



YAMAHA

Educator Series

PERCUSSION



David L. Collier

David Collier is the director of percussion studies and a music liaison for ORAT, the Office of Research in Arts Technology, at Illinois State University. Mr. Collier is principal timpanist with the Illinois Symphony Orchestra and the Illinois Chamber Orchestra. As a freelance percussionist, Mr. Collier has performed with Mitzi Gaynor, Henry Mancini, Johnny Mathis, Tony Bennett, Petula Clark, Aretha Franklin, Tommy Tune and in the New York City touring productions of A Chorus Line, The Rockettes, State Fair and Annie. Besides his teaching and performing duties, he is an adjudicator for Drum Corps International, Bands of America and Drum Corps Midwest. Mr. Collier is currently pursuing a doctorate in Percussion Performance and Electronic Music at the University of Illinois.

Fundamentals of Accessory Percussion: Triangle, Tambourine, & Woodblock

By David L. Collier

Three of the most common percussion accessory instruments used in band, orchestra, and percussion ensemble are the triangle, tambourine and woodblock. Though each instrument is not difficult to play, it takes practice, inquisitiveness and sensitivity to master. Let's start with the fundamentals that are crucial to our goal.

Triangle

Holding the Triangle

- Suspend the triangle from an insulated clip which has a loop of light-weight material.
- Rest the tip of the clip on top of your middle finger and the back of the clip on your thumb

Producing a Quality Sound

- Gently drop a triangle beater or steel rod into the triangle.
- Strike the triangle on the side opposite the opening or on the bottom side.
- Lift the beater away from the triangle in a smooth motion.
- Striking the instrument in different locations and at different angles will produce a variety of sounds. Experiment!

Rolls on Triangle

- Move the beater rapidly and steadily back and forth in the top or side corner.
- Mount the triangle on a stand with one or two clips and use 2 identical beaters to play single-stroke rolls.



David L. Collier

Tambourine

Holding the Tambourine

- Hold at the portion of the frame where there are no jingles.
- Hold at a 45° angle with the head up to reduce the extra jingle noise.

Producing a Quality Sound

- For *pp* to *mp* sounds, play with the fingers on, or near, the rim of the tambourine.
- For *mf* to *ff* sounds, play with the bunched fingers or fist in the center of the head.

For Playing Fast Passages

- For *pp* to *mf* dynamics, turn the tambourine upside down, rest it on your raised thigh and play with the fingers of both hands on the rim.
- For passages louder than *mf*, use the fist-knee technique. With the tambourine held in the left hand, the head facing downward, move the instrument between the fist of the right hand and the raised knee. Strike the inside of the tambourine with the fist first.

Rolls on Tambourine

- The shake roll, used in loud passages, is produced by rapidly rotating the tambourine back and forth with an elevated wrist.
- For very soft rolls a thumb roll, produced by gently pushing the thumb around the rim of the tambourine with just enough pressure that it “skips” along the head, is best.

Woodblock

Positioning the Woodblock

- It is recommended to hold the woodblock in the non-playing hand if the rhythms are slow.
- For fast rhythms requiring the use of 2 beaters, rest the woodblock on a trap tray covered with soft material. It is also possible to place small amounts of foam under each end of the block to elevate it and increase its resonance.

Producing a Quality Sound

- To obtain a rich, round tone out of the woodblock, a medium to medium-hard rubber mallet is recommended. While drumsticks may be used, an perhaps indicated in the part, they produce a thinner sound with increased contact noise.
- Be wise and do not use a mallet or stick that is substantially harder than the wood of the block as the block may be damaged.
- Strike the block in the center and just off the edge of the opening. Always search out the fullest, most robust sound.
- Remember, a woodblock is delicate and it has limits to how loud it can be played.

As you can see, these fundamentals will involve some practice time but with diligence they can be mastered and will greatly improve your ensemble playing. Check out the exercises and etudes as a beginning for your triangle, tambourine and woodblock studies. Remember: accuracy, consistency and quality of sound are always important!

Good luck and have a great time with the variety of sounds possible with accessory percussion!

