

# **An Analysis of Harry Breuer's *Back Talk***

by

**Dr. Amy Dunker**

[www.amydunker.com](http://www.amydunker.com)

**Arranged By:** James Moyer

**Instrumentation:** Xylophone Solo

Piccolo

Flute

Oboe

Bb Clarinet 1 – 2

Bb Bass Clarinet

Bassoon

Eb Alto Saxophone

Bb Tenor Saxophone

Eb Baritone Saxophone

French Horn 1 – 2

Bb Trumpet 1 - 3

Trombone 1 – 2

Baritone

Tuba

Percussion I: Snare Drum, Bass Drum, Hi-Hat, Cymbal,  
Tambourine

Percussion II: Tom-Toms, Vibraslap, Wood Block, Cowbell

**Duration:** 3 Minutes

**Grade:** Band Grade 3 / Solo Grade 5

**Harmonic Language:** Tonal (C Major, Ab Major)

**Meter:** 2/2

**Texture:** Solo and Accompaniment, Melody and Accompaniment, Call and Answer

**Date of Composition:** 1938, Arr. 2006

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## **Composer Bio:**

Harry Breuer (born October 21, 1921 Brooklyn, New York - died June 27, 1989, New York City) was actually one of the few musicians of the space-age bachelor pad music era to treat percussion music as something more than a gimmick. In 1958, Breuer made his album debut with *Mallet Magic*, a collection of percussion instrumentals recorded for the Audio Fidelity label as a forum for demonstrating stereo technology; that same year, he issued a sequel, *Mallet Mischief*, which was later featured on the cover of the book *Incredibly Strange Music Volume One*, in the process becoming one of the more sought-after releases among latter-day space-age pop aficionados.

Breuer played with the very first musical stars of radio, the Cliquot Club Eskimos, as well as other society and vaudeville bands. He was a featured soloist on the xylophone in *Roxy's Gang*, the stage band of the Roxy Theater in New York City and continued to get the spotlight when he moved to the Radio City Music Hall orchestra. He worked for Warner Brothers and Fox movie studios in the late 1930s and early 1940s and even appeared in several short subjects and educational films during this time. He then returned to radio as a staff musician with NBC, where he remained until his retirement in the late 1970s.

Breuer was comfortable both as an entertainer in his live appearances and as a serious musician, publishing practice books and study guides for a wide variety of percussion instruments. He also performed percussion pieces written by such classical composers as Stravinsky and Shostakovich.

In the 1960s and 1970s, he worked in television, commercials, and films--in the latter, he wrote and performed background music for Harold Lloyd's and others' silent comedies, edited for television. When Jacques Perrey came to New York in the early 1960s, Breuer was one of the first musicians he met, and Breuer worked with Perrey on numerous recordings, both as a session performer and a composer. Together, they recorded *The Happy Moog for Pickwick*, and Perrey credited Breuer for his musical inspiration and help with the business of working in a studio. Breuer continued to explore technology and new musical equipment, working with a Kurzweil synthesizer at the age of 86 on an album titled, *Mallets in Wonderland*.

## **Notes:**

*Back Talk* was composed and published in 1938 along with *Chicken Reel*. Breuer played these ragtime solos on numerous radio shows and recorded them for many of the major broadcasting companies like NBC, Muzak, and the World Broadcasting System. This is a virtuosic showpiece for the advanced high school or college percussionist.

Program Note by James Moyer

**Form:**

Introduction	ms. 1 – 12	CM
A	ms. 13 – 52	CM
A'	ms. 53 – 76	CM
B	ms. 77 – 128	AbM
A''	ms. 129 – 136	AbM

**Theme 1 (Xylophone Solo, ms. 13 -24):**



**Theme 2 (Xylophone Solo, ms. 77 – 85):**



*Dr. Amy Dunker is an Associate Professor of Music at Clarke College in Dubuque, IA, USA where she teaches composition, theory, aural skills, trumpet and directs the new music ensemble.*

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