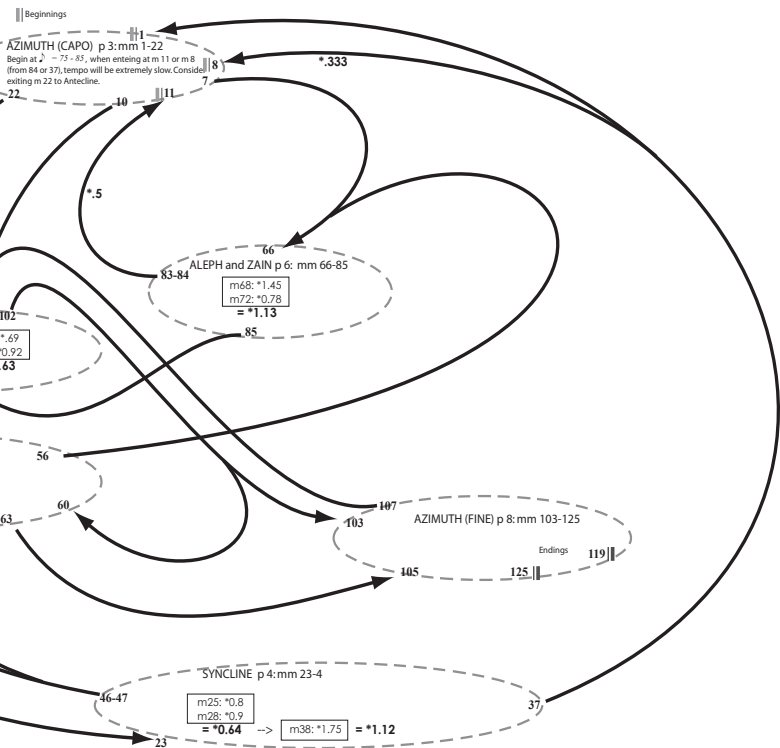
ACTIVITIES IN THE SCORE, and HOW THEY ARE COMBINED

Each activity in the score consists of staves arranged to allow passage between them, via bridges within each activity (disrupting one staff with notes from another), and exit- or entry-routes across the score's pages (disrupting one activity with another).

Each of the activities reflects a separate, "piece-like", framework for a performer to use as she pleases. But none has its identity without these essentially porous and amorphous features.

Players make use of a page titled "**Map of the Composition**" to explore a way of combining the activities and moving within and between them. A performance of this work consists of a planned or unplanned pathway through the activities, in which the tempo changes and other musical results incurred in each activity have a cumulative but dynamic effect on the remainder of the piece. Within the activities themselves, a similar variety of potentially circular and potentially transforma-





tive pathways is also possible.

Azimuth (Capo)

Four groups of four staves each, four ways to begin. Each is something like a choir, singing some fragment of the same monodic work. The 'choirs' might hockett, to form a single line, and/or disperse as complementary fragments.

Syncline

A broken ritornello. Tempo changes in mm 25, 29 (slowing) and 38 (quickening), will balance each other into a slight acceleration (by a factor just under 9/8), with each full, uninterrupted, repeat.

Anticline [excerpt this page]

A self-referential knot of elaborations, on overlapping pairs of rhythm and text. Choose two of four notes in the score (designated by ultra-long stems) to replace, always, with whole passages (marked with boxes), some containing, in turn, the four designated notes. Execute tempo changes in measures 54, 56, 63, and 65 strictly, regardless of what path brought you there. Retain the resulting tempo even after an elaboration that brought it about is complete.

ANTICLINE

(From m 7 or 56)

Anticline: At a chosen notehead, interrupt the current line's rhythm using the 'projected' box. Return to the original line at the box's end...if you reach it before the box is interrupted by another chosen note).

The musical score for 'ANTICLINE' consists of two main parts: a vocal line and a percussion line.

Vocal Line: The lyrics are "A- cross the". The notation includes a dynamic marking of *f* (forte) and a tempo marking of "3/8". There are two boxed notes with stems extending upwards, labeled "3/8" and "5/8". A dashed line indicates an interruption of the line's rhythm, labeled "1st 16th of 3/8". The dynamic marking changes to *pp* (pianissimo) and then *mp* (mezzo-piano). The text "First im- press" is written below the staff.

Percussion Line: The instruments listed are wood/paper, small glass, big glass, and toms. The notation shows rhythmic patterns for each instrument, with stems extending downwards. The dynamic marking is *pp*. The text "Mark equal timespans:" is written below the staff.

Annotations: Two boxes labeled "Choose one" are placed to the left of the vocal staff, indicating where a note can be interrupted. A dashed line connects the "Choose one" box to the "1st 16th of 3/8" annotation.

hall- way by the first few re- plen- ish- ers. No more will

9 8 15 16 3 8

(next page)

4th 16th of $\frac{5}{8}$

-ions: un- hinge un- der false re- morse un- der

mp the hand- lers, then the man

5th & 6th 16ths of $\frac{15}{16}$

mf But re- deem the whole ef- fort first. Then me

mf

ff

ff

mp

ppp

mp

but

9 8 15 16 4 4

m 86 (p 7)

The repeat will be faster by a little less than 9/8.

Repeat, or m 105 (p 8)

Arias: Aleph and Zain

[excerpt this page]

The instruments' pitches, filtered by an unpulsed rhythm, generate two melodies whose notes are interleaved. The percussion sounds accompany/complement your voice singing one, then both, and then the other, of the arias, with changing contours resulting from octave displacements of the melodies' notes. Aleph anchors, Zain is transfigured. In the course of repetitions, Aleph's longer departures accompany the return of Zain's original form, obscured until the end.

Arias: Qaph and Nim

The instruments' pitches, filtered by an unpulsed rhythm, generate two melodies for use in the algorithmic setting of a found text. The text separates carefully into disconnected fragment-categories, its meaning speaks through a *Gestalt* process of gradual and partial exposures.

Azimuth (Fine)

Four choir-like groups of four staves each, interrupting Qaph/Nim, or Anticline. The page can be read as one simultaneous system, or four in succession, and can end the piece in four ways.

(1) Each small blank staff on the lines marked Aleph and Zain should be filled with note, within your vocal range, in the same pitch-class as the one most audible striking the object indicated on the same stem. These are to be hummed and approximately through to the end of the next rest in the percussion line. For some of the notes, where permitted by your vocal range, write an octave transposition in the same staff, in parentheses.

(2) Develop an approach to humming the two arias so that they differ in sound: for example, hum one with mouth closed and the other with mouth slightly open to cultivate a distinction between a nasal tone and a guttural tone, a chest voice or head voice or falsetto.

(3) On the first iteration of the repeated measures, hum only notes from Aleph, the second, sing from both Arias, and on the third, sing only from Zain, changing contour by shifting some notes up or down an octave. On the fourth and final resting from both Arias, with Zain still in its changed version. The fourth is a new iteration, developing and departing from the arc of the first three.



(4) Upon returning to this page a second time in the performance, sing both arias the first iteration of the repeated measures, utilizing new variations of contour for both arias. Finally, the second, third, and fourth iterations are a reprise of the first three, except that it begins with the new Aleph, and is mixed only with the original Zain. Sing only the original Zain in the fourth iteration.



Musical score for Azimuth (Fine). The score is written for four instruments: wood/paper, small glass, big glass, and toms. The wood/paper part has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The other instruments have a common time signature. The score includes various rhythmic values, including deadstrokes (marked with '+') and small noteheads (marked with 'j'). The score is divided into measures, with some measures containing large numbers (9, 16) and others containing smaller numbers (2, 4). The score ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

+ = deadstrokes; these should have the effect of diminishing distinctions between staves.

j small noteheads are subordinate and ornamental; they can be omitted at fast tempo.

with a
when
held
me of
n the

d: for
n, or
and a

h; on
g its
peat,
/ sec-

ALEPH

as on
ur for
first
iginal

ZAIN

ALEPH

wood/paper
small glass
big glass
toms

mf *sf* *mf* *mp* *sf* *subito*

(16/11 - a little slower than 1 & 1/2 x tempo)

(7/9 - a little slower than 4/5 x tempo: 9/8 of m 67)

(Mark equal timespans.)

(Mark timespans: almost twice as fast as markers in mm 66-69.)

mp *pp* *mf* *sf* *pp* *mf* *sf*

5/8 2/4 9/16 4/4

Mediations, Tenors

4

[ca 11'15"] Ian Antonio and
Russell Greenberg

Mediations, Tenors is the second work in a pair of studies for marimba and vibraphone, that explore the narrow and unfamiliar region of ambiguity between melody (often defined in terms of singularities, openings and closings, the work of a “voice”) and texture (which is timeless, a snapshot; it has no conclusion, and no beginning). The two aren’t opposites, but in ‘the West’ at least (after modernity, in pop and art music) the categories are independent. Texture is most important when melody is truncated, undeveloped; memorable tunes are not supposed to rely on “texture” for their meaning or identity. Which made me wonder how, or where, the two might overlap.

The title refers to the “psalm-tone recitation formula” of medieval chant, and especially to the midpoint of the formula, between two lines of a psalm, where, at long last, a flatline of devotional text is given its rhythm: a hiccup, a stepwise ornament. But there are other “mediations”—I listened with fascination at the unpredictability of bell, woodblock, and gong articulations at the Cantonese Po Hua (Buddhist) Temple in San Jose, especially after a friend Duc Si told

me “no, it’s very simple; you just have to know where to strike are where not to.” I’m sure it was my remoteness from the tradition that made this incomprehensible even after I knew the words inside and out. My listening experience was stubbornly unlike hers. The melodies usually persisted with a chant “tenor” almost indefinitely, and arrived at mediations unpredictably, but melody and texture had to be interdependent, I thought, since the articulations of bells seemed just as often to mark a mediation as not, and neither the bells nor the mediations were placed in coordination with any obvious features of the text.

The other point of reference, then, is a false opposition of a different sort: that of the ‘difference’ between Brahms and Wagner. Enough has already been written about their hidden common ground—Schoenberg saw that both wanted the most modern thing possible, which was have the largest universe of ideas emerge from the smallest idea. But it was a less obvious common ground that mattered to me more: that both composers imagined melodies as dependent features of rhythm and counterpoint, so much so that melodies sometimes emerge or submerge without warning, from some distinguishing quirk of an inner voice, some turn of overlap between one idea and another, that makes melody and texture inseparable.

MUSICIANS



Percussionist Ian Antonio was born in 1981 and grew up in Albany, NY. After studying with Richard Albagli and performing with the Empire State Youth Orchestra and Percussion Ensemble, he moved to

New York City on a Presidential Scholarship to attend the Manhattan School of Music. There, Ian studied with Jatmes Preiss, Duncan Patton, Christopher Lamb, Eric Charleston, and Claire Heldrich, served as a fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center, and worked with the Wild Ginger Philharmonic, Albany Symphony, NYU Experimental Theatre Division, and the Wet Ink Ensemble. Earning a B.M. in 2003, Ian received the Kraeuter Musical Foundation Award.

At SUNY Stony Brook, Ian worked with Eduardo Leandro where he received his M.M. in 2005 and a D.M.A. in 2009. Ian has served as Stony Brook's professor of undergraduate percussion and manager of the Contemporary Chamber Players. Outside of the university, Ian leads a busy musical life, continuing his work with the Wet Ink Ensemble, performing and touring extensively with the rock trio Zs, piano/percussion quartet Yarn/Wire, and duo Hunter-Gatherer, and Theatre of a Two-Headed Calf. Ian also performs with the S.E.M. Ensemble, the Argento Chamber Ensemble, and the

International Contemporary Ensemble. Ian has lectured at Cornet Music School, I.S. 291 in Brooklyn, the Manhattan School of Music Preparatory Division, Adelphi University, the New York Summer Music Festival, and with Associated Solo Artists. His playing can be heard on the Albany, Bridge, Social Registry, Carrier, Three One G, Warp, Tzadik, and Planaria record labels.



Queens-based percussionist Russel Greenberg is interested in new music ranging from current compositional trends to electronic media, improvisation and rock music. Russell received his BA in music

from the University of California at Berkeley in 2002, where he studied percussion with William Winant, and with Eduardo Leandro at Stony Brook University, where he earned his M.M. in 2004 and a D.M.A. in 2009. While at Berkeley, he was awarded the Eisner Award for achievements in the creative arts, and performed with ensembles including the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, sfSound and the Berkeley Contemporary Chamber Players. Russell has recently performed at the SPARK festival of Electronic Music and Art (Minneapolis), and was a featured artist at the Festival of New American Music in Sacramento, California. Russell is a co-founder

of the new music piano and percussion quartet, Yarn/Wire, and tours actively with the innovative pop band Hi Red Center. Greenberg has also penned music for the Off-Off Broadway theater production of Clubbed Thumb's *Gentleman Caller* as well as a soundtrack for a short film by the WWE wrestler, John Morrison.

Greenberg has taught percussion and lectured in music at Stony Brook University, and has been an adjunct faculty member at Suffolk Community College. He is currently on faculty at the Lucy Moses School in Manhattan, and has recorded for the Bridge, Mode, Albany, and Joyful Noise record labels.



Chris Froh is a San Francisco freelance percussionist specializing in new music written for solo and chamber settings. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees at the University of Michigan and

has also studied at the Eastman School of Music and the Toho Gakuen Conservatory of Music, where he was a special audit student of marimbist Keiko Abe.

Froh was a founding director of the Ann Arbor, Michigan-based Brave New Works ensemble, where he produced and performed in dozens of

concerts. Since moving to the Bay Area in 1999, he has been heard in a variety of settings, from solo percussionist with the Berkeley Repertory Theater to marimba player for a video game about monkeys and pirates for LucasArts. He is a member of the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, Empyrean Ensemble, new music improvisation group sfSound, and Gamelan Sekar Jaya. He has also performed with Earplay, the Berkeley Contemporary Chamber Players, and Santa Cruz New Music Works and at the Other Minds, Berkeley EdgeFest, Festival *Nuovi Spazi Musicali*, and Pacific Rim music festivals. He performs abroad frequently, including regular tours of Japan with marimbists Keiko Abe and Mayumi Hama. He has taught percussion at California State University, Sacramento, and currently teaches at UC Davis.



The music of composer-theorist **Benjamin Carson** has been performed in Australia, Europe, and throughout North America, including the Aspen music festival and the 25th Anniversary of the "June in Buffalo" Festival of New Music at the State University of New York (2000), the New England Conservatory's *Summer Institute for Contemporary Piano* (2004), Sydney

Conservatory's *Music and Social Justice conference* (2005), and the *Gerngesehen* Festival in Cologne, Germany (2009); the Music Performance Program at Columbia University hosted a full concert of Carson's music in March of 2009. His work has also taken the first prize in chamber music (2001) for the London-based International Bass Society.

Carson supports his work as a composer with a variety of research and critical inquiry, including empirical work in perception and cognition, as well as historical gender studies. Both in scholarship and in practice, Carson is primarily concerned with the sometimes-unpredictable locations of musical "subjects," which he defines broadly as any identity-bearing aspects of musical experience. His writing is published in the *Journal of New Music Research*, the *OPEN SPACE Magazine*, the *American Journal of Psychology*, and in *Shock and Awe: War on Words*, the first publication of the Institute for Advanced Feminist Research. Dr. Carson is currently Assistant Professor of music, American Studies, and New Media Studies, at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

Sound Engineering:

A is for Azimuth and Arnica
Eric Parson

Mediations, Tenors

William Coulter, post-production by Eric Parson

Art Direction: Alex Inczech

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Arnica acaulis. [Common leopardbane; Britton, Sterns & Poggenb.] Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. An illustrated flora of the northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions. Vol. 3: 533. Courtesy of Kentucky Native Plant Society. Archived at the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Unprimeness Gravities 2. [Manual-entry-analysis with Adobe Illustrator.] By Ben Leeds Carson.

Arnica Montana [woodcut engraving]. From "Materia Medica and Pharmacognosy" by David Culbreth, M.D. (1927). Archived by the Southwest School of Botanical Medicine.



Arnica montana

1, rhizome and stem; 2, flowering stem;
3, vertical section of disk-flower; 4, ray-floret.