



**Texas Bandmasters Association  
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**Podium Perspective on Percussion**

**CLINICIANS:  
Todd Dixon, Mike Howard**



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



# PODIUM PERSPECTIVE ON PERCUSSION

Friday, July 23, 3:30pm

Presenters:

Todd Dixon, Director of Bands - Wylie High School, Wylie ISD

Mike Howard, Director of Bands - Vandegrift High School, Leander ISD

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## MAKING ARTISTIC MUSICAL DECISIONS BASED ON A FULL SCORE

- Woodwind / Brass / Percussion
  - Each have a musical purpose
  - Each are equally important
  - Each contain mature timbre and color
- Collaborate
  - Other directors
  - Clinicians
  - Percussion Director if available
- Record
  - Listen / Evaluate / Adjust / Record and listen again
- Score study
  - Know the role of the percussion parts before rehearsal
  - Have an idea of timbre and color before rehearsal
  - Anticipate any articulation needs (mallets/beaters)
  - Check instruments (put your hands on them)

Everyone has their own opinion. The director on the podium ultimately has to make the decision. Collaboration is positive, but in the end someone has to have a vision for what is artistically communicated.

## TOOLS for score study

Understanding Percussion Colors (teach the musicians to be thoughtful)

- Metals (Usually loud instruments)
  - Triangle | Cymbals | Vibes | Bells | Crotale | Sleigh Bells | Finger Cymbals | Bell Tree | Cow Bell (small to big) | Specialty Cymbals | Specialty Bells | Tambourine
  - Instruments made of metal don't all project the same
  - Think about placement of instrument vs. projection
- Woods (range from loud to soft instruments)
  - Xylophone | Marimba | Wood Blocks (small to big) | Log drums | Castanets | Clave
  - Think about placement of instrument vs. projection
- Pitched/Non Pitched drums
  - Timpani - a wrong note is a wrong note

- Always consider placement and beaters.
  - Toms - size is determined by composer of what other instrument the tom is playing with. Also think about the desired effect.
  - Snare Drum (piccolo, standaard, field drum)
  - Bass Drum, Bongos, Congas, Djembe, etc
- Instruments to use with hands
  - Bongos, Congas, Djembe, Hand drums, Cabassa, Clave, Castanets, etc.
  - Can be used with sticks or mallets if needed
- Instruments that ring (relate directly to note lengths)
  - Consider how the length of ring relates to who they are playing with and their role in the music at that time.
    - Timpani, Sus Cymbal, Crash Cymbal, Bells, Chimes, Vibes, Bass Drum, Gong, etc
- Articulation choices related to sticks or mallets
  - Hard / Medium / Soft
  - ANYTHING YOU HIT - articulation can be affected by the mallet
  - Does it need to match another instrument?
  - Is it a solo line?
  - After all this, sometimes it is as simple as hit it stronger or hit it softer
- Placement of instruments
  - Mallet instruments
  - Instruments that give time

## RULES for listening

These are some examples and CAN GO ACROSS MULTIPLE AREAS DISCUSSED.

- Color (Timbre, Frequency [high, mid, low], Dark, Bright)
- Rhythm
- Ensemble
  - Melody - Always be able to clearly hear the melody.
  - Counter Melody
  - Harmonic material
  - Special effects
  - Rhythmic material
- Impact - Anything gaining momentum and volume to a musical climax

## STRATEGIES in rehearsal

- Percussion ensemble within the band
  - Timing
  - Color
  - Balance
- What is it coloring
- What is it reinforcing

- Balancing cymbals
- Balancing bass drum
- Marches - Snare / Bass / Cymbal
- Full score listening
- Understanding frequencies of balance
- What does it sound like in the room vs. recorded

## RESOURCES

- Virtual Resources
  - <https://vicfirth.zildjian.com/education/percussion-101.html>
  - <https://www.innovativepercussion.com/educational-resources>
  - Concert Snare Head Replacement/Tuning - <https://youtu.be/YKFftcgqh3g>
  - Concert Bass Drum Head Replacement/Tuning - <https://youtu.be/LLmYOcGdSvY>
- Method Books for Auxiliary Percussion Instruments
  - *The Art of Percussion Playing* - Cirone/Grover/Whaley
  - *Technique of Playing Bass Drum, Cymbals and Accessories* - Payson
  - *Cymbalisms* - Epstein

## EXAMPLES - Think about the personnel (how many percussion do you have)

UIL Forms some top hits (most played) from PML

Grade 1

- Night Fury - Audio
- Dance Celebration - Audio
- Armory
- Atlantis - Audio
- Skylight

- Imaginarium - Audio
- Undertow
- Fantasy on a Japanese Folk Song
- Summer Dances - Audio
- Spoon River - Audio

Grade 2

- Fireball - Audio
- Japanese Pictures - Audio
- Tonchozuru
- Moscow 1941
- Danza De Espana - Audio
- Two British Folk Songs

Grade 5

- Danzon #2 - Audio
- Vesuvius
- Chester Overture for Band - Audio
- Give Us This Day
- Finale from Shostakovich #5

Grade 3

- La Madre de Los Gatos - Audio
- Brave Spirit
- Rippling Watercolors - Audio
- Butterfly's Ball
- American Riversongs - Audio

Grade 4