



TOUCHPOINT

The Division of Education Newsletter

Conn-Selmer
DIVISION OF EDUCATION

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A Note from Dr. Tim

Greetings. In this edition of *Touchpoint*, Jim Catalano, Percussion Clinician, Conn-Selmer Artist and Tradeshow Coordinator, takes us back-to-the basics of concert percussion.



What to Expect from your Concert Percussionists

By Jim Catalano

Now that marching band season is transitioning into concert band and orchestra, here is a checklist for your percussionists to enhance their experience, improve rehearsal time and ultimately, improve percussion performance.

- 8. For timpani tuning, percussionists will need a tuning fork or pitch pipe.
- 9. A drum key for a snare drum is also essential.

Impress on your students that they are responsible for controlling extraneous noise in the percussion section. The use of a dark towel, carpet remnant or pad of some kind is essential for a quality performance. Mallets, sticks and accessories are always to be placed on padded trap tables when not in use.

Make sure the school concert snare drums are equipped with stands that can be adjusted upward for taller students. Students perform better when the drum is at waist height.

Listen for the tone of the concert snare drum for a crisp and dry tone. This does not always mean that a drumhead is tuned tight. The use of a "zero-ring" or even a simple piece of tape on the drumhead can absorb extra overtones for a good clean sound. Also, be aware of the snare strainers. After coming from the marching experience, percussionists may have the tendency to tighten the snare strainer knob to obtain a tight sound. This actually does the opposite. Snares need to be adjusted to a tension where the drum has a dry, crisp sound.

The concert bass drum is easily played, but it is not about striking the drum as much as "controlling" the sound of the drum. This is achieved through properly muffling the drum with the student's knee against the head or by placing a towel on the drum to absorb the extra ring. The drum should have a good low "BOOM" sound.

While these are all simple points that you all know, it is still important to remind your students at the start of concert band season. This will result in a positive percussion performance experience.

Your students that play band instruments are responsible for their own instrument, mouthpiece, cleaning and lubricating supplies. However, in percussion the school owns all of the percussion instruments. Percussionists should be encouraged to own the tools to play those instruments. There is so much to choose from in today's marketplace, but the basic supplies necessary for your percussionists to play most percussion instruments are as follows:

1. Concert snare drumsticks—these should be medium weight and have a rounded bead to achieve good drumhead contact for a full tone.
2. Drum set drumsticks such as a 5A with either wood or nylon tip are good for set but also useful for a good suspended cymbal sound when the music calls for a wooden stick.
3. Wire or nylon brushes are not just for jazz-style playing on the drum kit. Many times concert music calls for brushes as well.
4. Timpani mallets have many gradations, but a "staccato" indicated felt timpani mallet will be good for 80% of all percussion music.
5. Keyboard mallets come in an endless variety these days, but a good birch handle, soft yarn set of mallets is recommended for marimba, vibes and suspended cymbal. Having a match set of four mallets is important for advancing students to perform today's band music.
6. A hard rubber mallet with birch handle is good for xylophone, orchestra bells, wood blocks and temple blocks.
7. A working lead pencil with eraser is a standard expectation for your percussion



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V.I.P.s

Ted Piechocinski

Indiana State University, IN

Jon Gomez

Dobson High School, AZ

John Vilella

West Chester University, PA

Our Next Issue Featuring:

An article by Dr. Charles Menghini, President and Director of Bands at VanderCook School of Music

In Our Last Issue:

The "Newly Energized" National Band Association by John Casagrande

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