

## 2. Jim Culley and Doug Perkins

**Josh** [00:00:11] Jim Cully and Doug Perkins. We're doing a series of interviews for the fiftieth anniversary of Steve Reich's *Drumming*. Russ Hartenberger is putting together a project with So Percussion called "Drumming at 50" and I'm sort of talking with anyone and everyone for whom *Drumming* has had some sort of impact on your life in one way or another. And I spoke yesterday with Doug and Todd and Jason and Adam of So because they were sort of patient zero for the *Drumming* seed that was planted in So Percussion as an organization. And that's how I learned it was by proxy through Doug.

But I learned later and more recently than I probably should have that Jim, you were patient zero for Doug's learning of *Drumming*, as far as I understand it. And I'm curious, maybe just to before we get into you, unfortunately, having to teach Doug, which I could imagine was a heavy lift... Can you, Jim, just real quickly start back maybe at the beginning, not the beginning of your history, but maybe just tell a little bit about who you are and then when *Drumming* came across your field of vision as a player?

**Jim** [00:01:25] OK, who am I? I love those kinds of questions. Well, I think my background was a little bit similar to you fellows that are all in the chamber music world. I went to the Oberlin Conservatory and when I went there, I had been raised as basically a child of symphony teachers with the expectations that that's the way to go about your life. So my high school symphony teachers sort of tried to tailor me into that particular area. And when I went to Oberlin, of course, Mike Rosen had been in the Milwaukee Symphony and that was on his mind, as he was only in his second year as a teacher when I got there.

**Josh** [00:02:15] Are you from Ohio originally, Jim?

**Jim** [00:02:17] Yeah, I'm from Cincinnati-ish.

**Josh** [00:02:22] Ohio is a big enough and diverse enough state that you can be from Cincinnati and never have ever gone to Cleveland and vice versa.

**Jim** [00:02:29] Are there any Cincinnatians that will listen to this? How do I say it? Well, we're not so diverse out here.

**Josh** [00:02:34] I don't know. But I'm from Ohio and there's many parts of it I've never even been to because it feels like a whole country away.

**Jim** [00:02:42] In this day and age, not to go there too soon - but we're pretty red down here. Well, anyway, so when I got to Oberlin, there was also a big component of chamber music and our student ensemble. He'd even named it after the Blackearth Percussion Group. He called it the Oberlin Percussion Group. We started getting involved in all kinds of projects where Mike would conduct us, but we would also do things on our own. So quartets and things like that took off pretty heavily. And then, you know, the early PAS conventions cranked up from like, well, just before I'd gotten to college. It's funny to look at the programs now because they're stapled eight and a half by eleven mimeographed copies of PAS conventions. But I went to a PAS convention. I can't tell you when - somewhere in the mid 70's -- and I saw a Nexus concert and at that particular Nexus concert, they were performing *Drumming* Part one, so that was my first exposure to them.

**Josh** [00:03:53] Not the whole thing at that point - or was what you saw was just part one?

**Jim** [00:03:57] Part one. And I remember the funny thing -- I was thinking about this last night -- was I was trying to scrutinize what Bob and Russell were doing. And I actually thought that I forget who speeds up and who sticks. But I think Russell sticks and Bob speeds up. Is that correct?

**Josh** [00:04:14] I think that's right.

**Jim** [00:04:17] In my hearing, I heard Bob sticking and Russell slowing down. So for a couple of years after that, I thought, "oh, *Drumming*. They slow down the

phase. That's really interesting to go backwards with that kind of thing. That must be really hard." But I had just misheard what I was listening to.

**Josh** [00:04:35] Well, they do phase backwards on the glockenspiels, right? Right. Which was like for a real trip for me. I mean I remember my first time playing *Drumming* with NEXUS. It was with NEXUS and Reich was playing and it was in Ojai. And Doug, were you there for that one? Were you in Ojai for that?

**Doug** [00:04:52] Yeah, I was around. I didn't play it, but I was I was very much at that rehearsal for all of its glory.

**Josh** [00:04:57] Like, in my head, I'm phasing, thinking you have got to lean forward and then we get in there and Steve just starts falling back. And I'm like, where are you going, Steve? And I just was like, wow, of course, you can phase backwards. You can tap the brakes just like you can tap the gas. And that was interesting. It kind of blew open for me this sort of dogmatic approach to *Drumming*, it was like, oh, OK, you can do not whatever you want, but it's a little more open than I thought.

**Jim** [00:05:26] Cool. Yeah, that's essentially it for me then, so my in my way, the, you know, the Ground Zero thing was watching NEXUS play it sometime in the mid 70s and then I didn't revisit it for several years after that.

**Doug** [00:05:39] When did the group first play it?

**Jim** [00:05:42] Oh, well, it was with Toth, right?

**Josh** [00:05:47] Yeah, talk to me about that.

**Doug** [00:05:48] It was a while ago.

**Josh** [00:05:49] Yeah, so just help me clarify some of the history around Cincinnati Percussion Group, because you haven't really hit on that yet.

**Josh** [00:05:58] But, you know, Cincinnati Percussion Group is one of the --

**Doug** [00:06:02] Oh you mean Percussion Group Cincinnati?

**Josh** [00:06:03] Oh, my God, I'm so sorry. We have to start the interview over Jim.

**Doug** [00:06:07] But it's cool.

**Jim** [00:06:08] It's where you put the comma, you know, hey.

**Josh** [00:06:15] The Percussion Group, Cincinnati. Jim, I really am deeply sorry. You guys are one of the groups that were blazing trails for all of us. But in terms of the members of the group, when you all picked up *Drumming*, can you talk a little bit about that particular history?

**Jim** [00:06:34] Yes. You know, Al had remained in -- well, OK, so Blackearth from 1972 to 1977 was the original kind of "reading music style" percussion quartet at that time, because Nexus had mostly been doing improvisation at that point. So a little bit more, you know, put the music on the stands, especially big music in the 70s, and play some very difficult stuff. And – oh sorry, 79, they lasted until 79. They had gotten an appointment at Cincinnati as a trio. And two years in, two of the fellows decided they wanted to do other things. And so Bill Youhass and I got hired in 1979, Bill Youhass from Ithaca, after many years teaching there, and me as a neophyte.

**Josh** [00:07:34] So who was the original group?

**Jim** [00:07:37] The original percussion group would have been Al Otte, Bill Youhass and me. OK, Bill was with us for about six years, and then he decided to go back to upstate New York and focus on mostly instrument making and tuning.

**Josh** [00:07:54] Is that Fall Creek marimbas? Is that his company?

**Jim** [00:07:58] Uh-huh. And so at that point, then Jack Brennan joined us for a year. Jack Brennan was at that time a Buffalo Philharmonic player, and we'd known him as a student for many years, he was a great chamber musician. He came in and a year in, had some -- he had always had a little bit of arm issues, and I think we were kind of exacerbating them. So after about a year with us, he figured he'd better leave for his long term playing. And as you know, even though he's on furlough now, he's in the Indianapolis Symphony playing timpani and has been for a long time. So he did, in fact, make the right choice. And then post-Jack it was Ben Toth. Ben was also with us for five, six years. And then our final third member was Russell Burge, who's been with us since 1992. So in that period of the 80s with Ben -- stop me if I'm talking too much here.

**Josh** [00:08:59] No, you're doing great. This is amazing.

**Jim** [00:09:03] Al had remained in touch with Garry Kvistad, who was one of the Blackearth founders, and Garry at that point was taking a great interest in participating sometimes in Steve Reich and Friends. And they'd been in touch, I guess, back and forth with *Drumming Part One*. And Al very cleverly actually got a hold of the score and figured out a way to add Steve...to add Steve's "add," shall we say, his "add" with three members. Through some pretty strange gerrymandering of the part, he figured out a way where if he played a couple of double stops, that Rusty played a double stop. If I accented some note that I was playing as a "sticker," all of a sudden that fourth player's "add" could come in *a la* the way Steve adds the part. And we weren't doing that because, you know, we thought we were so awesome -- so much -- as much as the idea that as a trio, then we could take this piece on the road and present it in places that it wouldn't normally get presented in.

**Josh** [00:10:15] That's something I know you know, So has in various ways. I think we've really been influenced by Percussion Group Cincinnati's approach, like willingness to rearrange parts or, you know, re-adapt parts so that it can be played. And you guys do *Credo in Us*. And, you know, you're playing buzzers with your feet and triggering radios and sort of multitasking. And that approach to things and sort of not needing to have a quartet in order to play a piece like that.

So that's a creative approach to music-making. And for *Drumming*: when you started to tackle that piece, I'm curious. For you all, you know, I have in my head this image of the way you all rehearse and the way you talk about music. Of course, I was never in the room when any of you rehearsed and maybe Doug could speak to this more.

But what was the vibe in rehearsals like? I mean, *Drumming* is a relatively new piece at this point, not being played a whole lot by hardly anyone other than Reich and his folks. And I think maybe Zoltán in Europe was starting to pick up and transcribe some stuff. Was everybody in the group on board with this piece? Did everybody like it? Was everybody -- what was this overall sort of environment like when you were rehearsing this piece?

**Jim** [00:11:32] Well, I think very much so. As in yeah, we were all into it. Again, because Al had been able to come up with a really clever mathematical fix for it, it also put him in the role of being kind of a combination of players three and four. And I think that was delightful for him because it gave him a chance to sort of do some of the rhythmic permutation, improv kind of things that you do. It was sort of a natural step from there for me to be the "sticker," and I'm sure Ben was more than excited to try to phase. And Ben was always the one who, you know, really enjoyed a challenge, and since I'm such a jerk about, you know, sticking and not giving until maybe the dress rehearsal or the concert or whatever. I think Ben really enjoyed that in a strange way, because he felt like it really kept him on the straight and narrow. And he likes to be on the straight and narrow if he can be.

**Josh** [00:12:36] So you said when you call it a sticker, that means I think in my lingo, "rock," like the person who just stays put.

**Doug** [00:12:45] I think Culley used to use the word "rock" too. I think we brought the word "rock" from Culley.

**Jim** [00:12:50] I don't know. I just, in that piece, I always thought of myself as, yeah, I "stick." Rocks anchor stick.

**Josh** [00:12:59] Well how was interpreting this music? I'm just thinking right now of a piece by Vijay Iyer that So had to rehearse and there were some concepts.

**Jim** [00:13:09] How do you spell that?

**Josh** [00:13:09] Vijay V I J A Y I Y E R. Yeah. And he wrote us a quartet called *Torque* that when we were playing it, we would get about 10 bars in and then the whole thing would just collapse and we'd look at each other like, what in the hell is going on? And *Drumming* with the phasing has something similar that's maybe different than like what you guys do with Cage's music. Cage and Steve Reich are two different worlds. And I'm curious, did it sort of jar anything loose in your ensemble where, like, I'm not really asking for any band fights, but were there any moments where you just stood and stared at each other like, what are we doing?

**Doug** [00:13:52] And can I add a piece of context maybe? Because what's interesting in your line of questioning is that for us Reich was an assumed quantity for young guys like us. But in some ways. Cage might have been Jim's Reich, and then Reich might be his Vijay Iyer of like just some dude, who is a couple of years older than him, who's getting some New York Times reviews but, like, who was this guy? Why is he making me do this? That was just brings--like you and I didn't question there's stuff because it was canonical for us in ways that for my friend from Cincinnati It might not have been.

**Jim** [00:14:37] I have to say, maybe across the group there would be that sense, too, because you can certainly imagine Al kind of feeling that way. You know, he's not the same age as Steve, but, he's older. He's a composer/percussionist, you know, so his opinions about that kind of thing are... I was definitely more enthralled, I think, of...certainly *Drumming* since I'd seen it, you know, in the 70s, so for me, it was it was an exciting project to take on. And I guess I would go back to the idea that we avoided fights because -- I was a little bit older than Ben, he assumed I was the rock, so whenever a mistake would happen, he would take the blame for it. Thank you, Ben. And then Al was generally on the periphery, just

kind of waiting for us to get it together, if that makes sense. He only had to worry about a couple of phases and then he was kind of off writing his little improvisational section. So in a way, it was perfect for us. And I'm sure Ben and I spent hours face to face on it to get it just so. And then Al would come in and, you know, put the flowers over the top of it. So... don't look puzzled, I'm just that's just kind of a joke about, you know--

**Doug** [00:16:00] Everyone's playing their role perfectly.

**Jim** [00:16:03] I mean, we build things and then Al comes in and puts the icing on the cake. How about that?

**Josh** [00:16:07] No, I mean, I kind of I want to do a whole other series of interviews with percussion groups just to sort of talk about band dynamics -- not to not for any palace intrigue or gossip, but just because I have my perceptions. I you know, I've spoken with each of you in in the group in various ways. And, you know, I have assumptions about the way that you all rehearse, but in the same way that I'm sure people have assumptions about the way So rehearses or Third Coast or the Cleveland Orchestra or whatever. But when you're actually in there making the sausage, I'm curious. That sort of stuff is really interesting to me, how you how you all put that stuff together.

**Jim** [00:16:44] And I'm interested in that, too, that you are even of course, you'd be in the middle of that. Because in my perception, So has always been super cool. And I just always assumed that your rehearsals are filled with nothing but smiles and jokes and laughter. And when you think about it, of course, it's probably not.

**Josh** [00:17:02] Well, I would say we overcompensate with smiles and jokes and laughter because know, I mean, as you as you're aware --

**Doug** [00:17:10] The context of the smiles have changed with the fires in that room.



**Josh** [00:17:14] The fire can burn pretty hot. And I would say *Drumming* is again one of these things that comes back and sort of just peels off the edge of the scab every time because of something like phasing, where, you know, no matter how much Jason and I phase together, I phase with him now for 16 years straight. The sticker. Yes, I'm the rock, I'm the sticker. And no matter how long we've done it, we still come back to it. It's like, oh, yeah, you know, we haven't spoken in a while, honey. You know, it's like I have an internal marriage within the organization that I don't have with anybody else. And I'm curious for you, like did you find yourself becoming like musically way closer with Ben than you did with anybody else just because you had to do this really intimate dance?

**Jim** [00:17:58] Yes. And I would say because, again, you know, Ben Toth had such a good attitude about it and I was only -- what am I five years older than Ben or maybe six or seven. I forget. Him coming into the group. He sort of had this feeling of, OK, I've got to step up and do my best. And like I said, he was always going to blame himself if something went wrong, which was a really nice thing for me only because, you know, and Doug may even remember this: I mean, in the mornings I'm not good. And it usually takes me until about 3:00 or 4:00 in the afternoon before I become even slightly affable. So I'm sure there would have certainly been sessions with Ben where I would just shut down and be quiet and just put my head down doing it, and that makes it difficult for everybody when you're not communicating at all.

**Josh** [00:18:54] Yeah. Did you ever yell in Ben's face like Doug yelled in my face?

**Jim** [00:19:00] Never. I never did. I took it fast.

**Doug** [00:19:04] I took an opposite view than Ben did, I think.

**Jim** [00:19:08] Yeah. So I think he was perfect for that. And Al would even tell you if you were talking to him, he would say, well, Culley and Toth, they love that music where the gears are clicking or whatever you would call rhythmic interplay. You know, I get to the end of Reich and realize that the whole time I've been making little clicking noises in my throat, in rhythm, you know, with the quarter

notes, so I think it was kind of a perfect mesh for us at the time. I'm grateful for it because I can't imagine if I had stood across from Bill Youhass at that time what might have happened. It would have been completely different and maybe great. But it was easy with Ben.

**Josh** [00:19:55] It's one of the things I mean, phasing with Jason every once in a while, it doesn't happen often...but if we have to sub a gig out and all of a sudden Adam's in front of me or Eric is phasing, my job, all of a sudden feels like I don't know what I'm doing anymore. And again, it's like if you're a really good tango dancer and you get with somebody who's only done one or two dances and then I've done three hundred, you're like, oh my God. Like, you have to look out for the other person a lot more. And I don't feel that way with -- I'm trying to think if there's any other music that we play that feels like that. Even when we play *Threads* by Paul Lansky and we switch up parts, it's like you're not doing anything new. You're just playing a drum instead of a vibraphone. You're not doing a new skill. You know, and I'm curious for you, Jim, on that tip, what for you personally is the hardest part about Steve's music compared to, say, like Cage or Tan Dun or any other music that you that you guys champion?

**Jim** [00:20:50] Well. I should first say, you know, I'm very inexperienced at anything besides *Drumming* Part one. So when you ask me about Steve's music --

**Josh** [00:21:05] We can keep it to *Drumming*.

**Jim** [00:21:07] I was going to say it really stretches beyond that to just what I've done with my ensemble at school, which would then be *Drumming* part one, you know, the *Clapping Music*, the *Pieces of Wood*, the participations that we've had in *18 musicians*. And, you know, Steve came to town and a couple of summers in the -- I guess was that Doug in the oughts back in the eighth blackbird era?

**Doug** [00:21:32] Oh, yeah. Yeah, I remember. With 304, something like that.

**Jim** [00:21:38] And they played one of the composers on faculty here. Got him too, you see a couple of times, so I'm sorry now I got to go back to your question.

**Josh** [00:21:50] On that tip, let me follow up. So what was it like when Steve came in the room? I mean, what were some things for you after, you know, when you met him for the first time or worked with him for the first time? Were there any sort of preconceptions about his music that were sort of blown up or --

**Jim** [00:22:04] That's where I get a little bit like when Doug was talking about the way you feel about certain composers. I'm a little bit in thrall with Steve so, you know, I'm going to shut down under those circumstances, probably just go and see if there's any light shining from some portion of the room. And then generally, I shun the light, so. I guess in terms of verbal communication with Steve, I have not had much. We played a concert. One of the surprising concerts that we played, this would have been with Ben before Rusty came in, we were playing a house concert up in Ann Arbor and it was sort of a give back concert for our management at the time. And Steve Reich and Musicians had played a concert either the night before or were playing a night after. And sure enough, we got up on this little raised stage in the center of this coffeehouse and Steve Reich was out in the audience. I think Mike Udow had brought him. And suddenly we're playing a trio *Drumming*, which, in my estimation he'd never heard of, I don't think we'd ever asked for or gotten permission. I'm not even sure the piece was published at that point.

**Josh** [00:23:25] It's better to ask for forgiveness rather than permission.

**Jim** [00:23:27] We were hoping we could kind of play him into accepting it because he's going to be so pissed off. So anyway, we played it and it was somewhat successful, and I remember we went over to Udow's afterwards for a little reception, and he was quite cordial, you know, he never said a word about you jerks, you assholes. What are you thinking? You know. And I don't even remember whether he and Al had a conversation about him being removed and Al bringing him in with accents or whatever, but, yeah, he was he was quite nice about it.

**Josh** [00:24:02] I would say. I mean, there's Steve. I think if you've been in the room long enough with Steve, you see moments where he can get really intense. And I think that I have found -- in my limited experience that I've had with him --that those moments have been when he sees someone not taking his music seriously, or if he perceives that being the case, whether or not it's true. But when he even perceives that you're not taking it seriously, that's when he gets like, "I'm going to fix this." But go ahead. I was just going to say, I imagine knowing you guys -- and I wasn't at that show -- but I imagine he saw you guys and was like, "well, they're clearly taking this seriously. I may not agree with every choice they've made, but I'm not going to tell people who are taking my music seriously now to not do it." You know, that is what I think I would imagine as a composer. That's a conversation that you have to have to read the intent of the performers. And I think, Steve, for the most part, at least in our experience, has been very supportive if you take his music seriously.

**Jim** [00:25:07] Indeed.

**Doug** [00:25:07] Well, at that point, there were probably very few people playing his music at all that weren't named Steve Reich. So I bet he was probably -- I can imagine at that point him being flattered and shocked that you're doing it right?

**Jim** [00:25:23] I hope so, yeah. Like I said, quite affable. And, you know, he was pretty nice when you guys invited me in Cincinnati a few years ago to be the "sticker" for your pieces of wood.

**Doug** [00:25:37] Oh so Jim was there the day you guys folded up all over the Nagoya and Marimba Phase.

**Josh** [00:25:45] Were you -- that was at Music Now, right?

**Jim** [00:25:48] Yeah, I was your Sticker.

**Josh** [00:25:49] Yep. OK, Jim. Well, we talked about this last night where Marimba Phase came off the rails and then Nagoya Marimbas turned it into

Nagoya “Marimba.” I love how quickly this memory is rushing back into your head like. Oh, yeah, of course I remember that. That was awful.

**Jim** [00:26:05] Well, it was that I had always understood, too, that you guys had a certain plan. And then when it turned out to be a Steve Reich event, you guys had to twist the program around.

**Josh** [00:26:18] Yeah, we were originally going to do some *amid the noise* and some other things. And then I think because Bryce had organized, we ended up doing an all Reich show and we bit off more than we could chew, as it turned out.

**Jim** [00:26:29] I'm familiar with that feeling and I dream all the time, you know, even though I don't play as much as I used to. Every night I have at least one dream where something's coming off the rails.

**Josh** [00:26:40] Do you have a *Drumming* performance story nightmare that you that you're willing to share before we get into the nightmare of teaching Doug *Drumming*?

**Jim** [00:26:51] I think we were lucky with *Drumming*. Maybe you guys, again, this is just part one. But I think when things go awry, you know it internally. But the audience, of course... They're just waiting for the end. So even the fact that when you end, you know, I can't remember whether we artificially ended on one note or whether we went ahead and played all 12. But whatever we did, we lifted our sticks up at the same time. Our last cue was always pretty solid.

**Josh** [00:27:17] Yeah, that's the most important cue in all of music. That last *Drumming* cue.

**Jim** [00:27:22] Yeah, I don't there was anything that was really outside of, you know, that I can blame it on somebody else and say, well, you were supposed to phase but then you double phased or you were supposed to phase and you went backwards, you know, like the old phasing around the horn, you know. It's like Rusty has played it, you know, dozens and dozens of times with us as well. And

he's quite like Ben in terms of, you know, I want to get this right. I'm quite serious about the whole thing.

**Josh** [00:27:49] Well can I ask you as a pedagogue? I mean, we've talked about your experience as a performer and you touched on a little bit of your teaching and bringing Reich in. But in terms of how we connect this to what we started with, which was So's lineage, you know, Doug was a student of yours at Cincinnati. And at some point, you transfer that knowledge to Doug. And I'm curious, maybe, Doug, would you be willing to start off with what you remember of that first *Drumming*, like your first experience with *Drumming*, with Jim and with the Cincinnati guys?

**Doug** [00:28:19] Yeah, I feel like it was in fall of '95. I kind of want to go back to the CCM archives sometime and find out. I feel like it was that year. And then again in '96, like when the group played, you opened a show in PCT-- Patricia Corbitt Theater with *Drumming*. I always talk about my three DNA altering Percussion Group Cincinnati shows: one, my first show as a freshman when you did a Cage music circus and walked most of Corbitt Auditorium. And I was like, oh, this is percussion music, not what I expected! And then *Drumming* at that PCT show, and then *Strange and Sacred Noise*, at the premiere of that also in PCT, either that year or maybe the year following. So I describe it as being the perfect combination of underage beer drunk and the music hit me and, you know, it was a great performance and I had gone to Pomey's, the pizza place before with some of the studio. So I had some pizza and probably some... What's the Cincinnati beer?

**Doug** [00:29:53] What's that again, Jim?

**Josh** [00:29:57] It's not natural bohemian, is it?

**Jim** [00:30:00] Oh, no.

**Doug** [00:30:04] Is there one with an R and -- whatever it doesn't matter. Went out, had some beers, had like the perfect Steve Reich beer buzz coming into the

show. I remember sitting there and the music washing over me and kind of like, holy cow, what the hell's going on? And, you know, it's the thing that we all know is our secret party trick with that piece. And the thing that Steve wrote in is like, what are they doing? Why are they all playing the bongos at the same time? And then you guys had that little nice choreography where you had flipped where you're standing. So I just remember kind of just kind of being like --

**Jim** [00:30:42] Make sure we come back to that, by the way, I want to talk to Josh about that real quick, but go ahead.

**Doug** [00:30:46] OK, because I'm assuming you did that to keep the same hand lead the whole time.

**Jim** [00:30:51] No, it was actually a visual thing because we got kind of tired of Al out front. If you watch any videotape--

**Josh** [00:30:58] Sorry, I just want to keep talking about band dynamics. The more the more you say this stuff, the more I want to go back and do our "band dynamics" show.

**Jim** [00:31:06] And this was my idea, actually, because if you look at video and then--

**Josh** [00:31:09] It wasn't Al's, that's for sure.

**Jim** [00:31:13] So you see this and you get Al doing this out front the whole time and Rusty and I just standing there. So we thought well, wait a minute. Why don't we flip that? And then on the second half of the show, Al will be in the back and you can see what Rusty and I are doing. So, yes, you are correct. That's why I came all the way around to the other side, OK?

The reason we did that was just to back off on the Al visuals a little bit. I think he would take that in stride, I think he would.

**Doug** [00:31:36] Because, yeah, Josh's question is now, how did you bring that up in rehearsal?

**Josh** [00:31:41] No, listen, you've been in a group longer than I have, but I'm going to assume things aren't that much different than it is with So Percussion. And you got to, you know...

**Jim** [00:31:52] You guys are old timers now.

**Doug** [00:31:53] So anyhow, my first experience seeing the piece was this show. And then there was a percussionist Tomasz Yarzecki, he was a couple of years ahead of me in school, and so for his senior recital we did *Drumming*. I guess it was just Tomasz, Matt McClung and myself. I would play what you might describe as the modified new guy part. Or the Al “flowers and cake icing” part of that time, but we were just all around all summer. So we sort of made it our summer project to hang out and play *Drumming* every day.

**Josh** [00:32:45] How are you learning it? Like, you know, like your first rehearsal with McClung, who was the other person that you were playing with? Tomasz. So you, Tomasz and McClung get in the room for the first time. How did you know what to play? Were you asking Jim, were you looking at a score? Were you looking at a video of them playing it?

**Doug** [00:33:02] There's definitely no videos because it was the 90s, so it would have been harder to set up, get all the AV in line to set that up.

**Josh** [00:33:10] You didn't have your Zapruder film up watching the old footage?

**Doug** [00:33:14] No. So it is a good question. I just remember... I mean, Jim's teaching style is wonderfully cryptic and opaque sometimes, which is the thing that I still love of just being in the room wanting to sit in the corner and be like: “Yeah, so, you know.”

**Josh** [00:33:33] Stroke your beard and say opaque things.



**Doug** [00:33:34] Yeah, like that part could be longer or... So who knows what the initial guide guidance was. Definitely we had the manuscript because I remember as the resultant pattern person kind of writing out a bunch of resultants. So probably similar, I bet. You know, I remember Thomasz and Matt obsessing about phases and I think, you know, Culley teaching kind of like how to phase --

**Jim** [00:34:04] Probably the sticker, right?

**Doug** [00:34:06] Oh, yeah.

**Jim** [00:34:07] Yeah, ok.

**Josh** [00:34:09] Doug, you say that like "that's obvious."

**Doug** [00:34:12] Well, he was my he was my rock when we shifted down and put Stu Gerber on the AI part. So I just remember, you know, Culley, where there's this rehearsal room where Jim was sort of sitting up above us in like a choir room and, you know, be like "it could be longer. Maybe the middle could be longer, maybe try to, you know..." Like just a lot of suggestions and then me being, as you probably know from -- well maybe I can say, being the impetuous third/fourth player, partially sitting there writing up the most interesting thing I've ever thought up and then being like, "I need to phase, I need to practice my phases, I need some time too!"

So I was just puppy doggin' in the corner barking at people. Yeah, so I just remember, like, I think we really just obsessed and like, did it all day, every day, because we thought it was the coolest thing we could do. And then Jim being Jim, Jim is not a -- we talked about this on another podcast of prescriptive teachers versus non prescriptive teachers. I would describe Culley as empowering, but not prescriptive. So, yeah, so I think this and this is something I've talked about with about, Jim, all the time: why I really valued my time studying with him is that, however, he did it, by the time we performed it, we felt such ownership over it. My memory is like we really felt like, you know, it was our

version and we were doing it, man. Jim might tell you that he has 16 nuggets that he drops in at exactly the right moment.

**Jim** [00:35:54] Jim's no dummy. I'm guessing, I'm sure there's days where -- you know, you're a teacher, Jim, and you get better at something when you do it over and over again. I imagine you've said some things in rehearsals that have totally derailed the whole process. And you have to step back and be like, oh, shit, what? You know, I got to do that one again.

**Doug** [00:36:12] I guess. I guess my question and sorry if I'm derailing you, what are what are your values when you coach somebody on *Drumming* Jim? What do you try to impart? How do you impart it?

**Jim** [00:36:27] Values. Boy, that's hard.

**Josh** [00:36:38] Let me ask while you're thinking, Jim, let me ask just to tag on to that question, what are your -- are your values when you play Reich's music any different? Do you prioritize anything different when you're teaching Reich's music or playing it versus teaching or playing, say, Cage's music? Like, is there a different mindset that you're in when you're talking to a student about that stuff?

**Jim** [00:37:01] You know, I don't think it's a whole lot different when it comes down to the basic idea of your mentioning of, you know, a serious approach to these pieces no matter what. I'm certainly going to be thinking about the Reich *Drumming* as being that particular side of the brain. You know, no offense to people that would be a little bit less mathematical than I would be. I think I do have a tendency with that piece and maybe you guys were the same way. And I know you've coached it a lot, too, over the years, which I think must be difficult, maybe gratifying, but seems very difficult. To sense who's going to be your best sticker. Right away, and if at all possible then to figure out from then on the phasing, because everybody wants to phase and I remember wanting to phase and I remember phasing probably against Ben because I'm sure Ben would be delighted to switch roles and be the sticker. And it just didn't quite gel and it wasn't going to gel quickly enough unless we did kind of like Doug and practice it

for, you know, weeks and weeks face to face. I'm not really getting to your values question, but.

**Josh** [00:38:22] I think I mean, values, it's semantics, I mean, in terms of how you what your ethos is when you're when you're thinking about this music and talking about it? I mean, I think priorities, when we talk, when we coach it, not that I don't prioritize time with Cage's music at all, like, of course you are. It's just... it's a different version of time. It's like saying Chicago pizza is the same as New Haven pizza. Yes, they're both in the pizza world, but they're just two different versions of the same thing. And--

**Jim** [00:38:52] I agree. And there's something about if you think of the Cage, the Third, you know, where you've got the quartet, you've got duples that flow back and forth between members of the band. So it kind of requires a little bit of a groupthink with everything. A much more willingness to sense when you're going to have to make micro adjustments to everything, and I think at least with *Drumming*, that's going to happen down the line with the sticker. But yeah, somehow to me, it seems like it's a little bit more of an intensified...certainly a burst of duet, duet, duet, duet, duet, yeah, and now bring in other people.

**Josh** [00:39:37] Steve had a great quote once. He's just like, you know, there's a lot of people who can play, you know, nine in the space of 13. But it turns out that playing eight in the space of eight is a lot harder than you think.

**Jim** [00:39:50] I agree. Yeah.

**Doug** [00:39:52] I feel like...I was going to say I feel like at least for me, I think you did really impart sort of the grid, or the agreement upon getting everything in its right place, especially in the approach to the adds, and it could be your clicking mouth. Like I can remember just subdividing our faces off and really, really making sure -- like you, I think we were really concerned about that overall, because I think I remember bringing that hard into into things with--

**Jim** [00:40:36] Well, and there may even be people telling you when they play the *Drumming* piece or they do a little bit of phasing, you know, how you can kind of turn this thing into a cloud? That's not necessarily as mathematically precise as what's written, and maybe I'm stating something that's so obvious, we should all just laugh. But I sometimes think my colleagues are doing that, whether they're doing it or not. But this idea of the eighth notes being totally precise and for me, I guess maybe as a sticker, but even as a player of other music, if I have those kinds of parts, I want to make sure I get the macro stuff down as well. So the better my micro is, the better my macro is going to be and vice versa. So I will subdivide these things into much larger groups as I go too, you know, instead of just thinking about (sings Drumming pattern), you know, thinking broader beats is what I'm trying to get at. And that tends to also, believe it or not, isolate the sincerity of my eighth notes. I sound like Linus on Charlie Brown now.

**Josh** [00:41:42] Well, no, I think again, in terms of taking things seriously, like an approach at playing the rhythm as architecturally sound as you possibly can, which allows what I think Reich calls a “canon of irrational numbers,” like, you know, if there are these two things that are moving relative to each other, but this one is just always moving a hair quicker. It's like there's never a point at which the canon is rationally still. It's always adjusting. And so you have to be micro in order for the macro to appear as if it's doing what it needs to be doing. I have two two more questions and then I'll let you go. I appreciate y'all's time.

Doug: In terms of the lineage sort of tree that I planted up front, as we step back now 50 years later and look at like the forest of *Drumming* trees that have sprouted up over the last 50 years, I'm curious for you, having taken the seed from Jim and Percussion Group Cincinnati, how has that version grown and adapted and changed for you over the last 20, 25 years?

**Doug** [00:42:47] Yeah, it's funny, we talked about this with So a little bit like how the piece for me -- the piece at its core, what's wonderful about it, it sounds, I think as fresh today as it did to me all those years ago, because there's so much room for different groups' intent and personality to come alive in in the piece. So I think if anything, I think I came away from when I learned the piece and seeing

Jim and the group play it. It also was like the first time. I think I brought a lot to that performance and in kind of stepping into the piece that like, you know, the first time you see a group really play something well.

You know, it's sort of it shakes you, so I think that was one of the first times I was like, oh, this music can be really great. So I think I brought my quest for excellence or my quest for that, making that bottle of whatever that focus of energy was that day, you know, in some ways like that we talk about a little bit, but that sort of went from *Drumming* all through everything So did for years in some ways, trying to create that energy in everything we played. So, in some ways, that performance, yeah, I think permeated everything I do, and in some ways that experience permeates what I'm going to do in two hours when I go coach percussion ensemble at Michigan. I'm going to intentionally sit slightly further from the ensemble than I should and give them a few furtive suggestions, just waiting for the room to catch fire, you know what I mean? Like, they don't realize they're in there.

**Josh** [00:44:38] I feel that -- you guys ever watch ever watch Family Guy? There's a scene in there where it's just like Peter, there's like "ooh piece of candy, ooh piece of candy." I feel like that's kind of like what you are as a teacher, Doug, where you just sort of leave pieces of candy around the studio and you just have students be like, "ooh, piece of candy. Ooh piece of candy." You don't actually tell them where they're going. It's just like you lead them with a trail of crumbs.

**Doug** [00:45:00] And then I'm waiting for them to just forget that I'm in the room. This is something that John Luther Adams, another person who affected me in that period, and I talk about. When we're doing our best at a performance, is when he and I have both been fired by the ensemble. And we have sort of empowered the ensemble at such a level that they're like, "I know what I got to do." And they're storming past John and me like, "who are the two old guys in my way? I got to go make music now." When that happens, that's sort of at its best.

So I think the process of learning *Drumming* and sitting in a room with my friends all day that summer was so awesome, with Thomasz and the times I had with So,

and even the times then when Matt and Stu and I went on our big concert tour to Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, one weekend, you know. That was a life changing moment for me where we played Drumming in Matt McClung's childhood church.

So, you know, like all of that, all of it got wrapped into Drumming in the spirit of adventure and hearing about Steve, you know, in his van with his small marimbas getting lost in Europe, you know, like all of that. It spawned...well, I think for us, it's spawned our careers in a lot of ways. So I think that that's sort of what the piece did all of those things for me. But the actual piece of music now, it's funny. I have a much more, you know, Zen relationship to the piece now, like the piece can do almost anything, and I think it's great as long as there's the serious intent, you know, there's no metronome marking or specific approach that's, you know -- I'm much more interested in everyone's differences. And it's not more a best or worst. It's more like a yoga practice. And seeing people who are serious about the practice of *Drumming*, it's just good for life, I think.

**Josh** [00:46:51] Yeah, it does something where it's sort of like immediately exploits all of your weaknesses and requires you to turn them into superpowers in like five seconds. Like if rhythm, if rhythm and steady time is troublesome for you, that doesn't mean you're a bad person. It means you should play Drumming because you are going to have to fix that... and by "fix it" you're just going to have to learn...it really forces you to deal with it in a way that very few other pieces do because it is so hyper focused.

**Doug** [00:47:23] I will say also.. sorry just like when I also think about *Drumming* and Reich's music and think about all of us, as much as I think about the great concerts I played with it, I think about when I played it at like eight thirty in the morning in Brattleboro, Vermont, in a gym, or when I played it to a really sketchy bunch of people in Eastern Europe or when Todd and I played Clapping Music in a jungle, you know. These pieces have come to be touch points for so much more in our lives and for like, how do you communicate in all of these places? So the memories of -- you know, like it's fun to hear Jim talk about getting up in a coffee shop and you see Steve Reich's head in the back and you're like, "oh, it's this

night.” You’re like, “oh, I’m in weird Russia and just broke all the bongo heads on the first phase. What am I going to do now?”

**Josh** [00:48:24] Yeah after So played Carnegie Hall for the first time, we had a gig the next day after Carnegie Hall on Friday. We played *Drumming* there, just the first part. And then the next night we played, you know, in Massachusetts or something where we drive up there, and there was an outreach show. The presenter was like, “I’ve got a great idea. So we’re going to set you up outside the cafeteria and have you play for the three lunch periods while kids come.” It’s like seventh, eighth and ninth grade, go to lunch. And she’s like, “I love the bongo piece.”

OK, so we set up the bongos right outside the cafeteria and it would be like [makes sound of lunch bell ringing]. We’ll be like [sings *Drumming* rhythm] hello, my baby, hello, my darling, like the bullfrog popping out of the cigar box and then the bell would ring again and we would just stop and collapse just in shame of like, poor Steve. We’re so sorry. What are we doing? You know? But for me, it’s like playing *Drumming* at Ojai with Nexus or at Maverick Concert Hall with, you know, everybody. And then that other performance of *Drumming* outside the lunch hour is like burned in my brain. Jim, what just as a final sort of question for anybody who maybe is on the verge of experiencing *Drumming*, whether just listening to it or as a teacher who might be hesitant to teach it because they personally have never played it, or as a student who is hesitant to pick it up or has just been assigned it and is like terrified or thinks they don’t like the piece? Why would you recommend that somebody else experience this piece?

**Jim** [00:49:57] Well, happily, you know, that’s a difficult question. But you in some ways already gave you the answer in talking about -- and Doug touched on this as well. That happily, I’m their teacher, so they’re probably going to do whatever I say, at least for a while, you know. But this idea of “it’s going to be good for you no matter what, under all circumstances,” probably this idea too, which I have not been maybe as Zen-like as Doug has been. But a little bit more flexibility on who plays what, you know, breaking it down into its components as

much as necessary for how your age group works in terms of those. What the hell's the time signature? Is there one I can't remember? Is it just 12 notes?

**Josh** [00:50:50] Yeah, 12/4 or something like that.

**Jim** [00:50:54] Yeah. Isn't that funny?

**Josh** [00:50:57] Right. Isn't that right Doug?

**Doug** [00:51:00] I'm going to look it up. Yeah. I don't know because.... Yeah, because if you'd written something there would be more arguments about like why we have to interpret it in three verses to you.

**Jim** [00:51:10] I wouldn't force that on them except at the very beginning, just to make sure that it's kind of like when you're doing *Clapping Music*, you know, the published version of it just has, you know, 12 vague notes with no time signature. It's based on an African rhythm that's in three. A lot of drummers learned it in six, you know what I mean?

**Doug** [00:51:29] There's no time signature... six quarter notes, but no time signature.

**Jim** [00:51:34] And it's very elegantly written in his manuscript. But I just feel like that can be confusing as well. And Doug can attest to this. You can attest to this when you look at his resultant phases. Now, you do this, you get to the later pages. And the way that he decides to write that out is a little bit confusing.

**Josh** [00:51:51] Yeah you feel you can feel the piece in one [sings the rhythm] you can feel it in two [sings again] then you can feel it in four and then you can eventually get it to six, like there are permutations of 12 that actually.

**Jim** [00:52:09] If I were really young I'd probably do it in six. But, you know, for my kids, I'll probably put it in three or have them put it in three until they can kind of get it down. And then you just kind of go from there.



**Doug** [00:52:19] Well, Steve feels it in six.

**Jim** [00:52:22] How? That's so fast.

**Doug** [00:52:25] One two three, four, five, six.

**Jim** [00:52:27] Oh, I see, I see.

**Josh** [00:52:28] And when they come in, like if Steve comes in on the big beat three, he'll enter on five.

**Jim** [00:52:34] Two bars worth, is that what you're saying?

**Josh** [00:52:38] No, he counts. One, two, one, two, five, six. Yeah, he counts out the three sets of quarter notes. One, two, three, four. And he'll just come in with [sings rhythm] on five, three or one depending on where they are in the beat.

**Jim** [00:52:54] Yeah. Well you know, as tight as that needs to be and then open it up as time goes on. Yeah, I don't think I exactly addressed your question, but you're just talking about if somebody is getting started on it for the first time. I always feel like...I always forget what the science is that, you know, shows your brain and the way that the colors change inside, depending on the areas that are stimulated, and I always feel like there's just something about Steve Reich that's probably stimulating the side of your brain that's a little bit more algebraic or arithmetic or something, but it's worth stimulating.

**Josh** [00:53:32] Well I think it's, you know, the equivalent of driving like on a racetrack, 500 laps. You get very aware of where every bump in each of the four corners is, you know, and with which is different than Third Construction or something where you're more on a winding road that's going over different terrain.

**Jim** [00:53:53] Another little thing: I think Steve was probably not even aware of this when he was writing the piece. But this idea of, you know, your left hand or your right hand, whichever part you happen to be playing, eventually playing this four pattern continuously. You know what's interesting is to watch what I think of as being slightly more amateurish performances of the piece where you can tell somebody's playing two iterations of two in a whole bar. But the fact of the matter is, you want to get an eventual circular thing with your left hand. You don't want to dwell on it. Because it's in the wrong place, you know what I mean? If you started counting it from there, you might be in trouble, but the smoother it can be and the more effortless. I'm a big fan of that kind of stuff, too, that your technique should not be obvious.

**Josh** [00:54:46] It works on your left-hand lead too, I know that's something for me that I've had. I play the marimba part, the rock marimba part, which is a left-hand lead. And the bongo movement for me is right-hand lead. And so, I've had to get better at my left-hand lead. And turns out I'm not good at left-hand lead, Jim. So maybe if I'd have studied with you I'd be a little better at it, but.

Well, hey fellows, I am very, very grateful for your time. We blew through an hour here. I appreciate your time. I got very distracted there. Are there any final words we can we want to leave anything with or do you just want to wrap it up there?

**Jim** [00:55:26] I'm curious to know this project a little bit more about this project.

**Josh** [00:55:30] Well, we are I think, like two years ago we recorded all of *Drumming* at Princeton with Nexus and some singers. And we had it filmed really well by four/ten media. And it was produced by Ai-yun and Ray Dillard, and Russ Hartenberger is sort of producing the whole thing, and it's basically just like we are documenting *Drumming*, the fiftieth anniversary of *Drumming* and getting down a version of it that embraces this new version of the score that Reich is putting out, but also combines a little bit of the way... I mean, it turns out, Jim, that when we learned the Glock movement of *Drumming*, we learned some things wrong. And Russ was in the recording session, Russ was like, "I think what you

guys are doing there is awesome. But maybe you should do something else. Maybe you should try.”

**Doug** [00:56:25] And also, we for years, apparently...basically I taught a quartet arrangement of the trio version to So, so there was all this stuff like in the last resultant thing that we just never got to, that when the first time we ever played it for Bob Becker, he was like, “I love what you're doing. Where are those parts?”

**Josh** [00:56:49] Well, and there was also like a rhythmic feel thing. I think we were prioritizing one part of the beat. And Russ, like the way Russ did it recontextualized the whole transition into the fourth movement to feel on a different part of the beat. And man, it took like two days of like really struggling to try to re-hear that. Anyway, point is, there's that part of it, the sort of documentation of the piece. But then also these interviews that I'm doing with everybody from like from you, So, a bunch of groups that have played it, Colin Currie, Judy Sherman, who recorded the first recording of *Drumming*, a lot of folks who played with Steve Reich, Gavin Bryars. So we're getting a bunch of stories from folks to highlight this fiftieth anniversary.

**Jim** [00:57:39] So, you know, that's very cool. Very cool. I'm excited about, you know, the result of all that stuff, too. And yeah, it's good even to have Deep (Doug) here to. I realize you know what I mean, you sometimes don't even know what you're doing and you do it and it works for somebody, so.

**Josh** [00:57:59] And for me: I've played *Drumming* a bunch, but within So percussion. But I'm actually relatively ignorant of the whole family that has grown around *Drumming*, you know. Jay Clayton sang on So's recording but also has worked with So a ton... I have no idea who Jay Clayton is. Never met her. So those are for me personally, I'm really curious to talk to everybody and then be able to zoom out and be like, “oh, that's why this is the way it is.”

And that's why this person that's why Garry, when he gets up to improvise -- not improvise, but play the resultants -- that's why Garry plays it more like Tito Puente versus the way, you know, Al plays it. You know, there's a real soloistic

nature to the way Garry plays it. And I just want to know. I want to ask Garry. I want to talk to him about it. I want to see if it's random, if he was just like, "I don't know," like if that's it.

**Doug** [00:58:51] [imagining he is Garry] "Steve and I are the same age and he can't tell me no."

**Josh** [00:58:54] Yeah, like if the reason is because Steve owes Garry money or something and like that's the only reason that's awesome. That's fascinating to me and I want to know. So anyway, I appreciate your time, guys.

**Josh** [00:59:07] Jim, I really do genuinely wish that you and I had beers and hung more. Doug talks nonstop about you and everything. I'm just like get to the point with Doug where I'm just like, why don't you marry him already?

**Jim** [00:59:19] So, Jim, it nice to have beers again with people, you know, like in a closed space where you can kind of huddle up and chat.

**Josh** [00:59:29] Well, it would be lovely. And let's put it on the docket, too. I'll take 51 percent responsibility to make that happen. But until that happens, thank you so much for your time. Stay safe. Be healthy. And I look forward to chatting with you again soon.