

Carmen Suite and Carmina Burana

By Michael Rosen

Q. *Might you have translations for the timpani and percussion indications in the parts for the Georges Bizet–Rodion Shchedrin “Carmen [Ballet] Suite”? You may know that the available rental parts are hand-written manuscript (stamped “USSR”), with Russian script movement titles and percussion indications/footnotes. Having done some research, the study apparently has German translations of the Russian text and is rather confusing. Thank you for your help!*

TODD SHEEHAN
PRINCIPAL TIMPANI

EVANSVILLE PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

A. Here are the translations Todd. It’s a fun piece to play and is often performed in the complete ballet form, especially in Great Britain. Note that the descriptions are in both German and Italian, and one indication has both languages. I have indicated Italian with (I) and German with (G). And just to make things more international, a handful are in English, which actually is common in Europe for indicating percussion instruments. I tried to buy a snare drum stand in Italy once and made an awkward translation from English to what I thought it might be in Italian, “C’e’un leggìo di tamburo?” (Do you have a snare drum stand?) only to have the salesperson smile and say, “Intendi voresti un snare drum stand.” (You mean you want a snare drum stand?)!

Batteria 1

Marimba: marimba
Vibrafono (I): vibraphone
Castagnetti (I): castanets
3 Cowbells
4 Bongos
Campane (I): chimes
Tamburo (soprano) (I): high snare drum
Guiro
Campane sole (I): solo chimes
Bacch. Di legno (I): wood sticks
Sopr (I): highest (soprano)
Tenore (I): medium
Alto (I): lower than medium
Basso (I): lowest
mit den Händen (G): with hands
come sopra (I): played as it was played above (with hands)
mit den Handflächen (G): with the flat of the hands

mit einem Schläg (G): with one strike, like a gliss
das niedrigste Register (G): the lowest register
quasi arpa, dolce (I): harp-like, sweetly
o Silof (I): or xylophone
in ritmo (I): in rhythm, play each note (not a roll)
ohne weiteren Anschlag (G): without hitting it again, let it ring
m.s. (I): left hand (mano sinistra)
m.d. (I): right hand (mano destra)
quasi gliss sempre (I): always like a gliss
con pedale sempre (I): always with pedal
nicht dämpfen (G): not dampened, let ring
Vorschlag rapido molto (sic!- German and Italian): the grace notes played very fast
2 Spieler (G): two players

Batteria II

Vibrafono (I): vibraphone
Marimba
Tamburo (alto) (I): medium snare drum
Tamburino (I): tambourine
2 woodblocks
triangolo (I): triangle
Guiro
mit Besen (G): with brushes (see below)
ma sonoro (I): sonorously
mit 2 Spieler (G): with two players
dolciss. (I): very sweetly (dolcissimo)
soprano (G): highest (drum in this case)
kl.Trommeln in Terzabstand gestimmt (G): snare drums tuned in thirds
alto (I): lower drum
in ritmo (I): play each note (not a roll)
mit gewöhnlichen Schlägel (G): with the ordinary stick

Batteria III

Campanelli (I): orchestra bells
Crotali
Maracas
Frusta (I): slapstick
Tamburo (I): snare drum (generic term for snare drum)
Cockolo: There has been some confusion over the translation of this word. Actually it is a poor transliteration from Russian of the word Chocoalho (Portugese) or Choccolo (Spanish), which is a metal tube shaker. Michael Skinner of the Covent Garden Orchestra tells us: “Quite a few of the

players in the U.K. have played the ‘Carmen’ percussion suite. The opinion here is that the cockolo is a choccolo.”

Guiro
3 Temple Blocks
Cassa (I): Bass Drum
Tam-tam
Tamburo rullante (I): field drum without snare
Triangolo: triangle
(ord.) (I): struck in the ordinary manner
mit kl. Besen (G): with small brushes
mit Schlägeln (G): sticks (Schalgel is a generic terms for sticks, but when used without modification usually means snare drum stick.)
zusammenschlagen (G): strike them together
auf den Rand (G): on the rim
senza corda (I): without snares
mit kl. Trommelstöcken (G): with small (thin) snare drum sticks

Batteria IV

Piatti (I): cymbals
Cassa (I): bass drum
Tam-tam
Charleston (G&I): hi-hat
Triangolo (I): triangle
Tamburino (I): tambourine
5 tom-toms
weicher Schlägel (G): soft mallet
Metallstab (G): metal beater
mit Nagel (G): strike with a nail
mit Besen (G): with brushes (a Besen is actually a broom in German, but in percussion parlance the word Bürsten is used; it means brushes. It could also mean a whisk broom in this case, or it is editor’s mistake.)
mit Bürsten (G): with brushes (see above)
m.d. (I): right hand (see above)
m.s. (I): left hand (see above)
mit kleinem Metallbesen (G): with small metal brushes
morendo (I): dying away
mit weichem Schlägel (G): with soft mallets
Schlag mit dem Schlägelgriff (G): strike with the handle of the stick
mit den Schlägeln (G): with snare drum sticks

5 Timpani

mit Schlag auf den Rand (G): strike on the rim

gliss. Auf einer Kesselpauke (G): glissando on the timpani

mit harten Schlägeln (G): with hard sticks accompanying
mit kl. Trommelstöcken (G): with small (thin) snare drum sticks

On the snare drum part, the crotali part, the tam-tam part, and the cymbal part you will find some notes with either a "+" or an "o" over them. I cannot tell you what these mean as these signs, characteristic of many Russian percussion parts, are among the most curious and difficult to decipher. On the cymbal part: does the composer want the cymbals struck together or struck with a stick; long or short; damped or let ring? All of these solutions work depending on the context and the instrument. And what about on the other parts? I would use my taste to decide on how to interpret these signs when indicated since it is not at all lucid. For a detailed discussion of the + and o marks see "Terms Used in Percussion," *Percussive Notes*, Vol.28, No.2, 1990, page 55-56.

Q. My question is about Orff's use of the word "cymbals," which he abbreviates as "cymb." Is this crotales? When I played the piece before I didn't play the part, but I seem to remember the player used small cymbals. It is clear that Orff is not using the term to differentiate between suspended cymbal and crash cymbals because suspended cymbal and crash cymbals are notated differently; he uses symbols to indicate suspended or two crash cymbals. Also, dynamics are not a factor since *piatti* notes range from *pp* to *ff*; same with the "cymb." part. The score reads exactly as the percussion parts. The movements affected are No.5, No.18, No.20, and No.22. All of these movements have both cymbal and *piatti* (or *piatto*) notated as separate parts. To add to the confusion, one of the percussion scores we have contained a previous percussion assignment sheet. They interpreted the "cymb" part as antique cymbal or crotales. If this is the case then why is the part on a single line instead of treble clef? These percussionists who played the part before indicated appropriate pitches on the music (F, D, A). Is this a possibility? The Latin/Middle Ages connection to 'Carmina Burana' certainly make the use of a tuned bell, from the word "cymbalum" (meaning tuned bell) possible, but the notation does not indicate pitches.

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A. The notation and instrument choice problems in "Carmina Burana" pose some of the most difficult in the literature. This part is indicated in the Schott score as 2 *Cymbali antichi* (*piatti piccoli*), which translates directly as 2 antique cymbals (small cymbals). This is

not very explicit and doesn't even appear on the original handwritten score! In addition, the composer is mixing his languages here or the editor or copyist created the problem. *Cymbali* is not a word in standard Italian but *antichi* (antique), *piatti* (cymbals), and *piccoli* (small, plural) are. It is also interesting that Orff indicates 2 *Cymbali* but only has one note on the score, making me believe he didn't mean two different crotales but rather a pair of cymbals or a suspended cymbal. My conjecture is that the editor used the rather fanciful name *Cymbali antichi* for small cymbals to mirror the subtitle of the piece that is written in vulgar Latin (as is the text of the piece) as "Cantiones profanae, cantoribus et choris cantandae comitantibus instrumentis atque imaginibus magicis."

Carl Orff was born in Munich (1895-1982), and it is curious that he uses Italian to describe the instruments. In fact the piece was written in 1936 and published a year later by Schott, a German publisher. One would expect German to have been the language of choice for the score, especially since it was first played in Germany when the highly nationalistic Nazi regime was in power. As a matter of fact, according to Alex Ross (*The Rest is Noise*), the piece had wide appeal and "by 1944 Goebbels was gushing in his diary that 'Carmina Burana' contained 'extraordinary beauties'."

Here is the list of percussion instruments that appear on the Schott score:

3 glockenspiel [This is the only place where German is used.]

Xilofono: xylophone

Castagnetta: castanets

Raganella: ratchet

Sonagli: sleighbells

Triangolo: triangle

tamburo di basco: tambourine

2 *cymbali antichi* (*piatti piccoli*): [Here's the problem!]

4 *piatti* (—|— anche ⊥ : 4 cymbals (crash and suspended)

Tam tam

3 campane, F C F: 3 chimes

campane tubolare: tubular chimes

2 casse chiare: 2 snare drums
cassa grande: bass drum

Note: there is no distinction between sleighbells and tambourine in the original score.

And here is the list that appears on the original score (all in German):

Pauken (5 kessel): timpani (5 bowls)

Schlagwerk (5 spieler): Percussion (5 players)

2 kleine Trommeln: snare drums

1 grosse Trommel: bass drum

1 Schelle: pellet bells [Also means tambourine in some music. Orff uses *schellentrommel* on score but doesn't differentiate between the two. On printed score the editor indicates *sonagli* (sleigh bells) and *tamb.di basc.* (tambourine)]

1 Triangel: triangel

1 paar Cymbelen: pair of cymbals [Here's where the problem starts. The editor used the term *Cymbali antichi*. Did he do this with the permission or suggestion of Orff? We'll never know. This is not crotales, in my opinion, because nowhere in either score is there a clef other than the percussion clef.]

2 paar Becken: 2 pairs of crash cymbals

1 grosse Gong in [low] D: low gong in D

1 kleine Gong (oder Glocken Platen in No.13): small gong or bell plate in No.13

3 Glocken in F C F: chimes

Röhrglocken: tubular chimes

3 Glockenspiele: 3 sets of glockenspiel

1 Xylophone: xylophone

1 Castagnette: castanets

1 Ratchet: ratchet

In addition: (1) there is no indication in No.12 for *piatti con bacchetta di legno* (cymbals with wood stick) in the original, which appears in the Scott score and parts; (2) *Becken* almost always means pair because he uses the —|— indication. However, a few times he uses the ⊥ with *Becken* meaning suspended. The original is much more precise than the Schott edition; (3) The tamtam called for is pitched to low D. Not so in the Schott edition. I imagine he had



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difficulty finding a tamtam pitched to D and therefore eliminated the pitch indication from the Scott edition; (4) *Cymb.* most likely means suspended cymbal most of the time. At one point the *cymb.* and *Becken* notation appear on the same staff just to confuse us more.

On closer inspection, the Schott edition of the percussion part adds to the confusion. Either the copyist didn't know about percussion instruments or was lazy. The question arises: did Orff approve of the Schott edition? I would imagine that things were changed at the first rehearsal but only some changes made it to the final printed score. Orff may have intended to write for antique cymbal but for some reason changed his mind. Clearly the *Becken*/cymbal part was not very important and not well thought out.

Here is how I interpret the cymbal/Becken/suspended/crash problem: In No.5 I would play suspended cymbal where the part indicates *cymb.* and crash cymbals where it indicates *piatti*. The word *piatti* is often used in the plural to mean singular much like timpani is used to mean just one drum, although technically one is a *piatto* and *timpano* respectively. It seems to fit the part well because of the way the movement is sectionalized. So, suspended cymbal starting before 24 and then crash cymbals starting before 27; same on the repetition of the material; same in No.18. There is even a pictogram at the *piatti* part two measures before 119. Once again the movement is sectionalized and playing different cymbals in each place makes sense.

We have a problem at No.20. The part says *piatti* but there is a pictogram in measure 128 indicating suspended cymbal. What to do? I would play this movement with crash cymbals throughout, but I'm not wedded to this choice. Now, in No.22 the real problem arises: the indication is *cymb.* at the beginning of the movement (I use crash cymbals), but just eight measures later the part says *piatto*, made clearer by the words *con bacchetta di c. chiara* (with a snare drum stick), which doesn't appear in the original score; suspended cymbal here. The original score indicates the suspended cymbal symbol. I wish Orff had been as clear as this at the other cymbal entrances. *Cymb.* again after measure 133 where I go back to crash cymbals. Then at measure 138 Orff indicates *piatti* (same music as six after 132): I use suspended. The word *piatto* again appears two measures later. What a mess!

When the parts are as unclear as in this piece, I use my better judgment and experience to decide what to play. I have never had a conductor notice the difference between suspended and crash in this piece (conductors have too many other details to deal with). But if I were told from the podium to play one or the other, I would certainly do so. I urge you to use your own judgment. The main point is

to realize that there is no crotale in "Carmina Burana."

I always enjoy getting mail from readers to help us all do a better job of using the appropriate instruments and making our crazy terminology more clear. As always, thank you all for sending in your questions and comments about "Terms Used in Percussion." If you would like me tackle a question about terms you are not sure of, please send it to michaelrosen@oberlin.net and I will answer you directly, then put my response in a future article.

Michael Rosen is Professor of Percussion at Oberlin Conservatory of Music and is Director of the Oberlin Percussion Institute. He was Principal Percussionist with the Milwaukee Symphony from 1966 to 1972

and has performed with the Grand Teton Music Festival, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, and the Concertgebouw Orchestra. He has served on the PAS Board of Directors and is an Associate Editor of *Percussive Notes*. He has recorded for Opus One, Bayerische Rundfunk, Albany, Lumina, and CRI labels and is a sought-after clinician for marimba and cymbals.

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