

Making Music on Auxiliary Percussion: Not Just Something to Hit

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UA Little Rock Music Major for a Day – 11/17/2022

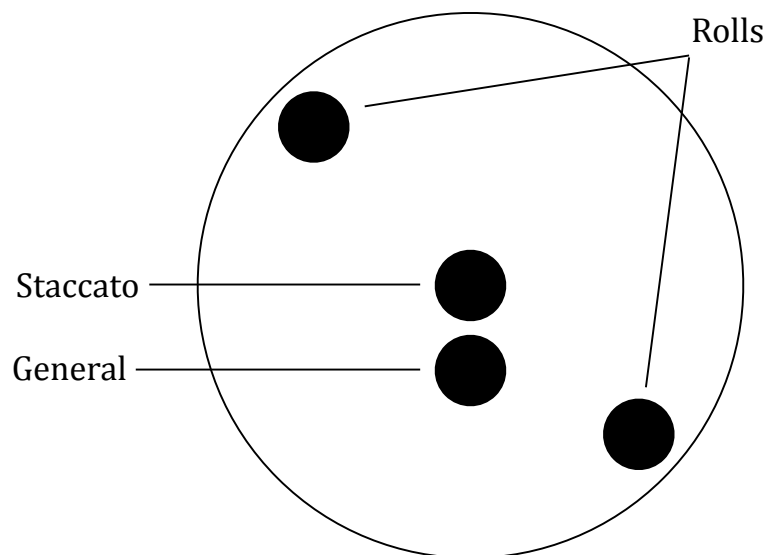
Percussionists often spend most, if not all, of their study and practice on the three main areas: snare drum, keyboard instruments, and timpani. Auxiliary instruments (bass drum, cymbals, triangle, tambourine, and many others) are often neglected. Through this clinic, I hope to provide tips for playing the most used auxiliary instruments musically and accurately.

Opening Thoughts

- All percussion instruments are just that: musical instruments. They are NOT objects that we “bang,” “smash,” “whack,” or “hit.”
- Percussionists are often the only members of an ensemble who are soloists 100% of the time. The sound and tone of everything they play must be spot on and reflect the music.
- Practice time must be spent on auxiliary instruments outside of rehearsals just like snare drum, keyboards, and timpani.

Bass Drum

- Playing Area
 - General playing – off-center
 - Punchy, staccato sound – center
 - Rolls – opposite edges

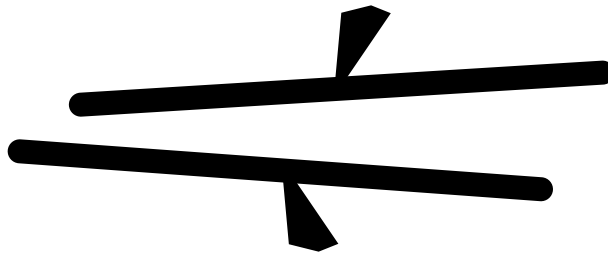


- Stroke
 - Think “arm weight” as a general stroke
 - Loose and relaxed wrist
 - Rebound off the head
 - Variation to match dynamic AND articulation (ex. piano staccato, forte legato)

- Rolls
 - Two matching, light mallets (preferably “rollers”)
 - Roll speed is slower than you think (experiment to make the drum “sing”)
- Muffling
 - Always control both heads
 - Front with towel, pad, hand, or knee with a foot rest
 - Back with hand
 - ALWAYS remember to muffle the back head when there is silence after your note

Cymbals

- Crash Cymbals
 - Felt pads are for marching field, NOT the concert hall
 - Pinch each strap as close to the bell as possible
 - Wrap other fingers around the strap just like snare drum grip
 - Turn non-dominant cymbal upside-down and nearly parallel to the floor
 - Place dominant hand cymbal parallel to the non-dominant
 - Pull top cymbal towards you one inch, then slightly lower the front edge
 - Simply let the weight of the top cymbal drop onto the bottom cymbal
 - Always remember: OFF-SET and FLAM

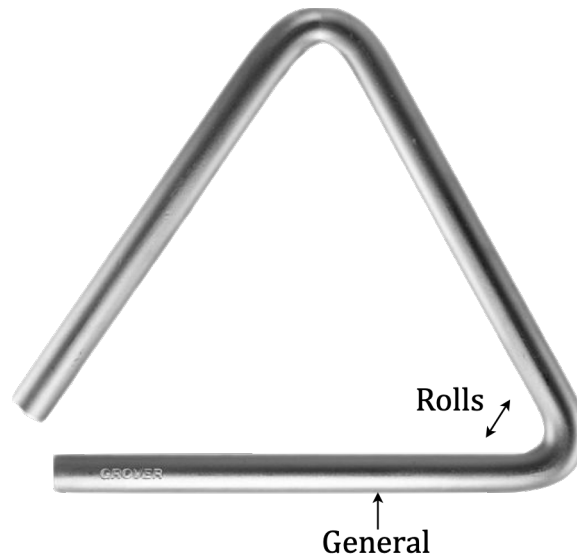


(side view)

- Suspended Cymbal
 - Use suspended cymbal mallets or soft keyboard mallets ONLY if they are used for nothing other than suspended cymbal
 - Rolls at 4 and 8 o'clock on the very edge of the cymbal
 - Like bass drum, slower than you think
 - Loose and relaxes strokes
 - Choked single notes with the shoulder of snare stick on the edge of the cymbal
 - Wire brushes for soft single notes
 - Triangle beater or coin for scrapes
 - Make sure the cymbal has ridges

Triangle

- Clip goes on so that the opening of the instrument is opposite your playing hand
- Playing area
 - Bottom beam creates the most complex overtones (ideal)
 - Find the “sweet spot” – usually a little off-center
 - Side beam creates a clearer pitch
 - Bottom corner for rolls



- AVOID clipping the triangle on a music stand
 - The stand may not be strong enough to hold it
 - Striking the triangle may cause rattling through the stand
 - Purchase a triangle mount or a small block of wood and drill a hole for a cymbal stand
- Hold so you can see the conductor, music, and instrument at the same time
- Use your ear to know when to muffle
- Keep the instrument elevated until it is no longer ringing

Tambourine

- Skin head affected by the weather
 - Electric heating pad on low will bring the pitch up
- Grip where there are no jingles; there is usually a hole in the frame
 - Four fingers inside frame, thumb along the rim on the head
 - 45° degree angle to the floor with the head facing you
 - Make sure wrist is at a natural angle
 - Angle of the instrument affects length of the sound

- Stroke types
 - General – “Chicken Dance” finger tips
 - Punchy accents – Knuckles
 - Biggest accent – Flat hand
 - Soft – 1-3 fingertips near the edge, over the jingles
- Rolls
 - Shake roll
 - Strike to start and stop (accent as the music calls for it)
 - Keep hand and wrist relaxed; “Jazz hands”
 - Finger roll
 - Generally for softer or shorter rolls
 - Brace middle finger at the top knuckle with thumb
 - Vary amount of pressure into the head and speed for dynamics
 - End with heel of the hand for accent
- Other techniques
 - Loud and fast (Knee-fist)
 - Foot on a case, snare stand base, or chair
 - Alternate strokes between striking with your hand and knee
 - Tambourine can be right side up or upside down
 - If upside down, plan ahead to turn it over to avoid extra sound
 - Soft and fast
 - Foot elevated just like knee-fist above
 - Tambourine resting on your thigh or knee at slight downward angle
 - Adjust muffling by using either forearms or heels of hands on head
 - Play with fingers of both hands on the edge of the head
 - EXPERIMENT! Any method can be correct if it gets you the right sound!

Dr. Justin Bunting currently serves as Assistant Professor of Music and Director of Percussion Studies at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. He has presented clinics and performances, individually and as a member of Blue Line Duo with his wife Cassie, at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention, the Midwest Band & Orchestra Clinic, the College Music Society South Central Regional Conference, and internationally at the PAS Colombia Day of Percussion in Armenia, Colombia. He also performs often with the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra and has appeared with the Charlotte, Greensboro, and Winston-Salem Symphony Orchestras.

Dr. Bunting earned the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Performance and a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Music Theory from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, as well as a Master of Music in Performance from Belmont University, and a Bachelor of Music in Performance from The Ohio State University. He is proudly a Malletech Performing Artist and an artist/endorser of Zildjian cymbals and Grover Pro Percussion products.

