



THE PAS EDUCATORS' COMPANION

Volume V
Spring 2017

A Helpful Resource of the
PERCUSSIVE ARTS SOCIETY
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

PERCUSSIVE
ARTS SOCIETY

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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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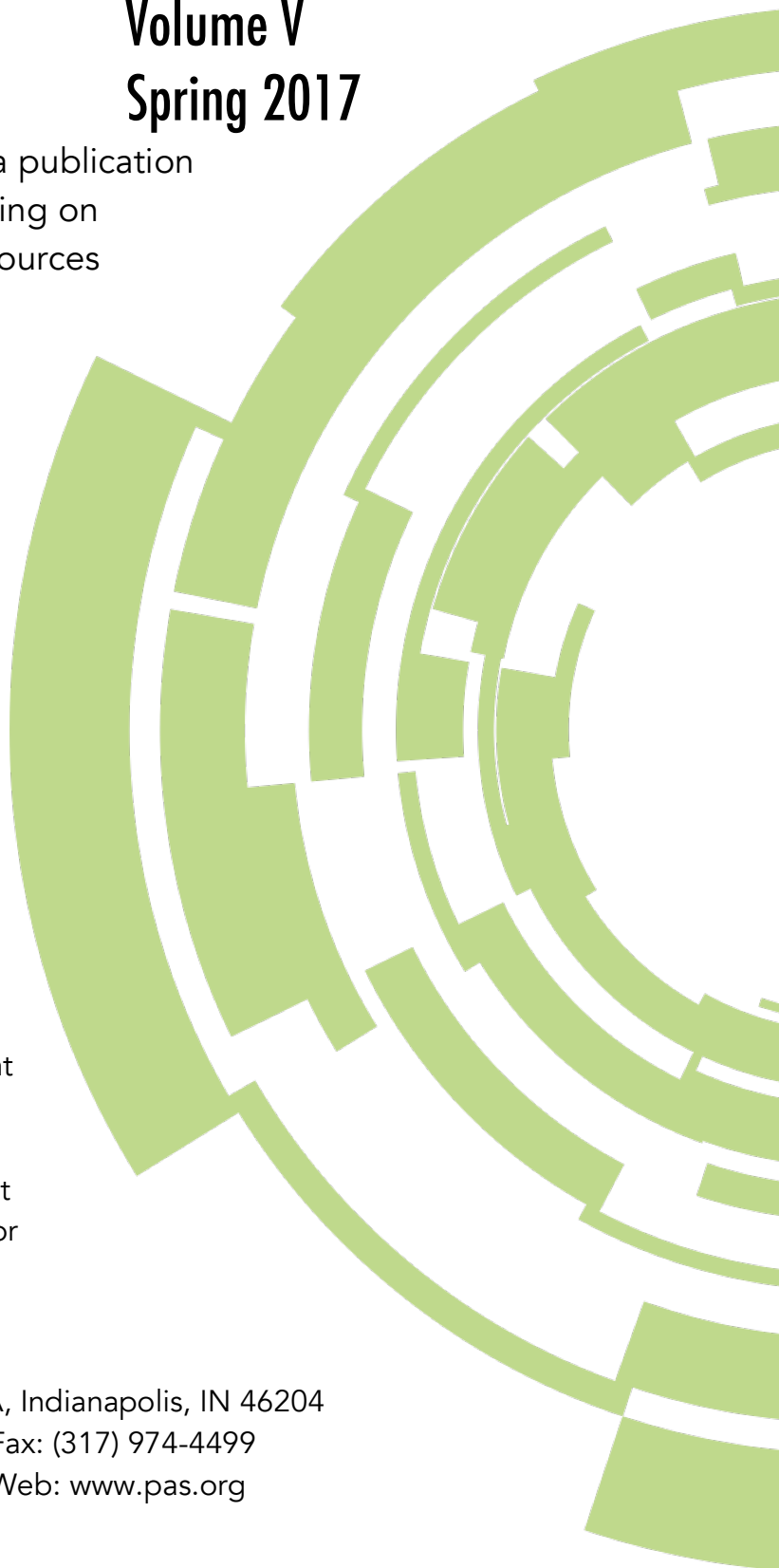
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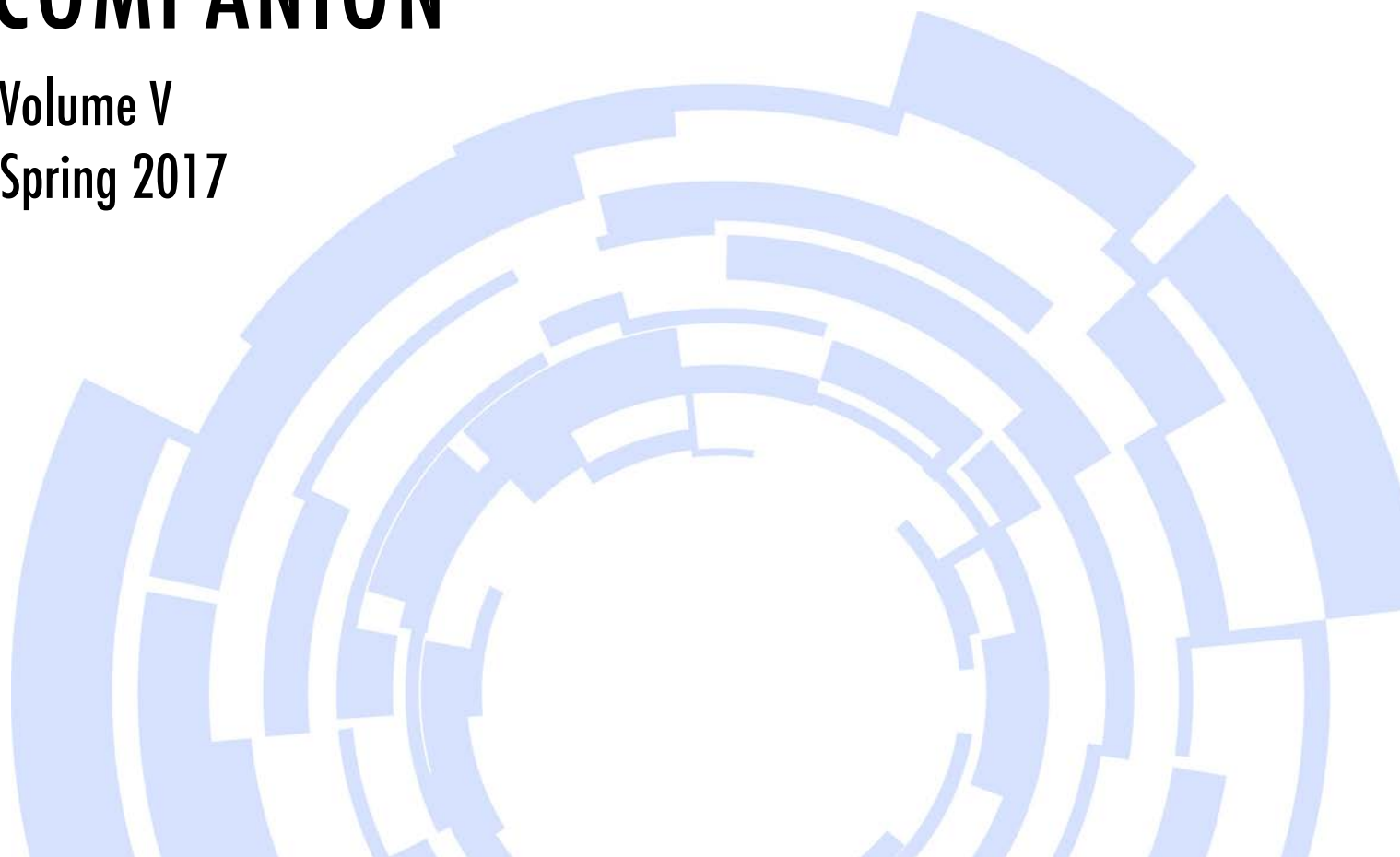




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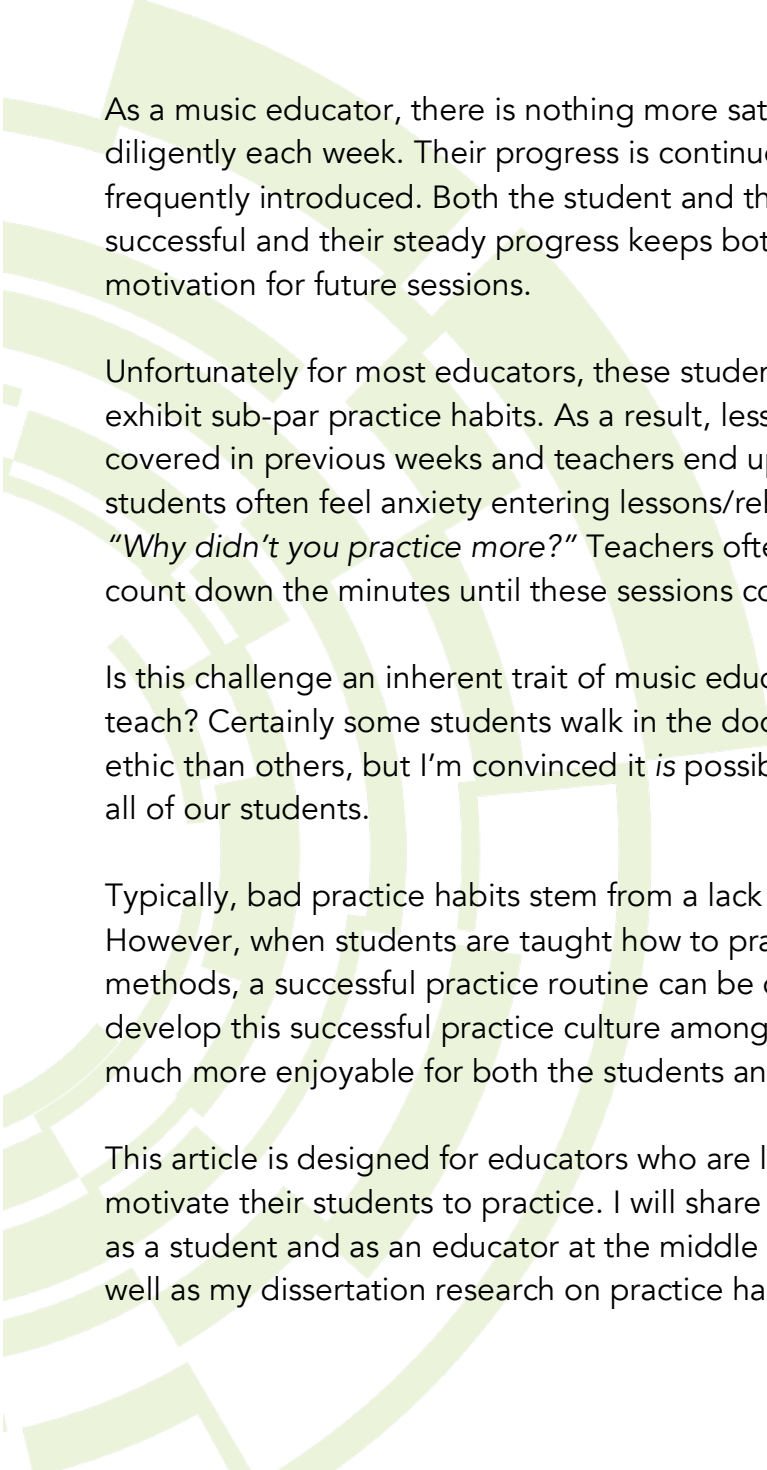
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MOTIVATING YOUR STUDENTS TO PRACTICE

Colin Hill



As a music educator, there is nothing more satisfying than teaching a student who practices diligently each week. Their progress is continuous and new concepts and material can be frequently introduced. Both the student and the teacher leave each lesson/rehearsal feeling successful and their steady progress keeps both parties fully engaged, providing mutual motivation for future sessions.

Unfortunately for most educators, these students are few and far between. Many students exhibit sub-par practice habits. As a result, lessons/rehearsals are often focused on material covered in previous weeks and teachers end up repeating concepts ad nauseam. Further, students often feel anxiety entering lessons/rehearsals, dreading the inevitable conversation, “*Why didn’t you practice more?*” Teachers often find these situations equally frustrating, and count down the minutes until these sessions come to an end.

Is this challenge an inherent trait of music education or perhaps a product of the way we teach? Certainly some students walk in the door with more discipline and a stronger work ethic than others, but I’m convinced it *is* possible to drastically improve the practice habits of all of our students.

Typically, bad practice habits stem from a lack of interest, motivation, or perceived progress. However, when students are taught how to practice efficiently, using fun and creative methods, a successful practice routine can be developed. When programs are able to develop this successful practice culture among its members, the learning process becomes much more enjoyable for both the students and teacher.

This article is designed for educators who are looking for new and innovative ways to motivate their students to practice. I will share methods I have discovered or been exposed to as a student and as an educator at the middle school, high school, and collegiate level, as well as my dissertation research on practice habits.

When motivating students to practice, the first step should include an effective explanation of the importance of practice. While all students and educators intuitively realize that practice is necessary for our development, research on the practice habits of the most gifted consistently shows that innate talent plays a much smaller role than preparation. Further, substantial evidence suggests that mastery can only be achieved after 10,000 hours of practice early in life.

The second step is to require each student to create an individualized practice schedule. Our society operates on a web of schedules, and if students can develop a consistent practice schedule (time and day), practice becomes a routine, rather than something that must be “fit” into each day. When executed correctly, students will “show up” to their designated practice time, much like they attend rehearsals and classes. This approach does not allow for other obligations to prioritize themselves over practicing and eliminates most issues of motivation.

The third step is to create sustaining motivation. While some teachers resort to stern communication as their default routine, there are numerous positive methods that can be much more effective. When implemented correctly, these methods can help a student, and an entire program, develop a long-lasting devotion to practice.

PUBLIC PRACTICE LOGS

Practice logs are an age-old way of encouraging/enforcing practice hours. However, these often fail for a number of reasons: dishonest entries, lack of enforcement, poor participation, added busy work for educator, etc. A simple solution is to make these logs public and highly promoted. Instantly, practicing becomes a competitive activity, as students try to “out do” one another and avoid finishing near the bottom of the list. Practicing then becomes a desirable activity, tied to the program’s weekly culture. This system naturally accomplishes many goals. One, the students who already exhibited great practice habits receive deserved recognition and feel pressure to maintain their reputation as a “top student.” Students also begin to see a correlation between practice hours and ability level. The top players are almost always near the top of the list, while the weak players routinely finish at the bottom. For the weaker students, this is often a tangible explanation as to why there are inferior players. Some students blame their deficiencies on their “lack of talent” rather than accepting it as a product of their work ethic.

While dishonesty will still occur, it is a favorable type of dishonesty. Those who lie about their practice hours do it because they feel pressure from their peers to practice more. Further, these lies are typically debunked rather quickly when they claim to be practicing a high number of hours but consistently show up for lessons/rehearsals unprepared.

Enforcing participation is as simple as giving grade deductions for those who do not complete the public practice log on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. Further motivation can be created by giving out weekly or monthly awards to students who achieve exemplary practice hours.

RECORDED ASSIGNMENTS

With today's smart phones and computers, every student should have access to a recording device. Supplementing weekly lesson assignments or rehearsal goals with individual recording assignments often resolves many practice issues.

A recording assignment could be an exercise, phrase, or excerpt that the student is required to record and submit by a designated deadline. The student may record it as many times as needed (if done correctly, it should take multiple takes), and the version submitted should be as close to "perfect" as possible.

The success of this method lies in the simple fact that it takes a substantial amount of practice to produce a recording of a perfect run-through. Many students have the false notion that if they play it right once in the practice room, they are prepared. However, when the red light turns on, the student will feel added pressure as they attempt to capture a perfect run-through. Successfully capturing a correct repetition requires a much higher level of proficiency.

The pressure felt when trying to record a perfect run-through is very similar to the pressure one feels in a performance. This pressure is rarely felt in the practice room, which is another benefit of recorded assignments.

Before students submit their recordings, require that they listen closely to their final product. This process of self-evaluation can be an eye-opening experience for less experienced players and teaches them what they *actually* sound like. For most, this instills a newfound awareness of their abilities, eliminating distorted self-perceptions.

REGULAR OCCURRING SOLO PERFORMANCES

It is amazing how hard students will practice when they know they have to get up and play for their peers. It only takes one or two unprepared public performances to improve a student's practice habits. While this may sound harsh, the fear of embarrassment is a huge motivator.

These performances could be formal (performance attire, on stage) or in a more relaxed environment (such as a masterclass-type setting). Regardless, frequency is key. It is recommended that each student be required to perform solo at least twice per semester and possibly as frequent as once per week, perhaps in the form of a playing test.

INCENTIVES AND PRIZES

Positive reinforcement is often the most successful type of motivation. Reward your students individually or as a group for accomplishing their practice goals. For example, individuals may receive small prizes or something as simple as candy for learning all their assigned lesson material. In a group context, students could be rewarded with a pizza party after reaching a certain number of combined practice hours. Creating incentive, especially with younger students, can be highly successful.

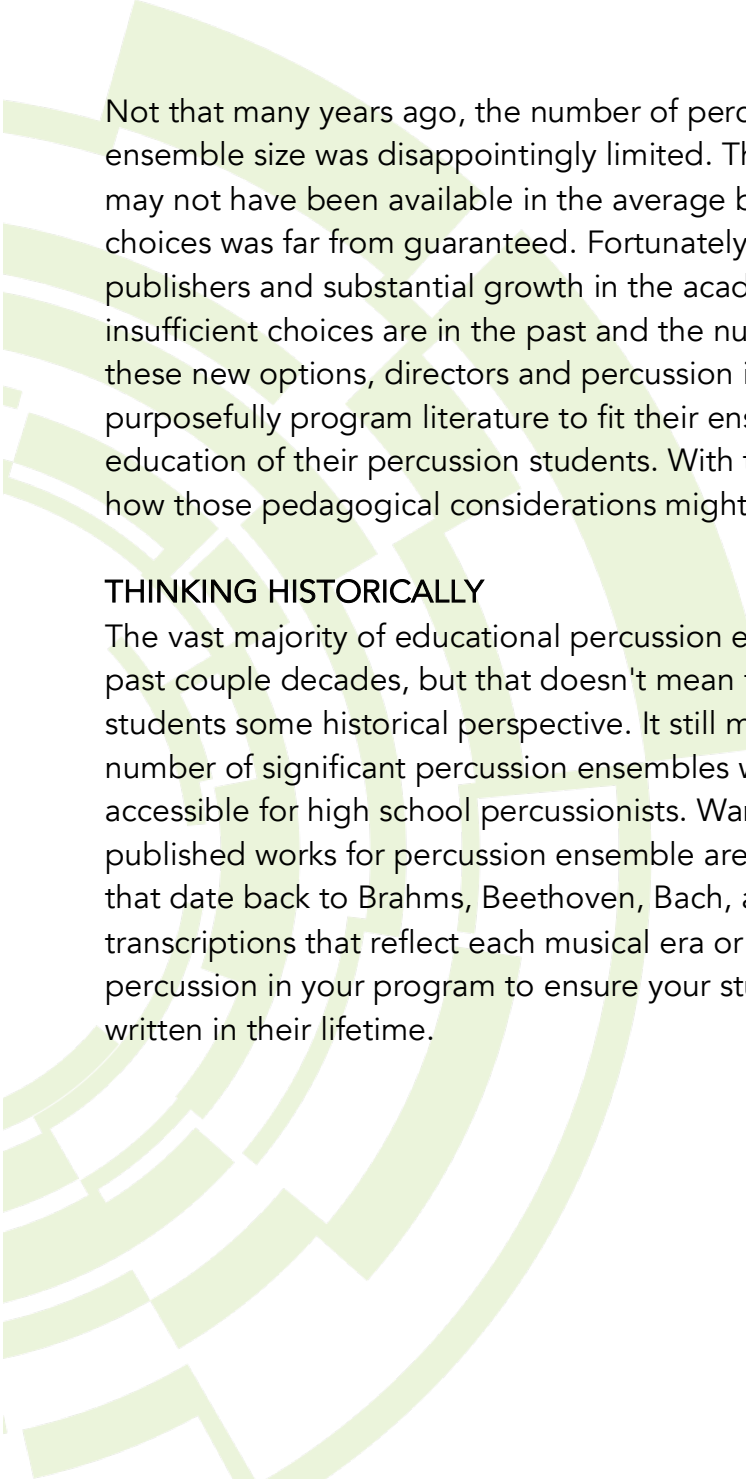
These methods are just a few ways that educators can motivate their students to practice. There are many other methods and strategies that can be implemented, and regardless of the approach, it is important that educators remain pro-active regarding their students' practice habits. While it is unrealistic to expect that all students will develop great practice habits, it is possible to greatly improve the culture and attitude towards practicing.

Dr. Colin J. Hill is currently the Assistant Professor of Percussion Studies at Tennessee Tech University. As an active performer, Colin has been invited to perform concerts throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia. He performs regularly with the BluHill Percussion Duo, Nief-Norf Project, Bryan Symphony Orchestra, and the TTU Faculty Jazz Combo. Other performing credits include the Lexington Philharmonic Orchestra, Bloomington Pops Orchestra, REP Theatre Company, and the Bluegrass Area Jazz Association Big Band. As an educator, Colin has appeared as a guest artist and clinician at universities and high schools throughout the United States and has been invited to present clinics at several PAS Days of Percussion and PAS International Conventions. He has served as a faculty member for Centre College, the Central Music Academy, Music for All Summer Symposium, and the University of North Texas Drumline Camp. Colin holds degrees from The University of North Texas (B.M.), Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University (M.M.), and The University of Kentucky (D.M.A) and is a sponsored artist of Innovative Percussion, Grover Pro Percussion, Sabian Cymbals, Evans Drumheads, and Pearl/Adams.



PURPOSEFUL PROGRAMMING OF PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE LITERATURE

Josh Gottry



Not that many years ago, the number of percussion ensemble pieces for a given difficulty and ensemble size was disappointingly limited. Throw in consideration of instruments that may or may not have been available in the average band room, and having a handful of quality choices was far from guaranteed. Fortunately, thanks to a number of significant percussion publishers and substantial growth in the academic percussion ensemble activity, those days of insufficient choices are in the past and the number of new works continues to grow. Given all these new options, directors and percussion instructors now have the freedom to more purposefully program literature to fit their ensemble needs while also furthering the musical education of their percussion students. With that in mind, here are a few suggestions as to how those pedagogical considerations might come into play in programming decisions.

THINKING HISTORICALLY

The vast majority of educational percussion ensemble literature has been written within the past couple decades, but that doesn't mean there isn't literature available to give your students some historical perspective. It still may not be an entire century old, but there are a number of significant percussion ensembles written in the early- to mid-1900s that are accessible for high school percussionists. Want to go back further still? Among the recently published works for percussion ensemble are exceptional arrangements and transcriptions that date back to Brahms, Beethoven, Bach, and beyond. Consider a selection of transcriptions that reflect each musical era or include at least one significant early work for percussion in your program to ensure your students are exposed to more than just what was written in their lifetime.

Historical percussion works and arrangements for consideration...

Title	Composer/Arranger	# Players	Publisher
4/4 for Four	Anthony Cirone	4	Alfred
Aquarium	Saint-Saëns/arr. Moore	6	C. Alan Publications
Circus Bee	Fillmore/Dittgen	10	C. Alan Publications
Clair de Lune	Debussy/arr. Alford	10-11	Row-Loff
Encore in Jazz	Vic Firth	7	Carl Fischer
Für Elise	Beethoven/arr. Retschulte	5-6	Tapspace
Intermezzo (from <i>Die Nase</i>)	Shostakovich/arr. Cahn	5	HoneyRock
Leyenda	Albeniz/arr. Howarth	14	Tapspace
Molto Vivace	Beethoven/arr. Gottry	11	C. Alan Publications
Music for Pieces of Wood	Steve Reich	5	Universal Edition
Rondo alla Turk	Mozart/arr. Hernandez	5	Row-Loff
The Marriage of Figaro	Mozart/arr. Kovács	6	Edition Svitzer
Three Brothers	Michael Colgrass	9	Music for Percussion
Toccatà for Percussion	Carlos Chavez	6	Alfred
Trio	Robert Kraft	3	Theodore Presser
Villanesca	Granados/arr. Gottry	10	C. Alan Publications

ALL ABOUT ACCESSORIES

Within every percussion section you have students clamoring for the best mallet parts, others who would be satisfied playing only snare drum or exclusively timpani for their four years in high school, and at least one student who would like to get a little extra rest playing (and leaning on) the concert bass drum. Choosing percussion ensembles that specifically focus on something other than the snare, timpani, and keyboard percussion categories is a great way to introduce students to, and excite them about, the accessory percussion instruments. Finding pieces that highlight (or at least significantly include) triangle, tambourine, wood or temple blocks, castanets, guiro, shakers, maracas, etc. allows you to put these instruments into the students hands, help them consider the unique techniques required, and facilitate the exploration of struck, shaken, and scraped percussion sounds. Take some time in rehearsal to do a few mini-masterclasses on each accessory instrument included so that all members of the section (not just the one player assigned to the part) have the opportunity to learn about these important percussion instruments.

Accessory focused pieces for consideration...

Title	Composer/Arranger	# Players	Publisher
Animals	Brian Slawson	4	Tapspace
Overture for Percussion Toys	Grant W. Cambridge	10	HoneyRock
Shake	Josh Gottry	5	C. Alan Publications
Songo Concertino	Michael Eubanks	9	Tapspace
Strike, Shake, & Stomp	George Frock	9	C. Alan Publications
Sweet Bread	Joe W. Moore III	7	C. Alan Publications
Talea	Daniel Adams	6	C. Alan Publications
Ting	Josh Gottry	4	C. Alan Publications
Waltz for Marty	Marcus Reddick	6	HoneyRock

SIMPLE, COMPOUND, & COMPLEX

For obvious reasons, most marching band music is set in a marching friendly time signature and relatively few concert band pieces explore advanced metric concepts. For that reason, finding percussion ensemble music that dances between metric types, explores complex meters, or even includes more challenging rhythmic figures and less familiar divisions of the beat can effectively fill in some of those potential gaps in exposure. Choose wisely, so as not to overwhelm the less experienced members of your section, and plan carefully to introduce the new rhythmic or metric concepts in exercises or warm-ups before drilling them in literature rehearsals.

Metrically creative pieces for consideration...

Title	Composer/Arranger	# Players	Publisher
Alive in Five	Emil Richards	12	Row-Loff
Atlantic Breeze	Walter Mertens	4	Edition Svitzer
Detour	Brian Blume	13	Tapspace
Ellipsis	Nathan Daughtrey	8	C. Alan Publications
Mas Fuerte	Stephen Rush	6	C. Alan Publications
Minor Infraction	Rick Dior	9-13	Tapspace
Quintessential	Jane Boxall	5	HoneyRock
Shifting Waves	Josh Gottry	10	Row-Loff
Streets of Ankara	Chris Brooks	15-22	Row-Loff
Surrogate	Igor Lesnik	4	HoneyRock
Venn Diagram	Josh Gottry	9	C. Alan Publications

WIDE WORLD OF PERCUSSION

At some point in every percussion student's studies, it is important to open his or her eyes to the great big world of percussion. Whether that be with an African djembe, the Cuban congas and bongos, a Peruvian cajon, steel drums from Trinidad, a Brazilian pandeiro, or a Guatemalan approach to marimba, world percussion instruments are a critical component of well-rounded experience. Furthermore, many of these instruments are played with the hands, rather than with a stick or mallet. The basics of how to execute a slap stroke, get a resonant bass sound, play a finger trill, or properly perform dead strokes or ghost notes are all hand percussion fundamentals that can be developed with the inclusion of these instruments. Some pieces may focus on the inclusion of world instruments in contemporary styles and others may demonstrate world music stylistic influences but be performed on more familiar percussion instruments. Either is great and can get students excited about the wide, wide world of percussion.

World influenced music for consideration...

Title	Composer/Arranger	# Players	Publisher
Clouds Make Songo Away	Josh Gottry	8-13	HoneyRock
Dun't Be Blue Mon	Lalo Davila	9-10	Row-Loff
Fanfarra	Joel Smales	12	HoneyRock
Hands Up	Josh Gottry	3	C. Alan Publications
Lanceran Satu Slendro	Josh Gottry	7-9	Gottry Percussion
Langwana	Krisztián Budai	5	Edition Svitzer
Mi Milagro	Ralph Hicks	3-8	Tapspace
Streamline	Gene Koshinski	7	C. Alan Publications
Surfboard	Jobim/arr. Gussek	8	Tapspace
The Mexican Marimba	Traditional/arr. Baldrige	3	C. Alan Publications
Ups and Downs	Josh Gottry	6	C. Alan Publications

STEP ASIDE

Though it may pose some logistical challenges, particularly for larger percussion sections or classes, breaking into smaller, uncondacted chamber ensembles is well worth the time and effort. Rather than being the instructor, step to the side and allow students to lead their own ensemble from behind the instruments. Serve as consultant rather than conductor, asking questions and expecting the students to solve problems and initiate their own success. Help them figure out how to cue an entrance with a breath, release a phrase with a nod of their head, or manage a tempo change without depending on a baton, but instead by listening to a central rhythmic part. Give them a chance to literally take their own bow, both in rehearsal performances for the rest of the class and for parents or community members in an informal chamber concert in the band room. If you happen to have a few wind or string players who

double in your percussion ensemble, this can even open an opportunity to look for mixed chamber ensembles for select members.

Chamber works for consideration...

Title	Composer/Arranger	# Players	Publisher
Amidst	John Ling	5	Tapspace
Conversations	Josh Gottry	3	Gottry Percussion
Duet Trio	Josh Gottry	3	Gottry Percussion
Four Studies	Mario Gaetano	4	C. Alan Publications
Jam Box	Ron Coulter	3	HoneyRock
Mad Hatters	Jane Boxall	4	HoneyRock
Mallet Ensembles Vol. 1	Daniel Berg	6	Edition Svitzer
On the Spectrum	Nathan Daughtrey	5	C. Alan Publications
Seeing the World	Matt Moore	4	C. Alan Publications
Sizzle!	Nathan Daughtrey	5	C. Alan Publications
Trisicles Collection	Various Composers	3	Row-Loff
Triskaidekaphobia	Josh Gottry	3	C. Alan Publications

NOT JUST A NOVELTY

Audiences (and students) love a novelty percussion ensemble. While a few have some pedagogical elements embedded in the writing, the greater opportunity for teaching may be in drawing connections to works more than half a century old that laid the groundwork for these pieces by incorporating found sounds in a percussion ensemble setting. Composers like Lou Harrison or John Cage deserve to be introduced to student percussion ensembles, so take advantage of the connection between buckets and flower pots or trash cans and coffee cans to show students the landmark "novelty" percussion ensembles that are part of our serious music tradition.

Novelty and found sound pieces for consideration...

Title	Composer/Arranger	# Players	Publisher
Bread & Butter	Andy Smith	4	Row-Loff
Buckets Ruckus	Kit Mills	3+	C. Alan Publications
Clap Happy	Chris Crockarell	4+	Row-Loff
Clapping Music	Steve Reich	2+	Universal Edition
Clappercession	Jane Boxall	4	HoneyRock
Junkyard Rumble	Julie Davila	8+	Row-Loff
Just Buckets	Brian Justison	4	HoneyRock
Living Room Music	John Cage	4	Edition Peters
Scavenger Music	Christopher Deane	5	C. Alan Publications
Stick Insect	Jane Boxall	4	HoneyRock
Tom's Tool Shed	Chris Roode	5+	Tapspace
Wood, Metal, Skin	Josh Gottry	3+	C. Alan Publications

ONE STEP AT A TIME

Assuming most directors don't stage multiple stand-alone percussion ensemble concerts each year, one may be looking at checking off all these pedagogical options with an attitude of impossibility. On the contrary, the idea behind multiple considerations in programming is to make sure no one runs out of ideas, not that you do all of this in one concert, one semester, or even one year. Doing each of these even once in eight semesters of high school would provide the pedagogical benefit to every percussionist in your program before their graduation. With that in mind, start with the idea that most excites you as the director, most fits with your ensemble needs or equipment, or matches with the literature you already own, and run with it. After that first step, start looking at what you may choose for steps two, three, and beyond...Best of luck in the pursuit of purposeful programming of your percussion ensemble literature!

A respected educator and internationally recognized composer, **Josh Gottry** has been working with the next generation of percussionists for over twenty years. Mr. Gottry earned his Bachelor of Music in Percussion Performance at Northern Arizona University and his Masters of Music in Composition at Arizona State University and is currently part of the music faculty at Chandler-Gilbert Community College and Grand Canyon University, teaching courses in percussion, composition, and music theory. Additionally, he works regularly with percussion ensembles and students at all grade levels as a clinician and within his private lesson studio. His performance record includes professional orchestras, music theater, community and chamber ensembles, as well as solo performances and recitals. Mr. Gottry is an ASCAP award-winning composer whose works have been credited as engaging, pedagogical, and brilliantly creative. His pieces have been performed extensively at universities, junior high and high schools, and multiple national conferences. He is a member of the Percussive Arts Society and the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers, has been published in several issues of *Percussive Notes* and *Rhythm!Scene*, and has presented clinics at the Arizona Music Educators Association Conference, Arizona PAS Day of Percussion, New Mexico PAS Day of Percussion, and the Percussive Arts Society International Convention. More information about Josh Gottry can be found at www.gottrypercussion.com.



DEVELOPING CREATIVITY AND EXPRESSION THROUGH IMPROVISATION STUDY IN MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Brandon Arvay

WHY IMPROVISATION?

Creativity and expression continue to be at the center of the rapid advances seen in today's musical landscape. With the arrival of technological platforms such as Facebook Live, Twitter, Youtube, and SoundCloud, the world's cultures influence one another in ways we could not have imagined just a few years ago. Humans also have the ability now to interact with others around the world in real-time and perform instantaneously for their followers. This injection of technology has breathed new life into our musical sensibilities. It is giving us access to new performance spaces and provides fresh perspectives on fusing cultures together musically. The College Music Society's 2014 report by the Task Force on the Undergraduate Music Major (TFUMM) confirms this connection, making the case for restructuring music in the academy to include both composition and improvisation as a stronger basis for teaching musicians today than previous models.

SO WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Most of our middle and high school students do not become professional musicians. They will go into retail, business, healthcare, and Information Technology. Knowing this, and to make our brief time together relevant well beyond a few percussion rehearsals, the curriculum must help develop social, personal, and professional skills for a lifetime. Improvisation is an amazing tool for curating many of these life skills for students, including communication, creativity, problem solving, teamwork, perseverance, and leadership. However, much of today's teaching centers learning on musical interpretation and technical facility at the expense of musical discovery and character development. Improvisation is a powerful tool for making a lasting positive impact on our students no matter their future career.

WHAT IMPROVISATION CAN DO FOR YOU

Comedy improv troupes have hosted corporate offsite events since the 1990s. In these events, business people take part in acting out scenes with no preparation and little scene premise—they are truly engaged in the present, encouraging them to listen deeply to their fellow actors. Through these exercises, participants not only learn how to become

“comfortable with objective facts, but with emotion and expressiveness.”¹

I began using improvisation with my students as a means of fostering creativity, musicianship, and performance skills through musical discovery. By eliminating traditional musical rules—no printed music or judgments here, folks!—students are given the freedom to create music live in real time. This is accomplished through a series of exercises and controlled parameters to gently steer the performance while the players maintain control of the musical content. Improvisation can be performed by players of all ages and ability levels—it is the ultimate democratizer. An amazing result of improvisation is that students who lacked music-reading skills or technical ability gain confidence because they are no longer interpreting someone else’s music in an attempt to achieve an expected outcome. Generating the “right” answers in real-time is liberating.

Even advanced students with incredible chops and excellent reading skills are challenged to make musical discoveries. Many programs struggle to engage their percussionists throughout a full band or orchestra rehearsal because they fail to create a culture of deep musical and philosophical contemplation. Laying the foundational awareness of nuance can improve a student’s overall musical experience and lead to greater retention rates, increased musical and technical program growth, and a larger number of students continuing music into high school.

Improvisation provides broad benefits for middle school programs. Beginning students develop basic awareness of touch and tone, discovering a variety of sounds made available by the instruments and implements they encounter. This awareness promotes a sense of confidence and composure in rehearsal and performance situations, where students are not simply trying to “hit a target”, but are executing a part with conviction and purpose.

High school improvisers develop an appreciation for subtlety while continuing to see growth in broader areas. Improvisation at this level challenges the players to employ non-verbal communication skills while expanding their performance awareness and knowledge of music forms. Students are encouraged to explore non-traditional methods of musical creation and activating an instrument (i.e. using fingers on a vibraphone, flicking a bass drum head, etc.). Make improv sessions fun by injecting them briefly throughout percussion ensemble or marching band rehearsal breaks. Inspire students to come before and after school to improvise on their own and with friends. Percussion ensemble concerts and recruiting events are perfect opportunities for your students to perform improvisations. Your percussionists can even improvise in a practice room together while the winds warm up in the main rehearsal space.

¹ <http://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesleadershipforum/2014/06/27/why-improv-training-is-great-business-training/#2b21be163926>

THREE APPROACHES TO IMPROVISING

Creative Music Making, a book by William (Bill) Cahn (a founding member of the percussion group NEXUS), is an invaluable resource for encouraging inquisitive reflection while practicing improvisation at any level. Cahn outlines a number of exercises designed to promote creativity and expression by implementing performance parameters. This approach also gets students actively thinking about their performances by having the teacher ask questions about the performance and the students provide verbal feedback. Sample questions include, “Who was the leader? What did you like? What would you change?” Recording these improvisations give students a chance to listen to their performance and experience it from the audiences’ perspective. Upon listening, students often comment that they didn’t realize a certain musical moment happened live. These little moments result in greater performance awareness the next time the students perform.

For another approach, try drawing shapes on a sheet of paper to inspire musical improvisation. The shapes on the page can be interpreted in a number of ways by the player, resulting in a wide variety of performances. Shapes can be a combination of swirls, dots, and lines and placed in any order. Create a series of shapes to be used in a single performance or use a single shape for the entire improvisation. A swirl shape may inspire a player to start in the middle register of a marimba and play chromatically up and down the keyboard, moving their hands in a matching swirling motion. Feel free to use the sample page I have included at the end of this article.

The Second City comedy troupe in Chicago, IL is another great inspiration for making musical improvisation. In comedy improv, participants create short stories and characters and then act out their scenes. Musicians can take a similar approach by creating a scene and playing a character as they perform. This is perhaps the most abstract, yet exciting method of making music through storytelling.

As the moderator, the teacher can control the performance parameters to fit the educational needs of the students, including dynamics, mode, meter, style, articulation, instruments, number of players, implements, rhythm, and performance space. Feel free to combine these elements in any way possible, even eliminating all parameters to engage in a completely free form improvisation.

TIPS FOR STARTING OUT

For groups new to improvisation at any level, it can often be difficult for students to put themselves out there and expose their musical and emotional selves to each other. To help, start with a large group improvising at once and encourage students to play instruments on which they’re most comfortable—this yields quick and organic results. If students say the classic line, “Well, I don’t know what to do,” remind them there are no “wrong” notes. Teacher demonstrations go a long way in getting students to open up to improvisation. As

students become comfortable with the idea, create a variety of ensemble sizes to perform and have them play instruments on which they're least comfortable. This is a wonderful way of getting students to engage those instruments they otherwise consider intimidating and working on touch and tone. For beginners, try starting with a focus on the nuances and musical possibilities of a single marimba note or single drum surface. Expand this to a dyad, chord, or scale to increase the pitch options. Introduce more instruments to the single surface setup to extend those options, too.

HOW TO DO IT

To include improvisation into your curriculum, try the following procedure:

Prepare

Determine the number of players and instruments available.

- vary the number of players and their instruments
- encourage students to play instruments they typically avoid
- Cahn approach: students in the audience should listen intently and be prepared to answer teacher-prompted questions
- Shapes approach: draw your shapes on a blank page
- Second City approach: discuss the scene premise

Start

Discuss how the performance will begin.

- instructor can signal an immediate start/stop
- instructor can signal a delayed start/stop (students come in ad lib)
- players stand quietly and start/stop without a signal

Perform

Now the fun begins.

- alter parameters for each group to keep performances fresh
- fade in/fade out improvisations work best
- try setting a timer to keep performances brief during short classes

Applaud

Every improvisation is an opportunity to practice performing.

- observing students should applaud the performers and politely encourage each other

Discuss

Get everyone talking about what they watched or played.

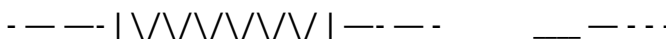
- ask questions to the students to start a conversation that gets them thinking about what they just experienced

IMPROVISATION SHAPE EXAMPLES

1)



2)



3)



4)



5)



Created by Brandon Arvay

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ARRANGEMENTS IN A PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE SETTING: THEIR PERFORMANCE AND PEDAGOGICAL BENEFITS AND FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN ARRANGING COMPOSITIONS

Jeffrey Barudin

The Western percussion world reached an important milestone at the end of the twentieth century. Percussion performers, pedagogues, ensembles, and compositions came to be recognized as a genuine presence within the vast worlds of academic and classical music. The years just before the new millennium brought with them a dramatic increase in worthwhile percussion solo and ensemble repertoire, new advances in the production of quality percussion instruments, and innovative techniques in percussion pedagogy. These developments, which some may consider long overdue, have had a positive impact on both professional musicians and the general public. Though advances have been made, much work remains when compared with other instrumental and vocal music.

There are far fewer quality compositions for percussion instruments than for other solo and chamber ensembles. The library was not firmly established until the first half of the 20th century, when several notable composers created works for "Western" percussion ensemble. These composers include George Antheil (*Ballet Mécanique*, 1924), Edgard Varèse (*Ionisation*, 1931), Henry Cowell (*Ostinato Pianissimo*, 1934), John Cage (*First Construction in Metal*, 1939) and Carlos Chavez (*Toccata*, 1942). These works have become staples in the repertoire, much like Haydn's string quartets or Mozart's wind quintets have for those respective ensembles. Our compositional output is still in its infancy, and this presents a disadvantage not only from a performance standpoint but from a pedagogical one as well.

While the repertoire from the mid-1920s through the mid-1960s was diverse in many ways, it did not expand in sheer quantity and variety of aesthetic styles until the late 1960s onward. One particularly effective method of bolstering the available repertoire has been to adapt and arrange music written for other instrumentation. Several notable percussionists added both original compositions and transcriptions to the budding library. Some were percussionists who were fascinated with mallet-keyboard instruments during the Vaudeville era, such as George Hamilton Green, Joe Green and Harry Breuer. Clair Omar Musser devoted his energies towards the development of the marimba and the solo and ensemble repertory for that instrument.

As mallet-keyboard and percussion ensembles grow in popularity, so do the number of original compositions for the medium. However, arrangements still comprise a significant percent of the available repertoire. There are many percussion programs at all levels that take advantage of these works. However, some collegiate and professional percussion groups do not make use of arrangements, either for performance or pedagogical purposes. It is my belief that arrangements play a vital role in a percussion curriculum. This article will discuss the performance and pedagogical benefits of arrangements, offer an analysis of two published arrangements, and propose methods for choosing which works to arrange and what compositional techniques to employ.

Before continuing, it is important to discuss terminology. People often use the terms “transcribe,” “arrange,” and “adapt” interchangeably when discussing a composition that has been altered from its original form. Inversely, there are those who have adamant beliefs about each word’s perceived meaning. A brief dictionary search¹ provides the following definitions:

Transcribe	1. To arrange a composition for a medium other than that for which it was originally written. 2. To represent sound (music) in written symbols (notation).
Arrange	To adapt a composition for a particular style of performance by voices or instruments.
Adapt	To make suitable to requirements or conditions; adjust or modify fittingly.

It’s interesting to note that the definition for “transcribe” uses the word *arrange*; and the definition for “arrange” uses the word *adapt*. One would assume this makes the words synonyms, despite the fact that many musicians have their own specific definitions for all three terms. In her article *What Do You Mean by ‘Transcribe?’*, Vida Chenoweth introduces an additional term that may make its way into our lexicon: *reassignment*². Chenoweth defines reassignment as the performance of a score, as written, on an instrument other than the one intended by the composer. For example, a performance of a Bach cello suite played on a 5-octave marimba with no edits or alterations from the original music. While the term reassignment is useful, it too suffers from a lack of standardized designation within the musical world. For simplicity’s sake, I will use *arrangements*.

¹ www.dictionary.com

² Chenoweth, “What Do You Mean by Transcribe?”, *Percussive Notes* 44/1, Feb. 2006, pg. 36

PERFORMANCE AND PEDAGOGICAL BENEFITS

Percussion ensembles continue to grow in popularity. In addition to professional percussion groups, universities and colleges as well as many middle and high schools are incorporating percussion chamber music into their curriculum. This is a positive trend that affords students and concert audiences an opportunity to experience how vibrant and exciting this type of ensemble can be. There are several reasons for a percussion ensemble director to integrate arrangements into the ensemble's repertoire, regardless of the age range or experience level of the group.

First, it's an opportunity to familiarize students with music from other genres. A timpanist playing a Mozart overture with an orchestra is involved with the music, but not to the same degree as the strings and winds. Percussionists rarely have the opportunity to be responsible for all melodic and harmonic aspects of a work, particularly with music composed before the 20th century. An arrangement of a classical or romantic composition offers percussionists precisely that opportunity. This same overture arranged for mallet-keyboard ensemble allows students to experience Mozart's use of melody, harmony, phrasing and texture more completely.

Second, mallet-keyboard arrangements can bring balance to a percussion-heavy concert program. The catalog of mallet-keyboard and percussion ensemble compositions grows every day. Yet it still pales in comparison to those of more established performance ensembles. Arrangements offer solutions to the problems many directors face, including the desire to program concerts having a wide range of genres and instrumentation. Arrangements also increase the options available when directors are programming for a specified number of students with potentially differing levels of experience. They are also helpful when directors are looking for something to perform outside normal expectations. One example is Dan Armstrong's arrangement *Samba Macabre*, which takes Saint-Saëns' *Danse Macabre* and presents it in an entirely unexpected way by combining a classical composition and Brazilian instruments and rhythms.

Including arrangements of well-known classical and popular works allows casual music enthusiasts an easy transition into a new medium, and thus, an easier achieved sense of gratification. This can be accomplished using either a specific work, or a familiar genre. On the whole, percussionists are eager for the percussion ensemble to attain the resplendence of other performing ensembles. This is entirely possible; and it begins with concert attendance.

Audiences may be comprised not only of parents and friends of the performers, but also school board members and administrators. Within the confines of K-12 education, the arts have always struggled to defend their perceived worthiness. Many school administrators recognize the vital role that arts education plays in the mental and physical development of students. But, many school districts across the nation have already cut the arts from their

curricula. Using arrangements helps introduce percussion ensembles to the general public, and could have a positive effect.

There are also pedagogical benefits to making arrangements a part of the percussion program. As mentioned earlier, these arrangements give percussionists the chance to be responsible for the melodic and harmonic aspects of a composition. Solo exercises and etudes may help students with phrasing, as well as building a sense of musical line. Performing a composition with a chamber ensemble is an even more effective way to reinforce those skills while working on melody and harmony.

Due to the nature of percussion instruments, students often study rhythmic aspects of music more so than the melodic and harmonic aspects of the score. Percussionists are often seen as rhythmically astute rather than as possessing a gifted or well-developed musical ear. It is the ensemble director's responsibility to make sure the percussion students are building the same musical concepts and skills as any other instrumentalist. Mallet-keyboard arrangements can be very useful teaching aids for students of all ages and ability levels. Even a simple arrangement of "Twinkle, Twinkle" could enhance lesson topics such as phrasing, melody and accompaniment, V-I cadences, as well as key and time signature discussions.

There are entire musical eras vastly under-represented in percussion literature. There exists some original keyboard-mallet ensemble repertoire written in a classical or baroque style. However, no keyboard-mallet ensemble music exists from those specific time periods. This is primarily because most of the melodic percussion instruments in use today either had not yet been invented, or were not yet available in Europe. As a result, composers prior to the mid-1920s did not write for keyboard-mallet or percussion ensemble. Had the concert marimba been available in 18th century Leipzig, Bach very well may have written exquisite music for it! The fact that original music does not exist from this time period should not preclude percussionists from being exposed to it. Through arrangements, students can learn about music's most famous composers and the eras in which they lived. Music students need a strong working knowledge of the role music has played throughout history. This is especially pertinent to a K-12 setting, where a cross-curricular teaching approach is encouraged. Having an opportunity to perform original music from these eras help students gain a better understanding of a given time period.

ANALYSIS OF SELECTED ARRANGEMENTS

I will present analyses for two arrangements – Dvorak's Symphony No. 9, "New World," and Stravinsky's *Histoire du Soldat*. Both original compositions were written within 25 years of each other, and are renowned works. They are written in distinctly different styles, and present different opportunities that are advantageous to the arranger. I also chose these

arrangements based on instrumentation. The works are written for mallet-keyboard ensemble and full percussion ensemble, respectively. These examples clearly illustrate the versatility arrangements can offer.

Largo from “New World” Symphony – Antonin Dvorak, arr. C.O. Musser, ed. Dan Armstrong
Clair Omar Musser arranged many compositions for his marimba orchestra, of which only a few remain in publication. Perhaps the most popular arrangement commercially available is the Largo from Dvorak’s Symphony No. 9. This edition, published by C. Alan Publications, has been updated by Dan Armstrong to incorporate a contrabass part. This provides a more substantial harmonic foundation in conjunction with the originally transcribed parts. This arrangement consists of five separate marimba parts, with Marimba One serving as the primary melodic voice. All parts call for two mallets, with the exception of four measures in the Marimba Two part that requires three mallets. Musser altered the original key from D flat Major to C Major in order to accommodate the range of the marimba of that era, (C3 – C7). This arrangement is not technically difficult but requires players who are sensitive to phrasing and musical expression.

Musser’s arrangement focuses solely on the first motive of the movement, which is characterized by the well-known English horn solo. The *poco piu mosso* section in the middle of the movement is omitted. This could be for any number of reasons. Musser may have wanted to focus on the more austere and nostalgic primary theme, thus keeping the orchestration simple and sparse. He also may have thought that the middle section of the movement would not lend itself well to performance by a marimba orchestra. Perhaps pragmatically, he may have had a compositional deadline or a set length for this arrangement in mind. Regardless, Musser’s arrangement is true to Dvorak’s original composition in terms of maintaining the relationship between melody and harmony.

This arrangement is readily accessible, both technically and musically, to ensembles of all ages. It can serve as a good teaching tool for younger ensembles. It can be used to work on phrasing, musicality, and ensemble cohesiveness. At the same time, it introduces students to an important classical composition. This arrangement would also be appropriate for college-level ensembles looking to develop the intricacies and nuances within composition. The performers could identify the instrument their parts represent, determine its place within the orchestration, finally demonstrating that understanding through performance. I think it was wise of Musser to arrange the *Largo* movement as it is, of course, a famous movement from an iconic symphony. The popularity of classical music in the 1940s suggests that the work may have been even more popular in Musser’s time than it is today. A benefit to choosing this movement is its sparse orchestration, which often features a single melodic line over a held chord. This utilizes the marimba’s resonance and sonorous tone qualities, of which Musser was keenly aware. In a marimba orchestra, fifteen to twenty people may be playing

the same part. The sustained quality of the sound would then be uninterrupted and immensely resounding. Surely, this is what Musser was hoping to achieve.

When writing for a large number of players, as Musser did, there will undoubtedly be varying ability levels within the ensemble. Various parts, particularly the inner marimba voices, would be playable by amateur players. This arrangement offers high musical reward despite a low difficulty level, making it a wonderful programming option for ensemble directors at any performance level.

“The Devil’s Dance” from *Histoire du Soldat* – Igor Stravinsky, arr. James Ancona
Stravinsky’s *Histoire du Soldat* is a well-known and important work for percussionists. Stravinsky utilized an innovative grouping of percussion instruments in the original work, which calls for several different mallets and beaters. This helped establish percussion as a viable and vibrant solo instrument. Given its history, an arrangement of “The Devil’s Dance” for percussion ensemble seems fitting. Ancona has created a faithful arrangement, keeping entirely within the original form and harmonic structure. Ancona became famous for his work with Drum Corps International (DCI), and this arrangement would be effective as a front ensemble showpiece or in a concert percussion ensemble program. The instrumentation calls for the following: glockenspiel, xylophone, two vibraphones, two 4.3 marimbas, five timpani and a multi-percussion setup of a snare drum, field drum, tambourine, and concert bass drum. Ancona transposes the work up a major second to accommodate instrument range. The arrangement is a mere 1:20 minutes long, but the parts are technically challenging at the listed performance tempo of quarter note = 144. Both marimba players will need 4 mallets. Because the timpani part follows the double bass line, extensive pedaling is required.

The original composition uses only seven players, and is exceptionally dense. There isn’t a single beat of silence until nearly the end of the work. There is always an eighth- or sixteenth-note pulse, even underneath the more drawn out melodic lines. This results in a high-energy and insistent feel, which is deftly realized in the percussion arrangement. The mallet-keyboard parts are often doubled, either melodically or rhythmically. Playing these lines together requires a high level of technical precision. A positive benefit of unison parts is the sense of cohesion and camaraderie that often forms within the ensemble. Trust among ensemble members, and the knowledge that they are depending on one another, instills interpersonal life skills. This arrangement also allows the ensemble members to work on other aspects of musicality, such as building rhythmic accuracy, reading over-the-barline ostinati in mixed meters, and building a sense of primary and secondary voicing.

This arrangement, while difficult, would be appropriate for an advanced high school, or college-level ensemble. As with the *Largo* from the “New World” Symphony, this work would be an excellent way to introduce students to important compositions that they might not have been exposed to otherwise. However, due to its short performance time, a director might

also want to consider arranging the 'Tango', 'Valse', and 'Ragtime' dances from *Histoire du Soldat* as well, thus creating a suite from this monumental work. This would prove an excellent exercise in arranging, since working with the limited instrumentation would be less daunting than arranging a full orchestral score. It also lends itself to developing more of a story arc that builds up to the Devil's Dance, rather than starting there abruptly. Utilizing Ancona's arrangement as a model would be advantageous to anyone looking to enhance his or her own arranging skills.

CHOOSING A WORK TO ARRANGE, AND TECHNIQUES TO EMPLOY

An average mallet-keyboard catalog is likely to list many arrangements of varying genres, difficulty levels, and instrumentations. While many arranged works are readily available, ensemble directors should not limit themselves to those works. Arranging works for one's own ensemble is an easy and exciting way to incorporate different music of any genre into the repertoire. Deciding what and how to arrange can be difficult, but these guidelines may prove helpful.

First, consider the ultimate goal. Is it more important to arrange a work that is a favorite of the students, a favorite of the arranger or a favorite of the anticipated audience? Perhaps it is most important to arrange a work that fits a particular genre or time period needed for the concert program, or to arrange a work whose rehearsal and performance would offer students the highest degree of musical growth? These are only a few worthy considerations. Often, the ultimate goal will involve more than one objective. As educators, we all want our students to be exposed to a wide range of musical genres – an experience that is better imparted through performance than lecturing.

Next, it is vital to ensure that the ensemble and the director both share a general consensus about the composition to be arranged. If a work is favored by the ensemble director but not the students (or vice versa), it may be more difficult to achieve positive results. However, no work should be immediately dismissed by either student or teacher. Through practice and perseverance, one can often develop appreciation for a composition initially perceived as uninspiring. Just as the director may want to arrange a Haydn string quartet or a Rossini overture, the students may want to arrange a current popular song or more obscure work. Those options all have value, both musically and educationally. One possibility would be for the students to create their own arrangements. This would be a wonderful way for them to learn about the inner workings of music in the context of a work that they enjoy. Concert programs featuring student arrangements are highly rewarding for both student and teacher, and can be an excellent means of encouragement.

Certain works will be more suited to arrangement and concert performance than others. One obvious issue to consider is what instruments are available to the ensemble. It would be frustrating to arrange a work that is ultimately unplayable due to instrument constraints. Both

keyboard-mallet and full percussion ensemble arrangements are beneficial. Arrangements for full percussion ensembles normally allow for more personnel. This particularly is an important issue for younger ensembles, where keeping everyone involved with every work is expected. Maintaining everyone's participation in a younger ensemble gives them a chance to bond as a section and assures no one feels left out or unimportant. Also, on a concert program that features many works for a smaller number of players, many high school and collegiate directors choose to close with a work that features the entire ensemble.

The use of non-melodic percussion instruments in conjunction with keyboard-mallet instruments is another advantage of arranging for full percussion ensemble. This is particularly true if the original composition makes extensive use of those instruments. Imagine an arrangement of Bolero without using a snare drum, or an arrangement of *Blue Rondo a la Turk* without a drum set. While they technically might work, they would not be as stimulating for performers or audience members. Still, it is important to consider the orchestration of the arrangement. If there are too many percussive instruments in an ensemble and too few keyboard-mallet instruments, the melodic content of the arrangement will most likely be drowned out.

Arranging for keyboard-mallet instruments alone is a wonderful option when considering compositions that either do not feature percussion prominently, or whose melodic and harmonic content carry the work by itself. Student percussionists, specifically those in K-12 settings, are typically less comfortable on keyboard-mallet instruments than on non-melodic instruments. Thankfully, this is a trend being addressed by many music educators. Despite the forward progress, students rarely have an opportunity to perform music featuring only keyboard-mallet instruments. These arrangements help students develop vital aspects of musicality. This includes phrasing as well as the interaction and hierarchy between melody, countermelody, and harmony. These are obviously areas that any teacher would want students to develop as part of basic musical training. These facets of musicianship can be developed even further with college-aged students who need these skills in order to consider their music education truly complete.

When choosing a work to arrange, one should also consider its musical properties. Is the work very dense, or lighter in texture? Is there a clear sense of melody and harmony, or is the tonal structure more complex? The answers to these questions should not, in and of themselves, provide grounds for or against arranging the work. But they may help lead to a decision. The texture of a composition or arrangement encourages students to focus on aspects such as ensemble balance, voice hierarchy, and ear development. Playing compositions with both lighter and denser textures ensures these skills are developed to their full potential.

When considering the tonal structure of a composition, the same logic applies. Both a clearly defined tonal work, and one that has a vaguer tonal center each have some positive attributes. Melody and harmony are relatively simple concepts for students to grasp, particularly when they are perceived in compositions already familiar to the ear. It is much easier to sing along to a typical melody from the classical era than to music from a post-tonal school such as the Second Viennese School. Music with straightforward melodic and harmonic content is easier to rehearse and is generally more accessible. However, this should not be taken to mean that this music is more worthwhile than post-tonal or atonal music. Introducing twelve-tone and/or highly chromatic or atonal music in a performance can be a useful teaching tool for the performers and the audience. People are not as familiar with music of that sort, and tend to base their opinions on either infrequent listening or on the opinions of others. Arranging these works will require a conscientious approach to rehearsals and performance from the students, and a more scrupulous approach to listening from an audience. The reward, however, is worth the effort if it inspires new appreciation for music previously thought disagreeable.

In conclusion, there are numerous positive reasons to make use of arrangements in both mallet-keyboard and full percussion ensemble settings. They offset the scarcity of music written for the medium from earlier periods, and they can be used to teach students about history in a musical context. The director can also use arrangements to help educate and reinforce vital aspects of musicality for the students. Arrangements can be a means for audiences to learn about musical genres previously unfamiliar to them; and they can help add variety to a concert program. Arrangements give ensemble directors options in addition to the current idiomatic repertoire. The percussion ensemble has emerged as an integrated component of music programs around the world. As that popularity grows, so will the repertoire. Utilizing arrangements as a practical and valuable supplement will serve to stimulate this growth further.

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BUILDING BETTER PERCUSSIONISTS: A CURRICULUM TO ADVANCE STUDENTS MUSICALLY AND TECHNICALLY: PART ONE

Scott Farkas

PREFACE

In my time as a percussion specialist in public school programs, a private lesson teacher, and as a member of the music faculty at the College of Southern Idaho, I have found that it can be difficult to organize an approach to the vast array of instruments, skills and techniques that it is necessary for student percussionists to master. In this series of articles, I will put forward an idea of curricular programming from year 1 of a percussionist's involvement with a school band program through graduation. The concept of this program of study is to organize the percussion education curriculum in a way that focuses deliberately on a small group of techniques at any one time. By focusing on technique first, and then picking music that reinforces the that focus, this curriculum will produce percussionists who:

- know all of the standard rudiments before high school and all of the modern hybrid rudiments before college
- master all of their major scales before high school and all minor scales before college
- are well rounded and technically proficient on all of the instruments in the percussion family
- can play suitably advanced repertoire on each of the major solo percussion instruments at each grade level
- listen to their fellow musicians and make music connected to their ears and breath
- continue to grow and learn more about their instrument every year
- become lifelong performers of the instrument.

6th GRADE (YEAR 1)

In the first year of percussion study, it is important to recognize that there is plenty of content that can be taught while giving your students lots of time to focus on one or two simple techniques; the full stroke, and its relationship to the double bounce and eventually multiple bounce stroke. By allowing students to focus more directly on these foundational aspects of playing, they will grow much more quickly, and will be on an accelerated track towards

musical success. Much of the curriculum in the first year on wind instruments focuses on sound production. For your percussionists, focusing on the full stroke and double bounce stroke is equivalent to wind players focusing on tone production and learning their instrument one note at a time. It is a lesson that will apply to nearly every other musical challenge they will face in beginning band. In order to apply this idea to your teaching, here are some thoughts on curricular planning.

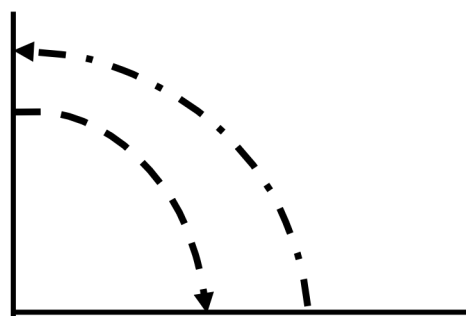
SNARE DRUM

What is a full stroke?

It is easiest to begin to teach the full stroke on an instrument that offers the most opportunity for rebound, the snare drum. We call this technique a full stroke, because it is produced by moving the stick through a full range of motion from furthest away from the drum, to the drum and back. It is initiated with the stick perpendicular to the drum head. The stick then moves all of the way to the drum. Upon striking the drum, the velocity of the stick should allow it to rebound all of the way back to its original position. A full stroke drawn on a graph looks like this:

4) *Stick returns
to original position*

1) *Stick begins
Perpendicular to drum*



2) *Stick reaches
drum head* 3) *Stick rebounds back
towards original position*

There are three important things to keep in mind during the execution of the full stroke. First, the students should have a good fulcrum between their thumb and the first knuckle of their pointer finger. Second, all of their fingers should remain in contact with the stick throughout the entire stroke. Third, there is no 'up prep' before playing a full stroke. Because you begin with your stick perpendicular to the drum, you need only 'throw' the stick down towards the drum and allow it to rebound. In essence, 'down' is the only motivation the student must give the stick.

Stick Control

Just as you would have your beginning wind students gain control over their instrument by playing long tones and gradually learning new pitches, you should have your percussionists gain control over their instrument by learning the full stroke, then very gradually adding to speed and the sticking combinations it is applied to. A great resource is the first page of the

book *Stick Control* By George Lawrence Stone. Have the students learn a new sticking variation each week, and practice them using full strokes. It is a good idea to start slow enough that students can evaluate the quality of each full stroke in the new sticking combination. I have started as slowly as eighth note = 70bpm. The goal I present to my students here is to feel very comfortable with this at a given speed, then to increase that speed by only 1 bpm each day. This seems physically to the student like unnoticeable change, but if they do it each day in your class, they will add nearly 180 bpm by the end of one year, and have a strong physical understanding of how the full stroke works in a large variety of sticking patterns.

Rudiments

This is also a great time to begin to teach your students their first of the standard 26 rudiments, the long roll. The long roll is a double stroke roll that begins slowly enough that it functions as two full strokes on each hand. The student then gradually speeds up until their fingers are controlling the rebound to create a slow 'double bounce.' The student continues to accelerate until they are playing the fastest double bounce roll they can control, at which point they may switch to a multiple bounce roll, and then slow back down. A great exercise to assign in working on this is the 5 minute long roll. I like to call this a 'commercial break exercise,' because it can be done during a commercial break of their favorite show. A student doesn't need to make a huge sacrifice to add this to their routine and improve tremendously as a percussionist.

The approach to this exercise is: 1. accelerate evenly for 2 minutes; 2. remain at the fastest roll for 1 minute. 3. decelerate evenly for 2 minutes. Doing this simple exercise once or twice a day will give any student many attempts to kinesthetically learn how to control the double bounce with their fingers, how to navigate the 'breaks' in the roll, when it seems too fast to play with the wrists and too slow to bounce, and build muscle strength and endurance in the arm, wrist, and fingers in a safe and gradual way. It also offers the instructor an opportunity to ensure that students are approaching rolls with relaxed body mechanics, which will result in better sounding rolls sooner from your students, and a healthier student who will be able to play for their entire life hopefully free from performance related injury.

Once the students are comfortable with the full stroke and double bounce, it is time to approach more of the rudiments. It is a good idea to approach the rudiments by breaking them into families according to technique. The first one to look at is the 'stroke roll' family. By now, your students already have all of the technique they need to play all of the 'stroke rolls' and so they need only learn the counting necessary to master each rudiment in this family. Each time a new roll is introduced, students should learn it slowly, and should eventually play them the same way they play the long roll, playing each roll from slow to fast and back to slow again. One way to organize these is to think of them first in the family of 16th note based rolls. These are:

5 stroke roll:

Two staves of musical notation for a 5 stroke roll. The first staff contains two measures of music, and the second staff contains two measures. Below each measure, the corresponding tap functions are listed.

Staff 1:
 Measure 1: R R L L R / L L R R L
 Measure 2: RR LL R / LL RR L / RR LL R / LL RR L

Staff 2:
 Measure 1: R R L L R / L L R R L
 Measure 2: LL RR L / RR LL R / LL RR L / RR LL R

7 Stroke Roll:

Two staves of musical notation for a 7 stroke roll. The first staff contains two measures of music, and the second staff contains two measures. Below each measure, the corresponding tap functions are listed.

Staff 1:
 Measure 1: R L L R R L L / R L L R R L L / R LL RR LL R / LL RR LL R / LL RR LL R / LL RR LL R
 Measure 2: L R R L L R R / L R R L L R R / L RR LL RR L / RR LL RR L / RR LL RR L / RR LL RR L

Staff 2:
 Measure 1: R R L L R R L / L L R R L L R / RR LL RR L / LL RR LL R
 Measure 2: L L R R L L R / R R L L R R L / LL RR LL R / RR LL RR L

9 Stroke Roll:

Two staves of musical notation for a 9 stroke roll. The first staff contains two measures of music, and the second staff contains two measures. Below each measure, the corresponding tap functions are listed.

Staff 1:
 Measure 1: R R L L R R L L R / L L R R L L R R L / RR LL RR LL R / LL RR LL RR L
 Measure 2: L L R R L L R R L / R R L L R R L L R / LL RR LL RR L / RR LL RR LL R

Staff 2:
 Measure 1: R R L L R R L / L L R R L L R R L / RR LL RR LL R / LL RR LL RR L
 Measure 2: L L R R L L R R L / R R L L R R L L R / LL RR LL RR L / RR LL RR LL R

13 Stroke Roll:

Two staves of musical notation for a 13 stroke roll. The first staff contains two measures of music, and the second staff contains two measures. Below each measure, the corresponding tap functions are listed.

Staff 1:
 Measure 1: R R L L R R L L R R L L R / L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L
 Measure 2: L L R R L L R R L / R R L L R R L L R / RR LL RR LL R / LL RR LL RR L

Staff 2:
 Measure 1: RR LL RR LL RR LL R / LL RR LL RR LL RR L / RR LL RR LL RR LL R / LL RR LL RR LL R
 Measure 2: LL RR LL RR LL RR L / RR LL RR LL RR LL R / RR LL RR LL RR LL R / LL RR LL RR LL R

17 Stroke Roll:

Two staves of musical notation for a 17 stroke roll. The first staff contains two measures of music, and the second staff contains two measures. Below each measure, the corresponding tap functions are listed.

Staff 1:
 Measure 1: R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R / L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L
 Measure 2: L L R R L L R R L / R R L L R R L L R / RR LL RR LL R / LL RR LL RR L

Staff 2:
 Measure 1: RR LL RR LL RR LL R / LL RR LL RR LL RR L / RR LL RR LL RR LL R / LL RR LL RR LL R
 Measure 2: LL RR LL RR LL RR L / RR LL RR LL RR LL R / RR LL RR LL RR LL R / LL RR LL RR LL R

Once students have learned these rolls well, they can move on to the 11 and 10 stroke rolls which are based in triplets. I teach them in this order because the 10 stroke roll is the first roll that has 2 taps. I find students get confused if you are trying to have them think in a triplet base and simultaneously change the way the tap functions, so we do the 11 stroke roll first with 1 tap at the beginning then the 10 stroke roll with a tap at the beginning and the end.

11 Stroke Roll:

11 Stroke Roll: Musical notation showing a sequence of notes on a staff, with rhythmic patterns indicated by R (Right) and L (Left) strokes below the staff.

R L L R R L L R R L L R L L R L L R L L R LL RR LL RR LL R LL RR LL RR LL
L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L RR LL RR LL RR L RR LL RR LL RR

10 Stroke Roll:

10 Stroke Roll: Musical notation showing a sequence of notes on a staff, with rhythmic patterns indicated by R (Right) and L (Left) strokes below the staff.

R L L R R L L R R L R L L R R L L R R L R LL RR LL RR L R LL RR LL RR L
L R R L L R R L L R L R R L L R R L L R L RR LL RR LL R L RR LL RR LL R

Finally, it is time to introduce students to the 6 stroke roll, which combines the two tap concept of the 10 stroke roll with the 16th note base from above.

6 Stroke Roll:

6 Stroke Roll: Musical notation showing a sequence of notes on a staff, with rhythmic patterns indicated by R (Right) and L (Left) strokes below the staff.

R L L R R L L R R L R L L R R L L R R L
L R R L L R R L L R L R R L L R R L L R

R LL RR LL L R LL RR L R LL RR L R LL RR L
L RR LL R L RR LL R L RR LL R L RR LL R

Learning these 8 different 'stroke rolls', together with the long roll and the work on single strokes that comprise the single stroke roll, your students will be well on their way to having full command over all of the traditional rudiments and all with having focused on, understood, and mastered only 1 simple technique so far.

Repertoire

What repertoire best accompanies the pursuit of mastery of the full stroke and double bounce strokes? First and foremost, the rhythmic etudes that exist in your beginning band book are often a great place to start. They usually unfold different rhythmic ideas in a logical way and progress the percussionists along with the band. One caution here is the early introduction of the flam. This will become confusing to students, because the flam is actually a combination of a down stroke and an up stroke, neither of which have they been taught yet. With the focus on full strokes alone at this point, it is both intellectually and kinesthetically confusing to students to attempt a new type of note that involves concepts and mechanics they have not yet learned. To work around this, make use of the rhythms and save flams for later.

When students are comfortable with a double bounce and single full stroke, and have begun to learn their stroke rolls, a great piece of repertoire to begin them with is a traditional rudimental piece called "Three Camps." It works well for students at this level because it focuses on only one technical idea. Every note is either a single full stroke, or a double bounce. The student can feel musically satisfied by working on a more substantial piece of music while simultaneously focusing on the technical goals of the first year curriculum.

music while simultaneously focusing on the technical goals of the first year curriculum.

Once students have conquered “3 Camps” it may be near the end of the first year. A great ‘graduation’ piece, or even summer assignment to move to some more advanced rhythmic language, is “Rolling in Rhythm” by Charley Wilcoxon. I have used this piece as an ‘entrance ticket’ for students entering their second year of study. It is assigned over the summer and they have something to present upon their return, and a means of musical growth during our time apart.

Beyond this, I often ask my students to compose a 4 – 8 measure exercise for each stroke roll as they learn them, and occasionally an 8 – 16 measure exercise combining 2 or more stroke rolls. This will offer one more modality of considering the new material they are learning in class. It also allows the student to understand the way these rolls are used in rudimental composition on a deeper level. Letting students ‘play’ with their technical work also makes it more fun and they tend to invest deeper into this technical work.

MALLETS

Much of what the students have worked on with their snare drum will apply to early mallet percussion lessons as well. The students should apply a good ‘full stroke’ technique to each bar of the mallet instrument. In fact, it is a good idea to have the students focus on playing 1 bar at a time to understand that the hand technique doesn’t change drastically, and that the mallet instrument is not only about moving up and down the keyboard. To accomplish this, I sometimes ask students to play rhythmic exercises on a single note of the mallet instrument with their classmates in the band.

Hand technique

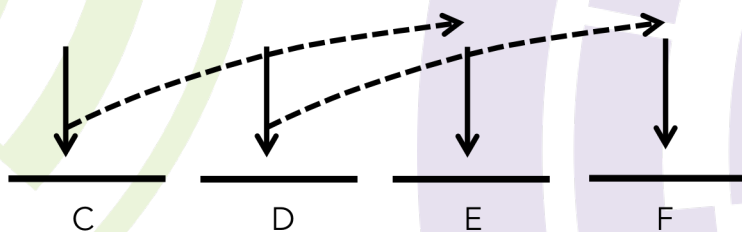
As stated earlier, not too much about the hand technique changes on a mallet instrument. One notable exception is that because of the nature of narrow bars, to play with two hands on one note of the instrument, the student will need to play with the sticks positioned one above the other instead of next to each other. It is best to position the sticks so that neither is in the direct center of the bar. One thing I tell students which seems to help them visualize this is to look at the resonating tubes on a mallet instrument. Those tubes are held together with two rails. Those rails make a convenient line just above and below the center of each bar. So it is easy to tell a student that their left mallet should play along the top rail connected to the resonating tubes and their right hand along the bottom one. This visualization will help students to understand the position of their sticks very easily. This photo illustrates the stick position



discussed here. Notice the sticks' alignment above the rails underneath each bar of the instrument.

Multiple notes and scales

The most important concept when students begin to play more than one note is that the sticks always move straight down toward the bar. They should not ever come in at a horizontal angle. To accomplish this, students should maximize the time allowed by the rebound from one note to prepare the stick over the bar for the next note. They should practice playing just 2 notes first. The stick comes straight down and straight back up, just like on the snare drum. After this is understood, add a third and fourth note. If, for instance, the student is doing this exercise with the notes of a C Major scale, they can first play C with their left hand, and D with their right hand. Then they can be instructed to add the note E. When the student plays C with their left hand, it should rebound over the E, and come directly down onto that bar. Next the student can add an F. The right hand will play D, then rebound above F and come straight down onto it. This idea is illustrated below:



This concept combined with the basic music theory of whole steps and half steps will help your students begin to learn scales. Because they do not have to overcome the physical struggles of learning to actually play each note on their instrument like their peers in the wind section, your beginning students may be able to work on this simple technique and learn several scales pretty quickly. It is not unreasonable to expect that they will be able to learn C, G, F, and Bb major scales in their first year.

Once students have learned each scale, they should gradually increase speed and comfort with them just as with the full stroke exercises above. A good goal is to have them perform these five scales in 8th notes at quarter note = 90 bpm. It is important for students to play scales in 2 octaves whenever possible. Again not having to learn about added breath support or new fingerings will make adding the second octave simpler for your percussion students, so don't be afraid to ask them to do it. The benefit of this is that since each scale has seven notes, they will be forced to play each scale leading both with their right and left hands.

Rolls

Early on, students will be challenged to play the single stroke rolls that are required of them on mallet instruments. It creates cognitive dissonance to ask students simply play very fast

hand to hand single stroke rolls on the mallet instruments because they are still learning the technical facility of full strokes and gradually building up speed in their snare drum practice. To get around this, mirror the gradual increase in snare drum technique by having your students take a rhythmic approach to single stroke mallet rolls.

To focus on good full stroke technique, you may ask them first to alternate whole notes. These are quite slow, but alternating hands and assessing the quality of the full stroke will be a valuable tool for the students as they progress. From there you may ask them to alternate half notes, quarter notes, and 8th notes, all with the same thoughtful approach to a quality full stroke.

A useful tool is to time this so that when the students arrive at the 8th note triplet, you may be teaching the concept of triplets to the rest of your band. They may practice playing three notes per pulse together on single notes and feel an extra inclusion to their peers who play different instruments. From here you may ask them to play rolls as groups of 16th notes. This may be as fast as the beginning student gets in their first year, but if they are moving quickly, the next steps are 16th note triplets and eventually 32nd notes.

Rhythmic rolls align nicely with long tone exercises in your warm up routine. As an added measure to this, I often ask my percussion students to sing while playing these exercises. It works on their ear in a way their peers on wind instruments get to, but percussionists often don't. It also allows young percussionists to begin thinking about phrasing and musicality in terms of breath. This will produce much more musically sensitive percussionists as they progress through your program.

Reading and Repertoire

Reading mallet music tends to be the scariest part of band class for many percussionists. Finding music that approaches this task in a methodical way and unfolds challenges one at a time is essential to keep students on board with their classmates in reading.

Much of the repertoire in the beginning band books is expertly designed to progress students through new pitches, and the concepts of moving first by step and then by particular leaps. This is a valuable tool. An exercise I have found success with for beginning percussionists is to use a combination of verbal and visual cues to approach reading. For instance, write a series of whole notes down on large cards. Set a metronome and at the beginning of a measure say the name of the note the students will play on the next measure, they then play that note. Once you've said them all, begin revealing the next note visually by turning around a card. This will help them to visually, kinesthetically and intellectually map the pitch from its name to the bar it represents and finally to its place on the staff.

You may reduce the time between notes to make this more challenging as students become comfortable with the exercise.

When it is time for them to begin working on individual repertoire, their peers' books offer great material. There may be different pitches, rhythms, or clefs involved, but with music that is familiar to the students from earlier in class. Often asking them to learn the trombone part or flute part to a song the class has already worked on is a good entry into more reading for mallet percussionists. Any simple flute, violin, trombone, or other "C" instrument music will make a great supplement to this practice.

From here, I like to use the beginning of *Modern School for Xylophone, Marimba, and Vibraphone* by Morris Goldenberg. The first 14 pages have technique exercises, scale exercises, and several short melodies in each key. This will combine all of the technique and reading skills you have worked on as your students advance to the second year of your program.

CONCLUSION

Following this layout for first year percussionists will allow them to not be confused or frazzled by having to learn several complex techniques all at once. By focusing instead on one or two simple techniques and methodically applying them to the different instruments of the percussion section, you will have students who advance more quickly through your program, and who are well on their way to mastering all of the standard rudiments, their major scales, and can approach many technical challenges in any music put in front of them. On top of this, you will be developing percussionists who thoughtfully approach each stroke and connect music to their ears and their breath. A program that emphasizes these things will find that it has at its advanced levels not only technically proficient percussionists, but musically advanced and sensitive students as well.

Scott Farkas is an assistant professor of music, and director of athletic bands at the College of Southern Idaho where he coordinates the percussion department. He has worked in public school systems teaching percussion to students from grades 5 – 12 in many contexts throughout his career. He has also served as a member of the percussion staff for the RAIDERS Drum and Bugle Corps. He is committed to expanding the community of percussionists by maintaining an active performance schedule, commissioning and creating new pieces of music for percussion, and engaging with local communities to expose them to the possibilities of percussion music. To this end, he curates, composes for and performs in the experimental "Stage Door Series" of performances at the College of Southern Idaho. As a founding member and the current vice president of the Idaho Bandmasters' Association, Mr. Farkas is also dedicated to expanding and enhancing access to music education across the state of Idaho.