



## **Beginning Percussion**

**CLINICIANS:**

**Michael Bartley, Michael Dick, Zach Scheer**

# **Texas Bandmasters Association 2016 Convention/Clinic**

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HENRY B. GONZALEZ CONVENTION CENTER  
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

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*Texas Bandmasters Association Convention*

*San Antonio, Texas*

*Saturday, July 23, 2016*

*CC205 – 2:00 pm*

## Overview

- We are hoping to provide different ideas for you to take back to your schools
- Do what is best for your situation
- We have included a spreadsheet with specifics that we and other great educators across the state use
- Use of the book
- Counting/Note-Naming

## Selecting the Beginning Percussionist

- Check the student grades from previous years
- Talk to the previous teachers/principal about behavior and attendance
- Selmer test scores
- GT does not always mean good percussionists
- Watch the reaction of friends when questioning the student
- Have the student repeat a variety of four beat patterns “patching” and on the snare
- Have the student pick up a pair of sticks on their own without prior instruction
- Have the student perform a coordination test, e.g., walking and clapping at the same time
- Have the student match pitch with voice
- A background in piano lessons can sometimes help—be careful
- Make sure the student understands they are a well-rounded percussionist

## Classroom Management through Expectations and Procedures

- Decide on a short list of expectations that you can hold your class accountable for
- Print the list and bring it to class
- Introduce the expectations on the first day of instruction. Have each student commit by signing his or her name to the piece of paper.
- Post the sheet in the room and refer to it as needed
- Adherence to the expectations should be a source of pride for the class

## Practice Pad/Snare Drum Instruction

- We like to begin the school year with practice pad. This allows us to establish a solid fundamental stroke for the students they can apply to the other percussion instruments.
- Be very specific in everything you have the students do, from setting up the pad, to where to place the sticks and music stand, etc.

- Grip – VERY IMPORTANT
    - Steps to the Proper Snare Drum Grip
      - Sticks should be at a 90 degree angle
      - Sticks should be approximately one inch apart and one inch off the top of the drum head
      - “Windows” Closed
      - Wrists Flat (should be able to keep a quarter on top)
      - See the butt ends of the stick out of the corner of your eye
      - Fulcrum should be firm
      - Fingers around the stick
      - No gaps in the fingers
- \*\*\*If you do all these things correctly, the stick should move straight up and down.
- Timing
    - Timing is the number one priority for a beginner percussionist
      - Develop accurate timing through...
        - Consistent use of the metronome in class and at home
        - Foot tap
        - Evaluating students on timing accuracy throughout the year
  - Rebound Stroke
    - The rebound stroke is the most important technical skill for a beginner percussionist
      - Develop quality rebound strokes through...
        - Practicing wrist motion without sticks
          - “wrist builders”
        - Starting with sticks “up” (at the top of the stroke)
        - Utilizing a “front” fulcrum
        - Playing eighth notes at an appropriate tempo
          - No slower than 70 bpm
  - Exercises/Progression
    - Begin exercises in quarter notes, and increase to 8<sup>th</sup> notes and 16<sup>th</sup> notes
    - 8 on a hand, 8s and 16s, 8s/16s/Doubles
    - 16<sup>th</sup> Timing Exercises
    - Rudiments
    - Roll Exercises

### Keyboard Instruction

- When to start—in the beginning or wait until more solid on the snare
- Motion is similar to snare but “pull the sound off the keys”—no rebound
- Understand that you have added a horizontal plane to the motion, not just vertical
- Start with learning where the notes are by warming up with eighth notes and calling out the note names—do not move on until all students have found the correct note (helps check technique also)
- Start scales early, preferably not C, and teach all 12 majors—go to 2 octaves as quickly as possible
- Move the student to a “normal size” instrument as quickly as possible
- Start reading from the book when they are comfortable with the instrument first

## Timpani Instruction

- A beginner with quality snare drum and keyboard skills has the tools to be a quality timpanist. Little more is required for the 1<sup>st</sup> year of instruction.
  - Pitch matching can be developed through “saying” scales and etudes when practicing on keyboards.
  - Timpani basics every beginner should know
    - Playing area
    - Use timpani mallets
      - Left unattended, students will use sticks or keyboard mallets
    - Single stroke rolls
      - Check to make sure they’re not playing diddles or buzzes
    - Tuning fundamentals (Simple 3-step process)
      - Hear it
        - From a “smart” instrument
      - “Say” it
        - I avoid the word “sing”
      - Tune it
        - Ear close to drum (also prevents them from looking at the gauge)
        - Strike the drum confidently
        - Slowly slide up to the pitch
          - STOP when you hear the pitch
          - Don’t second guess yourself
- In Coppell, timpani skills are covered more in depth during the summer percussion camp.

## Accessories Instruction

- Start accessories during the first semester--many programs have a Christmas Concert
- Have an “accessory day,” maybe Friday, and introduce a new instrument each week
- Be sure to encourage practice on these instruments, even incorporating them into weekly chair tests
- Cover all major accessories first, then add the less common instruments
- Al Payson Techniques of Playing Bass Drum, Cymbals, and Accessories
- Write exercises out on Finale or Sibelius
- Use actual parts from music in your library
- Take accessories just as serious as snare, keyboard, and timpani

## Teaching Strategies

- Teaching for understanding vs. teaching for execution
  - A beginner class is not a performing ensemble
  - Do not expect your beginners to play “clean”
  - Teach and repeat skills enough so that students understand them and can practice on their own, then move on. Reviewing on a daily basis is important as well.
- Teaching technique through memorable terms
  - Do not be afraid to use “kid-friendly” terms that replace technical language
    - i.e. – “garage door” instead of fulcrum

## Percussion Ensemble

- Percussion Ensemble is a percussionist's "band". It is a great way to get all of your students involved and being independent like we do with our bands.
- Try to do 2-3 ensembles during the 6<sup>th</sup> grade year. I do one on the Christmas Concert, one on a February Percussion Ensemble Recital and one on our May Spring Concert.

## Ways to Promote Percussion/HS/Drumline

- Have your HS percussion instructor come over and help with your percussionists.
  - Cover the beginner percussion class when you are out
  - Teach Percussion Ensembles
  - Assist during band class (be in the percussion section making comments)
- Announce/E-Mail/Social Media football games/marching contests/drumline contests
- Try to have the same lesson teacher for your cluster if possible
- Show videos of your HS Band, Drumline and/or DCI

## What to cover by the end of the year

- Practice Pad
  - 8 on a hand, 8s and 16s, 16<sup>th</sup> Note Timing, Buzz Roll, Basic Rudiments (Flams, Flam Accents, Flamadiddles, Flam Taps, 5-stroke roll, 9-stroke roll, 17-stroke roll, Ruffs, All Paradiddle Rudiments)
  - At least be able to read rhythms and play music that is similar to the All-Region Snare etude your students will be playing the next school year
- Keyboard
  - All scales 2 octaves that are required for your All-Region Tryouts
    - Add Green Pattern, 3rds and Arpeggios if possible
  - Chromatic Scale (range required for your All-Region Tryouts)
  - Play basic tunes/melodies involving up to basic 16<sup>th</sup> note rhythms
  - Sightread simple melodies involving up to basic 8<sup>th</sup> note rhythms
- Timpani
  - How to transport timpani
  - Sizes of the timpani
  - Tuning a drum with a pitch provided from a keyboard instrument/pitch pipe/etc.
  - Simple 2-3 drum etudes involving up to basic 8<sup>th</sup> note rhythms
- Accessories
  - Basic understanding of the typical accessory instruments seen in MS concert band literature

## Clinicians

Michael Dick – Director of Bands, Cook Middle School, Cypress-Fairbanks ISD  
michael.dick@cfisd.net

Michael Bartley – Director of Bands, Canton High School, Canton ISD  
mbartley@cantonisd.com

Zach Scheer – Director of Percussion, Coppell ISD  
zscheer@coppellisd.com

	District	Position	Book	Number of Beginners	Start Pad or Keyboard?	When to Introduce Keyboards?	Bell Kit or Practice Marimba?	Chair Test?
<b>Cinjin Casillas</b>	Cypress-Fairbanks ISD	Assistant Director of Bands, Cypress Woods HS	Wessels	12 students	Pad	October/November	Practice Xylophone	Yes
<b>John Hinojosa</b>	McAdams JH	Director of Bands	Wessels	10-15 students	Pad	2nd month	Bell Kit	Yes
<b>Lou Boldrighini</b>	Shadow Creek HS	Percussion Director	Wessels	20 students	Pad	End of October	Practice Marimba	Yes
<b>Michael Bartley</b>	Canton ISD	Director of Bands, Canton HS	Wessels	8-10 students	Pad	approximately 5th or 6th week	Bell Kit and Normal Instrument	Yes
<b>Michael Dick</b>	Cypress-Fairbanks ISD	Director of Bands, Cook MS	Wylie	approx. 10% of total beg. class	Pad	2nd Six-Weeks	Practice Marimba at Home/Regular Keyboards at School	Yes
<b>Michael Lemish</b>	Argyle	Percussion Director	Wylie	approx. 10% of total beg. class	Pad	2nd Six-Weeks (depends on year)	Practice Marimba at home (option for bell kit)/Regular Keyboards at School	No
<b>Tim Biles</b>	Duncanville	Percussion Director	Wylie	approx. 10% of total beg. class	Pad	2nd Six-Weeks	Bell Kit	No
<b>Zach Scheer</b>	Coppell	Percussion Director	Wylie	approx. 10 students	Pad	2nd Six-Weeks	Practice Marimba at Home/Regular Keyboards at School	Depends on class skills/personality