

GENERAL BATTERY APPROACH

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We emphasize efficiency, fluidity, exploration, and mental fortitude. We strive to uplift the art of drumming, challenging preconceived limitations of ourselves and the art form. We do so within a positive and supportive environment, creating memories and connections that last a lifetime.

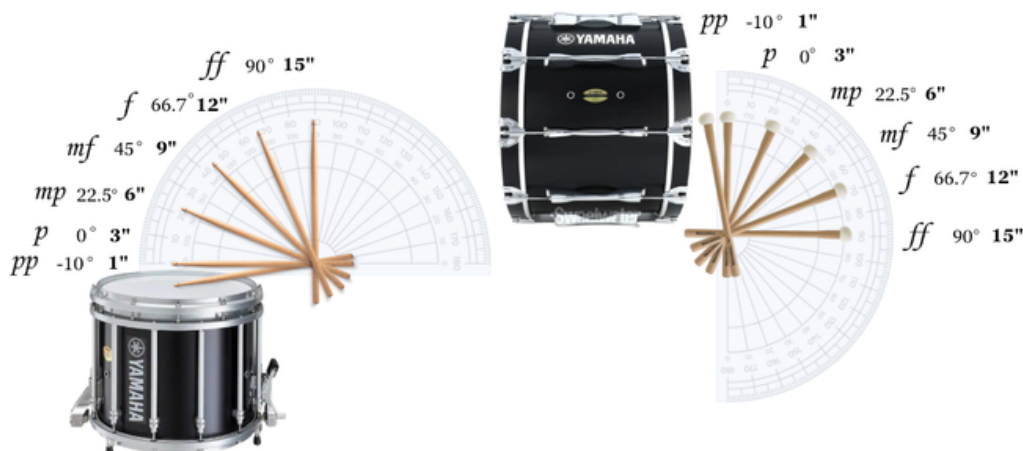
Sound / Tone

Both of our hands create the same sound. Our ability to listen and match sounds from one hand to the other, and from one player to another, is critical. We take these basic mechanics and translate them into creating outstanding music together. As you're reading about our approach, please understand that all these techniques are put in place to help create the best sound possible.

The stick should always resonate in your hand. Keep in mind the amount of velocity you are using at all heights as that will have an enormous impact on your overall sound. Lastly, be meticulous about the sound you're creating. Stickings should not affect the quality of your sound. The tone we create when playing accents should also not be affected by combinations of rudiments or accents. The more consistent you are with your sound/tone, the more consistent the group will be.

Heights

Each dynamic should be associated with an angle of attack, defined in relation to the playing surface. Notice that the fulcrum/pivot point is consistent across all dynamics. Arm motion may be added at times, but the fulcrum should always return to the correct playing position before the wrist rotates to strike the drum.



SNARE APPROACH

Right Hand

Our Right Hand fulcrum is located between the thumb and the index finger. The remaining fingers in the Right Hand should wrap naturally around the stick and stay engaged, yet relaxed, maintaining contact without pressure while at rest, and contact with responsible pressure while playing.

Left Hand

Our Left Hand fulcrum is located between the thumb and index finger, with the thumb laying on top of the index finger somewhere between the first and second knuckle. This connection must remain intact at all times and the thumb should mimic the fingers in the Right Hand – contact without pressure at rest, contact with responsible pressure while playing. The index & middle fingers should rest on top of the stick at all times to provide the support necessary to match the Right Hand's stability. The bottom fingers may come off of the stick at times, but should always remain close-by.

Playing Position

Both sticks should rest with a slight downward taper with each wrist higher than the bead. This will allow for substantial wrist turns at all heights to provide the power and depth that we're striving for, yet still ensure the "meaty" part of the bead will always make contact with the drum.

Stroke

When we're not holding sticks or mallets and we drum on our legs with our hands, our wrist turns are identical to the wrist turns that occur when we're holding sticks or mallets.

Prep Stroke: we avoid initiating the stroke by pumping from the elbow, and focus on using leading with the bead/using wrists to initiate every stroke

Weight: the natural weight of our hands and arms will help us control "down strokes" while minimizing how much we squeeze and choke the stick.

Pathway: when rebounding, we lead with the bead. Our arms are relaxed, and move as a result of the wrist turn (residual movement).

Fingers: as our wrists follow the stick upward, we keep the fingers on the stick in a consistent relaxed position. There will be exceptions to these guidelines with specific contexts calling for Moeller technique and/or an emphasis on finger control.

TENOR APPROACH

Grip

With sticks out at home position (resting over drums 1 and 2), our thumbs will be at 45-degree angles. This grip is referred to as "American Grip." This is halfway between "French Grip" (thumbs on top)" and "German Grip" (flat hands / thumbs facing one another)." When gripping the sticks, consider contact without pressure. There is just enough pressure to keep the stick in hand. If we hold the stick in the air vertically and shake it, there's slight wiggle room for the stick to breathe.

Playing Position

Our playing zones on the four primary drums (drums 1, 2, 3, and 4) are aligned in a straight path across the drums. When we move to the outer drums (drums 3 and 4), we keep the elbow in a consistent position and pivot our forearm outward.

We avoid pulling back the elbow and upper arm when reaching outward. The only time we need to pull the elbows back is for reaching the spock and playing rimshots on drums 3 and 4. We will not sacrifice sound quality when playing advanced arounds.

Challenge yourself to be as consistent as possible with this straight path of playing zones, regardless of the musical context.

Stroke

When we're not holding sticks or mallets and we drum on our legs with our hands, our wrist turns are identical to the wrist turns that occur when we're holding sticks or mallets.

Prep Stroke: we avoid initiating the stroke by pumping from the elbow, and we avoid opening and closing the fingers during rebound strokes.

Weight: the natural weight of our hands and arms will help us control "down strokes" while minimizing how much we squeeze and choke the stick.

Pathway: when rebounding, we lead with the bead. Our arms are relaxed, and move as a result of the wrist turn (residual movement).

Fingers: as our wrists follow the stick upward, we keep the fingers on the stick in a consistent relaxed position. There will be exceptions to these guidelines with specific contexts calling for Moeller technique and/or an emphasis on finger control.

BASS DRUM APPROACH

Grip

We will use a match grip, but with wrists in a vertical position. The mallets will rest on the pads of our palms, opposite our knuckles, allowing them to pivot easily. We will position the second knuckles of our index fingers opposite of our thumbs, and keep our fingers loosely wrapped around our mallets to avoid tension.

We will maintain this fulcrum at all times for consistent control.

A secondary fulcrum shifting pressure to the middle finger may be used when necessary.

Playing Position

The beads of our mallets will rest $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the center of the drum head, slightly angled inwards. Our forearms will rest parallel to both the drum and the ground, with a comfortable space between our elbows and shoulders. We will keep the middle/bottom portion of our forearms parallel to the ground, with the mallet at an angle.

Our elbows will remain relaxed and near our bodies, with no tension from the shoulders to the hands.

Stroke

Our wrists and forearms will work together in a relaxed, natural motion. We will combine wrist break with forearm rotation to maximize our technical range.

We will allow our mallets to rebound off the drum heads naturally without restricting their motion in order to produce a full, unrestricted sound using a relaxed, efficient hand and arm motion.

Weight: we will use the natural weight of our hands and mallets for efficient sound production.

Pathway: when our playing position and prep strokes are correct, our mallet's pathways will be naturally established.

Fingers: our finger movements will supplement the primary stroke, not supplant it. We will always keep the mallets in contact with our fingers, allowing them to add volume or speed when necessary.

CYMBAL APPROACH

Sound Production

The single most important aspect of cymbal playing is sound production. The visual effect the cymbal creates, while extremely important, is secondary. At the point of attack using a standard crash, the cymbals should NOT meet exactly together "edge to edge." This will result in what is called an "air-pocket" which is a momentary vacuum that locks the cymbals together and kills most of the sound. To create a full crash sound, apply a flam technique. At the instant of attack, the bottom edges of the cymbals meet first, followed by the top edges. Unlike an actual flam, there should be no audible "grace note." While an aggressive approach is desired, this should only be aggressive visually. Striking the cymbals together with too much force will also deaden the vibrations produced and therefore, deadens the sound. Using this sound quality technique, a full sound should be produced.

Visual Applications

The cymbal player is a big contributor to the overall visual program. Good posture is a necessity for playing and executing visuals well. When holding your cymbal at your sides in the "attention" position your shoulders should be relaxed and down. Keep your pelvis in line with your center (abs) and shoulders. Your arms should have a natural bend held firmly enough to control the cymbals. Your elbows should stay turned slightly outwards, not in towards your body. Keep the cymbals parallel to each other and approximately 2 inches from your sides. For cymbal players, the most basic visual element is the cymbal flip. To complete a "flip-up" you must start with your cymbals parallel to each other at your side. Keep your back straight, shoulders back and relaxed, and head up with your focus and weight slightly forward. A cymbal "flip" involves one simple rotation of the wrist: the thumb pushes back behind you and rotates the cymbal around to the front. Your arm should come forward and up simultaneously. Do not allow your arms to take a pathway to the side. To complete the flip, you stop your cymbals parallel in front of your face, 2-3 inches apart, with the knots of the cymbals in line with your eyes. Be sure to account for "tunnel vision" when the cymbals are that close to your face. What may look like parallel is actually flared out to the front. To force the cymbals to be parallel you must be able to see the inside far edge of the cymbal. A "flip down" is the exact reverse of the flip up. Pay careful attention to locking the cymbals in the attention position when flipping down. Practice these two elements slowly and work your way faster. An accurately done cymbal flip should happen instantaneously.

Physical Conditioning

Playing cymbals is one of the most physically demanding assignments in the marching percussion ensemble. In order to perform comfortably, it is important to develop strength and flexibility in those muscles that are most frequently used. Help prevent muscle cramps, wrist sprains, tendonitis and other injuries by stretching and applying strength training to your preparations for auditions. Remember, while push-ups are an excellent way to develop cymbal strength, no exercise compares to actually holding and playing the cymbals for extended periods of time.

