

Percussion Final Study Sheet

Concert Snare Drum

Stand with the feet shoulder width apart and set the stand height so that the drum is at approximately waist level with the snares perpendicular to the player. Use closed or buzz rudiments for concert or orchestral style playing. When rolling on snare drum use a measured rhythm and the Multiple Bounce Stroke. The subdivision of the roll depends on the tempo of the music. There are 5 basic stroke types used in snare drumming: the **Legato Stroke** (same as piston stroke), the **Downstroke**, the **Tap**, the **Upstroke**, and the **Multiple Bounce Stroke**. The Legato Stroke utilizes the rebound of the drum and starts and stops in the “up position”. In the Downstroke, the rebound of the drum is controlled by freezing the stick in the “down position”. The Tap is an unaccented stroke and the Upstroke is an unaccented stroke that ends in the “up position.” The Multiple Bounce Stroke is executed by pressing the stick into the head creating a sustained or “buzz” sound. Choose an appropriate snare drum based on the style of the music. A deeper drum produces a lower fundamental pitch. The sound of the drum may be adjusted by tightening or loosening the heads, altering the tension of the snares, or by muffling the drum. Different dynamic levels can be played on different areas of the drum head. Playing closer to the edge is appropriate for softer passages. Always play with concert snare sticks, not drumset or marching sticks!

Keyboard Percussion Instruments

For general playing on mallet instruments, use the **piston stroke**. Avoid playing “around” the other mallet by lifting off the bar after each stroke. Keep your feet shoulder width apart, your shoulders square, and your hands low to the instrument. Use the wrists to move the mallet vertically and the arms to move the mallet horizontally. Always play in the center of the bar (unless the tempo or speed of the passage warrants playing on the edges of the accidentals.) The node refers to where the bar chord goes through the bar. Be sure to avoid playing on the node because the sound is undesirable. Keep the stand low to the instrument and in front of the range in which you are playing. Choose an appropriate mallet for the style of music and the dynamic level you are playing. Don’t be afraid to use multiple types of mallets within a single piece. When sight-reading, keep your eyes on the music and do not stop for mistakes. Use your peripheral vision to identify “landmarks” which can help you find the appropriate note (use the accidentals you can see to help you find the notes you can’t see.) Over time you will develop an instinctual knowledge of where the notes are called muscle memory. When rolling, use single strokes in an unmeasured style. Be sure to sustain the roll for its full duration and connect all the rolled notes. The speed of the roll is determined by the dynamics and the range in which you are playing. It’s important to be consistent with your sticking when playing mallets. Keep a pencil handy and write your stickings in the music. Always cover the instrument when you are finished!

Timpani

For general playing on timpani hold the mallets using the **French Grip**. The shaft is held between the thumb and first finger with the thumb on top of the mallet. The piston stroke is the primary stroke type used on timpani. The proper playing area on the timpani is the “sweet spot” of the drum, approximately 1/3 of the way between the rim and the center of the drum. Try to avoid double stickings if possible. Crossing one hand over the other is an appropriate technique on the timpani. The drums should be set up from lowest to highest with the low drum to the player’s left. When looking at a piece of music for the first time, go through and figure out which pitches will be on which drums. If possible, try to put a given note on a drum where it is in the middle of the range. Make a note of your pitch assignments for the next time you play the piece. The ranges of the timpani are as follows: **32”**: **D-A**, **29”**: **F-C**, **26”**: **Bb-F**, **23”**: **D-A**. When tuning the timpani, always follow the same protocol: 1) Sound the pitch using a pitch pipe or tuning fork. 2) Sing or hum the pitch. 3) Get your ear close to the drum and softly strike the drum, slowly glissing up to the pitch. 4) Double check the pitch by singing/humming into the drum. (The drum should resonate if it is in tune.) Always gliss up to the pitch. Avoid endlessly pedaling above and below the pitch. Get in the habit of tuning softly. Tuning between pieces at a performance and pitch changes during a piece must be done without creating a distraction or detracting from the music. Once you have tuned all the drums check the intervallic relationship between the pitches. Do not rely on the gauges for tuning. They are simply a tool to facilitate quick pitch changes within a piece and must be reset every time the drums are played. When moving the timpani, never grab the drum by the rim, always hold the struts. The timpani may be dampened by lightly touching the head with the back fingers. There is a lot of gray area in timpani notation as far as when to dampen the drum. The rule of thumb is to use your ears and imitate the articulation of the rest of the ensemble. When rolling on timpani, use an unmeasured rhythm and a single stroke sticking. The speed of the roll is determined by the drum being played and the dynamics of the music. The lower drums and softer dynamics require a slower roll speed while the higher drums and louder dynamics require a faster roll speed. Choose an appropriate mallet based on the style of music and the dynamics being played. Be sure to use a trap table or a stand (with a black towel draped across it) to hold all your implements, etc. Always cover the timpani when you are finished!

Bass Drum

For general playing, strike the drum slightly off-center. (The center is reserved for “canon shot” type effects.) Position your body behind the drum so that you can hit it with the flat part of the beater and have a clear view of your music and the conductor. Strike the drum with a legato stroke style that primarily utilizes the arm. For more articulate passages, more wrist may be used. When dampening the drum you can use your hand, a towel, or your knee (by propping your leg up on a chair). Place your mallets on a trap table or stand (with a black towel draped across it), not on the drum itself. When rolling, strike the drum on opposite sides of the head about 3 inches in from the rim. Be sure to use rolling mallets with a single stroke sticking. In general, use a slow roll speed. You can increase the speed as you crescendo.

Cymbals

Hold the cymbals by gripping the straps with the thumb on top and the remaining fingers wrapped around. Try to minimize contact between the hands and the cymbal itself as this will dampen the sound. Do not put your hands through the straps! This is a grip used for marching band only. Stand with the feet shoulder width apart and the cymbals at a 45 degree angle about chest height. Hold the cymbals with the strong hand on top and strike with a downward motion using gravity to “drop” the cymbals together. To avoid an air pocket the cymbals must be struck using a flam type stroke. The lower portion of both cymbals should strike first, allowing air to escape between the cymbals. The “openness” of the flam will be determined by the dynamic level of the crash. The louder the crash, the more open the flam will become. Conversely, the softer the crash, the “tighter” the flam becomes. For a general crash, use a legato motion with a “prep” stroke and a follow-through. Choking the cymbals is attained by pulling the cymbals into the body to stop the sound. For soft crashes, the cymbals may be held parallel at shoulder height so that the player can control the distance between the cymbals as well as have a direct line of sight between the cymbals, the music, and the conductor.

When rolling on a suspended cymbal always use a soft yarn mallet, not a timpani mallet. Roll on opposite sides of the cymbal using an unmeasured rhythm and a single stroke sticking. Be sure to keep your stroke even and at a relatively slow speed. Do not roll too close to the bell as this results in a limited spectrum of overtones. For general playing use an 18” or 20” cymbal. A hand cymbal can be used by hanging it by the strap from a boom stand. For dramatic effect, two cymbals can be used by adding in the smaller cymbal, by moving one hand over, as the roll crescendos. Be sure to pace out the crescendo so that the cymbal crests at the release of the roll. Use your ears to blend the cymbal sound with the rest of the ensemble. Always follow-through by lifting off the cymbal at the release point of the roll.

Triangle

Hold the instrument in your weak hand between the thumb and first finger. The remaining 3 fingers should be free for dampening. Use a *real* triangle clip and *real* triangle beaters! (Not a hair tie or rubber band, tension rod or random piece of metal, etc.) Hold the instrument up high so that you can see the triangle and the conductor at the same time. The “hole” in the triangle should be on the player’s left. For situations where there isn’t enough time allocated for switching instruments, the triangle may be mounted on a stand. In addition, if the tempo or rhythms in the piece are too fast for playing with one hand, the triangle may be mounted. When using 2 beaters, be sure they are the same size and type. Choose an appropriate sized beater for the style of music and the dynamics you are playing. Change the angle of the beater as it strikes for different overtones. Use a legato motion that has a “prep” and a follow-through. When rolling on the triangle, use the inside corner to the player’s right. For softer rolls, play closer into the corner and move in towards the center as you crescendo.

Tambourine

For general playing on the tambourine, form a beater with the fingertips in a cluster and play about an inch in from the rim. Hold the instrument chest height in the weak hand with the thumb on top. For a dry sound, hold the instrument at a 45 degree angle. The tambourine may be struck with the fist in the center for accents. There are two types of tambourine rolls: the shake roll and the thumb roll. The thumb roll is produced by pushing the thumb around the edge of the head. The friction created between the thumb and the head causes the jingles to vibrate. This roll is useful for softer dynamic ranges and shorter roll durations. The shake roll is produced by a short, quick rotation of the forearm. It should be started and ended with a tap or an accent in the strong hand. Care should be taken that the jingles do not resonate after the release of the roll. For a crescendo effect, start the roll with the instrument at your side and lift it up as the crescendo progresses. This roll is most useful for medium to loud dynamic ranges and longer roll durations. For medium to loud rhythmic passages, the knee/fist technique may be utilized. By propping the leg up on a chair, the rhythm may be executed by alternately striking the tambourine between the knee and the fist. Take care to silently pick up and put down the instrument on a trap table or stand (with a black hand towel draped across it.)

Multi-Percussion

A multi-percussion set up is any percussion part written for one person that uses more than one percussion instrument. When playing a multi-percussion part, study the part to determine the best placement for each instrument (if one is not recommended by the composer.) As there is no standard instrumentation or notation for multi-percussion, each piece will have a different style of notation.

General Information

Always play with a relaxed technique. Avoid tension and tightness in your playing. Always match the motion of your stroke to the style of the music. Use slow, smooth motions for legato sounds. Use short, crisp motions for staccato style sounds. Consider all the sound choices (instruments and implements) you have at your disposal. Don't simply use whatever instrument is sitting there for sheer convenience. Take responsibility for your sound. Use your ears and listen to the ensemble. Learn how your part fits with the other percussionists and blend your part with the rest of the ensemble. When setting up the percussion section for band, always set the timpani up closest to the low brass as many of their parts will be together. Set the mallet instruments near the woodwinds as many of their parts will be similar. Keep the snare drum, bass drum, and cymbals close together as their parts oftentimes interlock. Always have your stick bag, music, and a pencil for any rehearsal you attend. Don't be afraid to mark your music (never with pen) with stickings, dynamics, and anything else that will help you remember what you are doing for the next rehearsal/performance. Do not assume you will remember everything you did last time! Allow extra time before and after rehearsal to set-up and tear-down equipment. Do not put mallets, cymbals, or small percussion instruments on the floor...EVER. Put your name on your folder, music, sticks/mallets, and stick bag. Do not leave your equipment unattended in the band room.