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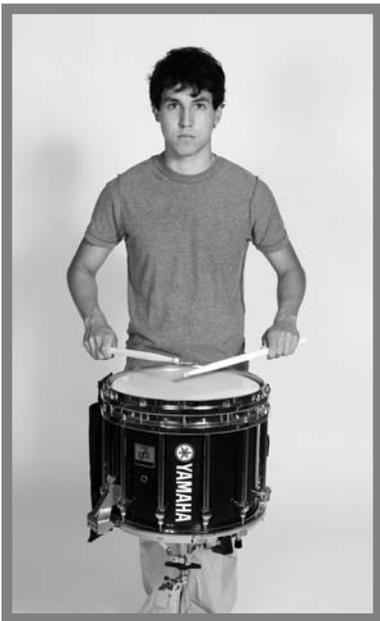
STICK HEIGHTS PROGRAM

We use a system of **stick heights** to help the marching percussion ensemble look and sound uniform. It's often easier for young performers to match heights and volumes when using inches to help define dynamic levels. Forte may be different from one person to the next, but six inches is always six inches. Assign each dynamic level a specific stick height.

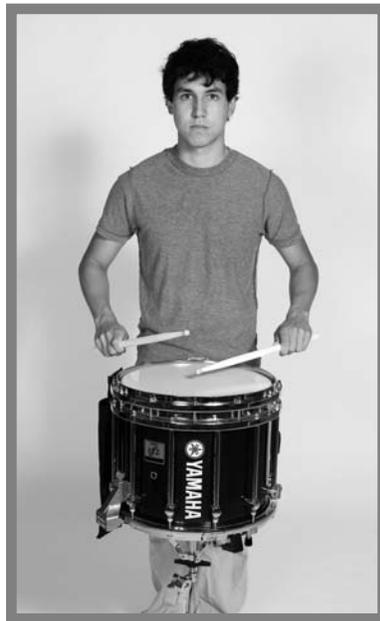
As the students progress, begin to talk less in terms of **stick heights** and use the musical terms more often. Speaking only in terms of stick heights can lead to a mechanical approach and sound from the ensemble, limiting musicality and fluid motion from the students. Many instructors use a series of levels, for example: levels 1, 2, and 3 or tap, accent and full stroke. These are basically the same idea, giving the abstract concept of dynamics a concrete definition.

It is important to stress to the students that they need to listen and balance with each other at all dynamic levels. The heights are merely a guideline, and eventually are only used when there is a discrepancy to get the players on the same page. When beginning a stick heights program, it may be necessary to minimize the number of heights used. Start by using a tap (3") and an accent (9" or 12") height and add more as students become comfortable with these heights.

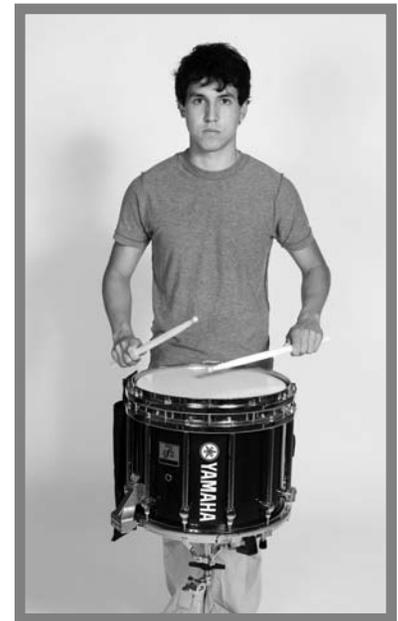
A sample stick heights program:



1^{1/2}" grace notes • *pp*



3" most taps • *p*



6" tap height for louder passages • *mp*



Alternating Stroke

Play entire exercise with the right hand, then repeat with the left.

The next exercise should be used to develop the **double lateral stroke**. At slow tempos, an alternating stroke can be used. As the tempo increases, the students will need to play two notes with each wrist stroke. The numbers (1,2,3,4) refer to the mallets, beginning with the outside mallet of the left hand (1) and ending with the outside mallet of the right hand (4).

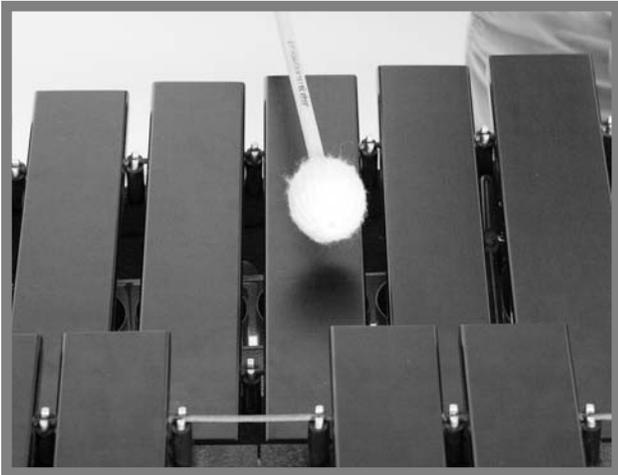


Double Lateral Stroke

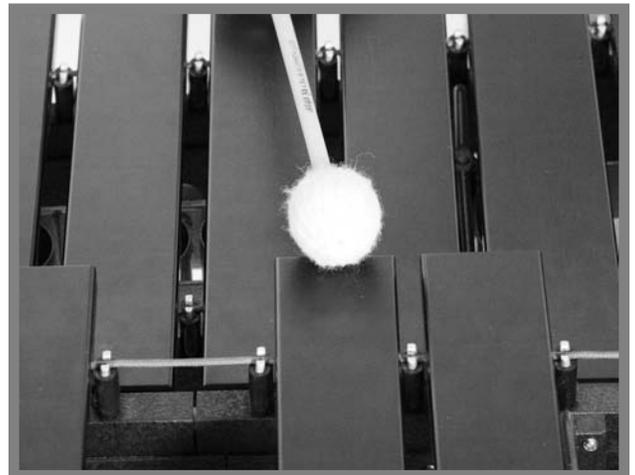
PLAYING AREAS

For general playing on the marimba and xylophone, strike in the center of the natural bars and on the very edge of the accidentals.

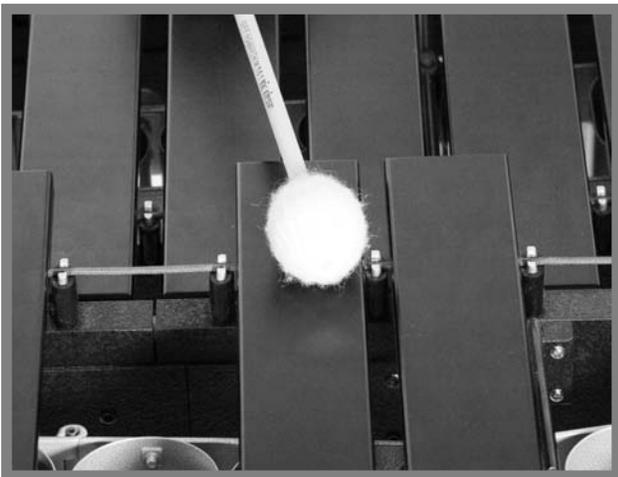
Center



Edge



Playing in the center of the accidentals is preferred when the tempo allows enough time for the performer to execute the musical passage accurately. **For bells and vibraphone**, always strike in the center of the bar whether it is a natural or accidental.



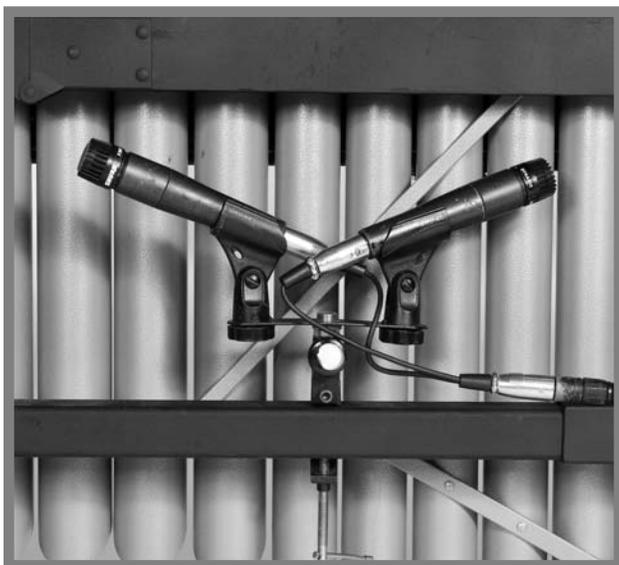
Avoid playing over the node of the bars on any keyboard. This is where the string or screw goes through the bar, producing the least resonance or tone.

Carefully monitor the students to make sure that they are playing in the correct areas on the bars. Playing in the correct areas will give the ensemble a much fuller sound, while playing in the incorrect areas will produce a thin sound.

AMPLIFICATION

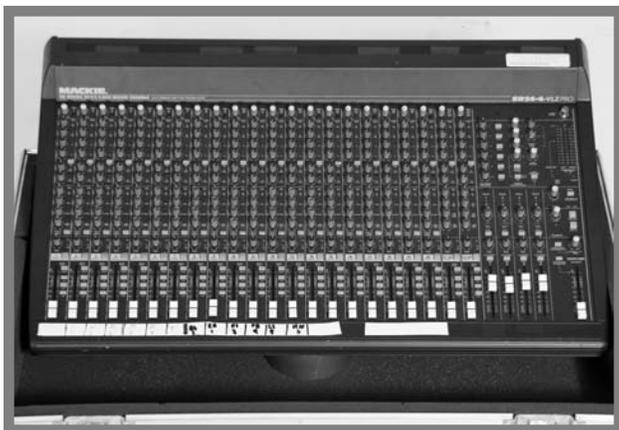
It is becoming more and more common for groups to amplify their front ensembles. This is a good idea both musically and educationally as students don't have to modify their technique or pound the keyboards resulting in cracked bars, broken mallets, or poor sound quality. Be sure to purchase good quality equipment! Several companies have amplification systems that can be purchased as a package.

Microphones



The marimbas should have two microphones each, while the vibraphones are generally fine with only one. The timpani should have at least two when using four drums. One on a stand between *drums one* and *two*, and another between *drums three* and *four*. The microphones can be attached to the keyboard frames underneath the bars, using clamps. Put a piece of foam rubber between the clamp and the metal frame to absorb some of the contact sound of the mallets striking the bars. Some ensembles place the microphones above the keyboard bars by clamping them to racks on the front of the frame.

Mixing Board



Choose a mixing board according to the number of channels, or microphones, needed. It is better to get one that has a few extra channels to provide room for growth in the future. Using the mixing board, the volume level and equalization of each instrument can be adjusted along with a main volume control for the entire front ensemble.

TIMPANI

When used and maintained properly, timpani can add a tremendous amount of depth and power to the sound of the band. Choose a good musician that will not only be able to learn the correct technique, but who will be able to hear pitches and tune the drums. If there is a limited amount of time to train a student to play timpani, look first for someone who can match pitch by humming or singing. It is easier to teach a student with a good sense of pitch the correct playing technique than it is to teach someone with good hands how to tune.

It is best to have a timpani player who will play aggressively. It isn't worth the effort of transporting 4 or 5 large drums on and off the field if they will never be heard. Confidence in their ability to find the correct pitches will usually generate confidence to play aggressively.

GRIP

There are three basic grips for timpani: **German, French, and American.** With all three grips, the mallet is held between the thumb and the first joint of the first finger with the other three finger wrapped lightly around the mallet. **The difference is the angle of the hand.**

The easiest grip for young students to master is the **German grip.** German grip is the basic "matched grip" that is used with snare drum, although the back fingers will be more relaxed when playing timpani in order to get more resonance and tone from the drum with less attack. The palm will be flat to the ground with the thumbs on the side. Students will generally feel more comfortable with this grip because it is the way they first learned to play snare drum.



The students must understand, however, that the touch used on timpani and the desired tone are much different than with snare drum. With German grip, the mallets should be at a 90 degree angle.

DRUMS, CYMBALS, AND ACCESSORY PERCUSSION

The following instruments provide much of the color, character, and impact of the front ensemble. The possibilities and number of instruments that can be included in this section are absolutely endless. Traditional concert percussion instruments such as cymbals, bass drum, tambourines, and triangles are a natural compliment to the sound of the keyboards and timpani. Depending on the style of music, it may be appropriate to include percussion instruments from Africa, Latin America, Japan, India, and the list goes on. A simple walk through a hardware store can result in the addition of metal pipes, trash cans, even a propane tank to enhance the sound of the front ensemble. To explore all of the possibilities would require another book.

In this book, we will address technique and care for some of the instruments most commonly used in the front ensemble, and provide a listing of additional possibilities that may be useful when a different sound is needed.

CONCERT BASS DRUM

The **concert bass drum** can be used in the pit to provide musical impact and a different tonal color from the marching bass drum section. It should be tuned to have a long sustain with no definite pitch. In most cases the front, or batter, head will be tuned slightly higher than the back, or resonant, head. This allows for better articulation from the batter head, with more sustain from the resonant head.

Unlike the set-up in concert band, the drum should be turned with the batter head facing the audience for better projection. Also, angle the drum up towards the press box so that the impacts will go to the same spot as the winds.

Stand

For best results, use a bass drum stand that tilts, and suspends the drum using rubber bands or bungee cords. Tilting the drum will place it at a better angle for playing and projection. Having the drum suspended will allow it to have better resonance.

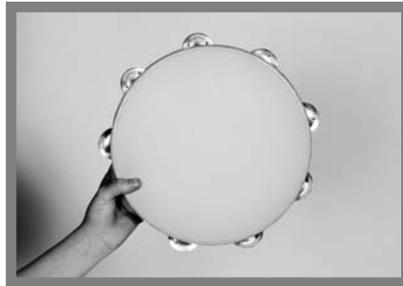


TAMBOURINE

For general playing use a tambourine with a head on it, for more of a rock style use one without a head. If you are wary of using a good concert tambourine with a calfskin head outdoors, many manufacturers make quality tambourines with plastic heads. Tambourines with silver jingles will have a bright sound, while those with brass jingles will have a darker sound.



calf-skin



plastic



rock

Basic Technique



- For **general playing** the tambourine should be held in front of the performer's face, at a 45 degree angle with the weaker hand, and played with the finger tips of the strong hand, toward the outer edge. Hold the tambourine by the edge, with the fingers wrapping around the frame with the thumb on top.



- For **loud playing** the tambourine should be struck with the fist in the center of the head.

CHANGING HEADS

1. After removing the old heads, wipe off the inside of the shell, bearing edge, and the hoops (rims) to remove dirt, tape and wood shavings from sticks, and anything else that has found its way into the drum.
2. Run your hand around the bearing edge to make sure that it is smooth where it will come in contact with the head. It may be necessary to lightly rub a fine grade sandpaper around the edge. This step will not be necessary on the batter side of a free floating snare drum.
3. If your snare drum has a free-floating shell, make sure the shell is in the correct position. If the shell has a snare bed (a light indentation in the bearing edge where the snares cross the shell), make sure it is in line with the snare strainer.
4. Set the new head on the bearing edge and spin to make sure it has even contact. Be sure to set any logos in the same position on each drum for a uniform appearance.
5. Place the hoop on top of the head. Make sure the hoop is even around the head.
6. Clean dirt and old grease from the tension rods.
7. Apply lithium grease to the tip of each tension rod. There is no need to apply to the entire tension rod as it will be lubricated completely through the process of screwing it into the lugs. Over-application can result in build-up of dirt and makes it more difficult to tighten.
8. Place the tension rod through the top of the hoop and into the lugs.
9. Finger tighten the tension rods with both hands opposite each other (i.e. 3 o'clock & 9 o'clock) then moving clockwise around the drum until they are all touching the hoop.
10. Once the tension rods are finger tight, begin to seat the head by turning each tension rod one full turn, moving in a criss-cross/clockwise fashion. Repeat this process, then begin using half turns until the head is within a reasonable range.



For *drums one* and *two*, the correct playing area is about two inches from the rim closest to the performer. The beads of the mallet or stick should be together.



On *drums three* and *four*, the proper spot is about two inches from the rim. However, the beads will not be together as they will follow a path typical of windshield wipers. On *drum three*, the right hand will be perpendicular to the body with the left hand below it at an angle. With *drum four* the position is reversed.



The *shot drum* is usually played just off center away from the body. This is done more for position of the arms than for resonance as shot drums are generally tuned fairly high and the tone has a very quick decay.



Single Hand Splits

Following are several basic tenor splits for developing fluid motion around the drums using "8 on a hand".



TRACK 1 1

out to 3 out to 4 in from 3 in from 4

outs 1 and 2 ins 1 and 2

out from shot in to shot

out & in circles

walk across walk across #2

around the world z's

walk across #3 down & up

PLAYING POSITION

The proper playing position should be relaxed and natural. Any tension in the shoulders or back will affect the fluid motion of the stroke.



First, have the students stand relaxed (with good posture) with their arms hanging naturally by their sides.



Then bring the arms up, bending at the elbow. The forearms should be close to parallel to the ground.

Avoid pushing the elbows in front of, or behind, the body as this will cause tension in the shoulders and back. Some adjustment may be necessary depending on the carrier and where it places the drum in relationship to the body. However, this adjustment should be minimal.



Elbows in front



Elbows behind



Just right!

MUFFLING

There are several different approaches for **muffling marching bass drums**. There is no right or wrong way, choose what works best, and provides the desired sound.

1. Weather stripping or tone foam from one of the drum manufacturers glued on the outside of the drumhead, close to the rim.
2. Weather stripping or tone foam from one of the drum manufacturers glued on the inside of the drumhead, close to the rim.
3. Foam similar to that used in the seat cushions on couches cut into 4 inch strips and glued to the inside of the shell. The foam should stick out approximately $1/8^{\text{th}}$ of an inch from the shell so that it will press against the head.
4. Square pads made from cloths taped to the head.
5. Both Remo and Evans have designed marching bass heads that come pre-muffled or with a simple muffling system designed specifically for the drumhead.



The first and second options will sound pretty much the same. The primary difference between the two is the appearance. The second will provide a cleaner look since the foam is not visible, but will be more difficult to replace or repair if the foam separates. When using one of these two options, it is a good idea to have foam pre-cut or even pre-applied to extra heads. This will speed up the process of changing heads, especially at the last minute. The third option will

muffle the head the most as it actually applies pressure to the head. It also makes head changes easy since the foam remains attached to the shell and does not need to be reapplied. The fourth option is rather dated and is generally not used.

The steps for the marching grip:



1. Put the hand through the strap up to the wrist.



2. Turn the hand so that the palm is facing outward and the thumb is pointed down.



3. Bring the hand around in an upward motion so the strap rests between the thumb and forefinger.

The performer's hand should have a snug fit within the strap. Too loose and they will have trouble controlling the cymbal, too tight and the strap could cut off circulation.

With this grip the students will be able to control the cymbal with their fingertips and the palm. Although this grip does not dampen the sound, it makes it more comfortable to play the cymbals, and makes it easier to control the cymbals when performing visuals.

To perform the following basic visuals, the performer needs to be familiar with the following positions:

1. Cymbals straight down in front of the performer at 6 o'clock.



2. Cymbals out at the performer's side at 3 and 9 o'clock.



3. Cymbals above the performer's head at 11 and 1 o'clock.



With each of these positions, all of the motion should occur slightly in front of the performer. Trying to execute these positions parallel or behind the body will be uncomfortable and cause unnecessary tension in the back and shoulders.

Towels

Require that each member of the cymbal section carry a towel any time they have the cymbals. The towels can be used for a variety of reasons, the most important is to provide a barrier between the cymbal and the ground. When the students set the cymbals down, they should always lay them on a towel, especially if the band rehearses on asphalt.



The towels can also be used to wipe fingerprints, sweat, and dirt from the cymbals. Be sure to have the students check the towels for dirt or gravel before wiping the cymbals. Remind them to wash the towels occasionally so that they do not do more harm than good.

Cracks

Anytime a crack develops, drill a small hole at the end of the crack to keep it from spreading throughout the cymbal. Left unchecked, a small crack in the edge of the cymbal can quickly escalate into an entire chunk of the cymbal breaking off.



EXERCISES

The next section of the book is a compilation of exercises used with the percussion program at Lassiter. We have included splits for the tenors, bass drums, keyboards, and cymbals, along with an explanation of the purpose of each exercise and rehearsal suggestions. Also included with each entry is a basic exercise that must be mastered before moving on. These basic exercises address the same techniques and skills, but in simple time signatures or rhythms. This allows young students to focus on the fundamentals of the exercise, the development of a particular skill, rather than devote all of their effort to learning to play the exercise itself.

When planning out your exercise program, keep in mind the students' ability levels and the relevance of the exercise to the style of music you're playing. Do not over program the exercises, especially in a high school setting. Make sure the exercises teach the basics, which are; maintaining a proper grip, basic stroke types, and rhythmic or rudimental patterns. All of the rehearsal time should not be spent cleaning the exercises. The purpose of the exercise program is to develop specific techniques and fundamentals which should make it easier to clean the show music.

The majority of fundamentals and techniques can be addressed with the first two exercises, while the other exercises provide further development and study. There is a large amount of information devoted to "6 - 8 - 7" and "ATP" as they form the foundation for the remaining entries. Everyone should incorporate these two exercises (or similar exercises) that address these skills, into their program. The rest of the warm-up routine and technique development will depend on the needs of each percussion ensemble and the skill level of the students.

Work each of the exercises slowly in the beginning stages, usually around 80 to 90 beats per minute. At this tempo, directors and instructors should be able to isolate and correct individual technique problems more easily. Moving too quickly will result in students developing incorrect techniques in order to keep up with the faster tempos. The resulting incorrect technique then becomes habit.

Allow the exercise program to evolve from year to year as the students and musical situation changes. Write out all of the exercises so that the students have to read them. This will help develop their reading ability. It may take longer at the beginning, but will develop better musicians in the long run.

(Don't forget to print your individual parts from the CD!)

Basic Exercise

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

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



TRACK 32

16th Timing

Mallets

Timpani

Snare

Tenors

5 BD's

Cymbals

1 2 3

R L R R L R → R R L R R L → R L L R L L →

R L R → R R L → R L L →

R L R → R R L → R L L →

R L R → R R L → R L L →

Mallets

Timpani

Snare

Tenors

5 BD's

Cymbals

4 5 6

L R L L R L → R L R → R R L → R L L → L R L →

L R L → R L R → R R L → R L L → L R L →

L R L → R L R → R R L → R L L → L R L →

L R L → R L R → R R L → R L L → L R L →

TRIPLET ROLLS

Triplet Rolls works isolated diddle patterns and rolls, using a triplet hand motion. Playing rolls in a triplet format has become increasingly common, due to the increased tempos in the modern marching activity. As the tempos get faster, 16th based rolls become more difficult to play because of the density of the notes and the speed of the hand motion. Playing triplet rolls at these faster tempos allows the performer to play with a more relaxed approach and get a full sound quality from the diddles.

Play the exercise at slower tempos to allow the students to concentrate on the correct rhythmic interpretation of the diddles and rolls. Also make sure the students match the sound quality and height established by the check pattern. Playing the exercise with the check pattern only, while thinking about the rolls and diddles, is often useful. The check pattern should have a strong sound quality without tension. Make sure the students do not place accents on the diddles, or at the beginning of the roll patterns, and watch their back fingers as they have a tendency to drop them off of the stick.

Crescendos, decrescendos and accented patterns should be rehearsed as well because these are common applications in music. It is very common for students to have good execution of a roll exercise and then completely change their technique when they encounter dynamics or articulations in the show music. Having these potential problems in the exercise allows you to address them much earlier. Make sure there is no fundamental change in their technique. The heights or zones will change to achieve the dynamic contrast. Their grip and stroke should remain the same.

We have not included a basic exercise for **Triplet Rolls**. Instead, we have written several variations that can help isolate different parts of the roll patterns, and challenge the students with more difficult combinations. Rehearse these variations at a variety of tempos, heights, and with and without accents. Look for consistent hand motion, stroke, and sound quality throughout. These variations can be executed with the tenor split written. Bass Drums will need to remove the 32nd note diddles and play only the 8th note skeleton of the split.

16th Roll Variations - Tenors

(Play each one of these in place of bars 1 - 4 in the exercise 16th Rolls)

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5. 

6. 

7. 

8. 

9. 

10. 

CADENCES AND STAND GROOVES

The final section of the book is intended to give the students an opportunity to apply some of the techniques developed in the exercise chapter. Included are 3 cadences, written at different ability levels: easy, medium, and difficult. If the drumline is ready to play the advanced cadence, *Legend*, the easier cadences can be used as reading exercises early in the season.

We have also included two of what we call “stand grooves”. The stand grooves are fun for the students to play at football games, pep rallies, etc. They will also give the directors and percussion instructors some organized music for the percussionists to play, rather than having the students ad lib during games.

As with show music, while rehearsing the cadences and stand grooves, keep in mind the exercise programs and techniques addressed. If a selection is not progressing as hoped, it is probably due to a lack of the student’s ability to perform the exercise/technique correctly or a lack of understanding of how the exercise/technique relates to the music.



TRACK 38

On the Way

by Mike Lynch

♩ = 120

Snare

Tenors

5 BD's

Cymbals

f

R L RL LR R R R R RLRLLR R LR L R RRLRRLRLRLR

R L RL LR R R R RLRLLR R RL LR RLRL LR RRLRRLRLRR

f

f

f

2 3 3 4

Snare

Tenors

5 BD's

Cymbals

5 6 7 8

f

3 3

Snare

Tenors

5 BD's

Cymbals

9 10 11 12

f

f

3 3

L R R L R RRLRRLRLRLR L R R LR R L L R RLRLLR