

2011 PAS Composition Contest Winners

By Alan Chan

This year marks the 38th Percussive Arts Society Composition Contest. It is designed to encourage and reward those who create music for percussion instruments and to increase the number of quality compositions written for percussion in various settings, including works for solo and ensemble. This competition continues to be one of the most prestigious in the field of percussion music, and attracted submissions across the globe. Cash awards totaling \$4,500 are distributed each year.

This year's contest drew 72 entries from around the world, including Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Singapore, Sweden, Taiwan, the U.K. and the USA. There were 33 entries in the marimba quartet category and 39 entries in the solo vibraphone category. The judges of the marimba quartet category were Michael Burritt, Bill Cahn, Pius Cheung, Mark Dorr, and Brian Nozny. The judges of the solo vibraphone category were Anders Åstrand, John Lane, Jon Metzger, Matthew Richmond, and Blake Tyson.

CATEGORY ONE: MARIMBA QUARTET

First place

"Bloom"

By Ivan Trevino

Ivan Trevino is a musician who wears many hats. He's a rock drummer at heart, and he brings that spirit into other avenues of his life, such as classical percussion and composing. Ivan is a founding member of Break of Reality, a cello rock quartet that has toured extensively across the U.S. and sold over 40,000 albums worldwide. As a composer, Ivan has received multiple prizes and commissions, including a second-place prize in the 2007 PAS Composition Contest.

Ivan says, "Bloom" weaves between minimalism and post-rock, reflecting my interest in bands like Radiohead, Explosions in the Sky, and Sigur Ros. Much like minimalism, post-rock compositions feature motivic ideas that are organically developed over time. Rather than utilizing the verse-chorus form of standard rock music, post-rockers tend to create a soundscape of textures, utilizing



thick orchestrations and a wide range of dynamics. I also create the same idea of texture and motivic development, while maintaining the energy and accessibility of the bands I like so much."

"Bloom" is a single-movement composition that lasts about nine minutes. Written in compound meters (12/8, 9/8, with dotted-quarter-note = 56 bpm), the piece opens with delicately layered chords in repeated sixteenth notes, with dynamic shapes constantly evolving.

The repeated sixteenth-note chords then modulate metrically to eighth-note triplets in 4/4 with quarter note = 116 bpm. A four-beat repeated melodic motif in the first marimba part occurs throughout this section (up to measure 67). Marimbas 2 to 4 play various textures through layering different ostinatos. For example, a bass-clef ostinato is added in measure 39 (marimba 4) and a countermelody to the first marimba part is introduced in measure 46 (marimba 1).

The next section is indicated as "Youthful, Kid-like" and begins with the melodic motif fading out from the previous section. While the marimba 3 part provides a simple half-note tetrachord repetition as background, there is an introduction of a new melodic motif written in dotted eighth-note dyads in the hemiola fashion in measures 63–64 and 66–67. This motif becomes the layering material, first introduced by marimba 4, then later by marimba 2, which is written in five-bar and three-bar cycles respectively. Marimba 1 then enters in measure 78 with a sixteenth-note delay in a six-bar cycle melody. All these devices provide this section with a playful effect.

Without key signature or accidental markings, the music employs only notes from the C-major scale up to this point. The introduction of the B-major key signature in measure 87 brings a refreshing quality to the music. After a half-note silence in measure 96, marimbas 2 and 4, each played with four mallets, join forces to play the hemiola in open voicing, which covers a wide range of the instrument. The repeated melodic motif in the second section reappears in the first marimba, with a syncopated ostinato from marimba 3.

A slow section begins in measure 116, with quarter note = 49 bpm. Ivan continues to develop the motifs from previous sections by shortening them and placing them in alternation of 7/8 and

4/4. Dyads and open chords still dominate this section with intriguing harmonic progressions.

The recapitulation in measure 144 returns to the key of C, with thematic materials in the same order as the beginning but shortened. Ivan continues to modify the texture and dynamics of these sections. A surprisingly short and static coda concludes the composition.

"Bloom" is a dynamic composition in minimalistic style. The metamorphosis of the form and materials creates a narrative that evolves naturally and organically.

Second place

"Radioactive Octopus"

By Steven Simpson

Born in 1967 in Waldorf, Maryland, Steven Simpson earned a D.M. in Composition at the University of Michigan in 2004. Simpson's music has been performed by the Cleveland Chamber Orchestra, Carolina Pops Orchestra, University of Michigan Symphony Orchestra, and Relaché. He is the recipient of the 1st prize in the 2010 Classical Lounge Competition for Orchestra, the 14th Annual Bowling Green New Music Festival Award, the Cleveland Chamber Orchestra's Young and Emerging Composers Series, and an Honorable Mention from ASCAP.

According to Steven's program notes, "Radioactive Octopus" was inspired by the earthquake and subsequent nuclear disaster that occurred in Japan in March of 2011. Each player represents two of the tentacles of the octopus, and a visual movement of the octopus is portrayed through imitation of musical lines. Additionally, changing textures, harmonic shifts, and sudden dynamic contrast portray the uncertain movements of the ocean environment."

Regarding the compositional technique used in this piece, he notes, "The octatonic scale or 'second mode' and the 'third mode' as discussed in Messiaen's *The Technique of my Musical Language* were incorporated for their symmetry as well as their contrast to one another. Both of these 'limited transposition'



modes provide a motivic cohesiveness through the nature of their intervallic construction, while often giving a sense of polytonality and a distinctive dissonance. Shifting from one mode to the other, and the use of short rhythmic gestures, allows a degree of uncertainty in the direction of the composition. From the use of these palettes, textures, and rhythms, I visualized the radioactive environment that the octopus was shifting through restlessly while attempting to move to safety.”

This seven-minute work begins with an uneven 5/8 meter with quarter note = 84 bpm. A four-note cluster is repeated in sixteenth notes, accompanying the theme, which is loud and syncopated. There are back-and-forth exchanges between two groups of marimbas until measure 36. Then the music turns to repeated sixteenth-note clusters with each player playing two notes at a time. The theme is then further developed with interruption of fast octatonic scales, also in the form of clusters through chromatic layering of all marimba parts. Often two transpositions of the octatonic scale are used simultaneously.

After a number of canonic passages using octatonic scales, there comes a more forceful section starting in measure 59, with the quartet playing mostly fast and repeated dyads. Measure 81 begins the middle section with sparse motivic ideas with occasional ensemble accents. The fast canonic writing in measure 89 becomes more dissonant with parts overlapping each other in chromatic intervals. The texture becomes more and more condensed until it reaches an 11-note cluster in measure 98. A short recapitulation with contrasting elements leads the piece to a 14-note cluster chord at the end.

“Radioactive Octopus” is an energetic piece with intense ensemble writing. It uses dissonant sonority with clear rhythmic directions. It is also technically challenging. For example, long passages with fast repeating dyads require fast wrist movement in both hands. The extensive ensemble writing with synchronized rhythm requires precision and excellent coordination among players.

Third place “Durufé Variations” By Lane Harder

Lane Harder holds degrees from The Peabody Conservatory and Southern Methodist University. His music is published by KPP and Rassel Editions of New York and recorded on Albany and Gasparo Records. He has received awards from ASCAP, PAS, Voices of Change and NACUSA, among others, and studied with Philip Lasser, Chris Theofanidis, Dan Welcher, and Donald Grantham. He is the Program Coordinator of EAMA Summer Program in Paris, France, where he teaches counterpoint, harmony, score reading, and compositional techniques. He is currently the Assistant Instructor at the University of Texas, Composition Co-Chair of the 2012 GAMMA-

To hear audio files of the winners
of this year’s PAS Composition
Contest, visit

Web Extra

www.pas.org/publications/November2011webextras.aspx

UT Conference and Editor for the 2011–2012 CLUTCH Recital Series, and the creator and host of the popular classical music podcast whatmusicis.com.

“Durufé Variations” is a marimba quartet in four movements, and each movement is based on a piece or a movement of a piece of organ music by Maurice Durufé (1902–1986). Lane explains that “the music was inspired by hearing Durufé’s ‘Prélude et Fugue sur le nom d’Alain’ in Saint-Etienne-du-Mont Cathedral in Paris, France, where Durufé served as organist from 1929 until his death in 1986. The organ in Saint-Etienne-du-Mont was built under his supervision, and its kaleidoscopic colors and registration served as a model for the instrumentation of the piece. I have replicated multi-octave organ spacing in the scoring of the music. I have also attempted to combine Durufé’s effortless, extended harmonies with the stepwise character of Gregorian chants, on which he based many instrumental and vocal works.”

A vibrant opening begins the first movement, “Sicilienne.” It is written in compound time, with dotted-quarter note = 52 bpm. Written in the D-major key signature, marimba 3 carries a slow-moving melody in the middle range of the instrument, characterized by small leaps and stepwise motion. This part is akin to the role of “tenor” carrying the *cantus firmus* in polyphonic music of the medieval period. It is accompanied by a sixteenth-note countermelody from marimbas 1 and 2 in the upper register, and tremolo of marimba 4 in measures 1–13. The melody is then accompanied only by a countermelody of marimba 4. After a short episode in measures 29–33, marimbas 1 and 2 provide a contrapuntal accompaniment, and later they become the melody in doubling octaves starting from measure 45. After this bright and uplifting section, the movement concludes with a soft chorale.

The “Scherzo” movement starts with a tutti passage with layers of rhythmic patterns descending from the upper register. After nine measures, everybody drops out except the pattern from

marimba 1, which is further developed in measure 75 with a countermelody from marimba 3. Other marimbas are gradually added to the contrapuntal texture, often in imitative manner. After a similar development in measures 123–144, the movement retreats to a soft coda.

“Adagio” is the only movement not written in compound time, but mostly in 3/4. It begins with a *senza misura* passage with a chant played in tremolos in the lower register by two marimbas an octave apart. The melody is then accompanied by sixteenth-note dyads in the upper register in measure 155. Sometimes the chant is played in single strokes, which gives a variety of color to the melody. The *Quasi Organum* concludes the movement in a choral fashion.

In the highly contrapuntal “Fugue,” there is a sense of liberty both in the formal structure of the fugue and the tonal language. The exposition contains entries of a five-bar theme in D major from each of the four marimbas. Upon the last entry of marimba 4, only four measures are stated, then it cuts into a dotted-rhythm melody in measure 236. Motifs from previous movements are used. The theme in measure 277 is a variation of the original theme, this time in C major, with only the contour and rhythm remaining the same as the original. This *quasi* reinstatement is written in monophonic fashion. The coda in measure 293 changes the key from D minor to D major. Rhythmically more unifying, this section brings the piece to a victorious ending.

“Durufé Variations” is a highly crafted piece utilizing mature contrapuntal writing with a modern twist.

CATEGORY TWO: VIBRAPHONE SOLO First place “Skipping Stones” By Ed Martin

Ed Martin is Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh. His compositions have been performed in Asia, Australia, Europe, South America, and throughout the U.S. at events such as the ISCM World New Music Days in Sydney, the World Saxophone Congress in Bangkok, and the Seoul International Computer Music Festival. His music is recorded on the Mark, Parma, and SEAMUS labels, and he has received awards from the Illinois PAS Chapter (2011), the Electro-Acoustic Miniatures International Contest, and the Craig and Janet Swan Composer Prize for orchestral music.



The composer says that this piece “was composed for percussionist Alison Shaw in 2007. My intention was to create the aural illusion of foreground and background layers through a combination of register, dynamic, and mallet changes. The foreground material consists of bold and bright melodic fragments that gradually develop throughout the piece. The background layer includes faint echoes of these fragments, and a continuous stream of delicate, rapidly articulated notes that gives the music its subtle, yet driving, pulse. The title refers to the manner in which the foreground melodic fragments appear to skip across and submerge into the undulating surface of the background material.”



At first glance, the layers that the composer mentioned are clearly represented in the notation—with regular noteheads for the foreground and small noteheads for the background. These two notehead sizes also signify the resulting sounds of brighter quality versus round quality through the choice of mallets. Ed also uses boxed dynamics for the small noteheads alongside unboxed dynamics for the regular noteheads, and sometimes applies them one note at a time. In addition, accents are carefully applied to put more emphasis on certain notes. The illusionary effect is created by using sustain pedals throughout many quick thirty-second-note passages in close range.

The piece starts with a simple melodic motif (notated in regular noteheads) in the high register constructed with two notes, a tritone apart (A-sharp and E). It is spread out through a soft thirty-second-note accompaniment (notated in small noteheads) made of D-sharp, E, and F, with sustain pedal employed throughout each phrase. Two A notes below middle C are used as a respond or echo to the melody in measure 4, and this dialogue between the two registers continues in the next two phrases.

After the introduction of an accelerating figure and a half-step trill, phrases continue to develop in the fashion mentioned in the previous paragraph. It is worth noting that passages are often started with depressing of the sustain pedal, with motifs in octave unison or tremolo, or a chord in louder dynamics. This triggers the building of a “sound cloud” throughout the phrase and creates momentum to the music. Several statements of the *accelerando*/trill passage conclude the first section.

The slow section that begins in measure 45 consists of a number of phrases, which usually begin with a tetrachord and a subsequent descending line. This subsequent line usually

starts with three notes a half-step apart then a number of chromatic and third combinations. Grace notes in the high register, starting from B-natural, are added to the melody as a new layer in measure 51. A variety of speeds are applied to the descending line, including the use of *poco ritardando*, to create different senses of “falling” in this section.

Measure 62 begins the recapitulation. A climatic moment is built by using the thirty-second-note figure with *crescendi* (mm. 74–79), acceleration figures in big leaps (mm. 80–86), and later a combination of ascending melody and thirty-second-note accompaniment. The melody reaches the highest point with an F/B-flat dyad. After several repetitions, the introduction of a decelerated figure from measure 96 marks the beginning of the coda. After the call and response between the figure and the soft thirty-second-note passage, the piece ends enigmatically with a soft, single-line, four-note melody. With the sustain pedal depressed throughout this last section, this melody is accompanied by residuals of the fading notes.

“Skipping Stones” is an advanced level piece that takes advantage of the metallic, long-sustaining nature of the vibraphone to create layers, sonorities, and “sound clouds,” with variable characters. The piece is non-tonal coupled with the use of tritones and chromatic materials, resulting in a mysterious mood. The performance notes focus on describing the desirable sound (e.g., bright timbre, round articulation, etc.), rather than specific material (e.g., using medium mallets), which invites performers to explore various technical possibilities in an imaginative way.

“Skipping Stones” will be recorded by Alison Shaw and included on her forthcoming 2012 album, *Cadenza, Fugue and Boogie: New and Used Works for Vibraphone and Marimba*.

Second Place “scenes for summertime” By Dana Difilippantonio

Dana Difilippantonio received his M.M. from Louisiana State University under the direction of Brett Dietz and B.F.A. in music from Indiana University of Pennsylvania under the direction of Gary Olmstead and Michael Kingan. He is the author of a book of marimba etudes, *Marimba Synthesis* (HoneyRock Publishing, 2010), which seeks to develop both musical and technical abilities for four-mallet marimbists of all levels.

“scenes for summertime” consists of five movements and requires four mallets. “Summer is a time that evokes a deep nostalgia for many people,” Dana says. “Whether it be adventures had, friends made, or a brief tryst, summer holds special and secret memories for all of us.” According to the composer, the movements are structured so that the first, third, and final movements are shorter, like “bookends,” while the second and fourth are more extensive, like book “chapters.”

The first movement, “prologue (enchantment),” is minimalistic. Indicated as “gentle, flowing,” the tempo is quarter note = 76 bpm. It begins with a two-bar melody and a countermelody with arpeggiated chords, and this basic structure is repeated throughout the movement. The alternation of meters between 13/16 and 6/8, and rhythmic groupings of the 13/16 meter (6+4+3 in sixteenth notes), provide an elastic quality to the phrases. The chord progression of F major 7 and C major 7 is repeated at the beginning and later moved to other key areas such as E-flat major 7 and C7 sus4.



The next movement, “the boy; the girl,” is faster (quarter note = 132 bpm) and begins with chords played in an energetic and bouncy rhythmic pattern without the pedal. They gradually move from the middle to the high register, with alternation of 4/4 and 3/4. A jazzy section that begins in measure 20 utilizes the sustain pedal with broken chords in syncopated fashion, and it is contrasted with a *secco* eighth-note phrase in every other measure. A new section starts in measure 46, which is indicated as “insistent, romantic” and is written in 6/8. It consists of a melody written predominately in dotted half notes, with sixteenth-note accompaniment in arpeggiation or stepwise motion, until it reaches the slow moving tetrachords at the end. The element of the following “repose” movement is developed from the first movement, this time in a slow 4/4 marked “delicate, sweet.”

The fourth “idyll” movement is the most dynamic. Carefully designed pedaling builds harmonies in an accumulative fashion. Many of the sixteenth-note passages consist of ascending or descending broken chords, with big leaps built by contrary motions in three different layers (measure 12), or three-note patterns displaced in different octaves (measures 20–23). A *forte* passage from measure 24 consists of a melody written in sixteenth-note octaves, which covers a wide range of the instrument. Measures 33–37 contain the middle section with a series of cadenza-like passages ending on a fermata. It is followed by a short recapitulation with a soft ending of the octave melody. The last movement is a reprise of the first movement, which concludes the composition.

This work combines several compositional styles to create a hybrid. The use of minimalistic style on the “bookend” movements combines with a touch of lyricism. The narrative of “the boy; the girl” and “idyll” movements 2 and 4 are peasant-like and simple, as the title suggests.

Third Place
“Time-Clouds”
By Jorge Vidales

Born in Mexico City, Jorge Vidales graduated with honors from the National School of Music, affiliated with Mexico’s National Autonomous University (UNAM). His principal teachers were Federico Ibarra, Mario Lavista, and Gabriela Ortíz. He has written solo, chamber, vocal, choral, and orchestral works, and he has received awards, commissions, and performances in prestigious venues in Mexico and abroad, including Italy, Latin America, and the United States.

According to the program notes by the composer, “Time-clouds” explores the possibilities of aggregate sonorities and resonances that rise from the vibraphone to form large events, or ‘mists’ of sound. These mists accumulate again into even larger resonances, or ‘clouds.’ The static, resonant moments are contrasted with more articulate events that make use of different pedaling and mallet techniques.... The ‘clouds of sound’ at work in the piece can also be viewed as ‘clouds of time,’ in which events group themselves according not only to their texture and dynamic level, but also according to their time-direction (static vs. dynamic time; measured vs. unmeasured time; linear vs. non-linear time; etc.). The final part of the piece exhibits a transformation of the vibraphone timbre, which suggests a ‘sublimation’ of the sound-mists, as they rise and slowly evaporate into an atmosphere of silence.”

This single-movement piece calls for four medium-soft mallets, a bow, and an extra mallet with which the rattan part is



Recordings of these pieces and scores will be available in the PASIC Listening Room located in the PAS Library of Rhythm! Discovery Center.

used. The performance notes provide detailed descriptions of the use of mallets, pedal, and motor.

The piece starts with a tremolo on F-sharp (quarter note = 52 bpm), with a continuous pedal throughout the passage. A melody that contains C, A-sharp, E, and D creates a whole-tone sonority, until additional notes such as G, C-sharp, and B are introduced in measures 8–10. After a brief episode with broken tetrachords in arpeggiation, a condensed version of the beginning is introduced, this time with a center note G. In measure 25, the broken tetrachord episode becomes a tremolo in two dyads in contrary motion.

In measure 34, a cadenza-like section begins. Tremolo phrases are sandwiched between short melodic phrases, first with grace-note elaboration of three-note fragments (measures 34 and 36), then a pentatonic melody (measures 38–39, 41–42, etc.). The melody is played at the center of the vibraphone keys with a rattan shaft, which doubles the “bell-like, pure” playing with regular mallets two octaves below.

A “brisk, lively” section combines the elements above with interactions between them. Short dead-stroke fragments that appear around middle C echo with the motifs above. The momentum of the piece continues to increase when the melodic element changes from rhythmic syncopation to fast running thirty-second notes, which pushes the piece to the climax with a *fortissimo* tremolo in measure 87. The pedal is depressed throughout the recapitulation that begins in measure

93, with hand-sweeping on the “black-note” bars combining with a bowing melody, which concludes the piece.

“Time-Clouds” explores various sonorities of the instrument, as well as the structure of time through a variety of phrasing and pacing. The motor is used in various speeds and it is clearly indicated on the score, as is the use of half and whole pedals. Extended techniques such as the use of a bow, rattan shaft, and hand-sweep create unexpected yet delicate effects. The composer handles musical elements in a concise way with a transparent texture.

2012 CATEGORIES

The 2012 PAS Composition Contest will include the following two categories: I. Solo Marimba and II. Drumset Soloist with Medium Percussion Ensemble (5–8 players).

Alan Chan is a composer with works written for orchestra, jazz big band, and various percussion, vocal, and chamber settings. He has received commissions across the globe and recognitions from PAS (2004 and 2008), ASCAP, ArtEZ (Netherlands), American Composers Forum, Los Angeles County Arts Commission, and Composers and Authors Society of Hong Kong, among others. Alan received his D.M.A. from the University of Southern California, M.M. from the University of Missouri – Kansas City, and B.M. from the University of Miami. For a list of works and publications, visit alanchanmusic.com.

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2011 HALL OF FAME



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Jimmy Cobb



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CORRECTION

In the "PAS Marching Percussion Festival" history article that ran in the September issue, Jeff Hartsough was not acknowledged as having been the Chair of the Marching Committee and director of the Marching Percussion Festival in 1997. Also, the article said that Carol Carpenter was the local marching host for PASIC '97, when in fact it was Tad Carpenter. We apologize for the errors, which have been corrected in the online version of *Percussive Notes*.

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| <p>1. Publication Title: Percussive Notes</p> <p>2. Publication Number: 0553-6502</p> <p>3. Filing Date: 10/19/11</p> <p>4. Issue Frequency: Bi-monthly</p> <p>5. Number of Issues Published Annually: 6</p> <p>6. Annual Subscription Price: \$100.00</p> <p>7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication:
Percussive Arts Society, Inc.
110 W. Washington Street, Suite A
Indianapolis, IN 46204</p> <p>8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher:
Percussive Arts Society, Inc.
110 W. Washington Street, Suite A
Indianapolis, IN 46204</p> <p>9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor:
Rick Mattingly – Editor
110 W. Washington Street, Suite A
Indianapolis, IN 46204
Hillary Henry – Managing Editor
110 E. Washington Street, Suite A
Indianapolis, IN 46204</p> <p>10. Owner: Percussive Arts Society, Inc.
Address: 110 W. Washington Street, Suite A
Indianapolis, IN 46204</p> <p>11. Known Bondholders, Mortgages, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None</p> <p>12. Tax Status: The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes has not changed during preceding 12 months.</p> <p>13. Publication Title: Percussive Notes</p> <p>14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: 09/01/2011</p> <p>15. Extent and Nature of Circulation:</p> <p>a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)
-Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 2880
-No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 2800 (Sept)</p> <p>b. Paid Circulation (By Mail and Outside the Mail)</p> <p>1. Mailed Outside-Country Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)
Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 2340</p> | <p>No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 2248</p> <p>2. Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)
Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 25
No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 25</p> <p>3. Paid Distribution Outside the Mails including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS®
Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 0
No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 0</p> <p>4. Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS (e.g. First-Class Mail®)
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No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 362</p> <p>C. Total Paid Distribution (Sum of 15b (1), (2), and (4))
Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 2716
No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 2635</p> <p>D. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail)</p> <p>1. Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies included on PS Form 3541
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Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 149</p> <p>b. No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 150</p> <p>E. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3) and (4))
Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 149
No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 150</p> <p>F. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c And 15a)
Average No. Copies Each Issue during Preceding 12 Months: 2865
No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 2785</p> <p>G. Copies Not Distributed (see instructions to publishers #4)
Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 15
No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 15</p> <p>H. Total (Sum of 15f. And 15g.)
Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 2880
No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 2800</p> <p>I. Percent Paid (15c. Divided by 15f. Times 100)
Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: 95%
No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 95%</p> <p>16. Publication of Statement of Ownership: Publication required. Will be printed in the November 2011 issue of this publication.</p> <p>17. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner Michael Kenyon, Executive Director</p> |
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Michael Kenyon

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