A REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND TEXTS RELATING TO THE PERCUSSION METHODS COURSE INCLUDING A PROPOSAL FOR A NEW TEXT TO MEET CONCERNS ABOUT COURSE CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

D.M.A. DOCUMENT

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ABSTRACT

The college percussion methods class is the only focused percussion education many music education majors receive before entering the professional world. Though the musicianship skills learned on their principal instruments will apply to percussion, the technical skills have no transference and new skill sets and concepts must be developed. Given the rapid evolution of the field, the methods course cannot be expected to educate the student in every aspect of percussion. Priorities must be derived from the potential content based on the perceived needs of the director in the school setting.

The observation of recurring problems in school percussion performance indicates that little evolution of the course has occurred. This lack of change can be attributed in part to the continued discourse on the subject taking place among higher education professionals and infrequent discussion of course needs with school music teachers. These teachers can provide valuable insight on the effectiveness and applicability of their training, but their input has been largely neglected.

The current texts available for the course present problems in both content and scope. Despite recent editions, some content has not been updated to reflect currently accepted pedagogical practices and the expressed needs of the music educator have not been entirely addressed. Some texts present very little pedagogical information and others contain too much material for a single term course. These texts do not provide
adequate course models for the methods instructors to help develop course content and structure. The layout often makes information difficult to find and the absence of clear step-by-step approaches to teaching technique reduces their usability in the classroom.

This document proposes that a new text be developed to address the concerns presented by the literature and the currently available texts designed for the class. Transferable skills and concepts will be emphasized and information will be included to prepare the music educator for non-performances aspects of working with the school percussion section. Included in the document is an appendix containing a portion of the proposed text to demonstrate how the new text will be structured and the methods of instruction used.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The methods class, or techniques class, is a fundamental and important aspect of the undergraduate music education major's preparation for teaching at the middle school and high school level. The classes are typically organized by instrument family and the course aim is to familiarize students with instruments beyond their own principal areas of study, covering material regarding sound production, technique, and pedagogy. Often, the students in these classes have little or no previous experience with instruments outside of their own family and thus most, if not all, of their preparation to teach the other instruments offered in the school music program comes from these methods courses.

The percussion methods course presents new and unfamiliar experiences to many students. Unlike learning within the wind or string family, where some transference of previous knowledge about sound production and techniques takes place, the percussion family presents entirely new techniques and aspects of performance. Technical execution on percussion is not similar to any other instrument family, and though producing sounds often seems simpler than on other instruments, obtaining quality sounds requires just as much technique, experience, and musicianship.

There are unique challenges presented by the percussion methods class, particularly for the instructor. Within this course, usually offered in one term, the
instructor must not only cover basic performance techniques and pedagogical methods for many different percussion instruments, but also address non-performance elements of teaching percussion that have importance to the music educator. Methods courses within other instrument families cover only a small fraction of this number of instruments and necessarily address far fewer non-performance topics, yet often have two terms in which to cover the material. Thus the percussion methods instructor must not only be organized, with a clear plan for covering the material on a timeline, but must also prioritize the course content, emphasizing what are believed to be the most fundamental skills and the most important areas of knowledge for the music educator and necessarily omitting many aspects of percussion study.

PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

The purpose of this document is to assess the methodology, materials, and content of the percussion methods class by reviewing the relevant literature and evaluating texts designed for the course, and to then utilize this knowledge to propose a new text to meet the needs of today's school music teacher. A significant body of research and writing has been created in regards to the course, but despite calls for restructuring the content and refocusing on fundamental skills and administrative aspects of teaching percussion, few texts are available that address the problems. Since the presentation of the Percussive Arts Society's minimum standards for the methods course in 1997\(^1\), six texts have been published that are designed specifically for the class. Of the six, only one is a newly

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\(^1\) PAS College Pedagogy Committee, "Standards for the College Percussion Methods Class," *Percussive Notes* 35, no. 3 (June 1997): 43.
created work; the other five are new editions or reprints, showing little change from earlier editions and leaving music educators' concerns regarding the course unaddressed.

The proposed text is designed to serve not only as a resource for methods students in and beyond the class, but also to function as a potential guide for the percussion methods instructor, providing assistance in structuring the course and choosing content. The faculty and graduate assistants teaching the course possess advanced knowledge of percussion and are experienced performers and teachers; however, due to their positions in higher education they often lack recent experiences with school music programs and students. The text is designed to help those teaching the course maintain awareness of the needs faced by school music educators and focus on the pedagogical skills and methods most applicable to the school music environment and is thus purposefully not an all-encompassing study of percussion. Materials are presented in a manner that guides the methods instructor, as well as the school music educator, through the development of technique in a step-by-step format, designed and detailed with the school percussion student in mind. A college music education major conceptualizes skills differently and often more quickly than a middle school student, and thus it is easy to present the methods course through concepts the college student will understand, forgetting that they need to learn how to present the material to younger students. Detailed strategies for addressing topics that do not relate to percussion technique would also be discussed in the proposed text, including part assignments, concert logistics, instrument storage, purchasing, and maintenance needs. These are topics which have high priority to the music educator working in the public schools, but whose significance is not always known to the methods instructor.
NEED FOR THE DOCUMENT

A number of studies and articles have been published regarding the assessment, importance, and content of the percussion methods class and the topic has been addressed at professional conferences. Much of the content of this discussion has centered on what professional percussionists and college percussion instructors believe to be the most important aspects of the course. Studies have presented the opinions of teachers who have taken the course regarding the quality and effectiveness of the class, showing serious gaps in teacher training effectiveness and preparation for the classroom, yet it seems no attempt has been made to construct a text for the course based on these findings. Classes continue to be taught using texts that have not addressed the concerns of current music educators and focus on what those in higher education perceive as the necessary areas and methods of study.

A need for the review of methods texts is demonstrated by the following observations regarding percussion performance in the public schools. These articles mention of a number of problems with school percussion students and sections, showing a recurrence of the same points over a lengthy period of time. The prevalence of these problems is likely indicative of inadequately covered material in the training of teachers and indicates that little or no adjustment has been made in the methods course or its associated texts to focus more attention on these areas.
Richard Scherer, "Percussion Problems in High School Bands"

Scherer discussed problematic trends he saw in school percussion programs in his 1951 *Instrumentalist* article.² Obvious problems with concepts of stroke were seen as students demonstrated a lack of using rebound as a regular part of their stroke, as well as an inability to produce or control double stroke rolls. Also observed was the lack of experience many seemed to have with playing more than one instrument; many groups he saw were not rotating percussion instruments among the players, but assigning one student to each instrument for an entire concert. He noted that the need for percussionists with broader skills demanded that players rotate instruments regularly so as to develop technical skills and musicianship at each instrument.

Willard Musser, "A Conductor's View on Percussion"

Concern was raised by Musser over a general lack in basic musicianship in the performance of high school percussionists in a 1968 article published in *Percussionist*.³ In the article, he addressed percussionists in the public schools who had developed technically while still possessing little understanding of the "aesthetic characteristics of music."⁴ He observed that though well trained to play a particular piece down to the finest detail of execution, students lacked concepts of ensemble performance and were developing few skills that they could transfer from piece to piece. Musser felt they were being "taught particular operations rather than general musical principles."⁵ Having been

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⁴ ibid., 324.

⁵ ibid., 325.
programmed carefully by their directors to execute particular parts, they were without their own conceptualizations of sound quality and musicianship and therefore unable to develop further on their own as musicians.

**Larry Snider, "Assisting the Non-Percussionist Band Director"**

Having recently judged high school solo and ensemble performances, Snider wrote an article for *Percussionist* in 1972, pointing out numerous examples of poor understanding of the instrument family and performance practices among students. Among his concerns was a student who performed a technically accurate timpani solo without the knowledge that the drums were meant to be tuned to specific pitches. He also saw multiple instances of incorrect implements being used on instruments, ranging from plastic bell mallets on the lower end of the marimba to the use of snare sticks to play a part on chimes. Many students Snider observed were not aware of standard performance practice differences between the two styles of snare drum solos. Students performed rudimental, drum corps style solos with small sticks, buzz rolls, and no discernible knowledge that the written numbers marking double stroke roll metering had intent; rather one student thought they were measure numbers. When performing concert style snare solos, numerous students used larger sticks and played in the drum corps style. Snider concluded that the frequency of these problems demonstrated the general lack of knowledge and training in public school teaching.

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6 Larry Snider, "Assisting the Non-Percussionist Band Director," *Percussionist* 9, no. 4 (Summer 1972): 98-100.
Harry Marvin, Jr., "One Viewpoint of Percussion in the Public Schools"

Marvin's 1978 article in *Percussionist* detailed general percussion problems that he had observed repeatedly in public school music groups. Of great concern to Marvin was the lack of well-rounded percussion training, as he saw many groups that were developing only snare drum skills while many of the other percussion instruments were being completely neglected in elementary level studies. Percussionists were later expected to perform on a full array of concert instruments at the secondary level, with no previous instruction regarding basic instrument knowledge or performance techniques. Marvin stated that "In building any strong program the impetus must be at the elementary level with a strong carry through program at the remaining levels," and he encouraged elementary programs to purchase some of the same instruments on which students would later need to be proficient, and to then modify instruction to better prepare and develop total percussionists.

Robert Snider, "Percussion Problems from the Podium"

Common problems and complaints about school percussion sections, along with suggestions for improvement, were addressed by Snider in a *Percussive Notes* article published in 1985. The need for better organization of music and the use of multiple copies to avoid large number of players reading of one stand was suggested to improve performance. Other problems observed included extraneous noise in performance from implement changes and from picking up and setting down accessory instruments. Snider

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8 ibid., 92.

pointed out that the simple act of regularly using carpet squares or towels on music stands would eliminate many of the disruptive sounds. He also suggested that a number of problems heard in the performance of hand held instruments would be eliminated if students were taught to hold the instruments up higher, placing the instrument in a position where the performers could easily observe their performance while still carefully watching the conductor and the music. Snider surmised that if directors paid more attention to the details in their percussion sections and addressed these smaller issues many problems heard in performance could be eliminated.

Frank Cocuzzi and Kristen Shiner, "What Really Needs to be Taught in the Percussion Methods Class!"

Interviewed for Cocuzzi and Shiner's 1988 Percussive Notes article on the percussion methods class content, S.E. "Moe" Turrentine told of his experiences adjudicating bands and orchestras throughout the country and of the problems he had witnessed within percussion sections. He discussed his observation of the frequent misuse of implements and improperly chosen playing spots which were resulting in poor sound production from the instruments. In his experience, cymbals and other such instruments were often inadequately chosen to match the style of a piece of music and took away from the effectiveness of the performance. Turrentine also noted the lack of logistical knowledge on the part of the directors which frequently resulted in illogical placement of the percussion section in relation to the other instruments, thereby creating balance concerns.

Jerry Bolen, "An Observation of Festival Percussion Sections"

Bolen recounted his observations of continued problems in high school percussion performance in a 1995 *Percussive Notes* article.\(^ {11}\) He commonly saw a use of poor stage placement for instruments that caused problems not only with balance and but also in finding a line of sight to the conductor. Fundamental problems on snare drum were also observed, as many players were not using the entire head for the execution of dynamics and drums were frequently not being positioned appropriately to the individual performer's body. Incorrect implement choices were noted by Bolen, as was a lack of basic concepts for performing on the accessory instruments.

Jim Coffin, "The Failure of Drumset Instruction in College Methods Classes"

In a 1997 article for *Percussive Notes*, Coffin addressed his concerns over the problems he repeatedly observed in high school jazz band drumset players.\(^ {12}\) Among his concerns were poor staging of the drumset, causing problems with the sight line to the ensemble, and balance issues within the drumset part created by placing the set at an angle to the stage. He stated that he frequently heard poor tuning of the drums which also contributed to balance problem and a lack of proper adjustment of the drumset's positioning and stand heights to suit individual players. Coffin also observed that there was often a poor concept of style shown by the players.


Stephen Hemphill, "Common Technical Problems with Young Percussionists"

Hemphill addressed the problems he had seen repeatedly in public school percussion performance in a 2001 article published in the Instrumentalist. The first concern discussed was the use of a poor mallet or stick angle to the playing surface, generally caused by using instruments that are at an incorrect height. He suggested adjusting stands accordingly or putting keyboard instruments on blocks for taller players. Also discussed are stroke problems, including overuse of the arms and down stroke playing. This frequent use of the arm as the main impetus of the stroke indicates a lack of development in wrist strength and creates control problems. The down stroke frequency demonstrates a lack of conceptual understanding and use of rebound and results in poor sound quality with too much attack and little blend. Hemphill also observed that much of the poor sound quality heard from many of the instruments was the result of a lack of knowledge about proper performance techniques for each instrument, as well as a general lack of attention to good musicianship and achieving a good quality sound in performance. The same lack of attention to musicianship and sounds being produced was evident in the incorrect mallet choices employed in many situations.

In addition to technique issues, Hemphill noted that attention to several general concepts would increase the effectiveness of the students' performance. Many performers were using extraneous motion in their bodies to feel the beat or various subdivisions, including head motion, foot tapping, and pulsing in the arms and he felt that the

movement was not only visually distracting but created interference in performance, often hindering rather than helping execution. He encouraged the study of exercises intended to help develop and internalize the time rather than physically create it. Also distracting to him was the excessive motion of students playing keyboard instruments, as they were making poor choices about where to stand at the instrument and thus had to adjust constantly to the instrument. Other problems included poor placement and height of the music stands, creating problems seeing the conductor and communicating with other players, as well as a great deal of extraneous noise when picking up and setting down instruments and mallets. Hemphill observed that both of these issues indicated a lack of awareness of the effect these seemingly small details were having on the overall impression of the performance, suggesting that paying attention to these areas and employing small changes, such as placing towels on stick trays, would help improve the effectiveness of the percussion section.

In summarizing the articles, the recurring problems with stroke concept, incorrect implement choice, lack of basic instrument knowledge, and poor sound quality indicate that technical aspects of performance are not being adequately addressed in the training of music educators. Appropriate explanation on the application of basic principles of musicianship to the percussion instruments also appears to be insufficient, as directors seem unable to transfer knowledge from their primary areas of instrumental study to the percussion family based on student performance observations. The literature indicates that a great deal more training on the organizational and logistical aspects of teaching percussion needs to be included in the methods course content, as evidenced by the lack
of part rotation, inappropriate stage placement, and amount of extraneous noise and activity in the percussion section that has been observed.

Beyond the published information regarding problems with percussion education in the schools, personal experiences and observations have shown a need for improved percussion methods instruction. Throughout my professional teaching career, I have continued to observe students at all levels struggling with the same aspects of technique and performance from year to year and school to school. Fundamentals such as the function of the grip and fulcrum have not been properly addressed and numerous flaws leading to poor execution have been observed. Many young students lack what is commonly referred to as "chops;" they have not developed strength or control and therefore do not have the skills to play rapid or complicated passages. Fundamental parts of the stroke are misunderstood and misused, including rebound and the function of the different muscle groups and the concept of the roll is flawed in the majority of students observed, with poor ideals of motion, sound, and metering of the roll evident in their performance. Developed musicianship in the percussion section seems almost non-existent, as consistently poor sounds are achieved. Many students have not developed concepts of touch or phrasing and do not know how to effectively execute dynamics on their instruments. Theoretically simple principles such as properly adjusting the height and position of instruments often remain unaddressed, resulting in problems with technique. Transference is often not occurring, as students approach each instrument with completely different techniques, failing to apply the skills learned on one instrument to others and lacking a concept of the relationships between instrument techniques.
Other observations, such as poor stage arrangement of the percussion section in large ensembles and damage to instruments caused by inappropriate storage, have shown a general lack of training for music education majors regarding topics outside of playing that are just as important to the daily job of the school music teacher. Colleagues frequently ask questions about basic maintenance and instrument purchasing that are common enough to be included in the methods course content. Additionally, the observed lack of regular rotation of parts shows that educators may not have a learned a system for logically and effectively handling this task.

As I observe these recurring problems, I have begun to realize that the concerns I have observed are not the issues; rather they are the symptoms. When poor techniques and concepts are seen in such quantity, it is not logical to say that the individual students are at the root of the issue, and given the diversity of programs in which the observations have been made, it does not seem that individual directors carry the burden. The common ground, the source of percussion education for both the school music educators and therefore their students, is the percussion methods course.

A review of writings on the methods course shows that this need has been stated previously, but a review of the available texts for the course and the aforementioned observations show that little evolution has occurred to accommodate the suggestions. Without a change in the content, pedagogy, and structure of the methods course, a significant improvement in the performance of school percussion sections is not likely to be seen. A new text is needed, designed to meet the needs of the methods student and the school music teacher, which will help to promote the long term development and success of percussion performance and education in the schools.
DEFINITIONS

Organizations

CBDNA: College Band Directors National Association; originally a committee within MENC, it became an independent organization in 1941; statement of purpose declares that the organization is "devoted to the teaching, performance, study, and cultivation of music, with particular focus on the wind band medium."

MENC: Music Educators National Conference; founded in 1907; statement of mission reads "To advance music education by encouraging the study and making of music by all."

NASM: National Association of Schools of Music; founded in 1924 "for the purpose of securing a better understanding among institutions of higher education engaged in work in music; of establishing a more uniform method of granting credit; and of developing and maintaining basic, threshold standards for the granting of degrees and other credentials"; institutional membership is attained through a peer review process.

PAS: Percussive Arts Society; established in 1961; mission is "to promote percussion education, research, performance, and appreciation throughout the world."

Publications

Dialogue in Instrumental Music Education: first published in 1977; biannually; designed for college faculty engaged in training teachers

The Instrumentalist: first published in 1946; monthly; sponsored by the Association for the Advancement of Instrumental Music

Journal of Band Research: first published in 1964; biannually; publication of the American Bandmasters Association

Journal of Research in Music Education: first published in 1953; quarterly; publication of the Society for Research in Music Education of MENC

Percussionist: published 1963-1975; quarterly; published 1975-1980 triannually; official publication of the Percussive Arts Society

Percussive Notes: first published in 1963; bimonthly; official publication of the Percussive Arts Society

Woodwind World-Brass and Percussion: first published in 1957; bimonthly; formed from the merger of Woodwind World and Brass and Percussion
Text and Percussion Terms

Accessory percussion: instruments, often hand held, which are frequently used in concert percussion, such as the triangle and tambourine

Conceptual framework: a knowledge base created by experiential awareness in which skills and knowledge are applied; this reference material increases the ability to use transference in learning new skills

Concert style snare drum performance: a style of interpretation on the snare drum using a more closed approach to rolls and ornamentations as opposed to performance in the rudimental style; as a general rule, rolls are executed with buzz strokes in this style; the concert style is generally used when playing in concert band and orchestra as well as in some chamber and solo repertoire

Ethnic percussion: instruments of specific cultural origin, which are becoming more frequently used in the concert percussion setting, such as bongos and claves; some of these instruments are now considered a regular part of the accessory percussion category

Experiential awareness: a concept of teaching and learning with the intention to develop a conceptual framework in which skills are applied; experiences are used to create a knowledge base that can be referenced when learning new skills or transferring skills to other instruments; one approach is to take experiences to extreme points followed by more moderate approaches to develop expectations and comparisons for quality, both in sounds produced and in physical sensations of execution

Fulcrum: the point in the grip where the thumb aligns with a particular part of the finger(s), while holding the playing implement

Grip: method of holding the playing implement in the hand, including all parts of the hand and the position of the wrist/arm

Implement: stick, mallet or beater, held in the hand and used to strike the instrument

Keyboard instruments: collective term for instruments using a chromatic arrangement of pitches, including marimba, xylophone, orchestra bells, vibraphone, and crotales

Matched grip: a method of holding the implements where both hands are the same; palm turned downward and the fingers all wrapped around the implement

Rebound: the motion following the striking of an instrument; rebound occurs naturally in reaction to striking some instruments, as with the snare drum; it can be artificially recreated by the performer, as with the keyboard instruments
**Roll:** means of sustaining sound on percussion instruments involving a more rapid execution of notes; snare drum rolls are executed as buzz rolls, with a tighter, more closed sound or double stroke rolls where two sound are played per stroke creating a more open sound; other percussion instruments use a single stroke roll technique

**Rudimental style snare drum performance:** a style of interpretation on the snare drum using a more open approach to rolls and ornamentations as opposed to performance in the concert style; as a general rule, rolls are executed with double strokes in this style; in the modern form, the rudimental style is executed with extreme definition between accented and non-accented notes; the rudimental style is generally used when playing in marching band and in much of the solo repertoire

**Sticking system:** any of several options for codifying the use of the right and left hands when executing a given rhythmic passage

**Stroke:** motion used to strike the instrument with the implement; includes the preparation, the motion to the instrument, and the rebound away from the instrument

**Total percussion:** a concept of teaching and learning with the intention of developing skills and knowledge in all areas of concert percussion, rather than focusing study on one instrument

**Traditional grip:** a method of holding the implements where the right and left hands are positioned differently; the right hand uses a matched grip and the left hand is turned with the palm facing sideways; developed to accommodate drums which are worn by means of a strap that places the drum at an angle

**Transference:** a concept of teaching and learning with the intent of applying concepts, skills and knowledge to multiple areas of study; use of the concept reduces the amount of material to be understood and developed
ORGANIZATION

This document is comprised of six chapters, an appendix containing a draft of the snare drum segment of the proposed text book, and a bibliography. Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the percussion methods course, states the purpose and need for the document, including a discussion of related literature, and contains a list of definitions. Chapter 2 reviews literature relating to the structure and content of the percussion methods course, including published articles and relevant doctoral documents and dissertations. Chapter 3 provides brief reviews of percussion methods textbooks published before 1997, as this year marks the publication of the PAS minimum standards for the class. Chapter 4 reviews textbooks published after 1997, including those that were reprinted or in new editions. These texts are reviewed for overall content and layout with a lengthy and focused review of the snare drum portion of each presented. Chapter 5 outlines the content, objectives, and concepts upon which the proposed text will be based. Chapter 6 summarizes the content of the document, including the need demonstrated by the literature and the review of texts for the creation of a new percussion methods book.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE RELATING TO THE METHODS COURSE

A fairly large amount of literature relating to the need for the percussion methods course and the design and structure of the class has been published. The official journal of the Percussive Arts Society, *Percussive Notes*, alone has published a number of such articles. Content and structure of the methods class have been major topics of discussion in these articles, but with seemingly little improvement in the course, given statements and topics repeatedly seen in the literature over a period of fifty years.

*Published Articles*

**Wilbur Peterson, "Training of Secondary School Music Teachers in Western Colleges and Universities,"

The *Journal of Research in Music Education* published Peterson's article addressing training of the school music teachers in 1955.\textsuperscript{14} After surveying teachers in seventeen states, Peterson found that a number of teachers felt the need for improved course structuring in an effort to provide, "a functional curriculum which presents materials that are easily adapted to high schools classes and practical in application rather than traditional and theoretical in nature."\textsuperscript{15} Very specifically called for was more

\textsuperscript{14} Wilbur Peterson, "Training of Secondary School Music Teachers in Western Colleges and Universities," *Journal of Research in Music Education* 3, no. 2 (Fall 1955): 131-135.

\textsuperscript{15} *Ibid.*, 133.
instruction in percussion methods and marching band techniques. From the results of the study, Peterson concluded that, "training in all areas of instruction fails to indicate adequate concern for the practical problems confronting music teachers in high schools."¹⁶

Michael Lamade, "Teacher-Training in Percussion"

Published in 1958 in the Instrumentalist, the article addressed a lack of adequate percussion requirements and training for music education majors at many institutions.¹⁷ Lamade, however, focused most of the article on the need for better facilities and improved instruction of percussion majors. He felt an improvement in this area could create a trickle-down effect on the development of the percussion methods course.

Paula Culp, "The College Percussion Program"

A brief review of textbooks used in the methods course was made as part of a larger survey by Culp, with results published in Percussive Notes in 1966.¹⁸ She listed seventeen different texts, some covering total percussion and some addressing specific instruments, currently being used as part of the instruction of the percussion methods course by the thirty-four collegiate instructor respondents. Culp also made suggestions for creating a rental system for use of mallets for methods students, reducing individual expenses for the course and creating income for the college's percussion area.

¹⁶ ibid., 135.


Ron Fink, "Percussion Methods Class"

Discussion of the percussion methods course by PAS occurred through a 1969 report presented by Ron Fink from the PAS College Curriculum Project, published in *Percussionist*. The project was designed to collect and then share information about the current status of percussion in higher education through a lengthy survey sent to collegiate percussion faculty. A major topic of the survey and the resulting report was the percussion methods course, with information gathered on class structure, enrollment requirements, texts, and overall content. A summary of the survey responses included a suggested extension of the course into two semesters, doubling the length of the course traditionally offered. Proposed content for the course was also addressed by respondents, suggesting adjustments in course structuring to include maintenance and repair topics and discussion of available literature.

Corwin Taylor, "Opinions of Music Teachers Regarding Professional Preparation in Music Education"

The *Journal of Research in Music Education* published Taylor’s article detailing concerns about the content of methods courses in 1970. A survey he conducted of public school music teachers in Maryland showed that when asked to rank college courses by their value to teaching in the schools, methods were listed fourth overall behind harmony, sightsinging, and ear training. Interestingly, methods were again listed in the fourth position on the list of courses least valuable to teaching in the schools,

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behind professional education, physical science, and social science. Taylor concluded that such a discrepancy, "...can only mean that the value of a subject is often contingent upon the manner in which it is taught."\textsuperscript{21} His belief in the importance of the methods course to teacher preparation was reinforced by his statement that, "For methods or theory to appear on a list of least valuable courses is educationally scandalous."\textsuperscript{22} The principle complaint of teachers who ranked the methods course low in value was that it generally presented a lack of reality, preparing teachers only for dealing with ideal students in ideal situations. Taylor also offered comments on the lack of public school experience and/or continuing contact with school students by those teaching the course.

It is, unfortunately easy for an instructor who moves in the protected atmosphere of higher education to become too idealistic or to lose touch with the rising generation.\textsuperscript{23}

\textbf{CBDNA Research and Education Committee Report, "The Education of the Band Director"}

The Research & Education Committee of CBDNA published a report on band director preparation through college courses in the \textit{Journal of Band Research} in 1975, commenting on the need for change and evolution in the course.\textsuperscript{24}

In most colleges and universities, the basic educational process for producing band directors has not changed in the past few decades, yet the job demands placed upon the newly-graduated band director have changed considerably.\textsuperscript{25}

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\textsuperscript{22} \textit{ibid.}, 337.
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\textsuperscript{24} CBDNA Research and Education Committee, "The Education of the Band Director," \textit{Journal of Band Research} 12, no. 1 (Fall 1975): 18-30.
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\textsuperscript{25} \textit{ibid.}, 18.
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The committee surveyed band directors in all fifty states regarding the importance and effectiveness of the courses in their undergraduate curriculum to their current teaching positions. In the overall rankings of importance, the percussion methods course was sixth, with 86% of the respondents stating that it was a necessary part of their training for the field. Striking in these results, however, was the fact that only 59% of the respondents felt that their own training in the class was adequate. This was the lowest adequacy rating among brass, woodwind, and percussion methods courses. Among open comments given by respondents was the statement that inadequate instruction often occurred in courses taught by instructors who lacked public school teaching experience.

Donald Gilbert, "Class Percussion in the University - Its Function"

Published by Percussive Notes in 1978, the article addressed problems and needs in the percussion methods course. Gilbert stated that the problems he had seen in high school students' performances should not necessarily be blamed on the school director, but rather on insufficient training to teach percussion. He cited three reasons for this inadequate training: too much focus on marching percussion, non-percussionists teaching the course, and instructors who are percussionists but have little or no public school experience, leaving them unaware of the needs of the school music educator. (The first two points are generally not a problem with the course today, but the third is still a valid concern.) The need for course time to be spent on matters pertaining to the organization and administration of the percussion section is emphasized by Gilbert as a key point in creating a valuable and usable methods experience for future teachers. He

also points out that music directors must understand the limitations of the methods experience and know when to contact a percussion specialist to meet program needs.

**Anthony Cirone, "The Percussion Methods Class"**

Cirone's suggestions for the content of the percussion methods course were published by *Percussive Notes* in 1983.²⁷ He expressed a need for students in the course to gain experience performing on the percussion instruments they would see in the schools most often and to learn to produce quality sounds on those instruments as he felt such personal experience would stay with them beyond the course. Cirone made point of saying that though he recommended performance experience, he did not believe that it was necessary to develop a high degree of technical skill through methods course training. Rather, he believed that it was more important that students "heard the proper sounds from the instruments and now can demand the same from their students."²⁸ He also stated his belief in the importance of having strong references beyond performance experience, and emphasized that a quality text should be used for the course that would serve students beyond the class setting.


Barresi's report in *Dialogue in Instrumental Music* details conclusions reached by discussion groups at the symposium sponsored by the Wisconsin Committee for the Improvement of Undergraduate Instruction and the Society for Teacher Education of the


²⁸ *ibid.*, 55.
Music Educators National Conference. Among the topics addressed in discussion groups was the need for excellent methods course instructors. The participants felt that methods teachers need to not only be highly skilled in their art form, but should possess successful experiences from public school teaching. They concluded that colleges and universities should make an effort to seek out experienced and motivated teachers to instruct the methods courses. Discussion also led to a statement that methods courses should not focus solely on the act of doing something, but should also address instructional approaches and concepts for how students learn a skill.

William Albin, "Teacher Preparation in Percussion: Results of a Survey"

Albin conducted a survey of band directors in Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana in 1978 regarding their perceptions of the value and effectiveness of the percussion methods course they took in college, with findings published by Percussive Notes in 1985. The 244 respondents indicated that many of their percussion methods classes had not used a specific text and that instruction was skewed toward the traditional battery instruments of percussion: snare drum, bass drum, crash cymbals, and timpani, with some teaching of accessory instruments. After teaching for a varied number of years, 63% of respondents indicated that their methods course had not prepared them for the demands of teaching percussion in the schools. Suggestions for improvement included more time on drumset, keyboard instruments, accessory instruments, and Latin percussion instruments along with increased course time to provide adequate preparation for future teaching.

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Frank Cocuzzi and Kristen Shiner, "What Really Needs to be Taught in the Percussion Methods Class!"

The Percussive Notes article published in 1988 noted that upon interviewing current band directors in the schools, the percussion methods course was largely labeled inadequate to meet the current demands in the public schools. General concerns raised included a lack of training in maintenance and a need for more instruction on commonly encountered topics, such as drum positioning, snare rolls, drum tuning, mallet selection, and proper storage of percussion instruments. Presented as part of the article is a prioritized list of what the authors believe to be the most important skills that need to be addressed in the methods course.

Garwood Whaley, "Percussion Education: Whose Responsibility?"

Whaley's desire for collegiate instructors to make room in their schedules to work with public school students was discussed in his 1988 article in Percussive Notes. He reasoned that students would gain the knowledge and experience of these "master teachers" and then carry this training into their public school programs, creating better experiences there. Not mentioned by Whaley is the reverse benefit of collegiate instructors then becoming more aware of the situation and needs in the public school environment from this contact. This type of first-hand knowledge would help the individuals most responsible for the content and structure of the methods course to better adapt it to the reality faced by today's music educators in the schools.

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Glen Steele, "Percussion in Higher Education: A Perspective on Its Present and Future"

The need for better training in percussion methods courses was mentioned in surveys of percussion in higher education, completed in 1984 with results published by Percussive Notes in 1988. Respondents were asked to make suggestions for improving percussion education in general, given the current demands and advancements in the field. Responses indicated that many felt an improvement in methods course education would lead to a better understanding and appreciation of percussion, thus leading to improved percussion education in the schools. From this improved public school education, young percussionists would be more developed and better prepared to enter demanding collegiate programs.

Gilbert Baker, "The Percussion Methods Class"

The need for practical instruction in the methods course was the main topic of Baker's 1991 Percussive Notes article, in which he put forth a proposed outline for course content. He stated the need to refocus the course on pedagogical training, as much of the methods teaching to date had placed emphasis on the performance execution of the pre-service teachers. Baker argued that, "The quality of future percussion performance will be greatly influenced by the college percussion methods classes being taught today," and his content outline put pedagogical and practical classroom issues in a position of prominence beside the development of performance skills.

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35 ibid., 43.
Richard Colwell, "Educating Teachers of Music for What?"

Colwell's lengthy 1991 Percussive Notes article raised several questions about music teacher education, as he discussed why little change had occurred in seventy years of music teacher training at four-year institutions. Colwell concluded that it was the generally conservative nature of collegiate music schools that slows evolution; institutions desire to maintain a status quo and do not demand change from their tenured faculty who have done the same thing the same way for many years. He observed that major curriculum and course structure revisions generally happened only when governing bodies and powers of accreditation, such as NASM, forced change on the institutions. Colwell pointed out that knowledge had increased at different rates in certain areas of music study and educational thought, creating the need for a reallocation of the hours assigned to various subjects in the degree program. Reassigning hours to particular courses, however, was avoided in many instances as it would necessitate a redesign of the already complicated master course plans and degree track outlines. Colwell also states that in many pre-service education programs where specialization in a subject matter is involved, for example math, students are now required to complete a four-year degree in the subject followed by a one year education certification program. Music has received a special designation at the institutions where these changes have taken place, and therefore music education remains a four year degree program. Colwell argued that though advantages may not exist in the five-year design - if teaching methodology is still flawed more time will not better prepare students - it is that "special" designation that allows

music's educational methods courses to continue to be taught by applied performance instructors rather than specialists in the educational field.

**Thom Hasenpflug, "Motivation in Methods Classes"

Hasenpflug addressed the topic of motivation in the percussion methods course in this article, published in 1995 by *Percussive Notes*. A number of ideas for creative class projects and encouragement for individualization of the course by the instructor were presented. Also addressed was hands-on teaching of the accessory instruments, though no mention was made of overall course content and structuring changes to help meet the previously discussed preparation concerns of in-service teachers.

**PAS College Pedagogy Committee, "Standards for the College Percussion Methods Class"

*Percussive Notes* published the Percussive Arts Society minimum standards for the college methods course in June 1997. The process began in 1991 when percussion educator Phil Faini asked members of the PAS Curriculum Committee to conduct a regional survey of college percussion programs, including aspects of the percussion methods course. The reports, presented in 1992, prompted members to develop minimum standards for percussion methods courses that would then be published in a number of music education related journals and presented to the National Association of Schools of Music. The Curriculum and Instruction subcommittee then formed under the College Pedagogy Committee to take on the project, starting their work with a survey mailed to eleven hundred collegiate percussion instructors. The survey results were

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presented in 1994 at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention and Michael Combs was asked to then use these results as a basis for the creation of the PAS standards. The official presentation of the standards, as created by Combs' subcommittee, took place at the 1996 Percussive Arts Society International Convention and the PAS College Pedagogy Committee immediately ratified the work. The PAS Executive Committee officially approved and adopted the standards as written in 1997. The full text of these standards follows:

**Minimum Standards for the College Percussion Methods Class**

Established by the Percussive Arts Society January 24, 1997

**Premise**

Minimum standards for the college percussion methods course are:

1. familiarity with a sound pedagogical approach to technique and instruments, including significant method books, quality solo and ensemble literature, and other related teaching materials that are significant, and current, and

2. familiarity with essential related areas of percussion teaching such as procedures for purchasing and maintenance of percussion instruments, familiarity with professional organizations for percussionists, knowledge of currently available school instruments, and understanding of the percussion requirements in school music.

**I. Snare Drum**

In the college methods class, minimum standards for snare drum are:

- knowledge of the proper snare drum technique (grip and stroke technique) and the various styles of drumming and special effects, as most appropriately applicable to current school literature;

- knowledge of the Percussive Arts Society International Drum Rudiments and performance skills of the basic and essential rudiments.

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II. Timpani, Keyboard Percussion, Drumset, Multi-Percussion, and Accessories
Minimum standards for timpani, keyboard percussion, drumset, multi-percussion and accessories (including ethnic instruments that are appropriate for the school music program) are:

- familiarity with the basic technique (as related to grip, stroke technique, and related application) and performance role within the school music ensemble of timpani, keyboard percussion, drumset, multi-percussion, basic accessories and significant ethnic percussion instruments.

III. Marching Percussion
Minimum standards for marching percussion are:

- knowledge of the specifications of the basic marching percussion instruments found in current school marching bands, and their functions in the drum line as well as their role within the total marching band.

Though a number of details about the process to create the standards were not mentioned in the PAS College Pedagogy Committee's article, Julia Hillbrick's 1999 DMA document provided more insight into avenues not pursued in the research leading up to the creation of the standards. Hillbrick found that Dennis Rogers had proposed to the committee that a phone survey be used to gain the input of current directors in the public schools, with a goal of determining how much and what kind of percussion training they had received in college and how this related to their current situations in teaching percussion. The committee opted not to conduct this survey, instead contacting eleven hundred collegiate instructors for input. After receiving responses to these surveys and then studying them, Michael Combs suggested, as Rogers had previously, that a survey of school directors be conducted to find out how successful the class was in meeting their current teaching needs, however, the committee voted and chose once again to seek input from the collegiate instructors.

Jim Coffin, "The Failure of Drumset Instruction in College Methods Classes"

Coffin addressed problems regarding drumset instruction in the methods class very specifically in his 1997 *Percussive Notes* article. He expressed his concerns over repeated problems he had seen when adjudicating high school jazz bands in several states, indicating negative trends in drumset education in the public schools. He had observed problems with the drumset placement, set up and tuning in these bands and stressed the need to do more than teach basic patterns in the methods class, arguing for the inclusion of logistical issues relating to drumset instruction as well. Coffin questioned whether or not college instructors were knowledgeable about the public school needs on drumset, stating "It is very natural for a percussion instructor to stay in touch with percussion-major graduates, but is there any form of outreach to those graduates who need assistance the most - music-ed non-percussionists?"

Michael Combs, "The College Percussion Methods Class - Collective Experience; Combined Wisdom"

This 1997 *Percussive Notes* article was a follow up to the June 1997 publication of the minimum standards for percussion methods. Combs addressed topics that were discussed in meetings or arose in the surveys that had been conducted in the process of creating the standards. He mentioned the issue of contact time in the course, stating that a large portion of the committee recommended no less than three class meetings per week for a full semester. Another topic raised includes suggestions for the efficient use of the


limited contact time, including email, text choice, use of audio visual materials outside
normal class hours and combining with other methods classes in small ensembles. When
discussing what should be taught, only two specific entries were made. One suggested
that if the instructor of the course had a specialty, he should feel free to devote course
time to it, and use audio visual materials to balance any other weak areas. The second
statement seemed somewhat contradictory to the first, stating that "The percussion
methods class must be primarily focused on preparing the students to do what they must
do as school band and orchestra directors." Combs continued, stating that less time
may need to be devoted to specialty areas in favor of topics more suited to the needs of
the students in the course. The last portion of the article addressed how the course should
be taught, drawing no conclusions from the three options stated: playing everything,
discussing everything, balancing playing and talking. One of the final statements made
by Combs rings strongest in the article, as he stated that for all the complaining
percussion educators do about the problems seen in the public school programs, "we have
no one to blame but those of us who teach the teachers."  

James Ackman, "Percussion Skills Class - Preparing for the Future"

Ackman addressed the course in a 1999 Percussive Notes article in which he
labeled five segments he felt should have equal time in the methods course structuring:

43 F. Michael Combs, "The College Percussion Methods Class - Collective Experience; Combined
Wisdom," Percussive Notes 35, no. 6 (Dec 1997): 34.

44 ibid., 38.

45 James K. Ackman, "Percussion Skills Class - Preparing for the Future," Percussive Notes 37, no. 2
(April 1999): 41-44.
• Snare drum, bass drum, accessory percussion
• Timpani
• Mallet/keyboard percussion
• Marching percussion
• Drumset and ethnic percussion

Ackman then further discussed details of what to include within each of the five categories. Of interesting note is the equal priority he recommended for marching percussion, drumset, and ethnic percussion, as the majority of previous literature had suggested that the primary concert instruments of snare drum, keyboard, and timpani should receive more weight in the course design. He argued that there was a need for these other instruments to receive equal time as the demands for directors to have knowledge in these areas was increasing and growing more complex. Though stated simply, Ackman pointed out the need for change in course content as he recommended that, "this course offers future instrumental music teachers a solid introduction to the world of percussion as it exists today." ⁴⁶ He concluded that the only means to more effective teaching of percussion in the public schools was to better prepare music education majors for the experiences ahead and to provide them with a solid knowledge and skill base from which to create their teaching methodology.

Masters and Doctoral Documents

Edward Cleino, "An Ensemble Method for Teaching Percussion Instruments"

Inadequate teacher training in percussion was a concern raised by Cleino in his 1958 dissertation. ⁴⁷ He observed that many of the problems currently seen in school


percussion performance could be traced back to poor training of music teachers. Cleino argued that the allotted time to teach the course, usually one term, was not enough to properly cover all the areas of percussion in which public school teachers should be competent. He felt that the rapid rate at which material was being covered in the course to complete the training resulted in a sense of false confidence in many future directors, allowing them to feel more prepared to teach young percussionists than they truly were.

Cary Dachtyl, "The Status of Snare Drum Instruction in Percussion Methods Programs of Selected Universities and Colleges in Ohio and Contiguous States"

Dachtyl's 1992 Ph.D dissertation focused specifically on snare drum instruction taking place in the college methods courses. Surveys were sent to instructors at ninety higher education institutions in Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania asking questions about who taught the percussion methods course and how the snare drum content was handled. As part of the survey, Dachtyl also asked what texts were being used for the course, finding that 45% utilized Gary Cook's Teaching Percussion in its first edition. Michael Combs Percussion Manual was the second most used text at 15%, with the rest using a combination of various method books and personal materials. When asked what they would change about the course, 60% of respondents suggested more course contact time in order to meet the expanding needs of the school music teacher.

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Larry Reeder, "An Analysis and Comparison of Select Teaching Methods for the University Percussion Methods Class"

Discussion of percussion methods texts was undertaken in the 1994 doctoral document of Reeder. A survey was taken of the PAS Education Committee to decide which texts to compare and the numbers of votes from the committee members are listed below.


Reeder's focus in analyzing the texts was to evaluate their usefulness to the non-percussionist who is taking the class, teaching the class, or teaching in the schools. Fourteen categories were used in evaluating the texts and in all but two of the categories Reeder ranked the Cook text highest, with the Breithaupt book dominating the second place rankings. The criticisms of the other two texts revolved around the dated material and techniques and a general lack of information. Criticism of the Cook book was given by some survey respondents, with the majority of the comments focusing on the overwhelming amount of material, the complexity in which it is presented, and the inability to cover all of it in one term.

Julia Hillbrick, "A Profile of the Perception of Instrumental Ensemble Directors in the States of Illinois, Missouri, and Wisconsin Regarding the Percussion Techniques Class"

Hillbrick conducted an extensive survey of directors in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Missouri schools regarding their percussion methods class training and asked them to

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reflect on how well they felt it prepared them for their careers. Her 1999 DMA document presented the results of her survey, showing continued gaps in the percussion training received by undergraduate music education majors and raising concerns over the need to reevaluate the priorities of the course. A major point in her introduction was the mention of the abundance of publications about the methods class structure and content, with little of the information being gathered by talking to the teachers in the schools. Rather, most of the published information was based on the ideas and experiences of college percussion instructors and those teaching the courses at the collegiate level without regard to how effective their methods and content were when used in the schools.

Hillbrick pointed out that most schools were presenting percussion as a one term, all-inclusive methods course while other instruments were being presented over two or more terms, forcing the percussion methods instructor to prioritize what is most important to cover in the class and to decide what can be just mentioned or left out entirely. Also addressed in her introduction was the need for the class to not only present playing skills, but for ideas on how to teach those skills to be discussed and developed, as well as the need for time to be spent on topics such as purchasing instruments and heads, part assignment procedures, and equipment care and storage needs.

Important results of her survey show how effective or ineffective specific segments of the methods class have been in preparing music education majors for their careers. The effectiveness of the total course was rated by 38% of the survey's 642 respondents as average, with a total of 64% finding the course effectiveness to be average

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or below. Interestingly, though the course left many feeling generally unprepared to teach percussion in the schools, 85% of 588 respondents received an A grade in the class, with 14.1% receiving a B and .9% receiving a C. Questions were asked regarding directors preparedness to teach specific areas of percussion with the following percentages indicating respondents who felt their readiness to teach the instrument was average or above:

- Snare = 87%
- Keyboard = 65%
- Timpani = 69.5%
- Accessory = 65.3%
- Drumset = 24.4%
- Marching = 35.3%

Beyond the development of performance techniques, Hillbrick asked questions about non-performance aspects of teaching percussion that were addressed in methods training. The following shows the percentage of respondents who received instruction in these areas:

- Distributing/assigning parts = 15.6%
- Storing instruments = 23%
- Purchasing instruments = 38.6%
- Positioning percussion section = 37.2%

When asked about text materials for the course, 32.4% responded that there was no text for their course and that handouts were the only written material used for instruction. 25% could not remember what text they had used, indicating that they were not making use of the text as a future resource while teaching.

The document also included a comparison of the survey responses to the recently created PAS minimum standards for the percussion methods class. Hillbrick found that snare drum instruction was generally in line with the PAS recommendations, though
more instruction on snare drum styles was particularly in need. Timpani, keyboards, and accessory training were also found to be up to standards, but drumset instruction was clearly needed yet lacking in the methods content. Marching percussion was the largest problem in comparison with the standards, as most respondents indicated they had not received training in this area, though PAS felt that the marching information was important enough to warrant a separate category in their published standards.

**Nicole Behn, "Content of Secondary Applied Instrumental Methods Courses at Selected Colleges and Universities"**

The 2004 M.A thesis by Behn researched content and structure of college instrumental methods courses through a survey. Included in the survey were questions asking respondents how much class time was spent on particular aspects of course content and this information was then classified by the decade in which the class was taken. In the percussion area, very little change in course structure was seen between 1950 and 2000, despite the content of published writings addressing percussion methods needs during that same time frame. Discussions on how to teach technical skills, as compared to playing time, actually declined in the course content over the fifty year period. Among the open comments offered by respondents was the need for more course contact time for percussion methods in comparison to the time spent on brass and woodwinds.

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Ronald Horner, "A National Survey of College Level Percussion Teachers Regarding the Importance of Certain Characteristics of Percussion Materials in Beginning Instrumental Methods"

Horner's 2005 DMA document surveyed college teachers on what they believed were the important aspects of method books for beginning percussionists studying in the schools. Though the focus of the survey was on books to be used by beginning students in the school percussion class setting, as part of the survey, the percussion methods course and related texts were discussed as respondents were asked if they taught the percussion methods course, which 78.4% did, and if so, what text was used for the class. Cook's *Teaching Percussion* was used by 42% of the respondents, with the next most popular texts being Combs *Percussion Manual* at 8.5% and Breithaupt's *The Complete Percussionist* with 6.7% usage. Among the open commentary given by survey respondents was that texts such as Cook's were academically valuable, but did not address practical situations, and that in the end methods courses were only as effective as the teachers presenting them.

**Summary**

The literature regarding the percussion methods course and the discussion of its content presents several recurring themes. Among these is the desire for practical training that addresses the daily issues faced by public school music educators. Eight of the twenty-six pieces of literature discussed in this chapter contained input from school music teachers, and in all eight teachers expressed the need for the methods class to contain more functional content and to relate more directly to their job needs. Teachers

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not only want more training on the non-performance aspects of playing, however, they also express a desire to see a refocusing of the methods course on how to teach the performance skills rather than an emphasis on the execution of the techniques.

Other recurring topics regarding the course include concerns that those teaching and supervising the methods course need to have more experience with students in the public school environment. Three of the articles with direct input from teachers alluded to the fact that many of those involved in the instruction of the methods course are working strictly in higher education, and have either been out of public school teaching for a number of years or have never taught in that environment and are unaware of the current realities of the teaching situation.

Both percussionists involved in the instruction and structuring of the course and those who have taken the course have agreed that an increase the amount of time allotted for the percussion methods course is necessary, given the vast array of material to be presented and the entirely new set of technical skills to be developed. The increases suggested ranged from adding more class sessions per week for the current one term course to adding an additional term to the course, as many observed that other instrument families generally required two terms of methods instruction.

The recurrence of these topics over such a long period of time is indicative of the lack of change that has taken place and of the need for a new approach to the course structure, content, and text. All seem agreed that the course is of great value in the preparation of music educators, but how much value it holds is directly related to whether or not the instruction and course material are relevant to the school music setting.
CHAPTER 3

PERCUSSION METHODS TEXTS: PRE-1997

Between 1960 and 1997 a number of texts were published as guides to percussion for both current teachers and college music education majors. As expected, given the rapid evolution of percussion and percussion education, a large amount of the pedagogical material in these texts is now outdated. The reviews that follow address these texts, written before the PAS standards were created, and focus on points considered significant to their usability today, including pedagogical information, use of line drawings versus photographs, subjects covered, and the presentation of information. Texts that were written before 1997, but have been reprinted or published in new editions since then, are addressed in chapter 4.


Buggert wrote his text to serve as a handbook for music educators, as he observed a lack of quality percussion training in schools at the time. Black and white photographs provide the majority of illustrations, with limited use of drawn diagrams. The text contains a large number of exercises for snare drum study, but very few for other instruments, as the overwhelming majority of the text is devoted to the snare drum and focused primarily on the use and execution of the rudiments. The need for better

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percussion education and a discussion of the purpose of public school music programs is included in the introductory material of the text.

The approach of the text does very little, however, to address the overall needs of percussion education in the schools. Though rudiments are developed thoroughly and sequentially, the general requirements of public school music programs focus very little on this area and require more complete study of concert snare drum as well as keyboard instruments and timpani, neither of which are addressed in the text. Marching percussion and its role in the school program is not discussed in the text.

Myron Collins and John Green, *Playing and Teaching Percussion Instruments* (1962)

The text was created to provide an all-encompassing percussion education for the college methods class, with a focus on basic technique for the snare drum. Line drawings are used for the majority of illustrations that demonstrate technique, while black and white photographs are used to show the different instruments. Snare drum exercises are numerous, but only a small number of exercises are included for other instruments. A presentation of rhythmic values as they relate to meters is provided in the introduction, as well as a chart for stickings in the "subtraction method," a system that is now referred to as the "right hand lead". Pedagogical material and instruction is presented in a prose format, with generally limited information and few details.

The book does not mention the matched grip for snare drum, discussing and demonstrating only the use of traditional grip. The majority of the snare drum lessons introduce performance in different meters or tempos, but with very little discussion of

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pedagogically developing technical skills. Care and maintenance concerns are not addressed in the text beyond the tuning of drumheads and there is no mention of organizational and administrative suggestions for school music programs.

**Joel Leach, Percussion Manual for Music Educators (1964)**

Leach designed the book for the music education student, but does suggest that it is also a useful reference for anyone working with percussionists. Illustrations are presented as black and white photographs with a few line drawing diagrams where they are more applicable. A significant number of exercises for individual and class practice are provided by the author. Most pedagogical material is presented in brief prose format with some information about instruments and maintenance in outline form. A brief section on drumset instruction is included in this text.

The presentation of the snare grip is questionable, as three different grips are discussed with matched grip being the least advocated. The "finger technique" is mentioned as the third grip in this text, though this grip does not appear in materials by any other authors. Skills are moved through rapidly with only cursory explanations for development. Though the illustrations are generally quite clear, they often show techniques that are no longer widely accepted. The marching percussion section and organizational concerns of the school percussion section are not addressed.

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The authors state that the purpose of the text is to function as a ready reference source for the music educator, presenting a total percussion concept as dictated by the needs of the evolving school music program. A few line drawings are used, however most illustrations showing instruments and techniques are black and white photographs. The presence of exercises in the text is limited and many serve more as examples of notation rather than functioning as exercises for developing performance skills. Matched grip is advocated by the authors due to its versatility in the percussion family as well as the matching stroke motions employed by the two hands. The discussion concerning parts of the snare drum is especially thorough and clear, making it very useful to the music educator. An entire section of the text is devoted to developing musicianship skills in percussion performance.

In regard to non-performance content, the authors include useful recommendations for instruments to be owned by schools, but the illustration of the set-up for a large ensemble percussion section is a nearly perfect mirror image of the standard employed by most groups. The presentation order of snare material seems somewhat illogical, as examples of extended techniques are presented before the standard snare skills are addressed. Though the illustration of matched grip is clear, the text lacks any specific written information about forming the grip. A number of the text's pictures show outdated techniques for instruments such as bass drum and cymbals, and the marching portion of the text will not function with a modern section.

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Charles Spohn, *The Percussion* (1967)

The text was written to be used as a reference to working with the percussion section for music teachers and conductors.\(^57\) Black and white photographs make up the majority of the illustrations with a few line drawings used. The number of included exercises within the chapters is small, but the author does suggest that supplemental method books be used for more performance experience and includes an appendix with ensemble pieces for group performance. All material is presented in a prose format, without clear step-by-step guides to pedagogy. Traditional grip is weighted in discussion relative to matched grip and all snare performance pictures and drawings show the use of the traditional grip.

An effort appears to have been made to neutralize any dating of pictures by the use of black clothing and leaving the performer's head out of the image, though instrument images still date the text. The marching percussion information is out of date and not usable in the modern school program and the discussion regarding placement of the percussion section in the large ensemble is not in line with common practice today. Additionally the lack of subsection markings in the material makes it difficult to find specific skill information quickly when using the text as a reference.

Kenneth Mueller, *Teaching Total Percussion* (1972)

The text was written to be used as a guide for the high school music educator in teaching students total percussion.\(^58\) Technical elements as well as instrument images are presented as black and white photographs. The text strongly advocates the use of


matched grip for purposes of skill transference to all three major concert instrument areas: snare drum, keyboards, and timpani. Also advocated by the author is the use of keyboard instruments as the fundamental basis of early percussion instruction. Detailed discussion on maintenance and care is included within each instrument section. Excellent information on using a section leader and assigning parts is included in the chapter on organization and administration of the school percussion section, with information on proper storage of instruments also addressed. A listing of method books for each instrument is supplied at the end of the text, though it should be remembered that many excellent books have been written since this text's publication. Pedagogical explanations are frequently presented in a prose format, though outline form is used to present some technical elements.

Though he makes a strong argument for starting on keyboard instruments, instructors using this approach would need to make some compensation for the lack of early and extensive snare drum training, as starting on keyboard instruments can make it more difficult for students to learn basic concepts of stroke, including rebound. Basic problems with the text include pictures of specific technical skills that are taken at a significant distance, making it difficult to discern detail. Information in some areas is out-dated, including the discussion of four mallet grips as well as all discussion of marching percussion, which has evolved greatly since the publication of the text.

The book was created to be used as the text for college percussion methods classes and the layout was chosen to accommodate that purpose. Diagrams, line drawings, and black and white photographs are used to demonstrate techniques and instruments. There are numerous exercises in the snare drum section and a smaller number are included in other portions of the text. Information on instruments is generally presented in paragraph form with outlines used to present step-by-step processes. The playing techniques for accessory instruments are discussed in excellent detail with illustrations to aid in learning about the large array of instruments in this category. Portions of the text are devoted to organization and management of the percussion section in the school, with information addressing maintenance concerns included.

The photographs showing elements of technique, such as grip, are taken with black clothing and a black backdrop, clearly focusing attention on the hands; however, some images would have more clarity and detail if they were taken in closer proximity. A questionable approach to choosing snare sticks is presented, basing the choice of stick size on the player's weight which does not take into account other issues relating directly to the player's body or the performance situation. The two column format used for page layout is difficult to follow as images often disrupt the flow of the text. Early exercises involving rolls notate the strokes to be buzzed with wavy line stems, a notation system which is very difficult to read. The material addressing the marching percussion section is out dated and not of use in the modern program.


Jackson designed the text specifically for the college methods course and as reference material for the active music educator. The majority of illustrations are black and white photographs, with a few line drawings included. A large number of exercises are included in the text to further the development of performance skills. The pedagogical material in the book is presented in outline format using step-by-step approaches, with lists of common problems and solutions included in the technical skill discussions. Information on organizing the school percussion section as well as lists of method books and solos are included at the end of the text, as is a section on instrument maintenance and care.

The presentation of grip and stroke in the text has students playing on the drum before actually learning how to correctly grip the stick. Many of the pictures have poor angles and are taken from a significant distance, making it difficult to view details of some technical elements such as grip. Though accurate in most areas, there are some technical concerns as compared with the currently accepted pedagogy. Some clearly outdated material is contained in the text, with the marching percussion section showing the most problems with a lack of current information that is usable for the director working with the modern section.

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The stated purpose of the book is to serve students, educators, and professional musicians seeking information about percussion. The author clearly states that some material has been purposefully omitted, as he was looking to create a practical guide, not one that is all-encompassing. The illustrations in the text are all black and white photographs, most of which demonstrate instruments rather than technique. A significant number of exercises and etudes are included in the text for various instruments, with arrangements for playing in small ensembles of varying instrumentation. The presentation of material moves between prose and outline forms. The need for attention to the quality of sound being produced is addressed from the first discussion of the stroke, reinforcing the development of musicianship as part of early performance skills. A list of common orchestral excerpts for many instruments is included in the back of the text and there is a bibliography listing a number of method books for individual study.

When discussing snare grips, McCormick states that he allows his students to choose which grip they wish to use. This could cause considerable problems for the educator in the schools who is trying to work in the class percussion setting and the lack of transference inherent in traditional grip makes it a far more difficult approach to use with beginning students. Though the concept of stroke is solid in this text, the pedagogy of developing the skill moves very quickly and without enough information for the non-percussionist educator to correctly define the motion. Discussion of pedagogy is narrow throughout the text with generalizations that do not provide essential information or break

down the method for teaching clearly enough for use in the public school setting. The presentation of marching percussion information is very brief and the information is not relevant for a modern section.


The text was written to be used in the college percussion methods class and much of the material was developed by the author for use in his own courses. All the included illustrations are drawings of instruments, with no images of technical elements presented. Exercises are contained in all major sections of the text, with discussion of pedagogical methods presented in both prose and outline forms. A substantial portion of the content is devoted to the acoustics of percussion instruments and maintenance concerns are only briefly. There is no section of the text that presents marching percussion information.

The lack of visual reinforcement makes it difficult to conceptualize elements of techniques such as grip and instrument positioning. A large number of the technical skills presented are not adequately discussed or developed enough to prepare the music educator for teaching the skills to beginning students. Additionally, the absence of information about non-performance aspects of teaching and marching percussion elements leaves substantial gaps in the music educator's training. The book does not have a professional appearance, likely due to the lack of a publisher.

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Summary

At the time of their publication, many of these texts may have been current with percussion pedagogy, but now most are outdated. The clearest problems with old pedagogy include those texts which advocate traditional grip for beginners, a technique no longer advocated for beginning students due to its lack of transference to other instruments, and marching percussion discussions that are no longer current with the demands and equipment of the modern section.

Regardless of publication date, a major concern with these texts is the overall lack of clear, step-by-step pedagogical presentations of technical elements. Most texts relied on brief prose explanations or pictures to demonstrate techniques, giving future educators little or no information to use when presenting these skills to school students. Only two of the texts attempted to break down the steps in developing techniques in a manner usable for teachers, both lacking somewhat in detail.

Though some texts included discussion of maintenance and organizational concerns of school percussion sections, most of the texts lacked substantial information about the non-performance aspects of teaching percussion. Literature discussed in chapter 2 of this text presented the need for this type of content well before 1997, but most authors continued to neglect these areas of concern to directors.
CHAPTER 4

PERCUSSION METHODS TEXTS: 1997-Present

The first problem encountered in the methods course is the selection of a current text. Of the large array of percussion literature available, few texts are written with the express purpose of serving as the course text for the college percussion methods class. Upon reviewing available texts designed specifically for the course, it was found that a number of them are more than ten years old and, given the rapid evolution of the percussion field, a limitation was put on texts that publication or reprint dates be no earlier than 1997, ten years prior to the review, for them to be classified as current. As mentioned previously, the Percussive Arts Society minimum standards for the course were put forth in 1997, making that year a significant mark in literature creation.

Each text was reviewed for general content and structure, the presence and type of illustrations, the inclusion of exercises, and the format in which pedagogical methods are presented. This information is presented in the overview section of each review, including any perceived problems with the material. The second portion of each review focuses on the snare drum portion of each text, chosen as a point for comparison because all of the texts contain substantial information in this area. Additionally, the sample section of the proposed text included in the appendix to this document is the snare drum segment, allowing for clear comparisons of material and presentation.
Overview

The text was written to serve as the course book for the college percussion methods class and for use by in-service music teachers as a reference source. Line drawings as well as black and white photographs are used as illustrations to demonstrate instruments and techniques. The limited number of exercises printed in the text provides notational examples, but is not sufficient to meet the need for performance training. The majority of information is presented in prose format with limited use of outline form for some pedagogical points. Unique to the book is a section listing objectives of a percussion ensemble program and advice for starting the group. Segments dealing with organization and administration of the percussion section are also included, as well as information on basic maintenance, care and storage.

Despite the new edition, the marching percussion section of the text is extremely out of date and not a good source of information for the methods class or today's music teacher in the school classroom. The lengthy discussions of instrument history are not a priority in the methods course and serve only to misdirect the instructor on what to prioritize for the course. Many of the images in the text do not show the technical elements clearly enough to discern details of the skills.

Review of Snare Drum Content

A line drawing is used to show the parts of the instrument, but the drawing is specifically of a field drum rather than a standard snare drum and explanations of the

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functions of the instrument's parts are not included. Information about the materials and sizes of drums is outdated and does not represent instruments which are currently available.

Though discussion is included on the modern use of the matched grip, a thorough explanation of traditional grip is presented with advantages listed that are no longer relevant, as they reference older styles of marching percussion performance. Eight pictures are used to show the positioning of the drum at an angle for traditional grip, but only one picture is included to show matched grip positioning. Use of variable playing locations on the head is advocated to serve dynamic execution and a thorough discussion of sticking is included in the snare content. The full arm technique advocated as part of the stroke is of questionable pedagogy today, as the repeated downward hinge of the wrist has been known to cause performance injuries in percussionists.

True buzz rolls are never presented, as the text focuses solely on the double stroke roll, stating that the buzz roll is only achieved by increasing the speed of the double stroke roll. As most literature played in school bands and orchestras (with the exception of marching band arrangements) is in the concert style, this approach to teaching rolls to beginners leaves students unprepared to meet performance expectations in the large ensemble setting.

**Overview**

Combs states that the text is designed to serve as a course text for percussion methods as well as for use with school percussionists. Black and white photographs are used to demonstrate some technical elements, though most illustrations are of instruments. A large number of exercises are contained in the text for the development of performance techniques, including examples in a variety of basic meters. Information about technique is presented in a brief prose format, while an outline form is used to present possible problems. A section of the text is devoted to organizing the school percussion section with information on section leaders, part assignments, storage, and general set up in a large ensemble. Also included is advice on starting the beginning percussion class, where homogenous groups and beginning instruction on snare drum are advocated.

Despite the new edition, much of the material is still dated. Photographic examples show some older instruments as well as performer images from the original 1977 text. Though matched grip is the most common performance technique today, the text states it is less common, as it was at the time the first edition of the text was published. The brief section on marching percussion discusses instrumentation as well as drum sizes that are no longer consistent with standard practice in the marching percussion idiom. The lists of repertoire, method books, and recordings are an excellent resource, but the text lacks detailed information on maintenance of the percussion instruments.

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Review of Snare Drum Content

When discussing the snare drum, the parts of the drum are labeled in a picture but no explanation of their function is provided. The discussion of drum shell material is inaccurate, mentioning covering material with a pearl finish as an actual shell material and the discussion of the snares themselves is outdated as it relates to appropriate sound quality for various settings. No information is discussed or pictured on properly positioning the snare drum in relation to the body.

Traditional grip is presented before matched grip, with an unclear explanation of grip fundamentals and the related stroke; two pictures of traditional grip show variations in the left hand position leaving questions about correct technique. The only image of matched grip is taken from almost directly above the performer and does not clearly show fulcrum or finger positions, elements which are given only cursory mention in the text.

Stroke development is presented with matched and traditional grip simultaneously, but without mention of the hinge motion versus the rotational motion. A wrist stroke is advocated though resultant motion in the arm is allowed to occur, encouraging a relaxing rather than a locking of the arm when executing a stroke. No mention of rebound, however, is made in the initial presentation of the stroke and playing area on the drum is not addressed. There is also no discussion on the adjustment of stick height when changing dynamics or stroke velocity, though excellent exercises showing ideas for use of note grouping in creating musical phrases is contained in the snare drum chapter; more discussion on the concept of "touch," however, is needed along with these exercises.
The presentation of rolls makes no mention of a change in motion from a wrist stroke to an arm stroke, as advocated by many performers for quality of sound. The open or double stroke roll is discussed first, with the buzz roll being introduced after several other skills. Written examples of metered double stroke rolls are clear and show the framework of motion in use and though encouragement is given to play the buzzed roll with as few strokes as possible, no clear explanation of using metering for this roll style is presented.

**Steve Houghton and Linda Petersen, *Play and Teach Percussion* (2004)**

**Overview**

The subtitle of the text is "A College Method for Success in the Classroom; A Lifetime Reference for Music Teachers." The book is designed for hands-on experience and comes with play-along CDs. Nearly all of the images contained in the text are line drawings, with only a few scattered photographs of instruments and technical elements. Performance exercises are abundant in the text, most of which have accompanying CD tracks. Pedagogical steps for acquiring skills are presented in a brief outline format. Unique to the text is the suggested semester timeline and course synopsis grid found in the introductory material. Another noteworthy addition is the inclusion of a skills assessment guide for each section of the text, rating how knowledgeable the student is and whether or not further review of materials is necessary.

The order of presentation in this text is unique among percussion methods course materials. Rather than presenting all aspects of an instrument and its performance in one

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section, the materials are interspersed throughout the book based on a suggested order for skill development that includes all instruments. Though potentially usable as a guide to addressing skills in total percussion with beginning students, this scattering of material creates more difficulty for the music educator, both pre-service and actively teaching, seeking information on a particular subject. This broken presentation of materials also makes it difficult for methods students to form a cognitive knowledge base on any given instrument's pedagogy. A large number of instruments are covered in the text, but the accompanying pedagogy lacks adequate explanation to serve as a step-by-step guide to technique for the music educator. The marching percussion portion of the text is very brief with little explanation of the individual instruments or discussion of technical matters associated with their use and performance.

**Review of Snare Drum Content**

As mentioned previously, the snare drum content is spread throughout the concert percussion portion of the text. A line drawing of a snare drum is labeled showing parts of the instrument, but it is somewhat unclear and no information about the function of these parts is provided. There is also no discussion about the sizes of available snare drums or variations of materials used for the shell and snares.

A brief, five step explanation is given on forming the matched grip, with no mention of the exact placement of the index finger in forming the fulcrum though it is a significant point in developing the grip. The accompanying line drawings do not help clarify the lack of adequate explanation regarding the grip. The formation and use of the traditional grip is not included in the text. Explanation of the basic stroke is also cursory and vague, though rebound is mentioned in the initial presentation. There is no
discussion of different stroke types or of varying height and playing area placement for effective dynamic performance.

The buzz roll is introduced immediately after the presentation of the basic stroke. Two sentences are used to explain the roll without any information regarding stroke adjustments to be made in order to execute the sound. The double stroke roll is introduced immediately after the buzz roll, again with only a brief written explanation and little technical advice. Metering is introduced when double stroke rolls are presented; however, use of metering is never mentioned as a part of buzz roll execution.


Overview

The purpose of Breithaupt's text is to outline basic information about percussion instruments, performance skills, and maintenance for current and future music educators. Black and white photographs as well as line drawings are used to show instruments and techniques. All concert instruments are presented in one extensive chapter, including a small number of brief exercises, with information about organizing the percussion section and maintenance of instruments in separate chapters. Pedagogical information is presented in outline form, with step-by-step instructions in bold face and further details about the pedagogy of each step included. Of particular note in this text is the chart indicating what mallet types are appropriate for particular keyboard instruments and another addressing types of drumheads and uses.

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Though thorough in the inclusion of images to demonstrate instruments and techniques, the use of line drawings to show technical aspects are sometimes unclear and the use of photographs in these situations would add clarity. The order of presentation used for the introductory material is somewhat confusing and lacks a clear purpose for its inclusion at this point in the text. The resources that are listed in the back of the book, however, are particularly useful for the director working in the school setting and the included maintenance information covers a number of instruments and is clear and concise.

**Review of Snare Drum Content**

The presentation of the parts of the snare drum is labeled clearly with adequate information about the function of the different elements. Of particular value are the diagrams showing the effect of different sizes and shell materials on the quality of sound. Though slightly confusing in layout, the chart showing the effect of variations in snare stick design also presents highly valuable information for the educator. Instrument position is addressed in the text with accompanying images, though the information is limited and lacks a pedagogical method for finding positions.

Matched grip is presented before traditional grip and is advocated by Breithaupt when starting new students. The line drawings showing fulcrum for the matched grip are particularly unclear and leave a large margin for individual interpretation, while finding the point on the stick for placing the fulcrum is only addressed in a statement about dividing the stick into thirds. Basic strokes are also presented as part of the grip formation process. The traditional grip presentation addresses the motion change from hinge to rotation, but does not give clear information about finger and stick positions in
the left hand and the accompanying line drawings are once again lacking in the detail necessary to clearly present the skill.

The concept of adjusting stick height for both dynamics and velocity of stroke is given a brief explanation, as is the use of a proper playing area. Though alluded to, the conditional system of choosing a playing area is not explained. Further information on the fundamentals of stroke, beyond the mention in the grip passage, is found in the introductory material of the text, with no passage devoted purely to stroke development within the snare drum segment. In addition, there is no focused discussion on the importance of rebound to the development of the basic stroke.

The buzz roll is presented before the double stroke roll; however specific information regarding appropriate use of each as applied to style is not discussed. The text states that a wrist only stroke should be used for the roll, thereby negating any mention of the commonly accepted arm generated stroke for roll production. Examples of roll metering are shown, but the concept is never thoroughly explained. General principles of musicianship and articulation on percussion instruments are presented in the introductory material, but there is no discussion of this topic as it relates directly to performance on the snare drum within the following material of the text.


Overview

The text is designed to serve as the complete text for the college percussion methods course. Included with the third edition are two DVDs demonstrating instruments and techniques of performance. Nearly all of the images in the text are black

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and white photographs, with a number of technical issues addressed on the DVD but not presented in the photographs contained in the text. Exercises are presented throughout the text to reinforce new skills as they are presented. Most pedagogical material is presented in lengthy prose form, with a few key point segments presented in outline format. The text is very thorough in the presentation of historical information about the instruments, and a lengthy discussion about principles of learning that relate to teaching percussion is included in the introductory materials. Information about organizing the percussion section is also found in the introductory materials, including discussions on the placement of the percussion section in a large ensemble, instrument substitutions, and instrument recommendations for different educational settings. Maintenance concerns are also addressed throughout the text as instruments are introduced.

The completeness of this text is its largest fault, as the amount of material to be covered is overwhelming for a one term methods course. Though valuable for the percussion major, the historical background information is not a priority in the future music educator's training, especially given the large amount of knowledge regarding technique and performance practice needed in today's teaching environment. In addition, the lengthy prose presentation of pedagogical material makes the book difficult to reference quickly or to use as a step-by-step guide while teaching. Though the DVDs are very helpful in the initial presentation of information, the lack of pictures in the text also makes it difficult to use as a quick reference in the job setting. When examining the text from the point of view of an inexperienced methods class instructor, the coverage of so many aspects of percussion, including advanced techniques, provides little help for prioritizing course content.
Review of Snare Drum Content

The historical origins of the snare drum and its performance techniques are addressed at the outset of the chapter. A photograph of a snare drum is labeled to show the various parts of the instrument, with functions of these parts discussed in detail along with information about shell and snare materials. Maintenance and tuning is presented early in the chapter, followed by a brief description of snare stands and sticks. Practical advice on positioning the snare drum is thorough, though some information is contrary to accepted pedagogy, such as the placement of the snare release lever in a 4 or 5 o'clock position rather than directly in front of the player to encourage playing directly over the snare bed for maximum clarity and articulation. Though the idea of playing from center to edge over the snare bed for dynamic execution is presented, wording of this passage would seem to discourage the accepted performance practice. Also of questionable pedagogy is the brief mention of playing rolls off of the snare bed to make them sound more even.

Both matched and traditional grip are discussed initially, with the author clearly advocating the use of matched grip for pedagogical reasons. The matched grip is explained in detail first, using a two finger fulcrum method where the thumb aligns with the space between the index and middle fingers, though alignment of the stick across the palm is not directly addressed and leaves some question as to the point where the stick should exit the back of the hand. Concepts of experiential awareness are provided as a method for finding the proper fulcrum point on the stick.

The basic concept of stroke is presented in detail, with discussion of maintaining a hinging motion rather than a rotational stroke. The only problem with the stroke
presentation may be the analogy of motion to the physical action of waving goodbye, a motion which encourages not only for the wrist to bend up, but also for it to hinge downward below the forearm. This motion of bending the wrist down not only weakens the stroke, but can also lead to performance related injuries over time and a more thorough explanation would avoid this danger. Rebound is a significant factor in the stroke discussion, encouraging the performer to constantly keep this very important part of performance execution in mind at all times. There is also mention of the necessary adjustments in stick height in relation to velocity and dynamics, but no section addressing the recognized four basic stroke types is included in the lengthy discussion.

Beginning rolls with the concert style buzz stroke is advocated by Cook over starting with the double stroke roll, though its value is addressed in the early information about the roll. The roll pedagogy used in the text starts with a free bounce approach, allowing the stick to bounce freely after the initial contact of the stroke and removing the ring and little finger from the stick. Though this pedagogy has been used successfully for years, other approaches exist which could reduce the frequency of problems young players often have with removing fingers from the stick when playing rolls. An arm stroke for the roll execution is discussed, but presented in combination with a wrist motion rather than functioning in an isolated manner. Roll metering is presented early in the exercises, encouraging this as a correct performance practice. The double stroke roll is presented only after extensive exercises on the buzz roll.

Ideas regarding the development of touch and quality of sound produced are addressed frequently in the technical discussions. Though it makes methodology
confusing at times, this constant attention encourages the development of musicianship alongside the development of technique in young players.


**Overview**

McClaren's book is designed to serve the director teaching in the public school as well as the methods student, with a focus on finding the common elements in percussion techniques so that transference of skills can occur whenever possible. The majority of illustrations are black and white photographs with some use of line drawings included. Exercises are included in the text, though they are not extensive. Outline format is used to convey pedagogical content and other key points with no lengthy prose segments. A useful chart for conceptualizing the importance of particular elements of percussion performance is provided in the introduction, with each of the elements related to a similarly functioning aspect of performance on a wind instrument. Content on the organization and administration of percussion within the school setting is included early in the text and maintenance is addressed within instrument chapters.

The use of vague line drawings in the appendix to show commonly used instruments is unclear and somewhat inaccurate. The presentation and basic explanation of some topics, for example rolls, is given in the introductory material and the logic of this placement in the text is questionable as the technical explanation of executing the skills comes much later. Though McClaren makes a statement regarding the importance of snare drum study for developing solid technical foundations, he seems to contradict

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himself somewhat by advocating that beginning students should spend equal time on keyboard instruments. Positioning of instruments and elements such as grip are approached by stating specific expectations for placements and positions, rather than by using experiential awareness, contradicting the goal of creating transference of knowledge wherever possible. The guidelines given will not always be the optimal choices in every setting and the students have not developed a conceptual framework from this experience to use in discovering new information on their own.

**Review of Snare Drum Content**

Information about the parts and materials of the snare drum is presented toward the end of the chapter, with the parts of the snare drum labeled in a photograph, but without providing explanation about the function of the parts. A description of the sound qualities of various shell materials is provided with information about the appropriate use of various sizes of snare drums. There is, however, no similar information given regarding various snare materials, sound qualities or uses.

Position and playing area are addressed with step-by-step processes and the method for determining height is valid, though all are somewhat lacking in experiential learning. The discussion of playing area is contradictory to much current pedagogical thought, as it advocates the use of one constant playing area rather than a conditional system. The position of the snare strainer recommended is not directly in front of the player, but this is likely due to the single playing area approach.

Matched grip is advocated for starting beginning students due to the inherent ease of transference to other instruments. The fulcrum is given a specific position, rather than being taught through an experiential process and the chosen point of contact for the index
fingertip is between the first and second joints. McClaren advocates not maintaining contact with the ring and little fingers, though he says they provide support and control. Traditional grip is presented briefly, but it is stated that it is not recommended.

The introduction to stroke discusses using a piston motion, and though the motion described by McClaren is pedagogically effective, returning with a full rebound, labeling it as a piston motion is a bit misleading if one considers the action of a piston engine as an analogy. At no point in discussing the action of the stroke does he use the term rebound, an important concept in percussion performance. Interestingly, after the first page explaining the basics of stroke, the next page presents volume exercises to be started without sticks in the hand.

The initial instruction on rolls is in the concert style and though the roll is presented in two different step-by-step processes, there is no information given on what the buzz sound is or what physical actions are used to produce it. The metering of rolls is strongly advocated from the very beginning, with the variables of tempo and volume both covered. The difference in interpretation between tied and non-tied rolls is addressed. Double stroke rolls are also discussed, and rolls with specific stroke number labels are introduced simultaneously.

**Summary**

These six texts, as expected, are more current in regards to pedagogy than those discussed in chapter 3. Matched grip is very clearly advocated over traditional in four of the texts due to its applicability to the total percussion approach common today. Most texts provided a more detailed discussion of stroke and grip than those written previously, demonstrating the importance of these fundamentals to good performance. The most
inconsistent aspect of pedagogy presented in these texts is the roll, with six very different approaches to teaching the technique as well as a wide variance in the information provided in the text about its execution and proper use. Problems with the clarity of illustrations continues to be a problem in a number of these texts, with inadequate line drawings and poorly positioned and angled photos making it difficult to discern details of technique.

The presentation of pedagogical methods in three of the texts is given in clear, step-by-step methods, though most sequences still lack adequate information and enough deconstruction of the skills for the methods student to reproduce the instruction in the classroom. Prose format for discussing pedagogy continues to be employed by three of the authors, making it difficult to dissect the important steps from the text.

These newer texts contain much more information regarding the practical issues faced by educators in the schools than their predecessors, including discussions about organizational and administrative aspects of programs, as well as information about maintenance. Marching percussion discussion is still a problem area in all but two of the texts, as some still contain out of date information or fail to address the topic.

Though these six texts show significant improvement in content and method over those previously discussed, problems still exist, especially in regards to pedagogical approaches to teaching skills. A new method book that synthesizes the best of these texts but takes a more careful and exacting approach to teaching skills is still needed, based on this survey of literature.
CHAPTER 5

THE PROPOSED TEXT: CONTENT, OBJECTIVES AND FOUNDATIONS

Content

The content of the proposed text will not be an all-encompassing presentation of percussion. Both in performance and educational aspects, the field is growing rapidly and any text designed to cover everything will inevitably be out of date within a year or two of its publication. Rather, the new text seeks to cover the aspects of percussion considered to be of consistent value in elementary, middle, and high school programs. Fundamental skills and concepts will be developed, with the hope that the experiences gained in the process of learning them will be transferred to new instruments, concepts, and skills as needed throughout the percussionist's career. In accordance with that ideal, a large portion of the text will be devoted to study of the snare drum as the fundamental instrument upon which to develop beginning percussion skills and musicianship concepts, as a substantial portion of that content is transferable to other percussion elements.

Other portions of the proposed text will include larger segments on keyboard instruments, timpani, and drumset, with more concise sections covering bass drum, cymbals, accessory instruments, and ethnic percussion commonly used in the school setting. Though world percussion studies are an important and growing facet of the
percussion field, appropriate and accurate instructional units on all the different types of ensembles and their associated cultural links are not possible within the time frame of the standard methods class. The proposed text will briefly introduce some of the most common types of world music ensembles found in school music programs, but it is strongly encouraged that specialized training is received from master teachers of a genre when starting new ensembles to ensure accurate education and performance of this diverse music, as well as an understanding of important cultural links.

The content of the text will also emphasize facets of percussion that are considered important from the school music educator's perspective. A large portion of what directors need to know is not derived from studying elements of performance and technique. Content included for their benefit will cover organizational and administrative elements of percussion in the schools, discussion of part assignments, performance logistics (including placement of instruments in the ensemble), traveling needs, storage, purchasing, and maintenance and care of the instruments. For the high school director, the marching band frequently plays a major role in the school year, as it is one of the most visible elements of the program in the community. It also comprises a great deal of the high school director's contact time with students and often has a significant impact on the yearly budget. Familiarity with marching percussion elements, appropriate equipment, and the function of the section is vital to the training of school directors, and whether or not they may later choose to hire a percussion specialist, the proposed text will devote appropriate attention to preparing directors for working with students in this setting.
A segment devoted to teaching rhythm will also be included in the text. A myth has long hovered around music circles that percussionists must develop stronger rhythmic skills and a more innate sense of time than their musical counterparts. The fundamental problem with that belief can be stated simply: a correct note, though performed perfectly in tune and with excellent tone, when played at the incorrect instant in time, is still a wrong note. Rhythmic understanding and execution are skills important in all areas of music, not just the study of percussion, and the general lack of understanding in school students about how rhythm functions is deemed an important enough issue to warrant discussion in the percussion methods text, as it may not be covered thoroughly in another course. The proposed text will present rhythm through a system of relationships, developing skills for deciphering unfamiliar rhythms rather than memorizing counting systems that are not consistently transferable to new meters and note values. This system can be used for teaching rhythm to all students, not just percussionists.

**Objectives**

In designing and writing a new text, the following objectives, detailed in this chapter, are priorities for the content and structure to be used:

- Ease of use as a reference beyond the course
- Function as a guide for the course instructor
- Detailed and clear presentation of important pedagogical material and methods
- Focus on the practical needs of the music educator in the school
- In depth discussion of often overlooked aspects of pedagogy

**Ease of use as a reference beyond the course**

The texts reviewed in chapter 4 present some difficulties in use as reference sources. Written as texts to be followed through a course, the structure and presentation of information were not always designed to allow the text to function as a future resource.
for directors in the classroom. The proposed text layout presented in this document seeks to resolve these issues by purposefully eliminating excessive prose when presenting important information, making it easier to find these segments and assimilate information from them. Information regarding items such as options in instruments size and material, including sound characteristics and practical use, is presented in bullet point format. Basic techniques are also presented in outline form, designed for the director to use as a step-by-step pedagogical guide when teaching skills in the classroom.

**Function as a guide for the course instructor**

As discussed previously, the instructor of the college percussion methods course has a difficult task. The whole of percussion education cannot be adequately discussed in a methods class and there are choices to make about what is to be covered in the minimal amount of contact time allotted for the course. With many of these instructors having little or no teaching experience in the elementary and secondary schools, prioritizing what to cover to best serve the future educator, and how much time to spend on each topic, can be very difficult. The proposed text is designed with these concerns in mind, and the order and amount of text to be devoted to each topic directly reflects the priority placed on that subject for the educator, and therefore the amount of course content that should be devoted to it.

**Detailed and clear presentation of important pedagogical material and methods**

In order to clarify pedagogical materials, the aforementioned bullet point format is used to show procedures for presenting and developing new skills. This format allows the instructors of both methods and school percussion classes to easily follow a step-by-step approach, helping to eliminate the inadvertent skipping of information and ensure
consistent teaching of the skill each time it is reviewed. A great deal of detail is
presented in the segments, with explanations in some of why each step is being taken to
help methods students better understand the pedagogical development. These methods
are given with the intent that they will serve not only the college age student learning to
play percussion, but dissect skills in enough detail and small enough steps to work well
for the young beginning percussionist.

**Focus on the practical needs of the music educator in the school**

The proposed text is written with the practical needs of the school educator in
mind. Lengthy discussions of advanced techniques better left to the percussion specialist
have not been included and factual information, such as historical discussion of
instruments, was evaluated as superfluous to the needs of the teacher in the schools and
left out of the text. The priority of the methods course is to teach pedagogy, and the text
remains focused on that task. Included in the text will be a chapter devoted to the
administration and management of percussion in the schools, as this section presents
unique challenges for the director. Topics covered will include assigning parts, concert
logistics, storage needs, and purchasing of instruments.

**In depth discussion of often overlooked aspects of pedagogy**

Though other texts have referenced many of these points, seemingly simple issues
such as instrument height have been given particular attention in the proposed text. A
number of technique problems seen in students are often symptomatic of other issues and
are easily resolved if they are noticed by a director. These commonly overlooked points
that lead to successful performance are discussed in depth, making their importance clear
to both the instructor and student of the methods course. Much emphasis within these
topics is placed on principles of experiential awareness, helping the student to become their own teacher and to avoid problems with these points in the future.

**Foundations for Successful and Continued Learning**

In addition to the aforementioned objectives, several major concepts form the basis for the text and are considered an important part of the development of well-educated and well-rounded percussion students. Included in these concepts are methods of teaching and learning as related to percussion instruments, as well as pedagogical principles considered important in percussion education today.

**Experiential awareness**

Percussionists face a disadvantage other beginning instrumental students do not from the very first day they are introduced to the instruments. Unlike their wind and string counterparts, the percussionist is physically disconnected from the instrument being played. They cannot feel instrument keys or strings with their fingers and the vast majority of the percussion instruments young players are introduced to are played using an intermediary implement to produce the sound. The spacing of keys, valves, and strings remains constant with wind and string instruments; each time the instrument is brought to the body everything is in the same position. The height of some percussion instruments, as well as the distance and position in relation to the body, must be considered and reset each time the percussionist sets up to play. This disconnect from the instrument and inconsistency of position can create problems with technique. Small changes in instrument positions can cause large technique problems, for example when the snare drum is set to an inappropriate height all aspects of stroke can be affected. Students may be told what is correct by their teachers, but without actual experiences of
what is and is not appropriate, functional, and efficient, they have a hard time conceptualizing the importance of these details to their continued learning and performance success.

Technical elements of grip, stroke, and sound production can also be difficult to execute correctly when there is no framework for conceptualization. In order to help create conceptual as well as physical reference points, the proposed text encourages the use of experiential awareness throughout technical and musical development. The fundamental premise of this concept is that by taking positions, physical sensations, and sounds to extremes, a conceptual framework for reference is constructed consciously and subconsciously, as well as physically. Elements of technique and performance can then be brought in from these extremes until a level of comfort or concept of quality is found.

As an example, consider the task of finding the appropriate height of the snare drum for concert performance. Each player's body is different, so a specific measurement of distance from the floor does not work. General statements about position in relation to the waistline are often made, but this too can be inaccurate depending on the build of the player. Other problems in instrument height are encountered when students visually memorize the position of their instrument and therefore do not adjust adequately as they grow.

Using an experiential awareness exercise will help to find the correct position for each of the students, as well as develop a conceptual framework for them to use throughout their musical experiences. The following steps, taken from the sample snare chapter of the proposed text, demonstrate a method for applying experiential awareness exercises to the task of finding the appropriate snare drum height.
• Lower the drum to the stand's lowest position
• Play at this height and focus on how it feels
  ° Notice how the angle of the arm feels
  ° Notice the position of the wrist
  ° Notice the position of the rest of the body
  ° Think about how playing in this position feels; consider comfort, efficiency, tension
  ° Talk about how this position feels

Next:

• Raise the drum to a position several inches above the waist
• Play at this height and focus on how it feels
  ° Notice the angle of the arm
  ° Notice the position of the wrist
  ° Notice the position of the rest of the body
  ° Think about how playing in this position feels; consider comfort, efficiency, tension
  ° Talk about how this position feels

Now, allow the player to randomly pick a few positions in between, thinking and talking about the same sensations. After doing this, many players actually stumble on to their appropriate height somewhat by accident, and will just know that this is the position that feels good to them.

The same basic concepts can be applied to technical elements as well, as shown by the following example from the proposed text which details steps for finding the appropriate fulcrum point on the snare drum stick.

• Turn hand over, palm facing and parallel to the floor
• Slide the hand on the stick to position the fulcrum a few inches from stick's tip
• Hinge the wrist back and forth
  ° Notice the weight balance of the stick in the hand
  ° Notice feelings of flexibility, strength, and control of the stick
  ° Talk about the sensations experienced

Next:
• Slide the hand on the stick to position the back of hand on the end of the stick
• Hinge the wrist back and forth
  ° Notice the weight balance of the stick in the hand
  ° Notice feelings of flexibility, strength, and control of the stick
  ° Talk about the sensations experienced
Continue this process with the fulcrum on different points of the stick until the student finds a spot that feels comfortable and in control. This exact position will vary with stick model and manufacture, but should land approximately one third of the way up from the butt of the stick.

The teacher could tell the student to place the fulcrum one third of the way up the stick, or they could put a piece of tape on the stick, but neither of these methods would help the student to conceptualize the feeling of an optimal fulcrum point versus one that is ineffective. Without these concepts, and the framework of physical sensations created by using a weaker choice of fulcrum, the student may well struggle with finding the optimal fulcrum point when using different sticks and mallets which vary in length, diameter, balance, and weight.

**Transference**

The concept of transference is fundamental to training successful percussionists today, given the ever increasing demands on the player to perform on an expanding array of instruments. Students must be able to transfer techniques and concepts from one instrument to another or the sheer volume of material and knowledge needed would be overwhelming. Using more transferable ideas also reduces the amount of technical knowledge that the music educator must learn and retain, thus minimizing the amount of course time needed in some areas so other course objectives can be met. The proposed text aims to make use of transference whenever possible, focusing on techniques and concepts that have cross over implications rather than other options that are more specialized. The matched grip, for example, can be used on multiple instruments and is therefore advocated as the preferred snare drum grip for starting beginning students.
Other transferable skills and concepts are not as obvious as matched grip, but are just as important to students' success. Consider the previous discussion on finding a fulcrum point. If the student's only reference point is a statement by the teacher or a marking on the stick, there is no transferable knowledge or experience when using different sticks or mallets. The experiential awareness exercise, however, creates a conceptual framework on which the student can base the choice of a fulcrum point. The student has been trained to seek the optimal point and not to just pick up the stick or mallet without regard to the best options available, thereby transferring previous knowledge to new experiences.

**Where to start**

One of the most important decisions a music educator makes when starting beginning percussion students is which instrument to study first. For many years, snare drum was the assumed starting point for beginning students. Most often these players functioned as drummers rather than as percussionists, having few developed skills on other concert instruments. Views on percussion education eventually changed as music educators began to see the value in training the total percussionist and a trend toward starting on the keyboard instruments or a combination of keyboard and snare drum emerged. Student bell kits were now available for the beginning percussionist, whereas previously owning a full size keyboard instrument was the only option for practicing at home, and the cost made it inaccessible to most young players.

The reasoning behind starting on the keyboard instruments is sound. Snare drum music requires reading skills in rhythm, but no demands for understanding pitched notation. In addition, many teachers feel that the development of musicianship is more
easily discussed when harmony, melody, phrasing, and interpretation are more obvious.
But the choice to start on keyboards may come at a cost and the potential negative
consequences to the development of the percussionist should be considered.

Basic concepts of grip and stroke are often lacking in our young percussion
players today. For many, starting on keyboard instruments early, if not first,
compromises the development of fundamental skills, as they attempt to apply vertical
concepts of stroke while at the same time using lateral motion to strike specific pitches.
This lack of single surface experience can confuse the underdeveloped motion concepts
in their arms, creating multiple technical flaws in their approach to all percussion
instruments.

These same young players frequently have problems with general dexterity,
playing strength, and control. They often have weak concepts of playing with fluid
strokes and using rebound because they have not yet spent enough time at the snare drum
to adequately develop the skills and become fully aware of their function. On keyboards,
a false sense of rebound must be created to execute with fluid and efficient strokes and
without experiencing this over time on the snare drum, or drum pad, students have no
frame of reference for recreating it on keyboard instruments.

Strength and control skills of many students are also low due to devoting a large
proportion of their playing to the slower rhythmic figures common in early mallet
exercises, as compared to the figures they could be executing rhythmically on snare
drum. Given the lateral motion considerations and pitch reading issues that are part of
keyboard performance, one cannot expect them to play any faster rhythmic figures than
the average young wind student. Contrary to popular myth, the reason young snare
drummers need to develop rhythm skills faster than most young wind and string players is not because rhythm is more important to the percussionist, but rather to create the technical facility for good performance on all percussion instruments through strength and control building exercises.

The proposed text will advocate starting students on the snare drum, with a significant amount of time spent here before moving to the keyboard instruments. Though some beginning percussionists may be able to successfully study keyboards and snare at the same time, especially if they show high aptitude and good coordination skills, for the majority starting their studies on snare drum will help to avoid a number of potential problems. Students in private lessons could certainly attempt to begin learning both instruments simultaneously, but given the typical school situation of learning in groups, initial instruction on snare drum will likely prove to be a more successful method.

Additionally, basic musicianship can be taught at the snare drum; it need not involve executing melodic parts on a keyboard instrument or timpani. Sensitivity to dynamics, concepts of touch and sound quality, and musical phrasing can and should be put into practice when working with a beginning student at the snare drum.

In summary, both musicianship and technical facility can be built at the snare drum and carried to the other percussion instruments, and thus young percussionists are encouraged to spend significant time at the snare drum before beginning in depth study of other percussion instruments, as it will better prepare them for further growth and development as a total percussionist. Supplemental exercises to prepare them for reading pitched music can be worked into their beginning band classes so that they are mentally prepared for reading keyboard parts when they are physically prepared to execute them.
It is also motivating for the students to start their studies on the snare drum and the enthusiasm built here can be carried to other instruments as they progress. The snare drum is the most fundamental of instruments to the concert percussionist. The basic approach to sound production, concepts of grip and stroke - the most fundamental ideas of playing percussion - are all presented upon introduction to the snare drum. Though as young students they are told repeatedly that they are "percussionists," they come to the instrument believing inside that they are "drummers." The snare drum is the simplest symbol, in the concert hall, of the drumming nature that fuels passion and enthusiasm for music in the young percussionist; it is therefore an instrument to be placed at the forefront of early percussion education in the schools.

**Advanced techniques: when to use a specialist**

Though the goal of the methods course is to train and prepare music educators to instruct all instruments with equal skill and knowledge, the reality is that advanced technical concepts cannot be fully mastered in the brief exposure any methods class can give to an instrument or instrument family. When dealing with advanced players, school music teachers rely on their own musical development and training on their principal instrument and the ready transference of this musicianship to other areas. Musicianship skills can be applied across all instrument families and use of this concept is encouraged, however when it comes to technical elements, transference from one instrument family to another becomes continuously weaker as the skill level rises.

There is a potential concern with teachers attempting to teach advanced technical skills they have not mastered themselves. As a general rule, as the difficulty of the technical skill increases, the number of things that can be learned wrong and conceived
incorrectly also expands. Many of the currently available methods texts present advanced skills to the educator in the same manner in which more basic skills are discussed. This presentation can create a false sense of comfort and competence in teaching the more difficult skills.

The proposed text seeks to clarify techniques that are best taught by the skilled private teacher or school percussion specialist. The techniques are presented in the text, but in limited discussion and clearly delineated as advanced skills that are encouraged to be left for the percussion specialist to teach. These designations and boundaries are not meant to serve as an insult to music educators. Rather, they are designed to help music educators set realistic boundaries for their own technical knowledge and competence so that they can make informed decisions about the education of their students. This delineation is also helpful to the percussion methods instructor dealing with the organization and prioritizing of the course, as it helps to clarify what skills are fundamental to the school educator and which are not as valuable to their training.

**Proposed Text Sample**

Included in this document is an appendix presenting the snare drum section of the proposed text. This sample section demonstrates how the objectives and basic concepts discussed earlier in this chapter will be handled in the new text, showing both the proposed layout of sections as well as the methods for presenting skills. It is the author's belief that the proposed text represents a simple but important departure from the books which have preceded it and that it will serve a valuable function, both in the college methods class and in the school music environment.
CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this document was to discuss problems with the content and structuring of the percussion methods class, evaluate both previously used and currently available texts for the course, and propose a new text to meet the needs of the today's school music teacher. The need for a new text is evident through observations of percussionists in school music programs who demonstrate poor technical and conceptual understanding of playing percussion instruments. The frequency of the problems observed indicates a need to address the way teachers are taught percussion in the hopes of developing a stronger understanding of the field and its pedagogy, thereby improving student performance.

A review of related literature shows the importance of and concerns over the methods course covering a period of fifty years. Music teachers in the schools have stated the need for an improved course design which covers topics relevant to their teaching experiences. The recurrence of this stated need in the literature is evidence that the content and structuring of the course has not changed on a large scale. The majority of the literature addressing actual content has been written by members of higher education, many of whom are distant from the current needs seen in the public schools as their contact is predominantly with more advanced students.
Minimum standards for the content of the course were published by the Percussive Arts Society in 1997, but they represent only the most basic content of the course, stating a need for understanding basic techniques and function of instruments, familiarity with literature and addressing topics relating to the school setting. These standards do not address specifics in any given area and serve as only the most rudimentary of guides for the percussion methods instructor to use when prioritizing the content of the course.

Percussion methods texts show a need for improvement in structure and scope. Even those texts released after the 1997 publication of PAS's minimum standards demonstrate significant gaps in basic content and problems in pedagogical presentation. The layout and structure of the majority makes it difficult not only to find information, but also to use the text as a step-by-step guide when teaching a skill in the classroom. When a lack of information and development is not the problem, an over abundance of information proves just as problematic. The methods instructor needs a common sense guide to help choose and prioritize the content of the course, given the limited amount of instructional time relative to the percussion field, and an all-encompassing text does not meet this need. The sheer volume of material can overwhelm the methods students and the instructor who makes an effort to cover all of it, rushing through topics that need more emphasis due to their importance in fundamental performance. There are also concerns raised by presenting all material equally, as future music educators may gain false confidence that they are truly prepared to instruct percussion at an advanced level, when some skill sets are best left to the private instructor or school percussion specialist.
due to their unique demands. A text which does not make these lines clear only serves to foster more performance problems in school percussion students.

A new text, written with the above concerns in mind and designed for maximum usability in the college methods course and beyond is necessary if the recurring problems seen in the school music setting are to be reduced and corrected. Methods students and instructors need a guide that focuses on the fundamental aspects of performance, giving emphasis to knowledge and skills which are readily transferable to other instruments and new settings. The focus on building conceptual frameworks while developing skills and attaining knowledge helps the students to become their own teachers, developing independently knowledgeable musicians and educators who will raise the current level of percussion performance to new heights.
APPENDIX:

PROPOSED TEXT
The Snare Drum

A fundamental approach to all concert percussion

The snare drum is the most fundamental of instruments to the percussionist. The basic approach to sound production, concepts of grip and stroke, all the most fundamental ideas of playing concert percussion are presented upon introduction to the snare drum. It is on this instrument where players begin to develop the strength and control necessary for successful performance on all percussion instruments. Beginning students on the snare drum before moving to other areas of study which involve multiple surfaces, such as keyboards and timpani, helps to ensure correct physical techniques are developed and a strong framework of mental concepts is built before execution becomes more difficult.

Construction and Materials of the Snare Drum

Sound production on the snare drum is based on a concept of vibrating air in a chamber. When the drumhead is struck, the compression of the air creates sympathetic vibration in the resonating head on the bottom of the drum. All drums with top and bottom heads work this way, but the snare drum is unique. Running across and touching the bottom head of the drum are strands of material, called snares, that are also set into motion when the resonating head vibrates. These snares, made of various materials which shall be discussed later, are what give the snare drum its characteristic sound.

The pictures and text that follow highlight the different parts of the snare drum, all of which the teacher should become familiar with in order to understand and use the instrument to its best potential, as well as to facilitate maintenance and repair needs.

Shell

The shell of the drum is the main body of the instrument. It supports the drumheads and serves as a resonating chamber. The shell also has resonance of its own, and this should be considered when choosing a snare drum. Common materials used for the shell are wood and metal, each possessing unique sound qualities that make them more or less appropriate in different ensemble settings.

Wood:
- darker and warmer sound
- excellent for use in the concert hall, and highly recommended for the school music program
- always used for marching snare drums
- also good in many drumset environments
- available in different types of wood to suit the player's preference for sound and cost
Metal:
- typically steel, aluminum, or brass
- brighter and more noticeably resonant
- rarely used in the concert hall
- very common on drumset
- generally less expensive than wood
- common in the beginner instrument kits for percussion

*Drum shells over the years have also been made of fiberglass and even plastic, but these are not at all recommended and are likely not what a director will find in their inventory.*

Shell size varies between a few common dimensions.

**Diameter:**
- 14 inch drums are the most common and the modern standard in all environments
- 13 inch and smaller piccolo snare drums, generally designed for drumset use are also widely available, but not recommended as the general use size for a school music program
- Schools with older marching drums may find they have some 15 inch instruments in their inventory. This size has essentially been phased out today.

**Depth:**
The recommended depth for a snare drum shell varies by use of the instrument. Tuning dependent, it can be generalized that the greater the depth the deeper the overall tone of the drum.
- The recommended depth for a snare drum in a concert setting is between 5 and 6.5 inches.
- Depths between 3 and 4 inches are considered piccolo snare drums, and not for general use in concert performance, though seen frequently on drumset.
- Shell depth of marching snares is usually 12 inches, not counting the extended rims common on the modern drums. (More on this will be discussed in the chapter on marching percussion.)
- Other shell depths are also available, though uncommon. These variations are usually designed for drumset use, creating more projection in that idiom.

*Note that statements on concert use are not necessarily relevant in very specific situations, such as use of the drums in a multiple percussion setting.*

**Drumheads**

The heads used on each side of the snare drum are very different. The head on the top, or playing side, of the drum is referred to as the *batter head*. The resonating head, or bottom head, is referred to as the *snare head* or *snare side head*. 

Batter head:
- Thicker, or heavier, than snare side heads
- Various head types and thicknesses are available, but most common are heads with some type of coating for both concert and drumset use.
- Marching snare batter heads may be made of special materials, or clear plastic. (More on this will be discussed in the chapter on marching percussion.)
- Many of these heads in concert use today are manufactured with some form of overtone control in mind, to make the drum more crisp and dry sounding.

Snare side head:
- Much thinner than the batter heads, necessary for good snare sympathetic vibrations.
- Come in a range of thicknesses, though not in the wide variety of batter heads.
- Generally clear heads, or nearly clear (commonly called "hazy").
- Some marching snare side heads may be made of a special material. (More on this will be discussed in the chapter on marching percussion.)

Snares

Along with shell material and head choice, the material used for the snares is the third major factor in creating the characteristic timbre of any snare drum, as well the level of responsiveness. Common materials used include wire, cable and synthetic gut. Snares are generally sold as units with multiple strands fastened to end pieces for ease of attachment.

Wire:
- Coiled wire design
- Snappy, metallic ringing quality
- Appropriate for drumset use
- Common on lower end concert snare models, but not preferred for school instruments

Cable:
- Straight wire design, much thicker than standard wire snares
- Dry, articulate sound
- Appropriate for concert snare drum use
- Generally too dry for drumset use

Synthetic Gut:
- Designed to emulate actual gut snares
- High projection quality, dry sound
- Used for marching snare drums, effective in outdoor environment
Other parts of the snare drum

Counterhoop:
- Metal on most modern snare drums, occasionally wood
- Holds the drumhead on the shell
- Tension rods secure it to the shell

Snare gate:
- Appears only on the bottom counterhoop
- Cut away section of the counterhoop where snares run through or over
- Bottom counterhoop will have two, that need aligned with the snare strainer

Tension rod:
- Specially designed bolt
- Secures counterhoop to tension rod casings
- Used to adjust the overall tension and pitch of the drumhead
- Requires a drum key to adjust

Tension rod casing or lug casing:
- Metal receptacle into which the tension rod is secured
-Attached to drumshell
-Exceptions exist on free-floating model drums, where the tension rod casings are part of a double counterhoop assembly
Snare strainer:
- Combines the snare release lever with the snare adjustment knob
- Snares attach to this unit
- Terms refers to the entire mechanical unit and all interacting parts

Snare release lever:
- Controls whether or not the snares are engaged
- Up position, snares touch bottom head
- Down position, snares released from bottom head with no response when playing
- Often called the throw-off

Snare tension adjustment knob:
- Used when snare release lever is up and snares are engaged
- Adjusts how tightly the snares are pulled across the bottom head

Foreign names and other terms related to the snare drum

The following are names for the snare drum in other languages:

- tambour; French
- caisse claire; French
- kleine trommel; German
- cassa chiara; Italian
- tamburo (alto); Italian
- tambor; Spanish
- caja; Spanish
Closely related to the snare drum is the **field drum**, a deeper and lower pitched snare drum. The term refers to older marching snares, but modern marching drums with Kevlar heads should not be used in substitution, as they are tuned to higher pitches despite the depth of their shells. When the term field drum is used in a part, the drum should be played with the snares engaged.

The term **tenor drum** designates the use of a field snare sized instrument with the snares disengaged. Again, a modern marching snare with a Kevlar head is inappropriate in a concert setting.
Choosing Sticks

As percussionists are disconnected physically from their instruments, the choice of a playing implement is very important. This stick or mallet is an extension of the hand and understanding how this extension functions is important to successful performance.

Basic Parts

The basics of drumstick design are an important part of understanding how the stick functions in performance. There are four major parts to the drumstick:

- Butt: non-playing end of the stick, usually rounded
- Shaft: majority of the sticks length, ends where the shoulder begins
- Shoulder: part of the stick where there is tapering of the width
- Bead: playing end of the stick, various shapes

![Figure 4: Parts of the snare stick](image)

The major factors in how a stick feels and sounds are the last three parts listed. Each affects the sticks performance in various ways.

Shaft:
The affect of the shaft on performance is very direct, as this is the area where the player's hand will contact the stick. Consider the following points:

- Wider shaft creates more gripping area, allows for easier learning of the grip basics
- Wider shaft is generally weightier, allows for a feeling of more control
- Different types of wood also affect weight

Shoulder:
The tapering of the shoulder affects how the stick responds at the point of impact. Though it is not visible, there is flex that occurs in the stick as it strikes the playing surface. Taper must be considered from two points: the length of the tapering and the severity of the tapering. The length of the taper is a measure of how much of the stick has tapering, and the severity is a measure of how narrow it becomes relative to the shaft.
Shorter taper will flex less, useful when learning to play initially and for the rudimental style.
Longer taper will flex more, helpful for more intricate performance and in buzz rolls.
More severe tapering will flex more, as the stick becomes very narrow.
Less severe tapering will flex less, as the width of the shoulder compared to the shaft changes very little.

**Bead:**
The bead design is of great importance to the sound quality of a stick, as this is the point of contact between the stick and the playing surface. Beads come in a number of shapes and sizes, each with its own characteristics. General principles of bead response are:

- Larger bead, larger contact area means more sound
- Smaller bead, smaller contact area means less sound
- Rounded bead, whether spherical or elongated, contacts evenly with a warmer, fuller sound
- Tapered bead (creating an edge) has a more pointed sound from the edge impact
- Smaller, edgier bead sometimes feels like it rebounds less versus a larger, rounded bead

![Figure 5: Examples of various bead designs and tapering](image)

Sticks with nylon beads are sometimes used for drumset to attain a particular articulation on the cymbals, but the nylon tip is discouraged for concert and marching use.
Sticks for beginners

Appropriate sticks are an important part of developing good technique in beginning students. Unfortunately, a number of the kits that are sold or rented to these students contain sticks that are not of high quality and are inappropriate in design. Directors can ask students to buy a specific stick in addition to the ones provided in the kit. An even better approach is to pick a stick design and ask the music retailer to substitute those sticks into the kit before delivery, ensuring that students do not start using the inappropriate ones at home.

When choosing a stick for beginners, look for the following traits:

- Medium to medium-large shaft
  - Provides a larger area on which to learn the details of grip
  - Provides greater weight for more control
- Medium to short and less severe taper
  - Less flex gives more control
  - Buzz rolls can still be produced adequately
- Medium size bead, rounded in shape
  - Produces a full sound to help develop good expectations of sound quality
  - Rebounds well off the head to help develop concepts of rebound and control

When choosing any pair of sticks, also check the following:

- Tap on a pad or hard surface, listening for the pitch of each stick and making sure they match; performance can sound weighted on one hand if the pitch of a pair of sticks does not match
- Roll the sticks on a flat surface to make sure there is no warping

The right stick at the right time

Using a proper drumstick for a given situation is an important part of successful performance. Sticks that are designed for drumset often are not appropriate for concert use and vice versa. Size, weight, type of bead and taper design are all aspects of choosing an appropriate stick.

Experimentation with different stick sizes, tapers, beads and weights is the best way to learn how a stick functions. Directors should collect a wide array of sticks for students to experiment with in class to create a conceptual framework of how different stick designs function. Allow students to experiment with different sticks and to talk about how they feel and sound. By doing this, students will become more discerning in their own choice of sticks.
Some general guidelines for stick choice are presented below:

- **Concert sticks**
  - Medium to medium-large diameter for more control through size and weight
  - Medium taper for response, severity of taper is player's choice
  - Rounded contact area, whether spherical or elongated to create a full sound; no severe edges
- **Drumset sticks**
  - Vary depending on the style of music, how heavy of a sound is desired
  - Bead design has the most obvious affect on articulation when playing cymbals
  - Owning several pairs of differing design to accommodate different styles is encouraged
- **Marching sticks**
  - Larger diameter provides necessary weight for playing on a deeper drum; also adds durability for numerous rimshots, etc.
  - Short, less severe taper for better control when playing on the marching style drumheads
  - Bead shape varies depending on desired articulation, but should be large in size to produce a full sound on the deeper drum
Snare Stands & Positioning of the Drum

One of the most important factors in successful snare drum performance and in the development of good technique is proper positioning of the instrument in relation to the player. A drum positioned at an inappropriate height, awkward distance from the player or at an angle of any kind can impact a student's ability to perform well and can adversely affect technique as the student adapts to the poor position and "makes it work." The positioning of the drum in relation to the player is something the educator should regularly readdress and observe. As young students grow, often in rapid spurts, the positioning of the drum needs to change with them. Often students do not make these adjustments intuitively and continue to set up the instrument at the height and position used when they first began playing. By regularly checking in on the position of the drum the teacher can catch these problems early. In the full band setting, students will often not bother to adjust the height of instruments as they rotate parts from piece to piece. If not taught and reminded of the importance of playing in a good position, many students will just walk up to the instrument as is and "adapt," even if the person who played on the instrument before was very different in build.

The Snare Stand

There are two basic design issues to be aware of when choosing and using a snare stand, including height of the stand and basket design.

Snare stands come in two basic height categories.

Concert Height:
- Constructed with longer middle section or with a removable extension tube
- Necessary for most players when in a standing position
- Can be used for field drums, tenor drums and toms (could make them too tall for some)
- Too tall for a drum set (unless extension tube is removed)

Drumset Height:
- Constructed with shorter middle section or with a removable extension tube
- Primarily used on drum set (seated performance)
- Excellent for deeper drums, such as field and tenor drums as well as toms
- Too short to properly position a concert snare drum to a standing performance height
Snare stand baskets come in two basic designs.

**Single Arm Adjustment**
- 3 arms
- 2 arms are adjustable in angle only
- 1 arm is adjustable by sliding through the center
- Adjustment of arms does not affect height of instrument
- Light weight, not very sturdy

**Clamp or Claw Adjustment**
- 3 arms,
- All 3 arms move together by tightening or loosening the center to open or close diameter
- Adjustment of arms does affect height of instrument
- Available in various weights, very sturdy design
Positioning the Drum in Relation to the Player

The important factors to consider when positioning the drum to the player include placement of the snare release lever (the throw off), instrument height and distance from the player. All of these factors have an affect on successful and musical performance.

Placement of the Snare Release Lever
In the majority of situations, the best position for the snare release lever is directly in front of the performer. Reasons why this is the best position include:

- Allows easy access during performance
- Keeps performance directly over the snare bed for best snare response
- Maintains consistency; no "searching" for the release lever in performance

Height of the Snare Drum
The adjustment of height to fit the performer may be the single most important factor in positioning a drum for best performance. Incorrect height can cause a number of physical "adaptations" that can adversely affect technique and thus musical performance. Generalized rules, such as "at the belt" or "three fingers below the belly button," do not allow for the individualized positioning necessary for each player. Rather, work through experiential awareness to find the proper height for each player. Remember, we can learn as much from doing or feeling what is incorrect as we do from what is correct.

When initially setting the height of the drum, try the following positions. The goal of these two extremes is to make the player aware of what is too much in one direction or the other, then to work in to a more appropriate playing position. The player does not know what feels good until there is an experience of what does not feel good and the goal of these steps is to create that awareness.
• Lower the drum to the stand's lowest position
  • Play at this height and focus on how it feels
    ◦ Notice how the angle of the arm feels
    ◦ Notice the position of the wrist
    ◦ Notice the position of the rest of the body
    ◦ Think about how playing in this position feels; consider comfort, efficiency, tension
    ◦ Talk about how this position feels

Next:

• Raise the drum to a position several inches above the waist
• Play at this height and focus on how it feels
  ◦ Notice the angle of the arm
  ◦ Notice the position of the wrist
  ◦ Notice the position of the rest of the body
  ◦ Think about how playing in this position feels; consider comfort, efficiency, tension
  ◦ Talk about how this position feels

Now, allow the player to randomly pick a few positions in between, thinking and talking about the same sensations. After doing this, many players actual stumble on to their appropriate height somewhat by accident, and will just know that this is the position that feels good to them.

If you notice any of the following, a height adjustment problem likely exists:

• Leaning over the drum; drum too low
• Steep angle of sticks down; drum too low
• Very little bend in the elbow, drum too low
• Lifting shoulders; drum too high
• Elbows far away from body, drum too high
• Frequent striking of rim; drum too high

Figure 10: Leaning over the drum; drum too low
Figure 11: Steep angle of sticks down; drum too low
Figure 12: Very little bend in the elbow, drum too low
Distance of the Snare Drum from the Body

One of the most neglected aspects of properly positioning a snare drum is the distance between the drum and the performer. In order to best determine the appropriate distance to stand from the drum, conduct an experiential experience much like the one for height.

- Stand with the drum almost touching the body
- Play in the center of the drum at this distance and focus on how it feels
  - Notice where the elbows are in relation to the torso
  - Notice the effect on the shoulders
  - Notice the position of the rest of the body
  - Think about how playing in this position feels; consider comfort, efficiency, tension
  - Talk about how this position feels

Next:

- Stand with the arms extended in front of the body
- Play in the center of the drum at this distance and focus on how it feels
  - Notice where the elbows are in relation to the torso
  - Notice the effect on the shoulders
  - Notice the position of the rest of the body
  - Think about how playing in this position feels; consider comfort, efficiency, tension
  - Talk about how this position feels

Now, allow the player to randomly pick a few positions in between, thinking and talking about the same sensations.
If you notice any of the following, a distance adjustment problem likely exists:

- Elbows behind the back; drum too close
- Reaching, straight elbows; drum too far away
- Leaning forward; drum too far away
- Excessive upper body tension, particularly shoulders and neck; drum too close or too far away

The optimum position is one that releases all unnecessary tension particularly in the upper arms, shoulders and neck. Keep in mind that distance to the drum and height work together and adjustments in both must often be made. Performers should appear comfortable and relaxed at all times.
To better clarify and set a good position after going through the experiential awareness exercises, follow these steps:

- Stand away from the drum
- Stand up straight, feet approximately shoulder width apart, weight evenly balanced
- Hold the sticks and allow arms to hang down at sides
- Bend the arm at the elbow, allowing the upper arm to hang straight down at the side
- Keep the forearm through the wrist and hand in a straight line as they are brought up
- Bring the sticks in front of the body, creating a "V"
- Keep a slight downward angle in the elbow
- Move to the drum with arms in this position
- Place the beads of the stick over the center of the head
- Adjust height of the drum to match position of the arm and sticks

Most students will soon be able to remember the position of their instruments by sight and muscle memory and will not need to continue to follow these steps after a few days. It is, however, important to go through at least the basic checklist, if not also the experiential awareness exercises, now and again. Young students often do not adjust on their own when they have grown in height and arm length and continue to set up height and distance based on what they are accustomed to visually. Going through the process will help them to realize that the optimum playing position changes as the body changes and encourage them to be aware of playing positions at all times.
The grip of the snare drum stick is an incredibly important part of the technical development of the young percussionist. Just as the particular aspects of embouchure are important to the wind player's success, the finer points of correct grip make the difference in performance for the percussionist. This basic grip is transferred to many percussion instruments, and therefore it is very important that students have a clear understanding of the grip, physically and cognitively, from the beginning of their studies.

It is strongly recommended that initial studies on the snare drum begin with the matched grip. In this grip, as the name suggests, the two hands hold the sticks as mirror images of each other.

The other grip employed on the snare drum is traditional grip. This grip is taken directly from historical rope drum performance, where the left hand is turned over, rather than palm down, to accommodate the drum hanging at an angle and slightly to the side of the body.

Matched grip advantages include:
- Learning only one hand position
- Using only one type of motion to play
- Transferring readily to other instruments

As with many other physical aspects of playing percussion, experiential awareness is often the best teaching tool. If students do not have a point of reference for what does not feel good they will not be able to differentiate what does feel good. With each step of learning the grip the physical sensations should be taken to extremes to create points of reference before attempting to find the appropriate position, pressure, or feeling in the hand.

Figure 24: Matched grip

Figure 25: Traditional grip
Teaching Matched Grip

The teaching of the grip will take time and need to be undertaken over the course of several sessions with beginning students, constantly reminding and readdressing in order to create the conceptual understanding and muscle memory necessary for it to become an automatic response to having the stick in the hand. Due to the very specific nature of this teaching, it will best be done with the percussionists in a homogenous group. If the teaching schedule does not normally allow for that, some creative measures may need to be taken to allow time for this to be done properly and with the attention that it deserves due its importance to the student's future development.

Getting Started
The hardest part of learning the grip is the first lesson. Following a step by step approach is the best way to make sure nothing is missed. Being consistent and following the same steps every time the grip is addressed will help the student to conceptualize and execute consistently.

- Pick up one stick near the butt with the left hand
- Hold the right hand out, palm up
- Lay the stick across the palm
  - Butt of the stick leaves outside the base of the hand, opposite thumb
  - Shaft of the stick at first joint of the index finger
- Close index finger and thumb around stick, creating fulcrum
  - Index finger touches the stick at the first joint
  - Thumb lies parallel to the stick
  - This creates a "T" position between the finger and thumb
- Wrap the remaining fingers around the stick
  - Butt of the stick leaves the hand just off the wrist, opposite the thumb
  - Back 3 fingers should not squeeze, just wrap comfortably
- Keep space between the side of the thumb and under index finger relaxed and nearly closed

![Figure 26: Stick across palm; forming fulcrum](image)
![Figure 27: Wrapping all fingers around stick](image)
![Figure 28: Side view of grip; space between finger and thumb relaxed](image)
Be wary of the following problems:
- Stick leaving the back of the hand up near the knuckles; increases wrist tension and can lead to rotating rather than hinging
- Thumb off center or at an angle; causes loss of control
- Index finger wrapped too far around the stick, second joint fulcrum; increases hand tension

Finding the Fulcrum or Grip Point
The point where the thumb and index finger meet on the stick has historically been referred to as the fulcrum, though now it is often called the grip point by those who have noted that it does not necessarily function as a physical fulcrum when using proper technique. Terminology debates aside, it is again experiential exercises that will best help the student to find the proper spot on the stick to form the fulcrum.

- Turn hand over, palm facing and parallel to the floor
- Slide the hand on the stick to position the fulcrum a few inches from stick's tip
- Hinge the wrist back and forth
  - Notice the weight balance of the stick in the hand
  - Notice feelings of flexibility, strength, and control of the stick
  - Talk about the sensations experienced

Next:

- Slide the hand on the stick to position back of hand on end of the stick
- Hinge the wrist back and forth
  - Notice the weight balance of the stick in the hand
  - Notice feelings of flexibility, strength, and control of the stick
  - Talk about the sensations experienced
Continue this process with the fulcrum on different points of the stick until the student finds a spot that feels comfortable and in control. This exact position will vary with stick model and manufacture, but should land approximately one third of the way up from the butt of the stick.

Teachers have at times chosen to mark this spot with a marker or tape. This is discouraged because the student becomes reliant on that visual aid and not on the feeling of the stick in the hand. When changing to different sticks or mallets, a lack of focus on physical sensations can cause problems in choosing a good fulcrum or grip point. Repeat the experiential awareness exercise often early on and the student will naturally start to make good choices for comfort and control in a fairly short amount of time. Remember, without a point of reference for what feels bad, they cannot conceptualize or relate what feels good.

**The Arm as Part of the Grip**

When thinking about grip, it is very easy to focus on the hand and not to pay as much attention to the rest of the arm. The angle and position of the wrist and elbow are all part of the grip. Problems in these areas can cause just as many issues as hand problems. It is important to watch for the following key point in the arm position:

- Straight line from elbow down through wrist into hand
- Palm turned to the floor
- Wrist not turned in or out (will appear to flare on both sides)
- Slight downward angle from the elbow to the drum
- Upper arm hanging relaxed from the shoulder
- Elbows lifted slightly from the body, natural position

![Figure 32: Straight line elbow to hand; slight downward angle](image1)

![Figure 33: Wrist straight, not turned in or out; palm to the floor](image2)

![Figure 34: Upper arm hanging; elbow lift](image3)

In the simplest of terms, look for a position that adds no tension. Any unnatural angle, turn, or lift will increase tension in the arm and this will transfer into the hand and stick. The arm and hand should feel as natural and comfortable as possible to allow for fluid, relaxed performance.
Teaching Traditional Grip

Traditional grip maintains the right hand position of matched grip, but alters the left hand grip entirely. Putting this grip into words is more complicated and students generally struggle more with conceptualizing this grip versus matched grip. It is a very specific technique that is not easily learned or readily transferred to other instruments and thus not the encouraged method for starting out beginning students. The most common use of traditional grip seen in the schools today is by marching band snare lines. For groups with sling carried drums it is a necessity, but others choose to use it on flat snares with harness carriers for visual reasons. Further discussion on the choice of grip for a snare line is contained in the marching percussion chapter of this text.

The grip is still seen in professional concert halls today, most often used by older performers who were taught this way in their youth. There are also many performers, some due to the marching band training received, who use the two different snare grips depending on the style of music being performed. The traditional grip is chosen for the open rudimental style and the matched grip for concert style performance. In addition, a number of drumset performers also use this grip, particularly in the jazz idiom, but when used in this setting the drum should be kept on a tilt for optimal striking angle in the left hand. Other transferable uses do include rolling on concert bass drums and tam-tams, thus later exposure to the grip is valuable. However, given the more complicated nature of the grip, the teaching of this technique is best left to the private percussion instructor or school percussion specialist if available, and only after a player has developed the matched grip.

For the purposes of training the educator to teach the grip when necessary and to recognize problem in students using the grip, the following steps should be followed to form the left hand:

- Hold left hand out, palm to the right wall
- Place stick in webbing between thumb and index finger
- Curve the hand into a "C" shape
- Rest stick on side of the finger nail on ring finger
- Curl index finger over top of stick
- Drop thumb onto index finger first joint, running generally parallel to the stick
- Think of pushing into index finger with thumb rather than grabbing it
- Place middle finger along side of stick, fairly straight (stabilizes)
- Slide stick in hand so that the thumb is generally in the same spot as matched grip fulcrum
As a teacher, these are the most important points to learn about traditional grip:

- Always done in the left hand (historical development)
- Palm to the wall rather than floor
- Based on a rotational motion rather than hinge
- Rotation begins at the elbow, not just a wrist motion
- Fingers wrap comfortably, not squeezing
- Stick should easily slide out of the hand, low resistance
- Designed for use on a tilted drum, use this way when possible

Again, use of this grip is not standard for beginning students due to its lack of transference as well as the more complicated development of stroke and technique. Teaching of this grip should generally be left to the percussion specialist working with more advanced students.
Stroke

After establishing the position of the drum and the grip, the students are ready to begin learning the stroke. All motion associated with bringing the stick into contact with the head as well as all motion and rebound that follows this contact is considered the *stroke*.

Establishing a strong and controlled stroke on the snare drum will lead to good technical development on other instruments as well. There are advantages to starting on snare drum for technical stroke development that do not exist on other instruments, such as the keyboard instruments. Among these advantages is the incredibly important concept of rebound and control of the rebound. It is strongly encouraged, due to these advantages, that beginning percussion instruction start with a lengthy snare drum unit, moving to other instruments only after grip, stroke and rebound are firmly established and show strength and control as well as conceptual understanding.

Advantages of Learning the Basic Stroke on Snare Drum

- Snare drum or drum pad provides rebound of the stick
  - Rebound must be simulated on keyboard and other instruments
  - Students cannot accurately simulate rebound without experiencing it
- Vertically focused motion
  - Lateral (horizontal) motion required on other instruments; can cause confusion if both motions are initially required
  - Single plane focus to the motion eases mastery of the stroke; better prepared for transference to other instruments
- Targeting issues reduced
  - Changing notes creates stress and tension to hit right notes
  - Single surface performance develops targeting without fear of wrong notes
- Grip issues reduced
  - Stroke motion can create some grip slipping in young players
  - Larger diameter of the snare stick helps reduce this slipping

Teaching the Stroke

Students will want to start playing very quickly and become restless if they are not given the opportunity to produce sounds on their instruments early in the process. It is not important that they begin reading music when they play their first strokes. Reading is a priority, but introducing it when introducing basic sound production can overwhelm a young player. The student needs to be able to focus on the physical execution of the stroke and rebound before compounding the difficulties by reading notation. Once the stroke has been taught and is executed fairly consistently, reading can follow rapidly.
First Strokes
If you've established a good grip and a good drum position, the first strokes should come fairly naturally. It is entirely possible to teach these initial strokes with the teacher demonstrating and the students mimicking, and this is strongly encouraged. Again, too much discussion can cause the students too feel overwhelmed with information and they will then often perceive the physical act of playing as something more complicated and less natural, inhibiting their technical development. Follow these steps to help students learn the basic stroke quickly and simply:

- Put the sticks in playing position over the center of the head
- Lift both sticks up from the wrist, raising them toward the body (not out)
- Accelerate the right stick into the head with the wrist, returning immediately in one motion to the raised position, following the stick's natural rebound
- Repeat the same hand in time, thinking about a beat of rest between strokes
- Count beats out loud, including the beats of rest
- Switch hands and repeat the sequence

Ex. 1

Notation key:
R = right hand
L = left hand

*read across and repeat one line of stickings at a time; in this case it is straight rights or straight lefts*
A great deal of information was conveyed in that exercise, even if it was not verbalized or explained. Here is the breakdown of what was just taught:

- Put the sticks in playing position over the center of the head
  *Positioning before setting up the stroke establishes an initial target for the stroke.*

- Lift both sticks up from the wrist, raising them toward the body (not out)
  *Lifting from the wrist establishes the motion to be used. To play the students simply reverse the motion. Raising toward the body makes sure that the motion in the wrist is based on a hinge and not on a rotation, which would send the stick off to the side.*

- Accelerate the right stick into the head with the wrist, returning immediately in one motion to the raised position, following the stick's natural rebound
  *Starting the actual stroke from the raised position eliminates the need for the preparation of each stroke and establishes the most fundamental of stroke types, the full stroke (to be discussed later in this chapter). Making the return in one motion encourages not only keeping the stick from resting on the head, but also allowing the natural rebound of the stick to take its course. Maintaining the other hand in that raised position creates a reference point for the rebound of the stroke.*

- Repeat the same hand in time, thinking about a beat of rest between strokes
  *Alternating hands initially complicates the process and can quickly turn into students using a piston stroke action between the two hands rather than fluid full strokes. Repeating on the same hand with the beat in between creates focus as well as maintaining a controlled playing situation when dealing with multiple students. A clear sense of time is also established by doing it in a manner that does not feel free, as it would feel without the rest inserted.*

- Count beats out loud, including the beats of rest
  *Counting out loud reaffirms the sense of tempo for the students. It also allows the teacher to make sure that the students understand the idea of beats and initial ideas about counting. The audible feedback confirms that they could are not just following others without beginning to conceptualize time and tempo.*

**Details of the Stroke**

A more detailed discussion of the stroke and how it functions is an important part of this process for the teacher to understand. At the beginning stage, it is not necessary to discuss all these points with the student. Keeping the information simple and clean allows them to conceptualize the motion in a more relaxed manner. The stroke should be a very natural act and providing an abundance of detail can make it seem more difficult to the student.

Focusing on these key points at all times will help to develop a strong and controlled stroke at the snare drum that can then be easily transferred to other instruments.
• Motion is generated from the wrist
  ° Forearm is not locked or tensed
  ° Free to move sympathetically with the wrist
• Wrist moves in a hinge motion rather than in a rotation
• Fulcrum remains solid and does not slip or adjust with the motion
• Fingers stay wrapped around the stick
  ° Not squeezing or adding pressure
  ° Not opening and closing with the stroke
• Forearm, wrist and hand are straight as stick touches the head
  ° Slight downward angle from the elbow to the tip of the stick
  ° Avoid turning hand sideways at all

![Figure 42: Wrist hinge with all fingers maintaining the grip](image1)
![Figure 43: Straight line forearm through hand at impact point](image2)

• Downward hinging of the wrist should be avoided
  ° Stroke weakens with a hinge that breaks the plane of "flat" in the hand/wrist
  ° Performance injuries can develop from this downward motion
• Upward only hinge can be practiced on the legs or at a table
  ° Place hand and forearm on the thighs or a table, palm turned downward
  ° Raise the hand up, bending the wrist back, without lifting the forearm
  ° Accelerate the hand into the leg, or table, and rebound as if playing on a drum
• Think of moving through water
  ° Avoid sharp/snappy motions
  ° Feeling of natural resistance

![Figure 44: Downward break of hinge motion; weak stroke](image3)
![Figure 45: Palms on legs for upward hinge exercise](image4)
![Figure 46: Lifting of hands for hinge exercise](image5)
Further Stroke Exercises

After establishing the initial full strokes with one hand at a time, the second exercise involves the same stroke used in alternation.

- Put the sticks in playing position over the center of the head
- Lift both sticks up from the wrist, raising them toward the body (not out)
- Accelerate the right stick into the head with the wrist, returning immediately in one motion to the raised position, following the sticks natural rebound
- Repeat with the opposite hand in time, thinking about a beat of rest between strokes
- Count beats out loud, including the beats of rest

Ex. 2

Again, using the beat of rest in between allows for focus and "thinking time" as well as developing an overall sense of performing in time/rhythm. The playing of more rapid strokes does happen in time, but the use of the counted rest helps the younger player to clarify mentally that they are indeed playing in a given tempo and not freely.

Teaching Rhythm

Now that the students have developed some dexterity at the instrument, begin working on the reading of rhythm. They actually have a great reference point for conceptualizing basic reading already from their experience playing single beats and rests in combination. Use that rhythm as a springboard for understanding notes and rests and how they work together. Next, notate the quarter notes and rests in different combinations and have the students say and then play the rhythms. Varying the stickings used for each rhythmic pattern will also help to develop performance flexibility in stroke usage, essential for later transference to other instruments. Exercises 3-10 are sample patterns.
From that point, there are many directions a teacher can go in developing students' rhythmic reading skills. Later in this text an advantageous approach to teaching rhythm in a manner that will develop long term success is detailed. This approach to teaching rhythmic concepts helps students to not just memorize rhythmic values, but to understand rhythmic relationships and transfer that understanding across more difficult meters and permutations of various tuplet figures, including triplets and quintuplets.

**The Four Stroke Types**

The strokes played thus far have all been *full* strokes. Basic percussion strokes can be classified into four types: *full, tap, down, up*. Each stroke is defined below, followed by teaching strategies for each.

**Full Stroke**
- Returns immediately to point of origin after striking the head
- Relaxed motion
- Covers full range of dynamics
- Used most often in general playing

**Tap Stroke**
- Low dynamic level stroke, 1-3 inches off the head
- Returns immediately to point of origin after striking the head
- Technically a full stroke in motion
- Term used most often in marching percussion for more stroke definition

**Down Stroke**
- Strong stroke
- Starts higher, then ends at a tap height over the head
- Rebound is stopped
- Executable from any dynamic
- Often used for accents
- Transitions from a full stroke level to a tap stroke level
Up Stroke
- Light stroke
- Starts low, then ends up higher
- Rebound is artificially created
- Can finish at any dynamic level
- Transitions from a tap stroke level to a full stroke level

A quick way to think about each of these strokes could be to say:
- Full: starts up, ends up
- Tap: starts down, ends down
- Down: starts up, ends down
- Up: starts down, ends up

Learning the four stroke types takes some time, as correct technical application of each relies on the student controlling the rebound of the stroke or even creating a false sense of rebound, as the up stroke requires. Students should establish the full stroke well before learning the tap stroke which requires more control and stability in the grip and stroke. Down and up strokes should be taught in tandem, but only after students are comfortable conceptualizing and executing full and tap strokes.

Teaching Strategies

Full strokes are the first strokes taught, using the previously discussed exercises. It is full strokes that should be used when beginning to work on rhythmic reading exercises. Make certain that the student is actually rebounding all the way back up with each exercise, not playing with down strokes, which appear to move like pistons when alternating. Focus on these points when learning full strokes:

- Start all patterns with the sticks in a raised position
  - Eliminates the need for a preparatory stroke
  - Sets the mark for the rebound of the stroke
- Take patterns slowly at first
  - Allow time to feel stick returning to start position before beginning next stroke
  - Increases in tempo will begin to create a natural full stroke out of necessity
- Play at varying dynamic levels
  - Rebound to the same level started from
  - Use the other stick as a guide for the return point
- Play at strong dynamic levels if there are problems
  - Exaggerates the motion
  - Creates greater muscle memory that can be refined for smaller strokes

Tap strokes are addressed after full strokes, as they are technically a full stroke in terms of execution; they return to the point at which they started. Wait to start these strokes until a good sense of control and facility have been developed through full strokes. Due to the smaller motions, these strokes are generally more difficult to execute consistently
for beginning players. The same exercises used previously to address reading skills and full strokes can be repeated for learning tap strokes.

- Set each pattern with the sticks just above the head of the drum
- Take patterns slowly at first
- Move each stroke straight into the head, no preparation upward
- Start with single handed exercises
  - Helps to develop the control at the smaller motion level
  - Begin with patterns used to initially develop full strokes
  - Expand to include the rhythms being studied at the time
- Move to alternating patterns after single hand exercises are fairly consistent

Once both full and tap strokes are established, an easy and traditional "eight on a hand" style exercise helps the student to transition between the two in an easy and comfortable manner.

*The "eight on a hand" term is used by many percussion instructors to refer to any exercise built on playing in 4/4 time with straight eighth notes where the right hand plays one full bar, followed by one full bar of left hand with any number of repeats.*

Play a full measure of eighth notes in 4/4 with each of the following strokes consecutively. This can be looped as desired.

- Full strokes: right hand
- Full strokes: left hand
- Tap strokes: right hand
- Tap strokes: left hand

Ex. 11

```
F: \( \text{\textit{R}} \text{\textit{R sim.}} \text{\textit{L}} \text{\textit{L sim.}} \text{\textit{R}} \text{\textit{R sim.}} \text{\textit{L}} \text{\textit{L sim.}} \text{\textit{T}} \text{\textit{R}} \text{\textit{R sim.}} \text{\textit{T}} \text{\textit{L}} \text{\textit{L sim.}} \text{\textit{T}} \text{\textit{R}} \text{\textit{R sim.}} \text{\textit{T}} \text{\textit{L}} \text{\textit{L sim.}} \)```

*Notation key:*

- \( F = \) full stroke
- \( T = \) tap stroke
- \( \text{\textit{sim.}} = \) simile; continue same sticking until otherwise notated

**Down and up strokes** should be taught before addressing the rudiments, as they are necessary for fluid and efficient execution of most rudiments. These two strokes are best taught in tandem, as isolating one requires resetting for each stroke. This wastes time and causes confusion about preparing for strokes that is not a normal part of playing with good technique. Starting to develop the strokes with single hand exercises before using alternation is generally helpful, as it allows the students to focus more effectively.
• Play a single down stroke
  ° Set the stick in a raised position for a full stroke
  ° Accelerate into the head and then stop the rebound at a tap height
• Play a single up stroke with the same hand
  ° Start from the position at the end of the down stroke
  ° Play a tap stroke, no upward preparation
  ° Create artificial rebound, raise the stick past starting point
  ° Return to starting point of previous down stroke
• Loop between down and up strokes with this hand
• Switch hands and repeat

Ex. 12

Notation key:
- **D** = down stroke
- **U** = up stroke

Next introducing a simple alternating pattern using both stroke types:

• Start right hand at full height, left hand at tap height
• Play a right hand down stroke
• Play a left hand up stroke
• Count two beats of rest
• Play a left hand down stroke
• Play a right hand up stroke
• Count two beats of rest
• Loop as desired

Ex. 13

In normal performance, down and up strokes are used as transitions between the full and tap strokes, as well as for executing accents. The following modified version of the previous "eight on a hand" exercise helps to develop this concept.
Play a full measure of eighth notes in 4/4 using the following stroke combinations. This can be looped as desired. Start very slowly so that the type of strokes can be focused on and executed correctly.

- Right hand 7 full strokes, 1 down stroke
- Right hand 7 tap strokes, 1 up stroke
- Left hand 7 full strokes, 1 down stroke
- Left hand 7 tap strokes, 1 up stroke
- Loop as desired

Ex. 14

An alternated sticking version of this can be played as well.

Ex. 15

Ex. 16

With all of these basic strokes and exercises established, the student should have a basic concept of snare drum performance and general facility at the instrument. By no means is all of this accomplished in one day. Frequency of contact, as well as homogenous or heterogeneous instruction groups, will affect how long it takes to get through all of this material. As each skill is learned and grows comfortable, move on to the next challenge, remembering to periodically review concepts. It is sometimes necessary to take a step backward if things do not progress as desired. More time spent on the previous skills may be needed before students are comfortable enough to add more skills to their repertoire. Covering material with enough time to gain conceptual understanding and develop good quality execution is more important than covering a specified quantity of material in a given time period.
Musicianship at the Snare Drum

Sound production at the snare drum is so easily accomplished that quality of the sound is something often overlooked by the player and teacher. Basic musicianship can be taught at the snare drum; it need not involve executing melodic parts on a keyboard instrument or timpani. Sensitivity to dynamics, concepts of touch and sound quality, as well as musical phrasing can and should be put into practice when working with a beginning student at the snare drum. From this instrument, we can not only build musicianship but also technical facility, both of which can then be carried to the other percussion instruments in due course.

Choosing a Playing Area

The first step to developing a good sound is to develop a system for choosing a playing area on the snare drum. Students should learn from the very beginning to always seek out a good quality sound from their instruments. One key point in choosing a playing area is to always remember that the absolute center of the head is a nodal point for vibration, and thus lacks resonance. Primary playing must take place just off of this nodal point in order for the full resonance of the drum to speak.

In order to find an appropriate and effective playing area, use the following guide:

- Make certain the drum is set with the throw-off directly in front of the player
- Visualize a line straight over the snare bed
- Play high dynamic levels slightly off center on this line
- Play low dynamic levels out near the edge on this line
- Adjust between the edge and center along this line when playing middle level dynamics as appropriate

![Figure 47: Off center playing position for higher dynamics](image1)
![Figure 48: Near edge playing position for lower dynamics](image2)
![Figure 49: Adjusted playing position for middle dynamics](image3)

The purpose behind using this conditional playing area is to obtain maximum snare response at all dynamic levels. Some percussionists advocate the use of a single playing area for all levels, under the argument that a timbre change occurs moving to the edge of the head. The problem with that system, however, is that the change in snare response
creates a dramatic timbre change when the conditional system is not employed, as more head resonance and less snare response will occur when playing near the center at softer dynamics. Performance will sound crisper and cleaner when the conditional system of playing along the line of the snare bed is used for concert snare drum performance.

**Developing Touch**

The musicianship skill often neglected in teaching young percussionists is that of *touch*. Some may not address it because it seems like an intangible instinct rather than something that can be taught. Others may not see it as being important. There may be some that do not perceive the difference between those playing with good touch and those with a more immature sound. But it is something that can be taught and it is an important part of developing good musicianship in a percussionist. Developing good touch on percussion is as important as developing good tone on a wind instrument. Advanced technical facility cannot cover up poor sound quality on a wind instrument and the same can be said of percussion.

As previously discussed, one of the best ways to help students develop a concept is to take ideas to extremes, thereby creating conceptual reference points. This can easily be done when it comes to developing touch. Try the following two experiments, being attentive to playing the same dynamic level for each.

- Grip sticks very tightly
- Play a full stroke exercise
- Listen carefully to the quality of the sound
- Talk about this sound

Next:

- Grip stick very loosely, fingers in the back released from contact
- Play a full stroke exercise at the same dynamic as the previous one
- Listen carefully to the quality of the sound
- Talk about this sound

Now try this experiment:

- Grip the stick very tightly
- Strike the sticks together
- Listen carefully to the quality of the sound
- Talk about this sound
Next:

- Grip the stick very loosely
- Strike the sticks together
- Listen carefully to the quality of the sound
- Talk about this sound

The previous experiments should show that not only does a tight grip produce a heavy sound, very attack oriented and aggressive, but it also chokes off the natural resonance of the stick. The looser grip produces a sound that is much fuller, though some perceive it as not being as strong because it lacks the attack quality of the sound. In terms of quality, the more resonant sound of the looser grip is preferred, as the head, drum and stick are all able to resonate fully.

The loose grip used above lacks control, however, as the back fingers are removed from the stick. The next step in developing touch is to learn how to achieve the resonant, relaxed sound without giving up control of the stick.

- Readdress key points about grip
- Talk about having "soft" hands
  - Think about the hands as thick foam
  - Firm in position, spongy in feel
  - Concept of sponginess negates squeezing
  - Think of absorbing the "shock" of impact
- Readdress key points about stroke
- Talk about fluid motion
  - Think about moving through water
  - Move with direction and acceleration
  - Concept of natural resistance negates sharp or snappy motion
  - Think about the hand riding the stick on the rebound, not pulling
- Talk about getting a "round" sound versus a "pointed" sound
  - Idea of round generates notions of big and full
  - Idea of pointed generates notions of edginess and aggression
- Talk about matching the motion to the sound
  - Round, fluid motions generate big, full sounds
  - Pointed, sharp motions generate edgy, aggressive sounds
- Experiment with motions
  - Make pointed sounds
  - Make round sounds
  - Make sounds in between
Analogies and descriptive words such as these help students apply concepts and experiences they already have to new tasks. They also help them learn the vocabulary to talk about sound and sound quality, something that many may have had difficulty expressing previously.

It is important that students start recognizing quality of sound from the very beginning of their studies. If they can learn to discern, discuss and create different sounds at the snare drum, they can later apply these concepts and skills to other instruments with knowledge of the importance of sound quality and touch to musical performance.

**Dynamics**

Discussing the importance of dynamics is very important to the young percussionist's development. Dynamics should be addressed with the percussion student just as they are with other instrumentalists, focusing on musical expression and balance. Unfortunately, many people instructing percussion today have defaulted to a system of describing sound production in terms of inches, measuring the distance of the stick off the head, rather than traditional dynamic terminology. The measurement system developed out of the marching percussion experience, as teachers sought to find ways to help students visually match their performance to the people beside them. Though stick height plays a large role in dynamic execution, describing dynamics in this matter does not address the concepts of musical expression or balance that are implied by using traditional dynamic terms.

Volume control in percussion is primarily adjusted by two factors:

- **Height of stick or mallet above instrument**
  - More height is more force, more sound
  - Lower height is less force, less sound
- **Velocity of stick or mallet**
  - Faster rhythms are louder without as much height
  - Slower rhythms need more height to create volume

Students will generally only need to be taught about the height factor. When talking about a conditional playing area, teach these two items together; lower dynamics mean less height and further to the edge of the drum. The velocity factor often happens naturally. In order to execute faster passages, most players will naturally lower the stick height in order to return to the head more rapidly. If a player is struggling with rapid performance, check the stick height and see if it needs to come down. Again, if these basic concepts are understood and executed at the snare drum, they will transfer easily to performance on other instruments. If the musicianship at the snare drum is taught differently than on other instruments, young players feel as if they are starting over each time a new instrument in the family is introduced. Consistency will help to breed successful development of not only their technique but their musicianship as well.
**Rolls**

The roll is the percussionist's technique for creating sustained sounds. Without using the roll on the snare drum, all note values will theoretically sound the same. At times, this is what the composer desires and the notational value chosen is simply out of ease, not to demonstrate the length of note as it is for other instrumentalists. However, when certain markings are added the percussionist is asked to create a sustained sound by utilizing a bouncing technique.

Ex. 17

Two styles of rolls are used in snare drum performance: buzz rolls and double stroke rolls. Any of the above markings can indicate a roll, though the trill markings and the “Z” marking generally refer specifically to buzz rolls, while the slash notation can refer to either buzz or double stroke rolls. The buzz roll is the standard technique for concert performance and the double stroke for rudimental solos and marching percussion performance. As concert performance is our initial focus with beginning percussion students, we will begin learning rolls with the buzz technique.

**Buzz Rolls**

Buzz rolls have several other names, including concert rolls, multiple bounce rolls and closed rolls. The use of the term buzz roll is encouraged because it creates an immediate sound concept in the minds of students; other terms do not have such ready associations to the inexperienced player. There are several pedagogical approaches to teaching these rolls. The one presented here focuses on developing the new technique physically and then addressing the quality of the sound produced.

**Learning the Motion**

A major change for the beginning student learning rolls is the use of the arm as the genesis of the stroke rather than the previous wrist generated motions. Though wrist generated rolls can be effective at lower dynamic levels, the use of an arm roll is essential to developing a smooth and consistent sound at louder dynamics. For the purpose of consistency, the use of an arm roll at all dynamic levels is strongly encouraged. It also helps when executing rolls involving crescendos and decrescendos, as no transition of motion is then required.

- Place the right stick over the drum at a tap height
- Lift the stick *from the arm*
  - Keep the wrist straight
  - Keep the stick nearly flat as it is lifted, parallel to the drumhead
  - Do not make a large hinge motion at the elbow
  - Lift more from the upper arm
• Push the stick down into the head *tightly*
  ◦ Use arm weight to apply the pressure
  ◦ Do not squeeze in the hand
  ◦ Pay no attention to length or quality of the buzz at this time
• Leave the stick on the head briefly before lifting again
• Repeat strokes with the same hand, one beat of rest between strokes
• Repeat the exercise on the opposite hand
• Repeat the exercise using alternating strokes

A few mental images for this new arm motion include pretending there is a splint on the wrist or pretending to work a bicycle pump. Both allow students to visualize something familiar and concrete while developing the new stroke.

It is very important when going through this exercise that the following problems are addressed immediately if they appear:

• Do not break the flat plane of the wrist, no hinge
• Do not apply excess pressure with the back fingers
• Do not allow the back fingers to break contact with the stick
• Do not allow the fulcrum to shift in any way

Up to this point, sound quality should not be the focus. Due to the complete change in motion from the previous wrist-oriented stroke, the emphasis should be on the new arm motion and mastering the use of it. This arm motion is the key to a good quality roll, as the entire stick and arm acting together is what creates the smooth buzz sound that is desired. Once the technique is developed and comfortable, the quality of sound is then addressed.
Developing the Sound
Before working on any exercise to develop the rolls of the students, they must learn how a good roll sounds. If possible, this should be done live. Have an experienced high school student or a local percussion specialist come in to class and demonstrate the roll. (Make sure this person plays with the same arm technique taught to the students.) If no live performer can be made available a good audio recording will work. A concert style snare drum solo is best, so they can focus more easily on the sound, but orchestral recordings with prominent snare rolls can also be used.

As we shift focus to the quality and length of the buzz produced, it is important that no major physical alterations to the newly learned technique are made. The adjustments should be subtle, not necessarily visible.

- Return to the previous single hand exercise, Ex. 18
  - Remember the beat of rest between strokes
  - Keep it slow to allow for "thinking" time
- Try to lengthen the buzz sound
  - Adjust arm weight and pressure after every four strokes
  - Remember concept of "soft hands"
- Listen for a buzz with length and evenness
- When the "right" sound is heard stop adjusting
  - Continue to repeat that sound
  - Shift focus from sound to physical feeling
  - Think about the weight of the arm
  - Think about the firmness of the hand
- Switch hands
- Work for the same sound
  - Continue to repeat that sound
  - Shift focus from sound to physical feeling
  - Think about the weight of the arm
  - Think about the firmness of the hand

Once the general motion is established, it is very difficult to put the subtle adjustments into words. Players have their own concepts of what adjustments are made to find that perfect buzz. Experiential work and allowing the aural to guide the physical are successful techniques for teaching concepts, such as rolls, that are difficult to verbally explain.

Further Technique Development
Now that the arm motion has been established and good sound is developing, further technique exercises for rolls should be studied before moving on to playing the concert roll in the context of written music.
The timing of roll strokes between the hands is developed in the following exercise. The goal is to eliminate gaps of sound without moving faster than necessary. The stroke speed for rolls can be much slower than most young players initially conceptualize.

- Set with both sticks over the head
- Play right hand buzzes on downbeats, slow tempo, 4 beats
- Add left hand just after the right, 4 beats
  - Sound should partially overlap
  - Could think rhythm "1e…2e…" etc.
- Loop the 8 beat pattern
- Switch to left hand lead and repeat exercise
- Vary the spacing of the two strokes
  - Try to get the maximum length from first hand before second
  - Allow no gaps in the sound
- Vary the exercise using 3 strokes per overlapping group
- Vary the exercise using 4 strokes per overlapping group

Ex. 19

Ex. 20

Ex. 21

Another technical issue to work through is the transition between wrist and arm strokes in normal playing. The following exercises are a jumping off point. Many others can be developed. Keep in mind that working on single hand exercises initially proves more successful.
**Dynamics**
When relating dynamics to rolls, a few things should be kept in mind.

- Use playing positions for dynamics as discussed earlier
  - With conditional positions, adjust center to edge for loud to soft
  - Snare response is important for rolls; makes this system advantageous
- Adjust touch to the dynamic
  - Louder dynamic, open up the buzz slightly for more projection
  - Softer dynamic, condense the buzz slightly for more control
- Arm motion is stick height in rolls
  - Louder dynamic, increase arm motion
  - Softer dynamic, decrease arm motion (still no hinge)

**Notation of Rolls**
The next step in learning rolls is learning to read the notation. There is some standardization in the notation of rolls, but many variations do show up in printed music. Percussionists should become familiar with the most common systems of notation.

Ex. 30

Though different in appearance, each of these would be interpreted the same way in performance.

**Tie Markings**
The initial confusion with tie markings is to be expected. In other notation, the presence of a tie marking is taken to imply a connection of the two notes and a linking of their durations into one, without a second articulation. Unfortunately, a new rule must be learned for the percussionist. *When roll markings appear on the first note and not the second, the tie marks the end of the roll.*

Ex. 31

The confusion centers on the interpretation and the duration of the second note.

- Second note's duration is NOT included in the roll
- Roll through entire duration of first note
- Second note is articulated as a single stroke ending
If two notes are tied and both have roll markings, then the durations are linked, without a break in sound.

Ex. 32

Rolls without Ties

Some rolls do not have ties on them. This leaves the interpretation much more ambiguous in terms of length and whether or not to play a single stroke or buzzed ending.

Ex. 33

As a general rule, first listen to or study the score of any piece where other players are involved, especially wind and string parts that can provide duration context. Information about the length may be implied by knowledge of what the other performers are playing. The lack of a tie does imply some space, but how much space should match the other performers in interpretation.

When playing solo, this space is left to the performer to interpret. Take in the general style of the piece and then develop an interpretation. This should be consistently applied throughout the entire work when multiple rolls exist without ties.

Due to inconsistencies in how composers notate rolls, often times the ear must be the guide rather than the page. The suggestions above are just that. If other interpretations fit the style of the work better, by all means use them.

Metering the Roll

(How many strokes to play)

Learning to meter rolls is a vital part of successful snare drum performance. It is a very rare situation, usually involving a fermata, when metering of a roll is not applicable. Metering the roll involves figuring out exactly how many buzz strokes will be used to fill the roll's duration. Knowing the roll base allows the performer to figure out all stickings in advance, greatly increasing performance accuracy.

In theory, any rhythmic subdivision of the roll's duration can be used to fill the space. Tempo is the fundamental factor in determining roll meters. Dynamics factor in on a secondary level.
When teaching metering, it is best to start by using 16\textsuperscript{th} notes as the roll base. By the time rolls are being taught, the students should be feeling very comfortable with a number of rhythmic figures built on 16\textsuperscript{th} notes. Conceptualizing roll base and calculating it is easier with comfortable rhythmic values.

Here are some examples of rolls with the written out 16\textsuperscript{th} note roll base beneath:

Ex. 34

\[ \text{Notation Key:} \]
\[ \text{Notes inside the ( ) are buzzed} \]
\[ \text{1}\text{st line shows written part} \]
\[ \text{2}\text{nd line shows individual buzz strokes played} \]

The use of a 16\textsuperscript{th} note roll base for metering is most common. Rolling with this base will feel and sound good across a wide tempo range. More advanced players can begin to use other roll bases to adjust for slower or faster tempos as well as to increase or decrease the intensity of the roll's sound for dynamic alterations.

Ex. 35

This, however, is several years of playing away for beginners. Teaching more than one base too early will create confusion and discourage them from using a base at all. Stick to 16\textsuperscript{th} notes in the early years for consistency and ease of understanding.

**Why Are They Called 5 Stroke, 9 Stroke, etc?**

Many method books for both beginning band and beginning snare drum teach rolls giving specific number values to specific durations. This naming system derives from the practice of playing double stroke rolls, as the number is the literal count of how many individual sounds are heard in the roll, including the final single stroke. This number is then not valid when using a buzzed stroke in which we are not counting or trying to hear a specific number of strokes. Young players have a difficult time conceptualizing these numbers into performance, since it has nothing to do with what they are hearing.

It is strongly encouraged that you speak in terms of roll base, as previously discussed, rather than using these names with beginning students. Specifically named rolls should only be introduced when the rudimental style of playing double stroke rolls is introduced.
Double Stroke Rolls

The double stroke roll is an advanced technique. Students should thoroughly develop the buzz roll before moving to the double stroke technique. In the school setting, this technique will predominantly be used for solo performance and marching percussion.

As the name implies, the double stroke roll is a method of sustaining sound on the snare drum, much like the buzz roll, but producing only two sounds per stroke. The effect of the technique produces notes at twice the rate of the stroke being used. For example, when playing a double stroke roll using sixteenth notes as the base rhythm of the stroke, thirty-second notes will be produced. Examples of commonly named rudimental rolls are shown below.

Ex. 36

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 stroke</th>
<th>7 stroke</th>
<th>9 stroke</th>
<th>13 stroke</th>
<th>17 stroke</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notation Key:

Notes with slashes are double strokes
1st line shows written part
2nd line shows individual double strokes played
3rd line shows what is actually heard

The fundamental technique of using the arm as the genesis of the stroke still applies to the execution of the double stroke roll. Essentially, the double stroke is a controlled opening up of the buzz roll stroke. The use of the double stroke roll is generally restricted to performance in the rudimental style, both in solo repertoire and in the marching ensemble setting. Rare application in the concert setting could include marches as desired by the conductor.

Development of the double stroke roll is a process much like developing the buzz roll. Experimentation with touch, finger pressure, and control of the rebound all come together to produce the sound. An approach which uses excessive finger motion to control the rebound and return it to the head is not advocated. Rather, control must develop from a sense of timing and touch, knowing when to lift the stick from the head to produce only two sounds per stroke.
The following exercises are helpful in developing a double stroke roll with a strong sense of time. Varying the tempo of these exercises is important, as the double stroke must be executed in a wide range of tempos for different pieces and situations. Always listen for the evenness of the two sounds produced by the single arm motion.

Ex. 37

Ex. 38

Ex. 39

Ex. 40
**Sticking Systems**

Stickings systems are methods of codifying the use of the right and left hand when playing the snare drum. The practice of using sticking systems will help not only performance execution but also sight-reading skills. There are two sticking systems commonly in practice, both with advantages and disadvantages.

**Alternating Sticking System**

The alternating system is based on the consistent alternation of right to left hand.

Ex. 41

Advantages:
- Works both hands equally
- Develops flexibility and dexterity
- Transfers well to other instruments, including keyboard

Disadvantages:
- Lacks consistent execution of a given rhythm
- Lacks affirmation of same hand at start of each measure
- Not especially helpful to sight-reading skills

**Right Hand Lead Sticking System**

The right hand lead system is based on the use of the same sticking for any given grouping of notes.

Ex. 42

Advantages:
- Sounds more consistent
- Improves sight-reading
- Eases performance in ensembles

Disadvantages:
- Lacks equal treatment of the left hand
- Lacks basic transference to other instruments
- Does not translate easily in all meters
The advantages and disadvantages of each system show that there is value in learning both. Initially, when working the early exercises on quarter notes, the alternating system will have the most value. It is important at this stage that equal treatment is given to the right and left hand development.

**Eighth note rhythms**
Right hand lead sticking is most readily conceptualized after eighth notes have been introduced. When playing rhythmic passages where the smallest note value is an eighth note, apply the following:

- **Number with the right hand**
- **& with the left hand**

This will create a nice flow in phrasing and establishes consistent interpretation of a given rhythmic pattern.

Examples of stickings applying this principle:

Ex. 43

![1 2 3 & 4 1 & & 4 &](image)

**Sixteenth note rhythms**
The appearance of the sixteenth note in rhythmic passages brings the need for a sticking system to the forefront. As rhythms become more intricate, a standard system for execution will improve rhythmic accuracy and sight reading.

Apply the following to sixteenth note rhythms:

- **Number and & with the right hand**
- **E and A with the left hand**

Another way to think about it is to consider the sticking that would be used for a full group of four sixteenths and simply leave out the hand for any note that is not present.

Ex. 44

![1 E & A 2 E & A 3 E & 4 E &](image)
As previously stated in the disadvantages of this system, not all meters will allow for smooth application of these principles, and context can create a need for different stickings. The right hand lead system is not a set of rules, but a set of suggestions; there is always room to make changes when necessary.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


