

Level Up- A Game Plan for Improving the Skill Sets of Percussion Majors with Deficiencies in Small Music Programs

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It has become increasingly common that aspiring collegiate percussion educators will begin their careers as adjuncts, instructors, or lecturers in small liberal arts music programs or in colleges and universities that are not the major institutions within their state of employment. In many of these types of programs resources are limited, equipment situations are the bare minimum or less, and the students who enter the programs have significant deficiencies on several percussion instruments. Our strategies to foster improvement over the course of two semesters, focusing on the following instruments: Snare Drum, Mallet Percussion, Timpani, and Drumset.

Areas of Focus to Improve Technique

Snare Drum

- Grip (traditional, American, German)
- Stroke types (full, down, tap, up)
- 40 PAS Rudiments
- Playing Areas (Center, off-center, edge)
- Stance and instrument set-up
- Touch and tone
- Roll development

Keyboard

- Posture and stance behind the instrument
- Touch and tone
- Legato vs. Staccato strokes
- 2-mallet grip (front vs. back of the hand)
- Playing areas (center, off-center, edge of the bar)
- Roll development (2-mallets)
- Gradually introduce 4-mallets and grips (traditional, Musser, Burton, Stevens)
- Skill building 2 and 4 mallets

Timpani

- Grip (American, German, and French)
- Touch and tone
- Playing areas (edge, center, off-center)
- Tuning (humming vs. singing & pitch pipe vs. tuning fork)
- Legato and staccato strokes
- Roll development
- Shifting/changing, sticking (doubles/cross-sticking)

Drumset

- Instruments and their function (time, marking phrases, fills, mimic bass or mimic melody)
- Consistent playing areas around the drums (center vs. off –center)
- Independence

- Posture
- Feet (heel up vs. heel down)

Areas of Focus to Improve Reading

Snare Drum

- Counting and breaking down the rhythm in time
- Weekly etudes (encourages reading and not memorization)
- Involvement in large ensembles and marching band
- Intermediate Studies by Mitchell Peters

Keyboard

- Four ways to read music (pitch by pitch, intervallically, recognizing chord configurations and scale shapes, reading harmonically)
- Introduce all scales, modes, and arpeggios
- Remove rhythmic aspect and name pitches in real time with metronome; as the student progresses, begin to incorporate rhythm as written.
- Reading Mallet Percussion by Rebecca Kite
- Sight-read short melodies each week in applied (trumpet book, horn book, clarinet book, or etc.)
- Involvement in large ensembles (Be sure each student is assigned at least one or more keyboard parts over the course of the semester)

Timpani

- Counting and breaking down the rhythm in time
- Weekly etudes (encourages reading and not memorization)
- Involvement in large ensembles (Be sure each student is assigned at least one or more timpani parts over the course of the semester)
- Score study away from the instrument

Drumset

- Involvement in jazz ensembles and combos
- Participation in Basketball band
- Reading Charts (Groove Essentials by Tommy Igoe, Survival Guide for the Modern Drummer, Commandments of R&B, and etc.)

Practice Habits and Time Management

- Outline long term goals for their time in college, outline goals for each semester
- Two hours of practice per day; 1 hour per instrument studied in applied lessons each semester. Additional practice time is added for ensembles the student is participating in.
- Set small achievable goals each day.
- Sit them down and make a weekly view of their schedule so they see where they can add practice time and then add those sessions to their schedules and challenge them to uphold the slots they selected each week
- Practice lesson - have a practice session with the student as a lesson so they know how to approach that time. Repeat this for any instrument they may have trouble with when it comes to preparation.

- Grade them each week and let them see their grade
- Practice log
- Methods of eliminating distractions in the practice room
- Model practice regimen for your students
- Lead by example (if they see you, they will do)

Method Books and Other Resources

Method Books (selected)

- Snare Drum
 - Alfred's Drum Method, Complete by Dave Black and Sandy Feldstein
 - Snare Drum for Beginners by Morris Goldenberg
 - Snare Drum Method Book 1 by Vic Firth
 - A Fresh Approach to Snare Drum by Mark Wessels
 - Teaching Rhythm by Joel Rothman
 - Haskell Harr Book I & II by Haskell Harr
 - Fundamental Studies for Snare Drum by Garwood Whaley
 - Modern School for Snare Drum by Morris Goldenberg
 - Musical Studies for the Intermediate Snare Drummer by Garwood Whaley
 - Contemporary Studies for Snare Drum by Fred Albright
 - 22 Progressive Studies, Etudes, & Duets for Snare Drum by David P. Eyler
 - Developing Dexterity for Snare Drum by Mitchell Peters
 - Wrist and Finger Control by Charley Wilcoxon
 - Stick Control by George Lawrence Stone
 - Accents and Rebounds by George Lawrence Stone
 - Recital Solos for Snare Drum by Garwood Whaley
 - Standard Snare Drum Method by Benjamin Podemski
 - Contemporary Rudimental Studies and Solos by Lalo Davila
 - 14 Modern Contest Solos by John S. Pratt
 - Snare Drum in the Concert Hall by Al Payson
 - Odd Meter Rudimental Etudes by Mitchell Peters
- Keyboard
 - Reading Mallet Percussion Music by Rebecca Kite
 - Fundamental Method for Mallets by Mitchel Peters
 - Mallet Percussion for Young Beginners by Randy Eyles
 - Modern School for Xylophone, Marimba and Vibraphone by Morris Goldenberg
 - Elementary Studies by George Hamilton Green
 - Instruction Course for Xylophone by George H. Green
 - New Elementary Studies by George H. Green
 - Music for Marimba, Vol. 1 by Art Joliff
 - Modern Mallet Method by Phil Kraus
 - Percussion Keyboard Technique by Thomas McMillan
 - Primary Handbook for Mallets by Garwood Whaley
 - Fundamental Studies for Mallets by Garwood Whaley

- Timpani
 - Modern Method for Timpani by Saul Goodman
 - The Solo Timpanist by Vic Firth
 - The Well-Tempered Timpanist by Charles Dowd
 - The Tuneful Timpanist by Ronald Horner
 - Exercises, Etudes, and Solos for the Timpani by Raynor Carroll
 - Pedal to the Kettle by Kirk Gay
 - Fundamental Method for Timpani by Mitchell Peters
- Drumset
 - Groove Essentials 1.0 and 2.0 by Tommy Igoe
 - It's About Time by Fred Dinkins
 - New Breed by Gary Chester
 - Commandments of R&B Drumming by Zoro

Other Resources (selected)

- Keyboard Percussion Basics by Rich Holly & James Lambert (PASIC 1996)
- Keyboard Fundamentals by Eric Chandler and Chris Norton (PASIC 1997)
- Reading Technique on Keyboard Percussion Instruments by J.B. Smith (PASIC 1998)
- Keyboard Fundamentals by James Lambert & Judy Moonert (PASIC 1999)
- The Rudiments of Two-Mallet Keyboard Performance by David Steinquist and Chris Norton (PASIC 2003)
- Essential Elements for Two-Mallet Playing by Lisa Rogers (PASIC 2004)
- Introduction to Marimba Technique by Kevin Bobo and Jon Metzger (PASIC 2005)
- Snare Drum Grips and Strokes by Julie Davila (PASIC 1996)
- Rudiment Development by Lalo Davila (PASIC 1998)
- Snare Fundamentals by Jeff Prosperie (PASIC 1999)
- Snare Fundamentals by Ben Miller and John Papastefan (PASIC 2000)

Websites

- [FUNDamental Friday | PAS](#)
- [Resource Library \(pas.org\)](#)
- [Vic Firth Home page \(zildjian.com\)](#)
- [Educational Resources - Innovative Percussion](#)