

Percussion FUNdamentals:

What every director needs to know

Presented by:



Michael Huestis, Clinician

Mr. Michael Huestis has been involved in music education since 1991 and has taught at The Colony High School in North Dallas since 2010. Throughout his career Mr. Huestis' bands, percussion ensembles and drumlines have performed at the Percussive Arts Society International Convention, Music for All National Percussion Festival, MENC Biennial Conference, Bands of American Grand National Championships, President Bush's inaugural parade in Washington D.C., the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City and the Drum Corps International World Championships. Mr. Huestis was featured as one of the "50 Directors Who Make a Difference" by "School Band and Orchestra Magazine in 2008.

Mr. Huestis earned his Bachelor of Music Degree from the University of North Texas where he performed with the 3 O'Clock Lab Band, U.N.T. drum line, Steel Band, the Brazilian Ensemble, Afro-Cuban Ensemble and Percussion Ensemble. He then earned a Masters in Percussion Performance from B.Y.U. serving as a graduate assistant for the Cougar Drumline and Latin-Jazz Ensemble. Mr. Huestis has studied with David Glyde, Shawn Glyde, Paul Rennick, Ron Fink, Dr. Jon Kellis, Dr. Ronald Brough and Dr. Robert Scheitroma.

A highly sought after composer and arranger, Mr. Huestis is the percussion arranger for Pacific Crest Drum & Bugle Corps from Diamond Bar, CA. His compositions are published by JKS Music, Rowloff, Key Poulan Publications and HuestisMusic Publications. Michael is the author of the classroom method, "[Developing the Percussionist-Musician](#)" which was developed for middle school and high school students.

Mr. Huestis has presented clinics and master classes at numerous state music education association conventions and universities. Michael serves as the assistant coordinator of the Music for All, National Percussion Festival held yearly in Indianapolis, IN. His professional affiliations include Texas Music Educators Association, National Association for Music Education, Jazz Educators Network and the Percussive Arts Society, where he served one term as a chapter president. Michael is an endorser of Yamaha Instruments, Vic Firth drum sticks and Evans Drumheads.

Topic Overview:

The bell rings and students settle into their seats. Reeds are fitted and mouthpieces have been inserted. The conductor stands on the podium and says, "Long tones".

- It is the expectation of every director that they properly warm-up their ensemble, teach them to play with the highest quality tone production and intonation. If a director didn't do this for his/her students, we would think them a questionable teacher. Providing students with the fundamental techniques needed to produce the best possible sounds out of their instruments is the foundation of our activity.
- But what about the percussionists? What are they doing to warm-up? How do they create "tone" out of their instruments? What is their "embouchure"? What is the "air support" equivalent for drummers?

This clinic hopes to provide some answers to these questions. Percussionists need the same daily fundamental routines as their woodwind, brass and string counterparts. Too often we find percussionists not involved in the warm-up portion of the ensemble classroom. There are many causes for this oversight; often percussionists are "setting up" gear while the warm-up takes place, or band directors have not clearly defined what the expectations are for the percussionists, or perhaps directors are not sure of what exactly the percussionists should (or could) be doing while the band goes through their daily drills.

- What are some common fundamental techniques that young percussionist struggle with most often?
 - Rolls on ALL instruments and at ALL tempos.
 - The understanding of which muscle group to use in different playing situations.
 - A clear understanding of ALL the "Stroke Types"
 - Full Strokes (also known as Piston Strokes)
 - Down Strokes
 - Up Strokes
 - Lifted Strokes
 - Dead Strokes (also known as Buzz Strokes)

Stroke Types:

- **Full Stroke** – A stroke that begins in the “up position” travels down to the instrument and then returns back to the original “up position”
 - *The most common stroke type on all percussion instruments*



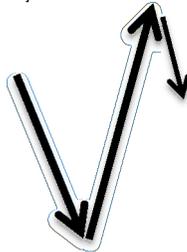
- **Down Stroke** – A stroke that begins in the “up position” travels down to the instrument and only rebounds back up about one (1) inch (i.e. it ends “down”)
 - *Used on snare drum only*



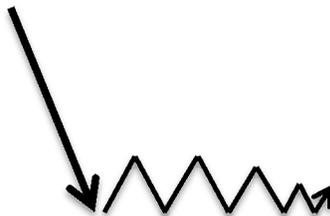
- **Up Stroke** – A stroke that begins in the “down position” strikes the instrument and then rises to the “up position” (i.e. ends “up”)



- **Lifted Stroke** – A stroke that is “lifted” beyond its original starting position and then “re-sets” back into place.
 - *Most common on timpani*



- **Dead Stroke (Buzz)** – A stroke that is dropped onto the drumhead and is allowed to bounce until it comes to rest.
 - *This is also a snare drum only stroke*



Standard Beginning Percussion Exercise Program – Stroke Types *(see attached music)*

- Eight on a hand (full strokes – wrist w/open fingers)
- Bucks (down and up strokes – wrist w/closed fingers)
- Double Beat (full strokes – wrist w/open fingers add arm at faster tempos)
- Hup – Dup “Pepsi – Coca Cola” (full strokes – wrist w/open fingers)
- Ones and Twos (full strokes – wrist w/added arm at faster tempos)
- Buzz Breakdown (dead strokes – arm w/open fingers and very little wrist)

Standard Beginning Percussion Exercise Program – Mallet Strokes

- Full Strokes (Long Tones)
- Double Stops (Long Tones)
- 5 Note Mini – Scale (Lip Slurs)
- Chromatic Scale (Lip Slurs)
- Diatonic Scale

Standard Beginning Percussion Exercise Program – Timpani

- Full Strokes (Long Tones)
- Lifted Strokes (Long Tones)

When winds are playing “tone” exercises percussionists must be involved.

Use “Foundations for Superior Performance in Band” as a method.

Create a rotation schedule that has students move from timpani to mallets to pads on a daily or weekly basis.

Use soft mallets on keyboard instruments so that the percussionist must play with a BIG wrist turn in order to produce enough sound. This will also keep the “klunk” out of the ensemble sound.

Use soft drum pads for the students playing the stroke type exercises.

Use a metronome!!!

Buzz Rolls and Hand Speed (*see attached roll speed music*)

This is one of the more poorly understood concepts by non-percussionists. Rolls on snare drum only sound good when the hands move at the appropriate speed. The window of tempo for this hand speed is actually fairly narrow. So, in order for percussionists to create a pleasant sounding, high quality sustained buzz roll, they must understand how to get their hands to move at the appropriate speed *despite* the tempo demands of any particular piece of music.

Rolls on keyboard percussion instruments and timpani

Mallet percussion instruments and timpani are played with single stroke rolls. The speed of the hands and the rate of strokes must create a sustained sound. The rolls cannot be “rhythmic” and must be appropriate for the size of the instrument being struck. The larger the instrument or note, the slower the roll speed needs to be. The smaller the instrument or note, the faster the roll speed needs to be.

- Lower Pitch = slower roll speed
- High Pitch = faster roll speed

Rolls on auxiliary percussion instruments

Suspended Cymbal – strike the edges; soft mallets; slow hand speed

Tambourine – shake roll; thumb rolls

Triangle – “clear” rolls; “overtone” rolls

Concert Bass Drum – edges; slow hand speed; correct mallets

Other thoughts on tone production

- You get what you pay for. Cheap instruments and mallets create cheap sounds.
- Mallet selection is the best way to get the widest variety of sounds out of the instruments you own.
- Give percussionists a listening reference for virtually every moment in their music.
- Large muscle groups do the heavy lifting and small muscle groups do the quick/delicate passages.
- Technique is a variant of tempo. (i.e. double tongue, when do you do it?)
- Create exercises that address technique issues in the REAL music.

Beginning Fundamental Exercises

Eight on a Hand

Musical notation for 'Eight on a Hand' exercise. It consists of two staves. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The second staff has a bass clef. The exercise is divided into two measures. The first measure contains eight eighth notes: four on the right hand (R) and four on the left hand (L). The second measure also contains eight eighth notes: four on the right hand (R) and four on the left hand (L).

R R R R R R R R L L L L L L L L

Bucks

Musical notation for 'Bucks' exercise. It consists of two staves. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The second staff has a bass clef. The exercise is divided into two measures. The first measure contains eight eighth notes with accents (>) on the right hand (R). The second measure contains eight eighth notes with accents (>) on the left hand (L).

R R R R R R R R L L L L L L L L

Double Beat

Musical notation for 'Double Beat' exercise. It consists of two staves. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The second staff has a bass clef. The exercise is divided into two measures. The first measure contains eight eighth notes with a double bar line and repeat sign in the middle, indicating a double beat. The second measure also contains eight eighth notes with a double bar line and repeat sign in the middle, indicating a double beat.

R R R R R R R R L L L L L L L L

Hup - Dup

Musical notation for 'Hup - Dup' exercise. It consists of two staves. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The second staff has a bass clef. The exercise is divided into two measures. The first measure contains eight eighth notes with a '6' above the notes, indicating a sixteenth note triplet. The second measure also contains eight eighth notes with a '6' above the notes, indicating a sixteenth note triplet.

R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

Ones and Twos

Musical notation for 'Ones and Twos' exercise. It consists of two staves. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The second staff has a bass clef. The exercise is divided into two measures. The first measure contains eight eighth notes. The second measure contains eight eighth notes.

R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L

Buzz Breakdown

Musical notation for 'Buzz Breakdown' exercise. It consists of two staves. The first staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The second staff has a bass clef. The exercise is divided into four measures. The first measure contains a quarter note with a 'z' above it. The second measure contains a quarter note with a 'z' above it. The third measure contains a quarter note with a 'z' above it. The fourth measure contains a quarter note with a 'z' above it.

Buzz Rolls

♩ = 60-120

Introductory musical notation for Buzz Rolls, featuring a series of eighth notes and triplets.

1 Medium Tempo

Musical notation for exercise 1, Medium Tempo.

2 Slow Tempo

Musical notation for exercise 2, Slow Tempo, featuring a sextuplet.

3 Fast Tempo

Musical notation for exercise 3, Fast Tempo, featuring a triplet.

4 Tied or Connected Rolls

Musical notation for exercise 4, Tied or Connected Rolls.

5 Untied or Unconnected Rolls

Musical notation for exercise 5, Untied or Unconnected Rolls.

6 Medium Tempo

Musical notation for exercise 6, Medium Tempo.

7 Slow Tempo

Musical notation for exercise 7, Slow Tempo, featuring sextuplets.

8 Fast Tempo

Musical notation for exercise 8, Fast Tempo, featuring triplets.

Buzz Rolls

1 Medium Tempo

2 Slow Tempo

3 Fast Tempo

4 Medium Tempo

5 Slow Tempo

6 Fast Tempo

7 Medium to Fast Tempos

8 Slow Tempo

9 Medium to Fast Tempos

10 Slow Tempo