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RCA Victor LPM-2352

Lover	Tea for Two Cha Cha
Begin the Beguine	Where or When
Fickle Weather	London Bridge
My Favorite Things	Mambo Drumbo
St. Louis Blues March	A Day at the U.N.
	Cincinnati Ratamatati

The First Percussion Sextet: C. Warren Hard, Director
Bob Swan, Earl Zindars, Bruce Spencer, Chuck Speas, Ralph Roberts, Doug Alien

With the recent resurgence of interest in recorded percussion, it seemed only natural that a musical ensemble at last be formed consisting entirely of percussionists, and dedicated to the expansion of the repertoire of instruments one does not blow into or draw a bow across or pluck or strum, but which one strikes with some sort of mallet.

Well, The First Percussion Sextet must be credited with unusual foresight because it was formed *in 1947* at Ohio State University. Needless to add, the founding fathers were all student drummers. By 1951, the group was proficient enough in making melody, as well as rhythm, to appear on TV and in concert before Eastern schools and colleges.

Part of the impact of the group is certainly visual: six grown men stride on stage and play, during the course of the concert, a total of twenty-five different percussion instruments in pieces covering music from jazz to the classics. But a good portion of The First Percussion Sextet's appeal is aural: the group actually plays songs and achieves harmonies with instruments that were designed primarily to serve as vehicles for rhythm. A variety of musical effects is at the mallet-tips of these six musicians, and they also manage to inject liberal portions of humor and excitement into their fare.

When the house lights dimmed in the acoustically perfect auditorium at West Virginia

University for The First Percussion Sextet's concert, the program was similar to many the group had done in the past. But there was one major difference: this concert was being captured on tape for records.

The program opens with *Lover*, taken at a furious clip and spiced with a hearty Latin-American beat. Chimes, vibes and bells carry the melody, with bongos, congas, timpani and snare drums driving the ensemble to the whirlwind climax. Norman Beatty arranged *Begin the Beguine* for listening or dancing. All of the percussion instruments come into focus over a beat suitable for a glide around any dance floor. *Fickle Weather* is Sextet member Earl Zindars' tone poem to the elements in four uninterrupted sections: rain dance, showers, storm, and clearing after storm. From the Rodgers and Hammerstein production "The Sound of Music," comes *My Favorite Things*, arranged for the Sextet by Director C. Warren Hard. Among the instruments contributing to the proceedings are tuned antique cymbals, muted bells, the "Swanophone" and the celeste. The side closes with *St. Louis Blues March*, which should ring some bells with fans of the late Glenn Miller, for the Sextet has adapted the famous Miller marching band treatment of this classic for an ensemble of percussion instruments, including xylophone, bells, snare, timpani, and even a bit of piano.

Side Two opens with *Tea for Two Cha Cha*, an arrangement in which bells and xylophone figure prominently, with assist from the celeste and snare drum. *Where or When*, another Beatty arrangement, was fashioned as music to dance to. Memories of a first piano lesson inspired *London Bridge*. The melody is heard clearly, then it fades out completely and is followed by the sharp rap of the teacher's ruler across the stumbling fingers. Timpani, bass drum, hand cymbals, xylophone, bells, chimes and jazz drums are among the objects also rapped. *Mambo Drumbo* has everyone sprinting because a total of nineteen percussion instruments is used, including claves, marimba, triangle, bongos and bells. The Sextet salutes World Peace with *A Day at the U.N.*, a composition with its dissonant moments, but which ends in harmony (and with everyone in the same key!). The program closer is *Cincinnati Ratamatati*, a Beatty composition which brings drummers Chuck Speas and Bruce Spencer out front for some flagwaving solo work over the ensemble.

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