

Keyboard Percussion

A Common Elements Approach To Teaching and Performing

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There are several common elements or "building blocks" leading the beginning or even advanced percussionist to the ultimate level of musicianship. This session will focus on the common elements needed for the two-mallet keyboard percussionist to enhance his or her abilities. Additionally, the session will provide the educator/performer with helpful hints regarding mallet selection and available literature for study.

COMMON ELEMENTS

STANCE

Feet almost shoulder width apart and move side to side with the instrument.

Avoid taking too many steps as you move throughout the range of the instrument. Too many steps tend to shift your center of gravity and compromise accuracy.

BODY POSITION

If your instrument is height adjustable, please adjust the instrument in the same way you would adjust your snare stand. If the instrument is not height adjustable, place blocks of wood underneath to raise slightly or build a wooden platform to stand on while playing.

If you are having trouble reading music, adjust the music stand. Don't adjust your body closer to or further away from the instrument resulting in poor or uneven sound production.

GRIP

Two-mallet grip should be similar to snare drum grip; however, make sure the mallets fit almost in the groove of each palm or slightly offside. This placement will allow the mallets and wrists to move in up and down motions efficiently and contact the bars accurately.

Every pair of mallets has an ideal balance point (where the mallets will rebound the most). Even though the bars of a mallet instrument don't rebound like the batter head of a snare drum when struck, the balance of a mallet is extremely important for efficiency of motion. Test the rebound capabilities of your mallets on a drum pad or snare drum. Position your fulcrum (thumb and first finger grip) at various points along the mallet. Then, drop with a weighted wrist motion and

check the number of rebounds. When you find the ideal balance point, you have also found where your fulcrum should be placed on the mallet.

STROKE

I try to think one stroke per wrist motion. As I strike a bar, I follow through and return to my starting point in preparation for striking the next bar. I don't strike the bar, then stop, and lift again as preparation for the next stroke resulting in two motions.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

MALLET SELECTION

1. Glockenspiel/Bells: Brass, plastic, or hard rubber mallets
2. Xylophone: Plastic or rubber mallets
3. Marimba: Yarn or soft to medium rubber mallets
4. Vibraphone: Yarn, cord, or soft to medium rubber mallets
5. Chimes: Rawhide or acrylic hammers

SAMPLE LITERATURE

Methods

1. *Instruction Course for Xylophone*-George H. Green **M-D**
2. *Modern School for Xylophone, Marimba, & Vibraphone*-Morris Goldenberg **E-D**
3. *Fundamental Method for Mallets*, Vols. I & II-Mitchell Peters (two and four mallets) **E-D**
4. *Primary Handbook for Mallets*-Garwood Whaley (two and four mallets) **E-MD**

Solo Literature (Two-Mallet, Accompanied and Unaccompanied)

Marimba

1. *Prism*-K. Abe **D**
2. *Etude 1955*-E. Hatch **M**
3. *Furioso and Valse*-E. Hatch **E**
4. *Extra Spices, Please*-J. Gottry **MD**
5. *Etude in A-flat Major*-C. Musser **M**
6. *Sonata-Allegro*-M. Peters **M**
7. *Two Archaic Dances*-A. Russell **E**
8. *Tempest*-T. Ukena **MD**

Vibraphone

1. *Joey's Song*-D. Mancini **E**
2. *Five Pieces*-J. Metzger **M**
3. *European Gallery*-B. Molenhof **D**
4. *Funny Vibraphone*-N. Zivkovic **E**

Xylophone

1. Rags and Novelty Pieces by George Hamilton Green and Harry Breuer (i. e. *Triplets, Bit O' Rhythm, 1908 Rag, Jovial Jasper, The Whistler*) **E-MD**
2. *Fantasy on Japanese Woodprints*-A. Hovhaness **MD**
Concertino for Xylophone-T. Mayuzumi **M**