

THE PAS EDUCATORS' COMPANION

Volume VII
Fall 2019

A Helpful Resource of the
PERCUSSIVE ARTS SOCIETY
EDUCATION COMMITTEE



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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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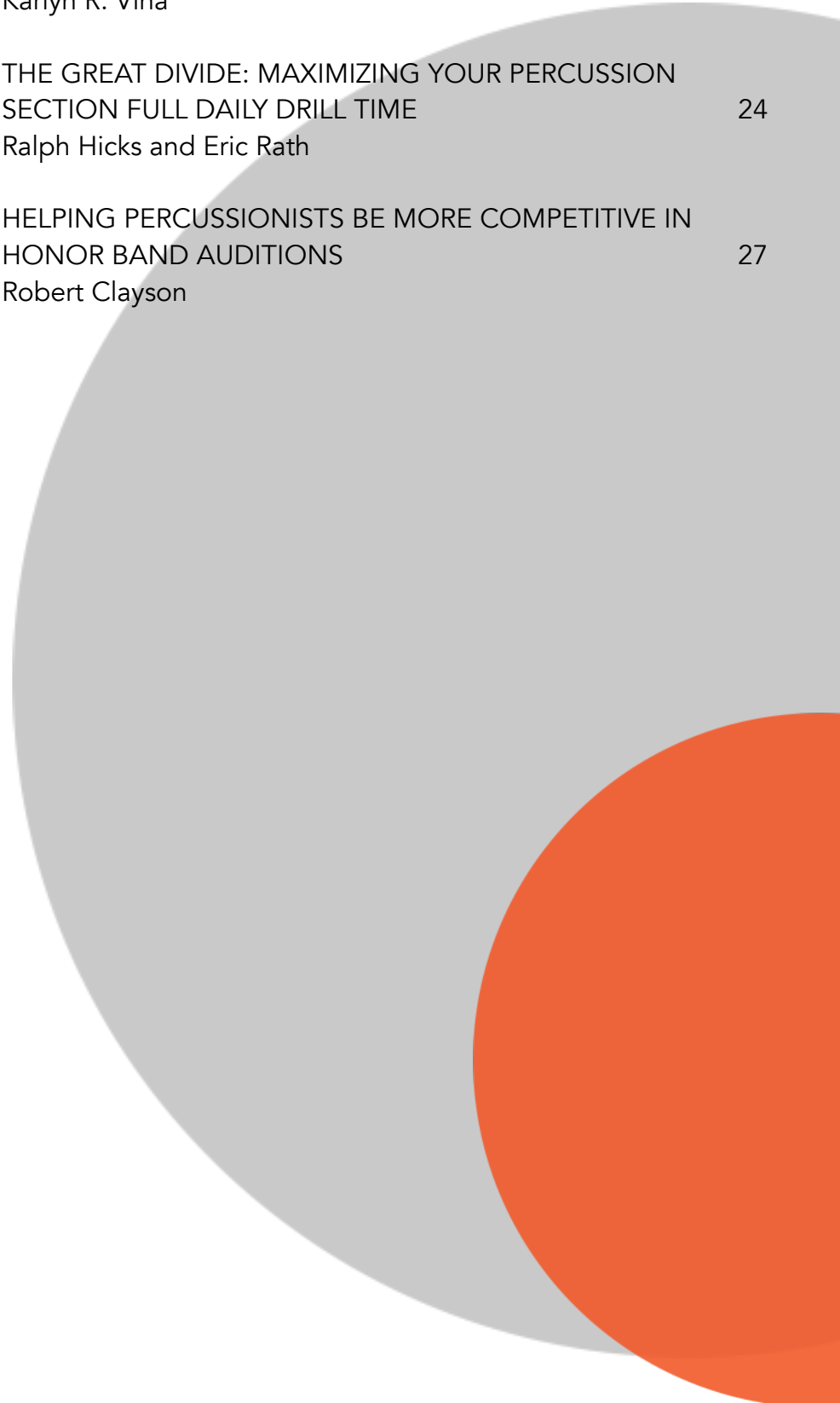
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PROGRAMMING FOR THE SCHOLASTIC PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

Emily Tannert Patterson

Percussion ensemble music is (or, arguably, at least should be) the centerpiece of many groups' work in the spring months, so it stands to reason that our primary curricular material would merit careful consideration in its selection. However, I find that educators often don't know where to look for pieces beyond, perhaps, their state's "selected repertoire" list. State lists can be a fantastic starting point, but with the enormous quantity of high-quality music being produced right now, the lists just can't keep up with the great repertoire for our art form.

So how does a successful ensemble director go about sourcing and selecting ensemble music?

I believe that each director has to find a process or method that works for them; I can only share my own, which involves spending a lot of time looking at publisher websites, YouTube and other social media channels, and talking to my colleagues. While that may sound a bit daunting, the great part about this process is that I come across a lot of pieces that, while they might not be

pieces that, while they might not be right for my group right now, I can file in my mental music cabinet to play later; and I come across a lot of pieces that I might not have otherwise seen. As I have often said to my students, one of the most incredible parts about being a percussionist is that our art form is a modern one, and we have the chance to participate, as composers, arrangers, and performers, in the creation of its canon. No other single instrument or instrument family can say that!

Criteria for selection

Before you look at any music, you should first know what the purpose of the repertoire is. Do you have a percussion ensemble concert at the end of the semester? A performance at a festival? Or is this piece intended only to be prepared in the classroom for skill-building? How long do you have to learn the repertoire? The answers to these questions will necessarily inform your selections.

Now, on to the music! First, for better or for worse, we generally have to select

for worse, we generally have to select pieces based on how many students we have in the ensemble. There are a few exceptions/workarounds – which I'll cover later – but usually we need to restrict ourselves to what's been written for the number of students we have.

Secondarily, many of us are limited by what gear we have on hand. Whether it's that we only have one 5-octave marimba – or only one marimba, period – this can be a determining factor.

Next is, of course, the level of challenge. Who is playing this: your beginners? Your middle school top group? Your high school second group? What are their strengths and weaknesses? Given the varying skills of our students, a group that can pull off a fairly hard drummy piece may need to stay on the easier side of the keyboard literature, or vice versa.

Then consider what type of music you're after – both in terms of what will work well for the individual group as well as how the piece will fit in a performance opportunity/concert as a whole. Do these students need a pop-style piece – something with groove? Do they need to do a classical transcription? Or are they mature enough to do something esoteric? Or perhaps you already have too many keyboard ensembles or drummy pieces or groovy pieces or transcriptions or classical percussion ensembles programmed for your concert (much like a great meal, every concert should offer a variety of flavors – a mini-tour of the different types of

a mini-tour of the different types of repertoire, if you will), or maybe you need something crowd-pleasing to play at a faculty in-service.

Lastly, you have to consider the skills and needs of the individual performers. Do you have a student who can be featured as a soloist? Do you have a killer drumset player? Or do you lack a solid timpani player, or have a player who needs a remedial-level part? How long do you have to prepare, and how much rehearsing will you be able to do in that time?

Sourcing material

All of these questions create a giant jigsaw puzzle. Thankfully, I really like puzzles! So every year, around the end of marching band season, I start scouring publishers' websites and composers' SoundCloud channels. I like to start with Tapspace and C. Alan; Jim Casella and Nathan Daughtrey, respectively, have done a great job of curating and publishing a wide variety of high-quality pieces. I also spend a bit of time at Row-Loff, depending on what kinds of music I'm looking for. I use the search filters to narrow down the field by number of students, difficulty, and/or instrumentation, and then... I listen to a LOT of music. I grab a piece of paper (such as the programming worksheet I've provided for you), write down every ensemble I'm programming for, and list all the possibilities I come across for each group.

Since so many composers self-publish

Since so many composers self-publish these days, it's worth checking out YouTube as well. YouTube's "next up" and "suggested video" features may lead you toward pieces or composers you didn't otherwise come across, as can looking up old concert programs online, or reaching out to other teachers in your area.

I try to go into the puzzle with an idea in mind: for example, a "centerpiece" piece for my top group, something esoteric for the second group, a "special effects" piece for my third group, etc. – not a formula, but some idea of what I'm looking for, to shorten the hunt. It often doesn't take very long to firm up the first couple of selections; and at that point the concert as a whole is starting to take shape, which makes it easier to include or exclude potential pieces for the next group on my list.

This process can take a while, but you shouldn't feel required to listen to the entirety of every piece you 'audition;' often I know just by reading a description, or by listening to the first thirty seconds, that a piece is not right for my group: maybe I don't have access to steel drums, or I don't have a drumset player (and the part can't be split up, or I don't have the personnel to split it up); maybe it's a wintery piece and this concert is in May! Whatever the reason, exercising a bit of early selectiveness drastically shortens the amount of time I spend clicking around. I've also learned over the years to check the provided scores/score samples as r-

well – what sounds easy on compose

well – what sounds easy on composer-produced audio can be deceptively difficult in reality; looking at the score will alert you to an individual part with a complicated rhythm, for instance, or to challenging ensemble moments that are not obvious to the ear.

Other Solutions

Sometimes you just can't find what you're looking for a need a few extra pairs of eyes and ears, and on these occasions, colleagues can be of help. On the infrequent instance I resort to social media in order to crowdsource programming suggestions, I try to do it with a very specific set of needs, for example, "A drummy piece for 5, no longer than 5 or 6 minutes, top ensemble of a very good high school program." I try to include other pieces the group has played for reference, since one person's 'moderately good' group is another person's 'outstanding' (or 'mid-lower level'). If you find yourself doing this too, just remember that the more specific you are in communicating what you need, the better the information that's offered will meet those needs.

Last but not least, when there's a piece I really, really want to play (or that the students really want to play, or that I think would be particularly good for our program) that requires more students than we have available in any given class period, I consider whether it's possible to get creative with rehearsing the piece.

piece

piece rehearsing only after school? Can you split up the part assignments such that all of one instrument type (ex. keyboards) are in one period and the rest of the parts in another period, to enable some extra rehearsal? If there are more students than parts, can you double or split a part while maintaining ensemble balance and the educational value of the music? If you lack an instrument, can you find a workaround – perhaps use synth to replace steel pan, split drum set into bass and snare/cymbals, or replace timpani with bass marimba? Getting creative about dealing with personnel and instrumentation challenges can really open up the variety of musical experiences we can offer our students.

This process does take time, but considering that – especially for high school students – the percussion ensemble pieces they play form the backbone of our curricular material for the spring semester, I consider it time invested in my students’ skills and experiences, and therefore time invested in the growth of the program. There is a particular joy in teaching a piece that is a good fit for your students, that they are capable of performing at a high level, that pushes them as musicians and as performers, and that they and you enjoy working on.

Happy programming!

Emily Tannert Patterson is a percussion educator, arranger, clinician, and consultant. She was previously the percussion director at the Rouse High School and Wiley Middle School, in Leander, TX, from 2015 till 2018, and was the percussion director at East View High School, Georgetown, TX from 2011 until 2015. Her ensembles have garnered numerous accolades, including winning the 2016 PAS International Percussion Ensemble Contest.

Patterson holds a Master's degree in Percussion Performance (2010) as well as a Bachelor's degree in Music Education (2008) and undergraduate Performance Certificate in Percussion from The University of Texas at Austin, where she studied with Thomas Burritt and Tony Edwards.

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TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR BEGINNER STEELBAND: FIRST STEPS

CJ Menge

School steel pan ensembles, both curricular and extra-curricular, continue to grow in popularity at all academic levels, as well as in community music settings throughout the United States. Largely due to the increased prevalence of university level steelbands, more and more percussionists are now entering the teaching profession with some amount of steel pan experience. There are, however, many new directors who take on the responsibility of leading steelbands with very little to no personal experience playing or teaching the instrument, including a significant number of steel bands being taught by directors who play a primary instrument other than percussion. The following suggestions are designed to serve as a guide for directors, with the purpose of providing some important first steps to consider at the start of a new school semester or session of community classes when teaching a beginner level steelband.

Tone and touch

The acoustic tonal qualities that make a

steel pan beautiful and resonant can quickly disappear when the instrument is played with too much force. A steel pan that is struck too hard can quickly go out of tune and/or suffer irreparable damage. It is important to teach students to focus on developing a light touch when playing a steel pan. Strive for a warm, resonant tone. The starting hand position for all voices of the steel orchestra should be low, close to the playing surface of the pan. Tenor pan (also referred to as lead pan), double tenor and double seconds players should especially work to keep their starting hand position inside the bowl of the instrument, directly over the next note being played. Teach your students to approach each attack as a low tap stroke, initiating the motion from the wrist forward, rather than a full stroke that initiates from the arm. Encourage your students to be thoughtful about where they are striking each note to create the most consistent, resonant tone possible.

Regarding specific hand position, students should develop a secure fulcrum between the thumb and index

finger, with the remaining fingers supporting the mallet in a relaxed fashion. Due to the shorter length of tenor/lead, double tenor and double second mallets, players will likely have their pinky finger positioned off of the end of the mallets in order to achieve a good center of balance at the fulcrum point, which in turn contributes to a warm tone and enables the student to develop comfortable dexterity in their playing. The starting hand position will generally rotate from a thumb up position (comparable to French grip) to overhand position (German grip), depending on the angle at which each note must be struck.

Teaching Philosophy - Rote Versus Musical Literacy

Trinidadian steel pan orchestras have historically conducted rehearsals using the rote teaching method. Today, while more and more steel pan players in Trinidad are musically literate, bands still often run their rehearsals using the rote method. There is tremendous value in exposing your students to the rote method, especially at the start of a semester. Teaching scale exercises, roll technique and key rhythmic patterns, as well as at least the first song of the semester, completely by rote allows students the opportunity to more quickly learn and internalize the layout of their particular voice of steel pan.

There are many thriving steelband programs in US schools that primarily use the rote method for the majority of

their instruction. My personal pedagogical priority, however, is to teach musical literacy and sound music theory-based fundamentals to all of the programs that I work with, especially if the ensemble exists as a curricular course that is offered as a part of the school day. These skills equip your students with transferable knowledge that they will be able to take into other school ensembles, as well as music settings outside of school. Ultimately, a valuable guide in this area is to align your steelband teaching objectives with the foundational pedagogical goals that your music program prioritizes in all of your ensembles. This consistency in teaching styles will benefit both you and your students.

The First Week

The unique challenge for beginning steel pan players is learning the non-linear note layout of the pan, which additionally varies from voice to voice in the ensemble. Practicing scale exercises at a slow tempo and playing easy, repetitive songs will help students to begin to learn the unique layout of their specific instrument. My primary goal with each beginning ensemble I work with is to help students develop a mental picture of their note layout as early in the semester as possible, freeing them up to focus on other aspects of music making. I also make sure to teach the band a simple composition (or at least a portion of one) during their first hands-on session, so that they have fun making music together right away, and understand what they will

be working towards throughout the year.

Teaching Sequence: *Eleven*

Eleven (Example 1) is the score of a beginner level piece I wrote with this purpose in mind. A reference video can be found here:

https://youtu.be/v12TPjSQS0s?list=PLIDw8ZigKjFRcKtZLPp-u6wXBmTpAb_yI

The key center of *Eleven* is A minor. Rather than teaching the entire scale at the outset, start by guiding your students through the first five notes of the scale. Keeping in mind that this is the first time for your students to play a steel pan, instruct them to find one note at a time (A up to E). Have the full ensemble, in unison, play four quarter notes, followed by four quarter note rests, a few times on each of the five pitches (typically quarter note=110). Maintain a soft dynamic throughout. This initial focus on soft dynamics will help your ensemble to develop an overall wider range of dynamic capabilities as the semester progresses.

Next, using the same rhythmic pattern, have the students play up and down the five note scale, adding a whole note roll after the final A (Example 2). Steel pan rolls are executed in single stroke fashion (no buzz or bounce rolls), best achieved with the same low starting hand position emphasized earlier. Strive for smooth, even rolls, with no accent at the beginning of the roll.

After completing the quarter note scale

pattern, take the rhythm found in the first measure of *Eleven* and apply it to the five note scale sequence (Example 3). Finally, before beginning to teach the tune, notice where you will need to take time to introduce the last two notes of the A minor scale as needed. The G# first appears in section one, while the F appears in section two. Use the same quarter note/rest pattern initially used when learning the location of the first five scale tones. To be clear, simply introduce the G# and F individually, rather than using more class time to place them into a longer scale exercise.

Referring back to Example 1, *Eleven* consists of three sections. Play each section four times before moving to the next section. Teach one section of *Eleven* at a time, all by rote. Repeat each section enough for the majority of your band members to feel comfortable playing the phrase. Continue to remind your students to play with a light touch even as the dynamic level in the group will start to get a little bit louder. Starting hand positions are still staying low to the instrument. Only add the calypso drum set pattern once the pan players are playing each section with confidence.

Although it is important to train student drum set players in your ensemble, I suggest that, if possible, the director plays drum set for this first piece, so each student is learning a steel pan part. For directors that do not play drum set, I recommend that you play time on a cowbell, beginning with quarter notes and then progressing to a steady half

and then progressing to a steady half note pattern as the tempo increases. Also consider using prerecorded play-along drum set tracks at the outset, which will begin to give your students an understanding of key steelband styles. Calypso or Soca drum set tracks will work well with *Eleven*.

Teaching Double Stops

Less experienced steel pan students often find that learning to switch smoothly from one double stop hand position to the next can be quite challenging (section three of *Eleven* includes double stop chord changes). Consider using the frozen hands technique when practicing new chord movements. When learning double stops, teach your students to freeze their hands directly over the two chord tones they just played. With the hands in this frozen position, instruct your students to find the next set of chord tones with their eyes before shifting their hands, and then move directly to the new chord portion in one unified motion, to effectively ingrain proper muscle memory. This exercise should initially be done out of metered time, allowing the students enough time to go through the thought process required for a sequence of chord shifts. Teach your students to avoid moving each hand separately when playing double stops sequences. Once you see the majority of your students moving both hands comfortably from one chord to the next in this fashion, repeat the same exercise using the

using the correct rhythms (in slow, steady time) from the song you are learning.

Primary and Secondary Steel Pan Assignments

If rehearsal time permits (or in the next class), have your students switch instruments and repeat the same instructional sequence, beginning with the scale exercise found in Example 2, continuing with Example 3, and then teaching at least the first section of *Eleven*. This gives you and your students a chance to see if a particular steel pan voice and/or clef will better suit each player for their primary instrument placement in the ensemble. Tenor/lead, double tenor and double second pan parts are notated in treble clef, while cello/guitar, tenor bass and bass pan parts are notated in bass clef. While steelband directors have varying approaches to instrument assignments, I find that beginners, after the initial introductory classes, benefit from being assigned to one primary instrument for the entire school year or community session. If the dynamic of the band allows for students to rotate to other steel pan voices later in the year, I would only do so after learning several tunes with everyone playing on their primary pans.

The Engine Room

The auxiliary percussion section of a steelband is referred to as the engine room, a term that originated in Trinidad. One standard instrumentation for a beginner level steelband engine room playing calypso or soca tunes includes

playing calypso or soca tunes includes iron, cowbell, congas and shaker. The iron is a resonant car brake drum, and is the most important instrument in the engine room. The iron is usually played with metal beaters. Matched triangle beaters can work well for this purpose. Calypso and soca conga parts are traditionally played with rubber tipped mallets rather than with your hands. The cello/guitar steel pan mallets work well for these parts. As previously mentioned, I suggest having all of the students learn steel pan parts at the beginning of a semester. As you assign students to drum set parts, also plan to assign students to engine room parts. Seek out resources for standard calypso and soca engine room rhythms as an initial guide. Some beginner level steelband charts also include engine room rhythm sheets.

Build Consistent Habits

As you and your students settle into a rehearsal routine, continue to use some portion of each class to teach fundamental skills. Major scale and chromatic scale exercises will continue to help your beginners to develop confidence in learning the note layout of their specific pan. Use your music fundamental instructional time to teach essential syncopated rhythms, proper roll technique and other techniques that are unique to steelband. Have your students practice playing scales and shorter note sequences without watching their hands. One effective verbal cue is to remind them to lift their chins and use their peripheral vision to track hand

placement. This technique prepares students to be able to confidently develop sight reading skills on the instrument. Also consider having your students play short note sequences with their eyes closed, encouraging them to visualize the specific note layout of the instrument in their mind. Work to connect all of your scale and warmup exercises directly to the songs you are learning. I also especially encourage curricular steelband directors to incorporate sight reading exercises into each class.

Be intentional in programming beginner level charts in key signatures related to the scales being practiced. Easy Calypso and Soca tunes are preferred in the beginning, in order to teach important syncopated rhythmic strumming patterns, in addition to making the cultural connection for your students to the steel pan tradition of Trinidad and Tobago. Avoid practicing scales that are unrelated to material you are learning, or will learn in the near future. Look for good beginner level charts in C, F and G major at the outset, then continue to expand your repertoire to include D and Bb major (and relative minor keys), and so on. Naturally, as your band progresses, you will want to diversify your programming and include many other musical styles in addition to Calypso and Soca.

When working with younger students (elementary and younger middle school bands), I look for pieces that have a mix of full band unison sections and only two different rhythms happening at once in

different rhythms happening at once in a given musical passage. *Eleven* again serves as a good example. Older students generally are capable of learning beginner charts with up to four different rhythms occurring at once.

Kiwi (Example 4) is an example of one of the first pieces I often teach to older middle school, high school or adult community students using sheet music at the beginning of the semester.

A reference video can be found here: https://youtu.be/BuW_kSkB8KM?t=2813

The piece starts with a portion of the chromatic scale being played in unison and then sets up an easy Soca chord progression in G major. When teaching *Kiwi*, I will begin the rehearsal with a G major scale exercise, then teach a chromatic scale exercise that starts on G, using the unison rhythm found in measure one of the piece. As the band learns each section of the piece, I will take additional time to teach other essential fundamentals, in particular the two different rhythmic strumming patterns found in the double seconds and cello voices. These fundamental skills will of course carry over into subsequent charts that you teach your band.

I hope these suggestions will help to set you and your students on a path to steel pan success. The ultimate goal is to create a fun learning environment where students get to experience the joy and sense of accomplishment that comes from seeing their skills develop on a new instrument. All the best in your musical endeavors!

CJ Menge is the founder and Executive Director of Inside Out Steelband, a nonprofit organization based in Austin, Texas, and is active nationally as a steel pan educator, composer and performer. Menge has held long-term artist-in-residence or director positions with many curricular school programs in Austin and Central Texas, including Covington Middle School (2000-2011), KIPP Austin College Prep and Collegiate (2009-2011, 2017-2019), James Bowie High School (1997-present), McCallum High School and Fine Arts Academy (1998-present), Sam Houston High School (San Antonio ISD) (2012-present) and the University of Texas at Austin (1999). Menge has composed and arranged over 150 works for steelband or solo steel pan, many of which are published by Boxfish Music Publishing, Inc. Professional affiliations include the Texas Music Educators Association, the National Society of Steel Band Educators and the Percussive Arts Society. Menge served as a member of the PAS World Music Committee from 2013-2019.

Eleven

♩ = 180

CJ Menge

1 4x Total

Musical score for measures 1-4 of 'Eleven'. The score is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 180. It features five staves: Tenor (treble clef), Double Second (treble clef), Cello/Guitar (bass clef), Bass (bass clef), and Drum Set (drum clef). The Tenor part begins with a first ending bracket labeled '1' and '4x Total'. The Drum Set part features a consistent rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents.

5 2 4x Total

Musical score for measures 5-8 of 'Eleven'. The score continues from measure 5. It features five staves: Tenor (treble clef), Dbl 2nd (treble clef), Cello (bass clef), Bass (bass clef), and Drums (drum clef). The Tenor part begins with a second ending bracket labeled '2' and '4x Total'. The Drum Set part continues with the same rhythmic pattern as in the first system.

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9 **3** 4x Total - No Rolls

Eleven

Musical score for five instruments: Tenor, Dbl 2nd, Cello, Bass, and Drums. The score is written in 3/4 time and consists of five measures. The Tenor part is in treble clef, Dbl 2nd in treble clef, Cello in bass clef, Bass in bass clef, and Drums in a standard drum notation. The first measure is marked with a '3' in a box and '4x Total - No Rolls'. The score includes various musical notations such as chords, eighth notes, and drum patterns.

♩ = 110

Example 2

Musical score for Example 2, measures 1-9. The score is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 110. The instruments are Tenor Pan, Double Seconds, Guitar/Cello, and Bass. The Tenor Pan part consists of eighth-note patterns. The Double Seconds part consists of eighth-note chords. The Guitar/Cello part consists of eighth-note chords. The Bass part consists of eighth-note chords.

Musical score for Example 2, measures 10-14. The score is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 110. The instruments are Tenor, Doubles, Guitar, and Bass. The Tenor part consists of eighth-note patterns. The Doubles part consists of eighth-note chords. The Guitar part consists of eighth-note chords. The Bass part consists of eighth-note chords. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat signs.

♩ = 110

Example 3

Tenor Pan

Double Seconds

Guitar/Cello

Bass

7

Tenor

Doubles

Guitar

Bass

13

Tenor

Doubles

Guitar

Bass

Kiwi

CJ Menge

Soca ♩ = 120

Musical score for the first system of 'Kiwi'. The score is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 120 beats per minute. It features five staves: Lead (treble clef), Double Seconds (treble clef), Cello/Guitar (bass clef), Bass (bass clef), and Drum Set (percussion clef). The key signature is one sharp (F#). The first two measures are marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The third measure begins a crescendo (*cresc.*) that continues through the fourth measure. The drum set part consists of a steady eighth-note pattern with accents.

Musical score for the second system of 'Kiwi', starting at measure 5. The section is titled 'To Coda'. The key signature changes to two sharps (F# and C#). The first two measures continue the previous section. The third measure begins a fortissimo (*f*) dynamic that continues through the fourth measure. The drum set part continues with the same eighth-note pattern.

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4

Kiwi

A

25

Lead *f*

Dbl 2nd *mf*

Guitar *mf*

Bass *mf*

Drums *mf*

Detailed description: This musical score covers measures 25 through 28. It features five staves: Lead (treble clef), Dbl 2nd (treble clef), Guitar (bass clef), Bass (bass clef), and Drums (drum set). The key signature has one sharp (F#). The Lead part starts with a dynamic of *f* and plays a melodic line. The Dbl 2nd part plays a rhythmic accompaniment with a dynamic of *mf*. The Guitar part provides harmonic support with chords and a dynamic of *mf*. The Bass part plays a steady bass line with a dynamic of *mf*. The Drums part features a consistent drum pattern with a dynamic of *mf*. Measure numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4 are indicated below the drum staff.

29

Lead

Dbl 2nd

Guitar

Bass

Drums

Detailed description: This musical score covers measures 29 through 32. It features five staves: Lead (treble clef), Dbl 2nd (treble clef), Guitar (bass clef), Bass (bass clef), and Drums (drum set). The key signature has one sharp (F#). The Lead part continues its melodic line. The Dbl 2nd part continues its rhythmic accompaniment. The Guitar part continues its harmonic support. The Bass part continues its steady bass line. The Drums part continues its consistent drum pattern. Measure numbers 5, 6, 7, and 8 are indicated below the drum staff.

AN ANALYTICAL APPROACH TO RUDIMENTS

Karlyn R. Viña

As my students hear on a regular basis, the study of [rudiments](#) is crucial for developing a solid technical foundation as a percussionist. I think of rudiments as a percussionists' basics and essentials, but not because they are easy or meant only for beginners. The 40 Percussive Arts Society International Drum Rudiments encompass a huge variety of combinations of different **stickings** and **types of strokes** that, when mastered at a variety of tempi and dynamics, leave the player well-prepared to tackle most technical challenges on the snare drum.

Let me explain more of what I mean by **stickings** and **types of strokes**.

The term "**stickings**" simply refers to playing each note with either the Right or Left hand. Many players, especially beginners, have a strong predisposed preference for one hand, and the ideal is to become equally competent and comfortable with both hands, and with any combination of stickings that the music may demand. To tackle this skill, I recommend starting with the four Diddle Rudiments in group II. of the [PAS International Drum Rudiments](#) and the Single Beat Combinations that begin on page 5 of [G. L. Stone's Stick Control](#).

Types of strokes are differentiated primarily by the position of the sticking before and after the attack. I conceptualize all snare drumming (excluding multiple-bounce and double-stroke rolls) to be made up of four basic types of strokes:

- Full stroke: the stick starts high, rebounds, and ends in the starting position. (Full stroke *can* occur at any dynamic, with starting stick height to be adjusted to facilitate desired dynamic.)
- Down stroke: the stick starts high, the rebound is controlled, and the stick ends low (very close to the drum head).
- Up stroke: the stick starts low, the rebound is assisted by the player's wrist and arm, and the stick ends high.
- Tap: the stick starts low, and ends low, in starting position.

The type of stroke for any note depends on two main factors: the volume of the note in context of the rudiment or musical passage, and the height of the note that follows. In other words, every stroke consists of two parts: the "pre-stroke" prepares to strike the drum and

the "post-stroke" serves to set up the proper stick height for the following note.

As a performer and instructor, I often find it enormously helpful to diagnose technical or musical problems by isolating what one hand must play from the other hand. In the following examples, I will break down several rudiments to show the strokes and rhythm that each individual hand must perform to play the rudiments cleanly and accurately.

I use the following abbreviations to denote stroke types:

- F = full stroke
- T = tap
- D = down stroke
- U = up stroke

The stem lengths in the following examples are meant to represent three different stick heights:

- The longest stem represents an accented high stick height.
- The medium stem represents an unaccented high stick height.
- The shortest stem represents a low stick height.

The Flam Rudiments, part III. of the [Percussive Arts Society International Rudiments](#), can serve as a prime example of application of the Four Basic Types of Strokes to rudimental snare drumming.

Let's first apply the four basic types of strokes to the flam. A flam is simply a note with a single grace note. A flam serves an ornamental purpose, widening the attack of a note to create variety in articulation. To play a flam, a percussionist sets up with one stick low (perhaps 1-2 inches from the head) and the other stick high (specific height

depends on dynamic) and brings the sticks down at the same time. Since the low stick, or grace note, is set up closer to the drum head, it attacks just before the high stick, or main note. The effect should be a slightly fatter attack; I often tell students to consider the two strokes of the flam to be one event: a "flam" rather than a "fa - lam." If the left stick is set up low and right stick high, we refer to this as a right flam, since the right stick is the main note. Conversely, a left flam is set up with the left stick high and right stick low.

20. Flam

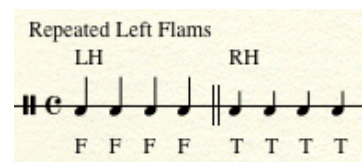


A series of flams can be played as repeated right or left flams, or alternating flams.

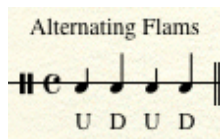
To play repeated right flams, the right hand plays only full strokes, while the left hand plays only taps, placed just before the right hand attack. Each hand separately would look like this:



For repeated left flams, the reverse is true: full strokes in the left hand, and taps in the right.



To play alternating flams, the right and left hands utilize alternating up and down strokes to set up for the opposite flam. For example, after playing a right flam, the right stick must be set low to prepare to be the grace note in the upcoming left flam. After playing the grace note, the right stick must be raised to prepare for the upcoming right flam. When playing alternating flams, each hand individually plays the following pattern: up-down-up-down-etc.



Whether playing all right, all left, or alternating flams, a common problem with flams for students is that the stick playing the grace note comes too high, resulting in a sloppy flam, or a flat flam (when both sticks are at equal heights).

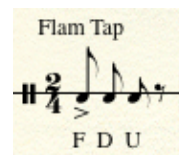
In the case of the repeated rights or lefts, this can be corrected by ensuring that the hand playing the grace notes maintains the tap stroke and is never raised higher than necessary.

When playing alternating flams, the issue most commonly lies in the down stroke. Students should ensure that the stick playing a down stroke only rebounds to a low stick height rather than allowing a full rebound.

22. Flam Tap

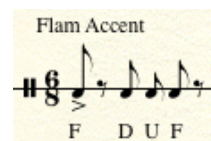


The flam tap is slightly more complicated than individual flams. Since flam taps alternate in succession, each hand repeats the same stroke pattern of full-down-up, with an accent on the full stroke:



While some issues with stick heights may arise, the stroke pattern for flam taps tends to flow naturally for many students, as it is natural for consecutive strokes to lose height and emphasis in succession.

23. Flam Accent



The stroke pattern for flam accents is technically a bit trickier than that for flam accents, because of the grace note sandwiched between regular notes. The most common difficulty that I see lies in executing the up stroke that is required to play the second eighth note in each group of three.

Conclusion

Isolating each hand can make it much easier to diagnose and correct issues in rudiments (and really, in any musical passage). I find that if each hand can perform the rhythms and strokes demanded by the rudiments cleanly and accurately, success in

performing the composite rudiment is much more likely. This strategy can also help students begin to develop a targeted and detail-orientated approach to practicing, which will certainly be useful in their continued musical studies.

As an educator, one of my primary goals is always to equip students with the basic musical and technical skills they'll need for a variety of musical situations and challenges that they may encounter. For percussion students, this means studying and mastering the basics, including types of strokes, stickings, and rudiments.

Praised by the South Florida Classical Review for her “dazzling” and “incisive” performance, **Dr. Karlyn Viña** is a dynamic and creative percussionist based in South Florida. In addition to an active freelance performing career, Dr. Viña serves on the faculty of Florida International University, New World School of the Arts, Broward College, and Miami Music Project. She also maintains a busy private studio in South Florida, teaching concert percussion, keyboard percussion, timpani, and drum set.

Karlyn serves on the Percussive Arts Society’s Education Committee, and can be heard as a co-host on the @Percussion Podcast. Karlyn is proud to be a Marimba One Educational Artist and Artist Endorser for Grover Pro Percussion.



THE GREAT DIVIDE: MAXIMIZING YOUR PERCUSSION SECTION FULL BAND DAILY DRILL TIME

Ralph Hicks and Eric Rath

From the podium, what are some typical percussion stereotypes during daily drill? *Off task? Bored? Not invested?* If so, consider the possibility that you aren't asking enough of them during this crucial time in their development. Does rolling a Remington study on a keyboard prepare them for a four mallet solo? Does mastering a Clarke study prepare them for the snare drum ruffs in Scheherazade? That's a big ol' "*negatory, good buddy!*" In this article we address several things you can do to develop a daily drill routine that will foster independence in your percussionists!

You have three choices when it comes to your percussion daily drill involvement. You can ***babysit them*** with the expectation they sit quietly and wait (yes, people actually do this), guaranteeing more behavior issues and zero developmental progress. You can ***keep them busy*** by having them double the flute parts on keyboard, almost assuredly making them feel placated while developing techniques with limited use. Or you can ***engage them***, giving them the same attention as the winds while virtually eliminating checked out noggins.

Yeah, we agree: let's focus on the last one!

Part One: Working Separately

When given the opportunity, we definitely recommend separating from the band during this time. Even factoring in for moving equipment in and out, you're still left with a decent chunk of time to get some good work done! You could get maybe a solid five minutes in? Maybe nine?

Exercises

If you aren't the percussion director, consider working with a trusted source (a local PAS member) to develop a curriculum similar to the expectations of the winds. Be sure to include basic strokes, rudiments, buzz rolls, scales, and concert accessories. Plenty of percussionists will know how to crank these worksheets out for you. A local college or your PAS state chapter could be great resources!

[Five Minute Drill](#)* and [Nine Minute Drill](#)* were written specifically for this purpose with the following list of techniques:

[FMD](#)

Legato strokes/Height
Control/Flams/Paradiddles/Timing
Patterns/Double Strokes/Buzz
Strokes/Accent Taps/Major Scales &
Arpeggios/Chromatic Scale (C to C or F to F)

[NMD](#)

Legato Strokes/Dynamics/Accents/16th Note Accents/Buzzes/Timing Patterns/Double Strokes /Paradiddles/Flam Rudiments/Diddles and Singles/Major Scales/Arpeggios/Interval Scales/Octaves/Chromatic Motion/Green Style Exercises/Four Mallets

Percussion Ensembles

It may seem counterintuitive to a non-percussionist, but the key to solid ensemble awareness lies in percussion ensemble! Think about it. In full band, you are one of 30-60 with the director a literal mile away focused on what vowel shape the trumpets are using. In percussion ensemble, you are one of 5-7 with the director 3 feet from you. Which environment sounds more apt for percussive engagement?

The literature available to us has never been better! We have composers pushing the envelope at all different levels, and many of our classics have aged very well. Being time sensitive, look for ensembles that are short, can be learned quickly, and offer opportunities to teach core concepts. As it just so happens, this is the structure we used to write the ensembles in [Beyond Basic Percussion](#).*

Whether you use these materials, those provided by a trusted source, or come up with your own, stick with these core concepts and you'll be in good shape!

**Come on y'all, cut us some slack. We wrote the things, how could we not bring them up?!*

Part Two: Fully Integrated

No doubt there are valuable listening skills to be learned playing the daily drill as part of the ensemble, but rolling the flute part on a keyboard is only one of them. Below are a few ways to keep them engaged without

leaving the room, the concept of a clean consistent sound is universal!

Doubling Wind Parts

But wait, didn't we say earlier that this was not a good idea? It depends on how you do it! Handing them the flute or trombone part is just the first step.

Take your standard *Remington* exercise in half notes for example. Give the kiddos time to familiarize themselves with the pattern, then start adding core percussion concepts. Fill the half notes with sixteenth notes to work on full strokes. Fill the half notes with eighth notes and work on octaves or different sticking patterns. Fill the half notes with an important rhythm from one of the competition pieces you're working on. You get the idea:)

Concert Setup Routine

Our last option is perhaps the simplest, and possibly the most fun! These percussion kiddos are responsible for so many instruments, yet too many kids only work on that specific technique if they're assigned that specific instrument. With the repetitive nature of our daily drill, it would be pretty easy to come up with a simple repeating pattern for each instrument. A concert bass drum or triangle part that works on both dampened and open strokes. A snare drum part with simple flams, ruffs, and rolls. A tambourine part with both thumb rolls and shakes. You can have them prepared on sheet music, or even make them up on the spot! Maybe a sweet salsa groove on Fridays? Get as creative as you want, just keep it simple and focused on getting the best tone possible out of the instruments.

And there you have it! The days of our brothers and sisters of the Drummerhood being neglected in the back of the room are numbered. With a little tweaking to your daily drill routine, and some attention you might not be used to giving, you can produce solid independent musicians with heightened ensemble awareness that truly feel part of the band rather than a side component!

Good luck, love what you do, and feel free to email us with questions!

Additional Video Examples:

[Five Minute Drill: Snare Pad](#)

[Five Minute Drill: Keyboard](#)

[Nine Minute Drill](#)

[Multitasker from Beyond Basic Percussion](#)

[Escape Artist from Beyond Basic Percussion](#)

[The Golden Age of Ragtime by Ralph Hicks & Eric Rath](#)

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Mr. Rath resides in Canyon, Texas, with his wife Kayla, and their children Regan, Grant, McKinley, Jackson and Harrison. His professional affiliations include the Percussive Arts Society, Texas Music Educators Association, Texas Bandmasters Association and the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP). He is a Yamaha Performing Artist and also an educational artist for Innovative Percussion, Inc.

Ralph Hicks (b. 1976) is founder and Executive Director of Let Them Drum, a 501(c)(3) non profit corporation, and Owner of drumwith.us adaptive private lessons and educator group coaching. With 19 years of public education experience, Mr. Hicks has educational materials and compositions available worldwide through Tapspace Publications, and regularly presents clinics and workshops across the country. In 2012, Mr. Hicks was Mitchell Intermediate's Teacher of the Year and named Conroe ISD Outstanding Teacher in the Arts by The Woodlands Waterway Arts Council.

Mr. Hicks is currently a REALTOR® with The Jack Allen Group, residing in Magnolia, TX with his wife and two children. He is a member of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, the Drum Circle Facilitators Guild, the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers, The Woodlands Chamber of Commerce, The Woodlands Disability Chamber of Commerce, serves on the Board of Advisors, Education Committee, and Diversity Alliance of the Percussive Arts Society, is endorsed by Innovative Percussion, and is a Remo Recreational Music Partner.

HELPING PERCUSSIONISTS BE MORE COMPETITIVE IN HONOR BAND AUDITIONS

Robert Clayson

Throughout my time as a university student and professional educator, I have judged quite a few All-State and other honor band percussion auditions and none of them have left me thinking that the state of percussion education is going in a good direction. The more I judge these events, the quicker and easier I get irritated at students for their poor level of preparation and lack of pride in what they are doing. Don't get me wrong, there are always some gems out there that play very well, but these students are becoming fewer and farther between. In addition, the quality of these students seems to be declining as well. There are obviously many causes of this, some of which we cannot avoid, but I have a feeling that a big cause for this dip in quality is because more and more band directors think they cannot do much of anything to help these students with the advanced topics covered in honor band auditions because they are not a percussion specialist. They then either wait for a percussionist to come work with their students, or they say "we can't afford to have anyone come in" and that is the end of it. This is a valid reason for why a lot of percussion students are failing at these auditions, but it is not as valid of a reason as we want it to be. There will **always** be issues that percussion students really need a percussion specialist to help them with, but

there are also plenty of things that non-percussionists can do with their percussion students to help them be more competitive in auditions. I am going to give some suggestions that should help you help your students be more competitive in their auditions without going into too much detail about percussion-related topics. My hope is that this article will give you some extra tricks to help your students have better auditions regardless of your level of knowledge regarding percussion performance. For the purposes of this article, I am going to focus most of my observations on All-State Auditions, but the content discussed here is applicable to any audition environment.

My first suggestion (and maybe the most obvious) is to start the preparations much earlier. When I was in school, most of the students who were successful at these auditions started preparing the repertoire around the beginning of January, when school got back in session from winter break. While this might be okay for most intelligent wind players, it typically does not work out well for percussionists because they have at least one more etude to learn on triple the number of instruments. This concept holds true for marching band as well: many successful marching band programs have a dedicated "percussion

camp” that takes place one or two weeks before the rest of the band shows up. Percussionists really need that extra time in order to digest all of the material they are being asked to handle in middle and high school band. So what are we supposed to do about this- do we hand out all state materials on the first day of school and hope that the kids don’t get sick of the music before November? I don’t think the situation is that critical yet, but that does not mean we shouldn’t be preparing students for these auditions throughout the year leading up to audition days. One of the best ways to do this is to break the audition up into three parts and spend the beginning of the fall semester working on part one, while you can start on parts 2 and 3 after marching season ends and after Christmas Break. Please see Figure 1 below for an example of what I think these three parts should be.

I believe that approaching preparation this way does two very important things: first, it will reinforce the importance of scales, rudiments, and ear training. More importantly, it makes the audition seem like less of an overwhelming task because you are taking the entire audition and boiling it down to a few manageable goals throughout a longer period of time. If you can help your students start to think this way, you have potential to help them get into better habits for things like concert preparation and even other academic pursuits

across the curriculum as well (which as an educator should make you very happy). The most important thing educators need to do is establish a positive work ethic in their students. If we can do that, the rest of the pieces will fall into place much easier.

The second suggestion I have to offer is to make sure your percussionists do not leave any potential points on the table, the biggest example of this being to make sure that they can play **all** of their scales, not just the minimum requirement to pass through the scale room. While this may sound like common sense, every all state audition that I have ever judged has always had some sort of meeting about pushing students through the scale room. Under the scoring model that is being used for All State Auditions at the time of this article, just the scales account for 32 out of 500 possible points a percussionist can receive in their auditions (which is just above 6%). To put this in perspective, the amount of points a student receives for completing all of their scales can absolutely be the difference in making either All State Band or District Honor Band, or the difference between making District Honor Band or not. I know that learning all twelve scales sounds like a tall order for younger students, but something to think about is that there is very little technical and musical skill involved to play scales on a mallet instrument. Since there aren’t any fingerings to memorize or anything like that, most

Figure 1

Preparation Cycle	Material to Lean	When
Preparation Pt. 1	Scales, Rudiments, Interval Tuning (Everything that is not centered around a prepared pieces)	First half of the semester before auditions
Preparation Pt. 2	Prepared pieces, Sight Reading Practice	Second half of the semester before auditions
Preparation Pt. 3	Final Preparations and Mock Auditions	Semester of auditions

percussionists have the technical skill required to play all twelve major scales with arpeggios as soon as they know all of the note names and where to find them on the keyboard. To make things easier on students, I try to have them learn one scale per week once they have reached this milestone. It usually takes about five minutes for me to teach one scale and maybe another ten minutes to review it and practice it with them. Once or twice a month I take some time out of lessons to call out a scale name to a student, and they tell me how many sharps or flats are in the scale and what they are. If I am skeptical about whether or not the student lucked out and guessed right, I have them spell the scale for me. The best thing about making sure your students know all of their scales at an early age is that once they know how many sharps or flats a scale has and can spell them out for you, they will never have to learn them again- brush them off maybe, but they won't ever have to learn them from scratch again.

The next piece of advice I can give is to not be afraid to listen to your percussionists play for you, and do not be afraid to offer criticism on things that you hear according to the written music. While you might never be able to correctly demonstrate the correct way to hold four marimba mallets, you can recognize the difference between what is written and what is being played. More often than not, the biggest glaring issues I hear during auditions are ones that are musical, not percussion specific. Though it might sound like common sense, here is a list of things that I constantly hear going wrong when students play audition etudes for me: rhythmic accuracy, note accuracy, dynamic contrast, tempo control, interval quality (timpani) and phrasing. All music educators

should be able to look at a piece of music and talk about whether or not these issues are being addressed- you do not need a percussion specialist to do this for you. If for nothing else, having your students play through audition repertoire for you will put the student in a situation where they are playing for someone while in the spot light. Most of the time marching or concert band rehearsals end with a run through of whatever the band just finished working on to cap off the day's objectives. They do this to make sure the day's objectives were actually met, and to help establish new objectives for the next rehearsal. This type of preparation is some of the most vital to the success of the student yet it is so often overlooked in the interest of saving time.

My last and most important piece of advice is to try and help your students practice everything to make your students stand out in a good way, while simultaneously working to eliminate the things that make your students stand out in a bad way. In my experience, this is also one of those areas that is vastly overlooked, and I can see why. Under the current scoring system, "Professionalism" is not a category on which students are scored. Students are not scored on how well they speak, or how they carry themselves during the audition. I am not saying they should be judged on these things, but what I am saying is that in order for students to have a better chance at success, they need to present themselves in such a way that says "I am prepared to play and be a professional human being". Again, this is something that can help bridge the gap between music and other curriculum that will help students become better inside and outside of the music curriculum. To help get this started, I first like to go over every aspect of the audition that does not involve

playing such as: what they are going to wear to the audition, walking in and out of the audition room, setting up and tearing down equipment, what to (and NOT to) say to judges and when to say it, moving from instrument to instrument, and every other little thing that you do in the process of an audition that does not involve playing. Working on this aspect of auditions with your students will help them to realize that these auditions (and other things in non-musical life) are not all about your particular set of skills, they are just as much about how you carry yourself and how well you interact and work with others.

After you have gone over the aspects of the audition that are not based on playing, do your best to ensure that whatever equipment the student is responsible for bringing is in GOOD working order. This includes but is not limited to the snare drum, stands, pitch pipes, tuners, etc. Let's be honest; good playing on an instrument that sounds bad still sounds bad. With that in mind, your students need to have GOOD sticks and mallets and more importantly CORRECT sticks and mallets for the instruments they will be playing on. Just this past year I judged an honor band audition where a student walked in to the audition room and wanted to play timpani with marimba mallets. I am fully aware that this might have been all she could afford on her own, but we as educators need to at least attempt to make sure the student has all of the materials they need, especially when they are representing your school, and you by extension.

In conclusion, I would like to offer some encouragement. If your percussionists are auditioning and genuinely trying their best to become better musicians, then you are doing the right things. The goal from that

point should be to try and help every student reach higher levels than they thought possible, even if you have little to no idea about what is actually going on in the percussion world. Through honor band auditions, students get to experience a little piece of what happens in life after scholastic music, and the more that we can do to help them succeed now, the better off the student will be when it is time to be self-sufficient. It is my sincere hope that the material discussed in this article will help you help them achieve this goal.

Robert Clayson currently serves as a Lecturer of Music for the Troy University John M. Long School of Music. He is an Innovative Percussion Artist and a member of the Black Swamp Educator Network.