

Samba da Janta (2007) by Douglas Wallace

Like many young children, my first experiences with percussion took place in the kitchen and at the table. I vividly remember the thrill of hitting a frying pan with a spoon, and the wonderful resonance that filled the air when a milk carton or lunch bag was popped just right. I even loved the jarring sound of a glass or dish breaking. Much to my parents' relief, I eventually began to appreciate the more sophisticated (and less destructive) sounds that could be created at the table. I enjoyed playing melodies on glasses partially filled with water. I practiced my drum roll with two forks and a dinner plate. I even learned to play the guiro with a chopstick and a cheese grater! To this day, I am intrigued and fascinated by the rhythmic and tonal potential of a stocked kitchen or a fancy place setting.

When I was asked to compose a percussion ensemble piece for Kilmer Middle School, I knew that I wanted to write something that utilized instruments from the kitchen and the dining room as well as more traditional percussion instruments. I also wanted to find a way to incorporate some acting and choreography. The result is a composition for 8 percussionists that transforms from an impromptu dinner table jam session into a full out percussion ensemble, a parallel to my transformation from a kid banging on pots and pans into a professional percussionist. The rhythms and grooves in this piece are based on several Brazilian song styles, all derived from the samba; hence the title *Samba da Janta*, Portuguese for "Supper Samba".

Samba da Janta is dedicated to the Kilmer Middle School Symphonic Band and Director, Christopher Weise. My inspiration for this music is the recent birth of my son, Brendan, and my niece, Sofia. I can only imagine the pleasure and headaches that I will encounter when they begin to explore the musical possibilities of the kitchen and the supper table!

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