

Reflections on the Mallet Ensembles vol. 3 by Daniel Berg

In November 2018 the music score *Mallet Ensembles vol. 3* were published by Edition Svitzer in Copenhagen, Denmark. Front cover was made by Gaia Gomes, the photo by Per Buhre and the engraving by Johan Svitzer.

I grew up in middle of Stockholm (Sweden), very close to Odenplan. When the percussion class of Lilla Akademien, a music school not far from Odenplan, asked me to write a new piece I came up with the idea of blending harmonies from Stockholm and rhythms from American composer Steve Reich (I hope this piece can be an introduction to his music for young percussion players). It became a piece in three movements called... Odenplan.

The artistic challenge was:

1. How can I catch the pulse and atmosphere from a city in the evening (1st movement), at night (2nd) and in the morning (3rd)?
2. Most young percussion players are focusing on drums. How can I inspire them to find the mallet instruments?
3. In what way can I write for an ensemble where every player has a different background and where the players are on different levels?

Together with students at the Academy of Music and Drama in Gothenburg I played and conducted the piece Sextett by Steve Reich last year. That piece got a clear pulsation with rhythms in different time meters and gave me a lot of inspiration. Maybe my piece for Lilla Akademien could be an introduction to the music of Steve Reich?

For the first movement, In the Evening, I used rhythms in different time meters and I choose harmonies going from major to minor – try to explain how the light in town goes from light-to darkness. In the second movement, at Night, the dynamics goes from piano to forte during the whole moment. By using bows on cymbals and tam-tam I tried to catch a little bit of scary noise while the glockenspiel is making stars blinking. Third movement, in the morning, starts with the pulse and rhythms from the first movement. In the three of the percussion parts I wrote typical sounds from a city morning like bicycle bell, car horn, sirens etc. In this third movement the harmonies will go to unison chord and a unison rhythm – the light is back!

Most young percussion players start playing drums and later in the teens they get in contact with the melodic percussion, such as marimba and vibraphone. Though the drumming, they build up a good technic and are used to read a score with complicated rhythms. On the other hand they are not used to read a melodic score. Based on these facts I wrote the songs in *Mallets Ensembles vol. 3* with repeated rhythmic patterns for the chord parts (four mallets), quite easy to learn, but a little tricky and hopefully joyful and technical challenging for a drummer to play.

The melody part was written for two mallets and easier than the chord parts. I tried to find a catchy melody, easy to remember. Many young drummers will probably learn the melody by ear, not by the score. For the very young player I wrote a part for glockenspiel with less difficulty. Totally every song in the *Mallet Ensembles vol. 3* got these parts:

1. Glockenspiel (easy)
2. Melody 1 (easy +)
3. Melody 2 (intermediate)
4. Chord (intermediate +)
5. Drums/percussion (ad lib)
6. Bass (intermediate -)

Through these songs and educational material for young percussion players I hope I will awaken a young drummers curiosity for marimba and vibraphone. With the parts in different difficulty I also hope players with different background can join. I also hope the song Odenplan can be an introduction to the music by Steve Reich.

