



The United States Army Field Band

The Musical Ambassadors of the Army
Washington, DC

Percussion Clinic

by

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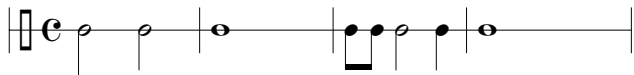
TRIANGLES

Description and Selection

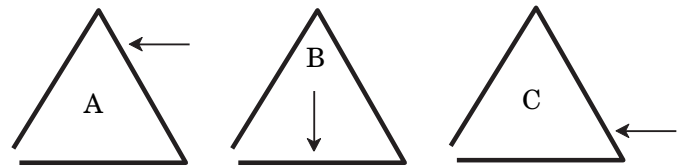
- Average triangles measure 6–8 inches.
- For a brighter sound, a smaller triangle may be a better choice (not necessarily for playing soft).
- For a darker sound, a larger triangle may be a better choice (not necessarily for playing loud).
- A selection of triangle beaters that vary in size (diameter)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

Triangle Technique

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



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



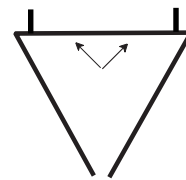
Fast Rhythmic Passages (*legato*)

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



Fast Rhythmic Passages (*articulate*)

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



grip). A muffled timbre is produced by placing the thumb on the head.

Tambourine Techniques

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

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



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

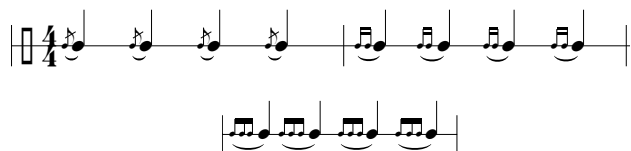


- Fast and loud—hold the tambourine with the head facing down. Alternate back and forth between the knee and the group of fingers playing on the inside (see the musical example on page 12-2).
- Fast and soft—lay the tambourine on the knee or a padded trap table with the rim facing up; Play with the fingers of both hands.

- Use more fingers for louder passages.
- Use fewer fingers for softer passages.

Grace Notes

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



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

Rolls

- Common practice—start and stop the roll with a head tap according to ensemble articulation. Occasionally no head tap is necessary.
- Shake roll—hold the tambourine in either hand, rotating the wrist in the same manner as the left hand traditional grip for snare drum. Simultaneously, add a slight forward/backward wrist motion in the same manner as matched grip to create a fluid circular motion.



- Soft roll—hold the tambourine alongside the leg. Jingles should be light, bright, and delicate for extremely long rolls.
- Loud roll—hold the tambourine in front at about eye level.
- Extremely loud rolls—use two tambourines.
- Thumb and finger rolls—move the thumb (or finger) along the edge of the tambourine. The rapid bouncing causes the jingles to vibrate. To get friction between the head and thumb (or finger) a player can either dampen the finger or rub bass rosin or bee's wax on the head of the tambourine to create a sticky surface to facilitate the bouncing effect. This technique is used primarily for soft rolls that are of short duration.



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

CONCERT BASS DRUM

Heads and Tuning

- A standard size for concert bass drums is 36 x 16 inches.
- The best types of material for heads are "Fiber Skyn" (man-made) or calfskin (natural).

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

Mallets

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

Effects Mallets

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

Playing Area and Strokes

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

Proper Strokes

- The general playing stroke is produced by the forearm and the wrist. Soft strokes are produced mostly by the wrist. Loud strokes are produced by adding the upper arm to the general stroke.
- A direct stroke goes directly into the head with a “flicking” of the wrist to terminate the stroke. This produces maximum vibration and overtones from the drum.

- For rolls, use two matched rolling beaters. Hold the beaters with the traditional snare drum grip and use single strokes to execute the roll.

Dampening and Muffling

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

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

Bass Drum Part

Brass Part

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

- Type of notation (fast).

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

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Smaller Cymbals

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

Larger Cymbals

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

Mallet Selection

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

Playing Techniques

- Strokes are always made on the edge of the cymbal, unless otherwise specified in the score.
- A roll can easily be controlled by placing the mallets on the edge at approximately 4 and 8 o'clock.

- Additional effects call for different areas of the cymbal to be struck, scraped, or rubbed by triangle beaters, coins, a bass bow, etc. A sizzle effect can be obtained by holding a thin triangle beater on the cymbal and then striking the cymbal with another mallet.
- Muffling is used to articulate rhythmic figures.
- For slow tempos, use one hand to muffle and one hand to play.
- For fast tempos, when both hands are needed to play, use your midriff to muffle.

BASS DRUM AND CYMBAL ATTACHMENT

Cymbal Grip and Selection

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

Dampening

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