

# 50 Years of PAS

## Chapter 3:

## 1981–1990

By Rick Mattingly



As PAS began its third decade in 1981, much of the foundation that still supports the society today was in place in terms of publications, committees, chapters, and PASIC. Much of the Society's efforts in the '80s was devoted to strengthening that foundation and expanding it.

“By having PASIC in New York City in 1979, hosted by Arnie Lang, and in Los Angeles in 1985, hosted by Jay Wanamaker, we were able to bring people in from chapters outside the U.S. and become truly international,” says Jim Petercsak, who served as PAS President from 1977–'81. “We began the process to establish a new set of rudiments that were international in scope, and we established a PAS committee led by Jay Wanamaker for that purpose, and that also led us to the marching competition at PASIC as a vehicle to bring the rudimental and marching folks into the organization. Eventually, Fred Sanford was asked to coordinate this segment for PAS, and that helped to greatly increase the membership of PAS and attendance at PASIC. As editor of *Percussive Notes*, F. Michael Combs developed a format that is still the basis of *Percussive Notes* today.”

When Larry Vanlandingham took over as PAS President in January 1982, he cited Petercsak's accomplishments in a *Percussive Notes* editorial:

Heading up the Society most recently has been Jim Petercsak. Some of the biggest changes and most significant developments occurred during Jim's tenure as President.

PAS now has a stable, well-organized business office located in Urbana, IL. Thanks also to Tom Siwe, the office runs efficiently and effectively, keeping in constant contact with members regarding address changes and other business matters. PAS now operates at the same high level in business matters as in promoting its objectives of furthering the cause of the percussive arts.

The PAS International Conventions, originated while Jim was a PAS officer, have developed from the first at Eastman School of Music in 1976, to the most recent in Indianapolis, which was attended by over 700 percussionists!

But for all of the positive accomplishments of PAS, the organization was suffering some growing pains, in part caused by the fact that the musicians and educators who ran it were not always well versed in business practices. As the society grew, a more businesslike approach was needed. "At the start of the 1980s, PAS hit a rough patch on its road to becoming today's leading instrumental society," Tom Siwe explained recently. "*Percussive Notes* continued to grow in excellence, and PASIC was becoming *the* place for percussionists to congregate each fall, but the office was in disarray and complaints from the membership

indicated to the Executive Committee that something needed to be done. In an attempt to right the ship, the home office was moved from Terre Haute, Indiana to Urbana, Illinois. As First Vice-president (later President), I was given the task of overseeing the Society's business and getting PAS back on the right course. At that time, the Society's financial resources were meager and its future looked bleak. With the help of full-time office manager Dennis Wiziecki, part-time secretary Pat McKenzie, and many of my percussion students from the nearby University of Illinois, things began to change for the better. With a grant from a local Urbana business, the office began using computers to track membership and address mailing labels for the journals. Phone calls and letters from members were answered; bills were paid on time. The office, for the first time, was run like a business. It was not all smooth sailing, but, with the leadership of an expanded Board of Directors, the support of the membership, and many student volunteers, PAS avoided the abyss. The '80s was a decade of change, and many who joined PAS during those years are still around to remember the struggle."

The publications were reflecting a wider range of interests by the early 1980s. *Percussive Notes* covers were devoted to such topics as steel drum, studio recording, drumset, and show drumming. Also, the November 1981 issue of *Percussive Notes Research Edition* (formerly *Percussionist*) announced the formation of a PAS World Music Committee and all of the articles in that issue dealt with the percussion and music of India.

But the drumming world was about to experience some major changes, as evidenced by a letter published in the February 1982 issue

of *Notes* warning of the Linn drum machine after ads had appeared in other music journals bragging that the Linn had been used instead of a drummer on several recent hit records. Bob Saydlowski wrote:

Recently, the industry has been introduced to the LINN LM-1 Drum Computer. Not your ordinary rhythm box with "chunka-chunka" rhythms, the LINN is an entirely new breed of drum machine. The LM-1 has real drum sounds stored in its memory, able to be programmed by anyone by typing patterns out on a small "keyboard." And this machine sounds like nothing we've heard before—it sounds good! It seems that the machine is capable of doing anything the user programs in. The machine retails at \$4995.

Now for the worst...

I've enclosed the LINN ad, which appeared in the July 4 issue of *Billboard* magazine. The LINN LM-1 has already begun to replace human drummers on recordings, as witnessed by this ad. And LINN seems to be proud of it. I think that drummers everywhere have a good reason now to fear a "rhythm box."

I strongly urge the PAS membership to write President Victor Fuentealba of the American Federation Of Musicians in NYC and express views on the use of this threatening device. And, if anyone has had a job lost because of this machine, please have them inform the AFM, as negotiations with recording companies are coming up, and this would give some firm evidence to stand on to block the use of the LINN.

But instead of trying to fight electronics, PAS included them through articles in *Percussive Notes* and clinics at PASIC. Later in the



Larry Vanlandingham



Jim Petercsak



Tom Siwe

decade, technology would play a major role in keeping the PAS publications solvent.

One of the society's biggest concerns in the early 1980s was increasing foreign membership. Several countries had formed chapters, but many of them had only a handful of members. In 1982, Jan Williams, a member of the Board of Directors and percussion instructor at the State University of New York at Buffalo, was asked by Vanlandingham to coordinate efforts toward increasing PAS's membership in Europe and France.

By October 1982, after a couple of years of discussions, the PAS Rudiment Committee presented its proposal for 40 International Drum Rudiments and asked for feedback. Subsequent issues of *Percussive Notes* included letters, mostly pro but a few con, and the proposal was officially adopted.

In the January 1983 issue of *Notes*, F. Michael Combs announced his resignation as editor. Robert Schietroma took over as of the following issue.

In the July 1983 issue of *Notes*, vice-president Tom Siwe reported that, "In June of 1981, the paid membership stood at 3,988. Today it is 5,337 and presently growing at a rate of 100 new members per month. Our sustaining membership total has risen from 135 to 161, and inquiries come in each week from new publishers, drum shops, and product specialists."

In early 1984, it was announced that, "Carroll Bratman, founder of Carroll Sound, Inc. and owner of the largest collection of percussion instruments and sound effects in the world, has presented a gift of a number of those instruments to PAS. These instruments will ultimately be housed in the PAS museum

of percussion instruments." It would be several years before the membership heard any more about a museum.

In January 1985 the membership was informed that Larry Vanlandingham had resigned as PAS president due to an "increase in professional responsibilities." In his first editorial as the new PAS president, Tom Siwe cited Vanlandingham's accomplishments.

During Larry's twelve years as an officer, we saw PAS grow and change. Membership during his tenure more than doubled, while the scope of the society's influence increased and broadened worldwide.

As the new PAS president, I pledge to build on the accomplishments of the past and to respond to the challenges of the future with maximum effort and dedication.

One area of concern is membership. For PAS to fulfill its mission, to communicate and to educate, it must increase its membership in all categories: performers, students, educators and libraries. By this November we should have over 6,000 members and, by the end of our 25th Anniversary year (May 31, 1987), our membership goal is 7,500 PAS members worldwide.

The reason that membership was a concern was that PAS was experiencing financial difficulties and more members paying dues was seen as a big part of the solution. Siwe urged members to encourage their friends and colleagues to join, and for teachers and students to ask their school libraries to become members. In addition, he pledged to personally ask members of the industry to better support *Percussive Notes* with their advertising dollars, and he also planned to ask them for contributions toward a \$100,000 endowment.

"Finally," Siwe wrote, "I pledge to involve additional qualified people in the government of PAS at the local and international level. Toward this goal I asked the board at our Ann Arbor meeting to increase the size of the board by two. The motion carried and two additional members were elected. I plan to ask for two additional members at our Los Angeles meeting to insure board representation of our Canadian and European members."

As PAS grew in size and influence, some people became concerned that certain people and/or manufacturers were gaining too much influence. So in early 1987 it was announced that the PAS bylaws had been amended in terms of the Board of Directors. First, it was agreed that a person could only serve a maximum of four consecutive two-year terms on the board. After completing eight years, a person would not be eligible to serve again for two years. Second, only one full-time employee of a single corporate entity (e.g., a company or a school) could serve on the board at a given time.

September 1987 saw the debut of the PASIC Preview issue of *Percussive Notes*. In many ways, it provided the blueprint for what is now the PASIC Program, containing schedules, maps, a guide to local restaurants and attractions in the PASIC host city, and bios of PASIC presenters, along with registration forms and hotel and airline info. The PASIC Preview issue replaced an issue of *PN Research Edition*, leaving only one research publication on the annual schedule. In fact, the previous year there was only one physical *Research Edition*, designated Volume 24, Numbers 3/6, March/September 1986. The single *Research Edition* published in 1987 was the last. It was subsequently announced that "Focus on Research" would be part of every issue of *Percussive Notes*, which would be published bi-monthly.

The reason that *Research Edition* was cut back to one issue and ultimately eliminated was that the publications were losing money, and because the *Research Edition* did not carry advertising, it had to be paid for from the ads in *Percussive Notes*. But even when one of the *Research Editions* was replaced by the PASIC Preview issue, the publications were losing so much money that PAS came close to cancelling publication of the Winter 1988 issue. *Notes* was also footing most of the bill for *Percussion News*, a monthly, single-page newsletter that PAS started putting out shortly after Siwe became president.

John Beck, who had become PAS president the previous year, discussed the situation with *Percussive Notes* editor Jim Lambert and Administrative Manager David Via, and Lambert made a suggestion. "I volunteered to learn [desktop publishing program] *Pagemaker* and secure a MacIntosh computer," Lambert recalls. "I then started doing page layout, which was at that time sent via computer disk to our publisher in Illinois." Although desktop publishing held a lot of promise, few professional publications had embraced it by 1988. But Lambert took the plunge, and by taking over typesetting and page layout, he made the publications profitable and brought PAS into the computer-publishing era.

Around the same time, PAS started promoting itself as being "more than just a magazine subscription." However, at Board of Directors meetings there was a realization that for many who were unable to attend PASIC and who did not have active state chapters, the PAS publications were, in fact, the only real benefit of membership (which at that time was \$15 for students). Although every state had a chapter by this time, only a few offered annual Days of Percussion. So a commitment was made to put more focus on chapters and on providing more benefits to members, a commitment that led to a number of changes in PAS.

By the Spring 1988 issue of *Notes*, President



John H. Beck

Beck was able to report that PAS was on more solid financial ground:

The Executive Committee and I have been working diligently to correct the Society's financial problems. We now feel that PAS is on a road to fiscal responsibility. There were many bumps and turns in the old road that caused much concern and apprehension from time to time. Our debts were real and had to be paid. You all responded to my requests for help. I am happy to say that it is reassuring to me as president to see a society rally around the problem and help to solve it. The Sustaining Members helped by their donations; the chapters helped by not receiving half of their dues reimbursement; the National Office reorganized its office duties for a more economical approach, and in general the entire Society helped out by offering patience and understanding.

When *Percussionist* was changed to *Percussive Notes Research Edition*, all of the PAS news that had previously been in *Percussionist* was moved to *Percussive Notes*. But neither publication carried minutes from Board of Directors meetings, which had long been a staple of *Percussionist*. At the 1988 board meeting, it was proposed and agreed to that minutes would be published in *Percussive Notes*. The minutes from the December 1989 board meeting included this "state of the society" paragraph:

The Percussive Arts Society is now enjoying a time without problems. Our finances are in order, our Urbana office is functioning well and with a contemporary flair, our chapters are active, and our sustaining members are committed to PAS. We are looking to the next decade with optimism and a dedication to promote percussion education to our membership throughout the world.

The First Vice President's Report, delivered by Robert Schietroma, echoed that sentiment.

There is a healthy spirit in PAS today. The PAS committees have become more active and continue to fulfill their appointed charges. In the past there has not been any money to help committees with their projects. This year it was possible to help the Education Committee with its recent publication, *Percussion Education: A Source Book of Concepts and Information*. Next year we hope to update the Solo and Ensemble Repertoire Lists. With some personnel changes and new possibilities of funding, our committees will likely be more productive than ever before.

The commitment to focus more on chapters was continuing, with Second Vice President Garwood Whaley reporting that a Chapter President's Handbook was going to be a

priority project for the coming year and that funding for chapter grants would become a continual line item in the PAS budget.

But as PAS completed its third decade, a major change was looming, first indicated by an announcement that the street address for the PAS office in Urbana had changed. PAS had been relocated to a smaller office, and the lease on that office would expire in 1991. An update from Administrative Manager Steve Beck in the February 1991 issue of *Percussive Notes* mentioned that in the coming year, the society would "search for a permanent office/museum." The results of that search would lead to the most significant change in PAS since its founding. PN

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