

The Tortoise and The Hare

Contributed by Larry Lawless
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After the performance for Doug's class, it's time to start the recording. Kevin Harbison, our recording engineer, has quite a challenge to figure out how to handle the diversity of instruments. We have pretty much taken over the recital hall, with 2 marimbas, 2 vibraphones, the MalletKat (an electronic mallet percussion instrument we are using for most of the bass parts) drumset, congas, hundreds of small percussion instruments.

The first song to go on disk is "The Tortoise and The Hare" by Rich MacDonald. I decided to do this one first, because it is so different from everything else we are doing. It uses no mallet instruments, only piccolo snare drum, 3 concert toms, wood block, ice bell, temple blocks, and bass drum. It is more like a traditional percussion ensemble piece that you would hear on a college or high school percussion concert. Although most of the piece is in 7/8, the bass drum keeps a steady ostinato of 2 8th notes going throughout, being the "tortoise" plodding along as though it were 4/4. The temple block part in 7 is dancing and scurrying around the bass drum part, the "hare" of the title, as the other parts, like spectators to the race, interact with the other two, in and out of different time feels. This proves to be quite a challenge to record, as the rhythms are very intricate, at times obscuring the beat. After a number of takes, the first song of the CD is in the can, and we go out for a well deserved relaxing dinner. It's not until the waiter tells us that we realize it had poured down rain earlier in the day. We've seen nothing but the inside of the recital hall for 3 days now.