“We are living in the Golden Age of Percussion,” wrote PAS Executive Secretary Neal Fluegel in 1970. “Historically, percussion instruments represent the oldest instrumental family, but they have been the last to approach having their potential sounds fully realized. They are no longer in the background of musical development, but in the center of musical activity. The ‘Golden Age of Percussion’ has arrived.”
A

that point, the PAS could certainly be credited with contributing to percussion’s enhanced status. Although only ten years old, the society had already made gains in raising standards for percussion education and evaluation, and through its publications had created a valuable resource for scholarly research devoted to the percussive arts.

Most importantly, it had brought people together who shared a common devotion to all things percussion—be they performers, teachers, students, composers, publishers, or manufacturers. Through PAS they could share ideas and concerns, inspire each other, learn from each other, and support each other. Longtime Remo executive Lloyd McCausland’s favorite adage is “a rising tide raises all ships.” PAS has been the tide that has lifted percussion and percussionists for half a century, and as the society celebrates its “golden” anniversary, it is appropriate to look back at a time that was regarded as the “Golden Age of Percussion” and the people whose dreams and visions have become realities.

When fourteen percussionists and educators met for dinner at the 1960 Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic in Chicago, their goal was simply to discuss the possibility of establishing a national organization that would “bring up to date the present standards in solo and ensemble contests, stimulate a greater interest in percussion performance and teaching, and promote better teaching of percussion instruments.” That meeting is credited today with planting the first seeds of what would become the Percussive Arts Society, which was unanimously approved. Following this meeting, Robert Winslow, a professional percussionist and North Hollywood band director who served as an educational advisor to Belli, sent a letter proclaiming: “The Percussive Arts Society is open for business,” and in September 1961, the society sent its first publication, Percussive Arts Society Bulletin, printed on a mimeograph machine donated by Belli, to the membership.


After three Bulletins, the administrative and publication duties of the society were transferred to Donald Canedy, percussion instructor and band director at Southern Illinois University. In May of 1963, the first issue of the new PAS journal, Percussionist, appeared. Canedy was listed as Executive Secretary and Editor, Neal Fluegel was listed as Corresponding Secretary and Assistant Editor, and the Contributing Editors were Henry Adler (Dance Drumming), Mervin Britton (New Materials), Vida Chenoweth (Keyboard Mallet Instruments), and James D. Salmon (Percussion Education).

Canedy recalls getting the first issue of Percussionist, which he refers to as the “little red book,” out to the members. “In the fall of 1962 I called Remo Belli and said I needed four timpani heads and some other stuff. Two weeks later I got a package from Remo, and on top of the contents was an envelope with my name on it. Inside was a check for $140 and a note from Remo that said, ‘Do whatever you can whenever you can.’ We had been talking about PAS for months and had many hopes and dreams, so I knew what he intended for me to do and I did it.

“I asked all my percussion students to give any help they could, and they all paid dues and became PAS members. I called everyone I knew and asked for whatever help they might give in creating an official quarterly publication of the Percussive Arts Society. I asked the SIU printing department for help, and they agreed to print the first PAS journal free of charge. I contacted everyone I had met who was excited about percussion, teaching, manufacturing, retail, publishing, etc. I asked Tom Davis and Vida Chenoweth to write articles. I asked every question I could think of about starting a quarterly journal, and I spent time in the college library looking at professional journals of all kinds. I spoke on the phone

Pictured above are several of the fourteen founding members of the Society. (left to right, near side of table) Remo Belli, Jack McKenzie, Don Canedy, Mervin Britton, (left to right, far side of table) Hugh Soebbing, Vern Reamer and Sid Lutz, and Kenneth Leisen.

The first issue of Percussionist
with as many percussion professionals as I could reach.

“I started the process in September of 1962 with Remo’s check, and gave birth to Volume I, Number 1 of Percussiologist in May 1963. My children Kysa and Todd inserted the volumes into envelopes with the addresses of the members, and as a family we took them to the university post office and mailed them. All business activities were through accounts at the university, and there was all kinds of support from the top brass. Work had already begun on the next issue, and more and more help was being offered from all quarters of the PAS. It was an exciting time and there was much joy in the hearts of percussionists everywhere. To me it was like a great gift, a marvelous opportunity, and a huge challenge. I was so grateful to be associated with so many wonderful people of percussion. I am thankful that I was asked to do these things that had such great rewards for so many, and humbled by so much support.”

In the debut issue of Percussiologist, the goals of the Percussive Arts Society were listed as:

- To promote better teaching of percussion instruments on all levels. To stimulate a greater interest in percussion performance and teaching.
- To establish standard criteria of adjudication for percussion performance contests in light of today’s demands on the percussion player. To foster the composition and publication of solo and ensemble music and teaching methods for the percussion instruments. To coordinate the activities of the membership with groups having similar objectives. Annual membership dues were $2.50.

Under the title “The Challenge,” Canedy wrote: “In trying to get this bulletin off to a fine start it seemed appropriate to ‘challenge’ our readers with a rather large collection of projects suggested to us by members of PAS as a result of our original request for ideas and concepts. The list is large because of the tremendous response from the members. It is not the list that is the challenge but the problems involved in implementing any one of the proposed projects, establishing a priority list, and carrying them out collectively.”

That list provides a valuable snapshot of the state of percussion in the early 1960s. The projects were grouped into several sections, starting with projects that “would be valuable to teachers, performers, and administrators.” Those topics included: a recommended list of qualified judges for festivals and contests along with the establishment of criteria for qualifying judges; recommended clinicians for percussion clinics; lists of resources about percussion and percussionists; a list of recommended accessories, traps, and special equipment prioritized by order of purchase for high school band directors; sources for purchase or rental of percussion instruments.

Another section dealt with research and included: study the ramifications of required traditional rudiments at school contests in order to determine the desirability of revamping the requirements to more logically enhance the objectives of music education; make recommendations to manufacturers concerning quality instruments, accessories, and educational materials designed to meet the requirements of percussionists; encourage secondary and college level administrators to give more careful consideration to a well-balanced percussion education program at all levels. Bring to the fore the inadequacies of a music program, teacher training and conservatory, which gives only lip service or solemn mockery to this essential element.

Goals for the society itself were also listed: progress as a clearing house for information about and for percussion and percussionists; receive and disseminate information, materials, published and unpublished works, lists, specific questions about percussion from members and non-members, and generally, through active participation of members, advance the musical concepts where percussion is concerned by all means educationally, economically, and physically possible; advance concepts which seem most valuable in all areas of percussion—scholarly but practical approaches; make recommendations of the best of study material as a result of adequate research in terms of general usage by membership and others; begin a file on programs to be made available as reference for members and others; make recommendations to state contest committees concerning more-standard criteria for adjudication of percussion solos and ensembles; make available those requirements most commonly accepted by colleges and universities in terms of entrance and general placement; through collective need, encourage composers to write for percussion in the area between elementary rudimental solos to advanced-grade experimental ensembles.

Had the founders of PAS intentionally set out to create a 50-year plan for the fledgling society, they could hardly have done a better job considering how many of these goals have been accomplished and/or continue to be pursued.

The first issue of Percussiologist also included a letter from Chicago Symphony Orchestra percussionist Al Payson, who wrote: “It is very difficult for an individual to influence a large mass of people. One voice is lost in the multitude. That is why individuals with a common purpose group together and shout in unison: they are bound to be heard and will probably have some influence on those who hear them. I would hope that the Percussive Arts Society is such a group. It has very lofty aims, and people who subscribe to these aims and who want to implement them presumably join PAS to work with the other members in this direction. An organization can exist and be healthy only if all the members actively participate in a common purpose.”

Payson also shared his thoughts on state contests: “There is too much emphasis on the
made now for an indication from the membership as to your interest and willingness to serve on committees for these two projects."

That issue also contained the constitution that had been adopted at the December 1964 Percussive Arts Society meeting in Chicago. The society’s purpose was defined as being: To raise the level of musical percussion performance and teaching; to expand understanding of the demands, needs, and responsibilities of the percussion student, teacher, and performer; to promote a greater communication and understanding between all areas of the percussion profession; and to accomplish these purposes solely by educational means.

The constitution also provided for formal leadership, stating that: The officers of the Society shall consist of a President, Vice-President, Secretary-Treasurer, and thirteen Directors. These officers shall equally represent the following areas of the percussion arts: Professional; College Educational; High School, Grammar School Educational; Drum Corps; Dealer; Publisher; Manufacturer; Members at Large. All officers shall, by virtue of their office, be members of the Board of Directors.

The first official PAS officers were:

President: Gordon Peters
Vice-President: Jack McKenzie
Executive Secretary: Donald G. Canedy

The first members of the Board of Directors were Alan Adams, Frank Arsenault, Thomas Brown, Richard Craft, Thomas Davis, Frederick Fennell, Neal Fluegel, Roy Knapp, Maurice Lishon, Larry McCormick, Al Payson, Richard Richardson, Robert Tilles, and Robert Yeager. An editorial board was also established for Percussio, consisting of Donald Canedy (editor), and Al Payson and Alan Adams (assistant editors).

The minutes from the meeting included several projects that were being considered, including: evaluation of elementary percussion education; an outlined curriculum for college percussion majors; list of masters and doctoral theses on percussion; PAS serving as a clearinghouse of solo and ensemble percussion programs.

Two specific projects were to be set in motion immediately: 1. Dick Richardson was asked to arrange for a percussion program in the name of PAS for the 1965 Mid-West Band Clinic. 2. Gordon Peters submitted a survey of percussion instrument and accessory improvements to be included in the next Percussio mailing.

In addition, the following committees and projects were approved: the college-university percussion dept.—curriculum, equipment, literature; stage band and show drumming; elementary percussion education; improving percussion parts to school band and orchestra music; acoustics of percussion instruments; solo and ensemble recital materials—a clearing house; ethnomusicology; commissioning of a work for percussion section and orchestra and/or band.

A subsequent issue of Percussio, which combined issues 2 and 3 of Volume III, included a “preliminary report” by the Committee on Improving Elementary Percussion Education, chaired by Al Payson. The report contained a list of “problems” that had been identified, some of which continue to this day:

1. There is little (but a growing) awareness, in music education, of percussion as a medium of musical expression.
2. The caliber of percussion instruction is generally low.
3. Many percussion teachers do not keep abreast with modern techniques of education, particularly those developed by educational psychologists.
4. “Percussion” instruction in most cases is confined almost entirely to snare drum instruction.
5. Some school music educators make a practice of putting students with the lowest aptitude on “drums.”

In May 1966, it was announced that Donald Canedy had resigned as Executive Secretary to devote all his time to his new job as Educational Director of Rogers Drum Company, and that Neal Fluegel would serve as interim Executive Secretary. The official PAS address became Terre Haute, Indiana, where Fluegel lived.

Minutes printed in that issue from a Board of Directors meeting announced that, “The Chairman was authorized to promote district satellites of PAS throughout the U.S.” This was the first step toward forming chapters.

The January 1967 issue of Percussio listed Peters as president and Fluegel as Secretary, but no vice-president was listed. New names
on the Board of Directors included Remo Belli and Robert Zildjian, along with the first female member, identified as “Miss Barbara Buehlman.” (None of the men were listed as Mr., but the “Miss” designation appeared before Buehlman’s name for over a year, being dropped in the March 1968 issue of Percussiônist.)

Having Belli and Zildjian on the Board of Directors was significant. As Sewrey explains, “Originally, the industry was not involved in any way, or allowed to be involved in any way, shape, or form. The fear was that the industry would take over and PAS would be viewed as representing the manufacturers.”

Part of the reason behind this concern was that, at that time, the National Association of Rudimental Drummers (N.A.R.D.) was very prominent, and it was closely associated with the Ludwig Drum Company. “That made sense,” Sewrey recalls, “because Bill Ludwig Sr. was one of the 13 drummers who established N.A.R.D.”

Sewrey credits Dick Richardson, who at the time was in charge of the Musser division of Ludwig, with allaying the PAS’s concern about industry involvement. “[Richardson] saw that percussion had to go beyond N.A.R.D., and so he told the PAS leadership, ‘Industry people are interested in supporting PAS. But we will not dictate; all we want to do is support.’ So that was important for the society.”

Another notable feature of the January 1967 issue was a report by Saul (Sandy) Feldstein concerning the formation of the first PAS chapter in New York State. PAS was growing quickly.

In the May 1967 issue of Percussiônist, the following announcements appeared:

We are most pleased to announce that the Board of Directors has approved a merger between the PERCUSSIONIST and PERCUSSIVE NOTES as agreed upon by their respective editors. Therefore, beginning next fall the journal PERCUSSIONIST and the magazine PERCUSSIVE NOTES will both be publications of the Percussive Arts Society. All members will receive the seven publications during the academic year with no additional membership dues. James L. Moore will continue to edit the PERCUSSIVE NOTES, and we wish to encourage all members to send him items of interest of their activities, programs, etc.

Percussive Notes had begun life in February 1965 as a newsletter published by the Indianapolis Percussion Ensemble. The second issue (April 1965) included information about how to subscribe to the Percussive Arts Society Bulletin. It also stated that, “Percussive Notes will review method books, reference books, solos, ensembles, and recordings that have proven effective in teaching and performance. Also, newly published material will be reviewed.” In June of 1965 Percussive Notes began printing programs of percussion recitals and percussion ensemble concerts, which would ultimately tie in with the PAS goal to serve as a “clearinghouse of solo and ensemble percussion programs.”

Just as PAS was experiencing rapid growth during the early 1960s, so was Percussive Notes, and its articles were expressing similar interests and concerns as those printed in Percussiônist and discussed at PAS Board of Directors meetings.

When it was announced that Percussive Notes would become an official PAS Publication, the following explanation appeared in Notes:

This new merger has been greeted most enthusiastically by the editors and Board of Directors of the PAS Percussiônist and by the editors of Percussive Notes. Much careful thought and planning have gone into this effort that we feel will be a step forward for all concerned with percussion education and performance. The PAS Percussiônist will continue to publish articles and research studies of importance to all in the percussion field, and Percussiônist will continue to keep all members informed on current news, trends, recent programs, and happenings of interest. Both publications will be available only to members of the Percussive Arts Society. Members will receive during each school year four issues of the PAS Percussiônist and three issues of Percussive Notes, plus all other announcements and information sent out by the society.

Annual memberships are $5.00 for regular members, and $2.50 for student memberships. All students with an interest in percussion should take advantage of this excellent opportunity to receive for $2.50 a wealth of information. For the cost of less than one private lesson, they will receive in the seven issues information and insights that they couldn’t possibly obtain from even the best professional percussion teacher. Student membership in the PAS along with private lessons from a fine teacher should be the goal of every aspiring percussionist.

In October of 1967, after a year with no vice-president, Al Payson was listed as VP of the society. It was also reported that PAS had 353 regular members, 212 student members, and 75 library members. The Board of Directors approved purchasing a PAS banner that would be used for booth displays at the Midwest Clinic and the Mid-East Convention.

The first 1968 issue of Percussive Notes was the first to carry significant commercial advertising, including full-page ads by Remo, Zildjian, and Drums Unlimited, and a four-page insert introducing Rogers timpani.

The March 1968 issue of Percussiônist carried the following announcement: “It is with regret that we announce the resignation of president Gordon Peters. Due to a very busy schedule and numerous commitments, Mr. Peters felt it
would be difficult to continue in the very active position of president. Much of the success and growth of PAS during the past few years can be attributed to his outstanding and tireless leadership. He has willingly given of his time, efforts, and funds to promote the growth and activities of the organization. We are pleased that Mr. Peters has consented to accept the elected position of vice president and will continue as an advisory member of the Executive Committee.

Saul (Sandy) Feldstein was elected president, Ron Fink and Peters were elected vice presidents, and Neal Fluegel's title changed from Executive Secretary to Secretary Treasurer.

Feldstein began his tenure with an ambitious goal: "This president would like to see our membership rise to 5,000. If each of you feel responsible to help our 1968 membership, we will be able to reach this goal."

It was announced that "significant progress" had been made the previous year in the following areas:
1. Addition of Percussive Notes as an official PAS publication.
3. Display and information booth for use at conventions.
4. Printing of 100,000 newly revised application forms.
5. Over 100% increase in membership.
6. Reprints of Contest Projects in two issues of The Ludwig Drummer (PAS credit).

It was also reported that, "The need continues to develop a format that clarifies differences between Percussive Notes and Percussivemot. PN articles generally should be of practical application ("how to do it type") or of lighter nature."

In May of 1968, it was announced that New York State had devised new adjudication sheets based on the Percussivemot's suggestions. "The results were very gratifying," Feldstein reported. "The sheets not only make the adjudicators job easier, but also enhance the educational experience of the student and his teacher."

The December 1968 issue of Percussivemot addressed the lack of serious percussion literature in an editorial:

It continues to remain astounding, the lack of percussion publications in this, the "Golden Age of Percussion." The advancement of percussion education in the past fifteen years and particularly in the past five years has been phenomenal, and yet a real void continues to exist in good performance literature. This is not to imply that solos and ensembles are not available, but only to emphasize a real lack of quantity—snare drum solos excepted—and in many cases, a lack of musical quality.

It seems we are still in a stage of turmoil: most composers are reluctant to write serious percussion solos and ensembles, perhaps due to a lack of knowledge about percussion instruments and their notation, or fear of few or no performances. Often if one is inclined, and in fact does write serious percussion literature, he is hesitant about submitting it to a publisher for fear or knowledge it will be rejected. He even refrains from sending it to strategic places in which it can be evaluated and published in manuscript form—reason unknown.

Many publishers feel there is little market for serious percussion literature and tend to be reluctant to publish works other than those of an elementary nature, or jazz oriented—"it

**Entrance Exam**

The Fall 1967 issue of Percussive Notes included a suggestion from John Noonan that PAS require prospective members to pass some sort of exam:

We should have many more student members in PAS, but I see no real incentive for students to join. Harking back to the NARD, there was a challenge there. The applicant had to play 18 rudiments to gain admittance. This gave them something to work for. As I see it, we need students—young drummers 16 years and up—if the PAS is to go forward. But we must not place ourselves in a begging position, but rather in a discriminating one. We must determine who gets in, and to do this one must qualify.

At first I thought of a playing exam of solos on multiple percussion, timpani, and xylophone, listing the numbers to be played to the satisfaction of their teachers. However, I thought that perhaps a general exam with questions similar to the enclosed ones might be better. This exam score would indicate if the applicant has a real interest in percussion and would take work on the part of the student. Think about this; I feel we must have something that assures the PAS that applicants are truly interested in the field of percussion.

Sample questions from Noonan's proposal included:
What do the following words mean? (1) Membranophones, (2) Idophones.
What is the range of the 25" and 28" timpani.
What are antique cymbals and how do they differ from crotales?
What instrument is "piatti" and what does "secco" and L.V. mean?

The next issue of Notes included this response:

I am a student, a member of PAS, and I love percussion. But I don’t know the difference between "piatti," "secco" and "l.v.,” and "membranophone" and "idiophone." I also don’t know the ranges of the timpani. I am sure Mr. Noonan has nothing but the best intentions, but he is wrong. An exam would only discourage many students from applying for membership in PAS. Many students such as myself are seriously interested in percussion, but are not technically well acquainted with all forms of percussion. A student will say, "I haven’t a hope of getting into PAS." Because they are unable to gain admittance, they will lose out on a great deal of knowledge from the publications of PAS. Please do not require an entrance exam. It would only discourage those who need PAS the most: the students without the background, who wish to develop one.

Timothy G. Taylor, Dedham, Mass.

After discussion at a subsequent Board of Directors meeting, it was decided not to implement a qualifying test.
won’t sell” or “there is little market for it.” And so it becomes a typical vicious circle—which comes first, the literature, the market for the literature, the performance of the literature, or the audience's appreciation of the literature?

When will the art of percussion truly become of age? When will composers realize the receptiveness and market for serious percussion literature and be willing to compose for this medium without a contest or commission? When will publishers realize the need and market for serious percussion literature—the most vibrant and colorful of the musical arts? Must we await the arrival of the 21st century!

It is hoped that the people who are members of PAS subscribe to its basic philosophy “to raise the level of percussion performance.” This can be accomplished by its members; those inclined as composers writing serious and challenging percussion literature; its publishers publishing these compositions; and its teacher, student, and professional members supporting this endeavor by performing and/or directing performances of the literature.

THIS IS THE CHALLENGE.

At the December 1968 Board of Directors meeting, John Galm was elected 1st Vice President, replacing Peters. Total membership was reported as being 1,784. It was also announced that a new PAS logo was in the process of being created, and that Gary Olmstead was investigating the possibility of PAS sponsoring a percussion composition contest.

In 1969, the society was incorporated in Indiana as the Percussive Arts Society, Inc., a status it maintained until 1985 when it was reincorporated under the laws of Illinois. Briefly, the society was identified as PAS, Inc. in the publications, but soon everyone went back to just calling it PAS.

It was also announced in 1969 that PAS was beginning a College Percussion Curriculum Project to “promote communication and thought among interested participants, and generally aid in the improvement of percussion pedagogy, curriculum advancement, and performance. The Society has undertaken this worthwhile project in order to make available information and data to those schools or administrators who are in need of guidelines in setting up percussion programs.”

Three new committees were formed that same year. One was to establish recommended standard procedures for “all-state” auditions. The second was to compile a list of recommended materials for contests. And the third was to encourage public and private music educators’ interest and membership in PAS.

At the end of the year, Saul Feldstein was re-elected as President, Neal Fluegel was re-elected Executive Secretary, and Ron Fink was re-elected Second Vice-President of PAS.

As PAS concluded its first decade in 1970, the society created its first staff position: a secretary for the Executive Secretary’s office. “This staff position has been a much needed addition due to the expansion of organizational activities and membership growth,” said the announcement in Percussive Notes. “This position is vital for efficiency of central office activities and will aid in improving services for PAS members. With expansion, however, comes an additional challenge and responsibility for the entire membership—prompt response and payment of membership dues—so that all financial obligations can be met on time. The membership must keep in mind the fact that the organization operates on a limited budget and is legally incorporated as a not-for-profit organization. Any profits are used to expand growth, to support national projects, and hopefully, in the future, to aid state organizations with local projects.”

PAS also published a list of available percussion materials, compiled by a committee chaired by Mike Combs. And in December the PAS sponsored its first “official” program: a panel discussion at the Mid-West Band Clinic in Chicago that included Frank Arsenault, Remo Belli, Larry McCormick, Al Payson, Bob Tilles, Larry Vanlandingham, and Neal Fluegel. The report in the March 1971 Percussive Notes can be seen today as prophetic: “It was a fine initiation for what is hoped will develop into a much broader program concept. This expansion may well include performances and more symposiums, which could eventually lead to a National Percussion Convention or possibly a World Council of Percussion. Plans are now underway for a possible part or full day of activities to be held near the end of the current calendar year.”

The Fall 1970 issue of Percussive Notes included Fluegel’s article, “The Percussive Arts Society in the Golden Age of Percussion,” in which he traced the society’s accomplishments since its founding:

Since its conception in 1960, PAS, Inc. membership has rocketed. Interest is high and forward progress has been rapid… The organization has grown to over 2,000 members representing people from various parts of the world involved in all aspects of percussion. PAS, Inc. has gained the moral and financial support of most of the percussion manufacturers and many instrument dealers and publishers. Perhaps this is one of the unique features of the organization, i.e., all concerned with percussion can meet together and intelligently discuss all aspects of this, the last and most exciting of the instrument families to be realized, and enthusiastically reach a consensus on common goals.

PAS, Inc. publishes a scholarly journal entitled Percussive Notes four times during the academic year. This publication contains articles covering all aspects of the percussive arts: items of interest to the student, professional, composer, and non-percussionist music educator. Over 100 university libraries, both foreign and domestic, now subscribe to this publication. In September, 1967, the Society assumed publication of Percussive Notes, a newsletter magazine which carries features, listings and materials of a somewhat lighter nature. Each annual membership entitles the holder to receive both publications of the Society.

PAS, Inc. has initiated the organizing of state chapters to implement national goals and promote local projects. Over thirty chapters are now in existence. During the past years the Society has undertaken nationally many projects through committee activity to promote the stated purposes of the organization. Specific projects under study include: Acoustics of Percussion Instruments; Avant-garde Percussion Music; College and University Percussion Curriculum and Materials; Elementary percussion Solo and Ensemble Contest Adjudication Standards, Procedures, and Materials; Musicology and Ethnomusicology as Relates to Percussion; Percussion Literature Improvement; Methods, solos, Ensembles, Percussion Parts to Band, Orchestra, and Stage Band Drumming; Standardization of Terminology and Notation of Percussion Instruments.
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