

PERCUSSIONISTS ARE MUSICIANS, TOO!

How to make the most of percussion instruction to build competent and contributing musicians

MUSICAL EXCELLENCE IS TIMELESS

Therefore, we should always aim to draw out meaningful musicality from the great diversity of music a percussionist may be exposed to. Percussionists regularly perform music from the **past** (perhaps centuries-or millennia-old music) and actively engage trends of the **present**. Making those transfers across genres and instruments sets students up to be relevant musicians of the **future**. Percussionists who can keep up with the rapidly rising technical standards AND demonstrate musical excellence will be those who continue moving us forward into a stronger future.

CONNECTIONS ACROSS MUSICAL DIVERSITY

Some basic goals of musical performance:

- Artistic expression
- Communication of an idea, feeling, image, etc.
- Phrasing that makes sense, understanding of form
- Technical accuracy
- Good quality of sound
- Awareness of others and knowing roles within an ensemble
- And many more!

Educators must help our percussionists identify how to explore these elements of music in each of the many areas of percussion they encounter. Today's presentation looks at the following musical examples:

Marimba — Gigue, from Cello Suite No. 3 in C Major (J.S. Bach)

Snare drum — Etude #2, from Intermediate Snare Drum Studies (Mitchell Peters)

Tambourine — Carnival Overture (Antonin Dvořák)

Jazz drumset — Medium Swing (from Essential Styles, by Steve Houghton)

Keyboard Ensemble — Coventry Carol (arr. Brian Blume)

Percussion Ensemble — Rudi's Batuque (Julie Hill)

IDENTIFYING STYLES/GENRES TO SHARE WITH STUDENTS

- Music from outside of Western art music traditions (aka "world music")
 - *Afro-Cuban, West African (Ghana, Guinea, Mali), Brazilian, Indian, Indonesian (gamelan)*
- Jazz (and related styles) — through drumset and vibraphone/marimba improvisation
- Classical (Western art music) — through transcriptions and band/orchestra music
- Pop music — through drum set, band/percussion ensemble arrangements, marching/pep band
- Modern percussion solo and ensemble repertoire
- Modern marching ensemble music (marching band and indoor percussion)

THE BIG PICTURE

Whether the music is 300 years old, or 3 days old, glockenspiel or timpani, djembe or drum set, the goal is to identify and express the heart of the music. If we consistently ask our students "What are our musical goals here?", no matter the music, no matter the instrument, I believe we will confidently be able to say of OUR students, "Percussionists are musicians, too!"

PERCUSSION RESOURCES

WHERE TO GO FOR WHAT

Middle school and high school band directors should learn to be masters of resources, knowing where to direct students for additional learning and experiences that can complement what happens in the classroom. Below is a sample of some helpful and proven resources to share with your students. Visit the URL below (or scan the code) for a ***much larger*** resource list with active hyperlinks. (The choices listed here are only a tiny portion of available resources, but they are reliable, trusted sources that can meet many of your percussion education needs.)

www.brianblumemusic.com/percussionresource



ONLINE RESOURCES

Vic Firth Education Resource Library (vicfirth.zildjian.com/education.html)

Includes a wealth of information, videos, lessons, play-alongs, practice tools, and more

Percussion 101 (vicfirth.zildjian.com/education/percussion-101.html)

Part of the Vic Firth site, but I list it separately as it's a great tool for learning the basics of all the common concert percussion instruments—snare, mallets, timpani, cymbals, bass drum, tambourine, triangle, wood blocks, temple blocks, gong/tam-tam

Percussive Arts Society (www.pas.org/resources/resource-library)

Includes resources for directors (See the [PAS Educator's Companion](#)) and students, plus videos from clinics/conventions. Access to many resources require PAS membership. Schools may purchase group memberships for the entire school and allow access for all students for \$250 annually. (See <http://www.pas.org/membership/individual-group> for details)

PRINT/BOOKS

A Percussionist's Handbook, by Peter J. Saleh – extremely practical guide for students/teachers

Up Front, by Jim Casella and Jim Ancona – great resource for front ensemble (marching band)

Percussion Repair and Maintenance, by Mark Bonfoey

Practical Guide to Percussion Terminology, by Russ Girsbirger w/ Anthony J. Cirone

Percussion Methods, by Stephen Primatic

Percussion Instruments: Purchasing, Maintenance, Troubleshooting, by Stephen Primatic

TOP PUBLISHERS for EDUCATIONAL PERCUSSION MATERIALS

Tapspace Publications

C. Alan Publications

Row-Loff Productions

Alfred Music

Meredith Music

Innovative Percussion

GET IN TOUCH!

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