

# 4590

## *Percussion Quartet in a Rondo Form*

By Jeffrey T. Parthun, Sr.

### Program Notes

**4590: *Percussion Quartet in a Rondo Form*** is one of those cryptic titles like *25 or 6 to 4* by the legendary rock band Chicago. The piece was written for a quartet of 8<sup>th</sup> graders for their annual Spring Concert. The ensemble was written in installments. The students received 4 to 12 measures every week when I came to their school for a percussion sectional. When the piece was finally finished I had to give it a title but was unable to come up with anything I liked. At the very last minute, literally on my way to the copy machine to run copies of the final parts, I entitled the piece *4590*. The students enjoyed learning the piece and, since each installment began with the A theme, they really understood how the rondo form worked. They kept asking me about the title and I told them to figure it out. After a couple of weeks one of the members figured it out and told the others. I swore them to secrecy and they had fun keeping the secret from their wind playing peers. What does the title mean? The first installment was written on April 5, 1990 (4/5/90). What does *25 or 6 to 4* mean? Sorry! Figure it out for yourself.

### Performance Notes

The piece has a rudimental feel to it because of the instrumentation. Many older percussion ensembles (through the 1960's) were written for snare drum, tenor drum, marching bass drum and crash cymbals because most bands had marching responsibilities and had those instruments available. This does not mean that this piece must be played with open, rudimental style rolls. Buzz/orchestral rolls will work as well. You should base your decision on the technique level of your snare drummer.

The rim knocks will sound best if you hold the stick at the shoulder end, holding the tip on the head acting as a hinge while the butt end strikes across the rim. Have your players experiment with moving the stick tip

around the drum from the center to the edge to find the quality of rim knock that sounds best. In my own playing, I keep the heel of my hand on the drum head when I do a rim knock.

If you use a tom tom you might find that a higher pitched drum will balance the snare drum better than a lower pitched drum. A very low pitched drum will have too much ring in it to produce clear rhythmic passages and muffling a deep tom will not always give you the clarity you need to compete with the snare drum.

You might be tempted to use a marching bass drum and this is OK if you use a rudimental interpretation. I would encourage bass drummers who are playing an ensemble of this difficulty to use a concert drum and work hard on their muffling skills and playing areas. A skilled bass drummer, one who can produce good tone at all dynamic levels and can manipulate the articulation of the drum, is found too rarely at this grade level.

I intended that the cymbal part be played on crash cymbals. When using crash cymbals, the hi hat parts are played by holding the cymbals horizontally, forming a hinge that rests against the player's belly. When I have had a small or physically weak player on this part I have substituted a suspended cymbal and a closed hi hat played with a snare drum stick.

A good tempo range is somewhere MM.112 – 126 depending on the level of your ensemble.



**Jeffrey T. Parthun, Sr.** lives in Lafayette, Indiana with his wife Kim and four children. He is a band director in the Lafayette (IN) School Corporation where he currently directs the concert and jazz bands at Tecumseh Middle School and is an assistant director at Jefferson High School. During his 20+ years as a public school teacher he has taught instrumental music at every level from elementary band and orchestra through teaching applied percussion at Purdue University. Jeff holds degrees from Butler University and Northwestern University where he studied band arranging with John P. Paynter, Don Owens and Don Casey. In addition to a busy teaching schedule he is active as a freelance percussionist with many regional jazz and concert groups. He is an experienced adjudicator, clinician and arranger for concert, jazz, marching and percussion ensembles and is a member of the Central States Judges Association. He can be seen (briefly!) as the band director in the Paramount Pictures movie "Blue Chips" with Shaquille O'Neal and Nick Nolte.