

What on earth do I do with my percussion section?

Da Capo Conference 2016

Graydon Cramer

cramer.graydon@bsd.ca

Selection of players

- Strong/independent
 - o I don't believe the percussion section is a good place to put students who are likely to struggle with independence or music reading
- Personally, I am much more selective with choosing my students who play tuba, French Horn, and Percussion

Selection of parts

- Keep a chart with fair and equal rotation between players
- No student plays the same instrument twice in a concert
- Every student should play: timpani, snare, bass drum, mallets, cymbals, and auxiliary at least once a concert/term/year
- Be aware of which parts the challenges are in and know your students' strengths, needs, abilities
- Class parts – As long as their assigned part will be ready for the concert students are encouraged to learn, try, cover any and all other parts during class

Inclusion in warm up

- All percussionists should be able to play mallets
 - o Strive for balance and blend
 - o Translation of wind terms to percussion
 - Posture = posture
 - Embouchure = grip
 - Breath = up motion
 - Articulation = point of contact
 - Sustain = roll
 - Air = vibration
- Train your percussionists to interpret your "wind" language independently
- Ideas to challenge and keep your percussionists involved:
 - o Mallets
 - play harmonies on mallets – 2, 3, 4 part (ex. In 3rds or 5ths)
 - o Timpani
 - Scales (Tune drums to arpeggio notes and pedal adjust)
 - Great for tuning exercises
 - Opportunity to learn bass clef
 - o Articulation – why not use percussion instruments to teach the sound of articulation
 - Legato – Bass drum
 - Accent/Bell tones – Chimes
 - Staccato - Snare

Modifying parts

- If no mallet part or mallet part is too simple assign the flute part instead
- Lots of publishers/composers include an “advanced” part now (usually a snare part which embellishes the original with rolls and 16th rhythms). These two parts can also usually be played simultaneously

Combining parts (Example: *Fires of Mazama* – Michael Sweeney)

- Combining parts together, creating set-ups, and having to run around the back row make playing percussion more fun and engaging.
 - o No one likes to count 68 bars of rest to play a suspended cymbal roll
 - o Especially multiple times a rehearsal, every rehearsal, for a month and a half
- Bass and snare (Drum set like)
- Multi set up
- Timpani and cymbal or bells (one hand each)
- Substitutions/Modifications:
 - o Crash cymbals – stick on suspended cymbal
 - o Bell mallet on triangle (while clipped) to facilitate speed
 - o Flip mallets over to use as sticks
 - o 4 mallet grip

Working with too few/too many

- Double parts
 - o I will often have a mallet part tripled on bells, xylophone, and vibraphone
 - o Double snares in a march
 - o Double drums in an African style piece for tribal effect
- Create parts
 - o Timpani based on the bass line
- Have a wind player who plays piano try a mallet part
 - o All percussion equipment is movable
 - Have set up bells in front row and had a flute player partially cover a part
 - Have set up a single chime bar on cymbal stand and had French horn player cover chime part

Percussion ensemble – Maybe the best possible way to develop your percussionists

- School based extra-curricular group
- Camp/Special occasion
- Divisional wind ensemble (BWMY Percussion Ensemble – partnership with BU)

I hope this has helped you gain a better understanding of what might/can go on in the back row of your band room. Please keep your percussionists involved as much as possible and challenge them whenever possible. The more they are treated like an integral, unique, but equal part of the band the more pride they will take in their craft; making your band better.

Please don't hesitate to contact myself if you ever have questions. Thank you!

Percussion 101

Good Vibrations - "Bring it to you, strike it, and get out of its way"

- Take pride in what you do by doing it well
- Choose your "weapons" musically
- Balance and blend with the band
- Play as many parts as possible in class
- Create a set-up that works fluidly for your instruments and "weapons" (trap tables)
- Warm-up your stroke every day (rudiments), the same stroke will transfer between many instruments
- Let the instrument vibrate . . . stop the vibration when needed
- Percussionists play every instrument back there
- If you are tense, you are playing incorrectly
- Every comment made by your director affects what you play somehow

Timpani

- Soft, medium, hard, wood mallets
- Strike 1" – 2" from edge of drum (in between lugs)
- Pull sound out
- Rolls are slower than you might think and always single stroke
- Tune the initial pitch not the after ring (hopefully they're the same)
- Set the drums up so you hit all your sweet spots by rotating your torso
- Lower notes need to be emphasized in order to balance with notes on higher drums
- Stool is not to sit on, but to lower your standing height if you are too tall for the drums

Snare

- Larger handled sticks w/ wood tips
- Snare cable and latch point to you
- Stand square to drum, feet shoulder width apart
- "V" shape with sticks
- Snare just above waist height
- Left and Right mirror image from center of the drum
- Use the middle of the drum all the way to the top edge to help with dynamics
- Slow relaxed wrist speed for rolls

Keyboards

- Rubber, Wood, Yarn, Metal (Glock only)
- Return stick immediately to top of stroke
- Always play in middle of bars (or very front if necessary)
- Lead downwards with left, upwards with right
- Anticipate next note with up stroke
- Stand square to keyboard and shuffle feet as necessary

Auxiliary

- experiment with different tone qualities and "weapons"
- Consider (in advance) how to begin, sustain, and end sound
- Is the part independent, complimenting, or accompanying the other parts?
- The audience needs to see it in order to hear it

Grade 8 Percussion 2014-2015

	Riley	Reece	Costa	Matthew	Dylan	Kristijan	Luke
Confidence	Bells	BD	Vibes	Xylo	Crash/Tri	Snare ^{Timp}	Snare
Final Impact	Timp	Snare	Tamb	BD	Chimes	Bells	WB + Gong
Song 4 Peace	Sus. Cym	Bells/Chimes	Timp	Wind chimes	Xylo	Triangle	Vibes
O Canada		Timp	BD ^{Snare}	Snare	BD		WB
Welcome Christines	M-Xylo	M-Vibes	Snare ^{Δ + Sus}	Snare	Timp BD	Snare ^{BD}	M-Bells
Darbury Fun	BD	Snare	Snare ^{Bells}	Bells	Δ + Sus ^{Crash}	Snare ^{Crash}	Timp
Brother James Air	Vibes	Chimes + Bells	Sus + Δ	Xylo	Snare + Crash	Snare	BD
Sandy Bay March	Snare	Crash + Δ	BD	Snare	Xylo	Vibes	Bells
Pioneer Song	Bells	Timp	Vibes	WB + Crash	BD	Xylo	Snare
Silver Scepter	Timp	Bells	BD ^{SIN}	Vibes	Vibes	Crash	Xylo
Chorale	SN/BD?			Timp	Bells	Xylo	Vibes?
Sailors	Snare	BD	Crash [*]	Xylo	Bells	Δ	Vibes
Niagara	BD Δ	Chimes + Xylo	Timp	Bells + Xylo	Tam/Sn wind chimes	Vibes	Sus + Toms
Royalty Ray	Xylo	Snare ^{Tam}	Bells	Δ + WB	Vibes	BD	Crash

Gr. 8

Fl	2
ob	1
cl	2
alto	1
ten	2
bari	1
horn	2
tp	17
tb	18
euph	7
bass	1
tuba	6
perc	7

FIRES OF MAZAMA

PERCUSSION 1

Snare Drum, Bass Drum

MICHAEL SWEENEY

With Anticipation

1 2 4/4 B.D. *ff* S.D. *mf* *ff* *mf* *ff*

8 *mp* *f* 11 With Intensity Snares Off *f*

15 On Rim *mf*

22 23 4 On Drum - Snares On 28 *mp* *f*

30

35 36 *mp* 4

44 *mf* On Rim 48 1 2 3

51 4 5 6 Calming 2 57 8 65 With Energy *p* *ff* *mp*

67 *mf*

72 73 2

FIRES OF MAZAMA

PERCUSSION 2

Sus. Cym., Gong, Brake Drum,
Triangle, Wind Chimes, Rain Stick

MICHAEL SWEENEY

With Anticipation

Sus. Cym. (with Mallets)

1 *mp* *mf* *ff* **11** **With Intensity**
Play 2nd time only
Cym. w/wood stick

8 *mp* *f* *f* Brake Drum w/mallet

15 *mf*

23 (Switch Back) **28** (with Mallets) *mp* *f* *mp* *f*

36 *mp* *f*

44 Triangle *mf* **48** (1) (2) (3) Wind Chimes (or Mark Tree)

4 **5** **6** Calming **57** *p* *ff* Wind Chimes (or Mark Tree)

65 **With Energy** *p* *mp* *mf* Brake Drum

73 *f* *mp* *ff* let ring

FIRES OF MAZAMA

BELLS
Medium Tom

MICHAEL SWEENEY

With Anticipation

1 2 *ff*

Sus *Gang* *mp* *mf*

With Intensity

7 11 4 15 8

(Sus) *(Gang)* *(Switch)*

23 2 28

mf *f* *(Sus)* *(Brake Drum)*

30 *(Sus)*

36 3 39 40 41 42 43 *(Switch)* 5

f

48 1 2 3 4 5 6 Opt. Medium Tom

p

Calming

54 2 57 8 65 **With Energy** 4

ff

Bells

69 *mf* 73 *f*

75 *ff*

FIRES OF MAZAMA

With Anticipation (♩ = 84)

[illegible]

11

Bells

Musical score for measures 20-24. The score is written for a four-staff ensemble. Measures 20-22 show a rhythmic pattern in the upper staves, with the third staff (treble clef, key of D major) featuring a *mf* dynamic. Measures 23-24 show a continuation of the pattern, with the third staff featuring a *mf* dynamic. The bottom two staves (bass clef) show a rhythmic pattern with a *mf* dynamic. The score is marked with measure numbers 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24.

Musical score for measures 25-29. The score is written for a four-staff ensemble. Measures 25-27 show a rhythmic pattern in the upper staves, with the first staff (treble clef, key of D major) featuring a *mf* dynamic and the second staff (treble clef, key of D major) featuring a *f* dynamic. Measures 28-29 show a continuation of the pattern, with the first staff featuring a *f* dynamic and the second staff featuring a *f* dynamic. The bottom two staves (bass clef) show a rhythmic pattern with a *f* dynamic. The score is marked with measure numbers 25, 26, 27, 28, and 29. A double bar line is present at the end of measure 27.

On Drum - Snares On

(with Mallets)

mp

f

mp

f

Flute/Oboe

Clar. 1, 2

A Sax 1, 2

T Sax

Tpt. 1, 2

Horn

B./W.W.

erc. 1

erc. 2

ells

30 31 32 33 34

mp *f*

Flute/Oboe

Clar. 1, 2

A Sax 1, 2

T Sax

Tpt. 1, 2

Horn

B./W.W.

erc. 1

erc. 2

ells

35 36 37 38 39

mf *a2* *mf* *mf* *mp*

