

Marching Percussion for Music Educators

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INSTRUMENTATION

Drumline Voices: Snares (soprano), Tenors (mid-range), Bases (bass)

- Ensure that the size of the drumline is proportional to the size of the horn line.
- Maintain certain proportions within the drumline:
 - Snare drums should outnumber tenors.
 - Multiple snare drums and tenors provide a full sound.
 - Have at least four bass drums in a section.
 - Is your cymbal line more effective than front ensemble cymbals?
- Ideal instrumentations:

2 Snares/1-2 Tenors/3-4 Bases

3 Snares/2 Tenors/4-5 Bases

4 Snares/2-3 Tenors/5 Bases

5 Snares/3 Tenors/5 Bases

6 Snares/3 Tenors/5 Bases

7 Snares/4 Tenors/5 Bases

Front Ensemble Voices: Marimbas (lead), Vibraphones (sustain), Xylophone and Glockenspiel (clear and cutting), "Rack" Instruments (accentuating)

- Each player needs access to suspended cymbals and/or crash cymbals for impact moments.
- Bass drum and gong parts, as well as other accessory parts are extremely important to the entire ensemble. These are not "easy" parts, so please assign these wisely.

Full Ensemble Considerations:

- Outfit the front ensemble and drumline equally.
- Basic musical contributions from the front ensemble have a greater impact on the full ensemble. (Cymbals, Bass Drum/Gong, etc.)
- If there is no drumline, place front ensemble on the field to establish pulse at the back of the ensemble.

IMPLEMENTS

Snare Drum: Utilize sticks specifically designed for marching snare drum, which have a greater diameter and are longer than concert snare drum sticks. Ensure that the entire section is using the same brand and model sticks for uniform sound and articulation.

- Suggested model: Innovative Percussion model PR2 (Paul Rennick #2) stick

Tenors: Utilize sticks or mallets designed for tenors, which are shorter for increased agility around the drums. Mallets are heavier and less articulate, while sticks are lighter and more articulate. "Hybrid" sticks combine the weight of a mallet with the agility and rimshot of a stick.

- Suggested models: Innovative Percussion model FT-1AH mallets, model FS-2T "Shorty" stick, and/or model TS-2 "hybrid" stick with nylon bead.

Bass Drums: These mallets are made with hard felt that provides clear articulation as well as weight for sound projection. Graduated mallets correspond to different size drums.

- Suggested model: Innovative Percussion model FBX mallets. Sizes are:

<i>Recommended Mallet Model</i>	<i>Diameter of Bass Drum</i>
<i>IP FBX-1</i>	<i>16"-18"</i>
<i>IP FBX-2</i>	<i>18"-22"</i>
<i>IP FBX-3</i>	<i>22"-26"</i>
<i>IP FBX-4</i>	<i>26"-30"</i>
<i>IP FBX-5</i>	<i>30"-32"</i>

Front Ensemble: Outdoor mallets have heavier cores and are made with synthetic yarn and cord to withstand varying temperatures and moisture. Marimba mallets have birch shafts (for four mallet playing) and vibraphone, xylophone, and glockenspiel mallets have rattan shafts.

- Suggested models: Innovative Percussion Jim Casella Series or Field Series keyboard mallets, and model CG-1S for bass drum and gong.

DRUMHEADS (Please replace at least once a year!)

Snare Drum: Batter and snare side heads made of woven fibers, but snare side head is much thinner than batter head. These heads are intended for very high tensions and should be used on free-floating snare drums.

- Suggested model: Remo WhiteMax batter and Falams XT snare side

Tenors: These heads are similar to traditional plastic heads, but have an extra-strong collar and increased thickness to withstand high tension and heavy use. Coated heads have a warmer sound and clear heads cut and project.

- Suggested model: Remo Clear Pinstripe Crimplock

Bass Drums: Some varieties come with muffling systems and others require muffling of the drumhead or the shell with "tone foam." Pre-muffled heads are simple, extremely durable, and comparatively low-maintenance.

- Suggested model: Remo PowerMax (pre-muffled)

PLAYING TECHNIQUE

Fit and Adjust Carriers:

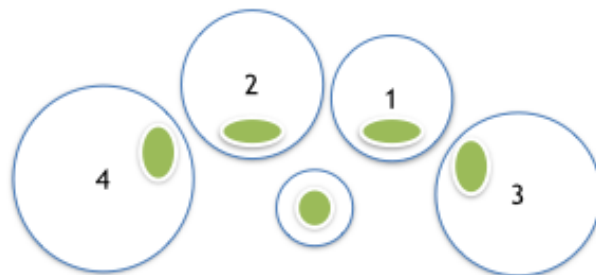
- First, ensure the carrier fits the student without the drum attached.
- Establish a comfortable and proper playing position, then adjust the drum to fit that position. Don't adjust technique to fit last year's carrier setup!
- Adjust drum angles and drumhead logos so they are uniform.

Basic Stick Grip:

- Matched grip can be used on each instrument.
- Bass drum technique is very similar to snare drum technique, only striking a vertical rather than a horizontal surface. Don't contort wrist or allow thumb to move above pointer finger on mallet.

Playing Zones:

- Play in the center of the drum on snare drum and bass drum. Other areas on the drumhead only change the sound, not the dynamic level.
- Play off-center on tenors for the clearest tone and the most resonance. Utilize "T Position" on drums 3 and 4 for easy navigation across the drums.



Set Position:

- Establish a set position for each instrument. Feet together, sticks head to toe in hands on snares and tenors, hands at 9 o'clock on bass drum rims with mallets (don't grab rims).

Playing Position:

- Snares have sticks out with beads less than 1" apart and less than 1" from the drum head. Sticks form a "pizza slice" shape.
- Tenors have sticks less than 1" above the drumhead, with the right stick over drum 1 and left stick over drum 2.
- Bass mallets are less than 1" over the center of the drumhead, meaning that the mallets are angled slightly inward towards the head.

To and From Playing Position:

- After the first four counts of the "tap off," the ensemble begins marking time.
- Two beats before the first entrance, everyone moves from set position to playing position ("sticks out").
 - Tenors shift to the first drums they play one beat before the first note.
- Sticks return to set position one beat after the final note played.

General Playing Technique:

- **Maximum velocity strokes** (this is the foundation of a "clean" sound); Uniform stick heights; Relaxed grip and arms; Fluid motion

EXERCISES

Legatos (aka "Eight on a Hand"):

- Uniform height and maximum velocity strokes, focused on one hand at a time
- Can incorporate different stick heights as well as crescendo/diminuendo
- Four basic stick heights can be taught, but Forte (12") is default:
 - Forte (12"), Mezzo Forte (9"), Mezzo Piano (6"), Piano (3")
- Tenors and Basses have "split" parts to move around drums with basic technique

Accent/Tap:

- Introduces multiple stick heights in one exercise
- Utilizes three stroke types to move from one height to the next:
 - **Legato:** The player propels the stick at maximum velocity and natural rebound returns the stick to the same height.
 - **Control:** The player propels the stick at maximum velocity and catches the stick after striking the head, preventing natural rebound in preparation for a lower stick height.
 - **Up:** The player strikes the drum from a low height and immediately lifts the stick in preparation for an accented stroke.
- Incorporates non-unison accent patterns

Double Strokes:

- Strengthens double strokes, leading towards a stronger double bounce
- Utilizes arm and fingers to create two even, consistent notes
- Isolates double strokes and then incorporates them in a roll pattern

Rolls:

- Pumping arm motion is necessary to create a consistent, even double bounce roll
- "Check" pattern and double bounces executed with same consistent arm motion
- Tempo dictates the consistent stick height throughout the entire exercise

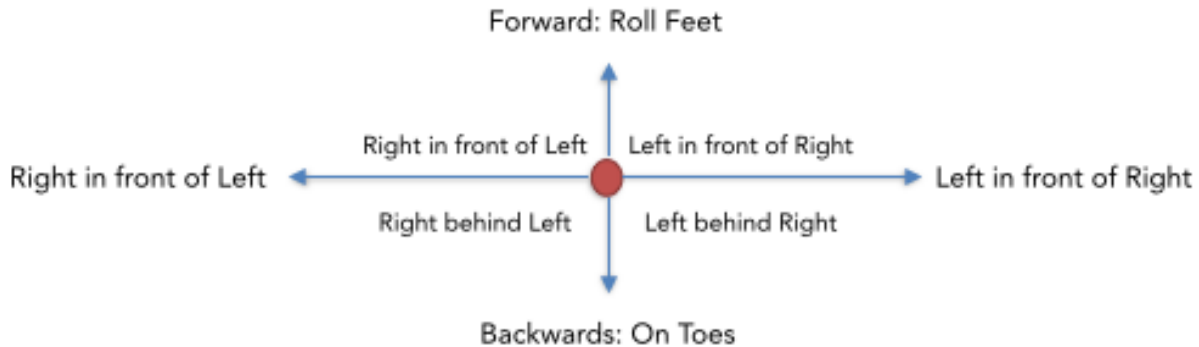
MARCHING

Shoulder Alignment:

- Snare Drum, Tenor, and Cymbal shoulders face the front sideline.
- Bass Drum shoulders face the end zone and the drumheads face the sidelines.

Movement:

- Forward march by rolling feet, backwards march on toes.
- Lateral movement on toes - "crabbing" (DON'T BEND KNEES)



Basics Block:

- Begin teaching technique with everyone facing the same direction.
- Turn bass drums 90 degrees to their "on field" position once fundamentals are established.
- Practice marching while wearing drums so the players learn to maneuver with the instruments (and limited sight-lines for bass drums).

Marching and Playing:

- Incorporate marking time with simple exercises and gradually increase difficulty, rather than only playing while marching in drill rehearsal.
 - March small steps and play exercises in a parade block. ("Tracking")
 - Mark time, hold, and perform visuals with the count structure of the drill.
 - "Track" the show music with holds and visuals.
 - Recreate abnormal formations in the drill to work on listening responsibilities.

TIMING/PULSE ISSUES

Keep Pulse in the Back:

- Placing the drumline in the back is most simple way to keep the ensemble together.
- Everyone can listen back to the drumline for the pulse.
- The metronome can be placed in the back for early rehearsals because that is the general location of the pulse during a performance.

When Pulse is NOT in the Back:

- Front ensemble introduction - it is very difficult for winds or drums to join a steady pulse established by the front ensemble. This must be done by sight because the winds and drums will be behind the front ensemble's established pulse if they listen for tempo.
- Full ensemble passages with drums beside winds. Sides cannot listen to one another and must find pulse from sight alone, making it very difficult to maintain a steady pulse.

- Percussion features sometimes require visually isolating the drumline in the drill. This must be designed well to avoid pulse location problems. Students in the ensemble must learn where to listen or watch throughout the entire show.

DESIGN CONCERNS

Please Tell the Percussion Arranger:

- The exact size and instrumentation of each section
- Strengths and weaknesses of each section
- Specific equipment available for front ensemble
- Due dates for each movement
- Provide complete, orchestrated wind arrangements:
 - Cues should be identified as required material or suggested ideas.
 - Chords should be provided if a specific progression is desired.
 - Blank measures equal free reign. Be prepared for anything.
 - Label measures that are intended to be silent.

Please Provide the Drill Writer:

- The exact size and instrumentation of each section
- Complete wind and percussion scores
- Information about any stationary on-field percussion (front ensemble, mounted drums)

RESOURCES

- **Marching Percussion 101** by Brian Mason - available for FREE online (Google it!)
- **Field Level** "The Ultimate Band Director's guide to fielding the Ultimate Marching Percussion Section" by Mike Lynch and Scott Brown (Row Loff Productions)
- **Rudimental Logic** by Bill Bachmann (Row Loff Productions)
- **Quad Logic** by Bill Bachmann (Row Loff Productions)
- **Up Front** "A complete resource for today's pit ensemble" by Jim Casella and Jim Ancona (Tapspace Publications)

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS TO HAVE ON HAND

- White Lithium Grease (clean and lubricate tension rods every year when changing drumheads)
- White Electrical Tape
- High-Tension Drum Keys (T-Keys)
- All-Purpose Cleaner and Paper Towels (clean drums and hardware)
- Wrench and Ratchet Set
- New Replacement Drumheads (not necessarily a full set if finances are a concern)
- Old Drumheads (to use in an emergency)
- Earplugs (Etymotic Research Musician's Earplugs work very well and are \$12 or less per pair)
- Parachute Cord (to re-string mallet instruments)
- Extra Cymbal Felts and Plastic Sleeves (for suspended cymbals)
- Extra Leather Cymbal Straps (for crash cymbals)

Legatos

perc. arr. Gordon Hicken

♩ = 96-160+

This system of the score includes five staves: Snare Drums, Tenors, Bass Drums (4 players), Bass Drums (5 players), and Cymbals. The music is in 4/4 time. The Snare Drums and Tenors parts feature a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents, alternating between right (R) and left (L) hands. The Bass Drums (4 and 5 players) and Cymbals parts also feature similar rhythmic patterns. A 'cross over' instruction is present in the Tenors staff in the fourth measure.

5

This system of the score includes five staves: S. Dr., Ten., B. Dr. (4), B. Dr. (5), and Cym. The music continues from the first system. The S. Dr., Ten., B. Dr. (4), and Cym. parts feature a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents, alternating between left (L) and right (R) hands. The B. Dr. (5) part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents, alternating between right (R) and left (L) hands. A 'cross over' instruction is present in the Tenors staff in the fourth measure.

Accent/Tap

perc. arr. Gordon Hicken

♩ = 96-144+

Snare Drums
Tenors
Bass Drums (4 players)
Bass Drums (5 players)
Cymbals

7
S. Dr.
Ten.
B. Dr. (4)
B. Dr. (5)
Cym.

Double Strokes

perc. arr. Gordon Hicken

♩ = 96-144+

Snare Drums
R R R... L L L... R R R... R R R L L R R L L R R L L R R

Tenors
R R R... L L L... R R R... R R R L L R R L L R R L L R R

Bass Drums (4 players)
(Snare sticking if unison)
R R R... L L L... R R R... R R R R R R...

Bass Drums (5 players)
(Snare sticking if unison)
R R R... L L L... R R R... R R R R R R...

Cymbals
open siz close siz/suck

5

S. Dr.
L L L... R R R... L L L... L L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R

Ten.
L L L... R R R... L L L... L L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R

B. Dr. (4)
L L L... R R R... L L L... L L L L L L... R

B. Dr. (5)
L L L... R R R... L L L... L L L L L L... R

Cym.
5

Rolls

perc. arr. Gordon Hicken

♩ = 96-128

Musical score for Snare Drums, Tenors, and Bass Drums (4 and 5 players). The score is in 4/4 time and consists of three measures. The Snare Drums and Tenors parts include the rhythmic notation "R L R L..." below the staff. The Bass Drums (4 players) and Bass Drums (5 players) parts show a consistent rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

Musical score for Snare Drums, Tenors, and Bass Drums (4 and 5 players). The score is in 4/4 time and consists of four measures. The first three measures show rhythmic notation for Snare Drums (S.Dr.), Tenors (Ten.), Bass Drums (4) (B. Dr. (4)), and Bass Drums (5) (B. Dr. (5)). The fourth measure shows a final rhythmic notation "R" for each part, indicating a roll.