

Flo Menezes

Pan-cada(s)

(January/August 2009)

textural and rhythmic study for percussion ensemble

for John Boudler
and his PIAP Ensemble

commissioned by the PIAP Ensemble, São Paulo

Introduction

In the Brazilian music literature of the 19th century, the percussion set of some scores was described with a rather pejorative word: *pancadaria*, which means, literally, *rumble*. The title of this piece refers ironically to this curious historical terminology, based on the fact that a great part of *Pan-cada(s)* deals with loud strokes along with very quiet textures. Furthermore, other senses are equally evoked in its title: *pan* versus *cada* stands for the opposition between the whole (*pan*) and each (*cada*) percussion player (concerning also a totally wrong use of the word *each* = “*eaches*”, for *cada* = “*cadass*”); *pancada* (stroke) versus *pancadas* stands for the opposition between a unique, enormously loud stroke given at the large tam-tam (the only instrument – together with the angklung – which does not belong here to the membrane percussion family and which is performed either by the conductor or by an extra percussionist who does not belong to the instrumental ensemble and who comes surprisingly on stage just to play this single sound) and the many strokes as accentuated notes throughout the piece; and finally the fact that *pancada*, in Portuguese, also means, in colloquial language, “crazy” – the possibility to have this word either in the singular or in the plural refers to a basic doubt: if “crazies” are all percussion players in the piece or “crazy” is just that one who plays the large tam-tam (the word *tantã* in Portuguese, by the way, also means “crazy”) or, maybe, just the composer himself, that is, me!

Pan-cada(s) – *textural and rhythmic study for percussion ensemble*, was commissioned by the most important percussion ensemble and percussion school of Brazil, PIAP – Grupo de Percussão do Instituto de Artes da Unesp, São Paulo State University. It is dedicated to PIAP and to its founder and Director/Conductor, John Boudler, and was written, on and off, between January and August 2009.

Formal structure

In many of my works I designated particular moments of the formal structure as *Situations*: a spatial disposition of the musicians with specific musical actions, which imply a *musical* function rather than a “merely” theatrical one.

Lasting about **13 minutes**, *Pan-cada(s)* is structured in **5 sections** containing **8 Situations**:

- Section A:
 - Situation 1 = ca. 2’30”
 - Situation 2 = ca. 40”
- Section B:
 - Situation 3 = ca. 5’50”
- Section C:
 - Situation 4 = ca. 40”
 - Situation 5 = ca. 13”
 - Situation 6 = ca. 21”
- Section D:
 - Situation 7 = ca. 21”
- Section E:
 - Situation 8 = ca. 2’13” + ?” (last resonances).

Fibonacci structuring is visible in many aspects of the work. Nevertheless, the main aspect of *Pan-cada(s)* deals with the opposition of *textural* versus *rhythmic structures*. In the first type of structure (textures), listening is linked to statistical evaluations of sound materials, greatly influenced by my electroacoustic experience; in the second one (rhythmic structures), rhythmic cells constitute the most fundamental element of musical organization: either as symmetrical disparities of accents (such as in **Situation 3**) or as directional but at the same time divergent structuring of bars and their respective subdivisions (as in **Situation 8**).

Instrumentation

Pan-cada(s) is basically written for a set of 34 membrane percussion instruments (29 general membrane instruments; 4 timpani – with pitches *ad libitum* –; 1 bass drum), which are distributed among 4 groups of 2 percussionists each, plus a few small instruments (8 total) and a large tam-tam (as large as possible, placed just behind the conductor and possibly covering him/her from part of the audience's vision). Besides the conductor, 8 percussionists should thus perform *Pan-cada(s)*, distributed in this way:

- Group 1: percussionists 1 & 2
- Group 2: percussionists 3 & 4
- Group 3: percussionists 5 & 6
- Group 4: percussionists 7 & 8.

An eventual ninth percussionist may replace the conductor in playing the unique tam-tam note at the beginning of **Section D / Situation 7**, coming on-stage just before this moment and just for this single sound. Immediately after playing the tam-tam, he/she leaves the stage and disappears from the audience's view.

The 29 general membranes may be freely chosen according to the available set of instruments of the ensemble, from lower to higher membranes, but the highest percussion lines of each group in the score must necessarily be a Brazilian tamborim. This instrument is normally held by the left hand and played with a stick in the right hand. However, here it must be suspended on a music stand, as shown in the next figure. In other words, the definitive set of variable membranes consists of 25 freely-chosen instruments and of 4 Brazilian tamborins, which must in their turn be very similar to each other and which should have exactly the same type of sonority.



Suspended Brazilian tamborim

During **Section B / Situation 3** percussionists 1 & 2 as well as 7 & 8 share their membrane instruments (including the Brazilian tamborim). Therefore the set-up on the stage must be done in such a way as to allow both pairs of percussionists easy visual access to the conductor, to follow his/her cues. Nevertheless, for practical purposes each one of these percussionists can have his/her individual set of membranes (in this case, see page 7).

Generally the direction of stems indicates the “voice” of each percussionist in the group: if the stems point upwards, one deals respectively with percussionists 1, 3, 5 and 7; if the stems point downwards, one deals with percussionists 2, 4, 6 and 8.

The timbre of all membranes (except the tamborins) must be as varied as possible in the ensemble and inside each group as well. Very distinct instruments should be used, such as different kinds of tom-toms, African djembe, conga drums (Brazilian tumbadoras), zarb, darabuka, Brazilian timbales and repiniques (used for samba rhythm), Indian tablas, and so on. Snare drums may be used, but without snare. All instruments should be, according to their dimensions and characteristics, either suspended on music stands or placed in such a way that they can be played with sticks. The choice of the membranes must cover a broad register, going from very low to very high membranes and culminating in each group with the highest membrane among them: the Brazilian tamborim. It is very important to cover a large extension from low to high membranes *in each particular group*, even in the first one with only 3 instruments.

Square-notes (◆) in **Section B / Situation 3** are to be played on the border of the instruments (either on the metallic border or, in absence of that, almost on the wood at the end of the skin), giving a sharper and higher sound. Specific sticks are not indicated in the score. They must be chosen so that the sonority for each membrane becomes sharp and extremely clear, with the exception of the timpani, the bass drum and the large tam-tam, which should be played with their conventional sticks. By the way, the 2 lowest membranes accompanying both timpani of percussionists 3 and 6 in the last **Section E / Situation 8** should be performed with timpani sticks as well, evoking a general “dark” sonority.

Here is a list and photos of the 8 small instruments used in the piece:

5 paste-board rattles (Brazilian berra-bois)¹:



Brazilian berra-boi

2 clapper drums:



clapper drum

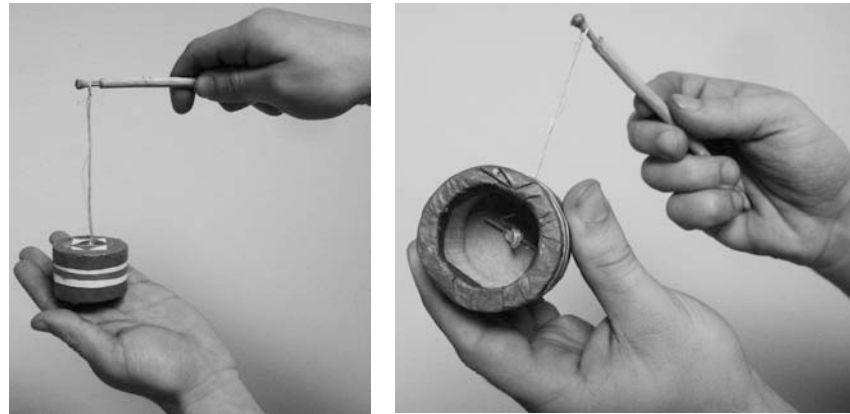
1 angklung:



angklung

¹ We assume that the English expression for the Brazilian berra-boi is *paste-board rattle*, according to Mário D. FRUNGILLO, *Dicionário de Percussão*, São Paulo: Editora Unesp, 2002, p. 40. For precise information about this particular instrument, so important in this piece, see please the photos of two kinds of berra-bois that can be used in this context. (Thanks to Charles Augusto for his hands!)

The Brazilian berra-boi (paste-board rattle; in fact a Brazilian popular toy) is difficult to find and must be strictly observed, since it should *not* be substituted by any similar instrument:



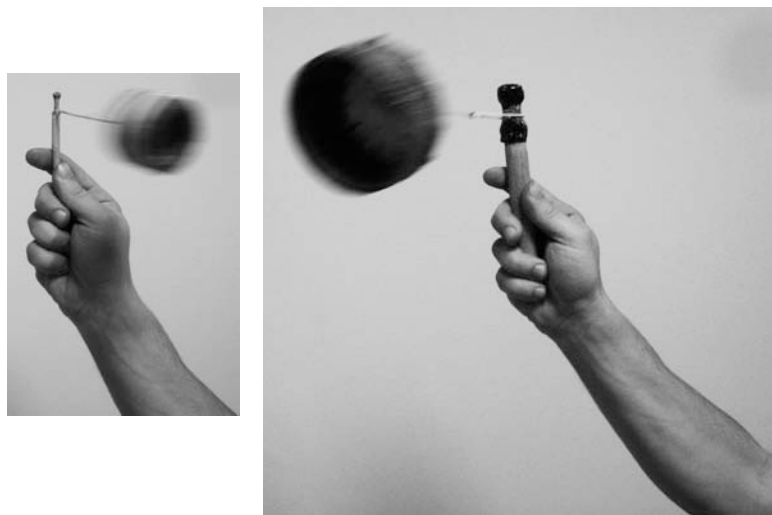
Smaller kind of berra-boi (also from behind)



Bigger kind of berra-boi from behind

It is played in *Pan-cada(s)* in two totally distinct ways:

- **Either by twirling it quickly in the air, as its usage was originally conceived (Situation 6):** see left photo below
- **or by holding its body with the left hand and slowly moving the wooden stick with the right hand and with variable pressure on the thin wooden membrane (Situation 1 & 2 through beginning of 3; and Situation 8):** see right photo below.



Twirling the (smaller or bigger) paste-board rattle quickly, in the traditional manner



Moving the stick slowly while holding the (smaller or bigger) paste-board rattle

Here is the general distribution of all the instruments used, indicating the groups and their respective musicians:

- **Group 1:**
 - **percussionist 1:** 3 membranes (eventually shared with percussionist 2; highest membrane = Brazilian tamborim); paste-board rattle
 - **percussionist 2:** 3 membranes (eventually shared with percussionist 1; highest membrane = Brazilian tamborim); clapper drum

- **Group 2:**
 - **percussionist 3:** 4 membranes (highest membrane = Brazilian tamborim); 2 timpani (pitches *ad libitum*)
 - **percussionist 4:** 4 membranes; paste-board rattle; angklung (placed behind the bass drum and hidden from audience's view)

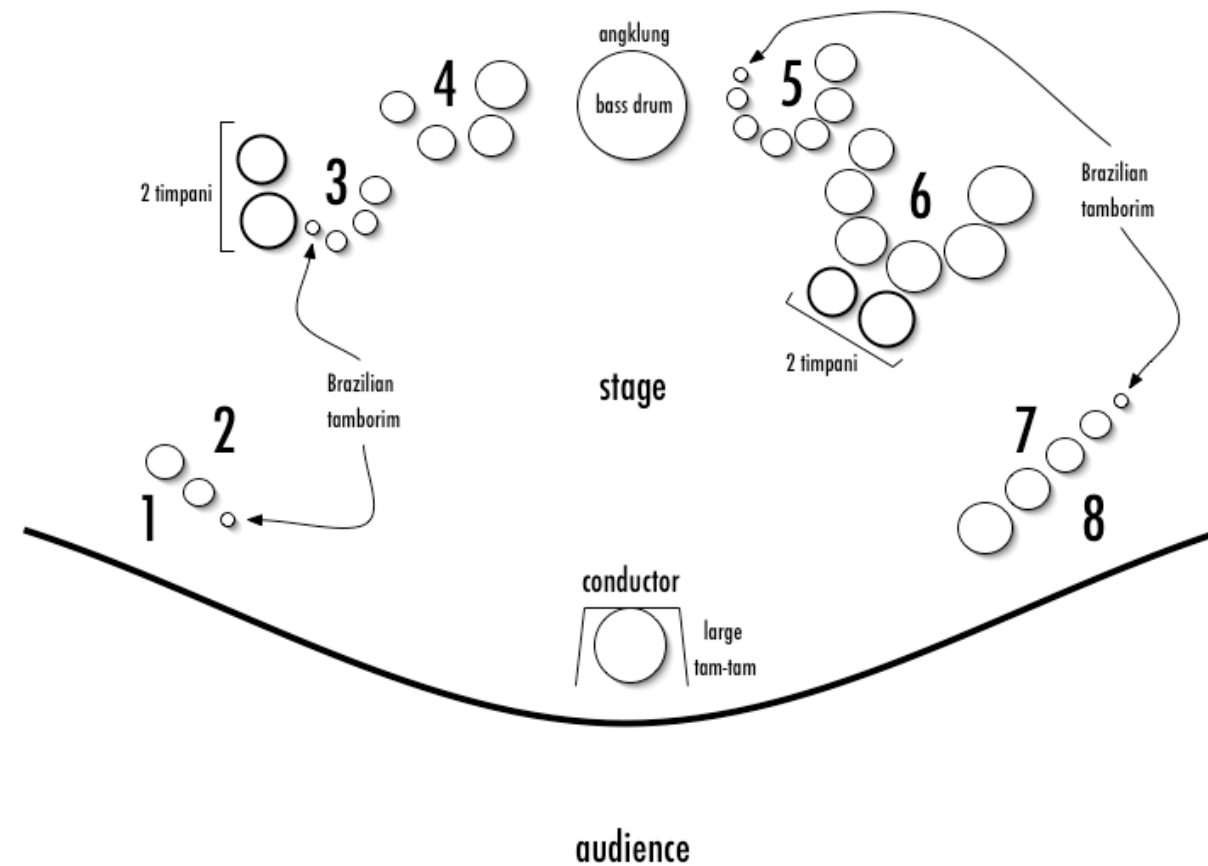
- **Group 3:**
 - **percussionist 5:** 7 membranes (highest membrane = Brazilian tamborim); bass drum; paste-board rattle
 - **percussionist 6:** 6 membranes; 2 timpani (pitches *ad libitum*); paste-board rattle (either taking it from percussionist 5 or using an extra, sixth paste-board rattle)

- **Group 4:**
 - **percussionist 7:** 5 membranes (eventually shared with percussionist 8; highest membrane = Brazilian tamborim); paste-board rattle
 - **percussionist 8:** 5 membranes (eventually shared with percussionist 7; highest membrane = Brazilian tamborim); clapper drum

- **Conductor:** paste-board rattle; large tam-tam (which can be played by a ninth percussionist).

Spatial disposition of groups and instruments

Pan-cada(s) needs space to be properly listened to! Ideally the 4 groups of percussionists should be placed as far as possible from each other, surrounding the audience almost in the totality of the theater space, with the conductor in the middle of the hall and the large tam-tam just behind him. If this disposition is not possible, the groups must be placed as far apart as possible on stage, as shown in the diagram below. The precise duration of **Section A / Situations 1 & 2** may vary according to the dimension of the hall where the piece is performed, but **Situation 1** should last *at least ca. 2'30"*, and **Situation 2** *at least ca. 40"*, as described in the score.



On specific aspects of performance

Pan-cada(s) is a virtuoso piece for ensemble. Besides textural complexity and difficulties provided by spatial coordination, one of the most difficult aspects of its performance lies in the rigorous control of very soft dynamic levels either in very rapid or throughout considerably longer passages. Therefore, the musicians must exercise special attention to dynamic levels. Enormous contrast between very soft and very loud figures is often required, alternating between “zen” states and very dramatic contexts. Rhythmic subdivisions of certain figures do *not* necessarily imply accentuation of notes; accented notes carry the typical sign: >.

In general the *crescendi* and *decrescendi* must be performed in an exaggerated way, i. e., *exponentially*. They occupy the whole and precise duration in which they are clearly indicated. Exponential or fast exponential *decrescendi* are nevertheless more prominent in the beginning of **Section D / Situation 7**, where they are clearly indicated in the score.

Last but not least, if possible, *Pan-cada(s)* may eventually be performed without conductor. In this case – which would considerably increase the difficulty level of performance –, the actions of the conductor must be – especially from **Section D** on – well-divided among the musicians, including the paste-board rattle, the excitation and the *fortississimo* stroke of the large tam-tam of **Situations 6 & 7 (Section D)**, which should be played in this case by a ninth percussionist who enters the scene just for those specific moments.

São Paulo, August 2009 – Flo Menezes
(Revision of English: Martha Herr)

ca. 5'50"

B Situation 3 all percussion lines: membranes
(highest membrane of each group: Brazilian tamborim)

♩ = 76

1 / 2

3

15 16

simile

sf *ppppp*

B Situation 3

♩ = 76

3

15 16

tacet

4

→ continue playing until just before the membrane part

B Situation 3

♩ = 76

5

15 16

→ continue playing until just before the membrane part

6

tacet

B Situation 3

♩ = 76

7 / 8

15 16

7 & 8: continue playing until just before the membrane part

simile

sf *ppppp*

24

1/2

simile

3

4

5

6

tacet

7/8

34
1/2
12 3 15
16 16 16
ppp *senza cresc.* *fff-ppp* *(senza cresc.)* *simile* *simile*
3
12 3 15
16 16 16
fff-ppp *(senza cresc.)*
4
12 3 15
16 16 16
simile
5
22
f-ppppp
6
tacet
simile
f-ppppp
7/8
12 3 15
16 16 16

45

1/2

3

4

5

6

7/8

sf-pppp

sf-ppppp

6

56

1/2

* Square-notes mean playing without any accent on the border of the instrument, not on its membrane.
 From here on, alternate accentuated tremolos on membranes with not-accentuated tremolos on the border of the instruments.

3

4

5

6

7/8

This musical score is for the piece "Pan-cada(s)" by Flo Menezes. It is written for a large ensemble, including strings, woodwinds, and percussion. The score is divided into four systems, each with a rehearsal mark (66, 3, 5, 6, 7/8) and a section number (1/2, 3, 5, 6, 7/8). The first system (1/2) features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes and rests, marked with *sfz-pppp*. The second system (3) shows woodwind and string parts with *sf-pppp* markings. The third system (5) is dominated by a dense, rhythmic texture of sixteenth notes in the woodwinds. The fourth system (6, 7/8) continues the woodwind and string parts, also marked with *sf-pppp*. The score concludes with a 3/16 and 4/8 time signature.

ca. 40"

C Situation 4

percussionists 2, 3, 5 and 8:
 react instantaneously to the conductor's cue by making an appoggiatura-figure
 (of 2, 3, 5, 8 or 13 notes, according to the respective set of instruments), going statistically from
 the lowest to the highest membrane (Brazilian tamborim) with an enormous decrescendo.

105

1 take silently and slowly a paste-board rattle and, without any sound, raise it to a high position in the air, looking fixedly at the instrument

2 **C Situation 4**
 suspended Brazilian tamborim (highest membrane)
 ppp subito

3 **C Situation 4**
 suspended Brazilian tamborim (highest membrane)
 ppp subito

4 take silently and slowly a paste-board rattle and, without any sound, raise it to a high position in the air, looking fixedly at the instrument

Conductor take with one hand silently and slowly a paste-board rattle and, with the other hand, give totally ad libitum signals for the appoggiatura-figures of percussionists 2, 3, 5 and 8

5 **C Situation 4**
 suspended Brazilian tamborim (highest membrane)
 ppp subito

6 take silently and slowly a paste-board rattle (eventually from percussionist 5) and, without any sound, raise it to a high position in the air, looking fixedly at the instrument

7 **C Situation 4**
 suspended Brazilian tamborim (highest membrane)
 ppp subito

8 take silently and slowly a paste-board rattle and, without any sound, raise it to a high position in the air, looking fixedly at the instrument

Diagram showing musical notation for percussionists 1-8 and conductor. Percussionists 2, 3, 5, and 8 play suspended Brazilian tamborim. The conductor gives ad libitum signals. Musical notation includes notes with dynamics like ppp subito, fff, and ppp, and appoggiatura figures. A 'model' box shows a sequence of notes with dynamics fff and ppp. A 'simile' box shows a similar sequence. Arrows indicate the conductor's cues to the percussionists.

ca. 13"

Situation 5 percussionists 2, 3, 5 and 8:
 begin at the same time the respective appoggiatura-figure after the conductor's cue,
 but not necessarily arriving synchronously at the highest membrane (Brazilian tamborim)
 and with inverted dynamics: a molto crescendo! Just after arriving at the tamborim:
 make an asynchronous subito decrescendo molto to an almost inaudible level

106

1 **Situation 5**
 tacet simile

2 **Situation 5**
 ppp subito sfff subito pppppp (almost inaudible)
 lower (3) membranes tamborim

3 **Situation 5**
 ppp subito sfff subito pppppp (almost inaudible)
 lower (5) membranes tamborim

4 **Situation 5**
 tacet simile

Cond. gives a unique signal for percussionists 2, 3, 5 and 8

5 **Situation 5**
 ppp subito sfff subito pppppp (almost inaudible)
 lower (13) membranes tamborim

6 **Situation 5**
 tacet simile

7 **Situation 5**
 tacet simile

8 **Situation 5**
 ppp subito sfff subito pppppp (almost inaudible)
 lower (8) membranes tamborim

ca. 21"

Situation 6 all percussionists: gradually achieve the highest tension!

2" ca. 19" attacca

Diagram showing musical notation for percussionists 1-8 and conductor. Percussionists 2, 3, 5, and 8 play lower membranes of the tamborim. The conductor gives a unique signal. Musical notation includes notes with dynamics like ppp subito, sfff subito, pppppp, and pppppp con tutta la forza. A 'paste-board rattle' part shows notes with dynamics p, molto, fff, and pppppp. A 'tam-tam' part shows notes with dynamics fff subito and pppppp con tutta la forza. A 'take membranes' part shows notes with dynamics p, molto, fff, and pppppp. A '12' box is present at the bottom.

ca. 21"

D Situation 7 percussionists 3, 5 & 6; 2 & 8; 1, 4 & 7:
simultaneous processes, but not necessarily synchronous with each other

108

1 paste-board rattle
fast exponential decrescendo → *mf* → *pp* → *pppp*

2 tamborim
rullo stretto molto rallentando → *mf* → *pppp* *not synchronously with percussionist 8*

3 lower membranes (3)
fff

2 timpani
pitches ad libitum → *glissandi ad libitum* → *etc.*

4 paste-board rattle
fast exponential decrescendo → *mf* → *pp* → *pppp* *move slowly to a position behind the bass drum*

Cond. large tam-tam
fff *lasciar vibrare (until the very last resonance)*

D Situation 7
tamborim
lower membranes (6)
fff

5 bass drum
f *lasciar vibrare* → *attacca*

6 membranes (6)
fff

2 timpani
pitches ad libitum → *glissandi ad libitum* → *etc.* → *attacca*

D Situation 7
paste-board rattle
fast exponential decrescendo → *mf* → *pp* → *pppp*

7 tamborim
rullo stretto molto rallentando → *mf* → *pppp* *not synchronously with percussionist 2*

8

* Interesting option: a further, ninth percussionist surprisingly crosses through the audience some seconds before Situation 7, coming from behind up to the stage and shaking a tam-tam stick in an exaggerated manner while walking, and, just arriving on stage, plays this unique tam-tam stroke, leaving the stage immediately afterwards.



all percussionists:
after the last bass drum note, remain totally still until
the last trace of every resonance completely disappears