

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

**Equipping College Students for a Marching Percussion Career in the United States**

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the Faculty of the School of Music  
in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Doctor of Music Education

by

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Equipping College Students for a Marching Percussion Career in the United States

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## ABSTRACT

Despite the traditional American percussion curriculum being valuable to the college percussionist, there is an unclear path toward preparing students for a career in the field of marching percussion. Every year, students graduate with a desire to pursue the marching arts as a vocation without sufficient guidance. This study examined the perspectives of marching band professionals (N=107) who have carved their path in the industry. Guided by Creswell's research design model, this qualitative inquiry identifies viewpoints from marching percussionists that can create a comprehensive percussion curriculum. Outlooks on performing, teaching, composing/arranging, and the industry have emerged as themes integral to the success of one's marching percussion employment. Therefore, these motifs are essential learning elements throughout college. Illustrating the experiences of people who have made marching percussion an occupation, surveys will be conducted with many successful marching percussionists to create a list of surfacing motifs represented in their stories. Having a professional's knowledge and experience is needed to develop a more efficient percussion curriculum that will improve the discipline of marching percussion. Pioneering the field of inquiry in marching percussion has only recently become explored as a valid research model. This project will serve as an example of the intersection of this young genre of percussion mixing with the traditional percussion curriculum. Additionally, this study and the ideas of new percussion curricula could encourage further investigation by other percussionists to apply this growing research method to all styles within the genre of percussion.

Keywords: curriculum; marching percussion; performing; teaching; composing/arranging

## DEDICATION

This thesis and degree are dedicated to my wife, Micha, children, Lyric and Rhett, and dog, Poppy. Micha, whose faith, love, and encouragement constantly remind me of who I need to be. When this academic pursuit seemed overwhelming and impossible, she encouraged me, prayed for me, and inspired me to persevere. She worked endlessly to care for our family and selflessly gave much of herself to support me. God has truly blessed me with a best friend and soul mate who completes me and brings out the best version of myself.

Lyric and Rhett, my children who make me proud every day to be their father, encouraged me daily to “get [my] homework done.” They were understanding and inspired me to complete this project successfully. Sweet hugs and smiles from them propelled me forward each day, and I will be forever grateful for their love.

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And finally, without the grace of God through His Son, Jesus Christ, I would not be who I am or where I am today. I am thankful for the eternal hope and life I can and will continue to experience in my relationship with Him. Thank you, Lord, for your never-ending love and grace. It is my prayer that others will see your light shining through me.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

Bands of America (BOA)

Bring Your Own Style (BYOS)

Doctor of Musical Arts (D.M.A.)

Doctor of Music Education (D.M.E.)

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

Drum Corps Associates (DCA)

Drum Corps International (DCI)

National Association of Rudimental Drummers (NARD)

Percussive Arts Society (PAS)

University of Massachusetts Amherst (UMass)

Winter Guard International (WGI)

## CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	III
DEDICATION.....	IV
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	V
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	VI
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
BACKGROUND.....	1
Background of Marching Percussion.....	1
The Importance of Marching Percussion Education.....	6
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM .....	8
STATEMENT OF THE PURPOSE .....	11
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY .....	13
RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	15
HYPOTHESES.....	16
CORE CONCEPTS.....	18
DEFINITION OF TERMS .....	22
CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	25
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	26
PERFORMANCE AND AUDITIONS .....	28
Musicianship.....	29
Playing to One’s Best Ability .....	29
Unified Performance.....	31
Reading Marching Percussion Music .....	32
Concise Rudimental Percussion Notation History.....	32
Rudiments and Visual Aesthetics .....	33
Learning Marching Percussion Music .....	35
Marching Percussion Technique.....	36
Grip.....	36
Strokes.....	37
Beat Patterns .....	39
Performance Characteristics .....	39
Auditions.....	40
Concepts for Successful Auditions .....	40
Drum Corps International Auditions .....	42
Martial Auditions.....	43
Theme Park Auditions .....	44
How to Maintain a Job After Winning the Audition .....	45
Summary of Performance and Auditions.....	46
TEACHING AND PEDAGOGICAL TECHNIQUES .....	47
Marching Percussion Pedagogical Methods .....	49
Philosophies of Teaching Marching Percussion.....	49
Listening Techniques .....	52

Approach to Cleaning Music .....	55
Summary of Teaching and Pedagogical Techniques .....	58
COMPOSING, ARRANGING, AND PORTFOLIO SUBMISSIONS .....	59
Mental Considerations .....	59
Marching Percussion Compositional and Arranging Techniques .....	61
Overview .....	61
Marching Percussion Arranging .....	63
Warm-Ups .....	63
Cadences .....	64
Show Music .....	64
Four Musical Functions: Support Material .....	67
Four Musical Functions: Melodic Voice .....	68
Four Musical Functions: Provide Impact .....	68
Four Musical Functions: Provide Effect/Color .....	69
Show Design for Marching Percussion .....	69
Staging Concepts .....	71
Wayne Markworth’s Recommendations .....	71
Corey Spurlin’s Recommendations .....	71
Marching Percussion Portfolio .....	73
Music Notation .....	73
Digital Audio Workstations .....	74
Visual Design Software .....	75
Summary of Composing, Arranging, and Portfolio Submissions .....	76
CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	76
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY .....	78
RESEARCH DESIGN .....	78
RESEARCH QUESTIONS .....	79
PARTICIPANTS .....	80
SETTING .....	82
DATA ANALYSIS .....	84
CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	85
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS .....	86
RESEARCH QUESTION ONE .....	86
Performing .....	87
Teaching .....	88
Composing and Arranging .....	88
Research Question One Summary .....	89
RESEARCH QUESTION TWO .....	89
Auditions or Interviews .....	90
Pedagogy Techniques .....	90
Portfolio Submissions .....	91
Research Question Two Summary .....	91
MARCHING PERCUSSION CURRICULUM .....	92
Marching Percussion Curriculum Summary .....	93
CHAPTER SUMMARY .....	94



CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION .....	95
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS.....	95
Marching Percussion Performance .....	96
Marching Percussion Pedagogy.....	98
Marching Percussion Composition and Arranging.....	99
Marching Percussion Curriculum .....	102
SIGNIFICANCE .....	103
LIMITATIONS.....	106
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	107
IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE .....	110
CONCLUSION.....	112
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	114
APPENDICES .....	121
APPENDIX A: TOTAL BAND PROGRAM.....	121
APPENDIX B: TOTAL PERCUSSION PROGRAM .....	122
APPENDIX C: PLAYING ZONES ON MALLET INSTRUMENTS .....	123
APPENDIX D: ANATOMY OF A STICK.....	124
APPENDIX E: REHEARSAL TECHNIQUES FOR MARCHING PERCUSSION .....	125
APPENDIX F: MALLET OSTINATO ACCOMPANIMENT .....	126
APPENDIX G: AUGMENTED MELODIC THEME.....	127
APPENDIX H: IMPACTFUL PERCUSSION.....	128
APPENDIX I: FRONT ENSEMBLE EFFECTS.....	130
APPENDIX J: SURVEY QUESTIONS.....	131
APPENDIX K: RECRUITMENT LETTER FOR SOCIAL MEDIA.....	132
APPENDIX L: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL.....	133
APPENDIX M: DOCTORAL THESIS DEFENSE APPROVAL.....	134

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The mission of a balanced music curriculum is to equip college students with a career that interests them. According to philosopher John Dewey, the aesthetic experience is one that is “embedded in the manifold of human needs and interests.”<sup>1</sup> He further explains, “we actively participate in its processes, and it is from this participation that all experiences...emerge.”<sup>2</sup> Since life involves a continual experience of process and evolution, the summation of these aspects of music and music education all point to preparing students for life. Laying the infrastructure for a philosophy of marching percussion education that applies to music educators and their programs in the United States may improve the achievement of percussion graduates.

### Background

#### **Background of Marching Percussion**

To accomplish the aforementioned goal, one can succinctly review the evolution of marching percussion and how it is imperative to have specialized skills and training for one’s success in the industry. Musicologist Stanley Sadie acknowledges that “there is [a] considerable amount of evidence concerning military music in the ancient world... By 1600 B.C., the Egyptians were marching to trumpet and drum.”<sup>3</sup> Author Sybil Marcuse reveals that royal court dancers wore drums and performed as part of the entertainment for their ruler in the ancient world.<sup>4</sup> Marcuse’s research signified that ancient marching drummers were entertainers in the

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne D. Bowman and Ana Lucía Frega, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy in Music Education* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 96.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>3</sup> Stanley Sadie, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments*, vol. 1 (London: Macmillan Press, 1984), 121.

<sup>4</sup> Sybil Marcuse, *A Survey of Musical Instruments* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 124.

ancient world and used drums to communicate in battle. According to Gary D. Cook, former president of the Percussive Arts Society, “Drums and drumming have been associated with both military functions and civilian activities throughout history. Evolving from the Saracen armies’ music of the eleventh through thirteenth century Crusades, one of the earliest fife and drum guilds existed in Basel, Switzerland, in 1332.”<sup>5</sup> The drums established the pulse for the soldiers’ march and the fifes provided the melody as the troop advanced. The function of military drummers continued in military service and became common in many countries all over the world.

Regarding the use of marching drums in the United States, “the fife and drum corps was well established” by the time of the American Revolutionary War.<sup>6</sup> Some believe “this marks the beginning of the American drumming heritage.”<sup>7</sup> Another former president of the Percussive Arts Society, John H. Beck, identifies two developments observed in this early form of drumming in America, involving performance and literature. Beck’s study of this progress includes how “rudimental drumming becomes much more stylized” and the fact that “most significant songs and instructional books about marching percussion were written in the classical period.”<sup>8</sup> As a result of this growth from 1750-1850, marching percussion became more organized and accessible. It reached the educational realm for the first time in the 1840s at the University of Notre Dame. At this institution, the formation of a marching band allowed for marching drum performance at football games. Shortly after, drum and bugle corps became more

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<sup>5</sup> Gary D. Cook, *Teaching Percussion*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Boston: Cengage, 2019), 329.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 329.

<sup>7</sup> John H. Beck, ed., *Encyclopedia of Percussion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 265.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 265-266.

common and “began to appear outside of the military.”<sup>9</sup> The first drum and bugle corps competitions within the United States began around 1872.<sup>10</sup> Two of the most supportive associations for the development of marching drumming styles reaching new performance opportunities include the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.<sup>11</sup> As drum corps gained popularity by the 1950s, “several thousand drum and bugle corps existed in the United States and Canada.”<sup>12</sup>

Since the late 1950s-1960s, drum corps and collegiate marching bands “departed more and more from its military origins and integrated a greater variety of music – from symphonic to popular – with more interesting visual aspects of performance.”<sup>13</sup> The addition of visual elements in performance created new opportunities for musical composition. This short period delivered “a great deal of change in styles, techniques, and equipment, brought forth by a new generation of instructors.”<sup>14</sup> These teachers used the martial drumming style as the foundation to create new musical and technical embellishments.

The Percussive Arts Society (PAS) was established in the 1950s and their aim “is to have a positive influence on percussion performance, education, composition, publication, and instrument manufacture.”<sup>15</sup> The society’s goals include “stimulat[ing] a greater interest in

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<sup>9</sup> Beck, *Encyclopedia of Percussion*, 268.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.

<sup>12</sup> Daniel Fyffe, *Indoor Percussion Ensembles and Drum Corps* (New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, 2007), 27.

<sup>13</sup> Cook, *Teaching Percussion*, 329.

<sup>14</sup> Beck, *Encyclopedia of Percussion*, 269.

<sup>15</sup> James Holland, *Practical Percussion: A Guide to the Instruments and Their Source* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2005), 89.

percussion performance and teaching,” “promot[ing] better teaching of percussion instruments,” and “establish[ing] standard criteria of adjudication for percussion performance in light of today’s demands on the percussion player.”<sup>16</sup> One notable result of the PAS formation is the evolution of drum rudiments. Before the establishment of the PAS, there were only 26 standard drum rudiments. The PAS expanded this list to 40 rudiments with more articulations and interpretations of such embellishments added.<sup>17</sup> The institution of this group of percussionists was another way to organize a new and exciting genre of music: marching percussion.

Two substantial advancements of competitive drum corps are due to the Drum Corps Associates (DCA) formation in 1963 and Drum Corps International (DCI) in 1971.<sup>18</sup> DCA standardized “percussion judging to the activity.”<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, DCI “organize[d] and unif[ied] leadership in drum corps.”<sup>20</sup> DCI has made many improvements, with new rules and regulations that allow for more creativity and performance opportunities. This evolution involves detailed performance practices, specific instructional techniques, and designed theatrical movements that are paramount to the achievement of the musicians and ensembles. Cook says that “the percussion section underwent interesting transformations in instrumentation, writing, playing styles, and pedagogical approaches.”<sup>21</sup> Due to these adaptations, specialized musicians must fill the responsibilities of performers, educators, and composers/arrangers.

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<sup>16</sup> Beck, *Encyclopedia of Percussion*, 315.

<sup>17</sup> Cook, *Teaching Percussion*, 378.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 270-271.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 270.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 271.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 329-330.

Some marching arts companies helped create new instruments and equipment that propelled the marching genre of music forward. Yamaha, Adams/Pearl, Tama, Zildjian, Sabian, Vic Firth, Innovative Percussion, and Ludwig have all influenced the field of marching percussion. The Ludwig family and company have a clear history of marching percussion innovation:

William Ludwig Sr., who started the company in 1909, established product designs and standards used in the segment for decades to come. His son, William Ludwig Jr., was an early and avid supporter of Drum Corps International who innovated numerous drums, marching bells, xylophones, and carriers for the booming drum corps movement of the 1970s... In the 1980s, however, new factors rearranged the playing field in marching percussion. Increased competition arrived from overseas manufacturers, and marching band and drum corps numbers dropped as baby boomers aged out of leading programs... Three decades later, however, Ludwig was back. In 2015 the drum maker delivered its first new marching products since the '80s - returning to a very different marching arts scene than the one it had left. With proliferating band, drum corps, and winter guard programs, the segment had grown into a year-round, multi-level phenomenon.<sup>22</sup>

Ludwig has been and continues to create new products for the percussion family. Due to his love for DCI, William Ludwig Jr. initiated a movement that expanded the marching percussion section. His tenacity to advance the production of instruments and equipment drove the return of the Ludwig company in 2015. Companies like Ludwig, make it possible for the specialization of marching percussion techniques and performance. The development of instruments and equipment allows for more creativity from composers and arrangers in the marching arts activity, which directly increases the need for experts in the field.

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<sup>22</sup> Music Trades, "Ludwig's Return to the Marching World: Fueled by the Growth of Marching Programs and a Long Tradition in the Segment, Ludwig has Reestablished its Name in the Marching Percussion Arena," *Gale Business Insights: Global*, November 2016, [http://bi.gale.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/global/article/GALE%7CA470557837?u=vic\\_liberty](http://bi.gale.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/global/article/GALE%7CA470557837?u=vic_liberty).

## The Importance of Marching Percussion Education

The field of marching percussion has seen and continues to endure changes each marching season. Beck declares that “the modern period [1980-present] of marching percussion activities is one that many would describe as artistically sophisticated and historically profound. There are ongoing musical and technical innovations around the globe in marching and field percussion.”<sup>23</sup> This modernization of a musical genre is a positive development for creating new ideas and musical opportunities, but it can be difficult for one to stay relevant without proper training. To answer this challenging order, Cook responds:

The informed, energetic director who takes advantage of today’s many resources, adequately outfits, correctly trains, and constantly challenges his or her percussionists with good music and fine percussion arrangements will find that these experiences in the marching percussion section carry over logically into indoor concert ensembles and complement the making of year-round total percussionists.<sup>24</sup>

Cook believes educators who appropriately apply their education to their dissemination will constructively affect the marching percussion ensemble and entire percussion program.

Percussionist and professor John Wooton says, “the more [one] knows, the better [his or her] chances” for successful drum corps auditions, succinctly educating students, or creating excellent music compositions.<sup>25</sup> Cook and Wooton are advocates for marching arts percussionists exercising his or her knowledge in performance, teaching, and composing/arranging. This application can positively alter one’s achievement in many aspects of the marching percussion genre.

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<sup>23</sup> Beck, *Encyclopedia of Percussion*, 272.

<sup>24</sup> Cook, *Teaching Percussion*, 332.

<sup>25</sup> John Wooton, *The Drummer’s Rudimental Reference Book* (Nashville: Row-Loff Productions, 1992), 3.

Regrettably, the standard college percussion curriculum does not include enough training in the field of marching percussion. For example, typical college graduates believe it would be incredible to earn a living by fulfilling their passion for the marching arts. Nevertheless, where might one start a search for a job in the field of marching percussion? Conventional percussion students do not typically focus on marching percussion styles and methods in college because many percussion curricula emphasize orchestral and commercial percussion techniques. As a result, percussion majors do not feel adequately prepared to explore teaching the percussion section of a drum corps or composing/arranging indoor drumline shows. Uneducated about potential career prospects in the field of marching percussion, some percussion graduates settle for playing drums as a hobby and pursue a different profession altogether.

Adam Wiencken, the percussion specialist for Broken Arrow Public Schools in Oklahoma, says, “whatever you choose to do for a living, make sure you love it.”<sup>26</sup> Discovering a student’s passion and giving them the tools needed to pursue their interests as an occupation may produce quality students and positively affect their area of expertise. Musician and educator David Elliot claims “all school subjects, experiences, aims, and attainments ought to be conceived in terms of their relationship to life goals” of the student.<sup>27</sup> It might be beneficial to re-examine the traditional percussion curriculum to see if there may be ways to develop specialized vocational paths that students can utilize in their career pursuits.

Unfortunately, there is not a clear path toward achieving employment in the field of marching percussion. Amidst many method books which describe the performance and

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<sup>26</sup> Adam Wiencken, “Career Options in Percussion,” *Halftime Magazine*, October 3, 2020, 3, <https://halftimemag.com/september-october-2020/career-options-in-percussion.html>.

<sup>27</sup> David J. Elliott, *Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 308.



composition/arranging techniques used in the genre of marching percussion, there is no scholarly literature that will aid one's pursuit of employment in this area. This gap in available literature may be due to the lack of academic research conducted on the subject matter. While some scholars work in marching percussion, many are strictly performers, educators, and composers/arrangers. The fast pace of marching band, drum corps, and indoor percussion seasons may also hinder the time needed to pursue academic research in this field. Therefore, there is a need to address questions within marching percussion that may positively affect the industry and students who wish to begin their life's work.

#### Statement of the Problem

Despite the typical collegiate percussion curriculum graduating excellent percussionists, there is a lack of marching percussion specialization within a percussion college curriculum. Specific opportunities within this field of music are being created and evolving every year, thus generating a need for more focused instruction in the marching arts. According to champion DCI percussion arrangers Jim Casella and Jim Ancona, "with each section of the marching percussion becoming more specialized, this multitude of responsibilities is in many ways unique," which "can create a challenging environment filled with musical, technical, and logistical questions."<sup>28</sup> With more specific jobs being created and evolving within this percussion area, greater detail in the percussion curriculum may benefit the percussion major. For example, Dave Knowlton, percussion author and music educator, explains that "the content coverage within a percussion methods course is necessarily broad - a type of survey of percussion," so this course will not

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<sup>28</sup> Jim Casella and Jim Ancona, *Up Front: A Complete Resource for Today's Pit Ensemble* (Portland, OR: Tap Space Publications, 2003), 8.

sufficiently prepare students for a specialized position in marching percussion.<sup>29</sup> This course may serve students best if divided into several sections to achieve more detail in their instruction.

Marching percussion elements that courses could encompass may include basic rudiments; hybrid rudiments; shaping musical phrases on the football field or basketball court; identifying listening perspectives in various locations and different situations; composing and arranging for the drumline, front ensemble, or entertainment ensemble; and analyzing the pedagogy of marching percussion in all circumstances. The span of the skill level of performers is vast, so the ability to instruct all students and performers can be challenging. Edward Freytag, a percussionist and educator, notes that “a majority of what is currently on the market [marching percussion literature] is dated either in its notational and musical concepts, or it is too difficult or too easy to meet the demands of all levels of rudimental students.”<sup>30</sup> Explaining musical literature to students with varying skill levels is necessary to be a successful educator. Performer and percussion instructor Robert Breithaupt recognizes that “the percussion area is in a constant state of change...new instruments, notation and playing techniques make staying abreast with new trends a challenge, both for the percussionist and the music educator.”<sup>31</sup> The continuous fluctuations in the percussion section make performing, teaching, and composing/arranging difficult. For this reason, a concentrated education of percussion is imperative for one’s advancement in the genre.

Despite the importance of using literature to increase one’s technical knowledge of drum rudiments and their applications, not all embellishments are composed in notation. John Wooten

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<sup>29</sup> Dave S. Knowlton, “Content Analysis of Students’ Journals in a Percussion Methods Course,” *Research Studies in Music Education* 25, no. 1 (February 2013): 63, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X12470598>.

<sup>30</sup> Edward Freytag, *The Rudimental Cookbook* (Nashville: Row-Loff Productions, 1993), 4.

<sup>31</sup> Robert Breithaupt, *The Complete Percussionist*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oskaloosa, IA: C.L. Barnhouse Company, 2005), iii.

mentions that “some of the more advanced rudiments, such as flam stutters and flam fives, are not often seen in published solos and method books. These exercises are for those that have a sound technical background and are ready to start trying new ideas.”<sup>32</sup> In his statement, Wooten discusses the need to compose hybrid rudiments based on previously learned content. The ‘Bring Your Own Style’ movement, conceived by Ralph Nader and Harvey Thompson, is a campaign that seeks an individual approach to playing drums. According to Nader and Thompson’s website, BYOS is an:

entertainment and performing arts duo from Brooklyn, NY that’s trying to change the world one beat at a time. With their creativity, musical abilities, innovative drumming and mind-blowing tricks, they’re able to catch any eye and put a smile on a face...It’s the love for the craft that fuels BYOS to welcome other artists to collaborate and demonstrate their love for the arts to a larger audience.<sup>33</sup>

The ‘BYOS’ duo encourages drummers to take rudiments and design new ways to perform their percussion compositions. Using percussion as one’s artistic voice to tell their story and exhibit their style is the purpose of this musical pair. Taking previously learned rhythms and placing an individual spin on rudiments should be explored within a newly developed college course.

Percussion pedagogue Dr. Michael Udow understands that the genre of percussion is expanding, and students must begin focusing on a particular aspect of percussion to pursue.

According to Udow:

Some percussionist students studying western percussion instruments will specialize in specific genres of percussion performance and teaching, which may include marching percussion, drumset, marimba, vibraphone, timpani, symphonic, world percussion, multi-percussion, or electronic percussion performance. Being able to accurately describe and demonstrate the snare drum grip, body position, and stroke motions is important for the percussion pedagogue teaching any of the Western European art music percussion skills.

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<sup>32</sup> Wooten, *The Drummer’s Rudimental Reference Book*, 3.

<sup>33</sup> “What is BYOS,” Biography, BYOS, accessed July 5, 2021, <http://byos1191.com/about.html>.

The smooth coupling of the three upper-body hinged joints, wrist, elbow, and shoulder (which also rotates) are primary aspects of setting the student on the right path towards technical success so that quality music making will follow.<sup>34</sup>

Dr. Udow's choice to use the words 'will specialize' indicates that learners are currently focusing on specified parts of his or her percussion study and that more percussionists will continue concentrating on exclusive aspects of the percussion family. Due to the movement toward percussion specialties, performers will experience more arduous competition for performance opportunities, instructional employment, and composition/arranging jobs. Therefore, a more detailed marching percussion curriculum should be included in a college degree, so that students can prepare to succeed in their marching arts careers.

#### Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was to complete a thorough investigation of current traditional college percussion curricula and consider the addition of specialized tracks within the programs. These tracks may include marching, concert, commercial, or jazz percussion. Involving specific courses may only be attainable at more prominent universities with more than one percussion faculty member, but this inspection revealed the solutions to these possibilities.

Percussion instructor Thomas Ford reveals, "it is important to remember that in order to lead a successful drumline, or any musical ensemble, basics must first be mastered in order for students to advance to a higher level of achievement."<sup>35</sup> The basics explored are contained in many comprehensive marching percussion method books, exercise, solo, and ensemble literature collections, technique manuscripts, and transcriptions of marching percussion performances. The

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<sup>34</sup> Michael Udow, *Percussion Pedagogy: A Practical Guide for Studio Teachers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 2.

<sup>35</sup> Thomas John Ford, "Pedagogical Concepts for Marching Percussion" (master's thesis, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, 2019), 45, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1793/80129>.

percussion methods course provides the fundamentals for marching percussion but does not delve into advanced techniques, rudiments, musical concepts, performance practices, and literature in marching percussion. Music administrator John Clinton admits that students need their professor's "time, focus, and thoughtfulness to be successful," so examining the details of marching percussion will progress their potential outcome in this genre of music.<sup>36</sup>

Jim Casella and DCI percussion arranger Murray Gussek believe the "evolution [of marching percussion] is exciting since there are now more opportunities to expose percussion students to a wider array of styles, instruments, techniques, and 'real world' potential. It all hinges on a collective approach between instructor and student to aim for higher goals than simply playing combinations of rudiments."<sup>37</sup> With this genre of percussion rapidly progressing, new alterations of style, composition, and performance must change to display a cohesive musical presentation. For example, excellent music composition allows the performer and listener to relate to the literature. The connection between the performer and listener is vital to the effect that music presents. To link this ideology with percussion, Casella and Gussek consider that "understanding the notes, rhythms, dynamics, and stickings is only one small portion of the player's responsibility. There should be just as much importance placed on making an emotional connection with the music and its phrasings so that there is a true understanding that communicates up into the stands."<sup>38</sup> To perform, teach, or compose/arrange music that links the performer and listener together takes a musician who understands the limits on their instrument, technical possibilities, and stylistic interpretations. Musicality is a large part of a

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<sup>36</sup> John Clinton, *Embracing Administrative Leadership in Music Education* (Chicago: Gia Publications, 2015), 37.

<sup>37</sup> Jim Casella and Murray Gussek, *Fresh Perspectives for the Modern Drumline* (Portland, OR: Tap Space Publications, 1998), vi.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

curriculum involving a well-rounded study of all music genres mixed with an exploration of the marching percussion idiom.

### Significance of the Study

This study is essential for college students who aspire to pursue a career in marching percussion and percussion professors who want their students to succeed in this field of music and the arts. Cook concludes that the percussion performance and school music program:

standards and expectations have risen as a result of many contributions: the increasing demands of performance literature and new arenas - like PAS, DCI, WGI, and BOA - and the greater refinement and understanding of our pedagogy by teachers and students, which have resulted in a general heightening of skill levels and musicianship in players of all ages and in all situations.<sup>39</sup>

The level of achievement is rising among the performers in marching percussion, so percussion pedagogy may need revision for producing specialists within the percussion college studio. Cook continues, “assimilation of new percussion concepts and techniques will prove gratifying to both teacher and student when presented with awareness instructions that are rich in visual, sound, and sensory imagery, contain metaphorical explanations and comparisons, and use abundant demonstrations together with imitation by the student.”<sup>40</sup> He describes practicing percussion techniques and mixing percussion with visual and sensory imagery that the student can learn, practice, and perform. This amalgamation of percussion performance techniques can serve the modern marching percussionist well when entering the workforce.

Along with the percussion student receiving more detailed instruction in marching percussion practices and techniques, the professor may spend more time within this percussion

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<sup>39</sup> Cook, *Teaching Percussion*, xvi.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, xxvi.

genre. In his research, percussionist and band director William Garrett reveals that some college percussion methods courses only spend two class periods, at most, on marching percussion. Garrett advocates for the creation of a marching percussion methods course stating, “with the growth of marching percussion popularity, the need to offer a separate Marching Percussion Techniques class should be required in the course offerings,” which can aid one’s development of hybrid rudiments, musical concepts, and listening perspectives.<sup>41</sup> Some of these advanced marching percussion idioms can be “overlooked in a two-class session” at the undergraduate level, so more time could be involved in teaching these skills to students.<sup>42</sup>

To add to Garrett’s sentiments, professor and chair of the Percussive Arts Society Education Committee, Paul Buyer, agrees that omission occurs in some marching percussion instruction within a college curriculum. Buyer remarks, “it is not what we teach that is the problem, but what we leave out.”<sup>43</sup> Deciding what to exclude from a course can be challenging, primarily when professors are concerned with the content and the academic enrichment the students should receive. The possibility of splitting the percussion methods course into two or three separate classes may prove beneficial to the learning process and digesting the learned content. A marching percussion methods course can explore the genre in much greater detail than two percussion methods class sessions. James Holland, former London Philharmonic percussionist, regards the “orchestra [as] a large team, and to realize its full potential each player must be totally aware of all the other instruments,” so having a solid overview knowledge of all percussion instruments and their performance techniques can be valuable to college

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<sup>41</sup> William Kenneth Garrett, “Marching Percussion Techniques for Prospective Band Directors: A Course Designed for Instrumental Music Education Majors” (Master’s Thesis, Liberty University, 2017), 3, <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/masters/500/>.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Buyer, “Reading is Not Optional,” *Percussive Notes* 45, no. 3 (June 2007): 34.

percussionists.<sup>44</sup> However, the importance of having a more detailed course that targets a particular style of percussion music can give greater insight into the intricacies of each instrument within that genre of music.

The University of Massachusetts Amherst (UMass) has a class that focuses on marching percussion techniques. Unfortunately, this group meeting is not an official Department of Music and Dance course, containing zero college credit. According to the UMass Drumline website, the techniques “classes are free and open to interested high school and college students” who wish to become a member of the UMass Drumline.<sup>45</sup> This seasonal study meets twice per week as the performers prepare for their upcoming marching band schedule. The curriculum for this free offering involves rehearsing the drumline and front ensemble through practicing cadences, exercises, rudiments, and studying method books authored by DCI Hall of Fame percussionist and music educator Thom Hannum.<sup>46</sup> Although learning many vast percussion styles, techniques, and music literature may be beneficial to one’s college education, a more detailed approach to a specific genre of percussion can be advantageous to one’s vocational training.

### Research Questions

Due to a rise in marching percussion jobs, there is a need for the college percussion curriculum to adapt to prepare percussion majors for job opportunities adequately. Buyer claims the goal of the music curriculum is to equip percussionists with “a hunger, passion, and respect for the process that excellence requires.”<sup>47</sup> To be competitive in the field of marching percussion,

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<sup>44</sup> Holland, *Practical Percussion*, 61.

<sup>45</sup> “What is Tech Class,” UMass Drumline Tech Class, UMass Drumline, accessed July 5, 2021, <https://umassdrumline.org/tech-class/>.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.



one needs to have a solid educational foundation. Adjusting percussion curricula can foster student growth, goal setting, and applications of lessons that may benefit students as they prepare for employment.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, employing a qualitative study sought to answer questions addressing such curricular modifications.<sup>49</sup> The following questions are discussed:

Research Question One: What crucial skills must a college percussion curriculum incorporate to prepare the percussion major to begin a successful career in the field of marching percussion?

Research Question Two: In what ways can collegiate students apply college percussion training for an occupation in the field of marching percussion?

### Hypotheses

The following were the specific alternative hypotheses:

Hypothesis One: Crucial skills that a college percussion curriculum must incorporate to prepare the percussion major to begin a successful career in the field of marching percussion should include performing, teaching, and composing/arranging.

Hypothesis Two: Collegiate students can apply a college percussion training for an occupation in the field of marching percussion in terms of ensemble auditions or job interviews, pedagogy techniques, and portfolio submissions.

College percussion curricula can be adjusted to include a deeper look at marching percussion methods, which may aid pupils' skills needed in this area of interest. Fine arts

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<sup>47</sup> Paul Buyer, *Working Toward Excellence: 8 Values for Achieving Uncommon Success in Work and Life* (New York: Morgan James Publishing, 2012), xx.

<sup>48</sup> Paul Buyer, *Marching Bands and Drumlines: Secrets of Success from the Best of the Best* (Galesville, MD: Meredith Music Publications, 2009), 1.

<sup>49</sup> John W. Creswell, and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2018), 179-211.

consultant Dee Hansen believes that “school reform measures have created an educational environment requiring accountability for student performance in all curriculum areas.”<sup>50</sup> Making alterations to curricula may be necessary to help students achieve their vocational aspirations in any field of music. Hansen also asserts that “no longer is it expected that teachers will automatically use a curriculum as ‘presented’ to them”; instead, they are encouraged to customize curricula that may advance one’s overall educational experience.<sup>51</sup> Cultivating marching percussion skills may help students build their portfolio and résumé for possible job interviews and auditions. Adding to one’s experience and boosting one’s competence may facilitate the confidence needed to pursue their passion in the workforce.

The application of collegiate learning to a quest for employment should be relevant to the current job requirement. The practice of exercising one’s music knowledge and marching percussion skill may assist their interview or audition process. Creating mock interviews and auditions may be constructive for students to learn how to control their nerves and be the best version of themselves in those contexts. Also, knowing what to display within one’s portfolio is imperative to one’s success in future jobs. Music educator Robert Duke maintains that “student accomplishment is the point of” music education, so making changes to percussion curricula may establish the groundwork for more efficient learning.<sup>52</sup> Modifying the curriculum to allow for specialized tracks can help percussion graduates to enter the workforce with relevancy and confidence. Clinton trusts that “if the conductor/teacher is a true educator, there is a sense of

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<sup>50</sup> Dee Hansen, *Handbook for Music Supervision* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), vii.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>52</sup> Robert A. Duke and Da-Laine Chapman, “Changing Learners: The Nature of Expertise in Music Teaching,” in *Advances in Social-Psychology and Music Education Research*, ed. Patrice Madura Ward-Steinman (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), 38.

great pride in helping students be successful performers,” teachers, and composers/arrangers.<sup>53</sup> Educators improving their specific curriculum can give students an advantage for seeking their first employment in marching percussion.

### Core Concepts

To better understand the typical percussionist’s lack of readiness for an occupation in marching percussion, one needs to learn some of the various aspects of marching percussion that may differ from orchestral and commercial percussion techniques. Some differences may include equipment choices, technical approach, instrumentation, interpretation of drum rudiments, instrument and human body maintenance and care, tuning, sticks and mallets, listening perspectives in rehearsal and performance, spatial awareness, and timing relationships. Cook mentions the “contemporary marching percussion-style program based on first understanding and mastering a correct basic rebound concert style of playing and then stylizing and adapting it to a marching drumming style will develop in the percussion students a clear understanding of correct percussion performance techniques with the greatest adaptability to all playing styles and percussion instruments.”<sup>54</sup> Adapting a traditional percussion approach to fit the marching percussion technique is crucial for the performer to achieve the proper sound, velocity of stroke, and relationship to other sections within the marching percussion ensemble. For example, DCI champion Pete Sapadin claims that when approaching the standard triplet diddle exercise, “the goal is to play a check pattern and add diddles, and keep the motions and the tempo the same, while focusing on sound quality of the diddles, and rhythmic accuracy of the 24th notes

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<sup>53</sup> Clinton, *Research Design*, 43.

<sup>54</sup> Cook, *Teaching Percussion*, 405.

(rolls).”<sup>55</sup> The average college percussion major would not understand the material previously described, which would hinder their ability to perform the music, teach the music, and compose music in a similar style. More detail in the marching percussion genre of percussion would be helpful for the percussion major’s preparation for their future career.

Key concepts in this study include marching performance techniques, marching teaching techniques, marching composing/arranging techniques, and potential marching percussion employment opportunities. All these aspects of marching percussion can improve a college percussion curriculum, which may deliver valuable concepts and lessons to students before seeking a job in this burgeoning genre of percussion styles. The approach to playing with a concert percussion approach compared to a marching percussion approach is similar, with some differences. Lane Summerlin, percussion caption manager at the Crossmen Drum and Bugle Corps, explains that “the front ensemble has developed into a legitimate ensemble where percussionists play concert instruments outdoors on the competitive marching field, with applications that are transferable to other musical genres.”<sup>56</sup> Summerlin observes the parallels between marching and concert percussion, but there may be more responsibilities when performing in a marching setting. Thom Hannum concludes that “the outdoor player should be required to perform with the same degree of proficiency as an indoor player. However, the outdoor percussionist encounters additional demands because of the acoustical setting (generally the football field) and actual size of most marching ensembles.”<sup>57</sup> Due to the similarities of the

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<sup>55</sup> Pete Sapadin, *Drumline Essentials*, 8th ed. (Chino Hills, CA: Pete Sapadin, 2020), 63.

<sup>56</sup> Lane Wendell Summerlin, “The History and Development of the Front Ensemble in Drum Corps International” (D.M.A. diss., The Ohio State University, 2016), 1, [https://etd.ohiolink.edu/apexprod/rws\\_etd/send\\_file/send?accession=osu1461167753&disposition=inline](https://etd.ohiolink.edu/apexprod/rws_etd/send_file/send?accession=osu1461167753&disposition=inline).

<sup>57</sup> Thom Hannum and Robert Morrison, *Championship Concepts for Marching Percussion* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Publishing, 1986), 91.

concert and marching percussion styles, adjusting the traditional college curriculum to sufficiently prepare the marching percussionist for their vocation is reasonably achievable.

Secondly, marching percussion teaching techniques differ from orchestral percussion. Percussion rehearsal for an orchestra may include the individual practice of orchestral excerpts with and without audio recordings or percussion sectionals where the performers and instruments are arranged in the actual concert setup or held in a large practice room. While these rehearsal methods may be conducive to developing the orchestral percussionist, marching percussion ensembles have stringent rehearsal techniques. For example, Casella and Ancona note, “it is very important to duplicate [the ensemble’s] ‘show’ setup in the warm-up.”<sup>58</sup> Placing instruments in their concert locations, while specifically focusing on their proper facing and interval between other instruments may benefit the ensemble’s rehearsal. Occasionally altering the position of instruments and performers in practice might aid phrasing or technique; however, there is no replacement for the importance of rehearsing in the show layout. Promoting an authentic listening environment that replicates a show performance may help learners. The reason to consider listening perspectives is that “the player with the lead part may change from phrase to phrase.”<sup>59</sup> Hearing these changes can facilitate the group’s anticipation for the location of the musical pulse and how to feel the groove collectively as a performance group.

Next, composing or arranging for a marching percussion ensemble is a distinct niche. The uniqueness of the percussion family and marching arts genre can be challenging to work with as a composer/arranger. Academy and Grammy award-winning arranger Sammy Nestico identifies

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<sup>58</sup> Casella and Ancona, *Up Front*, 168.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

the percussion section as “a very colorful and substantial segment” of an ensemble.<sup>60</sup> For example, one can achieve many different sounds from percussion instruments; numerous performance techniques are employed in the percussion family, and a variety of interpretations are possible with percussion notation. To create an outstanding arrangement, “the arranger must know who he [or she] is writing for and for what purpose it is to be written.”<sup>61</sup> Understanding the skill level of the performers, instrumentation, instrument ranges, ratio of percussionists compared to horn players, performance venue, and musical intent are details that may affect the composition or arrangement for a marching arts ensemble. To achieve success with a composition or arrangement, Casella and Ancona believe that the music must be “arranged specifically for [the] ensemble, [the] student’s abilities, and the equipment [the ensemble] own[s].”<sup>62</sup> The ingredients included in a marching percussion composition or arrangement are unique to the ensemble making it difficult to succeed.

Concerning potential job opportunities in the field of marching percussion, one may assume it only involves teaching a high school or university marching band, drum corps, or independent indoor drumline. Other possibilities may include entertainment, military, and freelance ensembles. For instance, some marching bands work between the regular business hours of the workday in theme parks and military ensembles. Author Elizabeth Geli remarks, “your 8-to-5 stride can get you a 9-to-5 job that is professional, full-time, and paid.”<sup>63</sup> Geli highlights a few professional marching bands, including bands from Walt Disney World and The

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<sup>60</sup> Sammy Nestico, *The Complete Arranger*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (San Diego: Rush Press, 2006), 6-7.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-13.

<sup>62</sup> Casella and Ancona, *Up Front*, 180.

<sup>63</sup> Elizabeth Geli, “Marching 9 to 5,” *Halftime Magazine*, April 8, 2017, 2, <https://halftimemag.com/march-april-2017/professional-marching-bands.html>.

Disneyland Resort. This article reveals that marching percussion jobs are available in many different places and forms, not just the traditional football stadium. Researching this topic and its core concepts can bring new scholarly literature full of marching percussion opportunities.

### Definition of Terms

To fully understand this study, one must learn specific terms and phrases used in marching percussion. These include the following:

Bring Your Own Style (BYOS) - BYOS is a movement created by Ralph Nader in 2013 to encourage the individual style of rudimental drummers.

Corps - “Synonym for drum and bugle corps.”<sup>64</sup>

Drum and Bugle Corps - “A musical marching ensemble that consists of brass instruments, percussion instruments, electronic instruments, and a color guard.”<sup>65</sup>

Drum Corps Associates (DCA) - Founded in 1963, this association “brought separate percussion judging to the activity as well as judges for the other areas of each corps’ performance. Standards of musicality and technique were established in judging percussion.”<sup>66</sup>

Drum Corps International (DCI) - Founded in 1971, this association is “the largest official organization of competing corps.”<sup>67</sup> Membership of a competing drum and bugle corps consists of young performers up to 21 years of age.

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<sup>64</sup> Summerlin, “The History and Development of the Front Ensemble,” 6.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>66</sup> Beck, *Encyclopedia of Percussion*, 270.

<sup>67</sup> Leah Meredith Dunbar, “Musical Identity and Arranging Styles of Drum Corps Front Ensembles” (Bachelor’s Thesis, Kenyon College, 2020), 129, [https://www.pas.org/docs/default-source/thesisdissertations/musical-identity-and-arranging-styles-in-drum-corps-front-ensembles-by-leah-dunbar.pdf?sfvrsn=8e19d43a\\_0](https://www.pas.org/docs/default-source/thesisdissertations/musical-identity-and-arranging-styles-in-drum-corps-front-ensembles-by-leah-dunbar.pdf?sfvrsn=8e19d43a_0).

Battery/Drumline - The section in the band or corps that employs performers wearing the following instruments: snare drum, tenor drums, bass drum, and cymbals.<sup>68</sup>

Front Ensemble/Pit/Frontline - Stationary percussionists who perform on the sideline (or more recently on the front edge of the field) playing the melodic percussion instruments (marimba, vibraphone, xylophone, glockenspiel), electronic instruments (synthesizer, sampler pad), and auxiliary percussion (triangle, shaker, cymbals, toms, woodblock, concert bass drum, tam-tam).<sup>69</sup>

Hybrid Drum Rudiments - “Hybrids are primarily derivatives of pre-existing rudiments.”<sup>70</sup> These contemporary “combinations of two or more existing rudiments and/or existing rudiments with various rhythmic alterations and embellishments” are based on the Original Standard 26 American Drum Rudiments and the PAS International Drum Rudiments.<sup>71</sup>

Indoor Percussion - Marching percussion ensembles who “compete in the winter months, performing inside gymnasiums.”<sup>72</sup> Indoor percussion ensembles use instruments that “are often equipped with carriers and straps to allow musicians to incorporate them into the performance.”<sup>73</sup>

Marching Arts/Pageantry Arts – These terms encapsulate the vast realm of artistic organizations, including high school and college marching band, DCI, DCA, WGI, and various theme park ensembles.

Marching Percussion - Percussion performance that includes a rudimental approach, including drumline/battery and front ensemble/the pit (indoor and outdoor) and soloistic performance.

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<sup>68</sup> Garrett, “Marching Percussion Techniques for Prospective Band Directors,” 8.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>70</sup> Freytag, *The Rudimental Cookbook*, 12.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>72</sup> Dunbar, “Musical Identity and Arranging Styles of Drum Corps Front Ensembles,” 129.

<sup>73</sup> Fyffe, *Indoor Percussion Ensembles and Drum Corps*, 9.



National Association of Rudimental Drummers (NARD) - “In 1933 at an American Legion National Convention in Chicago, a group of prominent drummers met to review the early rudiments and methods and established the NARD. The objective of NARD was to ‘standardize a system of drumming by selecting a group of rudiments on which all corps and drummers would be judged.’”<sup>74</sup>

Original Standard 26 American Drum Rudiments - A list of 26 rudiments created as the standard for performances. These rudiments were intended to be practiced slowly to fast to slow again and were the foundation for the PAS 40 Drum Rudiments.<sup>75</sup>

Percussive Arts Society (PAS) - Originated in the 1950s, PAS is the international organization that strives to: (1) stimulate a greater interest in percussion performance and teaching, (2) promote better teaching of percussion instruments, and (3) establish standard criteria of adjudication for percussion performance considering today’s demands on the percussion player.<sup>76</sup>

Percussive Arts Society 40 Drum Rudiments - “In 1984 the Percussive Arts Society issued a list of 40 International Drum Rudiments divided into four categories: (1) roll rudiments, (2) diddle rudiments, (3) flam rudiments, and (4) drag rudiments.”<sup>77</sup>

Rudimental - Style of percussion performance that stems from Basel, Switzerland, in 1332. It employs the use of the PAS 40 International Drum Rudiments.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Cook, *Teaching Percussion*, 377.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 377-85.

<sup>76</sup> Beck, *Encyclopedia of Percussion*, 315.

<sup>77</sup> Cook, *Teaching Percussion*, 378.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 377-378.

Rudiments - “Fundamentals of drumming involving various patterns and combinations of strokes on the drum.”<sup>79</sup>

Winter Guard International (WGI) - American performing arts association for three activities: color guard, percussion (marching and concert percussion ensembles), and winds (small marching bands).

### Chapter Summary

The standard college curriculum should require the appropriate training for one to succeed in their preferred musical field. Professional drummer Matt Dean presumes that professional percussionists should “pass [their] knowledge on to the next generation” of musicians.<sup>80</sup> Percussion graduates may achieve success at the beginning of their career and produce quality performance, pupils, or compositions/arrangements if this approach is adopted. However, research is incomplete concerning this aspect of marching percussion education. Therefore, specialized responsibilities in marching percussion demonstrate the need for the college percussion curriculum to adapt to modern music performance standards.

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<sup>79</sup> Fyffe, *Indoor Percussion Ensembles and Drum Corps*, 60.

<sup>80</sup> Matt Dean, *The Drum: A History* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2012), 257.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Creating a collegiate percussion curriculum that includes all genres of percussion and seeks maximum student preparation for career employment can be challenging. The difficulty is deciding what to have in the study over four or five years; however, devising a plan involving many percussion instruments should be considered. Hannum maintains that “a well-rounded percussion program should be geared toward developing outstanding musicians with superior performance abilities.”<sup>81</sup> Building a comprehensive initiative can be difficult if a nucleus is not determined. Band director and music curriculum developer Wayne Markworth established a training philosophy in his tenure as a music educator with a fundamental center. Markworth believes:

A balanced total band program has the concert band as the heart and foundation. The marching band, however, is a very important element and supports and enhances the goals of the program. Each school is unique with many variations in approach, goals, organization and emphasis. The foundation for all marching band programs needs to be the emphasis on music education and the development of the student members.<sup>82</sup>

Markworth designed his educational system with the concert band as the core of the total band program (see Appendix A).<sup>83</sup> A concert band study considers musical concepts, rehearsal etiquette, instrumental approaches, performance techniques, and tone quality. Markworth identifies that “all of these musical elements will carry over” into other bands and ensembles within the music program.<sup>84</sup> Much like the total band program, a college percussion curriculum

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<sup>81</sup> Hannum and Morrison, *Championship Concepts for Marching Percussion*, 91.

<sup>82</sup> Wayne Markworth, *The Dynamic Marching Band: A Resource Book*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Orlando: Marching Arts Education, 2017), 17, iBooks.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20.

can include a comprehensive percussion curriculum (see Appendix B). Concert percussion is typically the focal point in a percussion degree, similar to Markworth's concert band analogy, and many branches of percussion training are explored in greater detail. Along with concert percussion, jazz percussion, world percussion, and contemporary percussion, marching percussion is one of the many aspects of the percussion family which students should study.

Musicians can apply marching percussion rudiments and performance interpretations to many musical genres. In his rudimental drumming research, Eric Chandler states:

The knowledge and use of rudiments far surpass the arenas of rudimental drumming. Currently, in the specialized fields of percussion, the rudiments are incorporated into many different types of music. In fact, two of today's most sought after drumset recording artists, Steve Gadd and Billy Cobham, began their careers in drumming through drum and bugle corps.<sup>85</sup>

Percussionists can apply rudiments to mallet percussion instruments, drum sets, or hand drums. Rudiments are adapted to fit the rhythmic and articulated phrases on various percussion instruments, which support those instruments' solo and ensemble repertoire. Many music compositions and arrangements include drum rudiments in the scores, transcending percussion styles and genres. Due to the versatile application of drum rudiments, the marching percussion genre of music is apparent in many aspects of the percussion family.

The marching percussion ensemble often generates the most publicity of any percussion group or course. Markworth states that the marching band "is the most visible music ensemble in most communities. When most community members think of the high school 'band,' they are thinking of the marching band."<sup>86</sup> This analogy is similar to a college percussion studio. The

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<sup>85</sup> Eric Alan Chandler, "A History of Rudimental Drumming in America From the Revolutionary War to the Present" (D.M.A. diss., Louisiana State University, 1990), 85, [https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5900&context=gradschool\\_disstheses](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5900&context=gradschool_disstheses).

<sup>86</sup> Markworth, *The Dynamic Marching Band*, 19.

marching band's percussion section and indoor drumline frequently capture the audience's attention because they play at athletic events, perform at outdoor and indoor competitions and exhibitions, and commonly travel to recruit for the educational institution. Even though marching percussion ensembles support the concert percussion curriculum, the marching arts should be featured as a music degree or emphasized more within a percussion program of study. In a marching ensemble, "the skills demanded by the percussion section are very specialized and ever developing," so having an articulated marching arts foundation in college will enhance one's preparation for career aspirations.<sup>87</sup> Researching the performing, teaching, and composing/arranging elements in the marching percussion idiom may adequately equip learners with the training needed to achieve successful employment.

#### Performance and Auditions

To become a well-rounded marching percussionist, one needs to gain performance experience. To adequately teach marching percussionists or compose/arrange marching percussion music, a high level of performing experience is necessary to be a leader in marching percussion. Jeff Queen, DCI Individual and Ensemble Snare Drum Champion, declares that the best way to prepare for a performance is to "PERFORM!"<sup>88</sup> To achieve excellent performance, one should develop superior musicianship, read marching percussion music, learn proper technique, and discover how to audition successfully.

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<sup>87</sup> Markworth, *The Dynamic Marching Band*, 108.

<sup>88</sup> Jeff Queen, *The Next Level: Rudimental Snare Drum Techniques* (Plano, TX: Mark Wessels Publications, 2004), 136.

## Musicianship

### Playing to One's Best Ability

Improving musicianship begins with striving to achieve one's best performance ability. This process is composed of five parts: "peak performance, simulation, mental practice, nerves, and the clock's role in achieving [one's] goals."<sup>89</sup> Realizing that one's musical trek is continuous helps drive a focus on improvement. Buyer defines peak performance as "playing [one's] best, performing 'at [one's] peak,' and reaching and realizing [one's] potential."<sup>90</sup> It is something to always strive and work toward achieving. Setting goals is helpful but having a plan may benefit one's peak performance. Devising a program to learn and perform a particular solo or execute stick visuals will enhance one's fulfillment. To attain peak performance, "a plan, a process, or a system" is needed to construct the path toward excellence.<sup>91</sup>

Next, simulation involves "intentionally designing or creating the conditions, environment, and scenarios that replicate a real performance."<sup>92</sup> As Ken Coleman states, the Proximity Principle "allows [one] to learn, do, and connect."<sup>93</sup> Learning about the performance venue, practicing in the exact location, and connecting with people who are doing the job one desires are examples of the Proximity Principle and simulated experiences. Buyer believes that

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<sup>89</sup> Paul Buyer, *Drumline Gold: Innovative Systems for Marching Percussion Excellence* (Chicago: Meredith Music Publications, 2020), 53.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>93</sup> "The Proximity Principle Explained - Ken Coleman," interview by Daniel Tardy, *EntreLeadership*, May 14, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Kvp-xviiP8&list=PLIEWvbg8Vuh6vKkYzHh7WtXpA9hqx88-p&index=24&t=0s>.

“simulation ensures the first time is never the first time, helping [one] prepare to perform [the] best when it counts.”<sup>94</sup>

The third facet of superior performing pertains to mental practice. It is “the art of practicing in [one’s] mind.”<sup>95</sup> Rehearsing the music, reflecting on the visual choreography, or thinking through the performance routine in one’s mind can positively affect performance.

Regarding marching percussion:

World-class performance is always the result of integrating [one’s] hands, ears, and mind like a well-oiled machine. To truly perform at a high level, a drumline must have the hands (technique) necessary to play the music well, the ear chops (listening skills) necessary to play together as an ensemble, and the mind (mental skills) necessary to focus and perform with confidence.<sup>96</sup>

Having the mental stamina to focus from the beginning of a musical phrase to the end is essential in performance.

Fourth, overcoming one’s nerves gives the potential for optimum performance. Buyer declares that “one of the most common reasons why a drumline can fall short of its potential is nerves.”<sup>97</sup> Overcoming nerves in performance can be achieved by using adrenaline as an advantage for extreme focus, owning the stage and commanding the audience’s attention, trusting one’s preparation, and asking friends to observe a rehearsal to replicate an actual performance.<sup>98</sup> If all of these pieces of advice are embraced and executed, one’s nerves should subside, thereby improving performance.

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<sup>94</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 55.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

Finally, clockwork is the last ingredient to producing excellent musicianship. Buyer asserts that “leaders who are organized, disciplined, and skilled in pacing a rehearsal have the best chance of success.”<sup>99</sup> Professional percussionists regularly apply these qualities in solo or ensemble performances. Communicating the rehearsal schedule to students can help them prepare musically and mentally.<sup>100</sup> Having an achievable rehearsal goal, articulating the practice plan, and pacing throughout the practice session can benefit the performer(s). Above all, “consistency is one of the invisible secrets to success.”<sup>101</sup> Maintaining stability in one’s routine results in goal accomplishment and developing musicianship skills.

### Unified Performance

Barry Green, bassist and author, gives his recount of how percussionists perform together:

I have often marveled at the way two percussionists, out of visual contact with each other and separated by quite a distance, can pick up the pulse and character of the music from the conductor and play exactly together. What ensemble musicians are doing is tapping into a common rhythm communicated to them by the conductor. The individual percussionists, who are positioned far away from each other, somehow internalize this rhythm in their own bodies, then they respond to the flow of this common pulse or rhythm and play with it. They are not simply responding to the conductor’s cues. Playing within this established rhythmic flow or pulse allows them to stay in perfect sync with each other and the orchestra.<sup>102</sup>

Green describes how orchestral percussionists perform and feel the music together, but this concept and way of performing translates to all areas of percussion. A unified interpretation of

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<sup>99</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 57.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>101</sup> Buyer, *Working Toward Excellence*, 50.

<sup>102</sup> Barry Green, *The Mastery of Music: Ten Pathways to True Artistry* (New York: Broadway Books, 2003), 27.



music is necessary for percussionists to perform, which can be achieved by “defining listening responsibilities while playing” and establishing “a well-defined approach to technique with regard to stick heights and corresponding rudimental notation.”<sup>103</sup> Matching musical interpretations, tempo and pulse, dynamic extremes, articulations, and sound quality can create upgrade one’s musicianship.<sup>104</sup>

## Reading Marching Percussion Music

### Concise Rudimental Percussion Notation History

Reading marching percussion music is necessary to unify the ensemble. Cook explains that “the early rudimental drumming tradition of using onomatopoeic mnemonics to learn the rhythms of the rudiments and their stickings...was first chronicled in Basel, Switzerland in 1332.”<sup>105</sup> Beats and patterns were passed down over the years in Europe and then spread to America.<sup>106</sup> Rudimental drumming notation first “emerged [in America] in 1812 with Charles Stuart Ashworth’s manual and later the Bruce and Emmett book of 1862 and 1865.”<sup>107</sup> The style of drumming in the mid-1800s was a form of communication among military troupes. Even though drum rudiments are not used in the DCI or WGI circuits as “signals and calls,” as

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<sup>103</sup> Matthew A. Halligan, “Rudimental Drumming Style and Performance Practice in the Marine Drum and Bugle Corps 1775-1999” (D.M.A. diss., George Mason University, 2016), 5, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1802533544?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true>.

<sup>104</sup> Hannum and Morrison, *Championship Concepts for Marching Percussion*, 53.

<sup>105</sup> Cook, *Teaching Percussion*, 377.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 377.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 377.

indicated in many martial drill manuals, they are the foundation blocks of a drummer's performance and appear in various percussion music styles.<sup>108</sup> Chandler explains:

Percussion rudiments are as common in notation as scale patterns and other basic elements of music used by non-percussionists. Whether a student is playing timpani, mallets, snare drum or drum set, rudiments are continuously utilized in performance practices. The use and knowledge of the prescribed sticking vocabulary of rudiments will aid the student in performance throughout his entire musical career.<sup>109</sup>

Knowing how to read music notation and many drum rudiments is necessary for the college drumline to stay organized and have a unified performance, compared to learning by rote. Buyer defines reading: "reading is the ability and skill to read, count, and play music successfully in general."<sup>110</sup> Reading music will "accelerate the process of learning, memorizing, and cleaning" show music, cadences, exercises, and other types of compositions/arrangements.<sup>111</sup>

#### Rudiments and Visual Aesthetics

Studying the PAS 40 International Drum Rudiments will enhance one's learning ability to perform with marching percussion expression. Rolls, diddles, flams, and drags are the four primary categories that constitute this collection of rudiments.<sup>112</sup> Mastering all 40 rudiments is necessary before attempting to learn hybrid rudiments. Freytag defines hybrids as "primarily derivatives of pre-existing rudiments" and "are combinations of two or more existing

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<sup>108</sup> Chandler, "History of Rudimental Drumming," 12.

<sup>109</sup> Eric Alan Chandler, "Teaching Rudiments," *Bandworld* 10, no. 1 (Aug-Sept. 1994): 43, <http://www.bandworld.org/MagOnline/MagOnline.aspx?f=Misc&p=BWartPercRudiChandler>.

<sup>110</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 92.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>112</sup> Cook, *Teaching Percussion*, 378.

rudiments.”<sup>113</sup> Learning hybrid rudiments can be challenging if the standard rudiments are not successfully conquered. “3-Way Backsticking” is one hybrid rudiment that combines with a visual aesthetic.<sup>114</sup> The combination of “a running series of notes, and the hand executing the trick will cycle through three different strokes” with this visual.<sup>115</sup> It is common to pair standard and hybrid rudiments with visual tricks that demonstrate one’s ability to perform beyond the music. Adding flashy visuals can enhance one’s performance, resulting in entertaining the audience. Marching percussionist and educator Danny Raymond explains a few elements included in his solo, “Let It Rip.”<sup>116</sup> In the performance notes, Raymond says, “In addition to the quick tempos and visual shenanigans like the stick toss and backsticking patterns, those performing this solo are required to play in both match and traditional grip. It requires substantial physical stamina to play from top to bottom.”<sup>117</sup> His solo, like many others, demands the performer’s expertise with multiple grips, sticking patterns, rudiments, and drumstick visuals. Another example of numerous responsibilities within marching percussion literature encompasses the compositions from Jeff Queen. He recorded a digital video disk that incorporates many stick tricks and advanced concepts explained and displayed in the video performances.<sup>118</sup> Enhancing the marching percussionist’s demonstrations with stick visuals and

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<sup>113</sup> Freytag, *The Rudimental Cookbook*, 12.

<sup>114</sup> Mike McIntosh et al., *Violent Ice Cream* (Portland, OR: Tap Space Publications, 2001), 4.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>116</sup> Danny Raymond, *Let It Rip* (Portland, OR: Tapspace Publications, 2008), 3.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>118</sup> Jeff Queen, *Playing With Sticks* (New York: Hudson Music, 2006).

other entertaining amusements are integral to the performance of the modern marching percussion genre.

### Learning Marching Percussion Music

Counting notes and rests, strengthening one's ability to play in time, and learning sticking concepts are essential to reading marching percussion music.<sup>119</sup> When asked about how to develop and improve performers' reading skills, DeLucia suggests "[having] the students write music - their own parts, or their own exercises or compositions."<sup>120</sup> Composing music generally aids one's music reading ability, so practicing the art of music creation can strengthen one's music learning. DeLucia also suggests that performers use the "'right-hand lead' [concept] to establish consistency in sticking certain rhythmic figures the same way every time" when reading music.<sup>121</sup> In Colin Hill's interview about the process of learning new music, James Campbell, PAS Hall of Fame, responds:

My first goal when I get a piece of new music is to play through it to find a tempo I can play through it the first time. Usually half tempo is my default. So if it is marked at one-twenty, I'll set the metronome on sixty and try to read through it at that tempo. If half tempo is too fast I will slow it down. I try to play the whole thing with correct rhythms, dynamics, and good tone quality. Like sight-reading, I want to make sure the first time I play through something, I understand the road map and I understand the phrase. I'll play through the whole piece and then I'll know if certain parts of the piece are harder to learn or play than others. Then I'll know when I break the practice session down, maybe I'll need to break to the middle or work on something that might be harder, rather than just start from the beginning and go to the end.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 94.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>122</sup> Colin Hill, "The 10,000-Hour Threshold: Interviews With Successful Percussionists" (D.M.A. diss., University of Kentucky, 2013), 314, [https://uknowledge.uky.edu/music\\_etds/31/](https://uknowledge.uky.edu/music_etds/31/).

Campbell's approach to learning music works well for many musicians and can serve the marching percussion ensemble. Achieving the composer's intent early in the process allows the performer to advance quickly to a cohesive performance.

### **Marching Percussion Technique**

Hannum identifies that "the most important aspect of a competent marching percussion ensemble is the organization of a well-rounded basics program."<sup>123</sup> A basics program emphasizes the significance of a technical method closely adhered to by all musicians in the marching percussion group. "Since technical proficiency is the basis of good musicianship," Hannum acknowledges that "it is most important to establish a playing style with basic guidelines."<sup>124</sup> The marching percussion technique can be divided into a few categories: grip, strokes, beat patterns, and performance characteristics.

#### **Grip**

Hannum believes that "when studying a percussion instrument the first priority is learning how to hold the stick or mallet."<sup>125</sup> The term "'grip' refers to the way the hands (palms, thumbs, and fingers) hold the drumsticks."<sup>126</sup> Matched and traditional grips compose the foundation for drum technique. Jack McKenzie was the "matched grip pioneer" and made the grip famous amidst the heritage of performing with traditional grip.<sup>127</sup> Some hold that "matched

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<sup>123</sup> Hannum and Morrison, *Championship Concepts for Marching Percussion*, 18.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>126</sup> Udow, *Percussion Pedagogy*, 7.

grip is the best,” which stems from its frequent use on many percussion instruments.<sup>128</sup> A version of matched grip is used on snare drum, marimba, timpani, multiple percussion, and marching percussion. A basic two-mallet grip is another type of matched grip because each hand complements the other. Casella and Ancona describe “two main camps for four-mallet technique: Burton and Stevens. The Burton technique was created by jazz vibist, Gary Burton. The Stevens technique was created by marimba virtuoso Leigh Howard Stevens.”<sup>129</sup> Regardless of one’s grip preference, being versed in all styles of matched grip, traditional grip, and mallet technique are vital to one’s performance achievement.

## Strokes

Regarding stick and mallet strokes in marching percussion, Cook believes:

The principal objective of any approach for marching drumming is to get several drummers to play precisely and musically together with a good sound and flow or groove...The most successful approaches to developing a uniform drumming style simply deal with becoming aware of all aspects of playing and particularly of the stroke and resulting sound. This awareness is obtained by paying attention by listening, watching, and feeling all stick movements in the stroke or exercise. It is through this triple-channel (see-hear-feel) awareness that the most efficient learning takes place, and natural, relaxed, and musical uniform drumming can develop.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Thomas Siwe, “Jack H. McKenzie: Matched Grip Pioneer,” *Percussive Notes* 49, no. 2 (March 2011): 24, <http://publications.pas.org/Archive/March2011/1103.24-27.pdf>.

<sup>128</sup> Cort A. McClaren, “Reaching Consensus,” *The Journal of Percussion Pedagogy* 1, no. 1 (October 2008): 14, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57bb339dbe659420516c952e/t/5bfc0ff5b8a045b4c03fb239/1543245841770/Volume+1.pdf>.

<sup>129</sup> Casella and Ancona, *Up Front*, 104.

<sup>130</sup> Cook, *Teaching Percussion*, 347.

Cook describes the stroke awareness approach where the performer is aware of “all visual, aural, and kinesthetic aspects of the interpretation of the exercise and its execution (strokes).”<sup>131</sup> Being mindful of the stroke of the stick or mallet is crucial to producing a collective ensemble performance. Some strokes involve legato strokes, staccato strokes, downstrokes, upstrokes, accent heights vs. tap heights, and grace notes.<sup>132</sup>

Beyond understanding various strokes, controlling each stroke should be considered. For example, “dynamic control in marching percussion is approached through many systems.”<sup>133</sup> Cook defines five energy levels that “correspond to dynamic levels through stick positioning,” including:

Level 1 or p = playing from the horizontal plane formed by the hand and stick about 2 inches above the drum. This is also called [the] “ready” position.

Level 2 or mp = playing from a position with the tip of the stick just slightly above the ready position.

Level 3 or mf = playing from a 45-degree angle, wrist turn position off the head (the 45-degree angle is the angle formed between the stick with the head).

Level 4 or f = playing from a maximum wrist turn off the head.

Level 5 or ff = playing from a maximum wrist turn off the head coupled with arm movement sometimes even over the player’s head for visuals – this is the loudest playing ever used.<sup>134</sup>

This articulated height system refers to percussion instruments and need defining for an ensemble to perform with a blended approach. Uniformity in a marching percussion ensemble is imperative for balanced performance, both musically and visually.

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<sup>131</sup> Cook, *Teaching Percussion*, 348.

<sup>132</sup> Hannum and Morrison, *Championship Concepts for Marching Percussion*, 31.

<sup>133</sup> Cook, *Teaching Percussion*, 351.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 351.

## Beat Patterns

Beat patterns comprise the third aspect of the marching percussion technique. Hannum states that “a single beat pattern is any musical passage where one note is played per hand motion. Turn the wrist up after each note. Strive to make every note the same volume.”<sup>135</sup> Two notes played per hand motion where “the natural rebound and finger control” are accessed “to strengthen the sound of the second note” constitute double beat patterns.<sup>136</sup> Triple beat patterns use a similar technique. With triple strokes, only one wrist rotation is used, and “the natural rebound and finger control” produces reinforced second and third notes.<sup>137</sup> The amalgamation of these three beat patterns must be mastered and are necessary to perform marching percussion music.

## Performance Characteristics

Finally, performance characteristics constitute the last aspect of the marching percussion technique. Hannum lists many performance characteristics for the snare drum, multi-tenors, bass drums, and hand-cymbals in his textbook that should be learned and considered in performance.<sup>138</sup> Playing zones must be defined among the many aspects of producing a good tone on each percussion instrument. For example, there are places on tone bars on mallet instruments that generally cause dark and bright sounds (see Appendix C).<sup>139</sup> The same is true

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<sup>135</sup> Hannum and Morrison, *Championship Concepts for Marching Percussion*, 29.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 32-42.

<sup>139</sup> Casella and Ancona, *Up Front*, 103.



for drums as well. Drumsticks have different parts that are used for manufacturing various sounds (see Appendix D).<sup>140</sup> Playing with the “bead or tip” can achieve an articulated sound with many volume ranges, whereas performing with the back of the stick or “butt” often results in a softer volume when played in backsticking patterns, or louder sound when used with a full stroke in matched grip.<sup>141</sup> One’s touch on timpani “can produce a variety of articulation qualities” with different sets of mallet and “adjusting the firmness” in the fulcrum of the grip.<sup>142</sup> Dampening the timpani, tom, bass drum, or cymbal to diminish the resonance can drastically alter the character of its musical contribution.<sup>143</sup> By exploring the varieties of sticks/mallets, playing zones, and articulations, many possible performance outcomes affect the overall performance experience.

## **Auditions**

### Concepts for Successful Auditions

The final aspect of achieving excellent performance involves the audition process. Paul Winterhalter, two-time DCI champion, emphasizes that “setting the goal [to audition] is the most important step in actually auditioning.”<sup>144</sup> Instead of dreaming about auditioning, one must follow through and reach for his or her ambitions. Sapadin recognizes that “every musician has to prepare for auditions at one time or another,” so realizing the importance of auditions benefits

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<sup>140</sup> Dennis DeLucia, *Dennis DeLucia’s Percussion Discussion* (Nashville: Row-Loff Productions, 1995), 54.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>142</sup> Casella and Ancona, *Up Front*, 113.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>144</sup> Paul Winterhalter, “Preparing for a Drum Corps International Audition: Tips and Tricks for Being Your Best at a DCI Drumline Audition,” Educators, Yamaha Music USA, accessed September 23, 2021, <https://hub.yamaha.com/educator/preparing-for-a-drum-corps-international-audition/>.

the marching percussionist. Applying marching percussion education, practice, and experience toward an audition or job interview can be difficult if one is inexperienced with this daunting challenge. Buyer lists several practical concepts that can aid the candidate in his or her audition. Some include reading the information that provides the “details of the audition process,” “listen[ing] to recordings” of the audition music, practice[ing] and prepar[ing], “creat[ing] a game plan and work backward” with the end result in mind, strive for excellence daily, be open to playing other instruments, be teachable, and possess self-efficacy.<sup>145</sup> These audition recommendations should be explored in detail, but a few need stressing. Practicing and preparing involve “playing in time with and without a metronome,” visualizing oneself performing the “‘ideal’ audition,” and conducting several “mock auditions” with a live audience.<sup>146</sup> These three sections of audition preparation will boost the auditionee’s confidence and belief in themselves. It is wise to be willing to play other instruments after the audition’s conclusion. Delivering an ultimatum to the director is not a positive way to begin a new role. Students who only want to play the snare drum and quit after not achieving their preferred placement are prevalent in marching percussion. Buyer reminds the performer that “marching percussion is a team sport and it takes all sections to outfit a marching percussion ensemble. Snare or bust players have a negative and entitled attitude that is certain to deflate [the] culture.”<sup>147</sup>

Sapadin has three central notions to consider when auditioning. The first entails learning how to deal with nerves.<sup>148</sup> If the person auditioning is nervous, it means he or she cares about the outcome. Being excited about an audition and winning a position in the ensemble is a

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<sup>145</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 84-87.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>148</sup> Sapadin, *Drumline Essentials*, 116.

positive and drives a person to musical and performance excellence. Preparation can help calm nerves, so visualizing the audition process, anticipating the judges' questions, and simulating a mock audition might alleviate fear.<sup>149</sup> Secondly, preparing a "30-second to one-minute piece that shows off" the player's abilities is beneficial.<sup>150</sup> The judging panel is frequently in a hurry, so displaying one's best performance capabilities in the first part of the solo is sagacious. Finally, Sapadin believes that the instructors running the audition "want to know that [the auditionee] will be open to learning new things and willing to do things differently."<sup>151</sup> Keeping an open mind to trying new instruments and roles is a theme among Buyer and Sapadin. All instruments are essential in a marching percussion ensemble, and all have unique contributions to the collective production.

#### Drum Corps International Auditions

DCI experience is often the prerequisite for many percussion careers, so taking this first step in auditioning for a corps is necessary to unlock numerous employment opportunities. To successfully audition for a drum corps, one should decide which corps interests him or her. Watching DCI shows or observing corps online can help prospective members figure out their interest in the activity. Once this is accomplished, audition preparation is integral to the process. Some steps to consider throughout one's preparation include learning the music packet, recording one's practice session, rehearsing with a metronome, practicing on an instrument

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<sup>149</sup> Sapadin, *Drumline Essentials*, 116.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

instead of only on a practice pad, connecting with others who are associated with the corps or proposed members, and pretending the audition is a test.<sup>152</sup>

Knowing the exercises and etudes is crucial to one's audition performance. DCI instructors frequently take a musical idea and expand it by adding new rudiments to the passage. For this reason, the student must have all the music memorized and perfected. Being at a DCI audition camp "teaches [the prospective member] things [he or she] has not yet learned in other programs."<sup>153</sup> Some of the new musical concepts or phrases might be given to the prospective member during the audition, and he or she may be expected to play the passage instantly. Consequently, "devot[ing] a little time in [one's] practice routine to sight-reading" may serve one's audition preparation.<sup>154</sup> Winterhalter believes that "Being surrounded by like-minded individuals who are all striving for the same goal" is inspirational and commonly motivates students to perform better.<sup>155</sup> Audition rooms are full of musicians with many common attributes and aspirations, so it is a place to make lifelong friends. Keeping an open mind to learning new musical concepts, believing in oneself, and making connections with others will strengthen one's audition experience.<sup>156</sup>

### Martial Auditions

It is necessary to have the expertise and be well-versed in many styles and technical abilities throughout the professional audition process. For example, the U.S. Army Bands Instruments website indicates that:

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<sup>152</sup> Winterhalter, "Preparing for a Drum Corps International Audition."

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Fyffe, *Indoor Percussion Ensembles and Drum Corps*, 45.

<sup>155</sup> Winterhalter, "Preparing for a Drum Corps International Audition."

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

Percussionists perform in a variety of ensembles, and they must have expertise in many different styles of music. Percussionists perform on drum set in rock-pop band, jazz band, and other popular music ensembles. Additionally, percussionists perform on marching snare and bass drum in the ceremonial band and concert snare, mallets, and auxiliary percussion in the concert band.<sup>157</sup>

This ensemble has many performance opportunities throughout the world, so many musical styles are utilized. It is common for martial music to include a marching component where percussionists wear a drum or hold cymbals while on the move. Drum set and mallet experience are recommended, but the ability to play instruments within the marching percussion idiom is crucial for employment in martial ensembles.

### Theme Park Auditions

Theme park auditions are slightly different from the typical DCI or military band auditions and involve another component of performance: telling a story. According to the Frequently Asked Questions page on the Disney Careers website, one can prepare for his or her music audition by adhering to some of their audition counsel. Per the Disney website: “Be versatile. Be ready to play in multiple styles & genres.”<sup>158</sup> Examples of style versatility may include: “Rock, jazz, big band/swing, shuffle, soul, R&B, technical, lyrical, New Orleans Second Line, pop, etc.”<sup>159</sup> Another suggestion Disney mentions is to choose music that is enjoyable to play.<sup>160</sup> Performing music that is comfortable and pleasurable may allow the musician to focus

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<sup>157</sup> “Most Skilled and Versatile Musicians in the World,” Instruments, U.S. Army Bands, accessed September 20, 2021, <https://www.goarmy.com/band/instruments.html>.

<sup>158</sup> “Auditions FAQ,” Disney Auditions, *Disney Careers*, accessed September 20, 2021, <https://jobs.disneycareers.com/auditions-faq>.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

more on telling a story through his or her audition presentation. Disney advises the person auditioning to practice sight-reading and improvisation skills as these are frequently required in their interview process.<sup>161</sup> A few other recommendations that Disney articulates on their website include: keeping music neatly organized, keep instruments tuned and warm while waiting to audition, and play a few notes and re-tune once in the audition room if needed.<sup>162</sup>

The final audition advice that Disney gives is the most important of all when their website expresses, “Remember: We are storytellers. Your personality and connection with your audience (the Casting Team) is JUST as important as your chops.”<sup>163</sup> Telling a story through music is one of the parts about Disney Parks that sets them apart from other theme parks. Storytelling can be presented to the audience through music performance, singing, dancing, or acting. Music must be completely memorized for the performer to take their mind away from the music to focus on connecting their musical performance with singing, dancing, and acting. Often, all these parts of a Disney production are simultaneously performed, so being willing to prepare for such an endeavor may serve the theme park performer effectively.

#### How to Maintain a Job After Winning the Audition

After completing the audition, “the ability to sustain excellence - despite changes in personnel, talent, resources, and leadership - is what truly separates the best from everybody else.”<sup>164</sup> One cannot merely go through the motions with a music performance job; rather, he or she must demonstrate his or her best efforts for each show. David Grissom gives wise advice to

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<sup>161</sup> “Auditions FAQ.”

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Buyer, *Working Toward Excellence*, xxv.

the musician about keeping music employment: “1. Don’t be late. Ever. 2. Don’t noodle at soundchecks and rehearsals, especially when the artist is talking. 3. Don’t forget how lucky you are to be getting paid to play music.”<sup>165</sup> Even though Grissom’s experience is in popular music, his suggestions on maintaining a performance job after winning an audition hold in any music ensemble. Percussionists in DCI, WGI, college, military, theme parks, cruise ships, or other performance groups need to continue excelling in their performance to sustain the position that he or she secured at the audition.

### **Summary of Performance and Auditions**

To achieve an excellent marching percussion performance, one should develop superior musicianship, read marching percussion music, learn proper technique, and discover how to audition successfully. These aspects of performing are critical to accomplishing one’s performance goals. However, one must possess perseverance to attain performance objectives. Buyer reveals that “perseverance is the ability to keep going during tough times, overcome adversity, and never give up...Perseverance is the inner strength [one] must have to succeed.”<sup>166</sup> Perseverance is the ingredient that aids one’s pursuit for realizing a successful performance in the marching arts.

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<sup>165</sup> Matt Blackett, “David Grissom: On Getting and Keeping the Gig,” *Guitar Player* 42, no. 10 (October 2008): 16, [https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=BIC&u=vic\\_liberty&id=GALE%7CA192687956&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon](https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=BIC&u=vic_liberty&id=GALE%7CA192687956&v=2.1&it=r&sid=summon).

<sup>166</sup> Buyer, *Working Toward Excellence*, 83.

## Teaching and Pedagogical Techniques

Observing and learning pedagogical approaches in marching percussion makes the teacher more efficient and successful in producing quality ensembles and performers. By the time a student arrives at college, he or she has previously learned from several teachers. Band director Larry Seipp claims that “ultimately, the purpose of teaching is to nurture learning.”<sup>167</sup> Developing one’s desire for more education and instilling a passion for the marching arts is the professor’s purpose. Music education philosopher David Elliot believes in isotropy and how it supports the music listener. He explains, “teaching students how to perform and improvise musically informs their music-listening abilities both now and in the future.”<sup>168</sup> This concept of isotropy illustrates how music permanently stays with people. A music instructor’s mission is for his or her students to continue listening to and performing music throughout their lives. Marching percussion is a type of music performance that evolves with contemporary music and progresses to satisfy the audience’s desires.

Pedagogy is composed of educators practicing how to instruct methodologies, content, and practical knowledge. If successfully achieved, effective pedagogy inspires the learning process. Alice and David Kolb mention that “learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes. To improve learning in higher education, the primary focus should be on engaging students in a process that best enhances their learning - a process that includes feedback on the effectiveness of their learning efforts.”<sup>169</sup> A collegiate course of study should captivate students

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<sup>167</sup> Larry Michael Seipp, “Effects of Nonmusical Factors on Virginia High School Band Concert Performance Assessment Results” (Doctoral Thesis, Liberty University, 2021), 41, <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/doctoral/3127/>.

<sup>168</sup> Elliot, *Music Matters*, 103.



and propel them towards more learning. Kolb and Kolb also say that “all learning is relearning. Learning is best facilitated by a process that draws out the students’ beliefs and ideas about a topic so that they can be examined, tested, and integrated with new, more refined ideas.”<sup>170</sup> Having come from high school instruction, college percussionists relearn and solidify what they may have already been taught. To become a fruitful educator, one may test ideas that have been previously presented or refine pedagogical beliefs that have not yet been proven. Too often, instructors teach with methods that bring them comfort without considering the needs of the pupil. Colleen Conway believes educators should “consider content as a vehicle to establish a knowledge base and then promote lifelong learning in the content.”<sup>171</sup> Developing lifelong learners should be the mission of all pedagogues.

Paul Buyer articulates that “practicing is working on the music” individually, “while rehearsing is working on the music” as an ensemble.”<sup>172</sup> Individual practice is imperative to the student’s success, but a rehearsal will enhance the collective ensemble sound. The secret ingredient for a marching percussion ensemble to excel is how the group rehearses.<sup>173</sup> Marching percussion instructional methods are different from traditional percussion teaching. Therefore, having immense experience as a performer in this realm serves the educator well. Analyzing

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<sup>169</sup> Alice Y. Kolb and David A. Kolb, “Learning Styles and Learning Spaces: Enhancing Experiential Learning in Higher Education,” *Academy of Management Learning & Education* 4, no. 2 (June 2005): 194, [https://www.jstor.org/stable/40214287?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/40214287?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents).

<sup>170</sup> Kolb and Kolb, “Learning Styles and Learning Spaces,” 194.

<sup>171</sup> Colleen M. Conway, *Teaching Music in Higher Education*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 17.

<sup>172</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 20.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

rehearsal methods, listening techniques, and approaches to cleaning music can positively affect the marching percussion ensemble.

## **Marching Percussion Pedagogical Methods**

### Philosophies of Teaching Marching Percussion

Dennis DeLucia, member of the World Drum Corps Hall of Fame and DCI Hall of Fame, mentions that “teachers, instructors, and ‘techs’ must serve two masters: a. The integrity, intent, accuracy and nuance of the written music. b. The individual and collective interests, abilities, and experience levels of every student or player in order to foster her or his musical growth and psychological well-being.”<sup>174</sup> To achieve one’s full potential of musical maturation, creating a curriculum that facilitates a relaxed and motivating environment will produce learners with a passion for accomplishing goals. DeLucia suggests that the teacher should “create a program whose objectives are centered on: a. Education and growth (maturation), b. Music education, c. Percussion education, d. Sound habits, e. Fun, f. Intrigue, g. Fulfillment.”<sup>175</sup> This model of pedagogy can establish learning conditions that enrich one’s life musically while making it enjoyable. Too often, marching percussion teachers are negative in their instructional transmission, so using “positive reinforcement” may manufacture quality marching percussionists.<sup>176</sup>

Specifically referring to a drumline, “uniformity of style and motion are important components of the marching experience, but the teacher must allow for individual differences

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<sup>174</sup> Udow, *Percussion Pedagogy*, 368.

<sup>175</sup> DeLucia, *Dennis DeLucia’s Percussion Discussion*, 7.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

based on height, weight, size of hands, talent, and experience levels.”<sup>177</sup> Every human is created unique from one another; therefore, everyone’s body and experience are different. Should all the drums be level across the drumline without considering the height of each performer? Should the teacher instruct all players to wrap their middle finger on the left hand completely around the drum stick without noticing that some students’ middle fingers are shorter than others? Customizing the drum height and finger placement of each performer may allow each percussionist to present a performance that is comfortable for him or her. Also, to build one’s confidence, “understand[ing] the real talent level of the players” is vital.<sup>178</sup> DeLucia explains that “on a scale of 1 to 10, if [the] student is a ‘5’ in terms of talent and experience, then create a program of exercises and charts that is aimed at a ‘6’ not at a ‘9’!”<sup>179</sup> Devising a plan this way empowers the players to strive for their best efforts for optimum performance.

Fabricating a lesson plan that is thoughtful, feasible, and constructive will produce desirable results. DeLucia proposes the following plan for the first year teaching a marching percussion ensemble: “a. The Grip (relax, relax, relax), b. The Flow: arms-wrists-fingers working together to produce tension-free motion, c. Strokes - Down, Up, Natural, d. Reading - Right-Hand Lead, e. Rhythm Exercises, f. The Rudiments.”<sup>180</sup> This master plan for devising rehearsal sessions based on the expressed concepts should improve the section. A unified grip, flow, and stroke that are performed identically from player to player will generate a collective sound. Having a particular system for learning new music that follows the same sticking patterns makes it doable for all to execute the music correctly during the first repetition. Reading various

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<sup>177</sup> Udow, *Percussion Pedagogy*, 367.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 367.

<sup>179</sup> DeLucia, *Dennis DeLucia’s Percussion Discussion*, 6.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

rhythmic studies builds a secure knowledge of rhythms and ways to count patterns. Moreover, learning all rudiments is essential to performing show music, etudes, and cadences appropriately and accurately. DeLucia recognizes that the “three ‘R’s’ are essential to a thorough percussion education: a. Reading, b. ‘Riting, c. Rudiments.”<sup>181</sup> He believes that the educator who teaches the marching percussion ensemble how to read music, composes relevant music for the group, and instructs his or her students using all drum rudiments has the potential to assemble an exceptional marching percussion unit.

These aspects of marching percussion education are pertinent to effective teaching, but proper rehearsal is beneficial to developing a cohesive ensemble. Regarding the importance of rehearsal, Paul Buyer states:

Rehearsals are where the magic happens. Rehearsals are where the growth happens. Rehearsals are where the learning happens. Don’t get lulled into the ‘it’s just rehearsal’ mentality, despite the gravitational pull of the room. Rest assured, if [the teacher or student] choose[s] to go through the motions, [the teacher or student] might as well stay home and do something else. Rehearsals are for planting seeds. Isn’t it about time [musicians] started taking them more seriously, giving them the care and feeding they deserve?<sup>182</sup>

Buyer discusses the power of rehearsal if the teacher and ensemble decide to embrace a productive time making music together. Rehearsing is a time to improve and lay the foundation for future progress as a performing unit. Conceiving “a schedule with specific goals for every rehearsal” is necessary to keep students and the staff on course.<sup>183</sup> Determining where rehearsal will take place, how long rehearsal will last, what should be accomplished during rehearsal, and who will rehearse are all questions that need guidance. Answering these inquiries forms a

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<sup>181</sup> Udow, *Percussion Pedagogy*, 367.

<sup>182</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 33.

<sup>183</sup> Cook, *Teaching Percussion*, 347.

positive rehearsal. Also, dividing the rehearsal “into some combination of music and marching” is valuable.<sup>184</sup> Focusing on music in subsections and the whole ensemble helps students focus on how their parts fit within certain sections. Practicing marching technique and playing music while moving, either in tracking forward or marching show drill, is advantageous to the unit’s progress. Most of all, being mindful when creating a master plan for specific rehearsals, weekly goals, monthly objectives, and semester targets keeps the staff and students attentive, motivated, and amalgamated as one performing entity.

### Listening Techniques

Due to the importance for performers to match interpretations, dynamics, and rhythmic alignment, the art of listening in rehearsal is crucial to the ensemble’s achievement. To achieve excellence in a marching percussion ensemble, students “need to develop their ears.”<sup>185</sup> The ability to “hear, focus on, and listen to the music” and other musicians during a performance are integral to the ensemble’s cohesive sound.<sup>186</sup> Clif Walker, two-time PAS Champion, declares, “the marching percussion ensemble is a unique combination of artistic, physical, and acoustic challenges that demands an equally unique plan of attack in regard to instruction. The fundamentals of playing and marching are commonly addressed sequentially, but the listening component, the ‘how,’ ‘to whom,’ and ‘when’ is often overlooked.”<sup>187</sup> The listening duty of the performer constantly fluctuates, often making this aspect of teaching a challenge.

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<sup>184</sup> Cook, *Teaching Percussion*, 347.

<sup>185</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 37.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>187</sup> Clif Walker, “Ensemble Listening: Rehearsal Techniques for Marching Percussion,” *Percussive Notes* 43, no. 3 (June 2005): 30, <http://www.marchingroundtable.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Ensemble-Listening.pdf>.

Walker goes further in defining the distinctiveness of rehearsal listening technique for the marching percussion ensemble:

Listening responsibilities within any musical ensemble vary from micro to macro. In the marching percussion ensemble, we can also start with the individual sound (self), subsection (just bass drums), section (battery), percussion ensemble (battery and frontline), and ultimately full ensemble (with winds if outdoors). Challenges occur throughout this progression and become increasingly difficult due to the mobile nature and spatial issues associated with today's marching activity. For this reason, the introduction, development, and maintenance of listening skills are even more relevant and vital.<sup>188</sup>

There is a typical progression of performance practice and visual fundamentals that are articulated with ten steps. This process involves stationary music and visual fundamentals with and without instruments, music fundamentals and visual fundamentals, stationary show music and drill with drums on stands and then wearing drums, stationary staging and listening exercises with music fundamentals in warm-up sets and then in show staging, show music and visual fundamentals, staging and listening with stationary show music, and show music and drill.<sup>189</sup> The illustration that shows this rehearsal progression includes details of each section and how everything relates together in a unified sound (see Appendix E).<sup>190</sup> This visual graphic portrays the unique listening responsibilities of the marching percussion ensemble.

One part of Walker's methods involves starting with familiarity. When going outside at the beginning of the season, he suggests the percussion director should "position the battery percussion directly behind the frontline, similar to an arrangement they may use and understand while rehearsing indoors."<sup>191</sup> Rehearsing with a simple exercise that helps the frontline build

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<sup>188</sup> Walker, "Ensemble Listening," 30.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

listening confidence relative to the battery aids the establishment of ensemble trust. Over time, expanding the distance between the frontline and battery challenges the performer's listening demands; however, creating more distance replicates an actual marching show performance situation. This approach with drill sets and transitions from the marching show can also stimulate performance staging demands.

Another rehearsal approach could link exercise music with drill transitions. Walker proposes to have the ensemble “start by substituting a basic exercise to help focus the ensemble’s listening responsibilities over the existing drill sequence. By using actual drill sets and visual count structure sequences from the field show, [the ensemble] can expose and address timing tendencies while defining listening hierarchies.”<sup>192</sup> This practice method will increase the front ensemble’s confidence in the vertical alignment of their rhythms compared to the pulse of the battery. Due to the placement of the pit on the sideline, “the front ensemble will always be ahead of the band/corps if they play with what they see from the drum major. For the same spatial reasons, battery percussion should never listen to or play with music coming from the front sideline.”<sup>193</sup> After repeating the sequence of the drumline marching drill while performing exercises, they should begin inserting show music one section at a time.<sup>194</sup> This approach should result in a smooth transition from exercise music sounding cohesive to the show music aligning vertically from the front ensemble back to the battery. When the winds are added, pit members will have more music to listen back to and through to hear the cadence of the drumline.<sup>195</sup> Buyer believes that “listening often comes down to being aware, noticing, and paying attention to what

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<sup>192</sup> Walker, “Ensemble Listening,” 31.

<sup>193</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 38.

<sup>194</sup> Walker, “Ensemble Listening,” 31.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

is happening in the moment and then using - and trusting - [one's] musicianship to play with the right interpretation, balance, and touch."<sup>196</sup> Listening perspectives continually change, so heightening one's sense of awareness can reap a successful performance.

Walker encourages the marching percussion group when he states, "as the ensemble develops and their needs refine, be creative so the experience stays fresh and reaches its maximum potential for the students, instructors, and audience. Good listening skills will then have a greater chance of carrying over into all musical experiences."<sup>197</sup> Listening to the ensemble and making sure the performance blends with other sections is the goal for superior performance.

#### Approach to Cleaning Music

Establishing and executing a plan to clean the performance of marching percussion music is imperative to developing a cohesive sound. Cleaning is a substantial part of the educator's list of teaching responsibilities. Playing unified as an ensemble is the aim of ensembles in all music genres, but certain aspects of cleaning performances in marching percussion make it unique.

Buyer articulates the denotation of playing clean and its contrast:

Playing clean occurs when an ensemble plays together and all parts are executed, aligned, and balanced at a high level. A clean performance results in musical excellence and is the highest ideal for players, instructors, judges, arrangers, and educated audiences. Playing clean is also the most difficult goal for a marching percussion ensemble to achieve. The opposite of playing clean is playing dirty, which occurs when an ensemble does not play together, in time, or in a cohesive way. Parts do not line up and execution is sloppy.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 40.

<sup>197</sup> Walker, "Ensemble Listening," 33.

<sup>198</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 44.



Vertical alignment of all rhythms and matching interpretations across the drumline are integral parts of achieving cleanliness. Clemson University's Drumline uses a process that involves learning, memorizing, and cleaning music. Their philosophy states: "we cannot clean music that is not memorized, and we cannot memorize music that is not learned."<sup>199</sup> Learning music is the first step in the cleaning process and will position the marching percussion section for success. Creating playability and memorization deadlines for students prepares the ensemble to achieve cleanliness.<sup>200</sup> Hannum believes "the key to success lies in planning," so establishing due dates for playing the music with and without sheet music will prepare the ensemble for advancement.<sup>201</sup>

The final step in the cleaning process concerns the concept of 'listening in' to the center player. Markworth describes the concept of 'listening in' this way:

The battery sub-sections use the concept of 'listening in.' The section leader/strongest player is placed in the center and the next two strongest players on either side of him/her, etc. The idea is for the outside players to match the timing and volume of the section leader. The section leader is usually called the 'center snare,' for example. The leader's instructions or count-off's can also be heard better if placed in the center. Odd numbered sections are preferable to place the lead player in the middle, but the concept works with even numbers as well.<sup>202</sup>

It is the responsibility of the marching percussion instructor to position each performer in the correct location within the ensemble to ensure optimal performance. Achieving the best placement for all members entails understanding the abilities of each student beyond a short video audition. Knowing each performer, musically and characteristically, can help the teacher in

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<sup>199</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 44.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>201</sup> Hannum and Morrison, *Championship Concepts for Marching Percussion*, 69.

<sup>202</sup> Markworth, *The Dynamic Marching Band*, 115.

student placement. Beyond performer positioning, there are several ways to sufficiently clean a drumline, including going down the line, adding on, breaking it down, close one's eyes, changing the set-up, addressing technique, addressing time, asking questions, repetition, holding sectionals, and ending rehearsal with a climax of confidence.<sup>203</sup> Green says "confidence comes from being prepared," so strengthening one's belief in themselves will enhance the ensemble.<sup>204</sup> Devising a plan for achievement may improve student self-efficacy in the marching percussion ensemble.<sup>205</sup> These suggestions can polish the ensemble's performance generating a cohesive alignment of rhythms, rudiments, and musical interpretations.

Regarding the music cleaning process, Tom Aungst says, "cleaning a drumline is a process that should start from the beginning and consistently be maintained throughout the season. A detailed approach with technique and a methodical breakdown of the music through repetition is so important."<sup>206</sup> Establishing a cleaning process at the start of the season and employing it frequently throughout the season benefits the ensemble and teaches proper performance techniques. Aungst outlines other cleaning techniques, including the use of a metronome and discussing how a person's feet move with his or her hands, "breaking down rhythmic and rudimental patterns into short repetitive exercises" that develop a consistent path toward cleanliness, repeating phrases musically and visually, and rehearsing exercises and show music while tracking in a parade block.<sup>207</sup> Buyer reminds educators that "the metronome is a

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<sup>203</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 45-47.

<sup>204</sup> Green, *The Mastery of Music*, 269.

<sup>205</sup> Adrian North, and David Hargreaves, *The Social and Applied Psychology of Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 46.

<sup>206</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 49.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

teaching tool that isn't part of the actual performance", so using a metronome is a positive tool, but it should be eliminated once the "ensemble cohesiveness improves."<sup>208</sup> When interviewed about the cleaning process, Paul Rennick articulates valuable advice:

I try to get everyone to understand the music in the same way and agree on the interpretation. It's a constant balance between the physical and aural aspects of playing, so it requires flexibility from the instructor. Every musical situation is slightly different so knowing how to diagnose a problem and come up with the right solution is crucial. I want them to understand the root cause of a mistake, anticipate it, and ultimately prevent it from happening in the first place.<sup>209</sup>

Educators who are adaptable and willing to change his or her instructional methods to constructively influence his or her ensemble typically have prosperous ensembles. Conway acknowledges that "musicians perform, teach, and work in diverse educational settings," so being ready to alter one's cleaning approach or rehearsal plan to fit the ensemble's needs can benefit the overall performance.<sup>210</sup>

### **Summary of Teaching and Pedagogical Techniques**

Analyzing rehearsal methods, listening techniques, and approaches to cleaning music can positively affect the marching percussion ensemble. Having a "readiness to learn and adapt to new and different situations, can produce teachers of exceptional ability, flexibility, relevance, professionalism and effectiveness."<sup>211</sup> Adapting to the expansion and creativity of the marching

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<sup>208</sup> Clif Walker, "Using a Metronome with the Marching Ensemble," *Percussive Notes* 40, no. 1 (February 2002): 24, <http://www.marchingroundtable.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Using-A-Metronome-1.pdf>.

<sup>209</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 50.

<sup>210</sup> Conway, *Teaching Music in Higher Education*, 267.

<sup>211</sup> Annie Mitchell, "Seven Steps to Heaven: Time and Tide in 21st Century Contemporary Music Higher Education," *Australian Journal of Teacher Education* 43, no. 5 (May 2018): 74, <http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2018v43n5.5>.

arts is necessary to stay relevant in a developing genre of percussion performance. Udow remarks that “the art of teaching continually evolves. Thinking creatively, keeping an open mind to new technical and musical possibilities, and being well grounded in the historical roots of [the percussion] discipline is essential for future generations of musicians to progress.”<sup>212</sup>

### Composing, Arranging, and Portfolio Submissions

#### **Mental Considerations**

To discover inspiration for music composition, one must be creative. Green describes creativity thusly:

Creativity is a matter of translating messages of passion, excitement, and soul into our own musical language through structure, harmony, rhythm, and style. We ourselves are made up of everything to which we have ever been exposed. Even the study of one style of music may involve a blend of many cultures, and the broader our exposure and the more sensitive our inner listening, the richer our unique voice will be.<sup>213</sup>

Green’s advice for subjecting to a wide variety of music and culture will improve the composer or arranger’s artistic expression. About inventing a new piece of music, Nestico notes that “although the study of [music] theory is a requisite, no course of instruction stands in isolation. Notation of music in itself can’t capture sound, teach imagination or express emotions. Creative ideas come from curiosity; thinking in images and sounds. The music offers a problem and [the composer/arranger/orchestrator] try[s] to solve it.”<sup>214</sup> Nestico does not believe that one course of study gives enough experience to become a prolific and successful writer; instead, it is a combination of artistic encounters that enriches the composer or arranger’s imagination. In the

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<sup>212</sup> Udow, *Percussion Pedagogy*, 425.

<sup>213</sup> Green, *The Mastery of Music*, 244.

<sup>214</sup> Nestico, *The Complete Arranger*, xiii.

field of marching percussion, composers and arrangers need exposure to music from the Middle Ages, Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and Twentieth-century periods, jazz, rock, world music, musical theatre, film music, and independent styles. These genres constitute some of the more popular music forms prevalently used in marching arts shows. Fyffe recognizes that “competitive indoor percussion ensembles draw ideas, influence, and inspiration from many resources,” so having a solid familiarity of many musical styles will serve the composer and arranger well for his or her artistry.<sup>215</sup> According to musicologist Roger Kamien, “to fully understand the style of a composition, one has to be aware of its function in society.”<sup>216</sup> The music’s impact on humanity changes, so knowing how it affected history is imperative to telling a story through one’s show composition.

Nestico communicates that the qualities a music creator needs to execute a masterful composition or arrangement involve a focused mindset, clear purpose, compositional continuity and clarity, transparent form, logical key selection and tempo, appropriate style, perspicuous notation, syncopated notation, cogent voice leading, dramatic dynamics, expressive articulations, and a discipline to continue developing one’s compositional voice.<sup>217</sup> The cognitive stamina and musical characteristics listed previously significantly affect the artistry of the music and show design. Nestico advises that “any arranger who wants to improve and develop his craft should be constantly evaluating his work, never completely satisfied. The success of the contemporary arranger is built on just such mental and musical considerations.”<sup>218</sup> Show designer Dan Ryder

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<sup>215</sup> Fyffe, *Indoor Percussion Ensembles and Drum Corps*, 22.

<sup>216</sup> Roger Kamien, *Music: An Appreciation*, 12<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2015), 66.

<sup>217</sup> Nestico, *The Complete Arranger*, 1-2 – 1-8.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii.

holds that “the most important characteristic a show designer must have is a creative mind.”<sup>219</sup>

Along with being creative, one should consider marching percussion compositional and arranging techniques, show design concepts, and a cohesive portfolio to mature into a satisfactory marching percussion composer or arranger.

## **Marching Percussion Compositional and Arranging Techniques**

### Overview

The composition and arrangement for the marching percussion ensemble are integral to supporting the band. Udow writes:

In any marching ensemble the role of percussion is usually two-fold: to drive and to color. a. The drumline (especially the battery) drives the vehicle, the musical entity, the corps of band, thereby controlling pulse, rhythms, and members’ confidence. b. The percussion section, especially the ‘pit’ (front ensemble), colors the musical portrait by adding sounds and colors to the arrangement that brass and woodwind players alone cannot create.<sup>220</sup>

Udow describes how the marching percussion section propels the marching band forward with the pulse, energy, and rhythmic direction and paints the music composition with additional plangent tinges of sound. Like Udow, Nestico also believes the music should reflect a variety of colors within the musical landscape when he says that “the inquisitive orchestrator should attempt to feel the music, and then find the colors, sounds, rhythms and dynamics that will give the familiar melody a new and fresh personality...an old friend with a new face.”<sup>221</sup> Arranging

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<sup>219</sup> Dan Ryder, *Techniques of Marching Band Show Designing System*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Wylie, TX: Dan Ryder Field Drills, 2016), 1.

<sup>220</sup> Udow, *Percussion Pedagogy*, 367.

<sup>221</sup> Nestico, *The Complete Arranger*, 1-2.

and orchestrating existing songs with a new musical perspective can revive archaic versions of tunes.

About music composition and arranging, Casella and Gusseck convey:

The music should be written in such a way that both the performer AND listener may relate to it. In any musical situation, whether it's playing in an orchestra, drum circle, jazz combo, or speed metal band, there should always be the connection between the performer and the music. Music is a language that many people can read but can't often speak. Or commonly (at least in [the marching arts] activity), we speak just enough of the language to get by...Understanding the notes, rhythms, dynamics, and stickings [are] only one small portion of the player's responsibility. There should be just as much importance placed on making an emotional connection with the music and its phrasings so that there is a true understanding that communicates up into the stands.<sup>222</sup>

Music is a language that connects people together. It is a way to tell a story, explain a concept, or speak one's mind. The emotional relationship between the composer, music, and audience dominates music's primary purpose. In his dissertation, John Brennan explains that "form and emotional contour of a program requires a balancing act of listening to the brain and the heart."<sup>223</sup> A quality music composition or arrangement bridges the emotional aesthetics of one's soul and mind. To accomplish this feat, "the plan of the [music] program should highlight the emotional high and low points, in addition to giving the arranger a flexible roadmap that allows the music to be written in an organic manner."<sup>224</sup> The pliability to insert any musical resolution or detour allows the composer to be free and untethered from typical musical forms. Hannum and Morrison hold that "the students [or performers] should understand and experience the highs

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<sup>222</sup> Casella and Gusseck, *Fresh Perspectives for the Modern Drumline*, 41.

<sup>223</sup> John Michael Brennan, "Show Design and Wind Arranging for Marching Ensembles" (master's thesis, The Ohio State University, 2014), 108, [https://etd.ohiolink.edu/apexprod/rws\\_etd/send\\_file/send?accession=osu1397561909&disposition=attachment](https://etd.ohiolink.edu/apexprod/rws_etd/send_file/send?accession=osu1397561909&disposition=attachment).

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

and lows of the music, and oftentimes reflect these through body motions.”<sup>225</sup> The performers need to understand this emotional relationship to convey the composer’s imagination to the audience.

### Marching Percussion Arranging

**Warm-Ups.** Buyer believes that “writing for drumline is a process of brainstorming, outlining, writing, rewriting, tweaking, editing, and rewriting some more until [one is] satisfied and confident with the content, flow, and transitions in what [one is] trying to say.”<sup>226</sup> It is a continuous process that can always be adapted to fit any ensemble, performance situation, or show concept. He holds that arranging can be divided into three main groups of musical focus: warm-ups, cadences, and show music.<sup>227</sup> First, warm-ups are not solely intended to develop the performer’s technique, “but to increase [one’s] understanding of how rhythm works and [often] helps to dictate what the hands do.”<sup>228</sup> Casella and Gusseck explain that most of their “exercises explore some kind of rhythmic idea that is stated and then developed” into “miniature compositions.”<sup>229</sup> Buyer recognizes the importance of “[having] a warm-up routine that includes essential performance skills and techniques found in [one’s] show. This direct application not only saves rehearsal time but helps with the learning and cleaning process.”<sup>230</sup> Carefully crafting

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<sup>225</sup> Hannum and Morrison, *Championship Concepts for Marching Percussion*, 55.

<sup>226</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 64.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>228</sup> Casella and Gusseck, *Fresh Perspectives for the Modern Drumline*, vi.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>230</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 65.



exercises to efficiently warm the performer's muscles while supporting the music literature in the marching band, stage, or military show can benefit the ensemble's achievement.

**Cadences.** Cadences comprise the second part of marching percussion arranging. Aside from cadences being short compositions that showcase the drumline's technical and rhythmic ability, they have a valuable purpose. According to Buyer, "a cadence provides a steady beat that the band/corps can march to at all times."<sup>231</sup> Instead of having the center snare drummer play quarter notes to keep the ensemble marching together, cadences are elaborated musical compositions that maintain consistency among all band or corps members' marching. Also, "a cadence must be functional in terms of getting on and off the field, marching a parade, bringing the ensemble to a halt, and giving the drumline an opportunity to be featured while giving the winds some much needed time to rest."<sup>232</sup> In the modern age, the drummer's role still involves versions of "drum signals" to keep the ensemble aware of the sequence of performance and music synchronization.<sup>233</sup>

**Show Music.** The final segment of marching percussion arranging includes show music. Markworth proclaims that the technical approach for concert and marching percussion performance is similar, but "what is written for the percussion section, the dynamic range and the instruments themselves are very different in the two genres."<sup>234</sup> Regarding how percussion parts should be initially composed, David Rodenkirch and Joe Gallegos suggest:

Marching percussion arrangements [should] be written so that, for the most part, the players can attain a reasonable performance level within the given rehearsal time frame... Therefore, it is recommended that rather than write very difficult parts that will more than

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<sup>231</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 66.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>233</sup> Halligan, "Rudimental Drumming Style and Performance Practice," 49.

<sup>234</sup> Markworth, *The Dynamic Marching Band*, 129.

likely need to be watered down later (which is psychologically disappointing to the players), it better serves the student (and listener) to write parts at or a little above the overall level of the ensemble and enhance or beef up the parts only after complete mastery by the ensemble. This approach also provides motivation toward achieving a very high performance level and a real hype when parts are later embellished and enhanced.<sup>235</sup>

To bolster the confidence of the marching percussion section, composing music that is slightly too difficult at the beginning of the season but is achievable after much practice may be the best plan. The dynamic environment should be one of “concentration/focus,” “self-motivat[ion],” and optimism for accomplishing a cohesive performance.<sup>236</sup>

Regardless of the rigorous performance level, “the goal of every marching ensemble is to blend each and every element of the group so as to produce a pleasing balance between the audio and visual presentations.”<sup>237</sup> Percussion parts must support the entire ensemble’s sound and direction. Casella and Gusseck acknowledge that a battery arrangement “has to have an intensely strong vibe and supply a good amount of rhythm to accomplish the necessary drive.”<sup>238</sup> This push from the rhythmic variety keeps the entire ensemble moving forward musically and visually. Casella and Ancona write that “without a strong pit contribution, the effect of a modern-day marching band or drum corps is essentially lost.”<sup>239</sup> The front ensemble support is an “important musical ingredient” that adds many sonorities which boost the wind and battery arrangement.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> David Rodenkirch and Joe Gallegos, “Scoring and Arranging,” in *Teaching Percussion*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Gary D. Cook (Boston: Cengage, 2019), 394.

<sup>236</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 59.

<sup>237</sup> Hannum and Morrison, *Championship Concepts for Marching Percussion*, 71.

<sup>238</sup> Casella and Gusseck, *Fresh Perspectives for the Modern Drumline*, 48.

<sup>239</sup> Casella and Ancona, *Up Front*, 7.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

The most crucial part of composing and arranging the marching percussion music is supporting the wind arrangement. Buyer communicates that “the arranger’s responsibility to write quality percussion parts that complement the wind parts.”<sup>241</sup> Composing percussion music that improves the wind arrangement is the goal of achieving a cohesive musical package. The composer’s “musical intent is achieved when arrangements are performed at proper tempos, percussion parts reflect and enhance the wind score, and the percussion arrangement contributes to the integrity of the overall arrangement.”<sup>242</sup> Brennan reinforces the notion of the percussion section supporting the wind score when he describes some considerations:

The percussion book should complement the wind book... The battery will stabilize pulse, create a sense of momentum, and determine the overall feel of the music. Rhythmically the writing should complement the winds and not create an ambiguous texture... Keyboard (vibraphone, xylophone, marimba) should support the wind writing but not always double their music... The use of auxiliary instruments should also complement the arrangement and not feel out of context in the music... Regardless whether writing for the pit or battery, the percussion arranger should be sensitive to the texture of [the] wind score.<sup>243</sup>

Since Brennan reminds the arranger that the percussion score should support the wind music five times throughout this short quote, one must embrace this wisdom and make sure that the percussion arrangement strengthens the entire ensemble. Oliver Molina, a percussion director and writer, agrees with Buyer and Brennan when he mentions that “the percussion score should highlight and enhance the wind score while also supporting the overall concepts for the show

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<sup>241</sup> Paul Lorin Buyer, “Marching Percussion Arrangements for the Enhancement of Essential Performance Skills” (D.M.A. diss., The University of Arizona, 1999), 14, <http://hdl.handle.net/10150/284649>.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>243</sup> Brennan, “Show Design and Wind Arranging for Marching Ensembles,” 142.

design.”<sup>244</sup> Ensuring that one’s arrangement bolsters the entire music score is crucial to achieving a united musical production.

*Four Musical Functions: Support Material.* Casella and Ancona identify four musical functions of the front ensemble score: “to help support existing material or provide accompaniment,” “to add a melodic voice or counterpoint to the musical ensemble,” “to provide impact,” and “to provide effect or color.”<sup>245</sup> Melody and accompaniment comprise most musical elements in an arrangement. To mitigate conflicts in the composition, all arrangers for a project need to coordinate their musical responsibilities and roles.<sup>246</sup> For example, if the brass sections play the melody, the front ensemble can support the melody by outlining the chord progressions with various mallet permutations.<sup>247</sup> Dividing a composition into different parts is reflected in Santa Clara Vanguard’s (SCV) 2002 production of Aaron Copland’s “Symphony for Organ and Orchestra.” In this example, the mallets establish an accompaniment ostinato for the baritone soloist (see Appendix F).<sup>248</sup> Mixing these two musical ideas “create a ‘holistic output’” where “neither one can stand alone.”<sup>249</sup> The mallet parts generate the same effect that the clarinets and flutes produce in Copland’s original score.<sup>250</sup> Repeated patterns can easily transfer to mallet

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<sup>244</sup> Oliver Molina, “Writing and Arranging for Marching Percussion in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” *Percussive Notes* 51, no. 4 (July 2013): 14, <https://olivermolina.com.files.wordpress.com/2018/02/writing-and-arranging-for-marching-percussion-in-the-21st-century.pdf>.

<sup>245</sup> Casella and Ancona, *Up Front*, 188.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>247</sup> Leigh Howard Stevens, *Method of Movement for Marimba with 590 Exercises*, 9<sup>th</sup> ed. (Asbury Park, NJ: Keyboard Percussion Publications, 2012), 6.

<sup>248</sup> Casella and Ancona, *Up Front*, 188.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

instruments in a front ensemble, so marching band or drum corps arrangements frequently explore this method.

*Four Musical Functions: Melodic Voice.* Adding a melodic voice or counterpoint is the second part of supporting the music ensemble. In SCV's 2003 show, a chamber piece for 15 string players was employed.<sup>251</sup> In this arrangement, the brass provides the melody, but the vibraphone adds an "augmented melodic theme" to give a variety of orchestration and color (see Appendix G).<sup>252</sup> The battery plays a rhythmic supporting role to establish the groove for the melodies, and the marimbas, timpani, and percussion accompany the harmonic content. The amalgamation of these melodic sonorities and rhythmic textures reveals a "holistic [ensemble] sound."<sup>253</sup>

*Four Musical Functions: Provide Impact.* Next, the percussion provides impact to complement the volume of key phrases in the production. Mallet instruments and synthesizers do not offer impactful musical moments, so the performers playing these instruments often perform on "cymbals, tam tams, concert bass drums, tom toms, [and] timpani."<sup>254</sup> A demonstration of this compositional technique is evident in SCV's 2002 opener (see Appendix H).<sup>255</sup> The battery keeps the musical energy moving forward with rhythms, rolls, accent patterns, and 16<sup>th</sup> note syncopations. The percussion part supports the drumline's contribution, while the rest of the front ensemble adds musical impact. This impact includes "the timpani part provid[ing] some 'punch' to the brass melody," while the remaining pit "crashing on hand cymbals, rolling on

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<sup>251</sup> Casella and Ancona, *Up Front*, 189.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, 190-91.

suspended cymbals, or adding impact to battery parts on the concert bass drum.”<sup>256</sup> Due to the loud volume of melodic and harmonic support in the brass orchestration during this excerpt, percussive parts are essential to provide the volume impact of the ensemble.

*Four Musical Functions: Provide Effect/Color.* Finally, Casella and Ancona acknowledge the effect and color that a front ensemble contributes to the ensemble. Additional effects and textures are explored in the front ensemble with a limited drum corps orchestration of brass and percussion. Some ways to investigate colorful sounds include “switching to different mallets or playing with a different touch,” “scraping tam tams or submerging a chime into water to bend its pitch,” “hammer[ing] on anvils,” “shak[ing] sheet metal,” “play[ing] glass wind chimes,” or “play[ing] on loose drum heads with timpani sticks.”<sup>257</sup> SCV’s 2001 opener displays some of these color effects by applying “hard mallets on metallic keyboards” (see Appendix I).<sup>258</sup> In this example, the metallic instruments “recreate a dramatic piccolo line from the original piece,” and the marimbas and third vibraphone part administer an ostinato.<sup>259</sup> To explore the “infinite amount of tonal colors in this type of percussion ensemble,” Casella and Ancona suggest that imagination is a requirement to succeed.<sup>260</sup>

### **Show Design for Marching Percussion**

According to band director Tom Keck, “the major differences between concert and marching percussion playing styles stem from the differences in equipment, and the role of the

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<sup>256</sup> Casella and Ancona, *Up Front*, 190.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

player.”<sup>261</sup> The marching percussionist has the responsibility to perform music while marching drill formations. Markworth emphasizes that “most percussion specialists include marching as part of their duties in rehearsing the section. It is truly integral to the entire percussion performance.”<sup>262</sup> Moving the percussion section during the performance is what constitutes a marching percussion section. Buyer states that “the main purpose of drill design” is “to create movement and provide a visual representation of the music.”<sup>263</sup> When designing a show, the drill writer must consider how his or her staging affects the ensemble.

Designing a show for marching band/drum corps, indoor drumline, or theme park ensembles can be challenging to stage the percussion that supports the overall performance. Ryder remarks that “a show designer must present different staging ideas as the show develops... Staging will draw attention to the group being featured... Having the spectator’s attention directed to different parts of the field, will keep them active as they watch a performance.”<sup>264</sup> Writing drill is a necessary skill that the marching percussionist must possess to create a show. Staging the percussion section on the field in a marching band or on the court in a basketball gymnasium “is a very important concept...add[ing] general effect, entertainment, excitement, showmanship to the show while highlighting the interpretation of the music.”<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Tom Keck, “Marching Percussion,” in *The System: Marching Band Methods*, Gary E. Smith (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2016), 249.

<sup>262</sup> Markworth, *The Dynamic Marching Band*, 139-40.

<sup>263</sup> Buyer, “Marching Percussion Arrangements,” 70.

<sup>264</sup> Ryder, *Techniques of Marching Band*, 167.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

## Staging Concepts

**Wayne Markworth’s Recommendations.** When examining staging ideas, Markworth acknowledges that “the location of the battery on the field has as much or more to do with total band balance than the volume played. The most important rule is to stage the battery behind the winds and close to the center of the field as much as possible.”<sup>266</sup> If executed properly, this staging concept “will create the most unity of sound and precision” for the whole ensemble.<sup>267</sup> A show designer’s goal is a musical arrangement and visual design that empowers the performers to demonstrate their best playing ability. When mapping out a battery feature, Markworth has some recommendations for the visual designer to consider:

Although the section needs to be staged front and focused for the feature, be cautious of placing them in front of the wind section for the end of the previous musical statement. The battery will overpower the winds. A good solution is to have the battery in the middle of the winds, say at the front hash mark. As the battery feature begins, they can move forward to a staged location. This will also create musical and visual interest as the introduction crescendos while they move forward.<sup>268</sup>

Relocating the battery away from the winds and close to the front sideline will cause a vertical alignment disconnection of rhythm. Being near the front ensemble will reinforce the rhythmic clarity of the percussion section but may spawn a disunited ensemble phrase with the winds either before or after the percussion feature.

**Corey Spurlin’s Recommendations.** Along with Markworth’s experience in staging a battery, band director Dr. Corey Spurlin gives a few more guidelines to follow. First, “the ideal playing position for percussion sections is: snare drums in the middle, tenor drums to the right of the

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<sup>266</sup> Markworth, *The Dynamic Marching Band*, 140.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.



snare (from audience perspective), bass drums to the left of the snares, and cymbals behind the snares.”<sup>269</sup> This method often maintains a good listening environment. Next, “the highest bass drum should be staged closest to the snares.”<sup>270</sup> One reason for this is because the highest bass drum frequently plays a lot of rhythmic figures similar to the snareline. Third, “avoid staging percussionists in ‘V’ shapes” because the battery listens to the center snare.<sup>271</sup> Positioning the center snare in front of the drumline creates a poor listening environment. Considering the staging of the battery within the band can benefit the achievement of the entire ensemble. Fourth, “the percussion section as a group should never be split into multiple units that are more than ten yards apart.”<sup>272</sup> When diverged, the ensemble performs with vertical alignment issues. Lastly, a “fear of timing issues or execution problems often inhibits drill designers from properly incorporating percussion members into the overall design scheme.”<sup>273</sup> The battery section can be integrated into the visual design of the band or corps when the designer considers the listening environment. Spurlin believes that “the percussion will enhance rather than distract from the overall aesthetic” if the drill formations and transitions are designed with careful attention to the music performance.<sup>274</sup> Considering the staging of the battery within the band can benefit the achievements of the entire ensemble.

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<sup>269</sup> Corey Spurlin, “Drill Design,” in *The System: Marching Band Methods*, Gary E. Smith (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2016), 149.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

## Marching Percussion Portfolio

### Music Notation

When creating and organizing one's portfolio of marching percussion compositions and arrangements, having digital files to send to a potential client or employer is imperative in order to be competitive. The modern composer or arranger must use computer music notation software programs, digital audio workstations, and other music and visual writing applications. Regarding music, Rodenkirch and Gallegos believe it is advantageous to use computer music notation software to compose and arrange music.<sup>275</sup> They see two primary benefits to utilizing notation software. First, "computer-generated music from notation software is consistent and easy to read."<sup>276</sup> Hand-written music is challenging to read, looks unprofessional, and mistakes are easy to overlook on manuscript paper. Most notation programs create parts for all instruments instantly, which saves much effort. Music edits and alterations are simple, as the computer simultaneously revises all parts. Computer-generated music also saves the composer time and energy. Next, "the ability to create music files (MIDI [Musical Instrument Digital Interface], WAV [Waveform Audio File Format], and others) to be recorded onto a CD or tape so that they can be played and distributed to the players" is another benefit to using a computer notation software.<sup>277</sup> The ability to hear the music before rehearsal is an advantage to modern music learners. Not only does this make learning the music more manageable, but it also improves the memorization process. Numerous sound libraries which replicate real instruments and can be synchronized with computer notation software. Virtual Drumline is a highly recommended sound

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<sup>275</sup> Rodenkirch and Gallegos, "Scoring and Arranging," 394.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, 394.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, 394.

library that uses “real sampled sounds by the Santa Clara Vanguard Drumline.”<sup>278</sup> Possessing the knowledge and experience of creating music and visual artistry with computer software programs makes one more marketable in our modern technological society.

### Digital Audio Workstations

Another type of computer application that positively affects one’s portfolio encompasses digital audio workstations. Markworth recognizes that “the total musical production can be enhanced with the use of electronic instruments,” equipment, and computer software systems.<sup>279</sup> Digital audio workstations allow one to create MIDI or artificial sounds that “add colors and variety to the sound palette” within a front ensemble or music effects.<sup>280</sup> Casella and Ancona define “synthesized sounds” as being “created by a series of electrical signals” and “sampled sounds” as existing “from actual recordings of live sounds.”<sup>281</sup> Synthesized and sampled sounds can be created in a digital audio workstation and then transferred to a sampler or MIDI controller. These pieces of technology support one’s imagination for producing numerous sound design possibilities that reinforce the ensemble’s overall sound. Incorporating digital audio workstation experience into one’s portfolio boosts his or her worth in the competitive field of the marching arts.

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<sup>278</sup> Rodenkirch and Gallegos, “Scoring and Arranging,” 394.

<sup>279</sup> Markworth, *The Dynamic Marching Band*, 142.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>281</sup> Casella and Ancona, *Up Front*, 74.

## Visual Design Software

Considering visual design, Markworth recommends “us[ing] a quality computer program and stud[ing] the text *Techniques of Marching Band Show Designing* by Dan Ryder.”<sup>282</sup> He also proposes for one to “become a ‘student’ of the art of drill writing by studying live and recorded performances, attending workshops and clinics, and seeking input from experienced drill writers, judges, and band directors.”<sup>283</sup> Aside from the drill designer being able to know each drill’s step size quickly, the interval among other members, and observe the exact path of each transition, computer software programs allow the designer, instructors, and students to see the drill moving each performer in real-time to the show music. Constructing “a high-quality drill design will [not only affect the visual aesthetics of a performance, but it will] also enhance the musical production allowing the music and its performance to achieve its maximum potential.”<sup>284</sup> Music and drill arrangements suffer without a cohesive drill design due to “poor staging, unnecessary difficulty in cleaning the visual program,” complications when performing the music, and a lack of performer and teacher interest in the drill.<sup>285</sup> Sending a video recording of the drill and music-synchronized to a potential client boosts one’s marketability among technologically-advanced visual designers.

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<sup>282</sup> Markworth, *The Dynamic Marching Band*, 284.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

## Summary of Composing, Arranging, and Portfolio Submissions

Possessing the creativity to employ marching percussion compositional and arranging techniques, show design concepts, and a cohesive design portfolio may propel one's maturation into a satisfactory marching percussion composer or arranger. Visualizing the music and visual design of an ensemble may be the most critical aspect of writing music and drill for the marching percussion ensemble. Buyer suggests that one "sit or lay down in a quiet place with no distractions. Relax, close your eyes, and visualize yourself giving a speech, presentation, or performance that you have coming up."<sup>286</sup> This process allows the music arranger to hear the music before a performance or envisioning the battery in productive places on the field that produce superior achievement.

### Chapter Summary

Devising and adapting a comprehensive nucleus of performance, pedagogy, and compositional methods to the field of marching percussion is a continuous process. Buyer declares, "Excellence takes time...Working toward excellence is a process...It takes time and patience. It takes staying in the moment, giving your mind time to think, being patient, and understanding that if you do that each day the results will take care of themselves."<sup>287</sup> Persistence to maintain superior performance, evolve pedagogical approaches, and authoring high-caliber compositions is a daily choice. The training needed to cultivate such specific artistry can begin in college, propelling one's professional acuity in the marching percussion activity. Improving one's starting point "is a simple way to evaluate the growth, improvement, and progress" toward

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<sup>286</sup> Buyer, *Working Toward Excellence*, 17.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

achieving one's ambitions.<sup>288</sup> The earlier one starts his or her academic preparation for a career in marching percussion, the closer they will be to achieving their dreams.

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<sup>288</sup> Buyer, *Working Toward Excellence*, 26.

### CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Despite the various ways in which marching percussionists receive training, gain experience, and become successful in an ever-changing artistic activity, there is a lack of research that defines a clear path toward establishing a fruitful career within the field. As a result of this deficiency, it is essential to analyze how respected performers, educators, and composers/arrangers have achieved and maintained productive careers in marching percussion. The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of professionals in the marching arts industry for how they may have accomplished rewarding careers and the skills they wished were learned earlier in life. This chapter contains the methodology and approach used to conduct this study, including the research design, participants, setting, procedures, and methods for data analysis, all to answer the research questions.

#### Research Design

The focus of this study was to determine which factors might compose experiential evidence for producing a meaningful career in marching percussion. To serve this quandary best, the design of the inquiry employed a qualitative approach.<sup>289</sup> Asking questions that promote one's opinion or life experience is best achieved with a qualitative design. Qualitative research focuses on "anthropology, sociology, the humanities, and evaluation."<sup>290</sup> Survey research was the suitable methodology design.<sup>291</sup> The research questions are qualitative to explore one's feelings.<sup>292</sup> Perceptions are unmeasurable; therefore, this survey showed how many people

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<sup>289</sup> Creswell, *Research Design*, 179-211.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-14.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

reported feeling sure about the questions based on their professional experience. The survey captures the attitudes and opinions of a sample from a marching percussionist population to generalize their responses and apply them to the more significant marching percussion population.<sup>293</sup>

The literature reviewed in Chapter Two includes research from “interviews, observations, [and] documents.”<sup>294</sup> Reviewing texts that incorporate personal interviews from marching percussionists gave the researcher a holistic viewpoint of the research questions’ issues.<sup>295</sup> Gathering “multiple sources of data” to include in the investigation results allowed the researcher to have a deeper understanding of the importance of such curriculum reform.<sup>296</sup> The fusion of scholarly literature and shared experiences of professionals in the marching percussion industry may emphasize recurring themes of probable answers to the research problems.

### Research Questions

Professor Emeritus Hildegard Froehlich and Associate Professor Carol Frierson-Campbell assert that “qualitative research is contextual.”<sup>297</sup> Hence “many researchers prefer to guide their work with questions instead of or in addition to statements of purpose.”<sup>298</sup> “The questions and themes” are “typically based on such tasks as describing, analyzing, and theorizing about human action and interactions,” which lay the foundation for this marching percussion

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<sup>293</sup> Creswell, *Research Design*, 12.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>297</sup> Hildegard Froehlich and Carol Frierson-Campbell, *Inquiry in Music Education: Concepts and Methods for the Beginning Researcher* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 145.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.



study.<sup>299</sup> The answers to the research questions help determine how best to equip students for a career in marching percussion. The following research questions and proposed hypotheses that guided this inquiry include:

Research Question One: What crucial skills must a college percussion curriculum incorporate to prepare the percussion major to begin a successful career in the field of marching percussion?

Hypothesis One: Crucial skills that a college percussion curriculum must incorporate to prepare the percussion major to begin a successful career in the field of marching percussion should include performing, teaching, and composing/arranging.

Research Question Two: In what ways can collegiate students apply college percussion training for an occupation in the field of marching percussion?

Hypothesis Two: Collegiate students can apply a college percussion training for an occupation in the field of marching percussion in terms of ensemble auditions or job interviews, pedagogy techniques, and portfolio submissions.

### Participants

Professors Meredith Gall, Joyce Gall, and the late Professor Emeritus Walter Borg claimed that “In qualitative research, determining the number of cases is entirely a matter of judgment; there are no set rules.”<sup>300</sup> However, the challenge lies with “selecting an appropriate sample size for a qualitative study” and discovering the balance between “breadth and depth.”<sup>301</sup> It was decided that “the ideal sampling procedure is to keep selecting cases until one reaches the

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<sup>299</sup> Froehlich and Frierson-Campbell, *Inquiry in Music Education*, 145.

<sup>300</sup> Meredith D. Gall, Joyce P. Gall, and Walter R. Borg, *Educational Research: An Introduction*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: Pearson Education, 2007), 185.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

point of redundancy, that is until no new information is forthcoming from new cases.”<sup>302</sup> The survey results yield repetitious answers, supporting a “theory-based or operational construct sampling” where an “understanding of real-world manifestations of theoretical constructs” is gained.<sup>303</sup>

Anonymous participants for the survey were selected from several social media groups that are closed to the public. These respondents must have prior professional marching percussion experience to become an authorized representative of the social media faction, so the sample population contains reliable and relevant experience. Creswell states that “purposefully select[ing] participants... will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question[s]” in a qualitative inquiry.<sup>304</sup> Although some qualitative studies “provide incentives for individuals to participate,” their eagerness to complete the survey stems from their love for the marching percussion activity.<sup>305</sup> No rewards were granted to participants for their completion of the survey. Ensuring anonymity was a security measure taken to produce unbiased and honest responses from the participants. Due to the time restraint of completing the survey to analyze the data, “convenience sampling” was utilized because the participants were “readily available” to the researcher, and they volunteered to complete the survey questions.<sup>306</sup>

Professor and researcher Johnnie Daniel expresses that the “analysis of [a] major subgroup” involves examining “100 participants,” which is the closest sample size to this

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<sup>302</sup> Gall, Gall, and Borg, *Educational Research*, 186.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>304</sup> Creswell, *Research Design*, 185.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>306</sup> Froehlich and Frierson-Campbell, *Inquiry in Music Education*, 201.

study.<sup>307</sup> The total number of completed surveys amounts to 107 and serves the more distinctive marching percussion subgroup in the United States of America well. Eligibility for participation in the survey includes participants 18 years of age or older, employed in the field of marching percussion at the high school/college level or DCI/WGI level, and have at least one year of experience as a performer, educator, or composer/arranger in marching percussion. These stipulations are more than sufficient to produce relevant research information. Since “the choice of sample size is a very important decision,” careful consideration was involved in producing accurate results about current perceptions in marching percussion education.<sup>308</sup>

### Setting

Froehlich and Frierson-Campbell report that survey research is one of the “common types of descriptive studies found in the field of music education and that this type of exploration “obtain[s] responses from individuals.”<sup>309</sup> The questionnaire took place on Qualtrics XM, which hosted the survey online and provided a template for preparing the format of the inquiry. The questionnaire was formatted to be completed on a computer, tablet, or smartphone with internet access. The cross-sectional inquiry was available for participants to access online starting on August 23, 2021, for seven days. The survey response was incredible, despite participants traveling home and recovering from DCI World Championship Finals, teaching percussion and band camps, and starting the Fall semester as a student or educator.

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<sup>307</sup> Johnnie Daniel, *Sampling Essentials: Practical Guidelines for Making Sampling Choices* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2012), 243, <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781452272047>.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

<sup>309</sup> Froehlich and Frierson-Campbell, *Inquiry in Music Education*, 200.

## Procedures

Gall, Gall, and Borg describe attitude scales “as an individual’s viewpoint of disposition toward a particular ‘object’ (a person, a thing, an idea, etc.).”<sup>310</sup> For the marching percussion survey, a Likert scale was employed for most of the questions. This type of attitude test “asks individuals to rate their level of agreement (e.g., strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, or strongly disagree) with various statements.”<sup>311</sup> This scale measures behavioral responses indicating “a mean, range, and standard deviation” among “interval level questions.”<sup>312</sup> The second type of question involves a dichotomous or asymmetric query created in a “yes or no” fashion.<sup>313</sup> The following query sought to discover how participants learned marching percussion elements through a “select-all-that-apply” question.<sup>314</sup> The final two questions involved free-response answers that allowed the participants to express their opinions candidly. Some believe that “free-response questions more authentically capture [participant] knowledge because [participants] construct their own answers rather than selecting an answer from among several possible options,” so this query type was employed to allow participants to speak their minds openly.<sup>315</sup> An assortment of question designs is essential to receiving the most honest

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<sup>310</sup> Gall, Gall, and Borg, *Educational Research*, 220.

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>312</sup> Froehlich and Frierson-Campbell, *Inquiry in Music Education*, 200.

<sup>313</sup> Roberta Capellini, Simona Sacchi, and Paolo Cherubini, “Testing Hypotheses About Social Targets: The Effects of Instruction on Asymmetric Strategies,” *Experimental Psychology* 64, no. 5 (January 2017), 325, <https://doi.org/10.1027/1618-3169/a000375>.

<sup>314</sup> Arnold Lau and Courtney Kennedy, “When Online Survey Respondents Only ‘Select Some That Apply,’” *Online Surveys*, Pew Research Center, May 9, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/methods/2019/05/09/when-online-survey-respondents-only-select-some-that-apply/>.

<sup>315</sup> Joanna K. Hubbard, Macy A. Potts, and Brian A. Couch, “How Question Types Reveal Student Thinking: An Experimental Comparison of Multiple-True-False and Free-Response Formats,” *CBE Life Sciences Education* 16, no. 2 (Summer 2017), 2, <https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.16-12-0339>.

information about marching percussionists' feelings within an appropriate competitive environment. It has been stated that "Good research is rigorous, regardless of mode" or question type, so the results are paramount.<sup>316</sup>

### Data Analysis

A combination of descriptive statistics and thematic analysis conveyed the results of the survey responses. For example, the Likert scale and dichotomous questions used descriptive statistics to realize the survey outcome. Data from Likert-type questions "may be considered interval level, [so] a number represents the strength of the responses from positive to negative: always (5), frequently (4), sometimes (3), rarely (2), never (1)."<sup>317</sup> Once this was accomplished, choosing "a central tendency and variability statistic from the descriptive choices" was next.<sup>318</sup> This step involved finding the "mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum," and variance as the statistic choices.<sup>319</sup> From this analysis, the researcher ascertained the feelings from the participant sample about the inquiry.

Thematic analysis constituted the other portion of investigating the data. The select-all-that-apply and free-response questions involved examining themes among the responses. Creswell recommends "generating a small number of themes or categories - perhaps five to seven themes for a research study" to use in building a narrative to explain the findings of the quandary.<sup>320</sup> Recurring words and phrases were pursued that interpret emerging themes from the

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<sup>316</sup> Donald E. Casey, "Descriptive Research: Techniques and Procedures," in *Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning: A Project of the Music Educators National Conference*, ed. Richard Colwell (New York: Schirmer Books, 1992), 115.

<sup>317</sup> Froehlich and Frierson-Campbell, *Inquiry in Music Education*, 205.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>320</sup> Creswell, *Research Design*, 194.

data to complete this analysis. Sorting the data and organizing it in a table was a suitable way to display the findings in an organized design. From this structure, a narrative explained the survey outcome and related it to marching percussion.

### Chapter Summary

This study aimed to “find ways to investigate the effectiveness of the techniques, methods, curricula, and methodologies” that influence marching percussion education.<sup>321</sup> Taking a sample of the perceptions of performers, instructors, and music and visual creators from the marching percussion activity and devising a way to equip college percussionists for his or her future career is the objective for this pursuit. A mixture of question types is used to conduct a qualitative inquiry with survey research. Froehlich and Frierson-Campbell state that “A coherent study stitches all components into an interconnected and engaging whole whose parts (research questions, appropriate methods, related literature, theoretical perspectives, and interpretations) are clear yet connected.”<sup>322</sup> A consolidation of the reviewed literature and experiences from marching percussion professionals reflected in the surveys may help the researcher discover motifs that answer the research questions. This quest to see what skills are needed in the marching percussion activity and how to apply them in professional settings may positively influence the future of marching percussion.

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<sup>321</sup> Costanza and Russell, “Methodologies in Music Education,” 505.

<sup>322</sup> Froehlich and Frierson-Campbell, *Inquiry in Music Education*, 149.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

To learn how professionals in the marching percussion activity have achieved and maintained productive careers, the acquisition of skills and the application of their proficiencies need to be identified and scrutinized. This chapter describes the analyses conducted that examine the hypotheses corresponding to the research questions. The results that emerge from the survey responses are articulated, discussed, and related to the analogous hypothesis and research question. This chapter includes the results from research question one as it is divided into three marching percussion skills: performing, teaching, and composing and arranging, the findings from research question two when it is split into three marching percussion applications: auditions or interviews, pedagogy techniques, and portfolio submissions, and a discussion on marching percussion curriculum at the undergraduate level.

### Research Question One

Even though the survey questions and responses focus on all aspects of the marching percussion activity, they are separated into two main parts: skills needed to be successful in this genre of percussion and the application of those proficiencies. The first research question seeks the specific abilities that enhance one's marching percussion career as it asks: What crucial skills must a college percussion curriculum incorporate to prepare the percussion major to begin a successful career in the field of marching percussion? The first hypothesis offers a favorable response to this question: Crucial skills that a college percussion curriculum must incorporate to prepare the percussion major to begin a successful career in the field of marching percussion should include performing, teaching, and composing/arranging.

## Performing

Survey item four asks how well prepared the respondent felt for his or her first significant marching percussion performance (college, DCI, WGI, theme park, stage show, etc.). The results of this Likert scale inquiry indicate that 4.67% felt unprepared, 28.04% were ‘Somewhat prepared,’ and 67.29% believed they were prepared.<sup>323</sup> This result reveals that many participants received significant ensemble and private practice in their training to strengthen their performance. This can be attributed to the typical four years in high school marching band, high school indoor drumline experience, and a college marching band membership. Still, more investigation is needed to learn how one specifically prepared for their first marching percussion performance.

Survey item seven supports the results from survey item four when it requests how the participant learned marching percussion elements. ‘Drumline/marching band’ experience amounted to 49.76%, ‘Private instruction/lessons’ held 23.92%, ‘YouTube videos/media’ contained 18.18%, and 8.13% selected ‘Other’ and designated their appropriate responses to this “select-all-that-apply” inquiry.<sup>324</sup> Of those who chose to specify their exact place they learned marching percussion elements, five articulated DCI experience, four expressed taking lessons from DCI/WGI veterans and DCI/WGI clinics/audition camps, and one enunciated they learned from drumming with others. The culmination of these reactions proves that observing recordings of DCI/WGI performances, learning in the private and ensemble settings, and preparing for auditions benefits the learner and aids his or her performance technique.

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<sup>323</sup> Froehlich and Frierson-Campbell, *Inquiry in Music Education*, 205.

<sup>324</sup> Lau and Kennedy, “When Online Survey Respondents Only ‘Select Some That Apply.’”



## **Teaching**

The first survey item investigates the preparation level for the participant's first marching percussion teaching position. Of the three response options, 16.82% chose 'Not prepared,' 51.40% selected 'Somewhat prepared,' and 31.78% designated they were 'Definitely prepared.' These results show that young educators are adequately ready for their first marching percussion instructional job. If marching percussion teaching methods are not sufficiently learned in college, this outcome may be attributed to the inexperienced educator having several years of DCI or WGI performance experience and spending many years in the marching activity. Possessing extensive experience as a performer in DCI or WGI ensembles has often been the only source of training needed to pursue instructional employment in the marching arts. However, if one spends all their time on a single instrument, the marching percussionist is limited to only having the proficiency to teach one instrument. Learning instructional approaches to many percussion instruments while also having DCI or WGI experience on a specialty instrument may benefit the rookie marching percussion educator to be successful in their first instructional year.

## **Composing and Arranging**

Survey item three scrutinizes how the survey contributors felt about marching percussion composing or arranging preparedness for their first job. The answers reveal that 20.75% were 'Not prepared,' 57.55% felt 'Somewhat prepared,' and 21.70% sensed a feeling of being 'Definitely prepared.' Most of the respondents were apprehensive to begin their first creative role in marching percussion because of their composing and arranging inadequacies. The questionnaire does not request which composing and arranging courses one took in college, but it can be assumed that most did not pursue degrees in music composition or theory. A composition degree would aid one's arrangement for melodic instruments but not battery percussion. So, it

can be deduced that a typical music composition or theory course would not affect the outcome of this question because the battery percussion compositional elements make this genre of percussion unique.

### **Research Question One Summary**

The results to survey items one, three, four, and seven reveal that a college percussion curriculum must incorporate performing, teaching, and composing/arranging skills to sufficiently prepare the percussion major for an illustrious career in the field of marching percussion. These aspects in the marching percussion genre are interrelated and rely on each other to build a well-rounded percussionist, which supports the first hypothesis. Performers seldom only play their instruments without needing to instruct others or compose music, educators rarely teach without demonstration, and composers/arrangers must understand how the instruments work and what possibilities can be achieved within this musical and visual idiom. Having a blend of these abilities may serve the marching percussionist well in their employment pursuit.

### **Research Question Two**

To take the survey answers a step further to decipher what to do with the acquired marching percussion skills, research question two explores the application of these proficiencies within the marching percussion idiom as it articulates: In what ways can collegiate students apply college percussion training for an occupation in the field of marching percussion? The second hypothesis presents a reasonable response to this question: Collegiate students can apply a college percussion training for an occupation in the field of marching percussion in terms of ensemble auditions or job interviews, pedagogy techniques, and portfolio submissions. Feedback from the survey includes answers about auditions or interviews, pedagogy techniques, and portfolio submissions.

## **Auditions or Interviews**

In the second inquiry, the survey explores how prepared the respondents felt for their first professional marching percussion audition (DCI, WGI, theme park, stage show, etc.). Of the three answer choices, 25.23% of the participants were ill-prepared, 41.12% felt ‘Somewhat prepared,’ and 33.64% held they were ‘Definitely prepared.’ The number of people who chose each response is close, which disallows anyone to rise above the others in preponderance. The mean, which is “the average outcome of a random experiment,” amounts to 2.08.<sup>325</sup> When the minimum is 1.00, and the maximum is 3.00, the mean is almost precisely in the middle. Seventy-one marching percussionists (66.36%) lacked confidence when performing their first audition compared to thirty-six (33.64%) who were self-assured in their audition performance. The product of this question demonstrates that the majority were not secure in their first audition.

## **Pedagogy Techniques**

The final two survey items encompass many aspects of the marching percussion activity and summarize the overall survey. Inquiry nine asks what education or skills are needed to be a successful marching percussion professional. The last query seeks how one can prepare a quality marching percussion performance, constructive instruction within this idiom, and composition/arranging skills that support the marching arts. Within these survey items, pedagogical skills and applications are apparent from the responses. First, keywords such as ‘education,’ ‘teaching,’ ‘pedagogy,’ and ‘instruction’ were listed 143 times and discussed. Secondly, twenty-five entries mentioned the importance of learning pedagogical techniques from an experienced marching percussion educator. Third, the importance of communication and ways to articulate marching percussion elements to students was emphasized sixteen times. Next,

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<sup>325</sup> David W. Scott, *Statistics: A Concise Mathematical Introduction for Students, Scientists, and Engineers* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2020), 34.

the ‘care’ of instruments, the ‘maintenance’ of equipment, and proper ‘tuning’ techniques were listed fourteen times, indicating the significant need to teach pupils proper instrument preservation. ‘Listening’ concepts became a theme when brought up ten times. Furthermore, teaching about the ‘history’ of the marching percussion genre of music was recorded eight times throughout these two inquiries.

### **Portfolio Submissions**

Within the final two free-response survey items, the application of marching percussion elements emerged as a theme. Some of these motifs involved ‘performance’ and ‘practice,’ ‘composition’ and ‘arranging,’ following through by acting on one’s dream, and ‘adaptability.’ The connotation of performance often refers to playing an instrument; however, it also concerns the practice of submitting music or drill design for a job application, competition submission, or cataloged on a personal or marching percussion publisher’s website. One’s interview performance or the audio quality of an arrangement’s sound file both critically affect the reputation of the professional. Of the 112 times that the themes ‘performance’ or ‘practice’ were recorded, about half were articulated in music composition, arranging, or visual design. The motifs, ‘composition’ and ‘arranging,’ became keywords when introduced 105 times throughout these two inquiries. Following through with one’s aspiration to ‘write’ music, ‘design’ a show, or ‘create’ a marching percussion presentation was highlighted thirteen times. Moreover, the ability to ‘adapt’ and alter one’s musical or visual creation was expressed eleven times; thus, making this a crucial part of becoming successful in this genre of percussion.

### **Research Question Two Summary**

The second, ninth, and final survey items indicate a negative application of marching percussion abilities. A prevalence of doubt when performing one’s first audition, the need for

more educational opportunities, and the significance of preparing one's compositional portfolio became evident when analyzing the survey results. Many participants declared that experience in marching percussion facilitated their path toward learning how to apply their skills in the job market successfully. The second research question and hypothesis emphasize the concern of employing marching percussion skills in one's first employment. Having a plan to execute one's proficiencies may be crucial to starting a career.

### Marching Percussion Curriculum

Three curricula-specific inquiries are investigated in the survey. The fifth survey item explores the participant's perception of time spent on the topic of marching percussion in the undergraduate percussion methods course. Most standard percussion methods courses for music education majors in the United States typically only allocate two to three class sessions in a semester on this genre of percussion. To summarize the outcome, 83.65% of participants chose 'Not enough time,' 10.58% selected 'Just right,' and 5.77% designated 'More than enough time' consumed on this topic in the methods class. From this query, a significant majority of the survey contributors believe that the undergraduate program of study does not concentrate enough time and pedagogy on marching percussion elements.

Survey item six resulted in the most considerable variance of all the inquiries, equaling 1.58. This spread indicates that the numbers in the set are far from the mean and distant from each other. In this study, the surveyor seeks to learn how many academic marching percussion courses the participants took at the undergraduate level. The response from this survey item reveals that 63.55% experienced no courses, 20.56% completed one course, 4.67% accomplished two courses, 0.93% achieved three courses, and 10.28% finished four or more courses. These results divulge that most students did not study marching percussion in a formal curriculum.

They may have learned through a marching band class, indoor drumline ensemble, or a marching percussion-focused independent study in college; however, most participants did not learn the marching percussion vernacular in any undergraduate curricula.

The only dichotomous query blatantly asks if more undergraduate courses in marching percussion should involve performing, teaching, and composing or arranging.<sup>326</sup> Of the two options in survey item eight, 84.91% indicated ‘Yes’ and 15.09% selected ‘No.’ This outcome confirms that the mass who completed the survey believe more marching percussion undergraduate course options should be created and available for study. The asymmetric inquiry does not have an option to articulate which subjects (performance, pedagogy, composition/arranging) are needed more among collegiate curricula.<sup>327</sup> Due to this limitation, one must consider the responses to the final two survey items to decide which courses may be more in demand.

### **Marching Percussion Curriculum Summary**

While the marching band techniques class traditionally has one chapter devoted to percussion, it does not concentrate on this marching section. Also, the percussion methods course includes a few class sessions on marching percussion but does not focus on this specialty. Even though it is the professor’s decision what to include in the course curriculum, many composition or music theory courses do not even mention marching percussion arranging. For the universities that possess an indoor drumline course, it can be assumed that the emphasis is placed on learning the competitive show, performance techniques, and how to play to one’s best ability.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>326</sup> Capellini, Sacchi, and Cherubini, “Testing Hypotheses About Social Targets,” 325.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid., 325.

<sup>328</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 53.

## Chapter Summary

The result from this survey warrants the need for more undergraduate curriculum to be established and available for students to pursue in an undergraduate course of study. The artistry of marching percussion has traditionally been learned through the experience of performing in DCI, WGI, or other organized ensembles and not from an educational institution. Research questions sought to unveil the key ingredients that make one flourish within the marching percussion activity, and the survey's conclusion supported the hypotheses. The survey responses identify superior skills in marching percussion and the importance of successfully applying them in an authentic context. Possessing this knowledge will aid the college music administrator, dean of a music school, or professor to devise a curriculum that may support one's pursuit of employment in the field of marching percussion.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

This chapter discusses the findings of the study and situates them within the context of equipping marching percussionists for their career. Summerlin says that he “believes in the idea of a ‘total percussionist.’ His involvement in both marching percussion and concert percussion have influenced his teaching philosophy to one that encourages the development of a performer who is not only well rounded musically and technically, but is adaptable to any kind of music, and sensitive to every sound made.”<sup>329</sup> Too often, marching percussionists are adept in one area of the genre such as performance but not in other areas like pedagogy or arranging. This chapter seeks to emphasize the specialized responsibilities in marching percussion that are needed in a college percussion curriculum for students to exhibit in their career pursuit. The topics discussed include a summary of the survey findings, significance of the results, possible research limitations, recommendations for pertinent studies, and a conclusion tying the project together.

### Summary of Findings

The survey inquiries address the research questions by acknowledging the gaps in a traditional educational course. Most of the processes in this new research project were qualitative in nature. The research was descriptive allowing the participant to reveal their feelings about the survey questions. Even though percentages were obtained, this project explored the perceptions about one’s marching percussion preparation for their career. Research question one seeks the skills that a college percussion curriculum must include to sufficiently prepare the percussion major as they begin their marching percussion career. The survey results support the first hypothesis in identifying performance, pedagogy, and composition/arranging as the three most important skills needed in the marching arts. Research question two explores how collegiate

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<sup>329</sup> “Educator,” Dr. Lane Summerlin: Percussionist, Educator, accessed November 24, 2021, <https://www.lanesummerlin.com/educator>.



students can apply their percussion training in their marching percussion employment. The survey outcomes reinforce the second hypothesis through demonstrating the need for proficient marching percussion skills to be evident in auditions or interviews, pedagogy techniques, and professional portfolios. The culmination of these skills and application of these abilities may help develop the “total percussionist.”<sup>330</sup> Developing the “total percussionist” within the field of marching percussion becomes transparent when compared with the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.<sup>331</sup>

### **Marching Percussion Performance**

Three survey items explicitly question one’s performance experience. Survey item four reveals that most of the respondents felt prepared for their first significant marching percussion performance. The seventh survey item indicates where marching percussion elements were learned. Almost half of the participants chose ‘Drumline/marching band’ ensembles for where they learned these skills. This response involves performers participating in high school and college marching band, DCI, and WGI clinics, audition camps, and entire seasons marching in these ensembles. Survey item two articulates that the respondents felt ‘Somewhat prepared’ for their first professional marching percussion audition. A little over 66% of the performers from the questionnaire lacked confidence in their first audition. This confidence deficiency is noticeable before earning a spot in the desired ensemble. Once the audition was obtained, the participants specified earning immense performance experience in DCI and WGI ensembles.

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<sup>330</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Training Circular 1-19.30: Percussion Techniques* (Washington, DC: 2018), 1-1, [https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR\\_pubs/DR\\_a/pdf/web/ARN11365\\_TC%201-19x30%20FINAL%20WEB.pdf](https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/ARN11365_TC%201-19x30%20FINAL%20WEB.pdf).

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-1.

It seems that many marching percussionists are equipped for a performance career with such vast experience in distinguished ensembles. This may be attributed to ensembles with outstanding instructors who teach musicianship, how to read marching percussion music, and the varieties of marching percussion performance technique. All these performance aspects of the marching percussion genre can be applied in various audition situations. Chapter Two outlines these parts of one's performance quality when "peak performance, simulation, mental practice, nerves, and the clock's role in achieving [one's] goals" are taken into consideration.<sup>332</sup> To accomplish such excellent performance, one must understand "the use and knowledge" of the "sticking vocabulary of rudiments."<sup>333</sup> Having the ability to read music will "accelerate the process of learning, memorizing, and cleaning" all types of musical compositions and arrangements.<sup>334</sup> The technique involved in producing a successful marching percussion performance is mentioned in Chapter Two and divided into four sections: grip, strokes, beat patterns, and performance characteristics. The amalgamation of these performance aesthetics can boost one's confidence in the audition or performance setting. Regardless of the type of ensemble being pursued (DCI/WGI, martial, or theme park), one must "sustain excellence" to maintain their employment after winning the audition.<sup>335</sup> With such high percentages of the survey respondents feeling prepared with their first significant performance opportunity (after struggling through the audition process), most of the participants possessed vast experience performing in remarkable ensembles.

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<sup>332</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 53.

<sup>333</sup> Chandler, "Teaching Rudiments," 43.

<sup>334</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 92.

<sup>335</sup> Buyer, *Working Toward Excellence*, xxv.

## Marching Percussion Pedagogy

Of the ten survey items, three address marching percussion pedagogy. Survey item one shows that a little more than half of the participants were ‘Somewhat prepared’ for their first marching percussion teaching job. It is often more challenging to explain how to play a marching percussion element instead of just performing the musical phrase in question. DCI or WGI experience will not always include pedagogy techniques that can be employed in a sectional. The final two survey items indicate that there is a lack of marching percussion pedagogy being taught. For example, participants articulate 143 times that teaching techniques are needed to become a successful marching percussion professional, and twenty-five entries mention the importance of learning pedagogical techniques. These excessive numbers emphasize the need for better instruction for how to teach marching percussion elements to students.

The literature in Chapter Two lays the foundation for a pedagogy discussion about the survey results. Three main marching percussion pedagogical methods that should be considered include philosophies of teaching marching percussion, listening techniques, and approaches to cleaning music. Aside from the many detailed parts of teaching marching percussion components, the way in which they are taught is important. For example, DeLucia believes that “positive reinforcement” may produce quality percussionists because many learners gravitate toward optimistic teachers with reassuring instructional techniques.<sup>336</sup> Having a “learner-centered” approach concentrates on the student and yields an instructional method that may alter the mode of transmission.<sup>337</sup> Listening techniques are frequently obliterated by the performance aspects of a marching arts show. Walker reminds the educator that “the listening component, the

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<sup>336</sup> DeLucia, *Dennis DeLucia's Percussion Discussion*, 6.

<sup>337</sup> Conway, *Teaching Music in Higher Education*, 121.

‘how,’ ‘to whom,’ and ‘when’ is often overlooked” within musical passages.<sup>338</sup> The inexperienced instructor must remember that “listening often comes down to being aware, noticing, and paying attention to what is happening in the moment” and then having the confidence to trust one’s “musicianship to play with the right interpretation, balance, and touch.”<sup>339</sup> Hannum and Morrison believe “the key to success lies in planning,” so having a method to clean the music must be developed.<sup>340</sup> All of these ideas for creating ways to teach a marching percussion ensemble can boost one’s ability to provide a cohesive educational program. Reversing the grim numbers of pedagogical preparedness from the survey is something that should be pursued, and the content delivered in Chapter Two may help progress a promising outcome.

### **Marching Percussion Composition and Arranging**

Three of the survey items investigate the compositional aspects of marching percussion. Item three divulges that most of the survey contributors did not feel adequately prepared for their first marching percussion composition or arranging job. This result may come from a college curriculum fixating on classical music theory and popular music arranging instead of marching percussion show design. In the final two free-response survey items, the application of marching percussion composition and arranging constituents were prevalent. Keywords relating to ‘composition,’ ‘arranging,’ ‘design,’ or ‘create’ emerged as themes 185 times within these last two survey inquiries. Compared to performance and pedagogical motifs, composition and arranging words and phrases dominated the issues that appeared in the final two survey items.

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<sup>338</sup> Walker, “Ensemble Listening,” 30.

<sup>339</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 40.

<sup>340</sup> Hannum and Morrison, *Championship Concepts for Marching Percussion*, 69.

It is a challenge to perform rudimental percussion music and teach a marching percussion ensemble, but it is entirely different to create the musical soundscape and design the visual aesthetics of a marching arts presentation. Chapter Two gives a synopsis for how to approach learning compositional and arranging elements in the marching percussion genre. Arranging, show design, and portfolios are all addressed with robust support from scholarly literature. Nestico, Brennan, Hannum, and Morrison provide exceptional music arranging concepts that may positively affect a marching percussion composition. Paul Buyer reveals three main ways in which marching percussion arranging can be divided: “warm-ups, cadences, and show music.”<sup>341</sup> Casella and Gusseck hold that “exercises [that] explore some kind of rhythmic idea that is stated and then developed” will positively affect the musical performance.<sup>342</sup> The benefits of a drumline cadence are four-fold: “getting on and off the field, marching a parade,” halting the ensemble, and featuring the drumline “while giving the winds some much needed time to rest.”<sup>343</sup> Regarding show music, “what is written for the percussion section, the dynamic range and the instruments themselves are very different in the two genres.”<sup>344</sup> Some concert percussionists believe that the performance characteristics of marching percussion differ, but they are actually similar. Keck believes that “the major differences between concert and marching percussion playing styles stem from the differences in equipment, and the role of the player.”<sup>345</sup> These subtleties are so alike, and the differences can be easily misconstrued.

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<sup>341</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 65.

<sup>342</sup> Casella and Gusseck, *Fresh Perspectives for the Modern Drumline*, 3.

<sup>343</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 66.

<sup>344</sup> Markworth, *The Dynamic Marching Band*, 210.

<sup>345</sup> Keck, “Marching Percussion,” 249.

Show design for a marching percussion ensemble consists of a heavy dependence on staging concepts. Markworth and Keck's recommendations are detailed in Chapter Two, thus providing immense information about how to sufficiently stage the marching ensemble so the performers may achieve success. Markworth strives to "create the most unity of sound and precision" in his ensembles with his staging ideas.<sup>346</sup> Keck articulates the locations for where each battery percussion section should be staged in relation to the other sub sections of the drumline.<sup>347</sup> The placement of the battery percussion needs to be addressed in an undergraduate college degree so that the students will know how to stage their future ensembles effectively.

And finally, creating a marching percussion portfolio that professionally reflects the marching percussion designer's abilities is imperative to one's employment. Chapter Two discusses music notation software, digital audio workstations, and visual design software, all of which are technologies where the music and visual composer must achieve an exceptional level of proficiency. Rodenkirch and Gallegos trust that it is beneficial to use computer music notation software to compose and arrange music.<sup>348</sup> Having the ability to enhance the musical production with electronic instruments improves the show design.<sup>349</sup> However, this is only achievable with a digital audio workstation. For a marching arts show to realize "its maximum potential" with "a high-quality drill design," a visual design software must be used.<sup>350</sup> After learning how to successfully compose and arrange for a marching percussion ensemble, sending an audio and video recording of the music and drill will separate the professionals from the amateur show

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<sup>346</sup> Markworth, *The Dynamic Marching Band*, 140.

<sup>347</sup> Keck, "Marching Percussion," 149.

<sup>348</sup> Rodenkirch and Gallegos, "Scoring and Arranging," 394.

<sup>349</sup> Markworth, *The Dynamic Marching Band*, 142.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

designers. These specialized skills delineated in Chapter Two may stimulate a future for successful marching percussion employment as a composer, arranger, or show designer.

### **Marching Percussion Curriculum**

Three survey items scrutinize undergraduate curriculum pertaining to marching percussion. Item five dives into the time spent on the topic of marching percussion in the undergraduate percussion methods course. Almost 84% of the respondents felt that ‘Not enough time’ was spent on the marching percussion subject matter. The sixth survey item reveals that most students did not study marching percussion within the traditional framework of a college degree. It is evident that nearly 85% of the survey participants in item eight held that more undergraduate courses in marching percussion should be available and could contain performance, pedagogical, and design elements.

Ryder says that “a show designer must have...a creative mind.”<sup>351</sup> To have a “creative mind” one must have a knowledge of performance characteristics and possibilities that can be composed into a marching arts presentation. The designer needs to also understand the art of teaching marching percussion elements so their musical and visual artistry can be succinctly explained to students. And finally, the percussion caption head, director, or designer needs to know how to construct the musical and visual production “allowing the music and its performance to achieve its maximum potential.”<sup>352</sup> Without a keen comprehension of the marching percussion genre and marching arts activity, one may struggle creating music, drill, and teaching their ideas to learners. For this reason, Chapter Two is filled with scholarly

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<sup>351</sup> Ryder, *Techniques of Marching Band*, 1.

<sup>352</sup> Markworth, *The Dynamic Marching Band*, 119.

literature that supports the survey results and a college curriculum that should include marching percussion elements for students to learn for their potential career.

### Significance

This study is essential for college students who aspire to pursue a career in marching percussion and for professors who want their students to succeed in this genre of music and the arts. Although learning many percussion styles, specific techniques, and reading relevant literature may benefit one's college education, more detail within a specific genre of percussion can prove advantageous to one's potential vocational training. The problem is that there are "few resources [that] exist online or within percussion pedagogy" that teach composers how to arrange for marching percussion ensembles.<sup>353</sup> Buyer reflects on DeLucia's response to where one might learn about this skill, "In the marching percussion world, there's no place to go to school and learn how to do [this]. So, you learn by observing. You learn by doing. You learn by listening. You learn by trying, experimenting, and failing."<sup>354</sup> Udow confirms that "[s]ince drumline is not taught in schools, most of us who participate in marching percussion learn by doing and/or observing."<sup>355</sup> Instead of learning by trial and error, why not create undergraduate courses that assist students to develop the skills that interest them and their possible career path? This question is the summation of the significance for this marching percussion study.

Professors Harold Abeles, Charles Hoffer, and Robert Klotman state, "The most effective school music programs, however, are those that can see beyond the next concert or the next

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<sup>353</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 63.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>355</sup> Udow, *Percussion Pedagogy*, 368.



lesson.”<sup>356</sup> Having a long-range plan that propels students forward with necessary skills and the applications of those proficiencies will benefit the student’s future employment. Unfortunately, music programs often push “the publicly visible performing groups” and forget about creating courses that enrich the performance, pedagogical, and music creation aspects of those ensembles.<sup>357</sup> Having an indoor drumline performance ensemble or marching band may provide many of the performance tools needed to pursue a career in marching percussion but fail to provide the teaching and composition prowess that may enhance one’s marching percussion artistry. To decide what should be included in any curricula, Abeles, Hoffer, and Klotman offer several guidelines that may help the selection process. These rules may help the curriculum developer answer the following question: If created, will this course be educational, valid, fundamental, representative, contemporary, relevant, and learnable within an evolving art form?<sup>358</sup> If the answer to any of these aspects of the course is ‘yes,’ then it may contribute to a well-rounded education. Regarding aesthetic implications in the classroom:

Aesthetics relies on values, not only in what is taught, but how it is taught. It involves the intellect as well as the emotions. Aesthetic education means penetrating the conceptual understanding of a work or art to the stage that one becomes immersed in the impact, structure, and development of that work. As a result of such an immersion, one can make a valid, qualitative judgement regarding that particular work.<sup>359</sup>

If undergraduate professors teach their students with such vitality and vigor, students will have a great chance of being adequately equipped for their desired career. If courses in marching

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<sup>356</sup> Harold F. Abeles, Charles, R. Hoffer, and Robert H. Klotman, *Foundations of Music Education* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1984), 273.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid.*, 275-77.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

percussion are established by professors with this same excellence and dynamism, students will achieve fulfilling careers within this discipline.

Adaptability is also a main principle in the success of this study. Conway states that “[g]ood teachers...adjust their teaching to the needs of a specific content,” so having flexibility within an otherwise rigid curriculum can help pupils learn more efficiently.<sup>360</sup> Professor Alexandra Kertz-Welzel reiterates the need “to adapt or change already existing strategies or policies so that they would most likely work within a new educational context.”<sup>361</sup> Adaptability is a key component to keep the curriculum relevant to the ever-changing industry of the marching arts. Rennick says that “flexibility from the instructor” is a necessary part of the pedagogical method.<sup>362</sup> Buyer also advocates for the mastery of adapting with the marching arts genre of performance when he communicates that “writing for drumline is a process of brainstorming, outlining, writing, rewriting, tweaking, editing, and rewriting some more.”<sup>363</sup> Professor Wesley Parker sums it up well in his dissertation: “Percussion and drum competitions have continued to grow in size and quality.”<sup>364</sup> These statements from Rennick, Buyer, and Wesley demonstrate how adaptability is a significant part of this study for a marching percussion curriculum to stay relevant within a developing marching percussion activity.

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<sup>360</sup> Conway, *Teaching Music in Higher Education*, 18.

<sup>361</sup> Alexandra Kertz-Welzel, *Globalizing Music Education* (Bloomington: IN, Indiana University Press, 2018), 36, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/j.ctt2204p3c.6>.

<sup>362</sup> Buyer, *Drumline Gold*, 50.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>364</sup> Wesley Parker, “The History and Development of the Percussion Orchestra” (D.M.A. diss., Florida State University, 2010), 21.

## Limitations

As with any research study, some limitations were unavoidable. The first three limitations involve the survey structure. First, even though surveys are known to “include the high representativeness of the entire population and the low cost of the method when compared to other alternatives,” professors André Queirós, Daniel Faria, and Fernando Almeida state: “the reliability of survey data is very dependent on the survey structure and the accuracy of answers provided by the respondents.”<sup>365</sup> Out of the ten queries, only three survey items allowed the participants to freely write their responses in detail. Next, the “rigidity of the structure” was unavoidable when using the Likert scale and dichotomous questions.<sup>366</sup> The answers from which to choose mostly included three options. One survey item had two answer choices, another had four, and the largest choice involved five possible answers. It is difficult to gain specific answers within an inflexible inquisitive framework. Third, surveys do not typically “capture emotions, behavior and changes of emotions of respondents over a period of time.”<sup>367</sup> Responses that truly reflect the feelings of the participants are difficult to obtain within a firm survey structure. The final two survey items permitted free responses; however, the questions were constructed in a way to yield certain feedback. Some answerers provided detailed responses that slightly deviated from the prompt, delivering valuable supportive content.

The final limitations lie with the participants themselves. First of all, Gall, Gall, and Borg suggest that the “ideal sampling procedure” should reach “the point of redundancy,” which was

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<sup>365</sup> André Queirós, Daniel Faria, and Fernando Almeida, “Strengths and Limitations of Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods,” *European Journal of Education Studies* 3, no. 9 (September 2017): 381, <http://dx.doi.org/10.46827/ejes.v0i0.1017>.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*, 382.

<sup>367</sup> *Ibid.*, 382.

accomplished in the survey outcome.<sup>368</sup> Many similar answers were obtained demonstrating the success of the survey examination. Another limitation with the respondents involves a lack of motivation for one to take their time to give sincere recommendations. This survey contained no rewards for completion and was completely volunteer. Third, even though the “analysis of [a] major subgroup” involves scrutinizing “100 participants,” more participants could yield more of a variety of answers.<sup>369</sup> This study included 107 completed surveys, but more information is always desired. Lastly, the setting of the survey had limitations including an adeptness in technology and a short window of survey access. Since the survey was only available on a computerized device with internet access, this limited people with technological disabilities to complete the inquiry. Also, the cross-sectional query was only available for seven days, excluding those who were unavailable during the allotted week to complete the online study.

#### Recommendations

Given the findings from this investigation, significance of the marching percussion genre of percussion, and limitations that were evident in this study, a primary recommendation for future study is the continued review and adaptation of college curriculum supporting the job market. To support this suggestion, Professor Darin Kamstra wrote his thesis regarding percussion faculty positions in the United States with attention to the qualifications and duties that are involved with the post. Kamstra indicates that out of 98 faculty percussion jobs that were posted from 1992 to 2001, marching percussion was the most requested area of percussion specialization.<sup>370</sup> In this study, marching percussion was requested 36 times, followed by jazz

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<sup>368</sup> Gall, Gall, and Borg, *Educational Research*, 186.

<sup>369</sup> Daniel, *Sampling Essentials*, 243.

drums and percussion 32 times, then world percussion was desired 21 times, and steel band was the final specialization being sought nine times.<sup>371</sup> Since marching percussion experience was the most preferred specialization of percussion faculty positions, this demonstrates a need to more education and training within this part of the percussion family.

Lane Summerlin believes that more research in marching percussion needs to be pursued:

The amount of scholarly work that focuses on marching percussion is very limited, especially when compared to the research completed that focuses on other areas of percussion. In order for marching music to be accepted on the same level as other genres of music in academia, there must be a new wave of researchers who contribute on the same level as scholars who focus on other areas of music.<sup>372</sup>

In his dissertation, Summerlin recognizes the lack of marching percussion research compared to other areas of percussion (concert, jazz, contemporary, and world percussion). This issue often results in a nonacceptance of a marching percussion focus within a curricular program. When more scholarly analysis and scrutiny involving marching percussion is accomplished, the genre of marching percussion may become more involved in a course of undergraduate study.

Second, to create more courses in the field of marching percussion one may ask which degree(s) should the subject matter expert (creator of the course) and course professors (teacher of the course) possess? Should the qualifications be limited to those with a Doctor of Musical Arts (D.M.A.) in Percussion Performance, Doctor of Music Education (D.M.E.) with a specialization in Percussion, or a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Music Education with a

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<sup>370</sup> Darin Kamstra, "Percussion Faculty Positions at U.S. Institutions of Higher Education Advertised from 1992-2001: Qualifications and Duties," (D.M.A. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2004), 6, [https://www.pas.org/docs/default-source/thesisdissertations/kamstra.pdf?sfvrsn=d8c056a2\\_4](https://www.pas.org/docs/default-source/thesisdissertations/kamstra.pdf?sfvrsn=d8c056a2_4).

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>372</sup> Summerlin, "The History and Development of the Front Ensemble," 120.

specialization in Percussion? Or should the qualifications include those who have earned a combination of some of the above-mentioned degrees? It is uncommon for marching percussionists to possess a terminal degree in academia but that may change if more research is conducted within this field of percussion. This could be a potential topic that surveys terminal degrees obtained by marching percussionists.

Another recommendation for further study may involve analyzing how compositional styles have become complex. Buyer mentions:

Today's writing styles are extremely advanced in concept, rhythmic complexity, tonal variety, and instrument role and function...The marching percussion language includes forty International Drum Rudiments adopted by the Percussive Arts Society plus a plethora of advanced, contemporary rudiments and hybrid sticking combinations, with new ones being created every day...By incorporating essential performance skills into an arrangement combined with the innovative and sophisticated writing styles of today, a marching percussion score of the 1990s has become a musical composition which can stand alone.<sup>373</sup>

Composers and arrangers who write marching percussion music constantly mix traditional rudiments with contemporary hybrid rudiments and then blend them with other articulations that result in a new rhythmic language. Understanding the intricate details of a marching percussion score takes a specialist to interpret the nuances particular to this genre of percussion. This study may be divided into two emphases: exploring the modern marching percussion compositional approach and teaching the score to a marching percussion ensemble. Both topics may benefit the marching percussion community and undergraduate academic curricula.

Finally, a marching percussion study that could be explored might entail the ingredients to produce a successful marching percussion ensemble. It may be intriguing for one to observe the progression of a marching percussion ensemble throughout an entire DCI or WGI

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<sup>373</sup> Buyer, "Marching Percussion Arrangements," 52.

competitive season and document the ways the performers fail, excel, and overcome obstacles. Wayne Booth, Gregory Colomb, and Joseph Williams believe that “[d]oing research carefully and reporting it clearly are hard work. They consist of many tasks, often competing for [the researcher’s] attention at the same time. However carefully [one] plan[s], research follows a crooked path, taking unexpected turns, even looping back on itself.”<sup>374</sup> Chronicling the daily tasks, hindrances, and achievement of a marching percussion ensemble may yield effective ways to build a successful program. Even though four recommendations are given for further study, the marching percussion activity can always use more scrutiny to produce the best performers, educators, and designers.

### Implications for Practice

There are many employment options in the marching percussion genre of percussion. These opportunities can be divided into performance, educational, music and visual design, and industry careers. As suggested in Chapter Two, performance opportunities are prevalent, but not limited to the following: high school and college marching bands; DCI and WGI ensembles; martial bands; theme park performing groups such as The Disneyland Band, Main Street Philharmonic, The Disneyland All-American College Band, and “FutureCorps at Walt Disneyworld;” “chamber’ marching percussion ensembles such as The Star of Indiana’s Brass Theater,” Blast!, Blast II Shockwave, and Blue Devils Entertainment; and applying rudimental percussion elements in many other performance outlets.<sup>375</sup> Even though some of the previously

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<sup>374</sup> Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 5.

<sup>375</sup> Buyer, “Marching Percussion Arrangements,” 54.

mentioned ensembles are no longer performing, they can inspire creativity to establish new ensembles with similar musical and visual ideas.

Next, aside from being a performer, there are many educational opportunities in the marching arts. Teaching for a high school or university, DCI or WGI ensemble, or a chamber group are common ways to instruct marching percussionists. Another way to provide marching percussion knowledge is to advance research in the marching arts activity by studying new aspects of the genre. This type of education may aid other teachers in their instructional approaches.

Third, involvement in composing and arranging for marching percussion ensembles can develop into a flourishing career. According to educator Oliver Molina, “[S]erving as an arranger may make you a stronger candidate for a position on a marching staff. Being able to write for marching percussion may help you land a graduate teaching assistantship or a teaching gig at a high-powered high school marching band program or indoor percussion group. It can also be a nice source of income. If you have enough clients, arranging can turn into a large part of your professional activities, as some arrangers are able to support themselves by freelance arranging work.”<sup>376</sup> This type of work can be accomplished in many of the performance groups previously mentioned.

And finally, employment in the marching percussion industry may serve one well. There are companies who manufacture instruments, equipment, costumes, props, and many other resources that assist the performer, educator, and designer to convey their show’s theme to the audience. These businesses are integral to the success of the ensembles who utilize their services

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<sup>376</sup> Molina, “Writing and Arranging for Marching Percussion,” 10.



and product. All of these marching percussion professions, when united together, inspire the next generation of marching percussionists and continue evolving the marching percussion artistry.

### Conclusion

Completing a research study that assists to create a clear path toward preparing students for a career in the field of marching percussion is the objective of this scrutiny. Even though the traditional music degree includes many aspects of the percussion family, it often does not give enough academic, creative, and practical provision for one to pursue employment in marching percussion. The success of a music education program may include “the techniques, methods, curricula, and methodologies employed by the teacher; the students’ backgrounds, previous musical experiences, and motivations; and the instructional setting.”<sup>377</sup> While these aspects of music education have shaped the typical music department, various “teaching techniques and methods [have] been transmitted historically from one generation of teachers to the next.”<sup>378</sup> For decades, teachers frequently have instructed the same way and “often fail to explore the best possible teaching techniques, methods, curricula, and methodologies.”<sup>379</sup> This has been the issue in the genre of marching percussion; therefore, academic methods may need to change for the curriculum to stay relevant in a developing percussion artistry.

Exploring the current perceptions of marching percussion skills that need to thrive in an undergraduate curriculum of study and the application of one’s college percussion training for their occupation is the impetus that drove this academic examination. Just like concert,

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<sup>377</sup> Peter Costanza and Timothy Russell, “Methodologies in Music Education,” in *Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning: A Project of the Music Educators National Conference*, ed. Richard Colwell (New York: Schirmer Books, 1992), 505.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*, 498.

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*, 498.

commercial, or jazz percussion are all common specializations in an undergraduate percussion degree, marching percussion should be another option (Appendix B). Senior Lecturer Annie Mitchell acknowledges that “curricula, and therefore educational provision, should reflect the ideas, values and issues of merit and worth to its society.”<sup>380</sup> If marching percussion is popular among society’s entertainment offerings, then it should be explored in greater detail in a formal academic degree. Marching percussion and the marching arts intertwine into a genre of music that is currently prevalent in high schools, colleges, and professional ensembles throughout the United States. It is for this reason that college percussionists should be equipped for a marching percussion career in the United States.

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<sup>380</sup> Mitchell, “Seven Steps to Heaven,” 73.

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## APPENDICES

Appendix A: Total Band Program

# Central High School Band Program

## Total Band Circle



**Wayne Markworth**

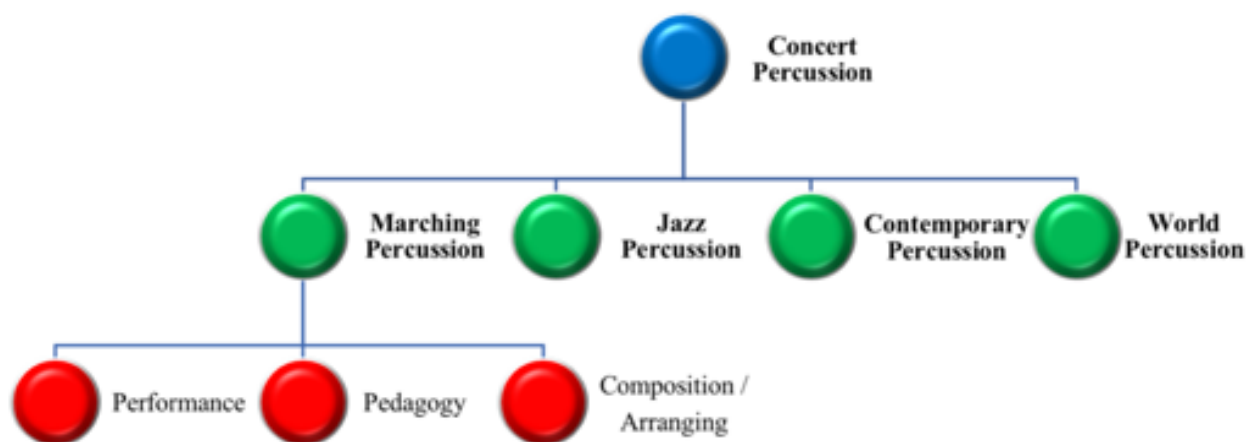
*The Dynamic Marching Band: A Resource Book*

[www.marchingartseducation.com](http://www.marchingartseducation.com)

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## Appendix B: Total Percussion Program

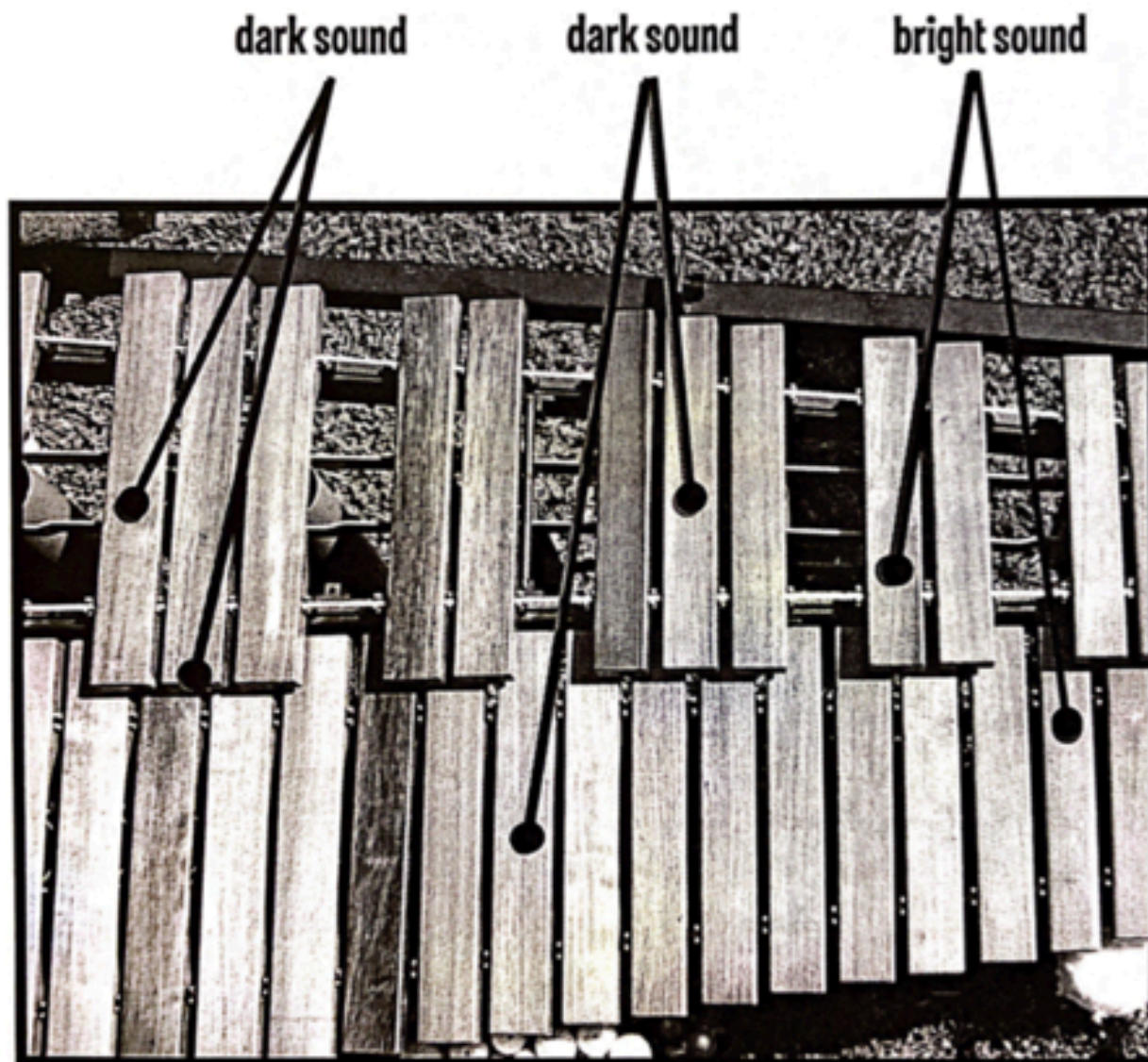
# Total Percussion Program



**Tommy Goddard**  
**[www.TommyGoddardMusic.com](http://www.TommyGoddardMusic.com)**  
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## Appendix C: Playing Zones on Mallet Instruments

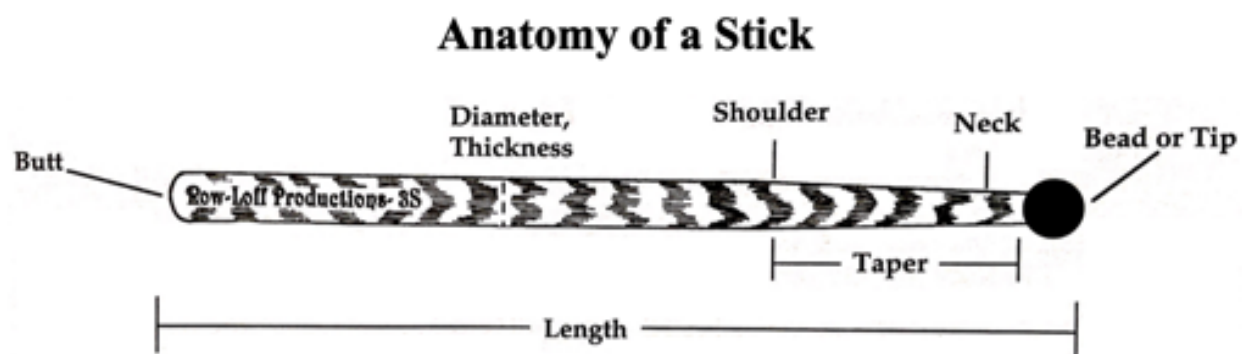
## Playing Zones on Mallet Instruments



**Jim Casella and Jim Ancona**

*Up Front: A Complete Resource for Today's Pit Ensemble*  
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## Appendix D: Anatomy of a Stick



**Dennis DeLucia**  
*Dennis DeLucia's Percussion Discussion*  
Row-Loff Productions  
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## Appendix E: Rehearsal Techniques for Marching Percussion

## Rehearsal Techniques for Marching Percussion

<b>1a. Stationary Music Fundamentals</b> Exercises only, drums on a stand, 100% student focus on technique, with metronome.	<b>1b. Visual Fundamentals</b> (battery only) Basic marching exercises, no equipment, 100% student focus on technique, with metronome.
<b>2a. Stationary Music Fundamentals</b> (battery only) Exercises only, wearing drums, 100% student focus on technique, with metronome.	<b>2b. Visual Fundamentals</b> (battery only) Basic marching exercises, with equipment, 100% student focus on technique, with metronome.
<b>3. Music Fundamentals and Visual Fundamentals</b> (battery only) The battery moving with a majority of their focus still on music fundamentals through exercises. Coordination between hands and feet, with metronome.	
<b>4a. Stationary Show Music</b> Phrase by phrase, drums on a stand, 100% student focus on applying fundamentals to actual music, with metronome.	<b>4b. Drill</b> (battery only) Set to set, with no equipment, 100% student focus on visual responsibilities (sets, dress points, applying fundamentals to actual show), with metronome.
<b>5a. Stationary Show Music</b> (battery only) Phrase by phrase, wearing drums, 100% student focus on applying fundamentals to music, with metronome.	<b>5b. Drill</b> (battery only) Set to set, with equipment, 100% student focus on visual responsibilities (sets, dress points, applying fundamentals to show), with metronome.
<b>6. Stationary Staging* and Listening Exercises; Music Fundamentals in Warm-Up Sets</b> Exercises (not show music) that build proper listening habits and hierarchies (within a section, front to back) using stationary arcs/friendly forms for the battery. Start with the aid of a metronome.	
<b>7. Stationary Staging* and Listening Exercises; Music Fundamentals in Show Staging</b> Exercises (not show music) that build proper listening habits and hierarchies (within a section, front to back) using stationary drill sets from the actual show for the battery, but not show music. Start with the aid of a metronome.	
<b>8a. Show Music and Visual Fundamentals</b> (battery only) Step 3, but with show music. Battery learns timing tendencies of music in relationship to feet. Start with the aid of a metronome.	<b>8b. Drill and Music Fundamentals*</b> Set to set visually, but using exercises. Frontline hears the battery's presence and timing tendencies in actual show staging. Start with the aid of a metronome.
<b>9. Staging* and Listening; Stationary Show Music</b> Show music, enforcing proper listening habits and hierarchies (within a section, front to back) using stationary drill sets from the actual show for the battery. Start with the aid of a metronome.	
<b>10. Show Music and Drill</b> Phrase by phrase, culminating in full show beginning to end. Start with the aid of a metronome.	

**Clif Walker**

**“Ensemble Listening: Rehearsal Techniques for Marching Percussion”**

*Percussive Notes*

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## Appendix F: Mallet Ostinato Accompaniment

## Mallet Ostinato Accompaniment

The image shows a musical score for a pit ensemble. At the top, a single staff is labeled "harmonic ostinato" and "only melody on the field". Below this, the score is divided into five parts: "Vibra 1, 2", "Harp", "Percussion", and "Triangle". Each part has a dynamic marking of *mf*. The score consists of 12 measures. The "Vibra 1, 2" part features a melodic line with a "soloist" annotation. The "Harp" part provides a harmonic accompaniment. The "Percussion" part includes a "Triangle" section. The "Pit supplies a 'bed' of accompaniment for solo melody" annotation points to the overall accompaniment.

Figure 5-F: From the 2002 "Scherzo." Illustrating the pit's important role in supporting the soloist.

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## Appendix G: Augmented Melodic Theme

**Augmented Melodic Theme**

The musical score is for an augmented melodic theme. It features a variety of instruments including Melon, Bar 1,2, Flute 1,4, Clarinet, Saxophone, Bass, Xylophone, Violin 1, Violin 2, Violin 3, Maracas 1, Maracas 2, Maracas 3, Maracas 4, and Timpani. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 190. The score shows a melodic theme being played by the pit ensemble, with the saxophone taking the lead over the brass.

Figure 5-G: Pit takes the lead over brass in this example from the 2003 closer.

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## Appendix H: Impactful Percussion

## Impactful Percussion

The score is titled "Impactful Percussion" and is in 3/4 time with a tempo of quarter note = 190. It features a brass reduction and a percussion ensemble. The percussion ensemble includes Snare, Tom, Bass Drum, Cymbals, Xylophone/Glockenspiel, Vibraphone 1, 2, and 3, Marimba 1 and 2, Percussion, and Timpani. The percussion part includes various techniques such as "china cym", "2 crashes", "longs", and "split crashes". Dynamics range from *ff* to *mp*.

Figure 5-H: Percussion ensemble and brass reduction from an early ending to "Trivandrum" from SCV 2002.

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## Impactful Percussion

The musical score is titled "Impactful Percussion" and is composed by Jim Casella and Jim Ancona. It is arranged for a pit ensemble. The score includes parts for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Trumpet, Trombone, Percussion, and Tuba. The percussion part is particularly complex, featuring a variety of rhythmic patterns and dynamics. The score is in 4/4 time and includes dynamic markings such as *ff* and *cresc.*. The percussion part includes a section with the instruction "cresc." and another with "diminu. molto". The score is presented in a standard musical notation format with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature of 4/4.

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## Appendix I: Front Ensemble Effects

## Front Ensemble Effects

The musical score is titled "Front Ensemble Effects" and is for a pit ensemble. It features nine staves with the following parts: Crotals (Kew), Oboes/Clarinet (Mike B), Vibe 1 (Dino), Vibe 2 (Almet), Vibe 3 (Mike H), Marimba 1 (Tom), Marimba 2 (Laurie), Marimba 3 (Kim), and Timpani (Steve). The tempo is marked  $J = 152$ . The score includes various dynamics such as *mf* and *ff*, and a "gluck. (90%)" marking for the Timpani part. The music is characterized by complex rhythmic patterns and a high level of contrast.

Figure 5-1: Example from 2001 pit opener score to illustrate extreme contrast in color.

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## Appendix J: Survey Questions

### Interview Questions for Thesis

#### *Equipping College Students for a Marching Percussion Career in the United States*

##### Updated Questions

1. How well prepared did you feel for your first marching percussion teaching position?
2. How well prepared did you feel for your first professional marching percussion audition (DCI, WGI, theme park, stage show, etc.)?
3. How well prepared did you feel for your first marching percussion composing/arranging job?
4. How well prepared did you feel for your first significant marching percussion performance (college, DCI, WGI, theme park, stage show, etc.)?
5. What is your perception of time spent (typically 2-3 class sessions in a semester) on the topic of marching percussion in the undergraduate percussion methods course?
6. How many academic marching percussion courses did you take at the undergraduate level?
7. How did you learn marching percussion elements? (Please select all that apply.)
  1. Private instruction/lessons
  2. Drumline/marching band experience
  3. YouTube videos/media
  4. Other (please specify)
8. Should there be more undergraduate courses in marching percussion that involves performing, teaching, and composing/arranging?
9. What education or skills do you believe are needed to be a successful marching percussion professional?
10. How can one prepare performance, instruction, and composition/arranging skills to be successful in the field of marching percussion?

## Appendix K: Recruitment Letter for Social Media

**ATTENTION MARCHING PERCUSSIONIST**

**PERFORMERS/EDUCATORS/COMPOSERS/ARRANGERS:** I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Music Education at Liberty University. The purpose of my research is to examine marching percussion curriculum. To participate, you must be 18 or older, employed in the field of marching percussion at the high school/college level or DCI/WGI level, and have at least 1 year of experience as a performer, educator, or composer/arranger in marching percussion. Participants will be asked to will be asked to complete a 10-question online survey within 7 days of receiving, which should take about should take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. If you would like to participate and meet the study criteria, please click the link provided at the end of this post. A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. After you have read the consent form, please click the link to proceed to the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the survey.

To take the survey, please click here:

[https://qfreeaccountssjcl.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_861trAggGtP7vfg](https://qfreeaccountssjcl.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_861trAggGtP7vfg)

## Appendix L: Institutional Review Board Approval

**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

August 12, 2021

Tommy Goddard  
Betty Damon

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY21-22-72 Equipping College Students for a Marching Percussion Career in the United States

Dear Tommy Goddard, Betty Damon,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46.104(d):

Category 2 (i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording). The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

**Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB.** Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]  
*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*  
**Research Ethics Office**

## Appendix M: Doctoral Thesis Defense Approval

## DOCTOR OF MUSIC EDUCATION THESIS DEFENSE DECISION

The committee has rendered the following decision concerning the defense for

Thomas Paul Goddard

on the Thesis,

Equipping College Students for a Marching Percussion Career in the United States

as submitted on February 25, 2022.

- a.   X   Full approval to proceed with no revisions. The document should be prepared for submission to the Jerry Falwell Library.
- b. \_\_\_\_\_ Provisional approval pending cited revisions. The student must resubmit the project with cited revisions according to the established timeline.
- c. \_\_\_\_\_ Redirection of project. The student is being redirected to take MUSC/WRSP 889 again, as minor revisions will not meet the expectations for the research project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ed. D., DWS., Ed. S., MM, B.S. 2/25/22

Print Name of Advisor/Mentor Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
DMA 25 FEB 2022

Print Name of Reader Signature Date