



# THE PAS EDUCATORS' COMPANION

Volume I  
Spring 2015

A resource from the  
PERCUSSIVE ARTS SOCIETY  
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

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Volume I  
Spring 2015

The PAS Educators' Companion is a publication of the Percussive Arts Society focusing on providing percussion education resources to the music education community.

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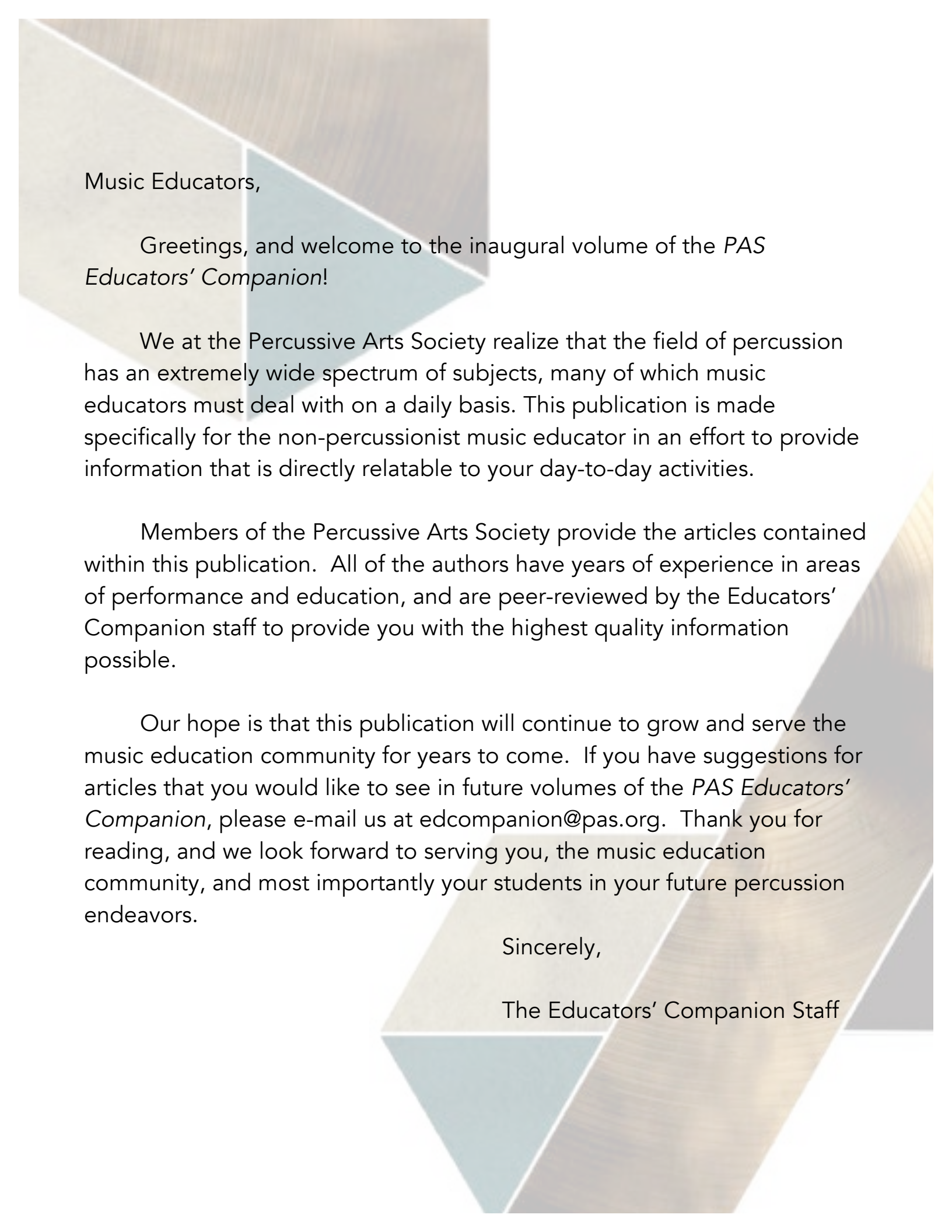
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LET'S ACCESSORIZE! CHOOSING TRIANGLES AND TAMBOURINES FOR YOUR SCHOOL PROGRAM Ben Stiers	5
DEVELOPING EAR CHOPS Paul Buyer	12
PERCUSSION POTPOURRI: 10 TIPS FOR HELPING YOUR PERCUSSION SECTION Brian Nozny	18
ESTABLISHING CONSISTENCY WITHIN YOUR MARCHING PERCUSSION SECTION Gordon Hicken	22
IT'S NOT ABOUT THE DRUMMING: INCORPORATING DRUM CIRCLE ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR CAMPUS SPECIAL NEEDS DEPARTMENT Ralph Hicks	29
PERCUSSION REPAIR 101 Christopher Davis	36





Music Educators,

Greetings, and welcome to the inaugural volume of the *PAS Educators' Companion*!

We at the Percussive Arts Society realize that the field of percussion has an extremely wide spectrum of subjects, many of which music educators must deal with on a daily basis. This publication is made specifically for the non-percussionist music educator in an effort to provide information that is directly relatable to your day-to-day activities.

Members of the Percussive Arts Society provide the articles contained within this publication. All of the authors have years of experience in areas of performance and education, and are peer-reviewed by the *Educators' Companion* staff to provide you with the highest quality information possible.

Our hope is that this publication will continue to grow and serve the music education community for years to come. If you have suggestions for articles that you would like to see in future volumes of the *PAS Educators' Companion*, please e-mail us at [edcompanion@pas.org](mailto:edcompanion@pas.org). Thank you for reading, and we look forward to serving you, the music education community, and most importantly your students in your future percussion endeavors.

Sincerely,

The Educators' Companion Staff

## LET'S ACCESSORIZE!

# CHOOSING TRIANGLES AND TAMBOURINES FOR YOUR SCHOOL PROGRAM

BEN STIERS

Thanks to the ears, imaginations, and handiwork of professional musicians and instrument builders, an incredible variety of percussion instruments are readily available to performers. There are so many possibilities and separating the “general-purpose” instruments from the “special-purpose” instruments as well as deciding which to purchase for your school program can be a daunting task. High-quality accessory percussion instruments are a significant financial investment, and many educators are working within budgets that require them to choose instruments that are as versatile as possible.

The following discussion is a broad overview of two of the most common accessory percussion instruments for band and orchestra: the tambourine and triangle. These two instruments were chosen because 1) there are numerous varieties of each available in terms of construction, quality, and intended purpose, and 2) it is my experience that school band and orchestra programs often lack appropriate versions of these instruments, often in favor of lower-quality or special-purpose models not suited for general use. The following information is intended to help the educator make informed decisions when purchasing tambourines and triangles; however, there is no substitute for trying out different varieties on your own and choosing the sounds you prefer. In fact, when deciding on instruments, a great approach is to ask your favorite local music store to loan you a variety of them to try out during a rehearsal in your performance space.

### General Philosophy

First and foremost, always buy the best instruments you can afford. (Note that “best” is not the same as “most expensive”!) If you can only purchase one high-quality tambourine, for instance, it should produce a beautiful tone at all dynamic levels, create a characteristic sound in a variety of musical settings, and work well in all of the performing environments in which it will be used, from the concert hall to the marching field. Also, make sure your instruments are properly cared for—many accessory percussion instruments are fragile, but proper maintenance should help them last for a lifetime.

*Note: It is the author's intent to present information in the most fair and unbiased way possible. Therefore, brand names are only mentioned when necessary. There are several manufacturers on the market producing high-quality instruments, and your personal taste is most important when selecting sounds that work in your program.*

## Tambourine

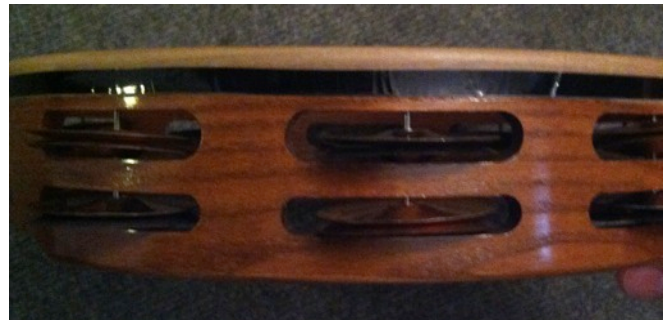
### Construction

A concert tambourine is an essential part of every percussion section's instrument inventory. The standard concert tambourine is 10 inches in diameter and is made up of three parts:

-The *shell* of a tambourine will have slots cut throughout to accommodate the jingles. The most common configuration is two rows of jingles, which can be stacked directly on top of one another or staggered (Examples 1 and 2). More importantly, these slots should be different sizes to allow for smoother shake rolls (compare the height of the bottom row of jingle slots in both fig. 1 and fig. 2 to the top row). Tambourine shells are typically made of hardwood, and manufacturers now produce them in a variety of weights and depths—an important consideration for fitting the hands of younger or smaller students.



Example 1: Detail of Grover tambourine with alternating jingle slots



Example 2: Detail of Black Swamp tambourine with stacked jingle slots

-The *jingles* give the tambourine its distinct sound. High-quality tambourines contain jingles made of resonant metals (and, conversely, lower-quality tambourines contain jingles that are cheaper and less resonant). The primary metals used in concert tambourines are:

- German silver—bright, resonant sound
- Beryllium Copper—slightly darker than German Silver
- Phosphor Bronze—darker than Beryllium Copper, but still resonant
- “Specialty” alloys and heat-treated metals designed for greater articulation
- Brass—used as a “budget” option by some manufacturers

The bright tone of silver jingles is considered a “general” sound, and is a great place to start when exploring options. “Specialty” jingles (such as Black Swamp’s Chromium 25 and Grover’s Heat-Treated Silver and Copper options) create a “crunchy” sound that is best suited for occasions when maximum articulation is needed. However, certain models feature these jingles in combination with more resonant silver, bronze, or copper. This combination of resonance and articulation may be an optimal general-purpose sound in performance spaces that have unusually “wet” or “muddy” acoustics. Brass jingles are sometimes featured on entry-level tambourines but are not the best choice when the intention is to purchase a fine concert instrument.

-The *head* is an essential part of the concert tambourine—if it doesn’t have a head then it’s not a concert tambourine! Tambourine heads are traditionally made of calfskin, which provides excellent sensitivity. Unfortunately, calfskin heads can be negatively affected (sometimes drastically) by changes in temperature and humidity. High-quality synthetic (mylar plastic) heads are also available from some manufacturers, and are largely unaffected by the weather. However, mylar heads are slightly less dynamically sensitive than calfskin.

#### Tambourine Accessories

-*Bags*: Most manufacturers of fine tambourines now sell their instruments with a padded storage bag. If not, one should be purchased to protect the instrument when not in use.

-*Roll assistance*: It is often necessary to treat the head with something to facilitate thumb/finger rolls, such as beeswax (which is marketed by manufacturers but can also be purchased at craft stores) emery paper (which can be glued to the perimeter of the head), or other similar substances.

-*Misc.*: A variety of mounts, cradles, and other devices are also available to facilitate one-handed playing, quick transfers between instruments, and other extended techniques required in performance.

#### Maintenance

As stated above, tambourines should be kept in bags when not in use, preferably inside a secure storage space. Calfskin heads should be stored in an area with controlled temperature and humidity. Additionally, they should be checked regularly to make sure the head is at proper tension. A head that is too tight can be lightly rubbed with a damp paper towel to lower the pitch, and a head that is too loose can be heated with a heating pad (set on low, and don’t lay a beeswax-treated head face-down on the heat source!) to raise the pitch. The shell of the tambourine should be inspected periodically for damage, and to ensure that the pins that hold the jingles in place are secure.

## Other Tambourines

Concert tambourines are both expensive and fragile. If the performer is called upon to play the tambourine with sticks, it may be a better idea to use a *mountable tambourine* designed to withstand such force. Many models are designed to clamp to a cymbal stand or other mounting post and feature a headless design with high-impact plastic shells specifically for this purpose. Hand-held *rock tambourines* are also convenient to have on hand for pep band, pops concerts, and other such settings. Crescent-shaped tambourines in particular keep the player's hand within the center of the instrument, allowing for longer playing without fatigue. Both mountable and hand-held rock tambourines come in a variety of sizes and sounds, and are significantly cheaper than concert instruments.

## Selecting a "General-purpose" Tambourine

If you are purchasing a single general-purpose concert tambourine for your program, start with a 10-inch, double row instrument. German silver is the most versatile option, although silver combined with an articulate "specialty" alloy may be appropriate if more articulation is needed in your performance space. (Of course, you may also prefer the sound of copper or bronze with your ensemble—choose the sound you like best.) Calfskin heads are the best choice for a concert instrument, though they do require a bit of upkeep. However, if your tambourine will also be used for outdoor concerts or marching band a synthetic head will provide greater durability. It's a good idea to purchase at least one mountable and one rock tambourine as well, so that your concert instrument doesn't have to perform double duty in a setting that might lead to damage.

## Triangle

### Construction

Despite its humble appearance, the triangle is capable of a wide range of musical expression. The key to a great triangle sound is the production of a wide spread of overtones. While the beater choice, mounting system, and playing technique all have a role in sound production, a high-quality instrument is essential for proper tone. In other words, while it's certainly possible to make a "good" triangle sound "bad," it's virtually impossible to make a "bad" triangle sound "good"! Here are some factors to consider when choosing a triangle for your program:

*-Material:* *Steel* is the traditional metal of choice for triangle construction—for both high- and low-quality instruments. Quality steel triangles will produce a wide overtone spectrum, often assisted by a special plating process. In recent years *bronze* triangles have also become increasingly popular due to their ability to produce a complex, shimmering sound, with some selling for hundreds of dollars.



-*Size*: Concert triangles vary in size from 4 to 12 inches. A typical size for a “standard” triangle is the 6-9 inch range. All other factors being equal, the overall tone of the triangle will be lower in pitch as size increases. When choosing a size, it is important to note that large triangles can be played in such a way as to produce a light, delicate tone; however, small triangles will have a lower maximum threshold of volume and projection. Therefore, if you are selecting a single all-purpose instrument it may be better to consider the larger side to ensure maximum versatility. The thickness of the metal is also important to consider. Thicker triangles (approx. ½ inch in diameter) will have a fuller tone and greater projection. Thinner triangles—particularly those made of bronze—can produce a beautiful, shimmering tone, but will not speak as well at louder dynamics (Example 3)

-*Shape*: Most concert triangles have a standard equilateral shape. However, other options exist—most notably Alan Abel triangles. Identifiable by its isosceles shape and cut-away ends on the larger models, the Abel triangle has been an orchestral staple for decades. It typically creates a slightly more focused sound with a tighter overtone spread that some percussionists and conductors prefer.

-*Finish*: Most standard concert triangles offer a smooth finish that allows for a high level of consistency between instruments and also makes getting a consistent sound easier in passages with repeated notes—an important consideration for younger students. However, many manufacturers also offer hammered options. The hammering process creates a wider and more complex overtone spread, and ensures that each hammered instrument has a unique sound. On the other side of the coin, it creates an uneven playing surface (so repeated notes must be played more carefully to achieve a consistent sound) and also increases the price of most models.

### Triangle Accessories

-*Clips/hangers*: In order to maximize tone quality, a triangle must be suspended as freely as possible. There are a number of devices on the market designed to do so, but the most versatile option is the triangle clip. Clips allow the triangle to be played while hand-held or attached securely to a mounting bar. Most manufacturers sell perfectly serviceable clips, and there are a number of online guides for creating your own with parts from the hardware store.



Example 3: Triangles (clockwise from left): 9 inch steel triangle, 6 inch hammered bronze triangle, 6 inch Alan Abel triangle

Clips should be insulated with rubber at the clamp point to prevent vibration transfer to the mounting bar, and should be easy to open and remove from the mounting bar with one hand. The suspension line that holds the triangle should be a very thin material that makes minimal contact, and should include a second “backup” line in case the first breaks. It is ideal to have two clips per triangle for situations that require the performer to mount the triangle from both closed ends and play fast passages with two beaters.

-*Triangle beaters*: There are two broad types of triangle beaters: *graduated* beaters and *rod-style* beaters (Example 4). Graduated beaters feature a thin metal handle (often covered in a rubber grip) with a thicker playing area at the end. This playing area may be a solid piece of metal, or it may be a hollow tube affixed to the handle with some kind of adhesive. Rod-style beaters are a simple design—just a straight rod of steel, often with a rubber grip on one end. Graduated beaters are typically more expensive than rod-style beaters, but are preferable in most cases. The added weight at the beating end produces more tone and less metal-on-metal “tick” than rod beaters. However, rod-style beaters can be useful in rapid passages that require clear articulation. It is recommended that beaters always be purchased in matching pairs, especially rod-style beaters. Beaters are sold both individually and in sets of graduated size. When selecting sizes to purchase, again, erring on the large side will ensure that your triangle beaters have sufficient mass to create a full sound at all dynamic levels.

### Maintenance

Like tambourines, triangles should be stored securely when not in use. Bags are available for individual triangles, but a great option is a bag that allows multiple triangles, clips, and beaters to be stored all in one place, such as Black Swamp Percussion’s Triangle Gig Pack. This helps to keep the disappearance of clips and beaters (an all-too-common occurrence in many band rooms) to a minimum. Triangle clips should be inspected frequently to ensure that both suspension lines are present and intact. If triangles are to be used outside, they must be kept dry to prevent corrosion.



Example 4: Examples of graduated triangle beaters (left) and rod-style triangle beaters (right)

### Selecting a “General-purpose” Triangle

For most school programs, a 6-9 inch steel or bronze triangle will be the most versatile option if only one triangle is to be purchased. The metal should be of a thicker diameter (around ½ inch) for when maximum projection is needed. Steel (preferably plated steel for maximum overtone production) will be a more cost-effective option. Thinner bronze triangles can also work beautifully but may lack the volume needed in certain situations. Plan to purchase (or build) a minimum of two matching clips for your triangles, and choose at least one pair of graduated beaters in medium to heavy weight (depending on the size of your triangle). If funds allow, it is a good idea to purchase a few pairs of graduated beaters in different weights and a few pairs of rod beaters. Again, if at all possible, a method of storage that will keep all of these parts in one place is also worth the investment.

### Summary

There are numerous tambourine and triangle varieties available for music educators to purchase for their programs. Sorting through the options to find the best fit for your program is an essential but often overwhelming task. Whenever possible, ask your percussion friends and colleagues for advice, try out different options before buying, and choose sounds that *you* prefer. While it would be wonderful to have the financial resources to purchase every tambourine, triangle, and beater on the market, in reality we often have to choose a small number of instruments (sometimes just one) that will work in as many settings as possible. It is hoped that the information provided above will make that choice a bit more straightforward, so that you can spend less time debating the merits of one tambourine over another and more time in making music with your students. •

Dr. Ben Stiers is Assistant Director of Bands, Athletic Bands and Percussion at Illinois State University, where he directs the Pep Band and Drumline and serves as assistant director of the Big Red Marching Machine. Prior to his time at ISU, he served as percussion instructor at Centre College in Danville, Kentucky. In addition, he has been a member of the marching percussion faculty for the Music for All Summer Symposium since 2003, and has been employed as a writer, arranger, instructor, and consultant for several high school percussion programs in Illinois, Nevada, and Kentucky. Dr. Stiers earned his DMA in Percussion Performance from the University of Kentucky, where he also received a certificate in music theory pedagogy. He holds a Master’s Degree from the University of Nevada-Las Vegas and a Bachelor’s Degree from Illinois State University. His teachers include James B. Campbell, Paul Deatherage, John Willmarth, Dean Gronemeier, Timothy Jones, David Collier, and Tom Marko. His performing experience includes extensive freelance work in the Las Vegas area, appearances with the Peoria Symphony Orchestra, the Illinois Symphony Orchestra, the Heartland Festival Orchestra, the Las Vegas Philharmonic, and the Lexington Philharmonic Orchestra, and performances abroad with chamber music ensembles in Australia and Taiwan. He also served as the Vice President of the Kentucky chapter of the Percussive Arts Society from 2010 – 2011. Dr. Stiers is a member of the Percussive Arts Society, the College Band Directors National Association, the College Music Society, and the Society for Music Theory, as well as an education endorser for Innovative Percussion, Inc.

# DEVELOPING EAR CHOPS

Paul Buyer

As a director, do you ever wish your percussionists had better listening skills? Do you find they spend most of their time and effort developing their hands, forgetting to develop their ears?

The emphasis on technique—whether on snare drum, marimba, timpani, quads, or drumset—has become all-consuming for today’s young player. With endless examples of incredible virtuosity online for students to see and emulate, many lack the listening skills they need to be successful musicians.

According to James O’Brien in *The Listening Experience*, “We simply do not listen attentively to the sounds around us. Listening to music...has become a peripheral and casual activity. Listening to music is an acquired skill—the result of cultivation and practice.”

To address this challenging issue, I would like to introduce a new term to our musical vocabulary—a term that identifies a missing competency in many of our percussion students today: *ear chops*. This article offers some ideas

and specific techniques you can use to develop and improve ear chops in your percussionists.

## What are Ear Chops?

Ear chops are the skills needed to listen to music and other musicians. “Chops” is a term often used in percussion referring to technique—specifically speed and control. Brass players refer to chops when discussing their range and endurance. Basketball players refer to chops when describing their dribbling and ball handling skills. As music educators, doesn’t it make sense to teach our percussionists not only to develop their hands, but also to develop their ears?

## Watching versus Listening

Many years ago, my professor at the University of Arizona, Gary Cook, told me a great story about how people experience live music. “One of my students came up to me and said, ‘Professor Cook, did you see that concert last night?’ ‘Yes,’ I replied, ‘and I *heard* it too!’ ” It was obvious from this exchange that the student *watched* the

performance but did not *listen* to the music. He was not aware of balance, blend, and intonation. He did not pay attention to precision, alignment, and execution. He did not notice interpretation, phrasing, and expression. Instead, he got swept away *watching* the ensemble perform. While there is certainly a lot to watch during a concert such as the conductor's gestures, the musicians' body language, and the ensemble's choreography, the essence of attending a concert is about *listening* to the music.

### **People Listen with Their Eyes**

Professor Cook also had a quote he liked to share: "People listen with their eyes." I used this quote to play with more expression, touch, sensitivity, choreography, and showmanship, since the audience—like the student above—tends to listen with their eyes. However, although we are a visual society, music—at its essence—is an *auditory* art form—something we hear. The challenge lies in balancing the visual nature of percussion performance with the ear chops needed to excel as musicians.

### **How Do You Sound?**

One of my guiding philosophies is, "It's not what you play, but *how you sound* that's most important." Young percussionists often gravitate to the difficulty level of a piece of music rather than focus on how they sound when they play. This attraction to musical difficulty, in part, results from watching videos online, from the latest DCI drum feature to solos on drummerworld.com.

(Drummerworld.com is an outstanding drumset resource but I often have to call my students' attention to the "Sounds" tab, which is a collection of audio recordings, rather than going to the "Videos" tab which is their default response). While there is no debate that the explosion of videos and DVDs has enhanced percussion education and pedagogy, it can be argued that the onslaught of *watching* percussionists perform has diminished our skills and ability to listen to them. We must always remember that as a musician, nothing is more important than how we sound.

Let's take a look at some musical examples of where and how you can develop ear chops in your students.

### **Ear Chops in Concert Band**

Percussionists must develop the skills and ability to listen to other sections of the concert band so they can play together as an ensemble. Far too often, young percussionists are unaware when bells line up with flutes, snare drum outlines trumpets, and timpani support low brass.

Students must be able to not only play their parts correctly, but watch the conductor and listen to what is going on around them. In addition, dynamics are often relative when playing percussion, especially in a concert band setting. A forte on crash cymbals and a forte on vibraphone produce far different volumes, so players must make adjustments based on what they hear, not on what their sheet music says.

As a director, a good way to develop ear chops in the concert band is to first give students permission to use their ears and explain that the dynamic markings written in their parts are not set in stone. You can then rehearse percussion and wind parts that align and enhance one another to raise ensemble awareness, develop listening skills, and increase sensitivity, touch, and musicianship.

### **Ear Chops in Jazz Ensemble**

Developing ear chops is also critical in a jazz ensemble setting. While chart reading is a critical skill for jazz drummers to learn, it is important they do not bury their head in the chart. A drum chart is only a (visual) guide and not intended to be performed like a snare drum solo. Your drummer must listen to the band at all times—especially the rhythm section—and be the consummate ensemble player.

According to drumset artist and educator Ed Soph, “All kinds of materials are used to educate young jazz drummers except the music they are learning to play. Instruction is visual, not aural. The reality of the situation is that everyone can read but not everyone can hear. Musical big band drummers learn to play the music by listening to it. Listen for [concepts] that make a big band drummer musical. Listen for them in the playing of artists [like] Chick Webb, Buddy Rich, Joe Jones, Butch Miles, and Mel Lewis. You won’t ‘hear’ these concepts in a book.”

You can develop ear chops in your jazz ensemble members by offering a steady diet of listening assignments on the legendary big bands and jazz greats. This aural instruction, as Soph states, provides an inspirational model for how to swing, play, and improvise. You can also remind your students that jazz ensemble members who do not listen to jazz are like authors who do not read books.

### **Ear Chops in Percussion Ensemble**

In a concert percussion ensemble, students sometimes develop a negative attitude toward playing concert bass drum, crash cymbals, triangle, or other accessories. These instruments, deemed easy, boring, or uncool, are not respected and valued the way they should be. As a director, one way you can change this attitude is to explain that if an instrument was not important, the composer would not have written for it. Whether your students feel their parts are easy, difficult, challenging, boring, or awesome is not the point. It is not about them, it is about the ensemble. More so, it is about the music and how the music sounds when performed.

To develop ear chops, schedule time for sectionals and try different set-ups. Move players around to create a new listening environment. Provide recordings so your students can hear their parts performed at a high level and in context. Finally, experiment with different mallets, instruments, techniques, and timbres throughout the

rehearsal process. This will instill creativity and ownership in your percussion ensemble members and give them the opportunity to find the right sound after exploring many options.

Susan Powell, Percussion Professor at The Ohio State University, identified “The Elements of Strong Ensemble Skills.” In addition to visual elements such as matching motions, cueing, eye contact, and choreography, auditory elements listed were listening, breathing, balance, and blend, which she defined as, “playing *within* each other’s sound.” What a beautiful definition, and certainly one that requires ear chops to execute.

### **Ear Chops in Drumline**

In a drumline, technique rules the day. From inverted inverts and pings on snare, to scrapes and crosses on quads, to forearm rotation and muffling on bass drum, to the myriad of timbres available on cymbals, marching percussion technique has become a world unto itself. While tone, sound, and listening are definitely taught—and taught well—they are often overshadowed by heights, playing zones, visuals, and uniformity.

As mentioned earlier, one of my guiding philosophies is, “It’s not what you play, but *how you sound* that’s most important.” Marching percussionists tend to think in technical terms and are often attracted to difficult writing, whether they can play it or not. Unfortunately, this attraction is narrow-minded and does not allow students

to appreciate the big picture of the entire marching percussion ensemble or band arrangement. I often ask my students, “Have you ever seen a marching band or drum corps with a snare line only?” After chuckling at first, they soon realize that all sections—snare, quads, basses, cymbals, and front ensemble—are critical voices in the marching percussion ensemble.

In marching percussion, excellence means clean. To develop ear chops in your drumline, teach them to hear the difference between clean and dirty playing. This can be done by recording them and listening to parts of the show that demonstrate excellence and mediocrity. Students must also develop the ability to hear their parts align with other sections of the drumline. When parts align, communicate to them that timing, rhythmic accuracy, and clarity are strong. When parts are not aligned, identify which ensemble skills need to be improved. Recording them and listening to ensemble precision and alignment issues will help develop ear chops in each individual drumline member.

### **Ear Chops in Private Lessons**

Private lessons are a great place to develop ear chops, as the teacher can tailor specific strategies to each individual student and record them. Similar to developing an exercise routine for 4-mallet marimba, snare drum, or timpani, ear chops can be addressed as a supplement to any percussion technique program.

NOTE: It is important for students to become comfortable singing in their lesson. I often tell students who may be apprehensive, “Good, now this time, sing *out loud!*”

### **Marimba**

On marimba, ear chops consist of matching pitch (playing a note and singing it back) and playing tunes “by ear.” By ear tunes, such as *Happy Birthday*, *Silent Night*, and *Take Me Out to the Ball Game*, can be practiced using the following 5 step process. Thank you to Gary Cook for teaching me this many years ago.

1. Pick a familiar tune you know by ear and choose a key (you can review the key by playing the major scale or arpeggio).
2. Sing the tune to determine the starting pitch. Then play the first note.
3. Determine if the next note goes up or down and if it moves by step (small interval) or by leap (large interval).
4. Play the note and adjust based on what you hear. Avoid “hunting and pecking.” Hear the next note in your head before playing.
5. After playing the whole tune by ear, transpose and play in other keys.

### **Snare Drum**

Asking the question, “How do you sound” during a lesson will immediately focus attention on listening as well as grip, stroke, beating spot, tone, precision, roll quality, dynamics, phrasing, and musicianship. Far too

often, the end goal for young snare drummers is to play their music *correctly* with right notes and rhythms. While this is certainly important, this approach focuses on visual elements (notation) and not auditory elements (sound).

### **Timpani**

Ear chops on timpani involve tuning, singing, and matching pitch in addition to playing in an ensemble. Often, young timpanists become dependent on the tuning gauges and fail to develop their ears. In short, tuning should be done by ear, not by eye. Students must understand intervals and scales, hear notes as sharp or flat, and adjust accordingly. While there are certainly many physical techniques that are required to become a good timpanist such as legato strokes, muffling, shifting, and rolling, nothing is more important—and necessary—than having a good ear. To improve ear chops on timpani, taking a music theory course is recommended, as well as visiting helpful websites such as [www.good-ear.com](http://www.good-ear.com), [www.earbeater.com](http://www.earbeater.com), and [www.basicmusictheory.com](http://www.basicmusictheory.com).

### **Conclusion**

According to Michael D'Angelo, Lecturer in Jazz Studies at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, “The best resource for any musician is the music itself. The more you listen to the music you want to create, the more it will become a part of you, and of course you have a model for your own development...By recognizing the



qualities that make the music successful, it will be easier to incorporate those qualities into your own playing.”

As Mr. D’Angelo and Mr. Soph have eloquently stated in this article, the answers to our questions are found in the music. Despite the incredible advances in technology and the wealth of online resources now available, we have to keep in mind that music is meant to be experienced and communicated with our ears. We have to take time to listen, focus, and be as proud of developing our ears as our hands.

In the private studio, I constantly remind my students, “It’s not what you play, but *how you sound* that’s most important.” To make sure they fully understand, I explain to them that I am more interested in how they play marimba than how they play their marimba solo. I am more interested in how they play snare drum than how they play their snare drum solo. And I am more interested in how they play timpani than how they play their timpani solo. Pieces come and go. Your sound stays with you forever. •

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# **PERCUSSION POTPOURRI:**

## **10 TIPS FOR HELPING YOUR PERCUSSION SECTION**

Brian Nozny

Your percussion section is one of the most valuable assets in your band. Unfortunately—despite the diversity and depth of the percussion family—this section can be easily pushed to the side and ignored for many reasons. The following are 10 suggestions for helping your percussion section improve (and ultimately help you) in a variety of ways.

### **1. INVEST IN A PERCUSSION MEDIA LIBRARY**

Band directors always have multiple issues to address, especially in rehearsal. Add to that that some sections of pieces or entire pieces that use little percussion at times, and your percussionists may end up feeling neglected. If you plan on hardly using your percussion section for a rehearsal, allowing them to watch a percussion related DVD is a good way to not only allow them to use their time wisely by learning more about their instrument, but also to help motivate them. Exposure to professional percussionists is a great way to show them what possibilities are out there and what they can achieve with their instruments if they practice. SEE RECORDINGS LIST.

### **2. CHECK OUT PERCUSSION COMPANY WEBSITES**

Percussion companies endorse some of the most talented performers and educators in the world. To help further the exposure of their product, many have websites that are filled with educational materials for students and teachers. From everything to articles on performing to audio and video podcasts with interviews and performances by many of today's leading players, these materials can help both you and your students, and best of all, IT'S FREE! SEE WEBSITE LIST.

### **3. CLINICS AND AREA EVENTS**

Many cities have professional percussionists living either within the city limits or very close by. Inviting these individuals to your school to put on a clinic or help with a sectional can help students by giving them a connection to professional players, showing them that music can be a potential career choice for them. Also, keeping your students posted on area events such as local symphony performances, restaurants and coffee houses that have house jazz bands, clinics and performances at local universities, and workshops and clinics put on by local music stores, are all ways to help your students grow and gain new musical experiences.

#### **4. WEEKLY READING ASSIGNMENTS**

While there are wonderful works out there for band that challenge percussionists, there are also many works out there with sparse percussion parts that bore them to tears. This means that little time needs to be spent practicing their band music at times. To help them learn more about percussion, and give them something constructive to do musically, try assigning them a free article a week from one of the many percussion websites out there. Exposure to what is going on in percussion is one of the key motivators for students, and assignments like this can keep them up to date on current events in the percussion world, as well as show them more possibilities for their musical lives.

#### **5. SEMESTER LISTENING ASSIGNMENTS**

Exposing students to a variety of musical styles performed by virtuoso performers is one of the single best things we as educators can do. Assigning students to check out a CD from a list of approved CDs and providing a short written report on that CD at the end of the semester is a great way to help them gain exposure to the many different kinds of percussion that are out there. SEE RECORDINGS LIST.

#### **6. TALK TO YOUR PERCUSSIONISTS LIKE WIND PLAYERS**

A lot of the stereotypes we have about “drummers” are perpetuated by the fact that we talk to them differently than other instruments. We sometimes get so bogged down with things like technique and percussion jargon that we almost don’t allow percussionists to think like musicians! Talk to your percussionists about tone production, phrasing, articulation, just as you would any other musician.

#### **7. ENCOURAGE YOUR PERCUSSIONISTS TO EXPLORE SOUND**

Sound is at the paramount of percussion. There are so many different sounds and colors that percussionists are responsible for, and yet because we don’t have to “work” for our sound in the same way that wind players do, the ideas of “sound quality” and “tone production” are quickly overlooked when it comes to percussion. Encourage your students to experiment with getting different sounds on instruments, and thinking about how those sounds can be used. Doing this can help them to see things like a snare drum as an INSTRUMENT instead of just something that they hit.

#### **8. SHOW YOUR PERCUSSIONISTS A LARGER WORLD**

Typically percussionists in public school band programs are exposed to marching percussion, concert percussion, and drum set. However, these are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the world of percussion. While few programs have the budgets available to own world instruments and ensembles such as steel bands or West African drum ensembles, exposure to these types of music can be priceless. Seek out resources to show your students how large the percussion world actually is.

## 9. INVOLVE YOUR STUDENTS IN THE MAINTENANCE OF INSTRUMENTS

Students learn through doing. One of the things I try to do in all of my percussion methods classes is have a “head changing class” where I have the methods students assist me in changing various drum heads that need replacing in the department. This provides them with the knowledge to do it themselves. This can be expanded to everything from tuning heads to clearing timpani heads or reorganizing percussion storage rooms. Involving them in these things will not only help you by giving you a few extra pairs of hands, but will help give your students a sense of ownership to the program and instruments.

## 10. ORGANIZATION IS THE FIRST STEP IN MAINTAINING YOUR EQUIPMENT

Percussion requires so much in the way of equipment, and very little of it is cheap. One of the easiest ways to help keep your equipment functioning properly is to keep it organized. Adopt the “everything has a place” rule, creating places in the room where specific equipment lives (IE the drum set goes in the corner, the bass drum along the back wall, the keyboards stacked next to the door). This allows you to see every piece of equipment, make sure it’s always in working order, and builds students sense of responsibility and ownership in the program. •

## Select Percussion Recordings

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### ROCK / POP

Sting – Ten Summoner’s Tales	- Drummer: Vinnie Colaiuta
The Police – Synchronicity	- Drummer: Stewart Copeland
Dream Theater – Images and Words	- Drummer: Mike Portnoy
Joe Satriani – The Extremist	- Drummer: Gregg Bissonette
Rush – Moving Pictures	- Drummer: Neil Peart

### JAZZ

Dave Brubeck – Time Out	- Drummer: Joe Morello
John Coltrane – A Love Supreme	- Drummer: Elvin Jones
Chick Corea- Now He Sings, Now He Sobs	- Drummer: Roy Haynes
Miles Davis – Milestones	- Drummer Philly Joe Jones
Keith Jarrett – The Cure	- Drummer: Jack DeJohnette
Buddy Rich – Swingin’ New Big Band	- Drummer: Buddy Rich
Sonny Rollins – Saxophone Colossus	- Drummer: Max Roach

### CONCERT

Leigh Howard Stevens – Marimba When...	
Robert Horner Percussion Ensemble – Far More Drums	
So Percussion – So Percussion	
University of North Texas Wind Symphony – Poetics	
Baltimore Symphony – Rouse Symphony No. 1	
Chicago Symphony – Tchiakovsky Symphony No. 4 / Romeo and Juliet	

## Select Percussion DVDs

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Modern Drummer Festival Weekend  
Jojo Mayer – Secret Weapons for the Modern Drummer  
Buddy Rich Memorial Concert 2008  
Buddy Rich and His Band – Channel One Suite  
University of North Texas Wind Symphony – Percussive Palooza  
Drum Corps International Finals DVDS  
Winter Guard International Finals DVDS

## Select Percussion Web Sites

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Drumchattr - [www.drumchattr.com](http://www.drumchattr.com)  
Drummer World - [www.drummerworld.com](http://www.drummerworld.com)  
Evans - [www.evansdrumheads.com](http://www.evansdrumheads.com)  
Innovative Percussion - [www.innovativepercussion.com](http://www.innovativepercussion.com)  
Latin Percussion - [www.lpmusic.com](http://www.lpmusic.com)  
Modern Drummer - [www.moderndrummer.com](http://www.moderndrummer.com)  
Pearl - [www.pearldrums.com](http://www.pearldrums.com)  
The Percussive Arts Society - [www.pas.org](http://www.pas.org)  
Remo - [www.remo.com](http://www.remo.com)  
Sabian - [www.sabian.com](http://www.sabian.com)  
Vic Firth - [www.vicfirth.com](http://www.vicfirth.com)  
Zildjian - [www.zildjian.com](http://www.zildjian.com)

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# ESTABLISHING CONSISTENCY WITHIN YOUR MARCHING PERCUSSION SECTION

Gordon Hicken

While a marching percussion section is one of many things on a band director's mind, this does not mean that the director cannot have a meaningful impact on the performance and progress of the drumline amid the chaos of marching season. When reflecting on the ability level and success of your own drumline, remember that students, audiences, and even judges want to hear a drumline with great sound quality, control, and the ability to make their performances appear effortless. One unifying element links successful high school, collegiate, and drum corps ensembles: consistency.

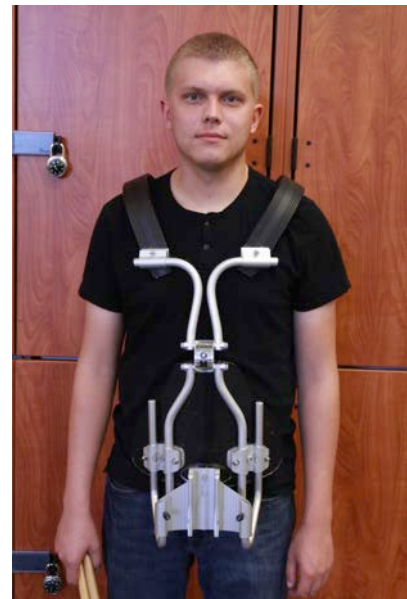
Every aspect of a drumline must be rooted in consistency. Whether it is the way a student strikes the drum or the way the drums are tuned, it should be done exactly the same way every time. This can easily be handled by a staff drumline instructor, but that is a luxury that many schools cannot afford on a regular basis. With that being said, here are some standard operating concepts that an individual band director can establish early in a marching season.

Some of these are one-time adjustments, but others require monitoring through a season. Student leaders can be tasked with reinforcing some of the concepts below, and the director can step in when necessary throughout the year.

## **Consistent Equipment Set-Up**

After instruments are assigned for the year, it is imperative that the equipment is fitted specifically for each student. The first step is to adjust the carrier to each individual's body without the drum attached to the carrier, allowing for quick and easy changes. Most carriers are constructed with multiple adjusting parts to fit the student's body as closely and comfortably as possible, which can help evenly distribute the weight of the drum while the player is on the move. While fitting the student, ensure that the belly plate sits at a comfortable height and that the shoulder harnesses rests squarely on the shoulders (Example 1).

Once the carrier fits the student properly, have each student hold their hands up as if they were playing the drum. With a few slight adjustments, this will establish a comfortable and appropriate playing height for each individual. After setting this position, place the drum on the carrier and adjust the drum height portion of the harness to match the student's established position. This set-up method prioritizes varied individual drum heights over one even drum height throughout the entire section. Everyone's drums may be at different heights, but appropriate individual proportions will allow students to utilize the same technique and produce the best possible sound. Each drum should sit at the same height for each specific student throughout the season, even if they are utilizing drum stands.



Example 1

Maintain equipment consistency by utilizing specific marching drumheads, sticks, and mallets. Whatever your choice, these items should be identical throughout each subsection (snare, tenors, and basses). Uniform stick selection within each subsection will help provide similar articulation, tone, and feel. If your ensemble uses graduated bass drums, ensure that each player has the appropriate size mallet for their drum. Most manufacturers have a drum and mallet correlation chart on their websites for reference. Utilizing the same marching-specific drumheads throughout each subsection will have a significant impact on producing a uniform sound, and it will also provide a consistent canvas for tuning the drums.

Just as a wind section sounds best when playing in tune, a drumline must also play well-tuned drums to sound its best. Even if you are not familiar with marching percussion instruments, there is a wide array of free information and resources available online about tuning marching drums. No matter how you choose to tune your instruments, it is important that you choose a specific "goal tuning" and establish a routine to maintain this throughout the season. Drumheads need to be changed at least once a year, and new heads will stretch quickly and need to be re-tuned shortly after the initial tuning. Some instructors have specific pitches for each drum and others rely on intervals to maintain the same sound throughout the season. Either way, maintaining consistent tuning within each subsection will allow the ensemble to sound its best all year.

### **Consistent Technique**

Now that the drums are set up and in tune, the ensemble needs to have a consistent way to approach playing the instruments. The easiest way to create a unified approach to all drumline instruments is to utilize the same matched grip used for concert percussion (Examples 2, 3, 4). When establishing this grip, it is important that all players employ a solid fulcrum on the stick between their thumb and pointer finger. This facet of the grip allows the stick to move properly



Example 2



Example 3



Example 4

for the best tone and rebound through all different stroke types. (Young bass drummers are particularly susceptible to misplaced thumbs on mallets.) This matched grip and fulcrum also allows the remaining fingers to help drive the stick towards the head and navigate complex passages.

With a consistent stick grip utilized throughout the drumline, the ensemble needs default "set" and "playing" positions - just like "horns up" and "horns down" for wind players. *Set position* is essentially the same for snare drums and tenors. Sticks are held parallel to each other while facing opposite directions in the player's hands. The student should hold the stick pair in front of the carrier's belly plate and about one inch above the drum rim closest to the body (Examples 5 and 6). For bass drums, the student's hands should touch the rims of the drum at either 3 or 9 o'clock (the closest position to the player's body). The bass drum players should not grab the rim with their fingers while at set position; rather, they should place the



Example 5



Example 6



Example 7



mallets against the side of the rims so that the mallets are pointing vertically towards the sky (Example 7). When playing, it is crucial that all members of a subsection strike their instruments in the same location. This is achieved through a consistent *playing position*. Snare drummers should align their sticks over the center of the drumhead where the beads of the

stick are less than one inch apart and less than one inch above the drumhead (Examples 8 and 9).



Example 8



Example 9

Bass drummers should also place their mallets over the center of each drumhead and their grip should look essentially the same as a snare drummer's, only rotated to strike a vertical surface (Example 10). Finally, tenor players should align their right hand stick over drum one and the left over drum two (the two outside quad drums directly in front of the player). The tips of the sticks should be less than one inch above each drumhead, but the sticks should be located between the center of the drumhead and the rim closest to the player (Examples 11 and 12). This off-center stick placement enables tenor players to produce optimal tone, projection, and articulation from the drum. In order to maintain proper playing zones on the drums to the player's right and left (drums three and four), students must utilize a "T" stick position (Examples 13 and 14). This position allows the player's arms to remain in a natural playing position with easy access to the proper playing zones on neighboring drums.



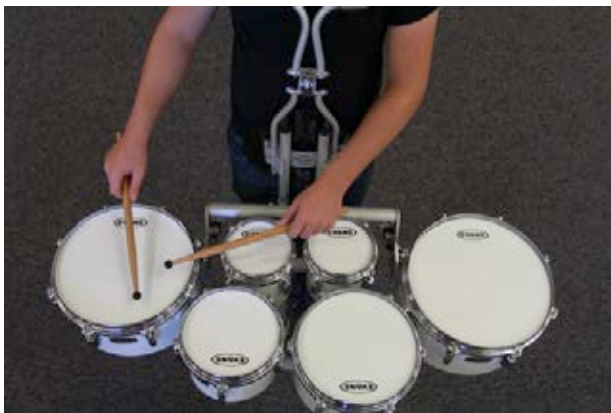
Example 10



Example 11



Example 12



Example 13



Example 14

Every ensemble needs a general protocol for moving from set position to playing position quickly, effectively, and consistently (once again, just like “horns up” and “horns down”). A good rule of thumb is that the ensemble at set position should move to playing position two beats before their entrance in the music. A similar system should be implemented for navigating from playing position to set position. This movement usually occurs one beat after the completion of a musical passage and it should be quick, energetic, and precise both in rehearsal and performance.

### Consistent Sound Quality

After defining stick and mallet grip, as well as how to approach the drum with implements in hand, an ensemble must be able to produce high-quality sounds on each instrument. Appropriate playing zones were established through the playing position for each subsection. These zones are absolutely necessary in order for each player to produce the optimal timbre, articulation, and projection from their drum(s). Please keep in mind that playing zones other than the ones defined above (at the edge of the drum, over the snare bed, etc.) are utilized for unique timbres - NOT dynamic level changes.

The easiest way to get the best sound quality from your drumline is to establish a relaxed, high-velocity stroke. In order to maximize the projection from large marching drums, everyone must use as much velocity as possible when striking the drumhead. The stick should then be allowed to rebound to its original starting height. This fundamental stroke is called a *legato stroke* due to the fluid motion towards and away from the drumhead. The legato stroke is the foundation for marching percussion technique just as long tones are the basis for wind playing technique.

Just because an ensemble has a high-velocity legato stroke does not necessarily mean that the ensemble will play together (otherwise known as “clean” playing) because velocity is only half of the “cleanliness” equation. In order for a drumline’s high-velocity strokes to align, everyone must start each stroke the same distance away from the drumhead. Some teachers refer to this distance as *stick height* and others prefer to describe this distance with different musical dynamic levels. In a maximum-velocity setting, a louder dynamic level requires the player to strike the drum from a further distance than when playing at a softer dynamic level. These stick heights/dynamic levels should be established in basic legato stroke exercises like “Eight on a Hand.” In marching percussion music, unaccented notes are generally considered to be “taps” played at a *piano* dynamic level. The accented notes vary based on the notated dynamic level and should clearly contrast any unaccented notes. No matter the system you choose to implement, the players must understand where each stroke begins to ensure that everyone attacks notes together. Remember that a small drumline that plays perfectly in time will have a fuller sound than a large ensemble with inconsistent dynamic levels and stroke velocities. Also, always practice with a metronome when establishing these techniques to ensure a solid understanding of pulse!

In order to navigate musical passages with varied dynamic levels or stick heights, an ensemble must implement different types of strokes that can be taught and rehearsed through basic warm-up exercises. To quickly change heights from accented to unaccented notes, players must utilize a *control stroke*, meaning that they prevent the stick from rebounding after they strike the drum. Manipulating the stick after striking the drumhead maintains a consistent sound because the sound exists before any change is made to the stroke. To move in the opposite direction (unaccented notes to accented notes), players must utilize an *up stroke*. After the drum is struck from a small “tap” height, the player should lift the stick in preparation for the impending accented note.

Finally, students should be able to execute a *double stroke* as well as a *double bounce*. The double stroke is utilized with slower bounces where the player must assist the stick’s action to ensure an even rhythmic passage. A double bounce is utilized for fast open rolls where the rebound from the drumhead, along with support from the hands, produces an even

bounce. One common pitfall of the double bounce is the arm motion utilized to produce this technique. This stroke should utilize a pumping motion from the arm that hinges from the elbow, allowing the stick to act as a seesaw from the fulcrum between the first finger and thumb. If students are bending their wrist downward to create a double bounce, the second note of the bounce will be less powerful than the first, creating an uneven sound and rhythm. Just as any other stroke discussed in this article, performers should utilize maximum velocity to maintain consistent sounds, rhythms, and visual appearance.

All of these techniques are external and visible, even from the podium or the rehearsal tower. If established at the beginning of the season, the strategies in this article can act as guidelines for successful drumline rehearsal and performance throughout the year. Student leadership can reinforce these concepts on a regular basis so that you can focus on all aspects of the full ensemble. However, make sure to acknowledge the marching percussion section periodically in rehearsal from the tower or podium so they know that they are still on your radar! •

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# IT'S NOT ABOUT THE DRUMMING: INCORPORATING DRUM CIRCLE ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR CAMPUS SPECIAL NEEDS DEPARTMENT

Ralph Hicks

It's not about the drumming. That's one of the many lessons learned starting a public school drum circle club for students with special needs. Yes, we have a great time, but it's not about that. Yes, we get exposure to different playing styles and world instruments, but it's not about that either. It's about using a steady beat to help calm an anxious child. It's about using a rhythm game to learn how to introduce yourself. No longer limited to the counter culture, drum circle activities and treatments have proven quite effective in creating an atmosphere for social and motor skill development, and an opportunity for your typical students to perform a meaningful community service!

The following information on establishing a drum circle program are based on my personal experiences. I hope this article can help alleviate some of the trial-and-error concerns you may have of starting your own!

## The Ideal Scenario

You may be in a situation where buying \$700 worth of hand drums is but a PTA fundraiser away. Awesome, buckle up for a fun ride on Santa's sleigh because it's Christmas! However you could just as easily be in a situation where you're provided the utmost moral support with a smile, and that's about it. In that case, hey, beans inside a toilet roll tube sound pretty awesome when accompanying a Folgers Coffee tin with the lid still on. On my campus the band department, special needs department, and PTA all pitched in \$200 allowing us to buy a CRAZY amount of small hand drums, shakers (oh so many shakers), and frame drums.

The ideal scenario is a myth. There is no ideal scenario. If you have it in your heart to serve others in a unique way, you should absolutely explore this option.



## Do Your Research

Before taking action, make sure you know what you are getting yourself into! I was fortunate to have a long conversation with Mr. John Fitzgerald of the Remo Corporation while researching equipment options. He opened my eyes quite a bit to how different a drum circle is compared to standard public music education. Drum circles connect you in a completely different way than rehearsing an ensemble or teaching an instrument. It's not about proper slap techniques, it's about the smile on the face! A quick google search on "drum circles", "drumming with special needs", "benefits of drum therapy" and other similar queries will provide countless references for you to make an informed decision. I recommend searching *Developmental Community Music*, *Village Music Circles*, and *Remo HealthRhythms*. These sites provided me a comprehensive idea of the most widely used approaches.

Drum circles are not for everybody. It takes a unique kind of person, one who can turn off the competitive educator within and create a unique experience having nothing to do with technical accomplishment. Do your research, talk to the community, and decide if it's really for you.

## Your Special Needs Departments

The professional and paraprofessional staff of your special needs department are the unsung heroes of the campus! Follow their schedule for even one day and you will never look at your job the same again. They are the only ones on campus that are qualified to decide who can participate in your drum circle, and what activities will work.

You will be amazed at all the different needs of each individual kiddo, ranging from needing the occasional helping hand to needing to be fed. *Present the drum circle idea in a way that reassures the staff this will not add to their already full plate!* Our department worked out a paraprofessional rotation and it works great. The most important aspects to agree upon will be the number of kids who can participate, how often the drum circles should occur, what teachers will attend, and most importantly what activities would be most effective for the group.

If you are unfamiliar with the world of special needs, it very well could be too much to handle at first. You might even get emotional after seeing what their world is like. It's ok, let yourself! That just means you'll be really good at this!

## Your Principal

Hands down, your Principal will be your strongest ally in making your drum circle a reality! You aren't just scheduling an after school sectional here, this will involve several different departments within your school and most likely at the district level. Definitely not waters to wade alone! Schedule a convenient time to meet with your principal and introduce the idea. They will no doubt love it but have a ton of questions on how to make it work. The better you did your research, the better this meeting will go!

Let's be honest, what principal would not want this happening on their campus? The kids get a great opportunity, and you both look good in the community. It's a win-win!

### Have an Equipment Budget Ready

During your research, be sure to include "hand drum reviews", "drum circle training sessions", or visit a few online merchants. I recommend building a spreadsheet similar to this one:

Item	Brand	Qty	Cost	Subtotals
Kids Konga	Remo	3	\$25.00	\$75.00
Kids Djembe	Remo	3	\$60.00	\$180.00
Frame Drum set of 5	Remo	1	\$59.99	\$59.99
PASIC Drum Circle Session	PASIC	1	\$75.00	\$75.00
			<b>Total</b>	<b>USD 389.99</b>

Using the formula functions to do the math for you (i.e. entering `=sum(c2*d2)` into cell e2), play around with the numbers seeing what kind of group you can outfit. *How much to get three of each kind of Remo kids drums, one set of frame drums, and four tambourines (type, type, type, type). WOAH! How about two of each, no frame drums, and only 2 tambourines (type, type, type, type). Sweet, we can swing that. Wait, can't forget the samba whistle. Kids dig the samba whistle...*

Odds are your administration is crazy busy and completely in the dark when it comes to drum pricing, then knowing you have a few financial scenarios ready upon request will help expedite the process should they want to move forward.

### No Budget, No Problem

The chances are high you will be asked to prove viability before investing money into it. This is not a reflection of lack of faith in you, but a concern of financial risk. Depending on the size of the groups (which are typically small), starting with what you have is definitely doable! That triangle you haven't used since you upgraded to the Abel? Put it to good use, it doesn't even need a clip. The snare in the bottom of the cabinet with no bottom head? Bottom head schmottom schmead, bust it out!



Despite the occasional dust up over property taxes, you can normally find plenty of parents willing to help either donating money, coffee cans, or their time to help you build something. Plus you never know what hidden treasure a quick “homemade instruments” google search will turn up! The more involved the community is, the more attached they will become.

### **Set Your Schedule**

Enter the labyrinth. Your special needs department will have a much more delicate schedule than you will. Don't expect the schedule you start with to be the one you end with, and don't expect to ever have 100% attendance! Sometimes the wrong number of ice cubes can be all it takes to ruin a kids day. Just roll with the punches and have fun with whoever shows up! The easiest option would be to send the special needs department a schedule of all the times you are available and let them choose a primary and make up time. We are able to hold our sessions during an advisory period at the end of the day, once every other week.

Don't expect any type of performance opportunity, that's not what it's about. But if you're comfortable leading them through a performance, I suggest a version of your school song with a drum beat! We always open the school talent show with a drum circle version of our school alma mater.

### **Choose Your Activity**

If you're looking for drum-circle-in-a-box I highly recommend the works of Kalani, including *The Amazing Jamnasium*, available at amazon.com. The role of the facilitator is clearly explained, the activities are already laid out, and several fun playalong tracks are included. Meet with your special needs team to decide which types of activities will be most appropriate. Some involve hitting a drum, some take a call-and-response form, some don't involve drums at all but talking, dancing, or singing.

Here are a few of the simpler ones that our kiddos prefer:

-Free play (icebreaker): We start a playback track on the speakers, either from the Kalani collection or one I put together in Logic (music sampling software), and the kids are free to play whatever they want. About four minutes tends to be the right amount of time for the more timid kids to see how much fun everyone is having and join in!



-Rumble Fingers (works on focus): Kids roll on the drum quietly with me controlling their volume with my “magic fingers” from the center of the circle. When I raise my hands, they get louder and vice versa. If I point to a certain person, we do the wave around the room. After a few times, I call for a volunteer and pass them the magic to control the group.

-Where’s Perry? (works on communication): This is pretty much “hot and cold” but with rolling on a drum. We have our “detective” wait outside the room so we can hide our little Perry doll (from Phineas and Ferb). We yell “WHERE’S PERRY!?!” when we’re ready, then guide the detective to Perry by playing louder when they’re closer and quieter when they’re farther away.

-Who wants a parade! (works on following instructions and step size): Self explanatory. Come up with a simple “1,2,3” beat and lead everyone through a short parade route. We sometimes mix it up and do small steps when we’re soft and large steps when we’re loud. Our administration love it when we come through the head office!

We tried them without our Drum Buddies first (more on this later), so our typical kids could lead by example. A little investment on your end will help you get off your feet smoothly. If you have access to a music therapist in your district, they could surely get you started!

## **Design Your Own**

Most of the activities available online or through publication are familiar, repetitive, and predictable which make them easy to learn and to imitate. Just like no single educator can claim to have created *8 on a Hand*, there’s nothing stopping you from creating your own after you’ve tried a few activities. *Where’s Perry?* was originally known as *Where’s Froggy?* in Kalani’s book. If you’re looking for some new playalong tracks, Mac users have access to a huge library of drum beats you can create at whatever tempo and length you want in GarageBand. On the topic of playalong tracks, don’t overuse them like I used to!

Be prepared for complete success and total failure. Some activities will be a huge hit one week and a dud the next. Some will crash and burn one week and steal the show the next. Just go with it!

## **Choose your Drum Buddies**

Your typical student volunteers, or Drum Buddies, will make the experience so very special for so many people. By far the most complimentary emails I receive from parents is about their child with disabilities having the opportunity to mix in with our typical population. “You make him feel like just another kid” can be a powerful thing to read!

While the obvious choice would be to start with your percussion section, they won't always be available or even an optimal choice. Plenty of ways to work your side of the roster. Band kids, fine arts kids, let the administration choose, etc. Be sure they understand it is not about them, it's about serving their community. If a kiddo with special needs is eyeing their drum, they should give it to them with a smile and go grab something else! The ones that simply don't get what it's about will reveal themselves quickly and lose interest in coming. They're the ones who think it's about the drumming! After a few sessions you'll have a regular crew of kids that understand it's not about them and will be there every time.

### **Develop A Relationship**

These could be the most important relationships you ever form, make each one of them special. Music may not have been an option to some of these families before, they will not be familiar with the activity and could initially not buy into it. The closer they feel to you and the more passion they can see in you, the more comfortable they will be asking questions and eventually buying into the idea.

### **Your Role As The Facilitator**

The facilitator is who leads the group through the experience. See yourself as more of a guide than an instructor. You won't be explaining proper technique or correcting ensemble tears. You'll simply show them what to do, get them going, and then get out of the way! Arthur Hull (Village Music Circles) and Kalani (Developmental Community Music) lay down clear roles of the facilitator on their websites and in their publications.



While you are there to provide guidance and energy for the group, one must be mindful to not inhibit free play. This was by far the hardest adjustment for me, coming from a world of tick sheets and scale passoffs! It can be so refreshing to step out of the "my kids must have this technique by this time" mentality and live in the moment if only for thirty minutes. When I'm in the middle of the circle and passing my magic fingers, I feel more like I'm goofing off than actually working!

## The Perks

There's nothing wrong with recognizing the personal benefits of offering your time for this experience! First and foremost, talk about a behavior incentive! Our special needs department has a chart with the days of the week and a little velcro drum with each kiddos name on it. If they misbehave or don't follow instructions they don't move their drum forward and could lose the privilege for that week. Same with our typical student drum buddies. They must be passing all their classes and have high conduct marks, and their advisory teacher can keep them from coming at anytime should they fall behind on their work or misbehave. I always end the sessions with *"I really had a lot of fun drumming with you guys today, be sure to do all your work and listen to your teachers so you can come back. I'm gonna miss you if I don't get to see you next week!"*.

Also, here in Texas for professional appraisal the highest scores in certain categories require participation on committees and projects that benefit the whole campus or district. This is not always easy to achieve, especially within the parameters of an electives teacher. When presented to your administration with facts and data, these activities may help you qualify for those highest scores!

## Be a Means to an End

Just because you're playing golf with a disability does not make it golf therapy. Keep it in perspective, and when you are presented the opportunity to work with a music therapist be sure to take it. Visit the American Music Therapist Association website for any registered music therapists in the area. While you may be able to provide the service for free, perhaps raise money to bring in an actual music therapist, or consult your district administration. You may be surprised how many school districts out there already have one on staff!

It's not about the drumming. It's not about the performance. It's about the experience. Just have a good time connecting with your students, and provide an opportunity like no other. You're building compassion, empathy, and service, qualities highly sought after as our children enter the emerging global market. To allow your percussionists the opportunity to use their skills in this way is a gift well appreciated by parents and will serve their child well into their chosen profession. I wish you the best of luck! •

**Ralph Hicks** is a member of the PAS Education Committee, and teaches band at Mitchell Intermediate in The Woodlands, TX with 16 years experience. Mr. Hicks is also Founder of Let Them Drum, providing drum therapy activities for The Woodlands and surrounding communities. Feel free to contact him with any questions or comments at [rhicks@letthemdrum.org](mailto:rhicks@letthemdrum.org).

# PERCUSSION REPAIR 101

Christopher Davis

Percussion repairs can be daunting for any percussionist, let alone for the public school music director who deals with percussion instruments on a daily basis. This repair guide was created to provide a step-by-step process that directors can follow to make sure that percussion equipment is operating at the highest level possible, therefore creating the best sound quality possible and allowing the student to perform at their maximum potential. At the beginning of the document is a list of recommended supplies to have in your toolbox. Some of these supplies are necessary and some are specific to individual repairs, so they may be purchased on the basis of need. For each repair discussed, there is a specific list of recommended tools and supplies that will be needed, or at least come in handy. By having this step-by-step document and the necessary tools on hand, you will be ready to fix the issues that have plagued you for years.

## **BEFORE BEGINNING ANY PERCUSSION REPAIR...**

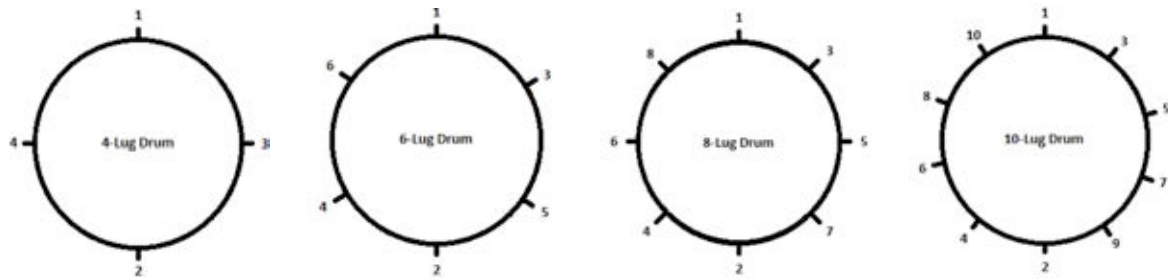
Be sure that you have:

- 1) Time to complete the repair
  - 2) All of the necessary tools and parts
  - 3) Dingy clothes that you can get dirty
- The grease will find you!!!

## **IN THE TOOLBOX**

Tape <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Duct Tape (Black, White, Gray, School Colors)</li><li>Electrical Tape (Black, White, School Colors)</li><li>Teflon Tape or Teflon Spray</li><li>Counter-Hoop Felt Tape</li><li>Moleskin</li></ul> WD-40 Petroleum Jelly/Lug Lube Clean Cloth Paper Towels Steel Wool Pledge (without oils) Block of Wood Small Screwdrivers (Flat and Phillips) Needle-Nose Pliers or Vise Grip Wrench (1/2" and 9/16") Allen Wrench Set Tape Measure Lighter Scissors	Fishing Line Black and Silver Marker Drum Keys <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Timpani Key</li><li>Small Drum Key</li><li>High-Torque Drum Key</li></ul> Chime Cable Keyboard String (Manufacturer's, Nylon, Para Cord) Tuner DrumDial Snare Cord Nylon Snare Straps Drum Pieces and Parts <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Lugs</li><li>Nuts, Bolts, and Washers</li><li>Cymbal Washers, Felts, and Plastic Sleeves</li><li>Spare Wing Nuts from Old Stands</li><li>Old Parts</li></ul>
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## CROSS-TENSION TUNING TECHNIQUE



## CLEANING DRUMS

*(Tools – Clean Cloth, Pledge, WD-40)*

1. Spray Pledge directly onto the cloth, never onto the drum, then wipe around the shell of the drum. Be sure to clean under and around all of the hardware and rims.
2. If the drumhead is currently off, first remove all dust and debris. Next, wipe down the inside of the shell, being sure to get all of the nooks-and-crannies around the rims and the hardware.
3. With the drumhead off, take this moment to check and secure all of the nuts and bolts on the inside of the shell. This is the best time to replace anything that needs replaced and maintain your tension rods (petroleum jelly or lug lube).
4. With a clean, dry cloth, wipe off any excess Pledge, petroleum jelly or lug lube, and WD-40.

## CHANGING A DRUMHEAD (SNARE, TOMS)

*(Tools – Drum Key, Screwdrivers, Tape or Black Marker, Petroleum Jelly or Lug Lube, Spare Washers, Nuts, Bolts, and Lugs, New Drumhead)*

1. Determine your head size by measuring from one edge to the other, crossing through the center of the head. Do NOT include the hoop when measuring.
2. Mark the counter-hoop and a corresponding lug casing with a piece of tape or a black marker.
3. Unscrew each tension rod and remove the counter-hoop and old head.
4. Take this time to clean the inside of the drum and check for any loose parts, tightening anything that is even the slightest bit loose.

5. Place the head over the shell, making sure that the logo is where you would like it. Place the counter-hoop onto the head, being sure to line up the marks from Step 2.
6. Apply a light lubrication to the bottom of each tension rod and replace all tension rods; however, DO NOT tighten the head at this point. Finger-tighten the tension rods just to the point of making contact with the hoop.
7. Using the cross-tension tuning technique, begin tightening the tension rods, one-half turn at a time. Continue this process until the head begins to resonate.
8. Seat the head by applying short bursts of pressure to the center of the head. This is done with a flat hand or hand-over-hand technique in the center of the head.
9. Continue Step 7 until you reach your desire head tension. Fine tune by tapping near each tension rod and use your ear or a tuner to match each rod.
10. SNARE DRUM TUNING – The snare side head is typically pitched at a perfect 4th or 5th higher than the batter head.  
TOM TUNING (DOUBLE-HEADED) – The bottom resonant head should be the same pitch or up to a minor 3rd lower than the batter head.

## **TUNING CONGAS & BONGOS**

*(Tools – 1/2" or 9/16" Wrench)*

1. Determine the correct size of head, measuring from the rim of the shell across the center of the head to the rim on the other side, not including the hoop.
2. "Righty Loosey – Lefty Tightly" (Yes, this is opposite of the norm!)
3. These heads should be extremely taut. You should not be able to depress your fingers into the head.

## **REPLACING SNARES**

*(Tools – Small Screwdriver, Snare Cord or Nylon Snare Straps, New Snares)*

1. Be sure to purchase the correct size of snares for your drum. The typical size for a concert snare drum will be 14", sometimes 13".
2. Place the drum on a flat surface with the snare side facing up.
3. Remove the old snares.
4. If you are replacing the snare head, this would be the time to do it.

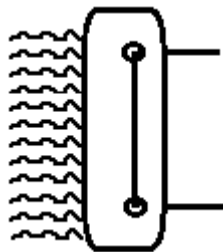
5. Lay the snares flat on the head, making sure that the side of the end plate that the wire strands are attached to is the side that lies against the head (A). Be sure that the snares are centered on the snare head.
6. Leave the snare release lever in the "ON" position and unscrew the snare adjustment knob to near its loosest position.
7. Dependent on the type of snares you are using, you will need to use either snare cord or nylon snare straps to attach the snares to the drum.
 

CORD – Thread the cord through the snare plate and create an equal length of cord on each side. On the snare plate, the exposed cord should be facing away from the drum (A).

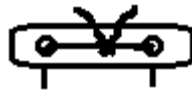
NYLON STRAP – Thread the strap through the snare plate and create an equal length of strap on the top and bottom.
8. Beginning with the snare release side of the drum, feed the cord or nylon strap through the counter-hoop snare gate and then through the holes of the cover slide (B) or through the clamp (C).
 

CORD – Make sure that the ends of the cord are spread apart as far as possible within the slide or clamp.

NYLON STRAP – Make sure that both sides of the strap pass through the clamp.
9. Keeping the snares centered on the snare head, tighten the screws on the clamp or tie a knot with the ends of the cord on the outside of the slide.
10. Repeat Steps 7-9 on the other side of the drum. While tightening or tying on this side of the drum, be sure to pull on the snares to make them taut.
11. At this point, if you are using cord, you may wish to burn the ends of the cord to keep it from unraveling.
12. Place the drum on a snare drum stand, batter side up, and tighten the snare adjustment knob to your desired tension.



A



B



C

View from on top

## CHANGING A CONCERT BASS DRUM HEAD

(Tools – Cloth, Tape or a Black or Silver Marker, Petroleum Jelly or Lug Lube, New Drumhead)

1. Determine your head size by measuring from one edge to the other, crossing through the center of the head. Do NOT include the hoop when measuring.
2. Have the drum suspended on a stand or lying on a flat surface.
3. Mark the drum hoop and a corresponding spot on the drum with a piece of tape or a marker.
4. Remove all of the tension rods by hand, remove the hoop, and remove the old head.
5. Wipe down the hoop, clean the inside of the drum, and clean off the tension rods of any excess dirt and oil.
6. Place the new head on the shell and center the logo at the top of the drum.
7. Place the hoop onto the head, being sure to line up the marks from Step 3.
8. Lightly lubricate each tension rod and place them into the lug casings.
9. Finger-tighten each tension rod, leaving the same amount of distance between the underside of the hoop and the lug casing. Be sure that each T-rod is square to the hoop. Hit the drum and you should hear a very loose, flabby rumble.
10. Using the cross-tension tuning technique, tighten each tension rod one full clockwise turn, leaving them square with the hoop. Hit the drum and listen again. You may use a tuner to fine tune.
11. Seat the head by applying short bursts of pressure to the center of the head. This is done with a flat hand or hand-over-hand technique in the center of the head.
12. Repeat Step 10 until the desired sound is achieved.
  - a. REMEMBER, this is a concert bass drum and should be the lowest sounding drum in the percussion section. *Do not over tighten!* Different muffling techniques may be employed to lessen any ringing sound that is not desired.
13. TUNING – The resonant side head should be the same pitch or a half-step higher than the batter head. •

Christopher Davis is Assistant Professor at North Greenville University, where he teaches applied percussion and directs the NGU Percussion Ensemble and the NGU Marching Crusaders. In addition to his responsibilities at NGU, Christopher performs with many regional orchestras, teaches private lessons to all ages, and presents master classes around the state of South Carolina. He has served on the PAS University Pedagogy Committee for 9 years and is currently the Vice-President for the South Carolina chapter of PAS.



# PAS/Meredith Music Publications

## Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC)

### Grant for a Non-Percussionist Band Director

The purpose of the “Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC) Grant for a Non-Percussionist Band Director” is to provide financial assistance to a band director to attend the Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC) to be held in San Antonio, Texas on November 11–14, 2015 in order to further the band director’s knowledge of percussion instruments and their use in school ensembles.

The grant shall consist of:

1. Financial assistance of up to \$1,000 (US dollars) for transportation, hotel and meals
2. One PASIC registration
3. One year PAS subscription

**Eligibility:** The grant is open to any non-percussionist band director teaching full time during the 2015–2016 academic year in a high school or junior high school in the United States.

**Application Materials:** Applicants must provide the following:

- A one-page bio or resume
- Proof of full-time teaching status
- A supporting letter of recommendation from the principal of their current school verifying current employment and support of professional leave to attend PASIC
- Completion and submission of the application form
- Completion and submission of the short-paragraph questionnaire

**Selection Criteria:** The grant will be awarded to the applicant whom the committee feels will benefit most from this unique experience by sharing his/her increased knowledge with a significant number of students and colleagues.

**Selection Committee:** The selection committee is comprised of Garwood Whaley, President/founder of Meredith Music Publications, Past President PAS; Anthony J. Cirone, San Francisco Symphony (retired), Professor of Music, Indiana University (retired), PAS Hall of Fame; James Campbell, Professor of Music, University of Kentucky, Past President PAS.

Download an application: [pas.org/resources/pas-opportunities/scholarships](http://pas.org/resources/pas-opportunities/scholarships)

**Deadline:** All materials must be postmarked by July 10, 2015.  
The winner will be notified in August of 2015.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT PERCUSSIVE ARTS SOCIETY 317.974.4488**

# PAS/Meredith Music Publications

## Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC)

### Grant for a Non-Percussionist Band Director

Materials must be postmarked by: 07/10/2015

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State/Province \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Country \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime phone \_\_\_\_\_

Evening phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

School name \_\_\_\_\_

School address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State/Province \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

What instrument(s) would you consider to be your primary area of concentration? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Number of band students in program (including percussion) \_\_\_\_\_ Number of percussion students in program \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been teaching? \_\_\_\_\_ How long have you taught at your present school? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a separate percussion class in your program? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you feature the percussion section during concerts? \_\_\_\_\_

On a separate sheet, compose an essay of approximately 500 words explaining the following:

Why do you want to attend PASIC? In what way will you apply the knowledge gained from this convention?

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Principal's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Where did you find out about this contest:

Twitter

Facebook.com

PAS Website (www.pas.org)

Percussive Notes

Rhythm! Scene

PAS Email Newsletter

PASIC Program

Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Checklist

The following materials must be postmarked by July 10, 2015:

Completed application form

Bio/resume

Proof of full-time teaching status

Principal's letter of recommendation

Essay

Send materials to:  
Percussive Arts Society  
PAS/Meredith Music Grant for a  
Non-Percussionist Band Director  
110 W. Washington Street,  
Suite A  
Indianapolis, IN 46204