

# FUNdamentals First!

By Oliver Molina

**E**ach year at PASIC, the PAS Education Committee presents its signature FUNdamentals series – a showcase of engaging and accessible clinics designed to reinforce the building blocks of percussion education. This year’s lineup brings an exciting mix of in-person and virtual presentations from leading percussion educators and performers that will deepen understanding, spark curiosity, and strengthen foundational skills.

The 2025 series features in-person sessions from Jamie Whitmarsh, Christopher Rosas, and Damon Grant, along with virtual offerings from Justin Alexander and Shawn Mativetsky. Whether you’re a student, private instructor, classroom teacher, or ensemble director, these clinics offer something valuable for everyone. While designed with students and emerging percussionists in mind, the concepts presented are relevant and enriching for musicians at all levels. The FUNdamentals series deliberately centers on core concepts and practical techniques whether in keyboard percussion, world drumming, drumset, or creative musicianship. Each session is interactive, participatory, and packed with ideas, exercises, and resources that can be applied immediately in the classroom, studio, or practice room.

In addition to new content, PAS members can access a growing library of past

FUNdamentals handouts online with a treasure trove of charts, worksheets, and pedagogical tools curated by years of top-notch clinicians. [https://pas.org/resources/?\\_search2=fundamentals&\\_publication=instructional-resource](https://pas.org/resources/?_search2=fundamentals&_publication=instructional-resource)

The FUNdamentals series is more than a beginner’s toolkit – it’s a celebration of core techniques, global traditions, and inclusive pedagogy. Each session provides practical, forward-thinking tools that percussionists and educators can immediately apply. Whether you’re attending PASIC in person or tuning in from across the globe, these clinics are sure to enrich your musicianship, inspire your teaching, and elevate your approach to percussion education.

## LIVE SESSIONS

**JAMIE WHITMARSH**

### A Practical Guide to Developing Your Composition Technique

In this session, Dr. Jamie Wind Whitmarsh will lead participants through a wide-ranging exploration of the compositional process for musicians of all backgrounds and experience levels. The clinic focuses on developing a healthy creative mindset, generating new material through live sketching, and organizing ideas using material sheets and formal diagrams. Dr. Whitmarsh also demonstrates how to refine and develop musical themes using the elements of music, such

as rhythm, texture, and form, so composers can expand, shape, and deepen their ideas with confidence. Participants will leave with a flexible “loose curriculum” to continue their growth well after PASIC ends.

Dr. Jamie Wind Whitmarsh is a composer, percussionist, and educator based in Oklahoma City. Known for his versatility and creative voice, he has won numerous awards, including the PAS Composition Competition (2012, 2013), the MTNA Young Artist National Composition Competition (2014), and recognition from the American Prize and 48-Hour Film Proj-



Jamie Whitmarsh

ect. His works span concert hall, film, and video games. Whitmarsh is chair of the PAS Composition Committee and has led educational outreach and workshops internationally, including programs in Lebanon, Egypt, and Kurdistan.

### CHRISTOPHER ROSAS

#### Frame Drum **FUNDamentals:** Exploring the Rich Heritage and Techniques of the **Riq**

Christopher Rosas presents a highly interactive workshop introducing the



**Christopher Rosas**

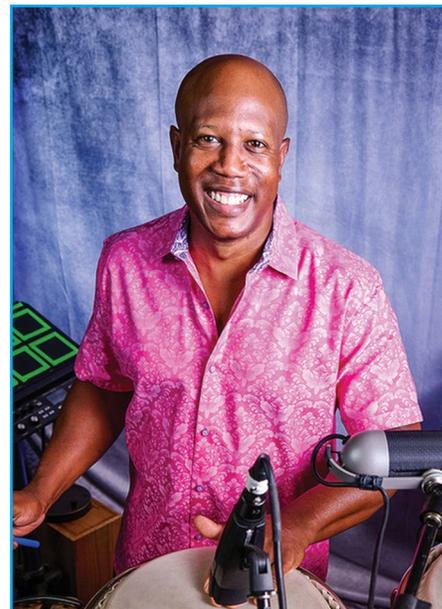
frame drum, with a focus on the riq, a tambourine-like instrument central to Middle Eastern music traditions. This session combines historical background with practical instruction on technique, tone production, and rhythm. Participants will explore posture, holding positions, and core playing techniques while also learning how to use frame drums in classroom and ensemble settings. Rosas also addresses the broader educational impact of frame drums, highlighting their affordability, cultural richness, and potential to expand inclusivity in music programs. Attendees will receive digital handouts including rhythm charts, teaching strategies, and a curated list of instructional resources.

Christopher Rosas is the Director of Percussion at Tomball High School in Texas. He holds a Master of Music in Percussion Performance degree from the University of Tennessee, where he served as graduate teaching assistant, and a Bachelor of Music in Music Education degree from Texas Lutheran University. At UT, he performed with the wind ensemble and Ensemble Knox, appearing at the CBDNA and TMEA conferences. A WGI World Finalist and gold medalist with 5points Independent Percussion, Rosas was also selected for the 2021 National Intercollegiate Band.

### DAMON GRANT

#### Building Your Independence!

In this engaging and practical session, Damon Grant explores limb independence and coordination through the lens of pop percussion performance. Drawing on real-world experiences from working with *The Voice*, *American Idol*, and major touring artists, Grant walks participants through grooves, patterns, and layering techniques that are essential in both live and studio settings. He explains how to adapt folkloric rhythms for pop music,



**Damon Grant**

## PANEL DISCUSSION

### World Percussion Committee Panel: Deep Resonances: The Gong Cultures of Asia

In many parts of Asia, a gong culture is deeply embedded in the way of life. Gongs can be played on various occasions, such as formal rituals and community celebrations. Gongs can be played to communicate and transmit messages, for healing sickness, and for invoking the divine. This panel seeks to explore the centrality of the gong in music traditions in Asia. It will focus on how – in countries like India, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, and Thailand – there are many places where playing the gongs are considered sacred, powerful expressions of musical identity that is indispensable in the community. The discussion will include how social and economic changes affect the transmission and context in which these gongs are performed. The panel will discuss the impact of the gong culture in percussion performance practice, and the emerging musical trends happening locally and globally because of these gong traditions.

### Dr. Brandon Bell, Ms. Laura Dunaway, Dr. Brady Spitz: Finding Pathways for Performances

Professional percussionists from every genre and in every stage of their careers can struggle with how to establish strong professional relationships among management, arts presenters, and community stakeholders. This panel will speak about preparing stand-out electronic press kits and riders, building a successful network of relationships within your arts community, and highlighting how you can attract positive attention in a crowded field. This session will present pragmatic advice on building a successful performance career, told from the perspective of music presenters and artist management. Led by Dr. Brady Spitz, this panel will feature Dr. Brandon Bell, General Manager of DACAMERA Chamber Music and Jazz, and Laura Dunaway, Artist Manager and Booking Agent with MKI Artists, speaking about how to get your creative projects from the rehearsal hall to the stage.

create and transcribe parts, and approach music production from the perspective of a working sideman. Attendees will also gain insights into using electronics, building solo vocabulary, and managing their careers in today's music industry.

Damon Grant is a professional percussionist, recording artist, and educator with a remarkable breadth of experience. He has recorded on Grammy-nominated albums and performed with high-profile artists including Madonna, Mary J. Blige, Marc Broussard, and Eric Hutchinson. Damon has been featured in *Modern Drummer* and *Latin Beat*, played at two Summer Olympics, and was an original cast member of *Blast!*, which won both Emmy and Tony Awards. In addition to his onstage work, he is known for mentoring musicians and sharing knowledge about the music business, technology, and creative collaboration.

## VIRTUAL SESSION

### JUSTIN ALEXANDER AND SHAWN MATIVETSKY

#### Rudimentaal: Indian Rhythmic Concepts through Snare Drum Pedagogy

Presented virtually, this innovative session bridges global rhythmic traditions by applying concepts from North Indian tabla drumming to rudimental snare drum pedagogy. Justin Alexander and Shawn Mativetsky demonstrate how rhythmic devices such as *taal* (cyclical rhythmic structures), *tihai* (cadential phrases), and *kaida* (theme and variation) can enhance sticking control, phrasing, and musicality in Western percussion training. Drawing from Mativetsky's book *Rudimentaal*, the session offers a model for integrating non-Western approaches into traditional pedagogy without compromising either tradition. Attendees will learn how these concepts foster creativity, improve technique, and deepen rhythmic understanding.

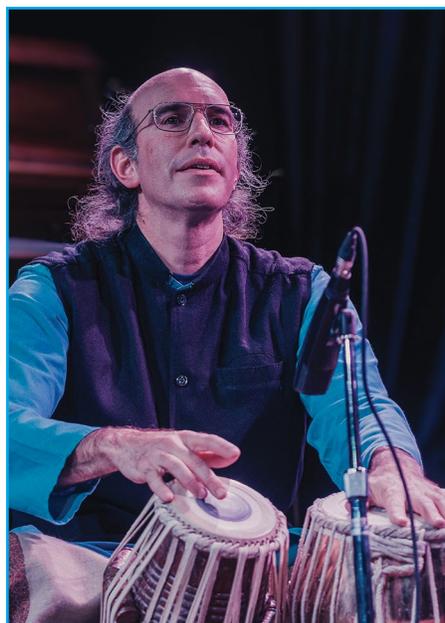
Dr. Justin Alexander is Associate Professor of Percussion at Virginia Commonwealth University and an internationally active performer. With degrees from Florida State University, he has appeared

in Belgium, Australia, Sweden, Costa Rica, and the Dominican Republic. His teaching and performance emphasize both traditional and innovative percussion practices.

Shawn Mativetsky is one of Canada's leading tabla performers and a pioneer in blending Indian classical music with Western percussion. He teaches at McGill University and is known for his deep commitment to cross-cultural education.



Justin Alexander



Shawn Mativetsky

Mativetsky regularly presents workshops, lectures, and performances across the globe.

Dr. Oliver Molina is an Associate Professor of Music at Northwestern State University of Louisiana where he serves as the Director of Percussion Studies. He is chair of the PAS Education Committee and treasurer of the Louisiana PAS Chapter. [PN](#)

## PANEL DISCUSSION

### Music Technology Committee Panel Tech from the Top Down: Technical Concepts Using Musical Language

Music technology is a broad topic that acts as an umbrella term for a variety of endeavors, ranging from live sound reinforcement to the recording arts. Each of these topics can take years to master individually, and musicians are generally spread far too thin to engage deeply with all of them. This panel will discuss the broad goals, outcomes, and concepts associated with four of the primary ways we use music technology in percussion circles: recording, live sound reinforcement (to include the marching arts), composition, and digital signal processing. We will approach each topic from the "top down": identifying key factors in each use of music technology, noting how these concepts either differ or relate to concepts more common to percussionists, and providing a sense of curiosity and encouragement to musicians who might not feel comfortable stepping into music tech-heavy endeavors.

PHOTO BY CURTIS PERRY