

2019 Kansas Music Educators Association In-Service Workshop

What Every Percussionist Needs

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SNARE DRUM

SNARE DRUM FUNDAMENTALS

There are 3 essential techniques, which if mastered, will give a percussionist the chops to play most music they will see in high school.

1. Legato strokes (8 on a hand, Hup Dup)
2. Down and up strokes (Accentuate, Floats Taps)
3. Diddles (Double Beat, Checkerboard Rolls)

Start learning these exercises on Day 1 of beginning band, on Day 1 of marching band, and as the first thing they play everyday. 8 on a hand is for percussionists what long tones or Remington exercises are for wind players. Matched grip is preferred because it is easier to teach, learn, and apply to ALL percussion instruments.

SEQUENCE FOR SUCCESS

Teach rudiments with this strategic sequence to ensure that students can correctly apply rudiments in music. Here are 2 examples. Apply to Jay Wanamaker's snare solo *Cyclone*.

Sequence of Steps	Applied to Flams	Applied to Rolls
1. Isolated hand exercises	Bucs or Accentuate	Double Beat
2. Alternating hand exercises	Float's Taps	Checkerboard Rolls
3. Isolated rudiments	Flams, flam taps, flam accents	5, 9, 17 stroke rolls
4. Rudiments in music	Reading flams in music	Rolls in music

Master these essential rudiments first:

- Single stroke roll
- Double stroke open roll
- 5 stroke (open and closed)
- 9 stroke (open and closed)
- 17 stroke (open and closed)
- Single paradiddle
- Flam
- Flam tap
- Flam accent
- Drag

KEYBOARD INSTRUMENTS

MALLET FUNDAMENTALS

Start with mallets up in the air, above the note the mallet will strike. Strike the note, and immediately bring the mallet back into the upright position. Lift! Use a variety of scale patterns to develop legato-stroke technique, speed, and accuracy. There is no reason for percussionists to be ignorant about scales. Mallets are the easiest instruments in the band on which a beginner can learn all scales.

COMMON MISTAKES

WRONG WAY	RIGHT WAY
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Tense wrists and fingers.2. Playing extremely fast or slow rolls.3. Accenting the beginning or ending of a roll.4. Losing track of the pulse.5. Playing over the string or node (the part of the bar with the least resonance)6. Rolls on metal instruments, including bells kits, glockenspiel, and vibraphone.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Relaxed wrist and fingers.2. Moderately slow in low range, moderately fast in high range.3. Keep all strokes even height. May play 1st & last note slightly softer.4. Practice with a click.5. Play over the center or edge of the bar to achieve the highest resonance.6. Rolls are usually for marimba and xylophone. There are exceptions, but generally rolls are for wood instruments.

4-MALLET PLAYING

4-mallet technique is increasingly important. Students across the country are learning it during their 2nd or 3rd year. New grade 3 solo and ensemble literature often calls for it, and new grade 4 literature is typically written with the assumption that keyboardists have a good foundation in 4-mallet technique. Use the instructional videos on vicfirth.com as a guide, especially if you do not have 4-mallet experience yourself.

A FEW POINTERS FOR THE OTHER INSTRUMENTS

TIMPANI

Placement – Find the “sweet spot” of the drum, roughly 2 inches from the rim (varying by drum size). Too close to the edge will produce a thin, twangy sound. Too close to the center will produce a thumpy sound.

Single strokes - Use an up-stroke or legato-stroke, not down-strokes. Professionals often turn their thumbs more upward and use what is sometimes called a “French grip.” Advanced high school students may start using this.

Rolls – Play rolls with open single-stroke rolls rather than buzz rolls or diddles. On a forte-piano roll, strike one forte note, then pause, and then sneak in with a soft single-stroke roll.

Mallets – Spend the extra money to buy nice sets of staccato and general mallets. Keep this pair in your office for responsible students.

Dampening – Dampen by lightly placing fingertips on the drum. Dampen during rests and sometimes when alternating pitches.

Tuning – Teach proper tuning procedures. Students should use their ear – not electronics, band directors, or tuning gauges.

DRUM SET

The first essential skill they need is the ability to play multiple styles with a steady beat. Tommy Igoe’s *Groove Essentials* series is an ideal resource for this. The second essential skill is the ability to “setup and kick” the band in each of those styles, and on any beat within a measure. Bobby Gabriele’s *The Chart-Reading Workbook for Drummers* is my favorite book for teaching this. I highly recommend Encourage your jazz band drummer to take private lessons.

AUXILIARY INSTRUMENTS

Teach proper technique on auxiliary instruments as you encounter them in your music. Teach the whole class, not just the individual playing that part. Use online videos made by Vic Firth and the Army Field Band to learn and teach the correct approaches to each instrument.

RESOURCES

BOOKS

A Fresh Approach to the Snare Drum, Mallet Percussion, and Drum Set.

<http://www.mwpublications.com>

This Mark Wessels series for beginners (3 separate books) is the top-selling percussion series for good reason. There are videos and play-along tracks for each lesson in each book. Mark Wessels is also part of the Vic Firth education team.

Five-Minute Drill: Daily/FUN Classroom Routines for Percussion

<https://www.tapspace.com/books-education/five-minute-drill>

Play-along tracks for a complete warm-up to start each day right.

Developing the Percussionist-Musician

<https://huestismusic.dpdcart.com>

Mike Huestis' four-book series (beginning to collegiate level):

This series will help percussionists become well rounded. He has beginning to advanced exercises and etudes for every instrument.

The Chart-Reading Workbook for Drummers by Bobby Gabriele

<https://www.steveweissmusic.com/product/bobby-gabriele-chart-reading-workbook-for-drummers/drum-set-methods-cd>

This is my favorite book for helping your jazz band drummer learn to set up and kick the band. Includes sample fills and play-along tracks.

The Percussionist's Workbook

<https://www.percussionwise.com>

This is a method book I co-authored with Jed Blodgett. It contains exercises and etudes for snare drum, mallets, and timpani.

ONLINE VIDEO LESSONS

<http://vicfirth.com>

You are probably already using this. You'd be crazy not to! There are countless resources from many of the top educators in the percussion world today.

<http://www.armyfieldband.com/education/the-complete-percussionist>

Lessons for snare, mallets, timpani, jazz, and auxiliary instruments.

PUBLISHERS

<https://www.tapspace.com>

<http://c-alanpublications.com>

<https://www.rowloff.com>

These are my go-to companies for solo and ensemble literature.

PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE NEW COURSE PROPOSAL

To the Junction City High School Administration:

The percussion ensemble is a musical performing group for percussionists without woodwind, brass, or string instruments. Today it is common practice for universities and high schools to offer at least one percussion ensemble. A focused percussion course is critical for implementing the National Standards for Music Education into our program. The percussion ensemble provides educators with the necessary context for teaching proper percussion technique, preparing for region and state festivals, and developing college-ready percussionists.

The National Standards for Music Education dictate that music educators should “select varied musical works to present based on interest, knowledge, technical skill, and context.” It is in the percussion ensemble where percussionists are given the greatest opportunity to perform musically challenging and rewarding repertoire on the widest variety of instruments. The percussion ensemble is also the ideal setting for teachers to effectively demonstrate and evaluate percussion performance techniques, and provide each student with appropriate feedback. Dr. Gary Cook (University of Arizona) wrote that, “It is through percussion ensemble performance that the student will learn musical ensemble listening and sensitive playing habits, become familiar with a variety of percussion instruments, and be challenged technically and musically beyond the average demands of band or orchestral literature.”

Music organizers recognize the value of the percussion ensemble. Accordingly, the Kansas State High School Activities Association sponsors both regional and state solo and ensemble festivals to which percussion ensembles are invited to perform. As indicated by the National Standards, we must choose music appropriate for this state-sponsored activity. Without a percussion class, we must either ignore this direction or take practice time away from the concert bands. Either approach would be to the detriment of all our band students. The only way to perform appropriate literature for these state events without jeopardizing the

progress of the large concert ensembles is to add a dedicated percussion class.

Performing in a percussion ensemble is critical for developing fundamental skills and participating in state festivals. It is similarly an essential experience for anyone who wishes to pursue percussion at the university level. A 2014 survey of 269 percussion professors indicated that 90% of professors expect their freshman percussionists to have previous experience in a percussion ensemble.

Similarly, numerous studies have shown that professors use a “totalization” approach to percussion, meaning their students must be able to play all types of percussion instruments. The days of a high school student specializing on just snare drum or xylophone are gone. Today, over 90% of university percussion professors require high school auditioners to demonstrate proficiency on snare drum, mallets, *and* timpani. More than half require drum set, as well. We currently have zero percussionists at JCHS who are ready for such a college audition. A percussionist has little chance of achieving these ever-rising expectations unless they are given the opportunity to take a percussion ensemble course in high school.

Participation in percussion ensembles introduces students to new styles and performance techniques, and deepens their musicianship. Percussion ensemble students learn to make better musical decisions, and those skills transfer to other performance settings. Percussion ensemble participation is the preferred way for students to develop rehearsal techniques, musical literacy, good practice habits, and the ability to interact with a conductor. It is also the ideal setting for teaching world percussion and developing percussion performance techniques. The percussion ensemble is a critical part of the development of complete percussionists. The addition of this class to Junction City High School will allow us to more fully realize the expectations outlined by the National Standards for Music Education, and will result in a greater number of students being prepared for collegiate music programs.

Sincerely,

Jared Morris, Director of Bands

PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Percussion Ensemble is a unique 9-12 grade learning community for all JCHS percussionists. A variety of musical styles will be explored to help budding musicians learn about all aspects of percussion. Students will become well-rounded musicians by learning to play snare drum, mallets, timpani, auxiliary percussion, and drum set. Each student will be required to learn and become fluent in playing all percussion instruments. Students will prepare percussion solo and ensemble music for regional and state festivals. All percussionists are considered members of the Pep Band, and select students will perform with the Wind Ensemble and Concert Band. Drum line is also part of the percussion class; this course will help students develop the skills needed for both marching and concert percussion styles.

WHAT DO I DO WHILE I WAIT TO GET A NEW PERCUSSION CLASS?

1. CREATE A WARM UP THAT FITS THEIR NEEDS

A percussionist in a full band class needs all of the same training as those in a dedicated percussion-only class. They should, therefore, still begin rehearsal with legato stroke exercises, just as your concert band begins with long tones. They should master scales and rudiments, and develop proficiency on auxiliary instruments. Organize your music fundamentals routine so the percussionists can play what they need with the winds. Some books, such as *Foundations for Superior Performance* have already created this for you.

2. PERFORM A PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE PIECE

Find a great composition and help your students prepare it for festival. Put it on your next concert program. Have rehearsals before or after school, during lunch/advisory/seminar, or even during your band class. Let them work on that independently while you rehearse the ballad they sight-read correctly 8 weeks ago. They are bored in the back of the room - they need percussion ensemble literature for their musical health!