



# 2021 Hall of Fame Garwood Whaley

By Rick Mattingly

**A**t the 1960 Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic in Chicago, fourteen percussionists and educators met for dinner. They were concerned about the lack of quality percussion education at the time, evidenced by what they were seeing and hearing from the percussion sections of many high school and college ensembles that were performing at the clinic. They met to discuss the possibility of establishing a national organization that would “bring up to date the present standards in solo and ensemble contests, stimulate a greater interest in percussion performance and teaching, and promote better teaching of percussion instruments.” That meeting led to the formation of the Percussive Arts Society.

Garwood Whaley was not at that meeting, but his career has perfectly aligned with the original PAS purpose. “My goal was to always attempt to raise the level and musicality of percussion playing,” Whaley says, “by providing a musical approach to percussion playing as a composer and publisher of methods, solos, and ensembles.”

He has accomplished that goal in a number of ways, most notably as the founder of Meredith Music Publications and from serving as President of PAS, during which time he increased the organization’s outreach and prestige. In recognition of his contributions to the percussion community, Gar Whaley has been elected to the PAS Hall of Fame.

**B**orn in Dobbs Ferry, New York, Garwood (Gar) Whaley began his study of drums and percussion at age 13 with Juilliard graduate Bruce Tucker in Tarrytown, New York. He played in the Ardsley High School Band, directed by Joe Greco, an alumnus of the West Point Band who had a degree from the Crane School of Music, and who, Whaley says, was “an inspiration.” After graduating high school, at Tucker’s suggestion, Gar auditioned and was accepted at the Juilliard School, where he studied for two years with Morris (Moe) Goldenberg and

three years as a scholarship student with Saul Goodman.

What did Whaley learn from Goodman and Goldenberg? “What did I NOT learn from them?” Gar says. “First, they were wonderful people and would do anything for their students. They modeled professionalism and musicianship, and they encouraged you to always play at the highest possible level. They made you feel special and that they really cared for you. One of my fondest memories of Saul Goodman was during my last year at Juilliard. During a lesson with Saul, he was telling me about how his recommendation helped Tony Cirone land a job with the San Francisco Symphony. And then he said, ‘Gar, I’m going to recommend you for the next job.’ Wow, that was a memorable day.”

While at Juilliard, Gar freelanced in New York and began giving private lessons at the White Plains Academy of Music and Art in New York. After receiving his diploma from Juilliard, Gar performed with Paul Lavalle and the World’s Fair Band of America during the 1965 World’s Fair. But before Goodman could recommend him for an orchestra job, Gar received his draft notice. He auditioned for the United States Army Band at the West Point Military Academy, and although no positions were available there, the auditioning officer procured a position for Whaley with the Army Band in Washington, D.C. During his six years as percussionist with the United States Army Band (“Pershing’s Own”), he performed several times as soloist, including a performance of the band arrangement of Milhaud’s “Concerto for Percussion and Orchestra.” During that time, he also attended The Catholic University of America, where he earned Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees. In addition, Gar gigged and taught percussion at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, and also taught privately, building a studio of around fifty students at all performance levels. Teaching led him to begin writing instructional books to fill what he per-

ceived as a void in the pedagogical percussion literature.

In 1971, Whaley began teaching at Bishop Ireton High School in Alexandria, Virginia and became chair of the Fine Arts department. During his time there, he led the Bishop Ireton Symphonic Wind Ensemble, which performed concert tours for 27 years in Canada, Germany, France, Switzerland, Finland, Wales, Austria, Luxembourg, Holland, Belgium, England, Scotland, Ireland, and Denmark. For a quarter of a century, Whaley commissioned a new work each year. In addition, the ensemble performed 29 annual combined concerts with university and professional bands, including the U.S. Army Band, U.S. Navy Band, U.S. Air Force Band, The National Concert Band of America, Harvard University, Yale University, and George Mason University. Whaley and the ensemble were featured in the June 1991 *BD Guide* article “More than Just Performance” and the May 2000 *Instrumentalist* article “From Struggling Ensemble to a Band of Distinction.” In 1998, Bishop Ireton High School named its new performance hall the Garwood Whaley Auditorium in recognition of his long-term contributions to the fine arts. Whaley retired from Bishop Ireton in 2004.

Starting in 1977, Whaley served for 30 years as Curriculum Coordinator of Instrumental Music for the Diocese of Arlington Schools in Virginia, where he was responsible for the administration of instrumental music in 29 schools. During his tenure, he established a yearly honor band, an annual band festival, and was responsible for providing instrumental music education to thousands of students in Catholic Schools in the Northern Virginia area. He later served as adjunct professor of music at Catholic University, teaching private lessons, percussion methods, and courses in music education. He organized the first percussion ensemble at Catholic University, whose members included Doug Howard, John Rudolph, Dick Ecton, Frank Cocuzzi, and Randy Eyles.

## PUBLICATIONS

While attending Juilliard, Whaley became good friends with Anthony (Tony) Cirone. The two of them teamed up for their senior jury exam, performing Bartok's "Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion." Cirone recalls that near the end of their third year at Juilliard, they decided to write a book together during the summer. "At the end of the summer, I realized I had completed a full book," Cirone says. "I called it *Portraits in Rhythm*. I was a bit squeamish about telling Gar, but he took it well and wound up completing his half with someone else."

Whaley's book, co-authored with Joseph M. Mooney, was titled *Rhythmic Patterns of Contemporary Music*. It consisted of original etudes based on rhythms of such composers as Bartok, Stravinsky, Carter, and others. The book was published 1974 by JR Publications, owned by Joel Rothman, and Gar subsequently wrote several other books for that company. Those books sold very well, but Gar had sold the rights to Rothman for a flat fee and was no longer receiving royalties. Although in the long run Whaley could have made more money from royalties, taking the

flat fee made more sense at the time, as he was able to use that money for a down payment on a home.

Eventually, though, Whaley decided to go into business for himself. He started Meredith Music Publications (named for his daughter) in 1979. The first book Meredith published was *Musical Studies for the Intermediate Mallet Player*, followed by books for snare drum and timpani. He also published collections of recital solos, audition etudes, and duets for snare drum, timpani, and mallets. In all, he has written over 30 books that have become standards in percussion pedagogy, with over 400,000 copies of his books having been sold worldwide.

He is especially proud of *Audition Etudes for Snare Drum, Timpani, Keyboard Percussion and Multiple Percussion*. "That changed the way students auditioned for placement in district and state bands and orchestras, and college entrance auditions," Whaley says. "I think it really helped non-percussion music directors who auditioned students to understand percussion playing on a whole new level." He is also proud of *Basics in Rhythm*, which provides students with a simple approach to improve their rhythmic understanding

and sight-reading skills, and his "Primary Handbook" series for snare drum, timpani, and mallets. "My goal was always to help students become sensitive, expressive musicians at any level," Gar says.

"Gar Whaley's publications, and especially his audition materials, set a new standard for students and teachers in helping to prepare them for college auditions and All-State audition presentations," said Jim Petercsak, SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor: Percussion at the Crane School of Music in Potsdam, New York.

"Gar Whaley's books have provided me and literally hundreds of thousands of others a firm grounding in the fundamentals," said Patrick Roulet, Chair: Western Washington University Music Department. "The way he includes studies in odd and mixed meters early in the learning process has helped my students develop the skills to play rhythmically challenging music at sight."

In 1986, Meredith published its first book by another author: *Essential Techniques for Drum Set: Book 1* by Ed Soph. Since that time, Meredith has published books by many prominent percussion authors, including such titles as *Instruction Course for Xylophone* by George Hamilton Green, *The Xylophone Rags of George Hamilton Green*, edited by Randy Eyles, *Majoring in Music* by former PAS president Rich Holly, the *Music for Marimba* series by Pat Roulet, four volumes of *Music of Musser's International Marimba Symphony Orchestra*, edited by Will Rapp, *The Symphonic Repertoire Series* by Anthony Cirone, Gerry Carlyss, David Herbert, Tim Genis, and Jack Van Geem, *The Modern Concert Snare Drum Roll* by Will James, *Cirone's Pocket Dictionary of Foreign Musical Terms* by Anthony Cirone, and *The Contemporary Percussionist* by Michael Udow.

Most recently, Whaley and Cirone collaborated on publishing Saul Goodman's memoir, *A View From the Rear: Saul Goodman, Memoirs of a Virtuoso*



so *Timpanist in the Orchestra's Golden Age*, which also contains a 1981 interview with Goodman and tributes to him that were published in *Percussive Notes* when Goodman died, along with a wealth of Goodman photos from the New York Philharmonic archives.

In 1987, Meredith Music published its first non-percussion book *The Creative Director: Alternative Rehearsal Techniques* by Edward S. Lisk, which became one of Meredith's best sellers. In all, over 400 composers and authors are included in the Meredith catalog.

"I am proud of every title we publish," Whaley says. "Each one is like adding a new child to the family. We publish lots of books for band, orchestra, and choral directors, and for students on conducting, musical interpretation, pedagogy, and so forth." But, he adds, he is most proud of the percussion books.

And as though Meredith did not keep Whaley busy enough, he served as chief editor for Music for Percussion, Inc. from 1980–2000. Works he edited include "Metalwood" by Stephen Primatic, "A Light Ascending" by Frederick A. Speck, "Sonata for Snare Drum" by Edwin McLean, "Spectrum for Solo Timpani" by Murray Houllif, "Sonatina for Solo Marimba" by Thomas Beverage, "Miraggi for Marimba Solo" by Richard Willis, "Wooden Music for Two Marim-

bas" by Rich O'Meara, and "Sonatine for Vibraphone and Marimba" by Gitta Steiner.

## PERCUSSIVE ARTS SOCIETY

While in the Army Band, Whaley came across an early copy of *Percussive Notes*. He submitted an article to the journal titled "The Service Band Percussionist," which ran in the Fall 1968 issue (<http://publications.pas.org/Archive/pnv7n1/articles/pnv7n1.06,14.pdf>). The cover of that issue featured a photo of the band's percussion section. "I was hooked," Gar said about his first involvement with PAS.

Whaley became active in the society, organizing and becoming the first president of the Virginia PAS chapter, and he assisted host Randy Eyles with PASIC '86 in Washington, D.C. Gar became chair of the PAS Education Committee and produced the first "commercial" educational publication for PAS, *Percussion Education: A Source Book of Concepts and Information*.

In 1987, Whaley was elected Second Vice-president of PAS. He served in that position for four years while John H. Beck served as president for two terms. In 1991, he became PAS First Vice-president during Bob Schietroma's presidency, and two years later, Gar became PAS president, serving two terms

(which no one has done since that time). During his four-year term he developed a membership campaign that brought PAS membership to over 8,000 for the first time.

When Whaley first became Second Vice-president, PAS was renting office space in Urbana, Illinois. "That space was extremely limited, and we were desperately searching for a new location," Gar recalls. "After PAS member Jim Lambert introduced us to the McMahan Foundation, a philanthropic organization in Lawton, Oklahoma, we were able, with their financial support, to build and move to our new headquarters in Lawton. This was the first time PAS actually owned its own building — a milestone in our history. We moved to Lawton in August 1992 only a few months before I became president.

"As president, and with an outstanding Executive Committee including Randy Eyles, Genaro Gonzalez, Bob Breithaupt, Mike Balter, and Executive Director Steve Beck — who I call the 'A team' — we put into place new protocols and procedures that included developing a long-lasting relationship with the McMahan Foundation and its chairman, Dr. Charles Graybill, which, in turn, led to additional matching grants, enabling PAS to reach the next level of growth."

In addition to office space, the building in Lawton included a percussion museum, which evolved into today's Rhythm! Discovery Center in Indianapolis. "Within the first year of my presidency," Whaley says, "it was obvious that the space for the museum was not sufficient for the number of instruments that were being gifted to PAS. Therefore, at the start of my second year, discussions for a Phase II of the museum side of the Lawton building began. Plans for Phase II were finalized and begun within months of the end of my presidency. After discussion during an Executive Committee meeting, we thought it would be best that the current Executive Committee continue for



The U.S. Army Band Percussion Section, with Gar Whaley in the front row behind the xylophone. This photo appeared on the cover of the Fall 1968 issue of *Percussive Notes*.

another term to see the Phase II project to completion. The Board of Directors unanimously voted in favor of the idea, which is why I had a four-year term as president.”

During Whaley’s time as president, the WPN (World Percussion Network) was started, a forerunner of today’s PAS website. “It was a network for drummers, percussionists, and educators via a dial-up modem connection,” Gar explains. “Knowing that I had the ‘A team,’ I gave officers the power to make decisions on their own, cutting red tape and lag time, which made the society stronger, more efficient, and continued the development of a truly dynamic team of leaders. During my second term, one of the first things I did, and of which I am most proud, was to bring the entire Board of Directors and Executive Committee to Lawton for a brain-storming

summit lasting several days. Not only were we able to develop plans and goals for the organization’s future, we developed great camaraderie among the leadership that united us as a team. I was able to hire Shawn Brown as Director of Publications and Russ Girsberger to organize the new museum. Thanks to the outstanding fiduciary management of treasurer Mike Balter, we were able to greatly increase our financial resources, funding many of the needed important projects. We added several annual awards, including the PAS President’s Industry Award and the PAS Outstanding Chapter President Award. Working with members of the industry, we were able to greatly increase membership and strengthen PAS. It was an exciting period in our history, and I’m proud to have been a part of it.”

According to PAS Past-President Jim

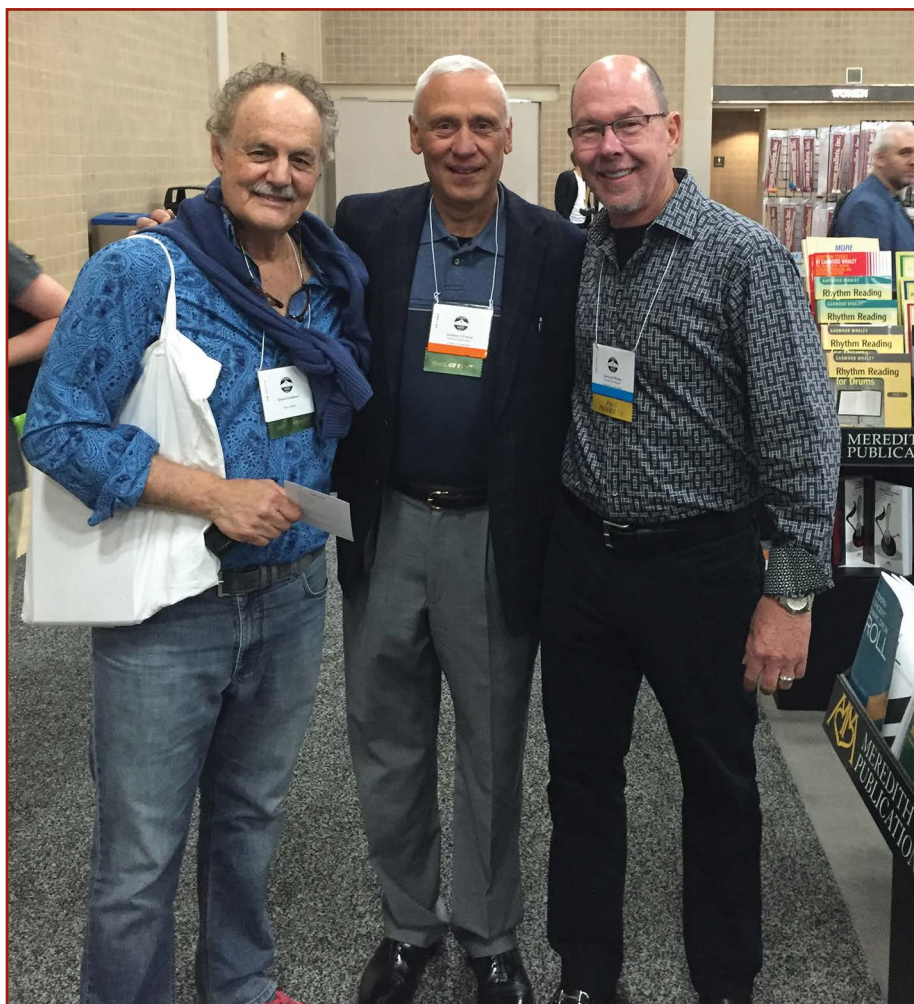
Petercsak, “Gar served as president of PAS during our transformation into a broad professional organization representing all aspects of percussion, and he was able to set a foundation to help secure the financial independence of PAS so it could become the leading professional organization it is today.”

For several years, Whaley provided a \$1,000 PAS/Meredith Music Publications Grant for a Non-Percussionist Band Director to attend PASIC. In 2008, Meredith published *The Drum and Percussion Cookbook*, which contains articles by 57 authors, with royalties from this publication going directly to the Percussive Arts Society.

## AWARDS

During his career, Whaley has received numerous awards, including Outstanding Secondary Educators of America Award, Outstanding National Catholic Bandmaster, The National Band Association’s Citation of Excellence, The National Federation Inter-scholastic Music Association Outstanding Music Educator Award, Bandworld’s Legion of Honor award, and the Alumni Achievement Award from The Catholic University of America. In 2002, he was inducted as an associate member into the American Bandmasters Association. For five years he received a Grant in the Arts from the *Washington Post* newspaper’s Educational Foundation for his “Commissioned Work and Composer-in-the School Project.” He is the recipient of the 2011 Midwest Clinic’s prestigious Music Industry Award.

Whaley says that being elected to the PAS Hall of Fame is “the culmination of what I have been working on since I began teaching and publishing over 50 years ago. Being selected by my peers – former PAS presidents and the Board of Directors – is especially meaningful. I am both grateful and humbled by being included with an illustrious group of performers, educators, and members of the percussion industry.” **PN**



Gar Whaley (right) with former Juilliard classmates David Friedman and Tony Cirone