



STRONG FOUNDATIONS FOR BUILDING YOUNG PERCUSSIONISTS

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Innovative Percussion

Mapex/Majestic

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The purpose of this session is to give directors the tools and their everyday applications needed for creating a successful percussion section in a middle or high school band setting.

I. STARTING OUT - The First Steps

A. Choosing Percussionists (The Evaluation Process)

1. Smaller groups are easier to evaluate; Take notes in between sections
2. Use the backs of chairs or a long 2"x4" if drums are not available
3. Grip - Quickly teach the appropriate grip (like holding a toothbrush) and watch for it throughout the evaluation
4. Stroke - Teach the relaxed, rebounded full stroke
 - a. 4 Quarter notes per hand, open repeat
 - b. 8 Eighth notes per hand, open repeat
5. Echo Rhythms - 3 Levels, increase difficulty
6. March & Play - Always start with marking time first, then add stick clicks
 - a. Quarter Notes
 - b. Eighth Notes
 - c. Upbeats Only
7. Borderline students can be reevaluated with the same or increased difficulty level
8. Beware of "he/she has been taking drum lessons already"
9. This is not a perfect, foolproof process (success is determined by hard work)

Who should play percussion?

B. Starting Sequence - Mallets vs. Snare vs. Both

1. Percussion Class Alone - Snare first, mallets second to develop good technique
2. Full Band - Mallets first, snare second to work on mallet reading at the same level with the winds

Do I start students on snare or mallets?

C. Preparation

1. Snare Drum (reference points are **bold**)
 - a. **Tape the fulcrum point on the sticks***
 - b. **With tape, outline a 2.5"x1.5" square in the center of the drum***
 - c. **Tape the rim of the drum and part of the drum head where sticks pass over for proper stick angle*** *use white electrical tape
 - d. Cut a small piece foam (6"x6"x2" yellow polyurethane or 12" of 2.25" gray air conditioning) to go between the stand basket and the bottom head
 1. Number each piece of foam and assign students specific numbers
 2. The foam takes the edge off the sound without sacrificing rebound
2. Mallets - Use colored electrical tape on frames and mallet shafts to help match the correct mallets to the instrument

What are good habits to teach?

D. Equipment

1. Snare Sticks - thick concert sticks (no smaller than a 2B), like IP-LD, IP-1, or IP-KW
2. Practice Pads (good for individuals, workouts, and sectionals; real heads are preferred) - like CP-1R
3. Make sure snare stands adjust to a comfortable height
4. Mallets - Multi-instrument use, like IP F8, IP F10 (in Fundamental Pack FP-1), ENS260R
5. Rattan shafts may hold up better than birch to middle school beatings
6. Timpani - IP's GTX-2, -3, and -4
7. Instrument Kits - Consider the following:

What are the right tools for the job?

There are many combinations of instrument purchases for percussion that can be used depending on your needs and the school's and students' budgets. Some schools ask students to provide a snare only (school provides keyboards), a snare & keyboard kit, or a keyboard only (school provides snares). Some schools are now renting xylophones over bell kits. Your needs will determine what combination works for your school. - Check out the Mapex Roller Backpack Snare Drum Kit (MSK14DC) or the Mapex Roller Backpack Snare & Bell Kit (MCK1432DP).

II. TECHNIQUE / DAILY APPLICATION

A. Snare Drum

1. Universal Grip - Doesn't change much no matter what is played
"Give Me 5": Thumb on stick; first finger across; all fingers touching stick; flat, relaxed wrist (or knuckle over stick); sticks in upside down V

*Most Important Skill
for Snare: Proper
Technique*

DAILY APPLICATION: Saying "Give Me 5" is a quick reminder to use the proper grip. Regarding reference points: "Play over the tape."

2. Stroke Types
 - a. Essential for playing music with accents (two-height drumming), rudiments, etc.
 - b. 12" off head to start; Relaxed, rebounded "full" stroke (Let the drum do the work)
 - c. Full, Down, Tap, Up, Flam, Buzz, Double Strokes
 - d. Double Stops - Can be taught along with the different strokes

DAILY APPLICATION: Use our sheets, "Snare Drummer's Toolbox" (Lesson 4), "Foundations for Superior Performance" (Long Tones, Warm Up Sets).

3. Rudiments (Combinations of Stroke Types)
 - a. Flams - Up stroke/down stroke combination; Think of a light switch
 - b. Paradiddles - Apply two-height drumming and double strokes
 - c. Rolls - "Rolls are rhythms": Think of the primary strokes' rhythm without the roll
 - d. Drags - Apply double strokes

DAILY APPLICATION: Use rudimental exercises while winds play scales.

B. Mallets

1. Grip - Same as snare (Variations exist, but we avoid these for simplicity)
2. Stroke - Same as snare with less rebound off the bars (somewhat of an up stroke, think similar to full strokes)
3. Body Position
 - a. Keep the mallets in the middle of the body
 - b. Music stand needs to be directly in front of student and close to keys
 - c. Keep eyes on the music; Use peripheral vision to see keyboard
 - d. For large leaps, use a quick glance with the eyes only
 - e. Use leaning or sliding for notes outside of the player's immediate reach
4. Must build hands/chops as well as reading skills
 - a. Mallet players must be more than just good readers (aka modified piano players)
 - b. Work on scale exercises, arpeggios, and double stop exercises to build hands
 - c. Building snare chops is essential to develop mallet chops

*Most Important Skill
for Mallets: Reading
Music off the Page*

DAILY APPLICATION: Build hands with scales, supplemental sheets, "Mallet Player's Toolbox," "Foundations" (Scale Patterns).

C. Timpani

1. Grip - Same as snare (called "German" for timpani); Used to simplify teaching grips used for snare, mallets, timpani
2. Stroke - Up stroke, pull the sound out of the head
3. Strike the drum 6-7" from the edge of the drum
4. For practice in hitting the "sweet" spot, place a sticky note over the striking position
5. Tuning - Always scoop up to the desired note
6. Moving Timpani - Hold ONLY by the arms and lift the pedal slightly off the floor

*Most Important Skills
for Timpani: Proper
Technique & Ear
Training*

III. RESOURCES

These resources can be used by middle or high school groups depending on their skill level.

A. Method Books

1. Band method books should be supplemented as much as possible
2. Use sticking changes to increase difficulty and/or to work on hand building
3. Row-Loff Productions' "Snare Drummer's Toolbox" and "Mallet Player's Toolbox"

B. Ensembles

1. Percussion parts for concert music can be sparse, not challenging, even boring. Use percussion ensembles as a way to challenge, develop, and motivate percussion students.

2. Beginning Level Ensembles: Look for ensembles that contain basic instrumentation (snare, bass, toms, xylophone, bells, two timpani, basic auxiliary percussion, etc.). Not only should the rhythms be at the beginner level, but they should compliment each other; in other words, even simple rhythmic parts that are very independent of one another can be difficult for younger ensembles. Students can play both tonal and non-tonal percussion music, plus novelty instruments (trash cans, etc.). The focus should be on getting your students excited about practicing percussion instruments and staying in band!

Solos and ensembles are available for all levels of ability, including beginners!

3. Intermediate Level Ensembles: Look for ensembles that challenge intermediate players musically while staying close to the same basic instrumentation from the beginning level. Students can explore world percussion, pop-style pieces, classical pieces, and novelty percussion. Individual parts can get more independent from one other, but remember that the more different the rhythms, the harder it will be for the students to fit them together.

4. Medium-Advanced Level Ensembles: Look for pieces that branch out from the standard instrumentation (marimba, vibes, four timpani, drum set, rhythm section, special auxiliary percussion, etc.). Pieces at this level might be chosen from state lists for festivals. As in all levels, students can experience many different styles of music.

5. Advanced Level Ensembles: The most advanced students have the best pick of percussion ensemble literature available. Instrumentation and part independence should not be an issue (although there are pieces that have variety in difficulty of the individual parts). Look for pieces that challenge students on as many aspects of percussion as possible. Students can also work on pieces that feature a soloist, everything from mallets to rudimental snare drum.

6. Holiday Ensembles: Holiday concerts can be augmented with percussion ensemble pieces. Many pieces have been written for all levels and with a variety of instrumentation.

7. Small Ensembles: Diversify instruction by having students work on duets, trios, and quartets. All ability levels can find pieces with various instrumentation. These pieces can be combined with large ensembles for a percussion-centered concert.

C. Solos: Percussionists can be exposed to solo literature from the beginning through advanced. From building skills to preparing for college auditions, students should focus on snare, mallets, and timpani pieces, along with multi-percussion and drum set compositions.

IV. CURRICULUM

These curriculum suggestions can be used by middle or high school groups depending on their skill level. We envision the first two levels to be for the first two to three years in band, with the last two levels being from the third or fourth year through graduation.

- A. Beginning Level Percussionists
 - 1. Technique
 - 2. Reading Music
 - 3. Basic Rudiments
 - 4. Buzz Rolls
 - 5. Simple Scales
 - 6. Keeping Time
 - 7. "Toolbox" Series Lessons
 - 8. Solo and Ensemble Literature
 - 9. Introduction to Drum Set
 - 10. Introduction to Two-Height Drumming

- B. Intermediate Level Percussionists
 - 1. Further Detail into Beginning Level
 - 2. Two-Height Drumming
 - 3. Double Stroke Rolls
 - 4. Honor Band Rudiments and Scales
 - 5. Chromatic Scale
 - 6. Exercises from "Foundations"
 - 7. Remaining Lessons and Chop Builders from "Toolbox" Series
 - 8. Drum Set - Basic Beats
 - 9. Solo and Ensemble Literature

- C. Medium-Advanced Level Percussionists
 - 1. Further Detail into Intermediate Level
 - 2. Drum Line Concepts (or Preparation for Drum Line)
 - 3. 40 PAS Rudiments
 - 4. All Major Scales
 - 5. Ear Training
 - 6. World Percussion
 - 7. Four-Mallet Grip (Burton)
 - 8. Drum Set - Different Styles (Rock, Jazz, Latin)
 - 9. Solo and Ensemble Literature

- D. Advanced Level Percussionists
 - 1. Further Detail into Medium-Advanced Level
 - 2. Preparation for Auditions (DCI, WGI, College)
 - 3. Four-Mallet Grip (Stevens)
 - 4. Traditional Grip
 - 5. Modern and Standard Solo and Ensemble Literature
 - 6. Minor Scales
 - 7. World Percussion
 - 8. Hybrid Rudiments ("Rudimental Cookbook" by Edward Freytag)
 - 9. Advanced Drum Set Concepts

Each year should continue to focus on the skills mentioned in in Section II and the resources in Section III.

It's okay for a student to specialize and excel in one aspect of percussion, but it is recommended for that student to be proficient in as many aspects of percussion as possible.

For more supplemental materials, visit this website or email the presenters.

www.strongfoundationspercussion.weebly.com