

2017 National Conference on Percussion Pedagogy

Timpani Away from the Timpani

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Tuning

- A) Work on singing specific intervals. The Perfect Fourth and Perfect Fifth are the most commonly used intervals in music because of their relationship to the V and I chord in composition. Become VERY comfortable with these two intervals first! Then proceed to the major and minor second (these put you into new key areas) and the major and minor thirds (allowing you to start to tune chords as well).
- B) Carry a tuning fork around with you daily. Periodically throughout the day play the A on the fork and sing to memorize that pitch. From there practice singing your intervals and arpeggios.
- C) Get audio tracks from easy bass guitar books (Hal Leonard *Easy Songs for Bass Guitar*). Practicing singing the bass lines with the minus one track. Visualize how pedaling it could work. Then use the ear and memorization of the pedaling when on the drums.

Strokes

As Sal Rabbio (PAS Hall of Famer and former timpanist of the Detroit Symphony) says, you should be able to make all of the sounds you need by adjusting your hands. The mallet changes just serve to enhance what you can do. I typically teach a French grip first (Praying Hands Technique).

- A) Regular/Tenuto: This is your average Joe, everyday stroke. This stroke uses a moderate stick speed (velocity) that creates a natural rebound off the head. The “lift” is an enhancement of this natural rebound.
- B) Legato: This stroke is essentially dropping the mallet onto the head with little thought of velocity etc. This gets a very warm and round tone with as little attack sound as possible. Feels very heavy.
- C) Staccato: This stroke is a very fast stroke with a quick rebound.
- D) Soft Strokes: Soft strokes are played from lower to the head but with more up stroke than down stroke (a glancing blow off the head). Hands in front and then lift.

You can also think about the fulcrum moving from the back to the front of the grip as the articulation changes. Work this sitting in a chair, with your hands on each leg in the playing position. Feel how, as you move the articulation, the weight and where you contact moves through the hand. (This works for other things as well!)