

Percussion 101: The Essential Truths and Their Practical Application
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I. Percussionists and Behavior. Why do they drive me crazy????????????? Are percussionists human? Why don't they practice what I ask them? Why are they never quiet? They never stop playing! Why don't they understand me? Why can't they read?

II. Motivation. How????????????????????

- A. Drum line
- B. Wind Ensemble/Symphonic/Concert Band/All State Band/All County Band
- B. Percussion Ensemble
- C. Jazz Band
- D. Using college students
- E. Solo & Ensemble (a must!)
- F. Percussion Class during school (I'm not a fan of)

III. Solutions to your rhythm problems.

- A. Rhythm Timing, practice at ALL tempos
- B. Metronome work that is fun and not discouraging
- C. Counting first, then NOT COUNTING!

IV. Timpani, the worst played instrument on the planet!

- A. Tuning
- B. French versus German grip
- C. Mallet choices
- D. Muffling issues
- E. When to "read" the music and when to use your ears. Timpani started as a 3rd trumpet, articulation is SO very important.
- F. The pedals never work, the heads are out of tune and the rods are bent, HELP!

V. Snare drum; help!

- A. The favorite percussion instrument (mine too) and the most annoying!
- B. Rudiments, 40 standard and hybrid, marching technique, stick heights, rolls
- C. Concert technique, MATCH GRIP ONLY
- D. The drums are always broken or sound bad.
- E. I have no idea how to help my student with the grade 5, 6, 7 FBA solo.

VI. Mallet Percussion

- A. Xylophone, Vibraphone, Orchestra Bells (glock.), Marimba, Chimes, Crotales
- B. Mallets!!!!!!!!!!!! Help? What's the difference? Why are they all over my band room floor? Why do they never have the correct mallet? What is the correct mallet? What mallets should I buy and what should they buy?
- C. Mallet Ensemble, adding extra mallet parts in band, why can't they READ?
- D. The benefits of every band owning a marimba

VII. Latin Percussion

- A. How do you play and teach hand drums?
- B. How does one not spend a fortune on all the different drums?
- C. What are all the new accessories, how do I keep up?

VIII. Accessory Percussion

- A. Tambourine, Triangle, Castanets
- B. Cymbal technique! Help help help help help help, oh yea, HELP!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- C. Bass Drum technique, sound and mallet choice
- D. The “toys”, does it ever stop?

IX. Drum set, the three ways to learn:

- A. Technique
- B. Coordination (can this be taught?)
- C. Maturity and Listening skills

X. Selecting Beginning Percussionists

- A. Cannot have a shy student, piano skills are very helpful
- B. Personality should have that spark and want to try everything
- C. Not just based on good rhythm, everyone in the band should have good rhythm, Should be able to tune, be creative, not be afraid, and have coordination.
- D. Good academic students make your life easier
- E. “But I’ve been taking drum set lessons at the local music store!”

XI. Is there a solution to your percussion nightmare?

- A. Hire a college student, or even better, a professional
- B. High school students are great for middle schools, offer them community service
- C. Require everyone own their own stick bag consisting of general timpani mallets, “A” tuning fork, concert snare sticks, marching sticks (high school), xylophone/bell hard plastic mallets, yarn mallets for marimba and a metronome. DO NOT let them share, make this part of their grade
- D. Demand organization, pride and protection of the schools instruments. Watch the “felt” thief. Do not let them dismantle equipment to “make” stands, etc.

XII. Advice for directors.

- A. Demand the sound your ears want. You may not know how to tell a student how to achieve a certain sound and that’s OK, let them figure it out
- B. Make your school’s instruments accessible to them, in practice rooms, with some alone time. The shy student does not want to practice marimba or timpani with dozens of band students around.
- C. Take pride and interest in your percussionists, a lot of the time they think you don’t care and dislike them. They are a different breed!
- D. In high school, the drum line to the students is the most important thing they do. There is a strange pull that sucks students up into this “drum line world” You may not understand it or agree with it, but its reality and everything to them!