Percussion Clinic

by
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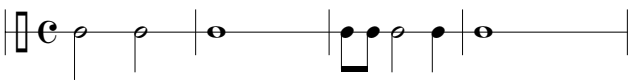
TRIANGLES

Description and Selection

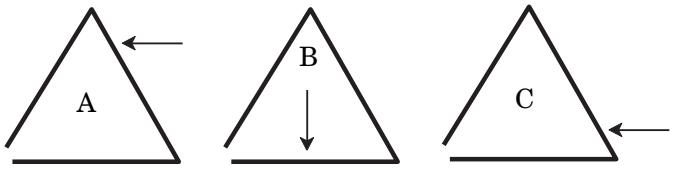
- Average triangles measure 6–8 inches.
- For a brighter sound, a smaller triangle may be a better choice (not necessarily for playing soft).
- For a darker sound, a larger triangle may be a better choice (not necessarily for playing loud).
- A selection of triangle beaters that vary in size (diameter) should be available.
- Small triangle beaters are used for a brighter sound and for a better articulation of certain rhythmic passages (not necessarily for the playing of soft passages).
- Triangle clips should easily clip to a music stand.
- Clips should be strung with a thin cord, preferably made of nylon.
- Two loops should be made so one can act as a backup if the other breaks.

Triangle Technique

- The thumb and first finger of the hand should form the shape of the letter "C." The clip should then drop into the "C" so that it rests on top.
- Use this technique for slow to moderate rhythmic passages and long note values.

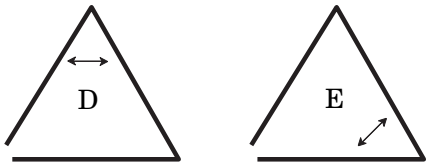


- For a thin texture and less resonance, play the triangle on the outside near the top (A) or on the inside of the base near the closed end (B). Play on the outside near the bottom for a full texture and resonance (C).



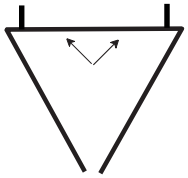
Fast Rhythmic Passages (legato)

- Place the beater inside the triangle and move back and forth between the two sides for a thin sound (D). Play between the base and the closed side of the triangle for a full sound (E).



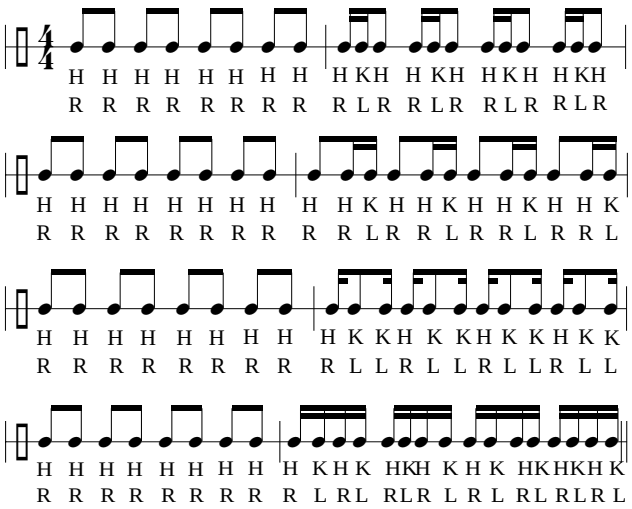
Fast Rhythmic Passages (articulate)

- Suspend the triangle from two clips with the closed side on top; play with a pair of matched beaters.



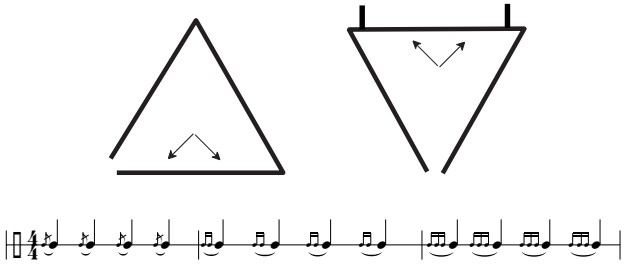
- The following technique may be used when playing triangle and another instrument at the same time.

H=hand K=knee L=left R=right



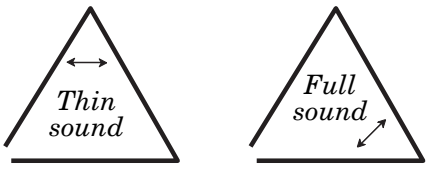
Grace Notes

The most reliable method for playing grace notes is to use two matched beaters. Play on the base of the triangle if suspended from one clip. Play on the closed side if suspended from two clips. Use single strokes on all grace note figures.

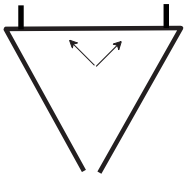


Rolls

Hold the triangle as if playing single notes. Place the beater between the two sides at the top or between the base and the closed side. Move the beater back and forth to create a smooth, sustained sound.

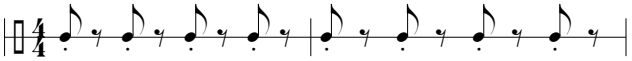


Suspend the triangle from two clips. Play on the closed side using a single stoke roll to create a smooth, sustained sound.



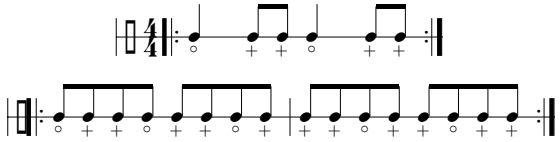
Dampening

A general rule for dampening the triangle is to let everything ring unless there are obvious unison staccato notes. Listen and emulate the musical interpretation of the ensemble.



The triangle is dampened by squeezing the remaining three fingers of the holding hand into the heel of the hand.

Practice the following groove patterns using dampening:



TAMBOURINE

Description and Selection

The tambourine is a hand drum with two different sounding parts: the head and the jingles.

The head is of medium thickness and is stretched over the shell and stays tight under all weather conditions.

Standard tambourine size is about ten inches in diameter with a double row of jingles (preferably staggered).

The shell should be lightweight to allow easy movement and to permit an acceptable vibration.

Grip the tambourine with either hand. Place the thumb on the top rim and let the fingers curl

around the shell under the head (like a baseball grip). A muffled timbre is produced by placing the thumb on the head.

Tambourine Techniques

Since speed and volume are restricted when playing with one hand, another technique must be devised. Tambourine techniques are affected greatly by different dynamics and tempos.

- Loud and slow—hold the tambourine about shoulder level and play with the tips of the fingers near the edge (bunch the fingers together and form a flat surface).

- Soft and slow—rest the heel of the palm on the head of the tambourine (less head sound, thin texture). Extend the fingers to the edge and strike.

- Fast and loud—hold the tambourine with the head facing down. Alternate back and forth between the knee and the group of fingers playing on the inside *(see the musical example on page 12–2)*.

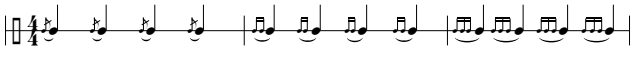
- Fast and soft—lay the tambourine on the knee or a padded trap table with the rim facing up; Play with the fingers of both hands.

- Use more fingers for louder passages.

- Use fewer fingers for softer passages.

Grace Notes

- Fast and soft—lay the tambourine on the leg and single stroke the grace notes.



- Fast and loud—use the hand-knee technique to play the grace notes.

Rolls

- Common practice—start and stop the roll with a head tap according to ensemble articulation. Occasionally no head tap is necessary.

- Shake roll—hold the tambourine in either hand, rotating the wrist in the same manner as the left hand traditional grip for snare drum. Simultaneously, add a slight forward/backward wrist motion in the same manner as matched grip to create a fluid circular motion.

- Soft roll—hold the tambourine alongside the leg. Jingles should be light, bright, and delicate for extremely long rolls.

- Loud roll—hold the tambourine in front at about eye level.

- Extremely loud rolls—use two tambourines.

- Thumb and finger rolls—move the thumb (or finger) along the edge of the tambourine. The rapid bouncing causes the jingles to vibrate. To get friction between the head and thumb (or finger) a player can either dampen the finger or rub bass rosin or bee's wax on the head of the tambourine to create a sticky surface to facilitate the bouncing effect. This technique is used primarily for soft rolls that are of short duration.

- When playing rolls that are part of a rhythmic passage, the player can drop the heel or the thumb of the hand to play the release. For longer thumb rolls, a larger (12") tambourine can be played.

CONCERT BASS DRUM

Heads and Tuning

- A standard size for concert bass drums is 36 x 16 inches.

- The best types of material for heads are "Fiber Skyn" (man-made) or calfskin (natural).

- Tune the playing head a fourth or fifth above, below, or at the same pitch as the resonating head. Ensure that the playing head is not floppy, so that it is articulate and resonant.

Mallets

- General beater—medium to large headed felt mallets; these produce a well-rounded, resonant tone.
- Rolling beaters (pair)—smaller than general beaters and are easier to control.
- Staccato beaters—similar to rollers, but having less felt and a harder core; used for articulating rhythmic figures.

Effects Mallets

- Wood beaters are used for extremely articulate playing (usually in a soft dynamic range).
- A hard felt beater is used for extremely articulate playing (usually for loud dynamic ranges).

Playing Area and Strokes

General Playing Areas

- The edge is used for soft rolls and special effects (thin sound and higher overtones).
- The next area is 1/3 of the distance from the rim and is used for all general playing and loud rolls.
- The center is used for loud strokes and extremely articulate passages.

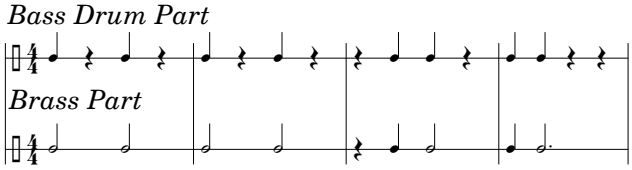
Proper Strokes

- The general playing stroke is produced by the forearm and the wrist. Soft strokes are produced mostly by the wrist. Loud strokes are produced by adding the upper arm to the general stroke.
- A direct stroke goes directly into the head with a "flicking" of the wrist to terminate the stroke. This produces maximum vibration and overtones from the drum.
- For rolls, use two matched rolling beaters. Hold the beaters with the traditional snare drum grip and use single strokes to execute the roll.

Dampening and Muffling

To dampen is to stop the vibration of the head by exerting pressure with the left hand or right knee. The most significant problem to address is not how to dampen, but when to dampen.

- Composers and arrangers are not always familiar with proper techniques and notation of the bass drum.
- Note values are not consistent with the band or orchestra.
- Players must listen and re-interpret the written part. Check the full score for the proper note values, as shown below:



To muffle is to partially mute the head to lessen the vibrations. Reasons for muffling are:

- Type of notation (fast).

- Character of music (secco).
- Small instrumentation or softer passages.
- Acoustics of the hall (live).

CYMBALS

Crash Cymbals

Types of Crash Cymbals

- A standard pair of cymbals is usually 18 inches in size and has a quick response to vibrations. These are generally used when a cymbal part

has a combination of loud and soft strokes and rhythmic passages.

- The French type or sound of cymbals has a quick response and a fast decay. These cymbals are thin and have lower overtones present.
- The German type or sound of cymbals has a slower response and slower decay. These cymbals are thicker and have a more brilliant sound.
- A smaller pair of cymbals should be on hand in order to have better control during softer, more delicate passages. However, smaller symbals create a thinner texture than larger ones.

The Grip

- The index finger and thumb curl around the strap nearest to the bell of the cymbal. The strap lays in the palm and the other three fingers wrap around the strap just like a snare drum grip. Another option is to lay the middle and ring fingers in the strap with the pinky on the outside.

The Crash Cymbal Stroke

- The top cymbal should hang down like a suspended cymbal, but at a slight angle.
- The bottom cymbal should face upward at a slight angle, resting on the knuckle of the hand.
- The two cymbals should set naturally at a slight angle to each other.
- The top cymbal is then dropped down onto the bottom cymbal. Both cymbals should be in motion for the best timbre. The impact causes the cymbals to pull apart from each other. To avoid air pockets (no sound), remember to drop the top cymbal straight down and not at a glance .

Loud and Fast Note Values

- Use a general crash stroke, but reduce the angle to about 45 degrees.
- The cymbals should be kept close together to be ready for the next crash.

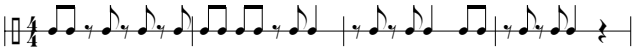
Soft Cymbals Strokes

- The cymbals should be held about 5 degrees to the left of straight up and down.
- Separate the cymbals with the edge of the bottom cymbal above the edge of the top cymbal.
- Drop the top cymbal by pushing downward with the thumb and forefinger, then pull apart after impact.

Dampening

- Bring the cymbals into the upper part of the body and arms.

- A forte-piano effect can be accomplished by dampening only one cymbal.
- The dampening rules for inconsistent note values on bass drum also apply to cymbals. Some parts indicate a need to dampen, although the tempo and note values may not allow for this.



Suspended Cymbals

Selection

- Suspended cymbals are usually smaller and thinner than crash cymbals. The standard size, which respond very quickly when struck with a mallet, is usually 16" to 18" in diameter.

Smaller Cymbals

- Used for very soft and delicate passages.
- Quickly respond for crescendos and diminuendos.

Larger Cymbals

- Used for a more sustained sound.

- Suspend the cymbal by its strap from a boom stand. This allows the cymbal to vibrate freely.
- The cymbal may also be placed on a regular cymbal stand, which allows for the most control.

Mallet Selection

- Soft wound yarn or cord mallets allow the cymbal to respond quickly and bring out all the overtones. When a composition calls for a timpani mallet, always substitute these instead.
- Other implements include snare drum sticks, triangle beaters, brushes, etc.
- Rolls with snare sticks should be played as a buzz roll on the edge of the cymbal.

Playing Techniques

- Strokes are always made on the edge of the cymbal, unless otherwise specified in the score.
- A roll can easily be controlled by placing the mallets on the edge at approximately 4 and 8 o'clock.
- Additional effects call for different areas of the cymbal to be struck, scraped, or rubbed by triangle beaters, coins, a bass bow, etc. A sizzle effect can be obtained by holding a thin triangle beater on the cymbal and then striking the cymbal with another mallet.
- Muffling is used to articulate rhythmic figures.
- For slow tempos, use one hand to muffle and one hand to play.
- For fast tempos, when both hands are needed to play, use your midriff to muffle.

Bass Drum and Cymbal Attachment

Cymbal Grip and Selection

- Hold the cymbal with the thumb and index finger. Let the fingers wrap around the strap and push the top cymbal into the attached cymbal.
- For loud playing, use a larger cymbal on top.
- For softer playing, use a smaller cymbal on top.

Dampening

- Bring the top cymbal into the chest.
- Grab the attached cymbal with the right hand.
- Dampen or muffle the bass drum with the right knee.