

THE ALABAMA ALL-STATE TIMPANI AUDITION

ALABAMA BANDMASTERS ASSOCIATION SUMMER IN-SERVICE CONFERENCE

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BEFORE THE AUDITION – FUNDAMENTALS

- Articulation versus Tone
 - Articulation – the point at which the implement contacts the instrument
 - Tone – the sound produced by the articulation
 - This concept has a HUGE impact on:
 - Mallet Choice – “Do I need more tone than articulation?”
 - Stroke Type – “Does this need to have a more staccato stroke applied?”
- Mallet Choice
 - Three pairs – legato, general, staccato. If you can get one pair, get the generals. General mallets with the right stroke can get you through most applications.
 - When selecting a mallet for a piece of music, remember to consider articulation versus tone. The softer the mallet, the more tone with less articulation. The harder the mallet, the clearer the articulation.
- Stroke Type
 - The Piston Stroke – “Start Up End Up”
 - Thumbs on top, mallets vertical
 - Equal velocity in down stroke and up stroke
 - Starting point for all others
 - Legato Stroke – More tone than articulation
 - Marcato Stroke – Equal tone and articulation
 - Staccato Stroke – More Articulation than tone
- Playing Zones
 - Usually about 3 to 4 inches from the edge.
 - Not in the center, unless called for as an effect.
- Rolls (legato versus staccato) – NO BUZZ ROLLS
 - Legato Rolls
 - No articulation in the roll
 - Tip – spread your mallets farther apart to take the articulation out of the roll
 - When to use – when a smooth sustain is needed
 - Staccato Rolls
 - More articulation in the roll
 - Tip – keep your mallets closer together
 - When to use – when more “intensity” is required in the roll.
 - Remember – Think of a roll as sustaining the vibration of the head.
 - Roll speed will vary
 - Based on size of drum
 - Amount of tension on the head
- Playing Zones
 - Usually about 3 to 4 inches from the edge.
 - Not in the center, unless called for as an effect.

- Muffling
 - Alternated muffling – one drum is muffled before another is played
 - Simultaneous muffling – one drum is muffled when another is played
 - Think like a wind player – attack, sustain, release
 - A general rule
- Proper Care and Maintenance
 - Pedals down
 - Keep them covered when not in use
 - Don't pull by the rims
 - Pedals won't stay?
 - FIRST – check the fundamental pitch of each drum (D, F, Bb, D – from low to high)
 - Make sure the fundamental is correct, if pedal still doesn't hold, THEN adjust the pedal tension knob.

THE AUDITION – GET IN A ROUTINE

- Tuning Intervals
 - Whether you use songs or scales to find the intervals, the most important thing is to use a routine.
 - “Oh When the Saints...” give you a major third, perfect fourth, and perfect fifth. Starting on the fifth, “Happy Birthday” will add a step, creating a major sixth from the starting note.
 - OR, you can simply sing the major scale to find each interval. With your starting pitch being one, sing up to three, then four, then five, then six.
 - An example routine:
 - Use Bb for your starting pitch. Get your starting pitch (keyboard instrument, pitch pipe, tuning fork, etc.)
 - Tune the 29” drum (third largest) to Bb.
 - Tune the 26” drum to the major third, D. “Present” the interval: Say “Major Third” and play it.
 - Tune the 26” drum to the perfect fourth, Eb. “Present” the interval: Say “Major Fourth” and play it.
 - Tune the 23” drum (the smallest) to the perfect fifth, F. “Present” the interval: Say “Perfect Fifth” and play it.
 - Tune the 23” drum to the major sixth, G. “Present” the interval: Say “Major Sixth” and play it.
- Prepared Exercise
 - Follow a tuning routine similar to the interval tuning.
 - Consider the style of the piece when choosing mallets. Most of the time the generals will be fine, but if it contains lots of fast rhythmic passages, the staccatos may be more suitable.
 - Tempo:
 - Be aware of the suggested tempo and practice with a metronome.
 - MY OPINION – I would rather hear it a bit slow (within stylistic demand) and correct than too fast and wrong or with no pulse at all.
 - Mentally count yourself off. Have a pulse in your mind before playing a note.

- Be aware of your stroke. Maintain your technique throughout the piece and strive for evenness from hand to hand and drum to drum.
- The prepared exercise should be an automatic 25 points.
- Sight Reading
 - **The only way to get better at sight-reading is to sight-read.**
 - Don't start at the beginning and start "playing" through the piece; you may not get to the end before time is up.
 - Again, have a pulse in mind before you play a note. Count yourself off. Don't go too fast.
 - Watch for "tricks": sudden dynamic changes, rhythmic variations of a previous idea, etc.
 - **The only way to get better at sight-reading is to sight-read.**

FINAL POINTS – SOME DO'S AND DON'TS

- One of the most important things you can do is to have a routine that includes:
 - A specific method for tuning the drums
 - Having a pulse in mind and counting yourself off before the prepared exercise and the sight-reading (especially the sight reading).
 - (If possible) your own pitch source (i.e. pitch pipe).
- Respect the equipment. Don't be afraid to adjust the set up of the drums according to what you're used to, but take care when moving the drums. Remember – It's your audition, but they aren't your drums. When you're finished, be sure to release all tension on the heads by returning the heel of the pedal to the floor.
- DO NOT TRUST TUNING GAUGES. The drums at the audition may not even have tuning gauges.
- Greet the judges and be polite. They want you to do well.