

Jim Casella

# Compound Autonomy

for percussion ensemble



**Compound Autonomy** Written by Jim Casella  
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# Program notes

*Compound Autonomy* was inspired by one of my musical heroes – Swiss composer and musician, Nik Bärtsch. His music is mathematic and complex, often built up via opposing asymmetrical patterns that repeat for long periods, patiently layering colorful and funky elements into a fabric of sound that really speaks to me. While marketed as “jazz,” I’ve sometimes likened it to the style of minimalist visionary Steve Reich with some subtle funk added to the mix.

With this multilayered approach in mind, my goal was to develop its character from a variety of independent patterns, all of which don’t necessarily align in their root phrasing. Written in the meter of 7/8, the main ostinato is comprised of two pitches repeated in an oblong pattern of 4+3. Over the top of this, the hi-hat enters in more of a common feel of 4/4-metered phrasing, followed by an ongoing 3-note pattern in the bongos. These opposing (or autonomous) elements break the barrier of the typical barline as they blend (or compound) together, occasionally landing back together on a common downbeat, but always providing a churning and weaving fabric upon which the main melodic material can be framed.

Written for a large ensemble, the piece uses a fairly typical array of percussion instruments as well as bass guitar and piano. While each part contains its own autonomous syncopation, flurries of rapid-fire rhythms feature four players in a brittle combination of woodblocks, brake drums, cowbells, and bongos, followed by some flashy explosions of keyboard runs. Ultimately, however, the resounding feature of this piece is the character of its overlapping lines and mysterious, almost lullaby-infused melody, all of which are anchored by the everlasting two-note 4+3 ostinato.

*Compound Autonomy* was written for the Foster High School percussion ensemble from Richmond, Texas, under the direction of Mr. Darren Jordan.

-Jim Casella

## Instrument/Parts list

This piece calls for **17 players** with the following instrumentation:

### **Glockenspiel part**

glockenspiel, guiro

### **Xylophone part**

xylophone, crotales

### **Chime part**

chimes, 2 cowbells, guiro, cricket

### **Vibraphone 1 part**

vibraphone, suspended cymbal

### **Vibraphone 2 part**

vibraphone

### **Marimba 1 & 2 part (2 players)**

Two 4.5-octave marimbas (low F)

### **Marimba 3 & 4 part (2 players)**

Two 4.3-octave marimbas (low A)

### **Timpani part**

4 timpani, 2 low/muted brake drums

### **Bongo part**

bongos, vibra slap, wind gong

### **Sandpaper part**

sandpaper blocks, 2 woodblocks

### **Triangle part**

triangle, mark tree

### **Miscellaneous Percussion part**

sizzle cymbal, suspended cymbal, 2 chinas, splash cymbal, mark tree, log drums (5 pitches)

### **Drumset part**

5-piece drumset with, ride, 2 crashes, hi-hats, splash, and china cymbals

### **Piano part**

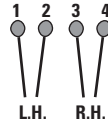
piano

### **Bass Guitar part**

electric bass guitar

# Performance notes

**Mallet sticking suggestions:** In some parts, stickings have been suggested. Players are welcome, however, to use whichever stickings feel most comfortable. For reference, the sticking numbers indicated use this numbering formula. In cases where both mallets in one hand are to be used as a double-stop (a.k.a. “double verticals”), a simple “L” or “R” is used to indicate the left or right hand.



**Conducting/barlines/phrasing:** If being conducted, the intention was to have the piece conducted in a typical pattern of four but with asymmetrical groupings (4+3+4+3). So in the conducting pattern, beats 1 and 3 would be slightly longer (four sixteenths) than beats 2 and 4 (three sixteenths).

Throughout the piece, individual players may find that their parts do not land naturally on a barline, or their phrasing may not line up with other players around them. This is intentional and part of what gives the piece its character. In such cases, perpetual flow is important. For example, the bongo part recycles every three measures, which doesn't technically “pair” with anything else in the ensemble. This pattern will also not land naturally with the conductor. So these types of “over-the-barline” patterns (which are in abundance) should groove while keeping various alignment checkpoints in mind along the way.

**Timpani tuning:** There are a number of ways that timpani tuning can be accomplished, so specific pedal markings have been left out. Whenever possible, it is recommended that stepwise melodic parts be pedaled on one drum. This may mean that three pitches of a 4-note figure would be performed on one drum, with the fourth pitch being played on a different drum. Some study may be required to determine what works best for different individuals. Once pedaling methods have been derived, this part should be easily accommodated using four drums.

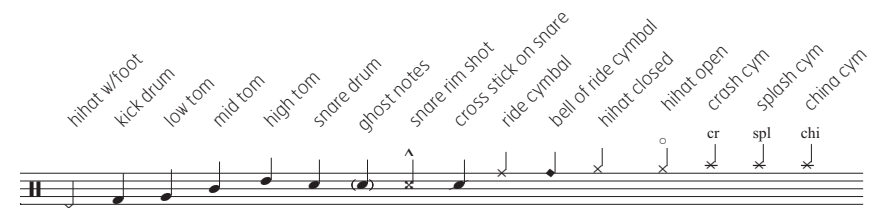
**Staccato ostinato:** The dominant ostinato is that of a quarter note followed by a dotted eighth note. While these notes appear to be of different durations, when they have a staccato marking, they should all be played equally as short notes. These parts are written this way so fewer rests were necessary for a less cluttered look.

**Cowbell/brake drum/bongo/woodblock feature:** One of the more challenging moments of this piece comes when these players play a quickfire feature of condensed 32nd note rhythms in unison. These parts are all written for two unpitched surfaces (high and low). While the part looks daunting on paper, with practice (and perhaps memorization), the syncopation should start to become easier with muscle memory. These four players should be very focused on playing uniformly and balanced with each other, so communication and listening is important. Also, since these instruments are all relatively bright in timbre, take care to use mallets that take a little bit of the “edge” off the attack so it's not too harsh.

**Vibraphones:** Pedal markings are not indicated in great detail, and much of this should be left to the discretion of the performer as they interpret the natural phrasing of each part. You will, however, notice several parts where the word “damp” is used, indicating that the instrument is to be played dry and without pedal. When this specification isn't present, feel free to interpret pedaling naturally.

**Marimbas:** While there are only two marimba staves in the score, these parts are ideally intended to be doubled by two players each on their own instrument which will help these parts balance with the rest of the ensemble. At several points, “dead strokes” are indicated with a plus (+) sign. These are performed by pressing the mallet into the bar so it's not allowed to resonate. Take care not to press so hard that these notes become accents, though. A light touch is important to achieve the desired timbre change from dead strokes to open strokes.

**Drumset:** While there are several repeat bars used, this part is generally written out with pretty specific detail. While it may be tempting to break away from what's written, it's pretty important for the drumset player to perform the written part. In particular, hi-hat accents that occur every four sixteenth notes will create an interplay between “on beat” and “off beat” feels. As such, accents should be played with authority, and less dominant notes should be very subtle. In all cases, the drumset player must be wary of how the balance of his or her playing is blending with the other players of the ensemble. In a concert hall, it's very likely for snare rimshots to become way too loud, so a light touch is important. The following notation is used.



**Niente:** As layers drop out at the end of the piece, the niente indication is used. If the pacing of the fade-away seems hurried, feel free to experiment with allowing more time for individual players to drop out. Ideally, each part would fade away to the point of being unheard before exposing the remaining players as they follow suit. If performed with detail, the ending of the piece should draw the audience in to a quiet moment of drama as the incessant ostinato dissolves into nothing.



Level: Advanced  
Duration: approx. 5'50"

Commissioned by the Foster High School Percussion Ensemble, Richmond, TX – Daren Jordan, Director

# Compound Autonomy

Jim Casella

**Tempo:** ♩ = 95  
**Instrumentation:** Glockenspiel (medium plastic), Xylophone/Crotales, Chimes, Vibraphone 1, Vibraphone 2, Marimbas 1&2 (Low F), Marimbas 3&4 (low A), Sandpaper Blocks (never wavering), small bongo (tuned very high, played w/ hard felt mallets), Mark Tree (from perc setup), very soft HH (accents should be very pronounced).

The score is written for a percussion ensemble. It includes staves for Glockenspiel, Xylophone/Crotales, Chimes, Vibraphone 1, Vibraphone 2, Marimbas 1&2 (Low F), Marimbas 3&4 (low A), Sandpaper Blocks, small bongo, and very soft HH. The music is in 4/4 time and features a variety of rhythmic patterns and dynamics, including *pp*, *p*, and *p* markings. A large, stylized silhouette of a hand is overlaid on the left side of the score.

## Sample Image

15 **A**

G *p*

X/C

Chm *p*  
Crotales (med plastic)  
Chimes (w/xylo mallet on cap)

V1 *mp*  
*♩*

V2 *mp*  
*♩*

M1  
M2 (4) (8)

M3  
M4 *p* (4) (4) (8)  
*mp*

Tim

Bo

SP (4) (8)

Tr Triangle *mp*

Per Sizzle Cymbal *p*

Dr 2 2 2

Pno all staccatos = secco *pp* (4)

Bs *mp*

Sample Image

**B** **C**

G *mp* *mp* *p* *mp*

X/C *p* *mp* *p*

Chm Chimes w/hammer *mp* *mp*

V1 *mp* *ppp* *mp* *ppp* *mp* *ppp* *mp* *ppp* *mp* *ppp* *mp* *ppp* *mp* *ppp* *mp* *ppp* *mf* *mf* *p*

V2 *mp* *ppp* *mp* *ppp* *mp* *ppp* *mp* *ppp* *mp* *ppp* *mp* *ppp* *mp* *ppp* *mp* *ppp* *mp* *ppp* *mf* *mf* *p*

M1 M2 (4) (8) *mp*

M3 M4 (4) (8) *mp*

Tim medium mallets *mp* *p* *mf*

(4) (8) *mp* (always driving)

Sizzle Cym *p*

2 2 2 *mp*

(4) (8) *mp* *pp* *p* *mf*

(4) (8) *mf*

Sample Image

37

G

X/C

Chm

V1  
*mf* *p* *mf*

V2  
*mf* *p* *mf*

M1  
(4) *f* *mf*<sup>2</sup> 1 1 21 sim. 2 2 2 1 22

M2

M3  
(4) *f* *mf*<sup>2</sup> 1 1 21 sim. 2 2 2 1 22

M4

Tim

Bo

SP  
(4) (8)

Tr

Per  
Mark Tree

Dr  
2 2 2 *vpl*

Pno

Bs  
(4)

Sample Image





55

G

X/C

Chm

2 Cowbells w/cord

*f*

4 2 3 1, 4 2 3 etc...

*mp* all damp

(4)

(8)

M1  
M2

M3  
M4

2 low muted brakedrums w/cord (not too harsh)

*f*

still w/hard felt mallets

*f*

2 Woodblocks w/cord

*f*

Tr

Per

Dr

Pno

Bs

Sample Image

63 Glockenspiel

The image displays a musical score for a Glockenspiel and various percussion instruments. The score is organized into systems. The Glockenspiel part (G) is at the top, followed by X/C, Chm, VI, V2, M1, M2, M3, and M4. The bottom section includes a China cym. and a part marked 'ch.'. The score features complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and rests. Dynamics such as *fp* and *mf* are indicated. Rehearsal marks with the number '2' are present. The score is partially obscured by a large, semi-transparent watermark of a hand holding a pencil.

Sample  
Image







99 **H**

musical score with staves for G, X/C, Chm, V1, V2, M1, M2, M3, M4, and T. Includes dynamics like *pp*, *mp*, *p*, and *p*. Includes performance instructions like "drag out last note (extremely soft)" and "bongos". Includes a large grey silhouette of a hand on the left side.

Sample Image

111

medium plastic

*mp*

Crotales (med plastic)

*p*

Chimes w/hammer

*mp*

all damp

*p*

*mf*

*mf*

*p*

*mf*

*mf*

med mallets

*mf*

*mp*

*mp*

*mf*

*mf*

*mp*

*p*

*mf*

*p*

*mf*

Sample Image













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## **About the Abridged Version**

Since *Compound Autonomy* is a multilayered work built on repetitive figures that need to develop over time, its playing duration can be a little longer than some ensembles can allow for programming or festival limitations. Ideally, the longer version is much more balanced and fulfilling; However I believe it is better to have a portion of your music performed than none at all! So I've reassembled this abridged version for situations where the original version is simply too long in duration. It will reduce the overall playing time by about 1:30.

*-Jim Casella*

Level: Advanced  
Duration: approx. 4'30"

Commissioned by the Foster High School Percussion Ensemble, Richmond, TX – Daren Jordan, Director

# Compound Autonomy (Abridged Version)

Jim Casella

$\text{♩} = 95$   
medium plastic

Glockenspiel

Xylophone  
Crotales

Chimes

Vibraphone 1

Vibraphone 2

Marimbas 1 & 2  
(Low F)

Marimbas 3 & 4  
(low A)

mp

Sandpaper Blocks  
(never wavering)

(4)

(8)

small bongo (tuned very high)  
played w/hard felt mallets

pp

Mark Tree (from perc setup)

p

very soft HH (accents should be very pronounced)

p

2

2

Sample  
Image

Compound Autonomy (Abridged Version) – Casella

**A**

Musical score for 'Compound Autonomy (Abridged Version)' by Casella, starting at measure 15. The score includes staves for G, X/C, Chm, V1, V2, M1, M2, M3, M4, Tim, Bo, SP, Tr, Per, Dr, Pno, and Bs. It features various dynamics such as *mp*, *p*, *mf*, and *pp*, and includes performance instructions like "all staccatos = secco" and "always driving".

Sample Image



Sample Image

Compound Autonomy (Abridged Version) – Casella

31

**B** Guiro

Xylo rubato (rubber mallets)

Cricket

SusCym

L.v.

4 2 3 1 4 2 3 etc...

mp all damp

M1 M2

M3 M4

mp

p

Tim

Bo

SP

(16)

Tr

Per

large cym.  
strike softly w/mallet (L.v.)

mark tree

mp

Dr

spl

chi

Pno

Bs

Sample Image

39

G

X/C

Chm

2

2

2

2

2 Cowbells w/cord

*f*

4 2 3 1, 4 2 3 etc...

*mp* all damp

(4)

(8)

(4)

(8)

M1

M2

M3

M4

2 low muted brakedrums w/cord (not too harsh)

*f*

still w/hard felt mallets

*f*

2 Woodblocks w/cord

*f*

(8)

*mf*

*mp*

*mf*

Sample Image





61 **E**

G *mf*

X/C **2** **2** *f* (4) *damp*

Chimes *mf* *damp*

V1 *f* *damp* *damp* *damp* *damp* *damp* *damp*

V2 *f* *damp* *damp* *damp* *damp* *damp* *damp*

M1 *f* *f* 4 2 3 2 4 2 3 3 2 etc. (4)

M2 *f* *f* 4 2 3 2 4 2 3 3 2 etc. (4)

M3 *f* *f* (4)

M4 *f* *f* (4)

Tim *mf* *f* (4)

Bo bongos (w/single fingers) *mf* **2** adding more fingers

SP (4)

Tr **2** **2** **2**

Per *f* to sticks china (Lv.) ride (accents on bell)

Dr *f* *spl*

Pno *f*

Bs (4)

Sample Image

70

**G** *ff* damp **F** *mp* damp damp damp damp

**X/C** *ff* *p* 2 2 2 2 2

**Chm** *ff* *p* Guiro

**V1** *ff* *mp* all damp damp all damp

**V2** *ff* *mf* damp damp damp

**M1** *ff* *mf* *mp* *f* *mf* *mf*

**M2** *ff* *mp* += dead stroke += dead stroke += dead stroke

**M3** (4) (8) (12)

**M4** *ff* *mp*

**Tim** *ff* *mp* *pp* soft mallets (muffle after each stroke)

**Wind Gong** *mp* wind gong (scrape w/coin) *lv.*

**Drums** *p* sizzle cym *mp* log drum *p* choked splash *mp* sizzle *p*

2 2 2 2

*p*

*mp*

Sample Image

83 **G**

**H** medium plastic

*mp*

Crotales (med plastic)

*p*

Chimes w/hammer

*mp*

drag out last note (extremely soft)

*ppp*

*pp*

*p*

all damp

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

strike w/soft mallet

*mp*

bongos

*p*

*mf*

log

*mp*

*pp*

sus cym

*mf*

*p*

Sample Image





102

G

X/C

Chm

V1

V2

M1  
M2

M3  
M4

Tim

Bo

SP

Tr

Per

Dr

Pno

Bs

Crotales (l.v.)

Xylo

Crotales (l.v.)

Bowed Crotales

*f*

*p*

*mf*

*mp*

4

(4)

(8)

strike w/mallet (l.v.)

mark tree

chi

Sample Image

Musical score for 'Compound Autonomy (Abridged Version) – Casella'. The score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes staves for G (Guitar), XC (Xylophone), Chm (Chimes), V1 (Violin I), V2 (Violin II), M1/M2 (Mandolin), and M3/M4 (Mandolin). The second system includes staves for M1/M2, M3/M4, and V1. The score features various musical notations including slurs, dynamics (pp), and performance instructions such as 'niente', 'strike softly w/mallet (l.v.)', and 'fade out till inaudible'. Measure numbers 110 and 114 are indicated at the beginning of the first and second systems respectively.

Sample  
Image



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