

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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Eric Rath is an active educator, clinician, adjudicator, arranger and composer. As a composer, Mr. Rath has a growing list of original works and arrangements published through FJH Music, Tapspace Publications, The Percussion Studio and TRN Music. His music has been described as "very exciting for performers and audiences alike." Mr. Rath's music has been performed nationally as well as abroad at the Midwest Clinic, the Texas Music Educator's Association Convention and the International Double Reed Society's Convention.

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.