

# C O N T E N T S

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## About the author

**Jim Ancona** is the Percussion Caption Head for The Cavaliers Drum and Bugle Corps and Front Ensemble Arranger for the Penn State Indoor Drumline. Jim has many years' experience as an arranger and instructor for world class drum and bugle corps including Star of Indiana, Santa Clara Vanguard, Glassmen, Crossmen, and Carolina Crown. Several of his percussion arrangements appear on Star of Indiana's "Brass Theater" and "BLAST" (the Tony and Emmy award-winning Broadway show) compact discs. Jim is the co-author of *Up Front: A Complete Resource for Today's Pit Ensemble*. He is an endorser and clinician for the Avedis Zildjian Company, Remo, Inc., Pearl Drums and Adams Musical Instruments, and a Signature Artist for Innovative Percussion, Inc.



Jim is an Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Delaware. He is the Assistant Director of the Blue Hen Marching Band, Director of the Basketball Pep Band, and Co-Director of the Symphonic Band. He received his Bachelor's Degree in Music Education from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and his Master's Degree in Performance from Indiana University where he was awarded the prestigious Performer's Certificate.

Jim currently resides in New Castle, Delaware, with his wife Lauren.

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## Introduction

Greetings friends of the pit.

The etudes in this collection are intended to be “the next step” for the front ensemble, the culmination of years of working on scales, four mallet strokes, and various other dry subjects. While there are many method books and texts available for the beginner that focus on stroke development and basic grip issues, this is *not* that text. I would recommend starting with the book *Up Front – A Complete Resource for Today’s Pit Ensemble*. I’m not just saying that because I helped write it but because it *is* that text.

The inspiration for the material within *Up Front Etudes* came from several places. Primarily, I wanted something more for my students. Many pits are accustomed to playing short exercises through several keys, then bumping up the tempo and continuing on. I needed a break from the monotony. First I took a look at what several of the top battery programs were doing. Like them, I wanted longer exercises that were technically challenging and goal-oriented. I also took note of some of my pit colleagues’ experiments. Several were starting to experiment, quite successfully, with adapting existing material (solos and ensemble works) to pit exercises. Between these two basic ideas and my desire to compose original works I was fired up and ready to write.

Enter reality...

I quickly learned there were quite a few challenges in composing this type of etude. The first big challenge was writing an entire exercise that only focused on one or two stroke types. I also had to be flexible with the instrumentation. Every pit has a different setup and different sizes and numbers of instruments. Next I wanted to create exercises with a flexible structure. This would allow instructors to play long or short versions of the exercises depending on their needs. I’ve also found that many pits don’t incorporate timpani and accessory instruments into their exercise program. I wanted to make this a part of the plan. At the same time, these exercises had to be fun to play and fun to listen to. Clever titles were also an absolute must.

“But Jim, how do I get started?” I’m glad you asked. You and your ensemble can start by reading the “Up Front Study Guide” (see Appendix page 47). This will let you know what text and exercises from the “Up Front” book will help with each specific piece in “Up Front Etudes.” The next step would be to dive into the material. Go slowly and take the time to analyze what you’re doing musically and technically. Check out the score and see what each player is contributing to the mix. Again, take your time. What’s the hurry? Next you can practice along with the MP3 files on the enclosed CD. Each etude has several MP3 files at different tempos to help you progress toward the target tempo. After this process is complete, it’s GO time. Get your ensemble together and tap it off. I recommend rotating players through keyboard, timpani, and accessory parts. Give everyone a chance to play everything. There is plenty of material to go around and plenty of time to do it. Also realize that any part can be doubled, and the setup is completely up to the ensemble director.

Have fun!

## C5

This two-mallet etude works on one of the most frequently deficient skills of young mallet players: accent control. The preliminary steps for this etude should begin AWAY from the keyboard with a drum and a pair of sticks. This will allow students to work on their control and technique without having to worry about tapping the correct slats. When the student feels they can control the sticks and produce a consistent sound at low (tap) levels and high (accent) levels, then they are ready for a batch of “C5”. As with all of the etudes in this collection, “C5” also focuses on blend, balance, basic shaping, and articulation.

Upon examining the score, you’ll notice that the keyboard parts are not written for specific instruments. Though the parts will fit on any combination of xylophones, vibraphones, and marimbas, it will sound best on vibes and marimbas only. This gives the ensemble a more mellow sound and keeps the parts in their original octaves. The mallet selection can vary greatly, but every player should be using a similar, if not the same, type of mallet. Experiment with everything from medium-soft yarn, medium cord, or even soft rubber. As for the form of the piece, all repeats are optional and you can repeat as many times or as few times as needed. Multiple repeats are great during the early stages of the learning process so the instructor can move around and evaluate each player.

Rehearsal C has a “marcato” indication. Here the players should strive for a brighter, more articulate sound. This can be achieved with a firmer fulcrum and a bit more velocity in the stroke. Rehearsal D (legato) should be the opposite: less fulcrum pressure, relaxed strokes, and a “washier” sound. These are both important concepts to have in your technical toolbox. Different musical applications will call for either or both of these techniques. Again, make sure that a consistent sound is achieved at the accent and tap levels. You will also notice that rehearsals C, D, and E have diamond-shaped noteheads during some of the double-stops. Here the player should only accent the diamond noteheads. Keep the other notes of the double-stops at the tap level.

The timpanist’s job is to provide groove and pulse for the ensemble. General mallets should be used throughout the piece; stay away from any mallets that are too hard or thin sounding. The marcato and legato indications for rehearsals C and D will also apply to the timpanist (see previous paragraph).

The rhythm section (shaker and drum kit) should always strive for a light and transparent sound. I recommend an egg shaker or the smallest shaker you can find (with sand or something similar inside). The accents on the shaker should be light. Don’t overdo it. The drumset will play quarter notes throughout the piece on hi-hat with foot (except rehearsals C and C1). Make sure the hi-hat cymbals are set on the stand with only about an inch or two between the cymbals and make sure they are flat on the stand (check the filter screw underneath the bottom cymbal). This will help to achieve a light sound; the quarter notes should never be too loud. As indicated, use a rute or light drum stick on the ride cymbal and a stick for the snare drum cross stick sounds. If you have access to a flat ride, this is the ideal time to use it.



**Tempos on included recordings are:**  
92, 82, 72, and 62 beats per minute (BPM).

## C5

Jim Ancona

 $\text{♩} = 88-96$ 

Keyboard 1 *mf*

Keyboard 2

Keyboard 3 *mf*

Keyboard 4

Timpani

Drum Kit *mp* \* hihat with foot

Shaker *mp*

\* Drum kit - Ride should be played with a light drum stick or rute, cross stick with a light drum stick. Hihat can be played on downbeats with foot (lightly) throughout the piece, however, tacet during rehearsals C and C1.

3

Kbd 1

Kbd 2 *mf*

Kbd 3

Kbd 4 *mf*

Timp *mf pp mp*

Dr

Shkr

## Wild Asses (Rant in C minor)

This two-mallet etude is based on a piece called *Hemiones* from Camille Saint-Saëns' *The Carnival of the Animals*. The rough translation of hemiones is, you guessed it, wild asses. This piece was originally written as a piano duet and is usually taken at tempos that are truly wild. We'll have to calm our asses down a bit for this rendition. I would suggest starting at a tempo of around 72 (or slower) and gradually working toward the target tempo of 144 or more.

This etude works on linear 2-mallet playing through the entire range of the keyboard, right- and left-hand leads, rhythmic accuracy of check patterns, stick control (various stickings), and as with all these etudes – blend, balance, consistency of sound, basic shaping, and articulation. For keyboard mallets I would recommend hard rubber or soft plastic on the xylophone, medium to medium-hard cord for the vibes, and medium to medium-hard yarn for the marimba. Since this exercise covers extreme register changes in all keyboards, make sure your mallets do not sound too harsh in the lower register or too “poofy” in the upper register. The vibraphone should pedal all slurred passages. All unmarked passages are pedaled at the discretion of the player.

The timpanist has quite a few challenges with this exercise. Notice that the forte attack and the pianissimo roll are detached during the first full bar. This will allow the drumhead to “breathe” before you re-attack for the roll. During the second full bar, make sure to detach the roll from the rhythmic figures at the end. A good general rule is: If the roll is tied to a note, don't rearticulate the release; if it is not tied, rearticulate.

Rehearsal B has several tuning challenges. Work out a tuning scheme and practice slowly. A fifth drum would be a great help in this exercise, though it can be performed on four. General mallets (medium hardness) are recommended; try to avoid mallets that are too hard or harsh sounding.

The snare drum part should be played on a concert drum with concert sticks. Take great care to balance down in the “mix” so the sound is not overwhelming (just a color). All rolls should be “buzz” rolls. The snare drummer should follow the same rules as the timpanist for tied and untied rolls (previous paragraph). For hand cymbals, I would recommend 17” or 18” cymbals, and again, take great care to balance with the ensemble. Staccato notes should be choked and tenuto notes should be held for exact value. Let all the other crashes ring freely.



### Tempos on included recordings are:

144, 132, 120, 104, 88, and 72  
beats per minute (BPM).

## Wild Asses (Rant in C minor)

Saint-Saëns, arr. Jim Ancona

♩ = 72 - 144

Xylophone

Vibraphone

Marimba

Timpani

Snare Drum

Cymbals

*mf* *ff* *ff* *ff* *f* *pp* *f* *ffpp* *f* *ffpp* *mf*

*l r l r* etc. *l r l r l r l r l r* etc. *l r l r* etc. *l r l r l r l r* etc. *l r l r* etc.

*mf* *ff* *ff* *ff* *f* *pp* *f* *ffpp* *f* *ffpp* *mf*

*l r l r* etc. *l r l r* etc. *l r l r* etc. *l r l r* etc. *l r l r* etc.

*f* *pp* *f* *pp* *f* *ffpp* *f* *ffpp* *mf*

*f* *ffpp* *f* *ffpp* *mf*

Xyl

Vib

Mar

Timp

SD

Cym

*mf* *ff* *ff* *ff* *f* *pp* *f* *ffpp* *f* *ffpp* *mf*

*l r l r* etc. *l r l r* etc. *l r l r* etc. *l r l r* etc. *l r l r* etc.

*mf* *ff* *ff* *ff* *f* *pp* *f* *ffpp* *f* *ffpp* *mf*

*l r l r* etc. *l r l r* etc. *l r l r* etc. *l r l r* etc. *l r l r* etc.

*f* *pp* *f* *pp* *f* *ffpp* *f* *ffpp* *mf*

*f* *ffpp* *f* *ffpp* *mf*

## Miko Cuban

This four-mallet interval-changing etude was inspired by one of my cats, Miko. Let's just say she has a bit of a jiggle when she walks. After watching her strut her stuff across the living room floor, the tune wrote itself.

Several technical concepts need to be worked on before a student can dive into this etude. For starters, the student must be able to move fluidly between all intervals, from a second to an octave. Take the time to work on basic interval-changing exercises (see Appendix on page 47) as well as working on finger/hand coordination away from the keyboard. Next, when shifting between the intervals, the student must be aware of how he/she is using their energy. The upstroke must be used to propel the mallets into the correct interval position and to propel the mallets over the correct pitches. Efficient use of energy is one of the key principles of the Stevens Method of Movement. Students must also be aware of what their body is doing while shifting. If an elbow, hip, or foot has to be moved in order to get the mallets into the proper position, these larger muscles must move first. Take the time to analyze any of these elbow or hip lead shifts. This is an important part of your accuracy.

During the **head** of the etude keyboard players can be divided into **Keyboard part 1 or part 2**. Any keyboard instrument can play either part. Both parts are demanding, but part 2 is a bit more advanced, working on linear interval changes and accompaniment and melody style playing. The head of the tune can be repeated as many times as you want before you continue on to the **interlude** or **coda**. I recommend experimenting a bit with who plays when. For example, the first time through the head, have part 1 play with the rhythm section; second time through, just part 2; on the third time all parts can play. When all parts are playing the head make sure to balance to the melodic line of part 2. That means the opening *forte* dynamic of part 1 may become a *piano*. The interlude splits the ensemble into specific keyboard parts and works on basic polyrhythmic ideas. Long story short, the instrumentation and form of this etude are very flexible, so experiment and have some fun.

I recommend medium-hard cord mallets for vibes, medium to medium-hard yarn or cord for marimba, and soft plastic for the xylophone.

The timpanist has to be aware of the 12/8 groove factor throughout this etude. To achieve this, work toward playing larger phrases with rhythmic and physical fluidity. Rather than playing beat by beat, play bar by bar or phrase by phrase. During the 9/8 sections of the head there are some step-wise tunings. To avoid the "trombone" effect, make sure the pedal action is like a grace note to the mallet stroke. Staccato mallets are ideal for this piece.

The agogo bell player is in charge. A firm understanding and *feel* for the rhythmic pattern are crucial. Play the bells with a rattan stick or a thin drumstick and make sure not to overbalance or "force" the part. The shékere player should experiment with two different basic techniques. For the head of the etude, use a side-to-side motion; for the interlude, strike the instrument with your hand for accents (experiment with bass tones on the bottom of the gourd) and tap the beads on your leg for non-accents. The shékere player should sit to achieve this.


 Disk

Notes

### Tempos on included recordings are:

104, 92, and 80 beats per minute (BPM).

As mentioned above, you're encouraged to be free with the form of this piece. This recording plays the head one time (keyboard 1), then repeats (kbd 1 and 2), then goes to the interlude, back to the head, then to the coda.



## Miko Cuban

Jim Ancona

Head  
♩ = 104

Keyboard 1  
*f*

Keyboard 2  
*f* 3 4 4 3 4 4 3 4 3 4 4 3 4  
*mp*

Timpani  
*mf*

Agogo Bells  
*mp*

Shékere  
*mp*

\* Keyboard 1 - First four bars will be *p* when Keyboard 2 is playing, *f* when solo.

Kbd 1  
*mf*

Kbd 2  
3 4 4 3 4 3 4 4  
*mf*

Timp

A. Bells

Shkre

# Flüchtig

This four-mallet roll etude is based on J.S. Bach's chorale setting of the hymn *Ach Wie Flüchtig, Ach Wie Nichtig* (O How Cheating, O How Fleeting). In my opinion, this is the most technically and musically challenging etude in this collection. Because the tempo is so slow, I would recommend consistently rehearsing with a metronome in the developmental stages (at the eighth note pulse). All fermatas should connect directly to the next phrase with only a breath in between. The only exception is at the end of rehearsal C. This is a caesura, or cut, before starting rehearsal D.

For the marimbist, this etude makes use of several roll styles and works on moving seamlessly between them. Roll styles included in this piece are traditional rolls, independent or one-handed rolls, double lateral rolls, and combination rolls (combining a lateral in one hand with a traditional in the other). Remember to vary roll speeds throughout the piece. Use slower rolls for the lower register and lower dynamics and slightly faster rolls for the higher register and higher dynamics. Very soft yarn mallets are recommended. These roll styles are notated as follows:



**Independent roll**  
rolling with one hand  
(i.e., 3-4-3-4-3-4, etc.)



**Double lateral roll**  
combined double-lateral strokes  
(i.e., 4-3-1-2, etc.)



**Traditional roll**  
alternating between hands  
(i.e., RH, LH, etc.)

The vibist is challenged to create lush textures while keeping time for the ensemble. Make sure not to over-balance the marimba, and don't let the rhythms sound too articulate. Experiment with medium-soft yarn or cord mallets on the vibraphone. Mallet dampening is required during rehearsal D; This is notated with an "x". To perform this task, simply dampen the note preceding the "x" with one hand while striking the note following the "x" with the other. It takes some practice to dampen notes silently, but with softer mallets this should be a bit easier.

The timpani part requires quite a bit of step-wise tuning so make sure to sing the part before attempting to play. Avoid a "trombone" effect while tuning by making sure that the pedal action is like a grace note to the mallet stroke. Like the vib part, the timpani part should also be lush, full and not too articulate. This is especially true with the rolls. Make sure they are velvety smooth and seamless. Very soft mallets are also recommended for the timpanist.

The bass drum, tam tam, and suspended cymbal parts are all about color. The sounds should be dark and full but at the same time subtle and complimentary to the ensemble. Use soft mallets on all of these instruments.



**Tempos on included recordings are:**  
100, 90, and 80 eighth note beats per minute (BPM).

Since the tempo of this piece is broken up, the metronome on practice tracks will stop during fermatas. Phrases following fermatas will be counted off with two clicks.

## Flüchtig

**J.S. Bach, arr. Jim Ancona**

♩ = 100

J.S. Bach, arr. Jim Ancona

♩ = 100

Vibe

Marimba

Timpani

Bass Drum  
Tam tam

Sus. Cymbals

*p*, *mp*, *pp*, *low*, *medium*

3

A

B

[illegible]

## Uncle Creepy

"Uncle Creepy" is my first foray into the happy world of twelve-tone composition. Many of the melodic and accompaniment ideas in this etude are basic twelve-tone rows and are followed by a retrograde treatment (all notes and rhythms are reversed). The technical focus for the keyboards is one-handed octaves (holding four mallets). This stroke is often overlooked during the course of a player's development. Particularly with players who employ the Stevens technique, these strokes tend to be played with too much arm motion. Focus on low level, controlled strokes initiated from the wrist. The marimba accompaniment at the beginning and the vibe accompaniment at rehearsal B require the players to "stack" their hands (in these cases right hand over left). This should not affect the wrist stroke technique.

The vibe player should use medium-hard to hard cord mallets (nothing too brittle sounding). There are several pedaling indications throughout the piece. Half (1/2) pedaling means to simply press the pedal approximately half way down in order to provide just a bit of sustain. Rehearsal B, however, is secco or dry; no pedal should be used. Throughout the middle of the piece there are several sections that are marked specifically to be pedaled. Sometimes these are echo effects and sometimes they are "cluster" effects. In either case, keep the pedal down until it is indicated to clear.

The marimbist should use a medium to medium-hard yarn mallet for this etude. Much of the challenge is getting great playing zones and a consistent quality of sound throughout the piece. During rehearsals C (twelve-tone row) and rehearsal D (retrograde), I like to bring out the left hand a bit. Not only does this create more interest in the part, but also at this point the timpanist is creating glissando effects, so the marimbist must provide the bass line.

The timpanist gets one of the creepiest effects of all: the rolled glissando. This part was inspired by the composer Béla Bartók (in particular by his masterpiece *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta*). These glissandi require silky rolls, a smooth diminuendo, and of course accurate and evenly paced tuning. Notice that the glissando at the end of the piece is not rolled. This is also a great etude to work on dampening coordination. All staccato notes should be struck, then dampened quickly. A soft general-purpose mallet can be used throughout.

Now for the most difficult part: the tambourine. This etude requires several different performance techniques. For rehearsals A and G, place the tambourine head down on your thigh (knee slightly raised and bent). Tap the rim of the drum with fingers of both hands. Rehearsals B and H use the more traditional style of playing or the knee/fist technique, depending on the tempo. The marcato accents should be "pop" sounds played with fist or flat palm. Rehearsals C, D, and E require thumb rolls. The tambourine part was inspired by Stravinsky's *Petroushka*, Britten's *Four Sea Interludes* and Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker* and *Capriccio Italien*. I encourage all performers to check out these classic excerpts!



**Tempos on included recordings are:**  
116, 106, 96, and 86 beats per minute (BPM).

## Uncle Creepy

Jim Ancona

$\text{♩} = 116$

**A** half-pedal unless indicated

Vibraphone

*f* l r r l l r r l r r l r etc

Marimba

*f* l r l r l r l l *mp*

Timpani

Tambourine

*pp*

*s*

Vib

Mar

Timp

Tamb

*f*

## Pieces of Dave

“Pieces of Dave” is a tribute to famed percussion instructor, composer, and friend David Reeves. I have had the pleasure of teaching for several years with Dave at Santa Clara Vanguard and The Cavaliers.

Anyway, this etude contains quotes and ideas derived from Dave’s work entitled *Pieces of Eight* (first two bars, rehearsal C, and the last bar). *Pieces of Eight* is an outstanding work for percussion ensemble and belongs in everyone’s library. Also included in *Pieces of Dave* is a new rendition of the 2004 Santa Clara Vanguard pit exercise entitled *Yanni* (rehearsal A,B, F, and G).

The technical focus of this etude is hand-to-hand alternating strokes in different combinations (a.k.a. permutations). All keyboard players must make sure that the motion throughout is smooth and flowing. Watch each hand to make sure the alternating stroke has a continuous and relaxed feel. At rehearsals B and G, the timpani takes over the melody. All keyboard players should bring the unaccented notes down into the mix and focus on subtly bringing out the accents. This can be quite demanding from a technical and musical standpoint.

For the first 8 bars of rehearsal C, the keyboard players must focus on keeping time. The timpani will then take over with 16th notes and act as time-keeper for the ensemble. Rehearsals D and E change the permutation. Again, focus on the flow of the strokes. This etude demands the most cohesiveness from your ensemble. In the initial stages, practice with a metronome and learn how each part fits together.

As for mallets, the xylophone/bell player should use rubber mallets or very hard cord or yarn on the xylophone and change to a soft or medium plastic for the bells. The vibraphone should be played with medium-hard cord and the marimba with medium to medium-hard yarn.

Most of the timpanist’s role is that of accompaniment, though there are a few moments to shine. The timpani voice is the melody during rehearsals B and G. This should have a lyrical feel with subtle shape. You heard me – I said a lyrical feel on the timpani. In spite of the rhythmic figures throughout, avoid using hard mallets. The timpani voice should not have any “edge” to it. If the need arises, articulate by using a touch more fulcrum pressure or more stroke velocity rather than a harsh-sounding mallet.

Finally, this is your chance to work on triangle playing. Stop your chuckling. Most students underestimate or simply don’t understand what goes into producing a good quality of sound on this instrument. Start with a good instrument, a good clip, and hang the triangle with fishing line (not twine, string, or a shoelace). Avoid using a beater that is too thick or “clanky” and strive to produce a complex and thick mixture of overtones. Staccato notes should be dampened and all other notes should ring. The term “LV” means let vibrate or ring freely (do not dampen during the rests).



**Tempos on included recordings are:**  
104, 94, 84, and 74 beats per minute (BPM).

## Pieces of Dave

Jim Ancona

♩ = 104

**A**

Xylophone *ff* *mf* 1 3 2 4 etc

Vibraphone *ff* *mf* 1 3 2 4 etc pedal each bar

Marimba *ff* *mf* 1 3 2 4 etc

Timpani *pp* *ff* *mf* muffle D and high A

Triangle *ff* *mp* Lv.

5

Xyl

Vib

Mar

Tim

Tri

# Appendix: UP FRONT study guide

*Up Front: A Complete Resource for Today's Pit Ensemble* by Jim Casella and Jim Ancona contains technical information and exercises which will help to guide your development with the etudes from this book. Here are some suggested readings and exercises from that text with their corresponding page numbers.



Also available from Tapspace

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**Enclosed in this book is a CD-ROM which contains the individual parts for each etude as well as audio recordings you can use for reference or practice.**

## Individual Parts

The parts are supplied in **PDF** (portable document format) for convenient handling. This is a very common format that allows you to open the files on your computer, display in high resolution, and print easily. In order to open and print them, you must have a copy of **Adobe Reader** (or other PDF compatible viewer) installed on your computer. PDF files are very common, and a compatible viewer program is included on nearly all computer systems. In the rare case you are unable to view the PDFs, you may download a free copy of Adobe Reader on the Adobe website at:

**<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>.**

## Audio Recordings

The audio recordings on the disk are in MP3 format. They were created electronically using percussion sounds exclusively from Virtual Drumline by Tapspace. You'll notice that each of the etudes recordings have multiple **BPM** (beats per minute) as well as **MET** (metronome on) versions for practice purposes.

Do not put this disk in a regular CD player. To listen to the MP3 recordings, drag the file from this disc onto your computer's hard drive. You will need a software program that can play MP3s. Most computers already have something like this pre-installed. If you don't have one, we recommend the free program called iTunes (Windows or Macintosh compatible). It can be downloaded from **<http://www.apple.com/itunes/download>**. With this type of program, you're free to listen to the recordings on your computer, iPod, or burn to a regular audio CD.

## Licensing Information

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