

# FUNdamentals First!

By Oliver Molina

**E**ach year, the PAS Education Committee presents a series of FUNdamentals sessions at PASIC by outstanding clinicians. This year, there will be a blend of in-person and virtual sessions, providing a comprehensive educational experience for all attendees. In-person clinics will be conducted by Alphonso Young Jr., Mike Vercelli, and Patrick Roulet, while Aaron Ragsdale and Justin Bunting will present their sessions virtually.

These sessions cater primarily to student percussionists and their teachers, including private instructors and band directors. They are beneficial for percussionists and teachers of all skill levels, offering valuable insights and techniques that can enhance anyone's approach to percussion. The sessions encourage attendees to revisit and refine their basic skills, which is crucial for developing advanced techniques and effective teaching methods.

Revisiting fundamental concepts is essential for continuous growth in any musical discipline. This year's FUNdamentals sessions cover a wide range of topics, including keyboard percussion, world percussion, and drumset. These diverse topics ensure that attendees gain a well-rounded understanding of different percussion instruments and styles, helping them become more versatile musicians and educators.

The presenters have designed their FUNdamentals sessions to be highly interactive, encouraging active participation from the audience. Attendees will have the opportunity to work closely with the clinicians, engaging in hands-on activities that reinforce the concepts being taught. Each session includes handouts with musical ideas, examples, and exercises that participants can immediately apply to their practice routines or teaching methods. These handouts are valuable resources that can be referred to long after the convention.

PAS members also have access to a wealth of educational materials from past FUNdamentals clinics. These handouts, published online ([https://pas.org/resources/?\\_search2=fundamentals&publication=instructional-resource](https://pas.org/resources/?_search2=fundamentals&publication=instructional-resource)), serve as excellent resources for teachers looking to refresh their knowledge or assign reading materials to their students. This extensive library of educational content ensures that PAS members can continue to benefit from the expertise of past clinicians.

The PASIC FUNdamentals sessions provide rich and diverse learning experiences for percussionists and educators alike. By attending these sessions, participants can enhance their skills, broaden their knowledge, and gain valuable insights from highly regarded clinicians in the field. Whether attending in-person

or virtually, these sessions promise to be an enriching and inspiring part of the PASIC experience.

## LIVE SESSIONS

### ALPHONSO YOUNG, JR.

#### PRACTICE "OLD," PLAY "YOUNG"

Alphonso Young, Jr.'s session focuses on applying traditional technique exercises to contemporary improvisational music styles. Today's young musicians are influenced by a wide range of musical genres and may not seek to emulate "the greats" such as Max Roach and Philly Joe



ALPHONSO YOUNG, JR.

Jones. This session presents ideas for the real-time application of “old school” techniques and language using traditional texts such as George Stone’s *Stick Control*, Ted Reed’s *Syncoption for the Modern Drummer*, and the Wilcoxon snare solos.

A significant aspect of this session involves the integration of modern technology resources like the Moises app, which revolutionizes real-time practice and application. Participants will learn how to bridge the gap between traditional techniques and contemporary musical styles, making these timeless exercises relevant and exciting for the new generation of percussionists.

Alphonso M. Young, Jr. has been a professional musician and music educator for over 40 years. His versatile and imaginative style has charmed audiences worldwide and led notable artists such as Randy Brecker, Bob Berg, and Etta Jones to seek his talent. Alphonso is currently the drummer with the Eric Byrd Trio and is on the faculty at Shenandoah University, Gettysburg College, and the National Jazz Workshop. He is also a music teacher with Loudoun County Public Schools in Northern Virginia.

## MIKE VERCELLI AND PATRICK ROULET

### GHANAIAN MALLET METHODS

In this session, Patrick Roulet and Michael Vercelli explore the teaching methods of two master gyl players from Ghana: Aaron Bebe Sukura and Bernard Woma. Both musicians are prominent figures in the Dagara culture and have taught thousands of students worldwide. This session demonstrates how their teaching methods and music can be used in various educational settings, both on the gyl and western mallet instruments.

Roulet and Vercelli will show how the independence and coordination necessary for gyl playing can enhance mallet study and offer new repertoire options for percussion studios. Participants will engage in hands-on activities, learning Woma’s introductory pedagogical pieces and Bebe’s focus on technique to cre-

ate larger etudes and ensemble pieces. Demonstrations will be provided by students from Western Washington University and West Virginia University, and session participants will be invited to join in using instruments provided by the clinicians.

Dr. Patrick Roulet is a percussion professor at Western Washington University with broad interests in symphonic



MIKE VERCELLI



PATRICK ROULET

percussion, jazz, and global music. Dr. Michael B. Vercelli is the Director of Graduate Studies and professor of music at West Virginia University, focusing on the transmission and performance practice of percussive traditions of Africa and the African Diaspora. Both clinicians have extensively studied the Ghanaian gyl with master musicians Aaron Bebe Sukura and Bernard Woma.

## VIRTUAL SESSIONS AARON RAGSDALE

### THE RIGHT LICK WITH THE RIGHT STICK (AND RIGHT QUICK)

#### Development, Motivation, and Maturation of Keyboard Percussionists in the Contemporary Band Program

This session delves into teaching technical and musical concepts for beginning and developing percussionists in a scholastic setting. It is specifically designed for non-percussionist band directors who may not have dedicated percussion-class experience. Topics include common technical development problems (with an examination of the five most prevalent issues in developing players), a suggested technical regimen to refine and strengthen technique in young players, factors affecting mallet selection, guidelines on



AARON RAGSDALE

usage and implementation, and tips for successful and confident ensemble sight reading.

Aaron Ragsdale is a Professor of Music at South Dakota State University, where he teaches applied percussion and percussion pedagogy, conducts the SDSU Percussion Ensemble, and works with the Pride of the Dakotas Marching Band. He is an active performer as a soloist, chamber musician, and member of the percussion section of the South Dakota Symphony. An advocate and activist in the realm of new music, he has premiered and commissioned over 20 new works for percussion. A native of Fayetteville, Arkansas, Aaron holds a DMA from Rutgers University, a Master of Music degree from the University of Arkansas, and a BME from the University of Oklahoma.



es with rubato and/or various dynamic swells further prepares the hands and mind for success.

Dr. Justin Bunting is Director of Instrumental Activities and Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Bunting is the President of the Arkansas PAS Chapter and a former member of the PAS World Percussion and Collegiate Committees. In addition to performing at PASIC, he has appeared at PAS Days of Percussion in North Carolina, Tennessee, Ohio, and internationally in Armenia and Colombia with Blue Line Duo. Justin earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Performance and a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Music Theory from The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, a Master of Music degree in Percussion Performance from Belmont University, and a Bachelor of Music degree in Percussion Performance from The Ohio State University.

## JUSTIN BUNTING

### FILLING YOUR TOOLBOX

#### A Practical Approach to Keyboard Percussion

A single-directional approach to learning any skill is ineffective; versatility and creativity are essential. This clinic covers four-mallet grips, tips for developing hand-eye coordination behind the marimba, and ideas for tailoring practice to the music being learned. These tech-

niques help fill our toolbox with skills and ideas that enhance musicality, technical fluency, and expressive capability. The session also includes discussions on developing exercises that isolate specific technical needs of the music currently being learned, using moments from Michael Burritt's "Preludes." For example, sequential sticking exercises are beneficial for Prelude 1. Playing these exercis-

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## ALLIANCE OF BLACK ORCHESTRAL PERCUSSIONISTS

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