

Groove Inc.

Front Ensemble

Exercise Guidelines

Posture

Both feet should be flat on the floor about a shoulder's width apart. One foot should be slightly in front of the other (vibraphone players should keep their right foot on the pedal), and there should be enough distance between the instrument and the player that the player's arms hang comfortably at his or her sides. Shoulders should be back (not slouched), and the chin should be up (head should not be bent toward the instrument).

Movement

Shoulders should always remain parallel to the instrument, and the player must keep his or her body centered over the notes that are played (belly button in front of mallets—don't reach for notes). By shifting weight from one foot to the other, the player can “sway” to keep his or her body centered behind the notes. Movement behind the marimba should be fluid and graceful—the body should never turn and the feet should never cross. Vibraphone players will keep their right toes on the pedal and the right heel will function as a pivot point—sometimes moving the left foot to shift weight in order to keep the player centered.

Sound Quality

Quality of sound is of utmost importance to the mallet percussion player. Players achieve good sound through appropriate playing spots, mallet choices, and a conscious effort to lift sound out of the bar (not smash it in). Players should hit at the center of the bar whenever possible. At faster tempos, it might be necessary to play over the cut (edge) of the bar, but be sure to avoid the node (the place where the cord runs through the bar). Through developing an ear that listens for good sounds, the player can make a mature, musical contribution to the ensemble.

Set Position

In the set position, players should be exhibiting proper posture (defined above) and be ready to move appropriately (also defined above). Mallets should be resting over the first notes that will be played, and they should be set at the height determined by the starting dynamic level (mallets low to the keyboard for *piano* and high above the keyboard for *forte*).

Chromatic 8s

Goal: proper execution of the piston stroke

- Start with mallets above the keyboard at the defined dynamic level
- Downstroke: both mallets should hit the bars at the same time (no flams)
- Upstroke: mallets should immediately return to the original mallet height
- Hands should maintain a 45 degree angle to the mallet instrument
 - Thumbs should not be pointed at the ceiling
 - Backs of hands should not be entirely parallel to the ceiling
- Watch for good playing spots
 - Center of the bar at slower tempos
 - Cut/Edge at faster tempos
 - Not only watch, but be sure to listen for good playing spots

Blues

Goal: note accuracy plus the proper execution of the piston stroke

- Maintain proper piston stroke technique (as described in *Chromatic 8s*)
- When mallets return to the original mallet height, they should also be placed over the next note in the sequence
 - Movement to the next note(s) should take place during the upstroke
 - Place the mallet over the note before it is played
- Watch and listen for good playing spots

Green & Chromatic Triplets

Goal: appropriate scale-wise movement plus note accuracy and piston stroke technique

***Groove members must be prepared to play all 12 major scales (see circle of 5ths below)**

- In the starting position, the mallets should resemble a wedge or triangle shape (mallets form the tip)
- Right hand lead (unless otherwise noted)
 - The right mallet should be placed over the first note at the appropriate dynamic level
 - The left mallet should begin just to the left of the right mallet and will begin moving to the second note of the scale as the right mallet takes a downstroke
- As one mallet takes an upstroke, the other mallet should take a downstroke
- Mallets should remain parallel
 - One mallet should never be in front of the other mallet
 - Mallets should never cross over each other

Double Vertical

Goal: proper Steven's technique including grip and vertical wrist motion

***Recommended Reading:** *Method of Movement for Marimba*, Leigh Howard Stevens

- The piston stroke technique will be applied to 4 mallet playing as well as 2 mallet
 - Begin with mallets at the defined dynamic level
 - All mallets should begin at the same height
- Tops of thumbs should be facing the ceiling
- Use the wrist in a "hand shaking" motion to hit the bars and then return to original playing height
- This stroke involves minimal arm motion and focuses primarily on the wrist
- Be sure to maintain good playing spots
- Avoid "flams" by making sure your mallets begin at the same height and hit the bars at the same time

Single Alternating

Goal: proper Steven's technique including alternating wrist motion

- Start with mallets at the defined dynamic level (all mallets at the same height)
- Mallets should move in a rotating motion
 - As one mallet takes a downstroke, the other should take an upstroke
 - This results in a "door knob turning" motion
- Be sure to use wrist to pull the sound out of the bar
- Mallets should always return to the original playing height when taking an upstroke
- The single alternating stroke is often used in 1324 mallet pattern variations

Double Lateral

Goal: proper Steven's technique including lateral wrist motion

- The double lateral stroke is similar to the single alternating stroke
- Instead of taking two separate strokes in each hand, use one large motion to rotate and hit the bars twice per hand
- This is an idea similar to a double stroke roll on a drum
- The double lateral stroke is often used in 1243 mallet pattern variations

Circle of Fifths

