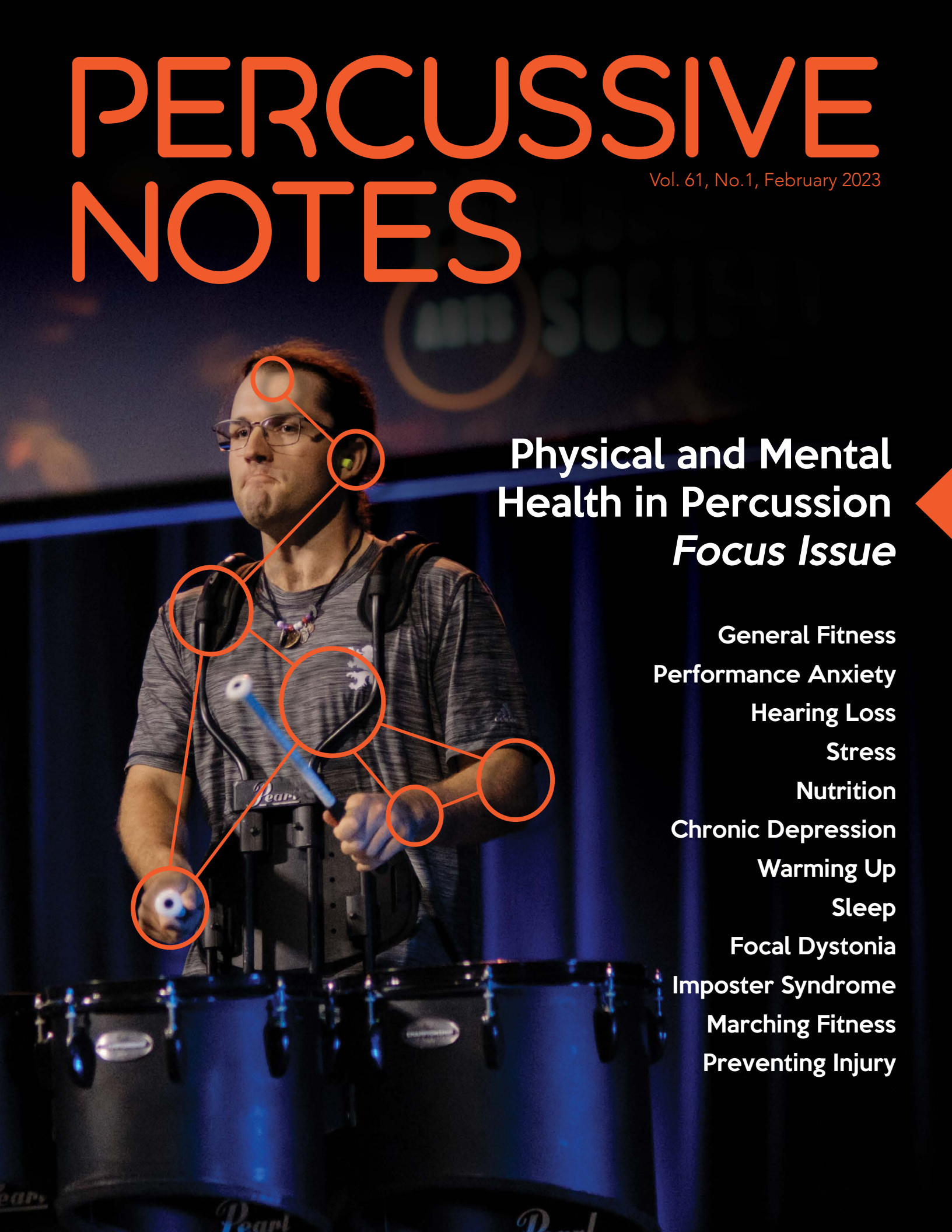


# PERCUSSIVE NOTES

Vol. 61, No.1, February 2023



## Physical and Mental Health in Percussion *Focus Issue*

General Fitness  
Performance Anxiety  
Hearing Loss  
Stress  
Nutrition  
Chronic Depression  
Warming Up  
Sleep  
Focal Dystonia  
Imposter Syndrome  
Marching Fitness  
Preventing Injury

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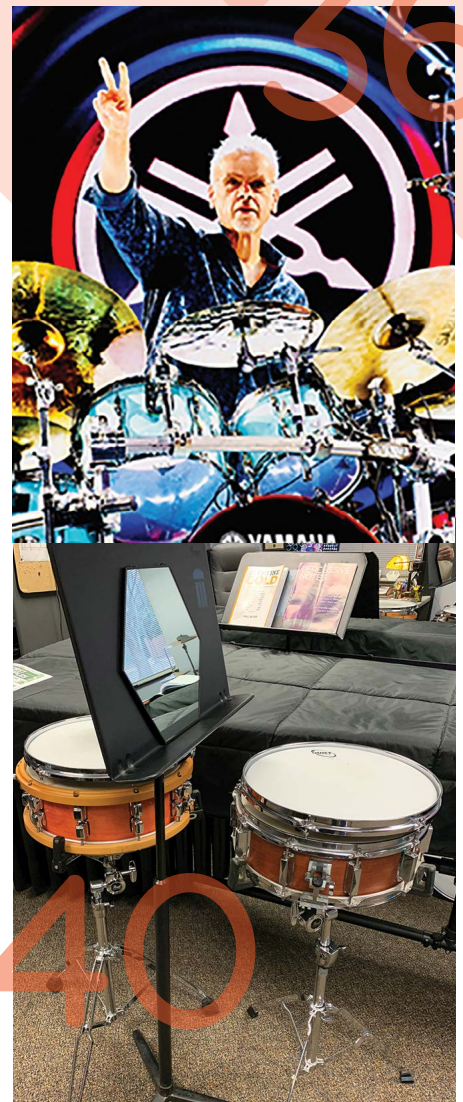
## FOCUS: PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH FOR PERCUSSIONISTS

**COVER PHOTO:** Eric Barnes, Tenor player of the 2022 season Boston Crusaders, performs (with earplugs) during the Boston Crusaders clinic at the 2022 Percussive Arts Society International Convention in Indianapolis, Ind. Photo by Joshua Clements for PAS.

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It is a privilege to welcome in the new year and compose my first official message as PAS President. With PASIC memories still fresh, and looking forward to the work ahead, I'm completely energized and honored to serve this terrific organization. For more than four decades, the Percussive Arts Society has been an important conduit in connecting percussionists and providing a platform to foster growth in support of percussion education, performance, and industry innovation worldwide. I'm grateful for the opportunity to work among the many who serve PAS to sharpen the vision and further the mission.

### RAISE THE ROOF!

I want to take a moment to reflect on how terrific it was to be back to pre-pandemic attendance and to recognize the overall success of PASIC 2022. "Raise the roof" is what comes to mind to describe the energy throughout the convention, which was especially evident in the enthusiasm on display at the evening concerts. Between the hundreds up dancing at the opening-night Pedrito Martinez concert, the artistry and phenomenal touch of Amadinda, the standing "O" for every number Ju Percussion brought to the stage, and the mosh pit at the closing concert with Ghost Note, it's fair to say PASIC 2022 was one for the books! The totality of experiences that the PAS convention offers our community of performers, educators, aficionados, industry leaders, and colleagues worldwide is truly enriching, and certainly proves that PASIC is the place to be every November.

### A COMMUNITY OF EXCEPTIONAL, INSPIRATIONAL EXPERIENCES

In the more than three decades I've been a member of PAS, from my first PASIC in 1985 to today, these words still ring

true. What makes the Percussive Arts Society and the PAS convention second to none is how this organization brings the worldwide percussion community together, cultivates *exceptional* musical experiences, and undoubtably *inspires*. How many of us return from PASIC and say "That was the re-charge I needed," or notice a spark in our energy from a concert we attended, a great clinic, or perhaps a lightness from connecting with friends and colleagues?

In reminiscing about my enthusiastic 21-year-old self, I remember attending my first PASIC with eyes wide open, grabbing all of the free stuff from exhibits, and being blown away by seeing percussion legends like Armand Zildjian, Vic Firth, Remo Belli, Leigh Stevens, Dave Weckl, David Friedman, Ralph Hardimon, Tom Float, and Dennis DeLucia in the exhibit hall or in passing on the way to a clinic. I knew then that PAS had to be a part of my life forever. Fast forward to 2023 when we live in an age of screens and social media; it is even more important than ever that we continue to protect, curate, and appreciate these "in person" experiences.

### WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER

*"Explain to each team member precisely how their contributions connect to the welfare and success of the entire organization."*  
—John Wooden, *Wooden on Leadership: How to create a Winning Organization*.

PAS is a non-profit organization that relies on the membership — especially multi-generations of membership — to keep the organization vibrant and current. While PAS spends a large part of the year cultivating a terrific convention, it is extremely industrious and productive year-round, broadening and refining resources, activities, events, and programs. Our sixteen committees, as well as domestic and international chapters, are ac-



tively planning and executing numerous programs and events. Committee chairs and chapter leadership work tirelessly to lead and promote the pillars of the PAS mission.

Member engagement and volunteerism are the hallmarks of our organization. I encourage all Percussive Arts Society members to become actively involved in supporting and contributing to PAS, whether at the state, national, or international level. There are a myriad of ways for you to get involved, whether serving on a committee, becoming active within your state chapter, volunteering to help in various ways while attending PASIC, or submitting an article to *Percussive Notes* or the *Rhythm! Scene* blog.

Additionally, we want to encourage college students to consider becoming involved with the University Student Committee (USC). The goal of the USC is to develop professional skills while contributing to the future growth of PAS. USC initiatives are designed to strengthen collaborative efforts of the "next gen" to provide input that aligns the younger demographic with a vision that will con-

tinue to elevate value, purposefulness, and benefits of their PAS membership. In order for the USC to achieve its maximum reach, we are asking for one representative of every college percussion studio to apply for the committee.

## TO SERVE

*“Fight for the things you care about, but do it in a way that will lead others to join you.”* —Ruth Bader Ginsburg

As I step into the role of PAS President, I am humbled by the trust and encouragement of the many Past Presidents, the Board of Directors, the Board of Advisors, and the membership. Having served as the Marching Committee chair for nine years, followed by six years on the Board of Directors prior to joining the Executive Committee in 2015, I’m inspired by so many who have dedicated decades of their lives to advance the impact and outreach of PAS.

While every past president has sacrificed and led with terrific vision, I must recognize the last few presidents I have been honored to serve with and learn from. Julie Hill, Brian Zator, Chris Hanning, and most recently, Michael Burritt, have been exceptional stewards of our organization. Additionally, I’d like to honor one of my prominent mentors, Past President Dr. Robert Schietroma. It was “Doc” who first introduced me to the Percussive Arts Society. He was serving on the Executive Committee while I attended the University of North Texas, and he

eventually served as PAS President from 1990–91. We all have a few “north stars” who make a significant impact on our lives, and Doc was definitely one who championed PAS and inspired countless generations of students to become what I call “PAS lifers.” There is no doubt that the Percussive Arts Society organization and the almost four decades of my membership in this collective has and will continue to ignite my passion for percussion, collaboration, and service.

## THE TEAM

*“The strength of the team lies within the individual. And the strength of any individual lies within the team.”* —Phil Jackson

I’m honored to work in tandem with the current Executive Committee of President-Elect Thad Anderson, Second Vice President Lamon Lawhorn, First Vice President Jules Thomas, Secretary Megan Arns, and Past President Michael Burritt, along with the Board of Directors and Board of Advisors. I appreciate their devotion to embracing forward-thinking vision in the steering and governing of PAS. Additionally, I’m thrilled to welcome several new members to the Board of Advisors, and new Board members Deb Birnbaum and Derek Moore. It is fair to say, PAS’s greatest assets are the leaders, derived from our membership, who are committed to fostering vision and providing council to our organization.

Great thanks are in order to our Executive Director, Joshua Simonds, and the

entire staff for their relentless efforts in leading us through a plethora of challenges. Whether it was navigating all matters of the pandemic, launching numerous initiatives and competitions, bouncing back to outrageously successful in-person conventions, and most recently enduring a flood at the Rhythm! Discovery Center, the staff is resolute in its work and allegiance to the PAS mission: “To educate, inspire, and support percussionists and drummers through the world.”

In closing, I’m energized for the great work that PAS, its committees and chapters, and the Diversity Alliance continue to dedicate to improving inclusion and diversity, advocacy for health and wellness, and developing programs and competitions that elevate education and exceptional music making. As I previously mentioned, multi-generational membership is imperative to the prosperity of PAS. Keep encouraging the younger generations to become members, attend the convention, apply to the University Student Committee, and participate in the many competitions and programs PAS offers. Let’s be intentional in bolstering the “next gen” to take the lead and become “PAS Lifers.” Are you in?

— Julie Davila

## CALL FOR ARTICLES

*Percussive Notes* welcomes articles of interest to percussionists and drummers involved in all genres of music. We are interested in articles that inform and educate percussionists and drummers in the areas of drum set, health and wellness, marching percussion, world percussion, keyboard percussion, and orchestral/symphonic percussion. We also welcome percussion-related articles on education and technology. Individual articles can deal with technique, scholarly research, and/or historical information.

Before submitting an article, please read the submission guidelines at [percussivearts.tfaforms.net/4728494](https://percussivearts.tfaforms.net/4728494).

# Physical and Mental Health for Percussionists

By Dr. Stephen K. Workman

**B**eing a percussionist can be physically and mentally demanding. You may experience overuse injuries, pain from hauling heavy and cumbersome equipment, hearing problems, stress, performance anxiety, and depression, just to name a few. When any of these things happen, it is natural to think that you are the only one struggling. The reality is that many percussionists encounter different types of health challenges that affect their careers and hobbies.

This issue of *Percussive Notes* is focused on the importance of learning about your body and taking the appropriate steps to care for it. We have collected educational articles from a variety of healthcare professionals and percussionists who have been willing to share their experiences. Among these articles you will find some that focus on the science behind common physical and mental problems that plague percussionists of all levels. Others demonstrate how some of your peers have improved their health and the common proactive approaches that have shown to be successful. Our goal is to help you expand your knowledge of how these different conditions can occur, options for prevention, ways to alleviate symptoms, and where you should look for additional help.

It is commonly said that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Awareness is the first step to avoiding potential physical and mental-health problems. Take advantage of this opportunity to improve your physical and mental wellbeing. These health-and-wellness articles, along with others that are published in every issue of *Percussive Notes*, can help you make informed decisions for yourself and educate those around you.

**Disclaimer:** The purpose of the articles in this issue is to provide basic health information that can help all of us lead healthier lives. None of the information is meant to be used to diagnose a condition or prescribe treatment. Be sure to consult a qualified healthcare professional to ensure that the information is applied correctly to your specific needs.

**Dr. Stephen K. Workman** is a chiropractic physician practicing in Cedar City, Utah. In addition to his doctorate in Chiropractic, he has a master's degree in Sports Medicine and bachelor's degrees in Human Biology and Exercise Science. He is the Health & Wellness editor for *Percussive Notes* and has been involved with the PAS Health & Wellness committee since 1998. Dr. Workman specializes in treating musician and sports injuries along with improving performance. He has treated many professional musicians, dancers, and athletes over the years. Dr. Workman has been playing the drums professionally for almost 25 years and teaching for over 20 years. He can be reached at [DocSWorkman@gmail.com](mailto:DocSWorkman@gmail.com).



# Hearing Health and Hearing Loss

By Steven D. Rauch, MD

**T**he ear is a marvelous organ. Like all sense organs, it encodes information about the world around us and sends that information to the brain, where it is decoded for us to perceive, understand, and appreciate. The ear takes sound vibrations as compression and rarefaction waves in air, collects them and concentrates them in the outer and middle ear, and conducts them into the fluid of the inner ear, where they stimulate auditory “hair cells” (named for the tiny fibers projecting off the top of each cell). The hair cells use neurotransmitter chemicals to encode the sound by frequency and intensity. Those coded messages are passed to the auditory nerve, which carries the signals to the auditory regions of the brain to be decoded. This system is exquisitely sensitive to low-intensity (soft) sound and to differences in frequency, yet robust to high-intensity (loud) sound.

As elegant as the ear’s “engineering” may be, it is not indestructible. While there are myriad potential causes of ear damage and hearing loss, the two most important are your genetics and your exposure to loud sound. We cannot control our genetics. If, like going bald or turning gray, our hearing is programmed genetically to deteriorate with age, we are destined to suffer some degree of age-related hearing loss. However, the magnitude and rate of this loss is profoundly affected by wear and tear on the ear through

the lifespan. And there is no greater or more common source of wear and tear than loud sound.

## ACOUSTIC TRAUMA

Much of our understanding of noise injury (a.k.a. acoustic trauma) has been known for decades. The ears’ response to loud sound exhibits a behavior known as a “dose effect,” just like a drug. The higher the dose, the greater the effect (or side effect!). Within a certain range of sound intensity, corresponding to the “recommended dose” of a medication, exposure is perfectly safe. However, at high dose, there is risk of damage. The higher the dose (i.e., the louder the sound), the less time it takes for damage.

Ear doctors and audiologists have been well-aware that sound of sufficient loudness can cause a temporary threshold shift (TTS). In other words, if you are exposed to loud enough sound, you will experience a feeling of stuffy ears, muffled hearing, and tinnitus that will usually clear in a few hours or a day. If you were to have a hearing test during that period of time when the ears feel stuffy, it would show a loss of hearing sensitivity. When the stuffiness cleared, a repeat hearing test would show restoration of normal sensitivity; thus the term “temporary” threshold shift.

Auditory scientists have shown that this TTS is due to the violent thrashing of the hair bundles on top of each hair cell,

causing the fibers to be beaten down so they cease responding normally to sound vibrations. Picture a bed of tulips beaten down by a rainstorm. Once the noise stops, the fibers of the hair bundle have a certain capacity to stand back up, restoring sound sensitivity. However, if they are beaten down repeatedly, they gradually lose the ability to straighten back up. Scientists have shown that enough trauma to the auditory hair cells causes the death of those cells, a condition called “permanent threshold shift” (PTS). This time, picture a boxer who is knocked down repeatedly. Each time, he arises more slowly, until he does not get up at all.

Individual sensitivity to acoustic trauma varies from person to person. Some people have tough ears and some have tender ears. No test can determine your sensitivity or resistance to noise injury. Across large populations, we know that extensive exposure to sound less than 85dB intensity is unlikely to cause hearing damage. However, when average exposure gets to 85dB and above, there is increasing risk of damage. And as the sound gets louder, it takes less and less time for the damage to occur.

The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has published a safety guideline for sound exposure in musicians (see link at the end of this article). It states that a musician is safe for eight hours of exposure at 85dB. For ev-

ery increase of 3dB average exposure, the time must be cut in half! Four hours at 88dB, two hours at 91dB, one hour at 94dB, etc. If a sound is extremely loud – for example, a gunshot, or a guitarist bending over in front a drummer when he or she strikes a rimshot – this “impulse noise” can be loud enough to cause instantaneous permanent damage.

In summary, traditional understanding of acoustic trauma teaches us that loud sound can cause temporary hearing damage, and repeated exposure or even louder sound can cause permanent hearing damage. There has been an assumption that once the noise stopped, so did further damage.

## HIDDEN HEARING LOSS

The information about acoustic trauma described above is old news. It has been in medical and audiology and occupational health textbooks for over 50 years. About 12 years ago, however, auditory scientists discovered some new and extremely worrisome insights about noise injury. Sharon J. Kujawa and M. Charles Liberman at Harvard Medical School were studying auditory synapses, the tiny areas where auditory nerve fibers reach out to the base of each auditory hair cell to receive the chemical signals generated by sound vibrations moving the hair bundles. In normal mammal ears, there are 5–30 synapses on the base of each auditory hair cell. When sound moves the hair bundles, two features of the sound are encoded: frequency and intensity. The frequency of sound is encoded by the rate of fiber bundle movement, which “phase locks” to oscillate at the same frequency as the incoming sound: 256 vibrations/sec for “C4,” 440 vibrations/sec for “A-440,” etc.

Intensity is encoded by the magnitude of fiber bundle movement – a small oscillation for a soft sound and a much larger oscillation for a louder sound. The magnitude of the fiber bundle movements regulates the amount of neurotransmitter chemical “dumped” at

the synapse to stimulate the adjacent auditory nerve fiber. When an “overdose” of neurotransmitter is dumped into the synapse, it can be toxic to the nerve endings – so-called “excitotoxicity.”

Kujawa and Liberman exposed mice with normal hearing to a single two-hour session of 120dB noise. Hearing tests showed that all the animals experienced a threshold shift, and two to three days later, a repeat audiogram showed that all the thresholds had returned to normal: a TTS. Then they studied those animals’ hair cells under the microscope. They discovered that all the hair cells were still alive, but there was a drastic reduction in the number of synapses on each hair cell. In other words, the cells survived but they were partially disconnected from the auditory nerve. Furthermore, they found that those synapses were lost permanently and the auditory nerve continued to degenerate over months and years, *even if the animals never had another loud noise exposure!*

This phenomenon described by Kujawa and Liberman has been dubbed “hidden hearing loss” because it is not detectable as a permanent threshold shift on a conventional audiogram. So, if it does not affect the audiogram, does it really matter? Absolutely! A threshold audiogram measures only one aspect of hearing: how well the ear detects soft sound at each test frequency. A routine audiogram does not test many other aspects of hearing sensitivity and clarity. Even with a substantially reduced population of hair cells and synapses, the ear can still detect that sound is present. But it cannot transmit as much detail in the sound signal.

In acoustical engineering terms, you can consider this to be a reduction of signal bandwidth. It is akin to differences in sampling rate in digital signal recording. A lower sampling rate carries less information than a high sampling rate. It appears that the first and most obvious effect of reduced auditory band-

width from loss of hair cell synapses is difficulty discriminating voices in background noise.

In summary, the new noise injury paradigm is that every time you experience acoustic trauma sufficient to cause temporary threshold shift, you are probably causing some loss of auditory synapses and progressive degeneration of auditory nerve fibers.

## HEARING CONSERVATION

We have known for decades that we are each born with our full complement of auditory nerve fibers and hair cells. Once lost, they cannot be replaced – like a bank account from which we can only make withdrawals, never deposits. Our traditional understanding of acoustic trauma would suggest that each sufficiently loud noise exposure event potentially makes another withdrawal from the account. The new “hidden hearing loss” paradigm would be like giving copies of our ATM card to lots of friends and colleagues! Even when we don’t make a withdrawal, the account is being drained because the nerves keep degenerating even when there is no more noise.

At the moment, we do not know of any way to halt or reverse this degenerative process. But we do know how to protect against further injury by implementing a Hearing Conservation Cycle:

### Education

The first step in the Hearing Conservation Cycle is to inform and educate people about the risks of loud sound, as has been done above.

### Noise Exposure Assessment

We are all exposed to varying degrees of sound throughout every day. The simplest way to assess your noise exposure is to install a sound-level meter app, such as “NIOSH Sound Level Meter” or “Decibel X,” on your smartphone and start taking readings. There are many such apps, most free, available for both iOS and Android phones. Look for one that

has a continuous running sound-level readout, a readout of the *average* sound level during your recording, and a readout of the *maximum* sound level reached at any time during your recording. You can take readings during rehearsals, performances — from the stage and from the audience — and a variety of everyday activities. It is a real eye opener to realize how loud our world is. You can use the results of average exposure values to calculate your safe exposure time according to information in the NIOSH Safety Standards document referenced at the end of this article.

### Hearing assessment and monitoring

The “gold standard” for hearing assessment is a comprehensive audiogram performed in a soundproof booth by a licensed audiologist. However, this is time-consuming, potentially expensive, and not as readily available as you might like.

Fortunately, there are at least two smartphone apps that allow you to do a very good basic audiogram with your phone: “Mimi” and “uHear.” These free apps are available for both iOS and Android phones. They simply require that you put on headphones or earbuds and go into a quiet room to run the test. The test results can be saved, printed, or emailed.

It is advisable to get a comprehensive audiogram first, and then do the home test, so you can compare the results and confirm the accuracy of your home test. Once you have this initial record, you can repeat the test at home any time you are concerned about acoustic trauma or any other cause of hearing change. If a change is confirmed by the home audiogram, you can seek prompt evaluation by a hearing professional.

### Noise Reduction

Regrettably, there is very little we can do to make the world quieter. Walking up to the maître d’ at a restaurant and asking him to turn down the music seems improbable, though you can cer-

tainly choose to frequent quieter restaurants. Likewise, it is unrealistic to expect clubs and other performance venues to turn down the volume. Perhaps someday the hidden hearing loss information will make its way into public policy that mandates safe noise levels. However, for the time being, sports arenas, bars and restaurants, and other performance spaces must be considered dangerous to your hearing.

### Hearing Protection

Ultimately, your best bet for hearing preservation is personal hearing protection. Musician earplugs, earmuffs, in-ear monitors, and acoustic baffles are all readily available means of protecting you from overexposure. Remember from the NIOSH exposure guideline, for every 3dB of sound reduction, you double your safe exposure time. If the average noise level in the club is around 100dB — far too loud for anyone to carry a conversation — you are only safe for about 15 minutes! If you can reduce the sound by 10dB, you are safe for two hours. If you can reduce the sound by 15dB, you are safe for eight hours. Musician earplugs are all rated for sound attenuation level, so it is easy to decide what strength of protection you will need.

### CONCLUSION

As musicians, you are highly informed and demanding listeners. We are born with exquisitely sensitive hearing and hope to have it last a lifetime. While we cannot control genetically determined hearing loss as we age, we can reduce our risk of accelerated hearing loss due to acoustic trauma. We can be mindful of the risk posed by loud sound. We can monitor our personal noise exposure and monitor our own hearing sensitivity. We can try to limit excessively noisy environments. We can use personal ear protection. And of course, we can acknowledge the “dirty little secret” about earplugs: they only work IF YOU PUT THEM IN YOUR EARS.

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Dr. Steven Rauch specializes in otology, which is the diagnosis, medical, and surgical management of hearing and balance disorders. Dr. Rauch is director of the Vestibular Division at Mass. Eye and Ear, which brings together specialists from otolaryngology and neurology to provide highly specialized clinical care and research initiatives with the goal of improving the lives of patients with vestibular and balance disorders. Dr. Rauch has served as a member of the Board of Scientific Councilors of the NIH National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) and as President of the Association for Research in Otolaryngology. He focuses his research efforts on combined disorders of hearing and balance, particularly Ménière’s disease, autoimmune inner ear disease, sudden deafness, and migraine. Dr. Rauch has also cultivated an interest in performing-arts medicine. He is an Adjunct Professor in the Liberal Arts Department at Berklee College of Music, where he teaches a course on Health and Wellness for undergraduate music students.

# Now Hear This: Dealing with Hearing Damage

By Rick Mattingly

It is very common for musicians to experience hearing damage as a result of constant exposure to loud music. Some may assume that the problem is limited to players in rock bands or musicians who play brass or percussion instruments, but instrumentalists or singers in just about any musical setting can suffer from hearing loss after prolonged exposure to music played at the upper end of the dynamic spectrum.

Over the years, a number of prominent musicians have acknowledged that they have suffered hearing damage. Artists who have said in various interviews that they have tinnitus (constant ringing in the ears) or some other type of hearing loss include singer Barbra Streisand, guitarist Eric Clapton, Beatles producer George Martin, Thomas Bangalter of the electronic music duo Daft Punk, Chris Martin of Coldplay, Red Hot Chili Peppers' frontman Anthony Kiedis, electronica artist Moby, singer Ozzy Osbourne, and singer/songwriter/guitarist Neil Young.

Peter Erskine likes to tell an old joke about a drummer exclaiming, "Whadda mean use more dynamics? I'm playing as loud as I can!" Erskine has done his share of loud playing over the years, but he came to appreciate lowering the volume. "In general," he explains, "the volume level and texture of music have become so loud that it becomes a sort of wash. Anywhere you go in public, there seems to be a musical soundtrack going, whether you ask

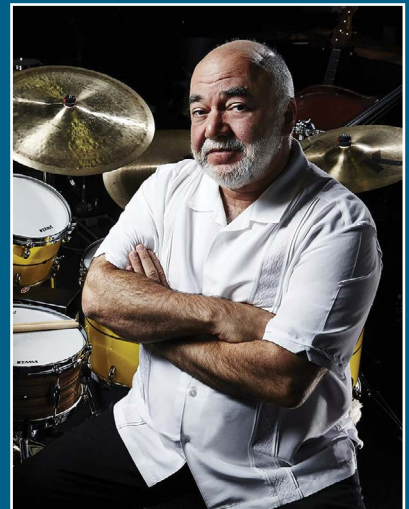
for it or not. And with a lot of recordings or live groups, the starting point seems to be so loud that after a while your ears become numb to a lot of the musical ideas that are being expressed."

Erskine has realized that audiences respond positively to music that is played at a reasonable volume. "When I play with my own groups, we play some songs very softly," he explains. "I sense people leaning forward to listen, and then getting with it. I've realized that audiences are hungry and grateful for that kind of dynamic shift — playing so quietly that it demands everyone's attention. And then when you increase the natural volume, it is more effective."

When judging percussion competitions, marimbist Nancy Zeltsman has sometimes questioned certain players' volume level. "When something is too loud for me — like when someone plays a thundering multiple-percussion piece — I immediately put in earplugs and sometimes also cover my ears," she said. "After observing some extremely loud performances, I've sometimes asked players, 'Why did the performance need to be that loud? What are you communicating if a major component of your performance is such a wall of sound that your audience has to figure out how to bear it? No one can tolerate it. Doesn't that distract from the performance?' And everybody said, 'Yeah, that's a good question.'"

## PETER ERSKINE

Sadly, Peter Erskine's appreciation for the softer end of the dynamic spectrum has been influenced, in part, by hearing damage. "Goodness knows my ears have borne the brunt of a lot of musical excess over the years," he admits. "Back when I was in Maynard Ferguson's band, they molded hearing-protection plugs for me,



**I suddenly heard this loud, oscillating frequency. I thought it was coming through the headphones, so I ripped them off, but the sound didn't stop.**  
—Peter Erskine

but I felt they were throwing my dynamics off. Playing that loud, I should have been wearing them all the time, but I wasn't.

"Several years ago, I was doing a tour with Gary Burton and Pat Metheny. We were in New York for a week, and we were doing two or three shows a night. I had also booked a lot of recording projects, and I was in the studio eight to ten hours a day. My ears were not getting any rest, and at the end of the week, in the recording studio, I suddenly heard this loud, oscillating frequency. I thought it was coming through the headphones, so I ripped them off, but the sound didn't stop.

"I panicked," Erskine says, "but it finally stopped. Apparently, my eardrum went into a spasm. The body will do what it can to protect itself, and I had pushed everything over the edge."

A few days after the tour ended, Erskine noticed that his ears were still ringing. "In the past," he recalled, "my ears would ring after a gig, and I'd think, 'Wow, we were really loud tonight.' The next day, the ringing would be gone. But that's ear damage at work. I already knew that I was losing certain frequencies in my hearing, because I was going to an ear doctor."

The day Erskine noticed that his ears were still ringing, the latest issue of *Modern Drummer* magazine arrived in the mail. The cover story was on drummer Rod Morgenstein, who discussed his own hearing damage. "I was very grateful that he talked about that," Peter says, "because when something like that happens to you, it helps to hear someone else talking about it."

Erskine made appointments with a couple of ear doctors, who both confirmed that he suffered from tinnitus. "It's very distressing," Peter says, "because I like quiet, and my life has been robbed of one of its pleasures. The sound never stops. The shame of it is that I'm more enthused about music now than I've ever been, and yet another part of me is saying, 'When can I take a break?' Because I've noticed that if I periodically give my

ears a rest, the symptoms are sometimes less severe."

For many years now, Erskine has practiced preventive maintenance to try to avoid further hearing loss. He is now very comfortable wearing earplugs, and is no longer worried that they will throw off his dynamic balance. "The initial problem or impulse/reaction I experienced when wearing hearing protection while playing was that I played louder and harder in order to compensate," he explains. "I didn't allow for re-training my touch and general/overall dynamics system, as it were. It is simply an important matter of getting used to wearing hearing protection.

"I am pleased and proud that some of my students at USC vigorously wear hearing protection," Erskine adds. "But I do advise them to not wear it at all times when they are practicing or playing softly. Some practice regimens should not be loud, and we do well to actually hear the tone being produced on the instrument or even on the practice pad. Like all things in life, hearing protection benefits from balance."

Has Peter ever felt he needed to hide the fact that his hearing has been damaged? "I have never been one to hide pleasure or displeasure, health or illness from my colleagues," he insists. "One of the first things I'll mention to an engineer in a recording studio will be about my hearing loss, thanking them and begging their indulgence in advance for my not being able to discern some of the higher-frequency sounds already recorded, such as cymbals or percussion overdubs like shakers or tambourines, etc. Take it from me: you do not want to lose any of your hearing if you can prevent it. That said, hearing loss is an occupational hazard, and most all of my musician colleagues and friends suffer from it to one degree or another — or, should I say, one decibel or another."

## NANCY ZELTSMAN

Although Nancy Zeltsman has spent most of her career playing in solo and

chamber-music settings, in 2005 she performed a marimba concerto composed by William Thomas McKinley with Boston Modern Orchestra Project. "It was very thickly orchestrated, and the orchestra was often very loud," Zeltsman says. "For the live performance, I requested that the marimba be miked. That way, I could play with my ideal range of sound colors instead of using hard, brittle-sounding mallets to project over the orchestra.

"A few days later we did a recording session," she continues. "The engineer reminded me that the mics over the marimba meant I could play the way I like to play and get my sound. But these mics were recording the marimba, not amplifying it. The engineer could hear me just fine, but the conductor and orchestra members couldn't! Therefore, I had to play extremely loudly. In one movement, I had to play a long roll on a really high pitch while the orchestra was screaming, and I felt something pop in the back of my neck. Later, I learned that a particular incident can cause hearing damage, so I



PHOTO BY CLAUDIA HANSEN

I reached for notes that felt right, and when I looked at the keyboard they looked right, but I couldn't hear what I was playing.  
—Nancy Zeltsman

wondered if that was a root cause of my eventual hearing problems.”

Soon after, Nancy noticed a sensitivity to loud sounds, so she began wearing hearing protection at times when she played and taught.

Then, in late 2009, she experienced some odd sensations in her right ear, including stuffiness, a sound akin to hearing the ocean in a conch shell, and occasional whooshing and whistling. And then there was her alarm clock: “The alarm would go off on my left side,” she explains, “and when I would rotate over to turn it off so that I was hearing it mostly with my right ear, the pitch would drop about a half step.”

Soon after, Zeltsman traveled to PASIC, where she was going to perform. Upon arrival, her right ear felt warm. “I ran into friends at the airport and told them that my hearing had been strange recently, and they told me my right ear was actually red,” she remembers. “So it was even external. When I was warming up before the performance, I reached for notes that felt right, and when I looked at the keyboard they looked right, but between the stuffiness and off-key whistling sounds, I couldn’t hear what I was playing. So that was really scary. During the performance I could hear normally, but there was a chunk of time that day I couldn’t hear pitches.”

Two audiologists confirmed Nancy had about thirty-percent hearing loss of low frequencies in her right ear. An otolaryngologist prescribed a high dose of steroids for two weeks, a diuretic, a low-sodium diet, no caffeine or alcohol, and getting more sleep. The steroids, which supposedly might reverse the hearing loss, had no effect. Nancy saw three otolaryngologists who had no understanding of pitch changes; all of them recommended Dr. Steven Rauch at Massachusetts Eye and Ear. Dr. Rauch disagreed with previous possible diagnoses of Cochlear Hyrdops or Meniere’s Disease; he said she had suffered “low-frequency sudden hearing loss” that happens to about one in 5,000 people per year. Odds are that it doesn’t

go to the other ear. Best course of action: try to ignore it.

Nancy came to accept her “new normal”: “A lot of things sound tinny,” she says, “like the way music sounds over a small radio.” She became accustomed to operating with fitted, musicians’ 25dB-reducing earplugs: putting them in and taking them throughout the day as she is teaching, listening to concerts, and even eating at restaurants. “Every time I think something is too loud, if I get out my sound meter, it’s registering 85 decibels. I really have a distinct threshold now.”

Nancy feels happy for one upshot of all this: her students have learned, from witnessing her screaming in shock, to be mindful of volume and to protect themselves and others. “My students know that when they arrive at an ensemble rehearsal with me, they should not warm up loudly or play indiscriminately with hard mallets. If a student is going to play something in a lesson they know will be loud, they give me a heads up. I wear earplugs most of the time but, at some point, I always take them out briefly so I can still get a sense of their tone.

“It used to seem,” she adds, “that if we had a masterclass guest playing *fortissimo* snare drum just ten feet from the first row of students, they felt it would be impolite to hold their ears or put in earplugs. But now they will do that.”

Almost a decade after her low-frequency hearing loss diagnosis, Nancy had another hearing test. “My hearing had returned in my right ear,” she says. “But things still sounded odd! The audiologist said that, in rare cases when hearing returns, people usually hear differently. So my perception of things sounding odd hadn’t changed during all that time. I’m still very sensitive to loudness. I might be walking on the street, and suddenly there is a siren or a loud noise. Everyone else seems oblivious to it, but I’m clapping my hands over my ears.”

## ROD MORGENSTEIN

While touring with rock band Winger in 1989, drummer Rod Morgenstein often

woke up in the morning with his ears ringing. “I didn’t think it was a big deal,” he says, “because for many years I would occasionally wake up after playing and have a ringing in my ears. By the middle of the day it would be gone, but this time the ringing kept going, and it was still there months later.”

Once Rod realized that the ringing was not going away, he had his ears checked. “After extensive checking, the doctor said, ‘You seem to have some ear damage as the result of loud music,’” Rod recalls, with a sarcastic laugh. “I already knew *that*, so when I practiced, I started wearing these big, clunky headphones that people use who go to rifle ranges or work around jets at airports. I also wear them when I do clinics, and when I play live, I use foam plugs. So I’m never without ear protection.

“It is definitely a different sensation,” he says. “You feel somewhat removed. But the more you wear hearing protection, the more that becomes the norm. Now, I actually love the way my drums sound when I have headphones on. It takes out all the extraneous overtones and gives me a crisp, Steve Gadd kind of sound, which is nice. The foam plugs don’t do quite the

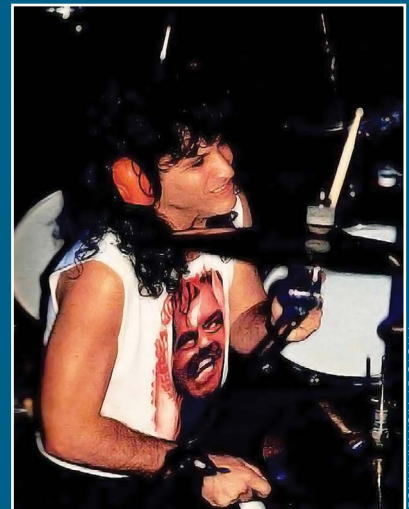


PHOTO BY ROCK MATTINGLY

I actually love the way my drums sound when I have headphones on.  
—Rod Morgenstein

same job, because the headphones cover your entire ear. But the foam plugs do cut out a lot of the damaging sound.”

## MICHAEL BURRITT

When Michael Burritt first started noticing a ringing in his ears, he didn’t pay much attention to it. “I grew up in the 1970s,” he says, “and I did a lot of high school marching band and drum set playing. Back in that era, no one was talking about hearing protection. Even when I went to college in the ’80s, it wasn’t being talked about very much, but a couple of buddies would wear headphones when they practiced drum set, and I did that sometimes. But we were not doing anything to protect our ears in percussion ensemble or other ensembles, and neither were the wind or brass players. It was probably mid to late ’90s before I started hearing people talking about hearing protection. I paid some attention to it, but when you’re young, you think you are indestructible; as you get older, you realize that you are not. But as more people were talking about hearing protection, I started wearing hearing protection more often.”

Around 2015, Burritt’s tinnitus became louder and more noticeable. “It never really bothered me,” he says. “Then, in the summer of 2016, I played in an alumni marching band – where I wore ear protection, but not medically molded plugs – and for a day or two after that, the ringing was worse; it was actually kind of scary. The ringing finally went back down, but I realized that something was wrong. So I had my hearing tested, and there was *definitely* something wrong. I already knew that, but I was trying to ignore it. So I had some molded earplugs made.”

Michael says the molded plugs helped prevent further damage and helped loud sounds feel more manageable. “At first it makes you feel insecure,” Burritt says, “but you find that you can adapt because the brain can overcome a lot. But you have to face it head on and learn to deal with it. I practice with earplugs all the

time now, no matter what instrument I’m playing. I wear earplugs in things like percussion ensemble rehearsals, but not always when performing in chamber music settings. In certain circumstances I’ll just wear one earplug, which can help me judge dynamics, but you have to adjust to that, too, because your sense of volume is skewed. You need to learn what it feels like in your hands to play at the correct dynamic level. Sometimes I’ll take the earplugs out for certain performances, but most of the time I am wearing hearing protection. I even put in earplugs when I use my leaf blower!”

Even when not wearing earplugs, Burritt was sometimes having trouble hearing conversations – especially with female voices. “Also,” he adds, “sometimes the upper register of the marimba would sound sharp. Ordinary sounds seemed louder and were jarring me more. Some people refer to this as hyperacusis. It was heart-wrenching for me to know that something serious was happening, which in a sense made me more afraid to find out what was going on. Because we



**There are probably people who need hearing aids, but who are afraid to get them because of a stigma.**  
—Michael Burritt

use our ears in such an acute way in our careers, any subtle change is a concern. So I needed to work around some of the issues I had.”

Michael finally went to an audiologist who said that he needed hearing aids. “That was tough,” he admits. “I wondered what people would think about hearing aids. The sad thing is that there are probably people who need hearing aids, but who are afraid to get them because of a stigma. There is no stigma attached to wearing glasses, but there is to wearing hearing aids. But there shouldn’t be. I told my students that I was wearing hearing aids because I wanted them to take care of their ears. I didn’t take care of my ears enough when I was younger, and I didn’t want my students to be in my position. I also told them that if they needed help with something, they should not be afraid to get help – whether it’s your ears, stress, mental health, or anything. I was afraid to get help, but I shouldn’t have been. You have to take the stigma out of it and let people know that they can get help. If you need hearing aids, get hearing aids; they will help you hear the world around you. With a lot of hearing aids, you can’t even see them.

“When I’m practicing, I take out the hearing aids and put in earplugs. The plugs and hearing aids have given me more confidence.

“People also have to realize that we can start to lose hearing as we get older,” he adds. “Plus, our daily environment is so much louder than it used to be; more people are probably losing their hearing now than they were a hundred years ago.

“It’s been tough for me,” he admits, “and I’ve had to deal with it in a real way. But you can get past it.”

*This article is excerpted from a chapter on hearing loss from the book Your Music Career is Not Over by Rick Mattingly. Copyright 2022 by Meredith Music Publications; used by permission. PN*

# Mental and Physical Health Benefits of Qigong for Percussionists

By Ryan Bond

**P**ercussionists face the risk of a variety of injuries from tension, overuse, and daily tasks that can suspend or end their careers. Several courses of action may mitigate these injuries. Among them is a non-invasive, non-pharmaceutical practice called Qigong (pronounced Chee-gong). This article covers a brief history of Qigong, its use to improve mental health and focus, and how to implement daily Qigong stretches to reduce the risk of injury specifically for the hands, wrists, and fingers.

## WHAT IS QIGONG?

Qigong is an ancient Chinese practice that helps to improve focus, and both mental and physical health. It has successfully been in use for more than 4,000 years. Qigong, one of the most popular traditional Chinese exercises, is known as mind-body movement therapy.<sup>1</sup> Qigong – also known as qi gong, chi kung, chi 'ung, and chi gung – is a system of coordinated body posture, movement, breathing, and meditation used for the purposes of health, spirituality, and martial-arts training.

Throughout Chinese history, Qigong has been developed and taught from master to student through training and oral transmission emphasizing meditative practice. Qigong is widely used by scholars and athletes, and in dynamic practice

by the working masses. Various factions of Chinese societies have used Qigong in traditional Chinese medicine for preventative and curative functions. Some factions where Qigong is used include in Confucianism to promote longevity and to improve moral character, in Daoism and Buddhism as part of meditative practice, and in Chinese martial arts to enhance self-defending abilities.

In 1949, Liu Guizhen adopted the name “Qigong” to also refer to the system of life-preserving practices that were developed based on Dao yin<sup>2</sup> and philosophical traditions. This approach is considered the start of the modern/scientific interpretation of Qigong.<sup>3</sup> This practice is now found in many cultures with a variety of forms, styles, and benefits.<sup>4</sup>

## SOME OF THE PROVEN BENEFITS

Qigong can have a variety of benefits if practiced consistently, correctly, and with patience. Many of these Chinese health exercises are practiced around the world because Qigong is known for its preventative capacity. There is existing evidence of its efficacy, which is a factor that has led German health insurance firms to pay for preventative medical Qigong.<sup>5</sup>

Traditional Qigong exercises are known to improve quality of life by relieving pain, even in patients with such

severe diseases as cancer.<sup>6</sup> The exercises have been used to treat such common conditions as arthritis of the knee, improve bone and cardiovascular health, increase antioxidant capacity, enhance muscular strength, and improve balance. Implementing Qigong has also proven to reduce injury and improve focus for athletes, performing artists, and public speakers.<sup>7,8</sup>

Multiple studies have shown that individuals of various ages, genders, races, and demographics have experienced mental benefits from a variety of intervention styles, durations, and frequencies. One study's results have shown two significant outcomes.<sup>9</sup> First, the standardized mean-difference in depression scores shows a decrease when comparing the control group to those who used Qigong. Second, the quality score increased the focus, clarity, and retention of information, even with the various distractions that the individuals were given. These Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs) were repeated in over 30 studies involving 2,328 participants. Results of this study were found to be robust in sensitivity analyses.<sup>10</sup>

In 2012, 17 heterogeneous studies were conducted that deal with the efficacy of psychotherapy and psychosocial interventions by using Qigong to help reduce burnout. These studies compare burn-



out treatment with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), stress management training, roots of *Rhodiola rosea*, physiotherapy, Qigong, and music. Qigong proved to be beneficial as a method that could be practiced and repeated multiple times, in many locations, with lasting effects. It is important to note that Qigong is not an overall cure; rather, it is a tool that can help one manage, cope, and reduce burn-out.<sup>11</sup>

## WHY SHOULD PERCUSSIONISTS USE QIGONG?

Qigong is recommended in Jon Gorrie's book *Performing in the Zone*. The use of Qigong helps a performer access "a mind state where everything clicks, everything is easy, where your actions are effortless, and when your results are up to, or even exceed, your previous expectations."<sup>12</sup> Gorrie recommends the implementation of Qigong to calm the mind and body, and to obtain low levels of positive performance arousal.

One study explored Qigong's effects on those who experience public speaking anxiety. A fear of public speaking is a common experience that many people share.<sup>13</sup> This anxiety interferes with speech quality and can negatively influence the speaker and listener. While effective public speaking skills can be learned, speech anxiety can be founded on biological factors alone. In this study, 24 participants completed a 12-week maintenance program at Kaiser Permanente Northwest Health Education Department and demonstrated that those practicing Qigong saw an improvement in focus, lowered heart rate, and the use of fewer filler words when speaking in public.<sup>14</sup> This is ideal for performers requiring fine control of their motor skills.

Percussionists face many of the same struggles as athletes and other performing artists. This includes overuse injuries, tension, carpal tunnel syndrome, and simple daily activities. Overuse injuries are also called soft-tissue injuries. They occur when soft tissues — ligaments, ten-

dons, cartilage, and muscles — become damaged. Soft tissues have biomechanical characteristics that help to determine their vulnerability to injury, phases of healing, varying prescribed exercises for each healing stage, and how to minimize a risk or injury.<sup>15</sup>

Two common risk factors contribute to overuse injuries, either alone or in combination: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic risk factors are biomechanical characteristics unique to each person, including malalignment, muscle imbalance, inflexibility, hypermobility, muscle weakness, instability, and excess weight. Extrinsic risk factors include training errors (excessive or repeated forces), equipment, environment, and technique. Outside factors that may contribute to an injury include changes in duration, intensity, frequency of activity (too much or too little), or too little rest. Overuse injuries are likely to happen during transitions from preseason to competition, aggressive preparation for recitals, heavy performance seasons, change of technique, or sometimes with the simplest of physical changes, such as a new pair of shoes.<sup>16</sup>

The three most common overuse injuries in percussionists are in the primary muscles used in flexing the wrist: tennis elbow, golfer's elbow, and carpal tunnel syndrome. Tennis elbow and golfer's elbow occurs from gripping or squeezing something in the hand with repetitive elbow, wrist, or finger movements. These injuries can be caused by day-to-day activities such as typing on a keyboard, playing piano or percussion, playing sports, and even exercise.

Percussionists are prone to injuries like tennis elbow, golfer's elbow, or carpal tunnel syndrome for several reasons. Extended periods of unnecessary tension and exhaustion to the muscles, such as practicing for long periods, make the body more susceptible to overuse injuries. Extended practice sessions usually coincide with decreased recovery time for the muscles to rest and repair. Percussionists should apply a consistent routine to aid in injury prevention, such as Qigong. Daily

warmups and cool-downs can help percussionists check in with their bodies and address technique issues. Below are Qigong exercises specific to the arms, hands, and fingers to benefit percussionists.

## QIGONG STRETCHES AND EXERCISES

Stand on a flat surface with good posture. Imagine a string pulling you straight from your toes through the top of your head. Put your hands on your belly button. Start with your feet together, open them up at a 45° angle, and then straighten them out with your toes facing forward. This puts your feet at "hip distance." Keep this position through all of the exercises.

Keep your knees slightly bent and remember to breathe throughout the exercises. As you breathe, fill your breath from the center of your belly button, keeping at a steady pace. Gather your breath, inhale while bringing your hands above your head, and exhale while bringing your hands back to your belly button. Repeat two more times

For the next set of stretches, do as many repetitions as you feel necessary to stretch:

1. Head rolls: alternate rolling the head clockwise and counterclockwise.
2. Single shoulder rolls: roll each shoulder forward and then backward, alternating left and right.
3. Shoulder rolls: both shoulders forward and then backward.
4. Wrist rotations: alternate clockwise and counterclockwise.
5. Forearm rotations: at the elbow, alternate clockwise and counterclockwise.
6. Entire arm circles: alternate clockwise and counterclockwise.
7. Tap the thymus: (the central area right underneath your collarbone) with your right hand closed with fingertips at your wrist. Tap lightly across the thymus from the right back to the left.
8. Hip rotations: draw a circle with your hips, alternating clockwise and counterclockwise.
9. Proceed to Heart to Hand Qigong.

# Qigong has proven to reduce injury and improve focus for athletes, performing artists, and public speakers.

## Heart to Hand Qigong

Stand or sit with the spine straight and the feet facing forward. Relax and breathe deeply and calmly; keep the body relaxed and the hands loose. These movements can be performed as needed but are suggested to repeat 15–20 times. Remember that it is important to listen to your body and its needs. Feel free to return to a specific exercise if that part of your body needs more attention.

1. Top Chopping: Keeping your hands palm down, hold your hands about chest height and fully extended from the body. Let your hands be fully relaxed, and gently strike your hands together repeatedly. The hands should connect horizontally just above the thumb.

*Top Chopping*



2. Bottom Chopping: Keeping your hands palm up, hold your hands about chest height, and fully extended from the body. Let your hands be fully relaxed, and gently strike your hands together. The hands should connect horizontally between the pinky knuckle and wrist.

*Bottom Chopping*



3. Wrist Tapping: While keeping your hands in loose fists, face your hands toward each other, and tap the heels of your hands against each other.

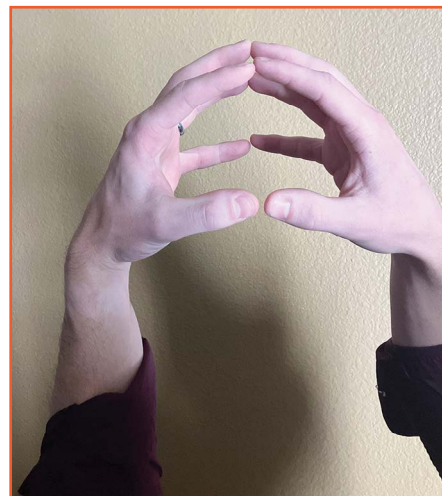
*Wrist Tapping*



4. Fingertip Tapping: Keep your fingers arched as if you are grabbing a basketball. Face your palms inward towards each other and tap all your fingers and

thumbs from one hand to the other. All fingertips from one hand should touch the other at the same time.

*Fingertip Tapping*



5. Back Hand Tapping: With the palm of your left hand facing the ground, have the palm of your right hand face the ceiling and gently tap the back of your hands against each other. Switch hands and repeat.

*Back Hand Tapping*



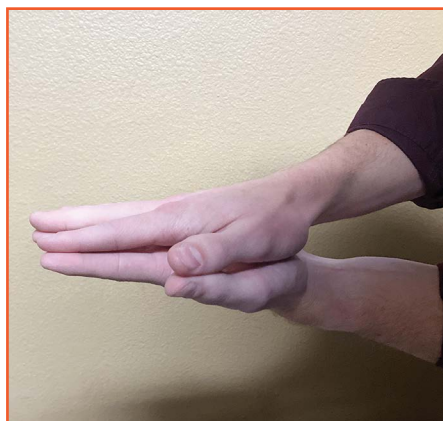
6. Clapping: Put your hands together with your fingers and palms touching the same spot on your other hand. Spread your fingers apart and keep them

loose. As you clap, the inside of one hand should touch the same part of your other hand (on the inside).

*Hand Clapping (top view)*

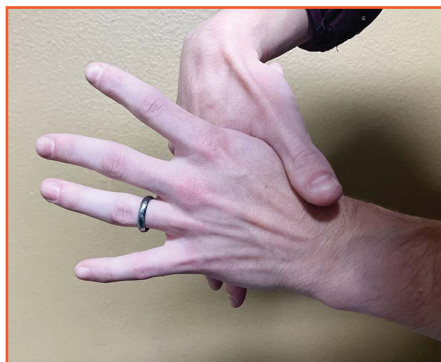
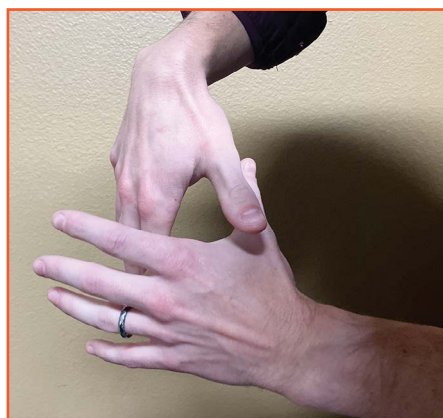


*Hand Clapping (side view)*



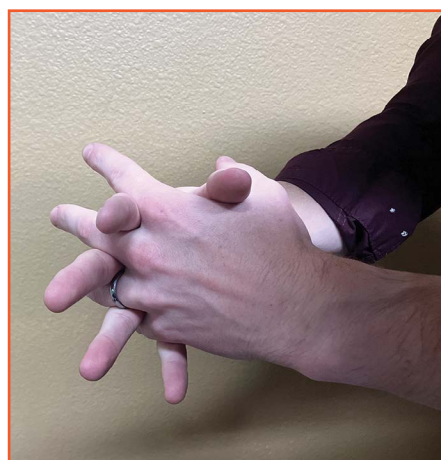
**7. Thumb Web Chopping:** Hold your right hand in front of you; keep it relaxed and stationary. With your left hand, tap the webbing between your thumb and pointer finger against the webbing between your thumb and pointer finger on your right hand. Then switch hands and repeat.

*Thumb Web Chopping*



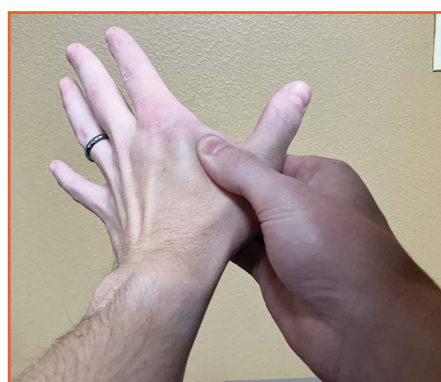
**8. Finger Web Chopping:** Spread the fingers of both of your hands. Tap the webbing between your fingers (not thumbs) and tap them against the webbing of the other hand.

*Finger Web Chopping*



**9. Massage Thumb Webbing:** Pinch the webbing of your right hand (between the thumb and pointer finger) with your left thumb and pointer finger. Massage the webbing, working from outward. Switch hands and repeat.

*Massage Thumb Webbing*



**10. Palm Stretch:** Massage the center of the right palm with the left thumb, then switch hands and repeat.

*Palm Stretch*



**11. Tendon Tracing:** Trace the tendons on your finger. Start at the palm and stretch from the heel to the tip of each finger, starting with the pinky finger and going to the thumb. Do this five times, then switch hands and repeat.

*Tendon Tracing (heel to fingertip)*



*Tendon Tracing (fingertip back to heel)*



**12. Back of Hand Tracing:** With the right hand supporting the left, have your right thumb trace the front knuckle on

top of the hand to the wrist and then back to the knuckle. Reach the knuckle three times, then switch hands and repeat.

Back of Hand Tracing (from knuckle to wrist)

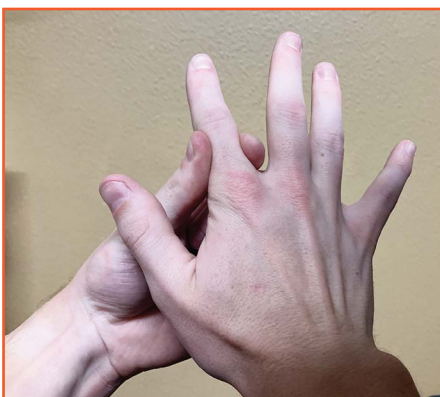


Back of Hand Tracing (from wrist to knuckle)



13. Finger Massage : Massage the sides of each finger on your right hand with the thumb and finger of your left. Start with the webbing and work toward the tip of each finger. Next, massage the top and bottom of each finger. Massage each finger five times, then switch hands and repeat.

Finger Massage (sides of fingers)



Finger Massage (top and bottom of fingers)



## CONCLUSION

Being a percussionist is physically and mentally demanding. Percussionists should warm-up, cool-down, cross train, and apply proper maintenance to be at their best (just like athletes). Qigong is an effective technique that can easily be applied to each of the aforementioned tasks. Consistently implementing quick and simple options, such as Qigong, can go a long way toward improving your physical and mental health.

*The implementation of Qigong or info in this article is not meant to replace any information from a licensed medical professional.*

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# Preventing Injury at the Height of Technical Demand

By Matthew Kilby

**Y**oung student percussionists are developing technically at exponential rates. As the demand for percussionists increases with rapidly evolving repertoire and teaching advancements, some high school students and even some middle school students have developed the technical facility of college and graduate students from the generation before. As a result, students experience more difficult four-mallet marimba literature, unforgiving playing surfaces, and more lengthy rehearsals than ever. Education costs have also created financial pressure for students to meet heightened technical expectations quickly. This pressure can manifest in unhealthy physical and mental habits, such as taking on difficult material too soon, practicing without breaks, practicing through pain, and practicing without warming up.

Overuse, strain, or injury may cause playing-related musculoskeletal disorders (PRMDs). These disorders can range from minor aches and pains to more severe injuries that can interfere with a percussionist's ability to play. In one study, two-thirds of percussionists reported musculoskeletal pain, most commonly in the form of tenosynovitis and arthritis in bilateral hands and wrists.<sup>1</sup> Percussionists report the highest incidence of pain compared to other musicians (31%),<sup>2</sup> with a 1994 study showing that percussionists

as 6.4 times more likely to experience PRMDs than other instrumentalists.<sup>3</sup>

Researchers have conducted several studies that can give insight into conditions that are the highest risk for PRMDs. For example, using data from an experiment conducted with a drumstick and accelerometer inside a glove, researchers determined that exposure to vibration can cause carpal tunnel syndrome, tingling or numbness in the fingers, fingers changing color, and loss of dexterity.<sup>4</sup> In addition, percussionists may be particularly vulnerable to intersection syndrome, an otherwise uncommon wrist tendonitis caused by impingement.<sup>5</sup> This impingement occurs where tendons controlling wrist and thumb movements intersect at the forearm.

Keyboard percussionists have a reportedly higher prevalence (89%) of PRMDs than other percussionists, with bilateral hand and lower back disorders most common.<sup>6</sup> Playing on a harder striking surface in a standing position may have led to higher reported pain in the thoracic back, low back, and neck and shoulder regions than the elbow region.<sup>7</sup>

## THE HIDDEN MENTAL HEALTH THREAT TO PHYSICAL INJURY

Musculoskeletal disorders can significantly impact a percussionist's mental health. The pain and discomfort associated with these injuries can be physical-

ly and emotionally draining. In addition, the inability to play or perform at one's desired level due to an injury can be frustrating and demoralizing. Several general instrumental studies have found that performance anxiety, along with female gender and high body-mass index, are predictors of PRMDs.<sup>8</sup> Female keyboard percussionists with performance anxiety may have an exceptionally high risk. Additionally, although women report higher pain, men report higher anxiety due to experiencing pain.<sup>9</sup> Losing a connection to performing because of injury can lead to sadness, loneliness, and depression.

Teachers and performers may wish to consider specific ways musculoskeletal disorders can affect the mental health of injured percussionists

**Stress and anxiety:** Physical pain and discomfort can cause stress and anxiety, particularly if the injury is severe or long-lasting. Uncertainty surrounding when or if an injury will heal can also contribute to these feelings.

**Depression:** The inability to play or perform at one's desired level due to an injury can lead to hopelessness and sadness.

**Loss of identity:** For many percussionists, playing an instrument is integral to their identity. An injury that prevents them from playing can lead to a sense of loss and a feeling of disconnection from their passion and purpose.

## In addition to physical warm-up exercises, it's also beneficial for percussionists to mentally prepare for playing.

**Social isolation:** Musculoskeletal disorders can also lead to social isolation, as the pain and discomfort may make it difficult for the percussionist to participate in rehearsals, performances, and other social activities with other musicians. Because community-building is integral to performing music, losing a sense of community can be overwhelming.

Injured percussionists need support from friends, family, and healthcare professionals to help cope with a musculoskeletal disorder's physical and emotional challenges. Teachers should strive to be lenient and accepting of students experiencing pain and should be aware that their support can also alleviate mental health challenges. Students may hide discomfort for fear of falling behind, but quicker attention to an injury can lead to more effective and expedient rehabilitation. While the negative consequences of an injury can be daunting, there are many great preventative methods, treatment, and rehabilitation strategies for those suffering from injury.

### CREATING HEALTHY HABITS

**Encourage good posture and technique:** Proper posture and technique can help prevent injuries by reducing strain on the muscles and joints. Encourage young percussionists to pay attention to their posture and technique while playing, and make adjustments as needed. Playing without tension is crucial for quality of sound but also for the performer's well-being.

**Warm up with stretching:** Before rehearsals, percussionists should spend a few minutes stretching the muscles most commonly used to play their instruments. An effective routine may include wrist, forearm, shoulder, and upper-back stretches.

Stretching can be a form of meditation

in the sense that it can help to calm the mind and improve focus and concentration. Stretching can also provide a sense of relaxation and mindfulness, as it requires one to be present in the moment and focus on the stretch's physical sensations. Meditation involves focusing the mind on a specific object, thought, or activity to improve mental clarity and calmness. It can be practiced in various ways, including through mindfulness techniques such as breathing exercises, body scans, and visualization.

While stretching does not involve the same type of focused concentration as traditional meditation practices, it can still provide many of the same benefits. Stretching can help to reduce stress and tension, improve mental clarity, and increase feelings of relaxation and well-being.

**Incorporate strengthening exercises:** As young percussionists become more comfortable with certain movements, gradually increase the difficulty to continue building strength. Increasing difficulty could involve adding more repetitions or incorporating more challenging techniques. Be careful to break down hand motions for advanced techniques slowly and individually, so students have enough foundational knowledge of physical systems at work in their technique to build healthy habits.

**Mental Preparation:** In addition to physical warm-up exercises, it's also beneficial for percussionists to mentally prepare for playing. Mental preparation can include setting goals for the practice or performance, visualizing the music, and focusing on technique. Mental preparation can help to reduce anxiety and stress, which can further reduce the risk of musculoskeletal disorders by removing incentives for over-practicing or skipping breaks.

### HABITS TO AVOID

**Practicing for long periods without taking breaks:** Prolonged periods of practice can strain the muscles and joints, leading to overuse injuries. Taking breaks and giving the body time to rest and recover is important.

**Practicing with poor posture:** Poor posture can cause strain on the muscles and joints, leading to injuries. Maintaining a good posture while practicing is essential, with the shoulders relaxed and the spine straight.

**Practicing with improper technique:** Using improper technique can put unnecessary strain on the muscles and joints, leading to injuries. It is important to focus on proper technique while practicing and to seek guidance from a teacher or mentor if needed.

**Practicing while tired or in pain:** This can lead to further injury or worsening of existing injuries. It is imperative to listen to the body and take breaks as needed.

**Practicing without warming up:** Proper warm-ups prepare the body and mind for the physical demands of practice. Skipping a warm-up can increase the risk of injury.

### MOVING FORWARD

In typical high school programs, students often warm up with exercises to train specific musical skills rather than a proper physical warm-up. This type of physical warm-up can be the first aspect of rehearsal to be cut during a time crunch, but injury is a dire consequence for individual students, programs, and teachers. As the expectations for young percussionists continue to increase, teachers should be careful to invest in a proper warm-up and keep technical drills from superseding calisthenic purposes. A warm-up should gradually increase blood flow and flexibility, making the

body more prepared to handle the demands of performing.

Being self-reflective about the risk for PRMDs in rehearsals can help teachers make decisions that prioritize their student's physical well-being and longevity.

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# Kelsey Lee: Dealing with Clinical Depression

By Rick Mattingly

**P**rior to a gig, percussionist Kelsey Lee sometimes is in the midst of a clinical depression episode or a panic attack. “There have been times on the way to a performance when I’ve been in my car, on the phone with a close friend or family member, and I am bawling my eyes out,” she says. “But when the show begins, I have to morph into a different person and go out and project a fun vibe that convinces everyone that I have my entire life together, everything is absolutely amazing, it’s party central, and I’m here to pump you all up. That’s gotten easier throughout the years, but it’s not a healthy thing to do. We call it masking. It’s like when people ask, ‘How are you?’ and I say, ‘I’m doing fine!’ It’s the fast, easy answer. You don’t have to go into anything, and often, people who have depression or anxiety would rather not talk about it. So they just say, ‘I’m great!’ It’s like a pretend world just for a little bit.”

Despite what she is projecting externally during a show, Kelsey can still be in the throes of depression. “Sometimes that depression will last an entire performance,” she says, “and my mood drops as soon as I’m back in the car and it’s quiet. But there are a lot of times – I would say more often than not – that maybe by the second or third song, I can finally get out of my head and release whatever I was feeling right before the concert, and I feel that playing the concert was like a huge therapy session. It’s not that the depression magically disappears whenever I play music; it’s still there. But there are easier times and harder times, and the music can help make it easier.”

Everyone gets depressed now and then, but usually there is a specific reason – they lost their job, a relationship ended, someone close to them died, they have been diagnosed with a disease, or so on. Generally, the depression only lasts until whatever caused it is resolved. But for those suffering from clinical depression, there is often no obvious reason for the negative feelings, which can go on for years.

“You could be in the most magical place where everything you want is at your fingertips,” Kelsey explains, “and without

warning, you suddenly feel like you weigh 6,000 pounds and you can’t get out of bed or even move, there is nothing you can do for this world, it’s not going to get better, and there is no hope. It just comes out of nowhere. Sometimes you wake up to these negative voices and feelings, but it can happen at various and odd times, and you have no control over it. It’s very frustrating when someone asks you ‘What’s wrong?’ and the answer is, I don’t know; nothing is wrong; my brain is just telling me that I suck and I don’t need to be here.”

## MUSICAL BACKGROUND

Kelsey became a percussionist while in elementary school as a member of the Fabulous Leopard Percussionists (now the



PHOTO BY LONNIE TURNER

# I could go behind a drum set or a marimba and dive into a world where I could create something that expressed how I was feeling.

Louisville Leopard Percussionists), with whom she performed at PASIC '98 in Orlando as well as at other music conventions and conferences. During her years in the Leopards, the group performed with such musicians as Victor Mendoza, Louie Bellson, and Ndugu Chancler. In middle school she played in the school band and the jazz band. She then attended high school at Louisville's Youth Performing Arts School (YPAS). "That's like a college program in high school because you are dealing with music all day, every day," she explains. "There was concert band, percussion ensemble, wind ensemble, and musicals to play in." The YPAS percussion ensemble performed at PASIC 2004 in Nashville and the 2007 Bands of America competition in Indianapolis.

She started college at the University of Louisville, where she joined the pep band, and she also started teaching the Leopards. After two years at U of L she transferred to Indiana University Southeast and got a degree in Elementary Education. She began teaching elementary school and serving as assistant director for the Louisville Leopards, co-leading the beginner, advanced, lite, steel, and middle-school groups.

She also started playing in various bands on drum set and/or percussion, and taking Latin percussion lessons from Ruben Alvarez in Chicago. One night in 2013, at a "girl's pizza jam night," a couple of her friends pulled out their violin and guitar. Kelsey didn't have drums with her, so she grabbed some spoons and a cheese grater, which she played like a washboard. That jam led to the formation of the Southern Sirens, who quickly became very successful. Along with gigs in and around Louisville, they appeared on ABC-TV's *Rising Star* and opened the 2014 Humanitarian Awards, performing with cellist Michael Fitzpatrick and C.J. Vanston. They have opened shows for Bruno Mars, The Temptations, Gaelic Storm, and Carlene Carter, and performed in Utah, Wyoming, Colorado, Arkansas, Tennessee, Canada, Georgia, Florida, and Illinois.

"That's when my music career really took off," Kelsey says. "I decided to stop teaching elementary school and be a full-time musician, while still teaching the Leopards and private students." The Southern Sirens are still active, and Kelsey also plays occasional gigs with other Louisville-area bands.

## DEPRESSION

When Kelsey was in middle school, she started experiencing anxiety that she couldn't control and that didn't seem to be the same kind of anxiety any of her friends sometimes had. "No one talked about mental health or depression in those days," she says, and when I tried to talk about it, nobody really understood

what I was talking about. In high school, it was a big part of my life, and it was really hard. I wanted to start doing unhealthy things to my body to just kind of feel stuff."

At age 15 she started therapy. "Of course, they want to make you talk, but I was not great at expressing my feelings through words. I was put on medication, but that only solves one part of it. You have to change other parts of your life, too, and things like diet, exercise, meditation, holistic medicines, yoga, trauma yoga, meeting with a psychologist or psychiatrist, Reiki, group meetings, and so on can also help.

"Being an educator," she says, "I understand that each child is completely different. They learn differently; they express things differently. So whenever I did not know how to explain what was going on in my mind and get the words out, I could go behind a drum set or a marimba and dive into a world where I could create something that expressed how I was feeling. It was bringing out those emotions that I could not verbally explain. People don't understand until they get behind a drum; you don't even have to know what you are doing. There is something — I don't know if it boosts the serotonin or what — but it releases something that I'm not able to release verbally."

During her school years, Kelsey felt that she had to hide her depression and anxiety. "I felt that if my friends ever saw the dark, sad side of me, they would not want to be my friends," she says. "So there was that added pressure building up to hide that part of myself. I would hide it, hide it, hide it, and it would build up to where the balloon would just burst and I would be in bed all day, crying, not moving. I started thinking the lives of people around me would be easier without having to deal with my problems, my phone calls, and my episodes. It's the lies your brain thinks up, and it seems like suicide is the best option. If you are not brave enough to reach out, then it can be impossible to handle."

Kelsey says she came very close to making a life-ending decision. "That was a super triggering time," she says, "and ever since I survived that, I promised myself that would never, ever happen again. I have made it a mission in my life to make sure that people learn about mental health and where these dark thoughts can take people when their brain is lying to them and telling them that the lives of everyone around them would be easier if they were not there. It's very difficult to explain because it sounds so bizarre. I hope that my being a lot more open about it helps other people feel they don't have to suppress it or hide it."

To that end, Kelsey has gone public with her struggles, talking about her depression on social media. "After being vulnerable and posting on Facebook about my depression, I've had people

say, 'Oh, you just want attention,' or 'You have nothing to be sad about; everything is perfect in your life,' or 'This is just a phase.'" She says that bothered her at first, but then she started hearing from people who were grateful that she had posted about her depression. "I feel like I'm helping more people than those who are attacking me," she says. "They've asked for programs, they've asked for tips and tricks that I've used for panic attacks, they've asked for books. People have also messaged me telling me their stories and struggles, maybe for the first time ever, and saying we aren't alone in this, and I've received encouraging messages from people who appreciate that they are finally learning about mental health. A lot of people don't want to talk about it. But I want to be that person who *does* talk about it."

## COPING

Kelsey still suffers from depression and anxiety, but in some cases she is able to reduce the severity of the attacks. "Over the years I've learned that it's kind of like a train," she explains. "I used to not be able to change my train to a different track until it was too far gone. You never know how deep and dark these episodes are going to go. But when the depression is attacking and you can tell there are going to be panic attacks, if you can start to recognize those triggers and figure out the small things that will help you avoid the panic attack and the long depression and deal with it ahead of time, you can really shorten those episodes."

She says that, over the years, she has learned that the company she keeps and the environments she is in can have a positive or negative effect on the frequency of her episodes. "I've stepped away from certain work, life, and social environments, realizing that those were the very things triggering so many attacks. I've learned which people I need to go to for specific needs or types of attacks. Sometimes it's panic, sometimes it's fear, sometimes it's over nothing at all, and everyone reacts differently to someone who is in crisis mode, so you need to know who can help with a specific type of attack and be a calming source."

"Reaching out and getting professional help is the best thing you can do," she says. "It's extremely important to be honest with yourself first and foremost about how you're feeling, and then make sure you're being honest with doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, and loved ones, because you're the only one who knows how you feel, and you're the only one who can truly help

bring yourself out of these mood swings and attacks. We truly feel alone in these moments, but we have to remember we are not alone and life is totally worth living."

## HELPING

What can other people do to help someone who is fighting depression — and are there things they should not do? "The big no-no," Kelsey says, "is saying 'I understand.' Unless you suffer from clinical depression yourself, don't ever tell a depressed person that you understand. No, you don't understand these dark thoughts that are going on in a depressed person's mind. For example, if someone compliments a shirt I'm wearing, my brain immediately starts to think, 'Something is wrong with my X, Y, Z because they only said something nice about my shirt.' Then my brain starts going from something being wrong with X, Y, Z to me sucking at my entire life, how much I'm behind in everything I'm doing, and that I'm not doing enough to change this world into a better place."

"Something that really helps is just sitting there — just listening. Some depressed people are huggers. Sometimes they just want someone to sit with. Having someone be there with you through this uncomfortableness you are experiencing means the world, because you don't know how long these episodes are going to last. It helps if you can talk about these things that are going on in your mind and have someone there who is counteracting those thoughts by saying, 'No, that's not the truth. That's the depression side of your brain talking.'"

"Just sitting and listening is the biggest, biggest help," Kelsey insists. "Try to make specific connections rather than general statements, like, 'Everything's going to be okay,' or 'People don't want you to disappear.' Whatever makes that person unique, try to show them that light that's inside of them. That's what they need to know, because they are having trouble finding the love for themselves in that moment. They need to be told that they are everything that their brain is telling them they are not."

*Kelsey Lee is happy to communicate with others who are suffering from clinical depression or want to know more about mental health. You can contact her through her website: [www.kelsey-leedrums.com](http://www.kelsey-leedrums.com). PN*

# Health Tips for University Students

Compiled by the PAS University Student Committee

Collegiate percussionists can often find themselves stretched thin, with the very real demands such as needing to accompany on a jazz recital, play timpani in a wind ensemble, and perform in a masterclass – sometimes all in one week! As all this can be a fun, satisfying, and educational experience, it can easily take a negative toll on a students' physical and even mental health. The PAS University Student Committee has compiled some relevant information about physical health, mental health, and strategies to help our fellow collegiate percussionists find their school-life balance and manage each task that comes your way during your education.

## ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE

Alexander Technique is a study regarding how the human body moves like the other types of "Somatic Studies" you will read about in this article. It has been described as the "user manual we should have gotten when we were children" on how to use our body in the most efficient and pain-free way, as developed by the technique's founder, F.M. Alexander. Alexander was an orator in the late 19th/early 20th century and was compelled to develop a remedy for his own vocal issues.

A large part of Alexander Technique's appeal in arts education is due to a reviv-

al of its teaching pedagogy in the 1950s, starting at the Royal College of Music and following at the Juilliard School in the 1960s.<sup>1</sup> With continuous research coming to light about the technique's physical benefits, and even therapeutic effects with Parkinson's patients,<sup>2</sup> this study, which may be offered at your university, is of great interest to percussionists, pianists, violinists, and any musician who generates sound through movement.

## FELDENKRAIS METHOD

The Feldenkrais Method is a way to explore motion and movement through kinesthesia and deep, meditative, focused movements. Developed by Mosh Feldenkrais, this technique achieves similar results as the somatic studies on this list: ease of movement and pain relief. Feldenkrais differs from the Alexander Technique in the way it's taught. Students are taught to focus on breathing and movement, with the aim of bringing mindfulness to these everyday activities and thus adopting new habits.<sup>3</sup>

## EXERCISE FOR MUSICIANS

As musicians, we often find ourselves in stressful situations, which can easily show in our playing if we're not careful. Stress can manifest itself in physical ways beyond those of which we are aware. Thoughtful exercise can be used to prevent and mitigate those maladaptive

effects. Many musicians run, some lift weights, and some practice Yoga. What is most important is that musicians who exercise their body often see bonuses besides their mile time or the size of their muscles. Many people notice cognitive, emotional, and even spiritual gains after being physically active.

What is most important at the end of the day is life balance; whether you believe in it or not, your body will know and feel the difference.

## ESTABLISHING A ROUTINE

Developing and maintaining a new routine can certainly be a daunting task at first. Fortunately, there are a plethora of resources and guides that can help make creating and maintaining an effective routine easier!

- When it comes to establishing a routine, planning is one the most important aspects. Writing down what you would like to accomplish beforehand can help solidify what you want to accomplish and make it far easier to track your progress.

- Break up your large goals into small, achievable steps. This will make it far easier to slot your goals into a daily routine, and make huge leaps in progress into smaller, manageable steps.

- Be consistent with the timing of your routine. If you want to get up earlier in the morning, try to wake up at the same

time every day for a week or two. You will gradually become used to performing certain actions at certain times of the day. Consider writing out a schedule using block scheduling as well, which means that you will dedicate a certain amount of time to a predetermined task during that time.<sup>4</sup>

You can also consider writing declaration statements, such as “I will perform X task on Y day, at Z time.”<sup>5</sup> Doing this will make events that you must hold yourself accountable for easier to commit to, since you have determined exactly when you will perform the task, making it harder to wriggle out of.

- Tell people close to you about your plans, and have them hold you accountable. Having one or more people who can check you on your progress and support you along the way makes it far easier to commit to a new habit. Even better if you can find a buddy who is also looking to start a routine, and you can be each other’s critics and support group!<sup>6</sup>

- Track your progress, and frequently reflect on how you are doing. At the end of each week, look over all that you have done and try to find things that went very well, and things that did not. Perhaps you excelled at eating a healthier breakfast each morning, but were too burnt out at the end of the day to get to the 30 minutes of timpani practice you had scheduled each night. You can use the information from your weekly performance to help

you optimize your scheduling and notice weak points that you can work on.

- Reward yourself for making legitimate progress towards your goals. Preferably, a reward should not be a detriment to the overall goal, but rewarding yourself when you have been successful in working towards the routine you want will make it easier to continue to push forward.

## MENTAL HEALTH

People around music are statistically happier, as per the physiological effects it has on the human brain. Musicians who are in the field, however, may be susceptible to the exact opposite outcome. The daily amount of stress that a musician can undergo spans from reasons like a lack of financial security and career stability, repeated competitive evaluations, and performance-related demands.<sup>7</sup>

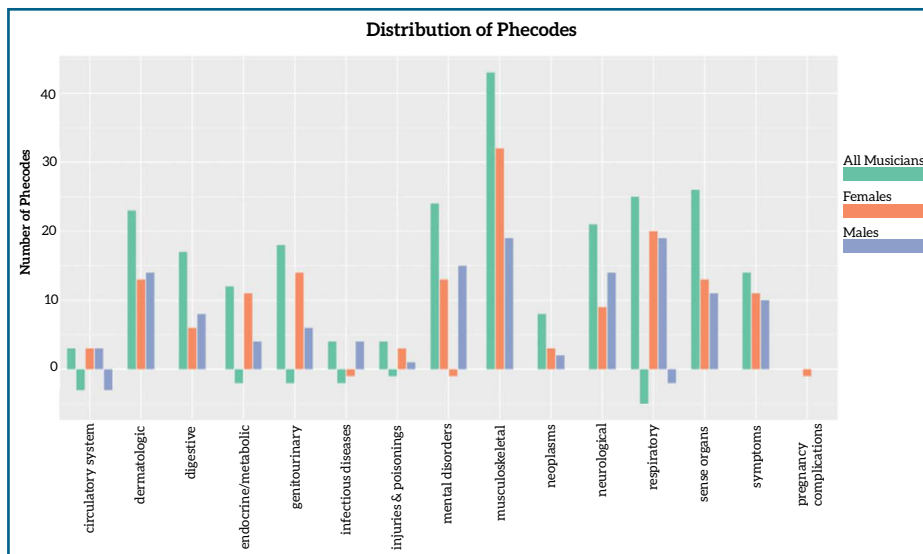
The accompanying graph from Maria Niarchou<sup>8</sup> shows the genetic probability of 9,803 musicians to develop a type of disease or disorder in the field. Combining the data from neurological and mental disorders show that health issues falling under the umbrella of “mental health” are the most prevalent health issues a musician can face. To help combat these issues, there are programs to help musicians with mental health. Musicares,<sup>9</sup> an organization for musicians in the music industry with more of a mainstream musician focus, has avenues for Mental Health

and Addiction Services. Along with this, there are a plethora of other avenues for industry musicians; however, student musicians are long forgotten. If you’re a university student in the United Kingdom or United States most of them offer some type of on-campus help.

*Experiencing a crisis? Text “HOME” to 741741, 24/7 to talk to a professional for free.*

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The PAS University Student Committee enables the next generation of percussion leaders to develop professional skills while contributing to the future growth of PAS.

# General Anxiety and Depression in Music

By Shane Jones

**A**lthough the music community has lots of discussions and dissemination about performance anxiety, this label can be misconstrued and oversimplified. Often, performance anxiety is thought of as getting nervous for a recital or a concert, and while this is one aspect of performance anxiety, it can also exist in several other settings. The American Psychological Association defines performance anxiety as the apprehension and fear of the consequences of being unable to perform a task.<sup>1</sup> Rehearsals, private lessons, classes, and even personal practice sessions are also catalysts for anxiety, both in the moment and for days, weeks, or months leading up to an event.

While many musicians can handle the pressure of a singular performance, presentation, lesson, or class, when these become recurring events in one's daily life, small anxieties can build over months and years to become significant. The long-term cumulation of anxieties in everyday events is what I am referring to as "general anxiety" in music and is the focus of this article. Since anxieties can often lead to or co-exist with depression, and these symptoms have significant overlap, I will address general anxiety and depression together.

## MY OWN ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

I will start by telling a brief personal story about general anxiety and depression in music. I was the stereotypical, hardworking musician from high school, through college, and into my professional career. As a college student, I was taking 18+ credits each semester, double majoring in performance and music business, with excellent grades in all classes. I participated in as many ensembles as I possibly could, taught private lessons, and gigged on the side.

These habits carried into my professional career. I worked as a college teacher 50+ hours per week. When I went home, I immediately opened my laptop and continued working during evenings, weekends, and holidays, rarely taking any time off. Concurrently, I toured, gigged, recorded, and published, as a college teacher is expected to do. I was happy and was finding success. Because I was doing something that I loved, I justified working 24/7 because it felt expected and normal for a professional musician.

On October 31, 2017, I was in a typical faculty meeting, having discussions about basic scheduling and events. I started to feel my heart rate rise with shots of adrenaline coursing through my veins. I was breathing hard and feeling anxious for no apparent reason. About five min-

utes later, I experienced a huge drop. I felt dizzy and lightheaded like I was going to pass out. Then the adrenaline started again. The cycle repeated every 5-10 minutes for the length of the hour-long meeting, but I was too embarrassed to say anything or to leave the meeting early.

Once we finished, I immediately went to the doctor and found out I had my first (and only, to this day) panic attack. That day was a wakeup call that I needed to prioritize my mental health and work/life balance. Since then, I have been on a journey of therapy, exercise, medication, and self-discovery about anxiety, depression, and mental health, both in my personal and professional life.

## GENERAL ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION IN MUSIC

In being very open about my journey, I have discovered how common my experience is amongst friends and colleagues in music. First and foremost, there is a major lack of quality communication in music-performance settings. The feeling of "If I make one mistake, I will never get called for a gig again," whether true or not, is an all too common sentiment in the music profession. Additionally, in a professional setting, those in charge do not often have a conversation with you about what you're doing well or need to improve on. If you sound good, you get

# Being critical in every aspect of one's musical life trains the brain to "fault-find" in all aspects of life.

called back for another gig. This means that even if you did a good job, you wait anxiously for another gig offer to confirm that you did something well enough to continue your career.

This creates significant underlying anxiety for many musicians. A logical solution to these anxieties is to establish a better culture of communication, so if someone does well, they know, and if someone needs to make improvements, expectations are clearly communicated. The unspoken nature of our careers lead to significant anxiety and depression.

In addition to these systemic communication problems in our field, we also do not establish a healthy balance between positive reinforcement and critical thinking with ourselves and others. By nature, musicians are extremely critical of themselves and others in nearly all of our daily events: practice sessions, private lessons, private teaching, rehearsals, performances, recordings, classes, etc. We justify this critique with the assertion that we are bettering ourselves through self-reflection. Phrases like "That wasn't clean enough" or "That rhythm rushed" are common daily assessments. Being critical in every aspect of one's musical life trains the brain to "fault-find" in all aspects of life without even recognizing it.

The music field is designed in a way that encourages musicians to hyper-strengthen the aspects of their brain that control critical thought with the desire to better oneself in all aspects of their career. However, without proper balance of all this critique, general anxiety and depression can become prominent and problematic in all aspects of one's life. It is my hope that by sharing this information, we can destigmatize conversations surrounding mental health in our profession. With heightened awareness of triggers, we can learn coping mechanisms before anxiety

leads to panic attacks or other significant health crises

## MENTAL HEALTH AND THERAPY

Balance and awareness of mental health were obviously missing in my situation. In order to stay balanced in work and life, we must have awareness of our mental health, but what is mental health? According to the Center for Disease Control, mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act.<sup>2</sup> Like physical health, mental health should be maintained regularly and not just addressed when a problem arises. For example, we should not wait to eat fruits and vegetables until we have a blocked artery; instead we want to be frequently monitoring our diet and eating healthy throughout our life. Likewise, we want to have knowledge and awareness of mental health at all times, not just when we have a panic attack. For me, therapy was the primary solution to this problem.

For most of my younger life, I was averse to therapy or counseling, falling into the stigma of movies and TV shows that therapy would involve me lying on a sofa talking about my past, or the idea that going to therapy was admitting that you have a mental illness and was a sign of weakness. Once I finally started working with a therapist, I found neither of these to be true.

First, it is important to find a therapist who makes you feel confident and comfortable, you feel confident in, and who you work well with. I was fortunate to find a very compatible therapist on my second try. My first therapist was not a good fit, likely because it was exclusively online during COVID, and that was not a good format for me.

Second, I found my therapy sessions to

be less about talking about my feelings, but more like a private lesson on mental health in general, using my personal experiences as examples and case studies. At each therapy session, I would come in with examples of anxiety-provoking situations from the past couple of weeks, we would examine them, and then learn specific tools and strategies to find balance. These strategies were researched, proven-methods based in science. I would leave the session with an actionable plan to practice and implement in my daily routine, and we would follow up in the next session. This was extremely helpful for me, as it was essentially the same teaching strategy I used with my students for music, and I wish I had learned many of these skills years ago.

## MENTAL HEALTH AND THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

Recognizing symptoms of general anxiety/depression in oneself is one of the most important things an individual can do to start addressing his or her mental health. That is the main reason why my situation developed into a health crisis. I was feeling symptoms of anxiety/depression for years, but I did not recognize them. Often, anxiety/depression will manifest in physical symptoms due to their connection with the autonomic nervous system. The autonomic nervous system controls the automatic parts of our body, such as breathing and heart rate. It is divided into three main sections: sympathetic, parasympathetic, and enteric.

The enteric nervous system primarily regulates digestion, while the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems create a balancing act between activating/accelerating and deactivating/slowing body processes. The sympathetic nervous system is responsible for the body ramping up, especially in times of

stress such as “fight or flight.” The parasympathetic nervous system is the opposite of the sympathetic, responsible for “rest and digest.”<sup>3</sup> These two facets of the nervous system can be triggered by anxiety and depression respectively, anxiety triggering the sympathetic nervous system and depression triggering the parasympathetic nervous system. (See the accompanying illustration.) The body naturally oscillates between these two in moderation, labeled on the illustration as the *Window of Tolerance*.

When our anxiety and depression oscillate within the window of tolerance, we are functioning normally and healthily. However, sometimes various factors cause our body to function beyond the

window of tolerance, and this is when anxiety and depression reach unhealthy levels. By learning to recognize one’s own physical characteristics of the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system, we can help regulate our anxiety and depression within a healthy realm.

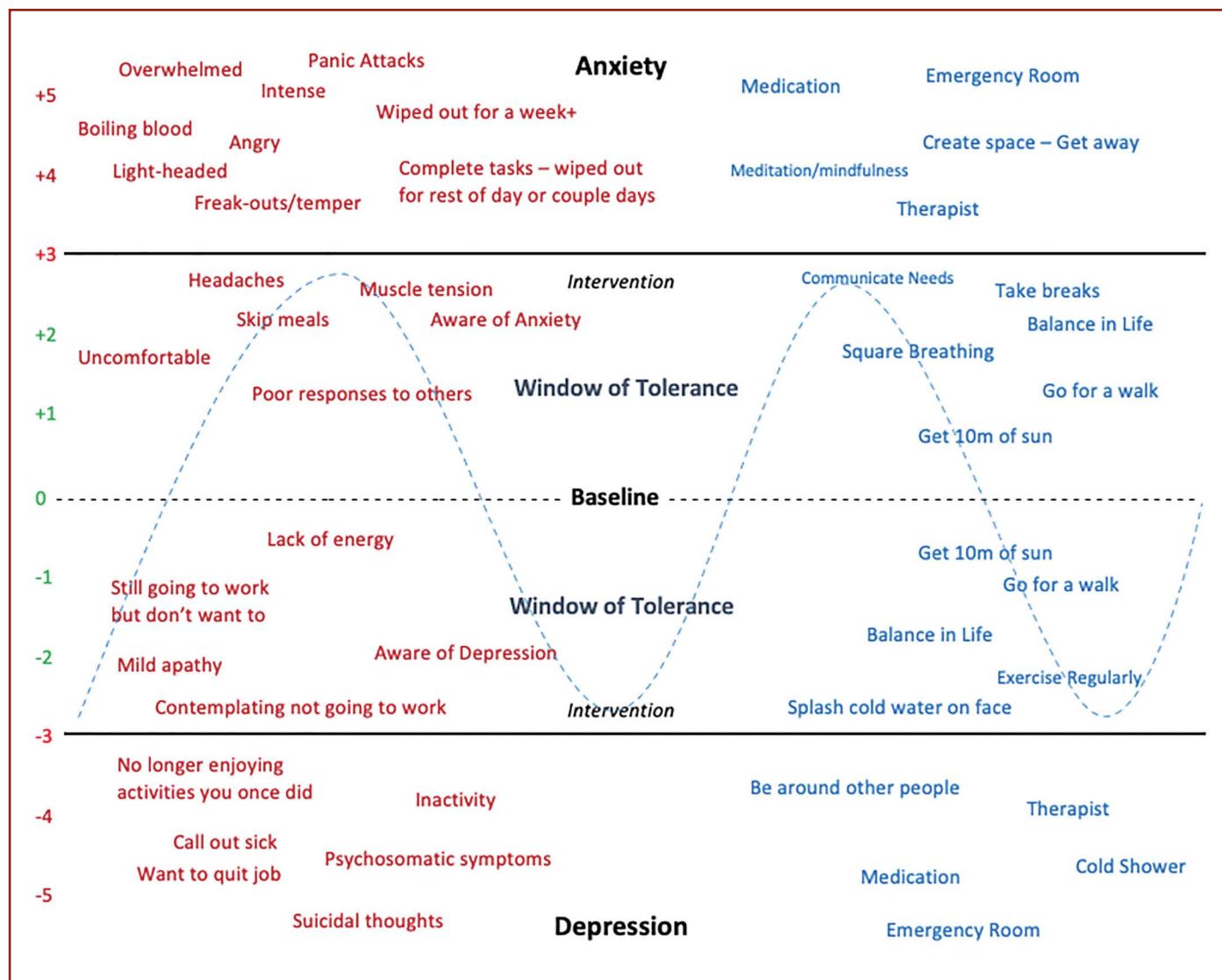
### RECOGNIZING SYMPTOMS AND EMPLOYING SOLUTIONS

When learning to recognize symptoms of anxiety and depression, we need to realize that although there are commonalities amongst people, every person is unique. Everyone should learn their own signs and symptoms affecting their mental health. On the Window of Tolerance chart, I have labeled some

common symptoms of anxiety and depression in red on the left. Minor symptoms of anxiety are things like muscle tension, headaches, meal skipping (often because we are too busy), and responding poorly to others. These should act as warning signs that we need to slow down a bit. Symptoms such as freak-outs and temper raging, anger, and panic attacks are signs that stronger intervention is needed.

Often, symptoms of anxiety can be paired or surrounded by symptoms of depression. Minor symptoms of depression include a general lack of energy, mild apathy, and a general lack of drive and activity. When depression becomes more severe, we see symptoms such as

Window of Tolerance





missing school/work without good reason, strong apathy, no longer enjoying activities that we once did, and suicidal thoughts. Similar to anxiety, at these points more significant intervention is needed.

In the most extreme examples of anxiety and depression, such as panic attacks and/or suicidal thoughts, treatment such as an emergency-room visit, therapy, and possibly medication are warranted based on the individual. Most importantly, these symptoms should not be ignored, and professional help should be sought. The goal, however, is to learn to intervene before we get to these extremes.

On the Window of Tolerance chart, I have outlined some common solutions or remedies that can help manage anxiety and depression at various stages. Keeping in mind that anxiety triggers the sympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for activating bodily processes, the antidote is essentially to slow down. Some common and simple treatments are to take breaks, go for a walk, get ten minutes of sunlight for Vitamin D, and take some repeated, slow, deep breaths.

On the opposite end, depression is tied to the parasympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for slowing the body down. When experiencing symptoms of depression, the simple treatment is to push yourself to create movement and activity, such as going for a walk, exercising regularly, being around people, and even splashing some cold water on your face. As a reminder, these pointers are just generalities and based on my personal experience. I strongly encourage individuals to try things and document what remedies work best for them.

## WRAP-UP

Although dealing with anxiety and depression is an individual journey for every person, we all experience these feelings in one way or another. The goal is not to eliminate anxiety or depression altogether, because when kept in mod-

eration, these are part of normal and healthy processes of life. The goal is to learn to recognize signs and symptoms of anxiety and depression so that we can better regulate our nervous system and maintain good mental health.

Additionally, a constant reminder of perspective is important. We must constantly remind ourselves of the joy that music brings us in all its various forms, and that oftentimes the things we feel most anxious or depressed about seem more significant in the moment than they really are in comparison to many of life's larger aspects. Reminding ourselves that music is fun, interactive, and enjoyable can seem small, but it is significant and far too often forgotten in our field.

A career in music can be very rewarding alongside significant challenges. When I was growing up and developing my career in music, mental health was not well discussed by my peers or teachers. It is my hope that this article offers some help, moving our field in a direction of more openness about mental health in a music career for all current and future musicians. I hope that we all find balance in our life, enjoying the music we create when we are creating it, and enjoying the richness of life when we are outside the practice room. For me, dedicating time to hitting the ski slopes, snuggling with my dog, and perfecting my pizza dough recipe are as critical to my mental health as being the best teacher and percussionist I can be.

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**Dr. Shane Jones** has studied and performed around the globe, including Brazil, China, Mexico, Trinidad/Tobago, Puerto Rico, West Africa, and across the United States. He serves as Director of Percussion/Assistant Professor of Music at Utah Valley University and Associate Editor of *World Percussion for Percussive Notes*. He is a member of chamber group *Khemia Ensemble* and regularly performs with the *Utah Symphony*, *Utah Opera*, *Ballet West*, *Hot House West*, and *Diamond Empire Bands*.

# Mindfulness on the Million Gig March How David Garibaldi manages an ongoing lifetime of touring with Tower of Power

By David Stanoch

**M**indfulness is a quality I've admired in David Garibaldi from the time I first heard and saw him play with Tower of Power when I was a young teenager, into the present day where I've been fortunate to know and befriend someone I see as a very straight-shooting, down-to-earth man who is also, quite undoubtably, not only a master of his instrument but a legend in his own time.

His sound is soulful, creative, and unique. His influence has been great on drummers worldwide for decades. In addition to his impressive and groundbreaking discography with Tower of Power, David has also worked with the Yellowjackets, Gino Vannelli, Jermaine Jackson, and Natalie Cole, among others. An educator and member of the PAS Hall of Fame, David has authored several method books and instructional DVDs, including the ever-popular staple, *Future Sounds*. David wrapped up 2022 with the news that his latest educational release, *DGz Notebook*, was the #1 top seller for the year from his publisher, Hudson Music.

I remember reading an interview with Prince (a Tower of Power fan himself) in *Rolling Stone* magazine where he was asked what it means to be "cool." He replied, "Being cool is being comfortable

with yourself." I never forgot that as an ideal to strive for and, I believe, that statement also personifies David Garibaldi. Coolness matters to David, as you will see in the interview that follows, but as much as he stands out as an innovator on his instrument, he takes great pride in his band being the vehicle for his message, and he manifests his coolness through his sense of community. His longevity is a testament to the mindfulness with which he manages his own mental, physical, and drumming health. He is equally philosophical, worldly, and street smart.

It's inspiring to see not only that Da-

vid can enjoy the fruits of his labors in his daily life and work, but also how his mindfulness figures deeply into his mental, physical, and drumming health, and that he shows no signs of slowing down or even wanting to. He's a survivor, and he knows his story is still being written. To me, he's definitely someone who can tell you what hipness is, and I think he takes great pride in still working around the globe with the boys he toughed it out with growing up in the Easy Bay of Oakland.

We spoke at the very end of 2022 via Zoom, and 2023 looks to be another busy



## I don't prepare for a tour; I prepare for the day I am living.

year for David and the band as they head out on tour (what David fondly calls “The Million Gig March”) to Europe and around the USA, including dates with symphony orchestras, and they will also finish recording their first Christmas album to be released later in the year. They continue to cultivate and enjoy the career they started over 50 years ago, and they do it with class and in style.

**David Stanoch:** Your love of performing is inspiring. What do you find to be the most empowering aspects of making music, in general, and drumming, in particular, for your mental health?

**David Garibaldi:** I think that being with a group of people – a team – who have a common goal is a pretty cool thing. It's totally empowering. I grew up in an era where being in a band was how you made music. It's not like what things have evolved to where you've got just one person, and they've got their influencers, and all the things that go on today. You joined a band, you stayed with it, you developed relationships with people. You wrote music together, ate dinners together, hung out together, knew each other's families, and the music, I think, was better as a result, in my humble opinion.

With Tower of Power, one of the reasons I've stayed so long is it's a family. I like looking across the stage and seeing people who I know intimately. I enjoy them as people, and I enjoy what we do together. When you come to a Tower of Power show, you're seeing a team effort. I love the sense of community. The sense of community is in the drum thing too; I hear from people all the time, and I love it. It's empowering and energizing. It's cool.

With my own playing, if I have a strong suit, it's that I enjoy the creative process. I've always been interested

in what happens when you get ideas and put them on the instrument. I love doing that; I think it's one of the most fun things about what we do, and it gives you the opportunity to be yourself, which I think is really important if you're going to do this. What we do is art – no more, no less – and art is an expression of how you see things.

**Stanoch:** Well, you certainly raised the bar by being yourself.

**Garibaldi:** [Laughs] Well, when I started playing and was listening to people, and trying to figure out what I wanted to do – in the days before you could see everybody on YouTube – the thing I liked was when you could tell who was playing just by listening to the records. I liked hearing a personality come out through the speakers, and I liked that even more than what they played. I liked that it was unique and personalized. I wanted that personalized approach so that when people heard me, they knew they were hearing me. And that takes some effort.

**Stanoch:** How do you work through stress when it arises in a performance?

**Garibaldi:** You've just gotta know that it's coming and accept it, but I don't really think about it like that. I just go out and play the show as it is, and some nights are really great, some are not as great. Sound is always an issue. There are venues that are uncomfortable to play in, and I know going into those I'm really going to have to buckle down and concentrate and not trip on these things that can be a distraction. Onstage we set up in one way that works for everybody, and we never change it. That offers a consistency that helps us know what to expect in general and avoid stress. Our soundchecks are always the same. We

have certain songs we always do; it's the same every day. Soundcheck is also where we rehearse a little bit if we have to, so it's one-stop shopping for getting everything right.

**Stanoch:** What types of physical fitness activities or other regimen do you employ when touring with regard to health and performance stamina? Are there specific conditioning exercises you'll do to prepare for a tour and maintain while traveling at length?

**Garibaldi:** I can say “no,” because I simply have a regular exercise routine. Exercise is part of the way I think about life, so I don't prepare for a tour or anything like that; I just prepare for the day I am living, and I love fitness and sports, so that's what I do. I've been doing that since I was a kid. I was a runner for many, many years and that was a really awesome thing. I've practiced yoga, Pilates, strength training, cycling – all kinds of different stuff.

For drumming fitness, I practice regularly. The way you live your life changes, and that affects your level of fitness. The way you play, the gig you have, affects your level of drumming fitness. I've learned how to deal with all that stuff with experience over time – what works and what doesn't. Drumming fitness is its own thing. You're not going to do push-ups and think it's going to help your drumming. It's just a whole other thing. There's mental fitness, physical fitness, drumming fitness – it's a total package. Nowadays, after two hip replacements, I don't run anymore, I walk for miles all the time and cycle, too. The cool thing about running and walking is you just go out and do it! You learn to enjoy being where you are and seeing what's happening. I've run in every country throughout the

world — even the Arctic Circle. It's cool! The main thing is having a regular approach to all the things you do.

**Stanoch:** Do you follow any type of nutrition regimen on the road?

**Garibaldi:** I usually don't eat a lot before a performance. Sometimes I'll eat something after. I drink lots of water and stay hydrated. I try not to eat garbage. That's more difficult on the road because you don't have control over a lot of that stuff, but I just accept that being on the road has nutritional challenges.



**Stanoch:** What has been the greatest challenge to your recording and touring work over all these years?

**Garibaldi:** Keeping things at the highest level you can, and maintaining a standard you want to live by and play by. Being in a band where everybody thinks like that makes it much easier than having to do it by yourself. And so, with the guys in the band, we share that; it's a self-policing unit, and it's a cool thing. Everybody wants to play well, and if you surround yourself with people who want to do well, you'll do well. They say if you're the smartest one in your group, then your group is too small. [Laughs] Each guy in the band is unique at what they do and the chair they occupy, and they're there because they can bring it; they play Tower Of Power music and do it great, and when the gig is over, you can have dinner with them and enjoy life with them. That helps you to keep your standards very high.

**Stanoch:** Is there a particular moment or achievement in your career you are the most proud of that keeps you inspired?

**Garibaldi:** The thing that inspires me the most is that I'm in something I'm helping to build. I love the challenge of it. Sometimes it's really intimidating.

**Stanoch:** Can you give me an example of that?

**Garibaldi:** It's just that you write some cool songs that have very difficult things in them, and that's where you were at in that moment in time when you put that together. And then, later on, life changes, things happen to you. Maybe your skills are different or maybe you don't like doing that anymore. So, it creates a challenge to approach that music and have it be great, given your changes in attitude or the physical demands of that particular thing. We wrote some of the stuff we play now when we were much younger — when I was 23 or 25 years old, and

I'm 76 now — and I want it to be really, really good. A few things go into that: some of the stuff I don't like anymore; I don't like the way I played in those days. I think I did it to be really complex, and I thought that was fun and I was exploring. These days, I really don't care about that. It helped build my playing, that's for sure, but I had this accident [Editor's note: On January 13, 2017, Garibaldi and ToP bassist Mark van Wageningen were stuck by an Amtrak train as they walked to a show with the band, both sustaining serious injuries that they have now recovered from] that changed a lot of things because I struggled with memory issues and other things because I got hit in the head. So, I had a traumatic brain injury, and coming back from that I wasn't able to do some of the things I could do before. I was just out of sync. So that presented some other challenges, but I wanted to be there, the guys in the band wanted me to be there, and I was really nervous about it.

I remember we were rehearsing for a week in Sacramento for our 50th Anniversary show and Mimi [ToP bandleader/saxophonist Emilio Castillo] was calling up all these tunes. We'd had meetings beforehand about the selection of material, and I made charts to be as organized as possible, because we're like a garage band that can read music. [Laughs] So he's calling up the tunes, and I had all the charts in my hand, but I couldn't put them in order. That was frustrating. When I went back to my hotel that night, I was thinking, "How am I going to get myself through this one?" And so, I told my two closest pals, Mark [van Wageningen, bassist] and Roger [Smith, keyboardist] what I was feeling and experiencing, and they said — almost in unison — "Don't worry about it. Everything's okay." And so, I started to view the rebuilding I had to do as just a project — reimagining some of the parts, and trying to find ways to make it sound real good, but still pay-

ing respect to the tradition of the song and the arrangements.

So after that week of rehearsals, I carried a folder of charts out on the road. We would do a show, but we would also do a big rehearsal for the 50th Anniversary show every day. It was really a lot of effort to make it all happen. I eventually got to the point where I had everything memorized, except for one song, by the time we got to the 50th Anniversary show. It was the hardest I had ever worked as a member of Tower of Power! By the time we got to the very last show of the 50th Anniversary Show, we were so out of gas, man, because we had just busted our asses doing it.

But it was really rewarding to do that. It was cool to have something that you're a part of that you can give that much of yourself to, and you're doing it with a bunch of people who are burning the same amount of effort that you are. It's energizing. It makes you want to do well and not disappoint the people you're working with.

I'm still developing a system of making things happen, like with opening the hi-hat, because I couldn't play with my hands crossed like I had before; something in the neural pathways was blocked. So I have a right-side pair of closed hats, and now sometimes with opening the hi-hat I do it with my right or my left. I'm just devising a system that works for me. Like Mark Twain said, "Don't let school get in the way of your education." [Laughs]

**Stanoch:** I can see some of that in your new method book, *DG's Notebook*.

**Garibaldi:** Yeah, that's kind of an expression of those approaches.

**Stanoch:** Can you share any tips you've learned regarding staying connected to family while on the road and/or getting along with bandmates to sustain your mental health?

**Garibaldi:** As far as home life, I met my wife, who's Italian, in Europe, and

from the beginning of our relationship it was always coming and going. And it's still like that. When I go on the road she says, "Bye, see you when you get home!" [Laughs] That's the way that it is, and it works great. You spend a lot of time together with the guys in the band on a tour bus. You don't want to be on a tour bus, in close quarters, with somebody you don't like or don't get along with. When we get new guys on the band, we call that period after we bring them in "Tower 101." And so, you get to experience what it is to do Tower music, and you get to experience what it is to be around everybody. And, after a certain period of time, if you pass the test, you're in! If you can't make those things happen, we have to find someone else.

**Stanoch:** That makes sense. After all these years, you've made such an investment to the band.

**Garibaldi:** We're invested with each other. It's so valuable to have cool relationships with people. You're playing music with people you really care about, and that really influences the way the music is presented and how it makes people feel. If you have poisoned relationships, but you're still somehow together, people pick up on that stuff, and that taints what you do. If you learn to be respectful to the people you work with, that has enormous benefits in your personal life. We hang out together and say stupid shit to each other, relaxing and having fun, and that's life. You build a life with people.

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# Drumming with Dystonia: Part 2

By Paul Buyer

In 2017, I shared my story about task specific focal dystonia in a *Percussive Notes* article titled “Drumming with Dystonia.” I kept the condition (primarily) to myself because I feared for my job, my credibility, and my future in the profession. In *Percussive Notes* Senior Editor Rick Mattingly’s book, *Your Music Career is Not Over*, he notes that if musicians have suffered an injury, “they may feel there is a stigma attached that might cause other people to think their musical abilities are compromised.”

During this time, I immersed myself in the research, joined a support group, and found a teacher who successfully recovered from a worse case than mine. At first, my confidence and control of my technique declined to 40%. Today, with determination, patience, creative practicing, and support from others, I’ve managed to reach 80%.

I wanted to share my story so I could help people — to serve and give back, which is what PAS is all about. Perhaps other percussionists experienced similar symptoms and feelings and didn’t know what to do or where to turn. Perhaps they felt lost and discouraged when no one could provide an accurate diagnosis or treatment for what was happening to them. Perhaps they lost belief in their playing abilities and skills and were depressed, frustrated, and at their wits end, like I was.

This article includes a look back at my story as a college percussion professor with dystonia and offers new strategies that helped me continue to improve physically and mentally, including Steve Smith’s *Pathways of Motion*, Graded Motor Imagery, and adding value in other ways.

## MY STORY

In early 2005, I was playing “Parcours en Duo” for vibraphone, timpani, and baritone saxophone by French composer Edith Lejet. My saxophone colleague and I had been rehearsing intently for weeks when one day, during rehearsal, I noticed something was wrong in my left hand while playing two-mallet vibraphone. My index finger kept coming off the mallet shaft involuntarily, breaking my fulcrum. It felt like my middle finger was forcing my index finger off the stick, as if there was no room for both. There was no pain, but certainly a lack of control and uneasy feeling.

Over the next few days, I continued to monitor my left hand. I started noticing my index finger also coming off when playing matched grip snare drum and timpani rolls, but interestingly, not four-mallet playing. I tried some creative measures like rubber banding my fingers to the stick, but nothing kept them there. I became concerned, and my playing started to suffer.

## DIAGNOSIS

After several months searching for answers, I was diagnosed with *task specific focal dystonia* (TSFD), meaning my condition only occurred when playing percussion with two sticks or mallets in my hands.

According to the National Library of Medicine, “Dystonia is defined as a movement disorder characterized by sustained or intermittent muscle contractions causing abnormal, often repetitive, movements, postures, or both.” Dystonia UK states, “Sometimes the effects are quite subtle — but they often prevent playing to a professional standard. It usually affects the body part/area which performs the most complex movement patterns, so the part affected depends more upon the instrument played, rather than hand dominance.”

With practice pad and sticks in hand to show doctors, I visited a chiropractor who tried acupuncture and a TENS-unit, Emory University for Botox treatments, and a hand specialist who prescribed medication, all common treatments for TSFD to relax the muscles in my left hand and arm. Nothing worked. I decided to take some time off from practicing and thought getting away from it would do me some good, but in the end that had no effect. My only option, I felt, was to find another way to hold the stick.

# It felt like my middle finger was forcing my index finger off the stick, as if there was no room for both.

## LEARNING TO COMPENSATE

After several weeks of experimenting, I discovered my fulcrum would stay intact only when I took the middle finger off the stick. My choices were to play with my fulcrum only or to play with a grip *without* the middle finger. While these options were not ideal and quickly led to fatigue in my hand and fingers, I managed to play at a respectable level.

Throughout the process, I kept thinking about the debate between traditional versus matched, Stevens grip versus Burton grip, and the fact that if there was a screen in front of me, no one would care. However, I was a *teacher* and had to lead by example. I had to demonstrate to my students what a professional percussionist looked like when holding two implements in my hands. I started to feel “imposter syndrome.”

## FINDING A CURE

For over a decade, I accepted my dystonia and took comfort in the fact that it did not get worse. In 2015, I attended a dystonia support group, only to witness first-hand how devastating dystonia can be in people’s lives. My story of “not being able to play drums with matched grip” paled in comparison to the men and women sitting around the table who were wheelchair bound, struggled to move freely, and needed assistance with daily tasks.

Then in spring of 2016, I received an article from my former professor, Gary Cook, about a drummer in New York City named Shaun Lowecki, who had a case of TSFD that included tremors. According to Shaun in 2011:

I had lost all control of my right hand. I was panicked and didn’t understand why I couldn’t move the way I used to. I had intense involuntary spasming, which

worsened with frustration and anger. I experienced aggressive clenching and compulsively contemplated my fulcrum. I developed severe fear and anxiety and I began searching for an answer. I spent the better part of this year seeking out specialists to help find a solution. I saw a chiropractor, worked with an acupuncturist, visited an orthopedic doctor, had massage therapy, attended a physical therapy course...and nervously searched the internet for an explanation. Unfortunately, none of the specialists I saw had an answer for the spasming or loss of control.

I contacted Shaun and asked if we could schedule a virtual lesson, and he agreed. My goal was to retrain and relearn how I think when I play. I had to change my focus, let go of control, and trust that, deep down, I already knew how to play everything. Following that first lesson, Shaun sent me a link to an excellent YouTube documentary called *Focal Dystonia: Understanding and Treatment as an Emotional Condition*, by Joaquin Fabra. According to *Focal Dystonia: A Musician’s Resource*, “Fabra is a trombonist/euphoniumist who was struck with focal dystonia many years ago and managed to rehabilitate himself completely. Fabra believes that focal dystonia is a behavioral disorder and not a neurological one.” For over twenty years, Fabra has been treating musicians who have traveled from all over the world to see him in search of a full recovery.

Through Fabra’s instruction, I learned to “pay attention to the person I used to be when I enjoyed playing the instrument, not to fight against tension, to shift my focus on playing freely rather than on not playing badly, and to loosen mentally and physically.” Fabra says, “Take responsibility for your dystonia. In a bi-

zarre way, you chose to have it. You can also choose not to have it, by changing the way you think and emotionally feel about yourself.”

## BEGINNER’S MINDSET

While working with Shaun once a month and practicing these strategies, I came across an excellent resource by Rob Knopper, Principal Percussionist of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, called, “How to Develop the Perfect Snare Drum Grip.” In it, Rob provides a video and five diagrams of the hand, showing exactly how he holds the sticks when playing loud singles, loud rolls, soft singles, soft doubles, and soft rolls. I started studying these diagrams carefully and tried modeling my grip after his, all with a beginner’s mindset. By learning to hold the sticks again from square one, I was retraining myself to play. What I continue to notice is that the physical change in my grip, in conjunction with the mental and emotional skills I learned from Shaun and Joaquin, have resulted in moderate improvement in my playing. According to Shaun:

Over the course of my rehabilitation, I learned many techniques to deal with the ups and downs of dystonia. I had to retrain the way I approached drumming on a physical, mental, and emotional level. In conjunction with my mentors, I discovered my own approach, which ultimately led me to a full recovery. There were times when I wanted to quit. There were times when I doubted I’d ever improve. There were times when I couldn’t handle the intense emotional roller coaster. But looking back on the struggle, I can say that I am grateful. I have become a stronger player because of dystonia and look at it as a positive experience.

## MY ULTIMATE GOAL

Many professional musicians have been affected by “embouchure” or “hand” dystonia, including classical pianists Leon Fleischer, Glenn Gould, André Previn, and Gary Graffman; Chicago Symphony Orchestra members Dale Clevenger (horn) and Alex Klein (oboe); guitarist Billy McGlaughlin; and Tokyo String Quartet violinist Peter Oundjian, just to name a few. Despite playing different instruments, their stories are eerily similar, with dystonia failing to discern they were at the top of their game in the music world. After reading their stories, I immediately felt a shared bond with them. We are part of a club – a fraternity – who experienced confusion from the symptoms, shock from the diagnosis, and fear from not being able to play again – at least not at the level we want or need to play to do our job at the standard our audiences, students, and music deserve.

There are musicians such as Shaun Lowecki who have fully recovered from task specific focal dystonia. *Why not me?* My ultimate goal is to play better than I did before, and I firmly believe this is possible – with practice, trust, and the help and support of all those who stuck with me during this process.

## MEDICAL BREAKTHROUGH

In the November 2018 issue of *Percussive Notes*, University of Toronto Percussion Professor Aiyun Huang published an interview with Eric Phinney, a founding member of the Ethos Percussion Quartet, about his journey with focal dystonia. An accomplished percussionist, orchestral timpanist, and tabla player, Eric’s symptoms began in 2009 when his right index finger started curling up after one week of a tabla-intensive workshop. To prepare for the workshop, Eric did an incredible “three *chillas* – intense sessions of continuous practice from morning to night for seven days – in a traditional way that all tabla players do at some point in their careers.”

Eric’s story is a familiar one – at least at first. His finger curled up only when play-

ing tabla, and it “really didn’t affect any other part of [his] percussion playing.” It was task specific. He never experienced pain. He took time off to rest. He taped his index finger to his middle finger to keep it straight. He tried acupuncture and saw a specialist who works with fascial massage therapy. Nothing worked. “Over the course of three summers,” Eric said, “I tried to regain control of my hand without success, so I had to make peace with the situation and move on with my life...I had basically given up on playing tabla ever again.”

In 2016, Eric was invited to participate in a “double-blind clinical trial [at the NYU Medical Center] studying the effects of using low doses of botulinum toxin treatments on only the very specific areas where muscle contractions are happening. The research aims to refine the doses, the amount injected, the specific location, and their impact on the muscle movements.” After two injections in the trial, Eric had regained 90% function, and in 2017 after his second post-trial injection, he was 100% symptom free.

As of this writing, Eric told me he has “basically been in the same place the last four years or so.” While his dystonia comes back mildly over time, he gets boosters every 18–24 months, which has allowed him to play tabla with the New York Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, and St. Louis Symphony. Eric says, “The Botox treatment hasn’t been a cure, but the dystonia problem is totally manageable now.”

## PATHWAYS OF MOTION

Though Eric’s success story is one I have considered looking into further for myself, I am at peace thus far with my efforts, progress, and how much time, energy, and mental bandwidth I can expend on my recovery.

Since first sharing my story in 2017, I have continued to search for anything that might help my confidence and control in my left-hand grip. Like my deep dive into Rob Knopper, I came across a 2018 article in *Percussive Notes* from drum

set legend Steve Smith called “Matched Grip Variations,” which is extracted from his book, *Pathways of Motion*. In his article and videos, Smith describes four different matched grips he uses in his drum set playing – each of which serves a different purpose and produces a different sound. I immediately found this fascinating and started to wonder if practicing with these grips could help my dystonia.

Grip 1: German grip with closed fulcrum



Grip 2: German grip with open fulcrum



Grip 3: French grip





Grip 4: Tony Williams grip (French grip with back finger fulcrum)



Playing with different grips reminded me of a strategy Shaun taught me when we first started working together. He asked me to set up a pair of concert snare sticks, drum set sticks, rutes, and brushes, and to practice basic exercises with each of them. I would start with 8's or a *Stick Control* exercise and rotate between sticks, rutes, and brushes, noticing my hands adapting to a different feel each time. I did this for several weeks until my grip felt more comfortable, regardless of what implement I was holding.

The title of Smith's book, *Pathways of Motion*, also struck a chord. Although not written with dystonia in mind, the book not only helped train the pathways of my hands, but also the pathways in my mind. As Smith says, "Examine the *pathways of motions* made by both hands and truly match each hand so they are symmetrical and evenly developed." By intently focusing on the pathways my hands and sticks were making with each of the four grips, my mind was occupied, and my control improved.

## GRADED MOTOR IMAGERY

Graded Motor Imagery (GMI) is an innovative and science-based rehabilitation technique for training and retraining your brain used primarily to treat pain

and movement problems. According to the GMI website, "Graded motor imagery is broken down into three unique stages of treatment techniques, each exercising your brain in different ways." For TSFD, stage 3 of GMI called "Mirror Therapy" was recommended:

1. Set up two snare drums or pads and put a mirror in between them. With sticks in hand, put your right hand on the right drum and your left hand on the left drum.

2. Play any exercise with both hands at the same time (double stops/cloning) and watch your right hand in the mirror.

3. The mirror tricks your brain into thinking the hand you see in the mirror is the left hand, but it is actually the right hand.

4. Behind the mirror, your left hand clones the right hand by default, based on the connections formed by looking at the reflection in the mirror.



I credit my friend and University of Utah Percussion Professor Michael Sammons for recommending Mirror Therapy for my TSFD and for reminding me of the many benefits of "cloning" as a sound pedagogical approach to practicing.

## CLOSING THOUGHTS

One final strategy that has helped me through the ups and downs of dystonia is to find other ways to contribute and add value. For me it was writing and speaking, and I am grateful to have written four books during this chapter in my life, and I am currently working on a fifth. My books led to professional speaking opportunities, presentations, and workshops across the country, podcast appearances, and serving as a Band Leadership Facilitator for the Janssen Sports Leadership Center. Because my dystonia was task specific, it had no effect on other ways I could express myself and make a difference.

Adversity makes us stronger, and while I wouldn't say dystonia was the best thing that ever happened to me, it did give me the time and perspective to think, reflect, and apply the habits and mindset I developed as a percussionist — and as a leader — to other creative pursuits. As Julie Fournier, Director of Player Development for Clemson Women's Basketball, said, "Great leaders wake up every morning hellbent on getting better. They crave learning, growing, and progress of any sort. Fight complacency, chase excellence; that's leadership."

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# The Marching Fitness Revolution

By Daniel Recoder

**A**s drum corps show designs evolve, the athletic demands placed on performers are exponentially increasing. Performers need to be stronger, faster, and more agile than ever before. The harsh consequence of this reality is that many performers experience physical traumatic stress in an effort to keep up with the expectations of modern show design. Tylenol and aspirin are regularly consumed by members who want to avoid dealing with their pain so that they can keep marching. Stress fractures worsen day by day until they become unbearable. Recurring muscle strains, tendonitis, and ankle sprains rarely get the medically advised duration of rest time and physical therapy needed to make a full recovery. Something is not right.

The high prevalence of overuse injuries in drum corps raises concerns for the way members are training for elite marching performance. We must be more proactive. One of the biggest contributing factors to these overuse injuries is improper athletic preparation. Many performers don't properly train for their season simply because they don't know how to. This is neither their fault nor their responsibility to figure out. They need a plan to develop marching athleticism and a community to hold them accountable. Below, I outline the elements of marching athleticism and offer examples of exercises and activities that will help prepare the body

for the modern marching environment.

Elements of marching athleticism can be subdivided into two categories: Health and Skill.

## HEALTH

Five components relate to the health and well-being of the individual. These components should be trained in the early part of the preseason to ensure adequate time for physiological adaptations. Two weeks of working out is not enough time to make any significant changes. Focusing on these five health components for 12 weeks will help develop a strong foundation for a physically fit human being.

**1. Cardiovascular endurance:** the efficiency of oxygen delivery during exercise. If you've ever felt out of breath after a rep on the field (or a lap around the block), that's a sign that your cardiovascular system is working very hard to keep up. Ten minutes of jumping rope daily is an effective and efficient way to improve cardiovascular endurance, respiratory function, weight management, and reduce stress. The portability of a jump rope and minimal space needed make it an excellent choice for a workout at home, at the gym, or on the go.

**2. Muscular endurance:** a muscle's ability to produce for repeated or extended periods of time. Marching for long hours while carrying equipment with proper posture requires muscular endurance.

Without this, the body tends to compensate by shifting the load from the muscles onto the ligaments, which increases risk of injury and long-term damage to the joints. Improving muscular endurance in the core muscles of the body is particularly beneficial for all sections of the ensemble. Exercises such as the hollow body, side plank, and bird dog should be practiced by all marching athletes and held for a minimum of 15–30 seconds each.

**3. Muscular strength:** a muscle's ability to exert force. Strength gives us the ability to stand tall against gravity while holding our equipment. There are six foundational movement patterns for marching athletes to train that can effectively strengthen the entire body, and they are: squat, lunge, hinge, push, pull, and twist/anti-rotation. Dividing these movements up into two or three workouts per week while working in the 6–12 rep range is a simple way to start building the muscle and strength needed for marching performance.

**4. Mobility:** the ability to take a joint through its full range of motion without pain. A colorguard performer who tosses equipment into the air needs adequate overhead shoulder mobility in order to move safely and effectively. A wind player who slides needs adequate rotational mobility in the spine and hips in order to avoid generating excessive torque in the knees. A drumline performer needs adequate ankle mobility to reduce the risk of

# Proper athletic preparation can also produce psychological benefits for performers.

rolling an ankle while crab stepping. Mobility helps us move freely.

Yoga poses such as crescent lunge, half split, downward facing dog, and triangle pose are particularly beneficial for marching athletes. Remember to start slowly and breathe while performing them.

**5. Body composition:** the body's ratio of lean muscle to stored fat. A common mistake many marching athletes make in the preseason is focusing too much on weight loss and not enough on gaining muscle mass. Muscle atrophy (loss of muscle) is inevitable throughout the season due to the endurance demands and focus on perfecting performance. For many individuals, this leads to an unhealthy appearance during the end of the final push of the summer.

In order to stay ahead of this problem, marching athletes should focus on a resistance training program focused on hypertrophy (building muscle) during the offseason so that they can arrive at spring training with adequate size and muscle to last them through the season.

## SKILL

Being a strong, healthy individual does not equate to being a skilled marching athlete. The following six skill components of athleticism relate to the body's ability to effectively participate in marching performance. These elements support the sport-specific athletic demands of marching. Skill components are often neglected with conventional workout programs, which is why many performers find spring training so challenging. By fine-tuning these skills six weeks before spring training, marching performers can condition their joints, tendons, and ligaments to the demands of their specific section. When it comes to achieving elite

marching performance, the health components and skill components interact in a reciprocal fashion.

**1. Speed:** the ability to perform actions or cover distance quickly. On the field, this means keeping up with the fast tempos of modern-day marching. Learning to stay light on the feet is key to improving speed, and one of the best ways to train this is by jumping rope.

**2. Agility:** the ability to accelerate, decelerate, and quickly change directions with proper posture. Agility is crucial for keeping the feet in time while changing directions. Marching drills like plus drill, box drill, circle drill, and zig-zags are great for developing agility in marching athletes.

**3. Power:** the ability to combine both speed and force in movements. Colorguard performers need power to toss equipment into the air. Marching members need power to achieve larger step sizes and a proper first step in any direction.

Power is a very physically taxing skill to train and should be performed at a very high intensity in an explosive manner for few repetitions followed by a rest period before repeating. Lateral bounds are a great exercise for all sections to develop explosive hip power while marching.

**4. Balance:** the ability to stabilize the body. Balance is particularly noticeable while marching at slower tempos. Marching, especially at slower tempos, is primarily spent balancing on one foot while the other swings towards the direction of travel. Having a strong and stable foundation at the foot and ankle is essential for balancing while carrying equipment.

A simple way to test balance and proprioception (awareness of your joints in space) is by standing on one leg with eyes

closed. An individual who is unable to do this for at least 15 seconds is at a higher risk of rolling an ankle while marching. Single-leg Romanian Deadlifts (RDLs) are a great exercise to develop ankle stability, improve proprioception, and enhance dynamic balance.

**5. Coordination:** the ability to use the senses (such as vision, hearing, and proprioception) to synchronize different parts of the body in a smooth, efficient, and controlled manner. While marching, athletes need to read the field visually in order to determine correct step sizes. They listen to the sound in order to blend. They feel the beat internally in order to play in time. Without a doubt, coordination is a huge component of athletic marching performance.

Jumping rope is one of the best ways to improve coordination off of the field, especially in marching athletes. Seeing, hearing, and feeling the rope in space are all coordinated with the rhythm and timing of the jump. Jumping rope also stimulates both sides of the brain, much like marching does! By learning a few beginner-friendly tricks like side swings and crossovers, individuals can create unique combinations of patterns to challenge and improve their coordination.

**6. Reaction time:** the ability to respond quickly to what is seen, heard, and felt. In performance, sometimes unplanned timing errors occur or direction changes are missed. This requires the performer to react to and determine the necessary action in order to recover. On the field, performers should always strive for recovery in any setting rather than "checking out" of the rep. Individuals who consistently practice recovery will be able to think more clearly and make more sound decisions after mistakes than an individual who rarely tries to recover.

## SUMMARY

Proper athletic preparation can also produce psychological benefits for performers. Regular exercise has been scientifically proven to improve cognitive function, which can help members focus for longer and perform at their best. Feeling prepared for the season can also elicit a sense of confidence in one's abilities to overcome obstacles and achieve excellence. An athletic individual will thrive while an unprepared individual will "survive." A prepared performer will be a stronger performer.

The days of running to get in shape for drum corps are over, and a new era for marching athletes has begun. Forte Athletics is a company dedicated to empowering marching ensembles worldwide to achieve excellence in health and fitness. By providing marching specific workout programs, we create content that is accessible to all experience levels. The

Forte coaching team is composed of fitness professionals with experience from all marching sections in order to develop custom fitness programs tailored to each section. For example, direction changes for a horn player look different than they do for a snare drummer or colorguard performer, which is why the skill should be trained differently. By providing a customizable framework, Forte Athletics fitness programs effectively remove the guesswork for ensembles striving to become a team of marching athletes. By providing free online educational resources and professionally crafted fitness programs, backed by science and clinical expertise, Forte Athletics is revolutionizing fitness for the marching arts worldwide! To learn more about the marching fitness revolution, visit [www.ForteAthletics.net](http://www.ForteAthletics.net).

Daniel Recoder is a marching fitness professional and founder of Forte Athletics. As a licensed PTA, drum corps alumni, and marching arts educator, he applies clinical knowledge of injury prevention, strength training, and empathy to help marching ensembles improve their health and wellbeing.



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EXPERIENCE THE

# Tools and Strategies to Optimize Performance and Sustain Longevity

By Andy Harnsberger

One of the most difficult things to learn as percussionists is self-care, mentally and physically. We have so much to do on a regular basis, whether it is performing, teaching, developing new techniques, and/or learning notes. Not to mention reading books or articles that give us insights into the minds of performing musicians or studying for exams as students. We tend to ignore some of the most basic and essential things that will help us excel. This article will reflect the things I have experienced throughout my career as a performer, certified personal trainer, nutritionist, and former competitive body builder to optimize performance, avoid injuries, and/or facilitate injury recoveries.

There have been many comparisons of percussionists to athletes. We use many of the same muscles that athletes use. We need to have muscular control, flexibility, coordination, and endurance, which are all the same qualities that athletes need to be successful. We read articles about how to stretch, warm up properly, exercise, get enough sleep, and eat a healthy diet to provide ourselves with the proper endurance, muscular efficiency, and mental acuity. Due to time constraints, many of these things are cut short or skipped to

just “get it done” in the practice room.

Throughout my experiences, I believe there is no “cookie-cutter” recipe for success, and everyone has their own individual goals and needs. Below are guidelines I have employed during my career to help ensure optimal performance and longevity.

## NUTRITION

Percussionists, and musicians in general, can underestimate the importance of proper nutrition for maximum performance. For many musicians, the average day consists of one or two meals, with a steady intake of caffeine to make it through the day. Often times, these meals are of the fast-food variety in between classes or on the way to gigs. If we use performance athletes as our example, we can see we are not giving ourselves a realistic opportunity to live up to our potential.

Sports nutrition in its most basic form is not rocket science. You need to make sure you are eating often enough and getting enough quality calories from your food to maintain high energy levels throughout the day. Make sure your intake of vitamins and minerals is adequate to support your active lifestyle, and eat “clean” foods that will allow you

to maintain your mental focus all day. In short, consume enough proteins, carbohydrates, and healthy fats every day to optimize your performance.

Nutrition also plays a large role in the recovery process. Eating an overall healthy diet can ensure that you don’t develop any nutrient deficiencies that may impair your muscles’ ability to recover after intense practice sessions. Here are a few easy principles to follow:

1. Eat a small meal every two to three hours (four to six small meals per day) to keep blood sugar level and prevent hunger. This may seem like a lot at first. But remember, you are eating smaller portions. If you really have a hard time with this, prepare your regular three meals and a snack for the day, and divide lunch and dinner in half; then, you’ve instantly got six small meals.

Combine lean proteins, complex carbohydrates, and healthy fats at every meal. We know that muscles use carbohydrates for energy. But remember that your brain also prefers a nice, steady supply of complex carbohydrates for fuel. When the brain doesn’t get its steady fuel supply, behavior and learning become more erratic. Eating lean proteins and complex carbohydrates often during the day provides a steady supply of energy to

# If you need to take a couple days off from practicing because you are physically or mentally fried, then do it.

your muscles and brain to keep them fully functional.

2. Avoid overly processed and refined foods (i.e., sugar, white flour, and anything that says “bleached and enriched”); avoid soda and other sugary juices and drinks. These types of sugars cause mood swings and “clog” your brain, keeping it from functioning optimally.

3. Avoid saturated and trans fats.

4. Follow a low-sodium diet. Elevated levels of sodium are a key contributor to swelling in the muscles and joints.

5. Drink plenty of water.

6. Avoid excessive alcohol consumption. Alcohol is another cause of dehydration, so limiting your consumption before a performance would be beneficial.

The benefits of eating “clean” foods are numerous. Not only will clean eating drastically improve overall health and wellness, but most clean eaters will find that they gain a significant amount of energy and endurance. Those who eat clean also find that their new lifestyle improves sleep, mood levels, and helps them deal with stress more efficiently. Many people have different dietary needs. Therefore, seek the advice of a professional to find out what is best for you.

## Nutritional Supplements to Aid in Memory and Brain Function

Keep in mind that these are *supplements* to your diet and should not be a substitute for proper nutrition.

**Acetylcholine:** Maximizes mental ability and prevents memory loss in adults.

**Dimethylaminoethanol (DMAE):** Aids in learning and memory. Not intended for everyday use. Best when used on days when you need to be more focused and alert.

**Vitamin B complex:** Needed for improved memory.

**Pantothenic acid (Vitamin B5):** Needed for proper brain function.

**Vitamin E:** 200 IU daily will improve blood flow to the brain.

**L-glutamine, L-phenylalanine, L-aspartic acid:** Essential amino acids for normal brain function.

**L-tyrosine:** Helps sharpen learning, memory, and awareness and elevates moods and motivation.

**Coenzyme Q10:** Improves brain and muscle oxygenation.

**Ginkgo biloba:** Increases blood flow to the brain and central nervous system, enhancing memory and brain function.

## Other Nutritional Tips to Improve Performance

1. Low to moderate amounts of caffeine (20mg–50mg) can increase mental alertness and improve concentration. Too much caffeine can cause excitability and nervousness, so use with caution.

2. Bananas are a natural beta-blocker. Eating a banana 30–45 minutes before a performance can help decrease performance anxiety or stage fright.

3. Here are some examples of foods that are commonly known as “brain foods,” or foods that will enhance brain function and memory: avocados, bananas, blueberries, broccoli, brown rice, brussel sprouts, cantaloupe, cheese, chicken breast, collard greens, eggs, flaxseed oil, legumes, lean protein, oatmeal, oranges, peas, sweet potatoes, romaine lettuce, salmon, soybeans, spinach, fresh tuna.

4. Clean eating is a lifestyle that requires time, commitment, and pre-planning. It is not about deprivation, avoiding food groups, counting calories, or starvation. At its most basic, clean eating is making the healthiest food choices possible. This doesn’t mean you can never eat your favorite foods. Reward yourself every now and then and have a cheat day!

## STRETCHING AND WARMING UP

This is an area that I believe is seriously overlooked. If stretches are incorporated into our routines, they are mostly aggressive stretches (i.e., the one where we hold drumsticks at both ends and twist) and are not done in a sensible fashion. Just as athletes incorporate stretching into their warm-up routines, so should we stretch before we even pick up the sticks. The general idea is to start with the large muscles and work our way down to the smaller groups. Most people just focus on the hands and wrists, but we need to focus on all parts of the body, including legs, back, shoulders, and chest in order to remain flexible behind the instruments. Then, we can work our way down to the smaller muscle groups such as forearms, wrists, hands, and fingers.

My personal routine involves stretching out the large muscle groups first, then running my hands and forearms under hot water as I begin to stretch them out. This really helps to increase the circulation. If you have very poor circulation in your hands, you can use a “contrast bath,” which is a type of therapy that involves soaking your hands alternately in warm and cold water. *For a sample stretching tutorial, please visit my YouTube channel at [youtube.com/andyharnsberger](https://www.youtube.com/andyharnsberger).*

A general full-body warmup before playing, like you would do before a sport, will increase your muscle and body temperature to avoid injury. Start with something simple like arm circles. Jog in place for 30 seconds and/or do a few jumping jacks. Not only will this increase your body temperature, but it will also increase blood flow and provide more oxygen to your brain.

Establish a daily routine. I’m not talking about going into the practice room and whizzing through your scales

or playing the hottest lick from your literature. Your daily routine allows you to continue to warm up, but it also allows you to focus on all the mechanics (e.g., grip, strokes, elbow shifts, body positioning, playing area, posture, relaxation, and breathing). This is also where you focus on how you want to sound on the instrument. Far too often, percussionists seem to be too concerned with building chops and playing fast, and they forget all those mechanics and sound characteristics of the instrument. The daily routine is the most important ingredient we have as percussionists for maintenance and longevity. If you establish such a routine, you'll have a much better chance of maintaining mechanics and sound when you must miss a week or two. *For a sample daily routine on marimba, please visit my website, [andyharnsberger.com](http://andyharnsberger.com).*

## EXERCISE

As musicians, we spend much of our time practicing. This can occupy most of our free time, leading some musicians to go through life in a very sedentary manner. Of course, everyone knows that exercise is good for a person's health. Did you know that consistent exercise might help make you a better musician?

### Breathing

Regular cardio exercise can have a huge positive effect on a person's ability to breathe efficiently. Obviously, better breathing is helpful to singers and those who play wind instruments. However, it can be immensely helpful to percussionists because easier breathing allows a more energetic and controlled performance.

### Improved Posture

Good posture allows percussionists to play for longer stretches without suffering from fatigue or backaches. It also helps with breathing and concentration, which are both important in offering the very best performance possible.

### Strengthened Muscles

As mentioned earlier, we need to start thinking of ourselves as athletes. Percussion performance requires performers to have a certain amount of muscle strength and control in one area or another. All percussionists can benefit from strength-training exercises. Try lifting small dumbbells in a variety of ways to build and maintain muscles in your arms. The weights don't need to be heavy, but after several repetitions, it should become more difficult to complete the exercise.

### Increased Coordination

Percussionists must have the ability to use multiple limbs to play various drums and rhythms simultaneously. Exercise can help percussionists further develop and fine-tune their coordination.

### Good for Your Brain

Regular exercise helps keep minds clear, which is essential for learning new music and performing it well.

- a. Decreased stress
- b. Decreased social anxiety
- c. Improved processing of emotions
- d. Prevention of neurological conditions
- e. Euphoria (short-term)
- f. Increased energy, focus and attention
- g. Hindrance to the aging process
- h. Improved memory
- i. Improved blood circulation
- j. Decreased "brain fog"

Not everyone is interested in the same types of exercise. Some people are runners, some are walkers, some play tennis or cycle. Personally, I have been into lifting weights for many years. Not everyone needs to do the same things. But I fully believe that everyone needs to do something active several times per week. Listen to your body. If something is hurting, don't overdo it. If you are unsure how to begin, seek the advice of a *certified* personal trainer.

## RECOVERY

What is one thing that differentiates good athletes from great ones? The way they recover. Recovery is one of the most important habits high-performing athletes can instill to reduce their fatigue and enhance performance. Percussionists need to think along the same lines. We have the tendency to finish a long, intense practice session and completely ignore the recovery process.

### R.I.C.E. Method

This acronym stands for Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation. It is the doctor-suggested recovery technique to help treat injuries and prevent them. The benefits of the R.I.C.E. method include the following:

**Rest:** Immobilization prevents further injury and gives the body time to recover.

**Ice:** Cold reduces pain by numbing the affected area.

**Compression:** Pressure keeps swelling under control.

**Elevation:** Keeping the injured body part above the heart reduces swelling and the associated pain and discomfort.

The swelling that we incur is from the shock of the stick or mallet striking the surface. Imagine how many times you hit the instrument during a two- or four-hour practice session! We also can incur swelling from other activities, including using the computer, texting, and playing video games.

I own therapy mitts and keep them stored in the freezer. Every night, I put them on each hand for 15-20 minutes to reduce any swelling that has accumulated throughout the day. If I am on the road and can't take my mitts, I fill the hotel ice bucket with ice and soak my hands/arms in that.

### Hydration

Dehydration can impair your muscles' ability to repair themselves. Water flushes toxins out of the body, transports nutrients into the cells, and delivers more oxygen to the brain. Water also helps



# Percussionists, and musicians in general, can underestimate the importance of proper nutrition for maximum performance.

with muscle soreness and tension and energizes the body at the cellular level. Dehydration has also been linked to mental fatigue.

How much water someone should drink to stay hydrated depends on physical size and intensity of activities. A general rule of thumb is drinking half of your body weight in ounces to relieve the symptoms of dehydration, leading to more energy and improved alertness. I recommend always carrying a reusable water bottle and gradually increasing your intake.

## Massage

After many years in the business, percussionists become accustomed to playing through their pain rather than seeking help. They might not know what they can do about it. Massage can be a beneficial course of treatment. A therapeutic massage helps unlock and release the offending muscle group(s), thus reducing pain, increasing circulation and oxygenation, removing toxins, and improving range of motion. In addition to massage, you can also try self-myofascial release through foam rolling.

## Stretching

Proper stretching is the key to maintaining a healthy body. I'm not going to tell you to stretch for 30 minutes after every practice session, but everyone should try to stretch for at least 10 minutes. Your hands will thank you later. Stretching is an important recovery technique to implement both pre- and post-practice. Through stretching, your body naturally lengthens the muscles, improving circulation and blood flow, and eliminating soreness and lessening chance of injury.

## Avoiding Burnout

The worst feeling a musician can experience is the feeling of burnout. There is a difference between being burnt out and being unmotivated. Sometimes you might not want to practice, which is different from burnout. When you are unmotivated, you must be disciplined.

Preventing burnout can be achieved easily by simply taking days off. Yes, we are athletes, but we are also humans who sometimes just need a break. Everybody reacts differently to emotional, physical, and mental stressors. You need to listen to your body. If you need to take a couple days off from practicing because you are physically or mentally fried, then do it. Just don't use it as a crutch.

## Sleep

The amount of sleep you get directly correlates to how effectively you learn, and it affects you in three ways. First, a sleep-deprived musician has a limited ability to focus and maintain the high level of attention needed for acquisition of new skills and facts. Your best practice sessions will consist of deliberate practice that is mindful and focused. Simply put, worthwhile practice sessions will be a mental workout, and you will not have the attention span nor preparation for massive acquisition of information if you're sleep-deprived.

Second, sleep itself plays a role in the consolidation of memory, which is the essential step during which acquired memories become stable. You worked hard to get the skills and facts into your short-term memory, but if you don't get to sleep, your mind will struggle to lock them away for the long term.

Recall is the final step in the memory process, which is the ability to access

information after it has been stored. Only memories that were successfully acquired and consolidated are available for recall. When low on sleep, your overworked brain struggles to coordinate information properly. On top of difficulty learning new material, you'll have increased difficulty recalling previously learned skills and information and applying previous knowledge to new problems.

## Supplementation

Over the years, I have researched and experimented with many different supplements, protein powders, and diet changes to find what works best for my body to reach my health and performance goals. While supplements should not take the place of food, a growing body of evidence shows that supplements are key players for recovery. Here are my top five favorite supplements:

1. **Probiotics** supply the gut with healthy flora necessary for digestion, absorption, elimination, and immune function. If your digestive system isn't operating properly, you won't recover properly, thus slowing the repair of muscle and tissue and leading to more inflammation.

2. **Glutamine** is not only essential for normal brain function, but it also speeds recovery by allowing the muscles to intake carbohydrates more readily post-workout.

3. **Curcumin/Turmeric** reduces pain and swelling when used either topically over sore muscles or taken orally.

4. **Glucosamine and chondroitin** are typically taken as one supplement, which help to reduce joint pain. Taking both can not only help to promote healing but also slow the natural deterioration of joint cartilage and keeping us free from joint pain.

5. **Branched-Chain Amino Acids (BCAAs)** are supplements that provide essential amino acids, which the body cannot make on its own. These supplements reduce muscle fatigue and even ease muscle soreness.

Admittedly, sleep has been the biggest challenge for me over the years. Sticking to the rest of the game plan as best I can has allowed me to recover from the injuries I have sustained and has given me the opportunity to continue performing professionally at a high level for over 25 years. Hopefully these guidelines will keep you free from injury, optimize your performing and teaching, and lead you toward a healthier lifestyle.

*The information offered in this article is for educational purposes only, and the reader should be cautioned there is an inherent risk with any form of physical activity. This article is not intended for the treatment or prevention of disease as a substitute for medical treatment or an alternative to medical advice. Consult with your physician prior to beginning any exercise or nutritional program.*

## WELLNESS RESOURCES FOR MUSICIANS

*The Musician's Way* by Gerald Klickstein and [www.musiciansway.com](http://www.musiciansway.com)

*The Percussionists' Guide to Injury Treatment and Prevention: The Answer Guide to Drummers in Pain* by Dr. Darin "Dutch" Workman.

*The Unbreakable Brain* by Will Mitchell

Music Strong; Strength Training for Musicians: [www.musicstrong.com](http://www.musicstrong.com)

The Functional Musician/Live and Perform Without Pain: [www.thefunctionalmusician.com](http://www.thefunctionalmusician.com)

Musician's Maintenance: [www.musicians-maintenance.com](http://www.musicians-maintenance.com)

The Productive Musician: [www.sarahwhitney.com](http://www.sarahwhitney.com)

Yoga: [www.yogaforallmusicians.com](http://www.yogaforallmusicians.com)

## OTHER RESOURCES

### Omega-3 Fatty Acids

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.gov/pubmed/24453077>

### Antioxidants

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.gov/pubmed/24957018>

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.gov/pubmed/19685255>

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.gov/pubmed/24957018>

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### B Vitamins

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### Foods

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# Performance Anxiety: A Look into the brain and how it deals with stress

By Dan McGuire

Every year, one of the most dreaded days for my beginning percussionists is their first solo performance. After working on the material for several weeks, each student performs a solo in front of the class. Invariably, after every performance, they are met with raucous applause from their peers. The students understand, all too well, the fear that forms like a lump in their chest as they approach the instrument at the front of the room, and they make it a point to support one another.

Performance anxiety (aka “stage fright”) is a common issue for many performers. As mental health awareness has surged in our society, the knowledge behind what occurs in these moments of nervousness and fear has increased dramatically. This article will examine the parts of the brain that dictate our response to anxiety, how the brain reacts to this type of stimuli, and methods for achieving equilibrium quickly. Anxiety and the subsequent fear are more than emotions; they produce a quantifiable physical reaction that can be dealt with in healthy ways.

## THE LIMBIC SYSTEM: THE EMOTIONAL GATEKEEPER

The limbic system is a group of structures in the brain that govern our responses and behaviors relating to emotion. As the body interprets sensory input (touch, sound, sight, smell, and taste), it first enters the thalamus, then passes through the amygdala before proceeding to the Prefrontal Cortex where conscious thoughts and decisions are made [Holland, K & Gepp, K., 2021]. The amygdala serves to both interpret and regulate emotions, as well as attach those emotions to past events. It is the “gatekeeper”, interpreting information before it reaches the Prefrontal Cortex [der Kolk, 2015, p. 61].

If you have ever had a bad experience with someone and then became nervous when they walked into the room, that was the

amygdala attaching an emotion to your current stimuli based upon past experiences. The amygdala is also the part of your brain that, if a threat is detected, will signal to the body that it needs to initiate the fight-or-flight response [der Kolk, 2015].

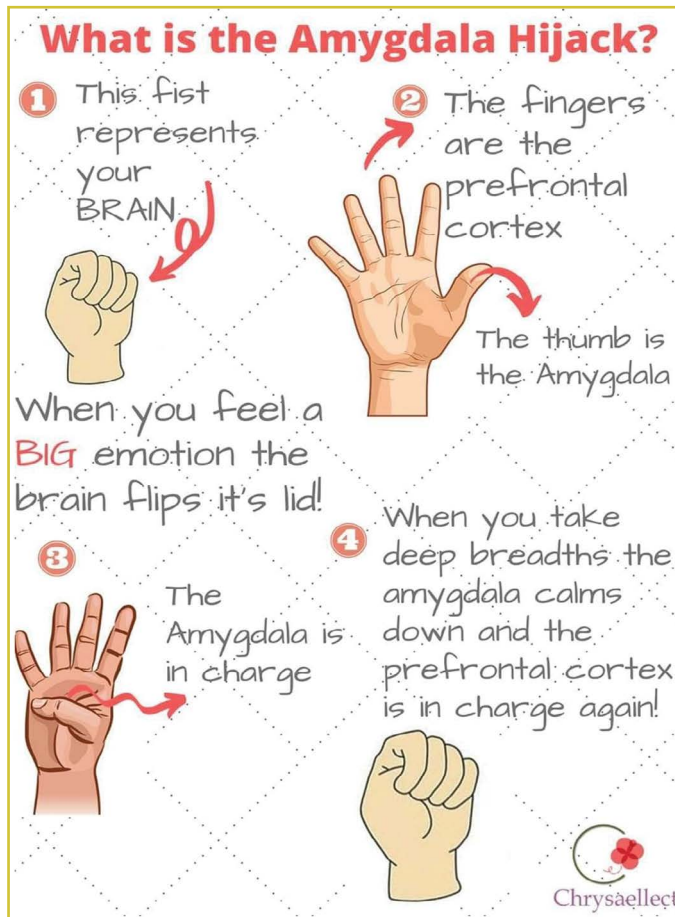
## WHEN STRESS OCCURS: THE FIGHT-OR-FLIGHT RESPONSE

When the amygdala detects stimuli that it perceives as a potential threat, it sends a signal to the other parts of the body that comprise the limbic system. The limbic system will then release stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline. This sets off a cascade of bodily reactions, which is collectively known as the fight-or-flight response.

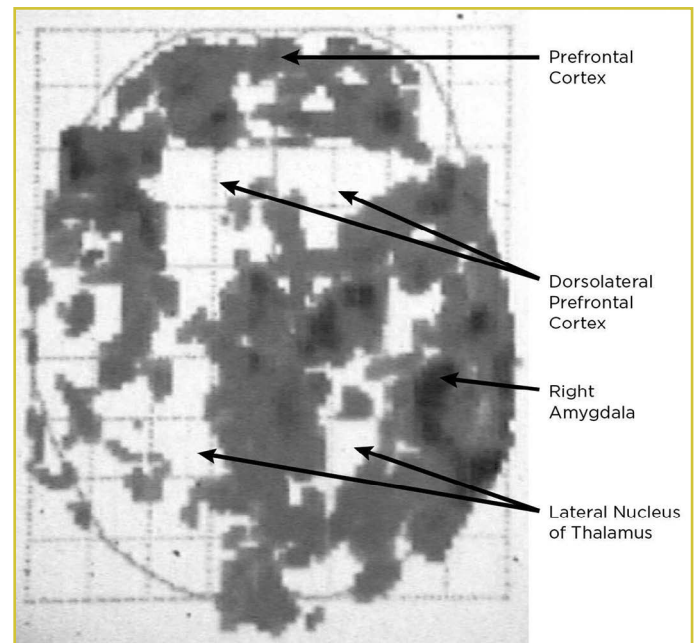
It is important to realize that this occurs as an automatic response without any decision on the part of the individual. While useful to early humans, in modern society the types of stresses we typically encounter do not merit the fight-or-flight response. When an individual encounters stress, the body still registers it as a physical threat and triggers the fight-or-flight response. In their article “Amygdala Hijack: When Emotion Takes Over,” Holland and Gepp write: “In the event of a physical threat, the amygdala may jump to the fight-or-flight response, but the front lobes process the information you’re receiving to help you determine if the danger is real. If the danger isn’t immediate, the frontal lobes help you decide what to do in response to the stress.”

In his 1995 book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, psychologist Daniel Goleman named this emotional overreaction to stress “amygdala hijack.” The amygdala hijack occurs when your amygdala responds to stress and disables your frontal lobes. That activates the fight-or-flight response and disables rational, reasoned responses. In other words, the amygdala “hijacks” control of your brain and your responses.

The Mayo Clinic Staff defines a panic attack as “a sudden epi-



the lack of activity in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex. This is the part responsible for decision making, working-memory, and timing. In this scan, the amygdala is the most active part of the brain, showing the “Amygdala Hijack” occurring [der Kolk, 2015].



sode of intense fear that triggers severe physical reactions when there is no real danger or apparent cause. Panic attacks can be very frightening. When panic attacks occur, you might think you’re losing control, having a heart attack or even dying.” Individuals who enter a panic attack often will not know what is happening to them, especially if they have never experienced one before. Some common signs of an impending or active panic attack include:

- Severe shaking in the legs and/or arms.
- Excessive wringing of the hands.
- Short and shallow breathing.
- Seeing “spots.”
- An inability to answer simple questions.
- “Freezing” and being unable to act or perform simple commands.

Performance anxiety can present in a variety of ways including forgetting music that has been learned in great detail, the body being unable to perform simple techniques specific to any discipline, or “blacking out” – forgetting what is about to happen. These and many other performance anxiety symptoms occur because of the “Amygdala Hijack” shutting down the prefrontal cortex.

In the brain scan image, the subject underwent an MRI while experiencing a panic attack. Light colored parts of the brain are inactive, and dark colored parts of the brain are active. Notice

There are several ways to help signal the amygdala that the threat has ended, and every individual will find specific methods that are most effective for them. However, one method has been proven to be consistently effective: Breathing.

A study performed by Holmes in 1984 looked at the effectiveness of controlled breathing in reducing both physical and psychological stress. Their abstract writes: “To determine whether slowing and altering the respiratory pattern is an effective means for reducing physiological and psychological arousal, subjects participated in one of three treatment conditions... either inhaled quickly and exhaled slowly, inhaled slowly and exhaled quickly, or spent equal amounts of time inhaling and exhaling. Other subjects participated in a distraction control condition or in a no-treatment control condition. Arousal was measured during a practice period, a threat (electrical shocks) anticipation period, and a threat confrontation period... inhaling quickly and exhaling slowly was consistently effective for reducing physiological (skin resistance) and psychological (subjective cognitive) arousal during the anticipation and confrontation periods.”

A simple method for practicing controlled breathing is to inhale for four counts, hold for seven counts, and breathe out for eight counts. The number of counts is much less important than the length being progressively longer as one goes from inhaling to holding, to exhaling. When this purposeful controlled breathing is performed repeatedly over a short period of time, the amygdala receives a “shut down” signal and will exit the fight-or-flight response.

Utilizing effective strategies for improving mental health is a new concept that educators, coaches, and performers are using to help themselves and their students. A proactive approach to this subject can provide a significant boost to an individual's confidence and achievement. Understanding that performance anxiety is a physical reaction within the body rather than an emotion to "work through" helps us empower individuals to deal with this issue.

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# Imposter Syndrome Among Percussionists

By Andrew Naughton

Imposter syndrome can be defined in many ways. The *Harvard Business Review* describes it as a “collection of feelings of inadequacy that persist despite evident success.”<sup>1</sup> It is prevalent in many occupations and professions. Artists or educators may feel inadequate making new contributions to their field, while a young lawyer may feel inundated by the magnitude of other lawyers with far more experience.

Within the percussion profession, there can be many causes for imposter syndrome feelings of self-doubt and estrangement. Percussion is an expansive field of musical instruments, performance practices, literature, and pedagogy. Even after years of study and relative success, emerging percussion artists and educators may experience the distress of imposter syndrome when entering a profession of vastly talented and knowledgeable experts. One of the most common forms of this malady is not feeling prepared enough to begin teaching at a collegiate level.

This article focuses on academic and performing percussionists, particularly those new to the professional world. It will discuss some causes of imposter syndrome within music professions, how imposter syndrome relates to the field of percussion, and conclude with recommended methods of coping with and overcoming this condition.

## CAUSES

The term “imposter syndrome” was coined in 1978 by Pauline Rose Clance, the Chair of the Psychotherapy Committee and Professor of Psychology at Georgia State University, Atlanta.<sup>2</sup> She first used the term to denote feelings of intellectual phoniness among high-achieving women.<sup>3</sup> Percussionists may experience imposter syndrome due to the overwhelming expectations of knowing the multitude of instruments and techniques or the amount of historical information. Some performers may feel that they are not skilled enough to compete with the top percussionists in the field. Other causes of imposter syndrome have arisen due to inequity. Entrepreneurship in women is ascending, though an under-recognized issue is their experiences of exclusion within male-dominated professions.<sup>4</sup>

There can also be an issue of cultural imposter feelings. Steven Schick describes his feelings when he performed “North Star Boogaloo” by George Lewis: “I had a sudden flash of the image I was presenting: A white middle-aged, classically trained percussionist intently focused on accurately rendering hip-hop rhythms to a mostly white, mostly middle-aged audience... That sudden feeling of not belonging, of never being able to belong, made me feel momentarily ridiculous and, later, profoundly sad... I had only momentarily dipped my toe into waters of not belonging, never belonging.”<sup>5</sup>

According to recent studies within the music industry, seven out of ten people experience imposter syndrome at some point. Within the creative industries,<sup>6</sup> this number then climbs to 87 percent.<sup>7</sup> Imposter syndrome is often paired with anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, which are common issues in the music industry. “Around 70 percent of people working in music report anxiety and panic attacks, while 65 percent have experienced depression versus 15 percent of the average population.”<sup>8</sup> These statistics reveal significant mental health issues exist in conjunction with imposter syndrome feelings within the music industry.

Studies observing music educators currently teaching within school systems affirm many of these teachers experience imposter syndrome symptoms.<sup>9</sup> A study of music educators across a wide range of colleges shows that many teachers do not conduct research in their field. They focus their time teaching and preparing for their lessons rather than developing professionally.<sup>10</sup>

## COPING

Some percussionists may likely experience imposter syndrome. Each person will react to imposter syndrome differently, but the challenge is to discover ways to help cope with and overcome imposter feelings. This requires perseverance and engaging in regular strategies. One of the main strategies is to recognize

# Taking chances is an opportunity to gain experience from failure and success and to grow and improve each time.

and acknowledge when these feelings arise, then to realize and accept that these feelings are common.<sup>11</sup>

When percussion educators begin teaching college, the focus moves toward building a program and away from learning pedagogy, literature, and the like. Dr. Luis Rivera has taught at the University of South Alabama since 2012 and has spoken of his insecurity outside of teaching music, such as seeking sponsors and endorsements for equipment, creating budgets for new inventory, and contacting clinicians for guest performances.<sup>12</sup>

The most recommended way for percussionists to overcome imposter syndrome is by gaining experience through success and failure. In nearly every episode of the TV series *The Magic School Bus*, Ms. Fizzle would yell to her students, “Take chances! Make mistakes! Get messy!”<sup>13</sup> Taking chances is integral to gaining opportunities. This author believes taking chances is the gateway between student and professional life. It is a way to see how an interview or audition process works and gain insight into what others are doing that gets them hired. Taking chances is an opportunity to gain experience from failure and success and to grow and improve each time.

Making mistakes is integral to the natural learning process.<sup>14</sup> Perfectionism is an ongoing challenge for many academics and professionals. College graduates have admitted to not turning in assignments because they did not feel their work matched the standards required of them.<sup>15</sup> Turning in an assignment that is not perfect is better than receiving a failing grade.

Many examples of success exist in the profession that were less than perfect. The song “Fight for Your Right (To Party)” was written as a joke by the Beastie Boys, and it became popular. Ella Fitzger-

ald won two Grammys even after forgetting the words to “Mack the Knife” and scat-singing her way through much of the song, and Quiet Riot intentionally attempted to sabotage their cover of “Cum on Feel the Noize,” which backfired and reached No. 5 on the Billboard Hot 100.<sup>16</sup>

It is imperative that percussion educators continue their professional development and stay current with percussion pedagogy and new literature to mitigate the causes of imposter syndrome. Gaining student respect challenges many new collegiate percussion educators. Being organized and prepared is imperative to maintaining student respect. “Constant and honest goal-setting and assessment with your students will gain and ensure their respect and commitment to the program—and you.”<sup>17</sup> Attending conferences such as PASIC is an excellent opportunity for professional development. General music education conferences sponsored by the National Association for Music Education (NAfME)<sup>18</sup> are another resource for gaining insights on teaching, preparation, and even time management.

## CONCLUSION

In closing, imposter syndrome can impair and challenge our psychological well-being. It is how we learn and excel despite this challenge that sets professionals apart. Recommended solutions to imposter syndrome include realizing, acknowledging, and honestly accepting that these feelings are common. Strategies presented within the article such as goal setting, attending conferences, and avoiding over-perfectionism are helpful tools to combat imposter syndrome. Take chances, make mistakes, be prepared, and continue to develop as a professional thinking percussionist.

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# Show Yourself That You Care

By Dr. Matthew Halligan

**A**s students, educators, and performers, we all need to periodically show ourselves that we care. Self-care can be anything from going on a vacation to simply taking a nap. With simple preventative self-care, we can ensure the ability to thrive – whether that’s throughout an entire season with a drum and bugle corps or the longevity of a lifelong performing or teaching career.

While not everyone has the time or resources for a long vacation, most of us can and should carve out time each week specifically for self-care. This time can be used to catch up on activities such as rest, laundry, enjoying nature, exercise, reading, and connecting with family and friends.

## SLEEP

This is a big one – and one that many of us struggle to prioritize. If you regularly have a hard time settling down to sleep, consider making a routine. Having a routine helps our subconscious minds prepare for sleep, using tactics such as regularly resting at a specific time or perhaps after a snack, shower, or light reading. Although it can be easy to make a mental checklist at night when you lay down, don’t try to keep it all inside. Write it down and then set it aside. You can always keep a notepad on your nightstand to make any quick notes at night.

When I was in the Marine Corps, I would take off my dogtags and put them

on the key holder to symbolically let myself know that I was “off duty” and could relax. When you create a routine for yourself, you can relax, too. Your to-do list will still be there in the morning.

## CLEANING AND OTHER TASKS

Maintaining a clean environment and good hygiene will ensure that your physical space and state match your mental readiness. Don’t forget to treat yourself: get a massage, take a nap, meditate, soak in a hot tub, watch a movie, or go downtown and play in a drum circle!

## NATURE AND EXERCISE

Getting out of town and spending time outside on a hike can be a perfect way to regain mental clarity. Making time to look up at the stars or out onto the water helps one to unwind, and combining these with exercise makes it beneficial for our physical health as well. Even a walk, light jog, biking, or running at home can have positive results with mentally resetting ourselves. If driving to a state park to go hiking is not possible, finding simple ways to boost your endorphins through exercise can help your endurance and with avoiding feeling stressed out.

## FAMILY AND FRIENDS

It can be easy to spend time by yourself on a day off, but do not forget to connect with family, friends, and colleagues when you are able. Watching a concert with friends is a great way to continue

Spending time with others who care about you is important for maintaining healthy perspective and attitude.

to develop your ear as a musician, stay inspired, and reenergize yourself. Spending time with others who care about you is also important for maintaining healthy perspective and attitude. A kind word or encouraging conversation can boost your entire week.

Everyone has different ways of relaxing and rejuvenating. Find what works for you and show yourself that you care!

Dr. Matthew Halligan is a percussionist and educator in St. Joseph, Missouri. He serves as the Director of Athletic Band Bands/Percussion at Missouri Western State University.

# Percussionists on the Run

By Jason Baker

Performing music engages many aspects of our being — physical, mental, and, some would say, spiritual. It can be described as a total-body experience, where training and preparation of many reflexes and senses is paramount for a successful performance. Additionally, music requires an immense amount of solitary preparation, honing a mental toughness necessary to endure low points and monotonous repetition that eventually lead to success on the stage. To love performance is to embrace this process, and the two become inextricably connected.

I find the same experiences when running. Both of my parents were long-distance runners while I was growing up. I engaged the sport in my early thirties, setting small goals around my neighborhood and then working up the courage to register for a 5k, then half-marathons, marathons, and eventually ultra-distance races. What started as perhaps just a quest for better health has evolved into a practice that parallels my life as a percussionist with planning, intense preparation, sense of accomplishment, and desire to see what else is possible.

In addition to well-known physical health benefits, running also affects mental performance crucial to music-making. A recent study by researchers at the University of Tsukuba in Japan demonstrated how running activated the prefrontal cortex and led to increased executive function in the brain, as well as a heightened mood.<sup>1</sup> In an even more compelling

study, drumming and running have both been used in eye-movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) in treating trauma and mental health patients, due to the right- and left-brain activation that occurs when both sides of the body are used.<sup>2</sup> In short, think of the calm you feel after a run (or brisk walk) or a cathartic drum set improvisation.

I know that I am not alone in these experiences and wanted to ask several fellow runner-percussionists to share their thoughts.

Nathan Daughtrey is president and owner of C. Alan Publications. He is a much sought-after composer and keyboard percussion soloist. John R. Beck is the principal percussionist of the Winston-Salem Symphony and teaches percussion at the UNC School of the Arts and Wake Forest University. He is a former member of the United States Marine Band. Bonnie Whiting teaches percussion at the University of Washington. Her performance interests involve non-traditional notation, interdisciplinary performance, improvisation, and the speaking percussionist.

**Jason Baker:** What caused you to start running? Were there any hesitations or challenges that you had to overcome?

**John R. Beck:** I began running when I was in the U.S. Marine Band in the early 1980s. We had most afternoons off, and the running boom was just beginning to be big in America. My first marathon was the Marine Corps Mar-

athon in 1989. I enjoyed the challenge of pushing myself to greater distances with each race.

**Nathan Daughtrey:** While living in Houston in 2007, I met a good friend who was an avid runner. I was about 40 pounds heavier than I am now, so I started running for the betterment of my health — physical and mental. I was not fast, but I had a patient and encouraging running partner who met me where I was on my journey. The biggest challenge from the beginning was eliminating the notion that running equaled being fast.

**Bonnie Whiting:** I remember being pretty young, and watching Jackie Joyner Kersee compete in the Olympics. I found her so strong and inspiring, and I loved that running was something I could do pretty much anywhere, with just a pair of shoes. I remember asking my dad to drive me to the local high school track when I was 10 so I could run. I've always loved running and physical activity, though I'm pretty uncoordinated when in team sports, so I joined the middle-school cross-country team. I've been running on a daily basis since I was 12 years old.

Running is my longest-standing habit; even when I go through periods of not practicing, I run every morning. I've run in Alaska when temperatures plunged below -40, in the Anza-Borrego desert, saddled with extra water, and during weeks of constant rain in Seattle. I've jogged past armed guards

on street corners in Turkmenistan, run through the hills of New Zealand, and capitalized on “speed work” drills to sprint through airports to many soon-departing flights.

**Baker:** Have you noticed any effects of running on your experiences as a performer or music professional?

**Beck:** Running is a great way to clear my mind. I don’t listen to music when I run, but music always seems to enter my head when I do. For some reason the “Turkish March” from Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9* is my ear worm when I swim laps in the pool. If I can run on the day of a performance or a stressful rehearsal, I always feel more relaxed. I am certainly physically stronger for schlepping instruments because I run and exercise regularly.

**Daughtrey:** Being in good cardiovascular shape is never a bad thing for percussionists, as we use our whole body when performing. That takes stamina. I have organized the Fun Runs at PASIC for the past 12+ years. As such, my social network in the percussion community has expanded simply through this shared experience of running.

**Whiting:** Each body will thrive with different engagement, and running isn’t the right choice for every percussionist. However, creating intentional space for reflection through physical embodiment is a practice that I’ve recommended to many students and friends. Running, in particular, as daily practice has shaped my identity and cultivated my well-being, but I believe the commitment to daily, habitual self-care, in general, can benefit musicians of all abilities.

**Baker:** Has the experience of training or running informed how you practice music or prepare for performances?

**Beck:** I constantly refer to training for running events when helping students prepare for recitals. Crisis training and crisis practicing do not result in good performances in races or on the stage.

There is base training, interval training, and performance rehearsal training involved in running and music. In a triathlon, the day you set up your transition area and go from biking to running is called the Dress Rehearsal for race day.

**Daughtrey:** I have always felt like they inform one another. I am at my best when I have set goals for myself — whether registering for a half marathon or getting a recital on the calendar. I know that three months out, I need to start gradually increasing my mileage. I can’t just cram it into the week before the race. Similarly, my hands are very unhappy if I wait until the last minute to prepare for a performance, even if for a single piece. I just love the discipline that both require.

**Whiting:** My early years of marathon training intersected with my first full-time job as a performer. I was a musician with a touring quartet that performed nearly 200 shows per year for children and family audiences, integrating movement and theater with newly composed pieces. I can go back to planners from those years and find practice logs and memorization deadlines right next to weekend long-run mileage goals, tempo runs, and speed work days. Distance running in particular helped me to better conceptualize the “long game” of music development, memorization, and performance. Coming out of a focused and heavily mentored conservatory undergraduate experience, learning to manage my own time and set goals in my running life paralleled the kinds of choices and routines I was learning to set in my musical life.

**Baker:** Can you provide examples of how running has affected your mental health?

**Beck:** Several years ago, I broke my toe and couldn’t run. I was presenting a clinic at the Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic about musicians’ hearing health that involved lots of technology



During morning runs I think about how I’ll use my always-limited practice time, problem-solve pedagogical issues, and dream about new projects.  
—Bonnie Whiting



Being in good cardiovascular shape is never a bad thing for percussionists, as we use our whole body when performing.  
—Nathan Daughtrey



If I can run on the day of a performance or a stressful rehearsal, I always feel more relaxed.  
—John R. Beck

and a collaboration with a high school band in another state. There were so many details swimming around in my head. I began to have chest pain in the days before the clinic. My doctor told me that excess adrenaline can cause chest pain, and my inability to get rid of it through regular exercise was the likely cause. Once I could run again, my mind was clearer, the pain disappeared, and the technology worked at Midwest!

**Daughtrey:** For the first few years of running, I always listened to music, which provided a bit of escape. At some point, I decided to leave the earbuds at home and be content with the sounds of my natural environment. It also left me alone with my thoughts. Sometimes I just let my mind wander, but often, especially on longer runs, 1–3 hours, I consciously try to work through some things — tough conversations I need to have, composition ideas, mental practice for an upcoming performance, brainstorming ideas for the publishing company, etc. I try to keep it positive, as

I want my running to always be something I look forward to.

**Whiting:** Solo runs, always first thing in the morning, are my time for reflection, meditation, and solitude. As a parent, full-time university professor, and active performer, running is essential to both my physical and mental health. I never set an “agenda” for these morning runs, but it’s often during this time that I think about how I’ll use my always-limited practice time, problem-solve pedagogical issues, and dream about new projects. I don’t listen to music or podcasts, but instead prefer to be open to my environment. As my body gets in “the zone” — a near autonomous sweet spot of exertion and calm — my mind wanders creatively. Running alleviates stress, produces endorphins that keep me balanced throughout my day, and has allowed me to feel more able to meet the physical endurance challenges that come with playing percussion and moving gear. That said, I think the most rewarding part of my running practice is the daily time I commit to myself.

**Baker:** Are there any other wellness practices — nutrition, meditation, etc. — that enhance your experiences either as a runner, musician, or both?

**Beck:** I have become heavily involved in facilitating HealthRHYTHMS drum circles over the past seven years. I view these 30- to 60-minute sessions as a form of wellness through rhythm and community building. I’ve been a vegetarian since 1996 and have a yoga routine to help with lower back pain that my physician daughter calls “old man spine.” Lifting timpani, marimbas, and drum sets in and out of vans takes a toll on us.

**Daughtrey:** I do about 95% of the cooking in our house, which I absolutely love. It’s a sort of meditation for me, but it’s also an activity where I can be creative, which is when I’m at my happiest. Additionally, by cooking every meal using mostly whole foods, I can take control

over the quality of nutrition for my family and me. Outside of that, spending dedicated time with my wife and daughter helps me to recharge. All of it is connected.

**Whiting:** Now that I’m over 40, I’ve found that I need to add yoga and stretching to my week to avoid injury and pain. This lets me keep doing long runs on the weekend and has thus far made it possible for me to keep loading my own equipment in and out! During the pandemic, I discovered stand-up paddle boarding, which has been a really fun full-body cross-training activity. I’m also an active hiker, something I love since I live in the Pacific Northwest, and this is something I can do with my family.

**Baker:** Have you had any running-related injuries, and how have you overcome or managed them?

**Beck:** Just before my first marathon I had some foot pain. The podiatrist I saw prescribed orthotic inserts for my shoes and advised not running the marathon. Being a 29-year-old “invincible” runner, I did it anyway, and I partially tore my anterior cruciate ligament. I’ve been working around that injury ever since. Listen to your doctor!

**Daughtrey:** Honestly, I have not had any terrible running injuries that have put me out of commission. Most of my injuries have occurred when training for full marathons, as my long runs approached 20 miles. Injuries almost always stem from not stretching my hips and IT band, which can wreak havoc on your knees. I just had a few sessions with a physical therapist and massage therapist specializing in sports medicine.

**Whiting:** The only time I wasn’t running was right after my son was born. I had to take a month off to recover from his birth, and I really missed the routine. Starting again slowly and running very short distances, with a body that had changed dramatically, was both humbling and gratifying. It was meaningful

to know I could still run, even though so much had changed. It's funny, I felt similar when I played my first concert after his birth, too. I feel a lot of gratitude for the constants of running and performing through major life changes.

## CONCLUSION

Percussion and cardiovascular exercise are widely accessible and are both relatively simple to start: requiring only a pair of drumsticks or a decent pair of running shoes. Like any physical activity, running can present the risk of injury, but this can be minimized with proper form, pacing, and shoe selection.<sup>3</sup> Injury can be further avoided, and performance increased, with a consistent warm-up routine (in both running and percussion).<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps many of us find a connection between running and percussion because they have been a part of our existence since the dawn of humankind, and returning to these simple, repetitive acts aligns us with something – physiologically, personally, or socially – we cannot find elsewhere. Whether explained through scientific data or personal experiences, both activities result in increased wellness, heightened functioning, and a connection with the world around us.

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# All About Stress

By Dr. James T. Lindroth

**T**he World Health Organization (WHO) defines stress as any change that causes physical, emotional, or psychological strain on a person. Stress affects the brain and body and is a normal reaction that happens to everyone. It helps a person adjust to new situations and can be beneficial in helping a people perform or protect themselves. In addition, it keeps a person focused, alert, and motivated. However, too much stress or continuing without relief can overwhelm an individual, leading to severe issues such as anxiety and depression. Therefore, identifying and coping with stress triggers is critical for a person's mental and physical well-being.

## SOURCES OF STRESS

Three significant sources of stress are physical stress, chemical stress, and emotional stress. Physical stress deals with events that negatively affect your body, primarily identified as physical pain. These include injuries from bad posture/technique, playing for too long, not warming up or stretching, an unhealthy lifestyle, not enough sleep, and any other factors that cause harm to the body. Percussionists often see musculoskeletal disorders develop such as bursitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis, trigger finger, myofascial pain, and nerve impairment (neuropathy). For a fuller examination of these injuries and prevention help, see my article in the [November 2019 issue of Percussive Notes](#).

Chemical stress involves what we knowingly and unknowingly put into our bodies. This heading includes narcotics (prescription or illegal drugs), alcohol, excess caffeine, tobacco, and even fast foods. In addition, we are exposed to toxins in our workplace or homes, such as inadequate HVAC systems or insufficient water supply. It is essential to understand what we are exposed to, from eating a steady diet of high fat to what prescription medication we take and how those chemicals affect our nervous systems.

Emotional stress is simply the stuff we think about daily. For example, thinking about how to pay rent, manage responsibilities, and coping with a serious illness can trigger emotional stress. Other common triggers include job-related stress, the death of a loved one, marriage/relationship issues, financial issues, family issues, and other negative thinking that leads to emotional stress. It is not uncommon for any of these events to happen to a person. Serious problems arise when these negative triggers overburden an individual without relief.

Impacts on our body in the form of physical, chemical, and emotional stress can affect the nervous system by sending abnormal signals to various glands, tissues, and organs. This situation can lead to both short and long-term debilitating problems for people. Therefore, let us briefly examine how this process works and what parts of the body play a significant role in this development.

## THE PROCESS

The hypothalamus is an area of the brain that acts as a command center for the human body. This area of the brain communicates with our body through the autonomic nervous system, which controls involuntary functions such as breathing, blood pressure, heartbeat, and the dilation and constriction of blood vessels and airways in the lungs. The autonomic nervous system has two components: the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. Both systems allow a body to function correctly, and a careful balance between the two systems is critical for good health.

The sympathetic nervous system functions like a gas pedal on a car. It triggers the body to a "fight or flight" response by providing the body with quick bursts of energy when dealing with a stressful situation. The brain (amygdala specifically) sends a distress signal to the hypothalamus, which activates the sympathetic nervous system. This nervous system then tells the adrenal gland to pump epinephrine (adrenaline) into the bloodstream. This brings on several changes to the body. The heart pumps faster, pushing more blood to organs, the heart, and muscles. The heart rate increases and blood pressure rises, causing small airways in the lungs to open wide. Extra oxygen is sent to the brain, which causes more alertness to all the senses. At the same time, epinephrine triggers the release of blood sugar (glucose) and fats from storage sites in the body. This act

supplies more energy to all parts of the body.

As the initial surge of epinephrine subsides, a second component known as the HPA axis (hypothalamus, pituitary gland, and adrenal gland) activates. This process keeps the gas pedal down in the car metaphor mentioned earlier. In addition, hormones that are released through this process allow the body to stay alert and focused. Eventually, when the hormone levels fall, the parasympathetic nervous system is activated.

The parasympathetic nervous system acts like a brake on the car by dampening the stress response, allowing the body to down regulate (the process of reducing or suppressing a stressful response) and come to the point of calm and rest all through the stimulation of the vagus nerve. It helps control the body in different ways, such as lowering the heart rate and breathing, activating metabolism, and regulating other bodily functions. Essentially, it informs your brain as to what is happening, rather than the brain telling your body what to do.

When we feel chronic stress, it is often due to the sympathetic nervous system being active too often or for extended periods without the relief of the parasympathetic system bringing our body functions back to rest. Chronic stress can lead to anxiety, panic attacks, sadness, and depression. People often attempt to mitigate chronic stress by engaging in unhealthy behaviors such as substance abuse and compulsive actions such as gambling, overeating, and shopping.

The problem with the effects of stress is that it is not easily measurable and highly subjective. Only the person experiencing stress can determine when it is present and the severity level. However, your physician can aid in detecting physical symptoms like high blood pressure and develop a treatment plan. Mental health professionals can also help a person through chronic stress with coping skills and strategies.

## HELPFUL GUIDELINES

We know stress cannot be eliminated in our lives because stress is part of life. However, the following guidelines can help deal with chronic stress.

**Seek medical professionals.** Seek medical professionals trained in providing clinical support and develop treatment plans when necessary.

**Understand the signs and symptoms of stress.** The warning signs may vary, but it is essential to understand your body and recognize your red flags and signals of stress.

**Learn to identify stress triggers.** Of course, we can't always avoid these triggers, but we can take note of specific triggers. This awareness can help formulate a plan to deal with the effects of stress.

**Mindfulness.** For many people, meditation and breathing exercise techniques help create an awareness of their body and surroundings. This act of mindfulness can have a positive impact on managing stress.

**Improve sleep quality.** Getting too little or poor-quality sleep can contribute to stress. Attempt to get eight hours of quality sleep a night. Set regular times for going to bed and arising in the morning.

**Exercise regularly.** Exercise can lower the buildup of stress in several ways. Physical activity increases the body's endorphins, which help boost mood and reduce stress. Exercise routines such as Yoga and Tai Chi can also play a part in developing awareness. Keeping your body fit will help your body with focus, clarity, and endurance.

**Develop your support team.** Family members, friends, confidants, spouses, and companions provide a positive social support network that can help you during chronic stress. We all need a support group to help us when we need it the most.

## CONCLUSION

Stress is a normal and natural occurrence in our lives. Stress can be a short-term or long-term issue. Listen to your body and learn to notice the signs and triggers of your stress. Develop positive coping strategies and eliminate negative compulsive behaviors outlined in this article. Since stress cannot be measured or detected well, remember to seek professional medical help when the stress becomes chronic and overwhelming. Set up a strong support team that will aid you in managing stress and living a better life.

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# Transform Your Health and Play Better with Evidence-Based Tools

By Gloria Yehilevsky

**T**ransformation is a strong word, yet I assure you that implementing even one of the recommendations in this article will have profound effects. Please note that simply thinking about these things, but not doing them, will, unfortunately, not elicit effects. That's the only catch.

A former mentor of mine (Adrian Spillett, CBSO Section Leader, Percussion) always said this, but I genuinely found it difficult to implement: "*Less talking, more playing.*" This piece of wisdom applies beyond one's ability to excel at percussion. In fact, the things you do for your health outside of time devoted to your musicianship will have a far greater impact on your playing (and life) than will the playing alone. This may appear contradictory, but bear with me.

There are behavioral changes that anyone can make to improve one's health, and the only prerequisite for their effects to be positive is being human. At least, that's what the science has shown thus far. All the percussionists I know, and indeed every percussionist reading this article, is undoubtedly human. This article will provide an overview of some key health-related practices, slanted towards the problems associated with playing percussion.

## MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

"Health-related" appears to be a broad topic on the surface; therefore, it is important to note that our physical health is directly impacted by our mental health. Considering this more deeply, getting our psychological and physiological health on track not only benefits how we feel, how each day goes, and our ability to play an instrument – and improve our focus and attention when doing so – it extends to our relationships with the people in our lives, and our relationships with the musical instruments in our lives. Our relationships with these people and instruments then extend to our ability to communicate emotions effectively while on stage, as well as our ability to connect with audiences.

In *The Master and His Emissary*, a book about the brain's lateralization, and how differences between hemispheres impact our experience in and shaping of the world, Iain McGilchrist writes: "Food... and musical instruments, presumably because of the intimate way in which they take part in the life of the body, sort with the living rather than the non-living."<sup>1</sup>

In other words, our brain not only groups, but perceives and emotionally connects with musical instruments and

food in the same broad category as other living beings. Consider how profound the consequences of this experience are for musicians – and particularly percussionists, who deal with a high number of instruments. I can easily look through my life thus far and recall the connections I have felt with my instruments – especially the ones I owned. Therefore, improving our health in every manner of the word, has profound implications beyond "looking good" or the type of confidence that results in "not caring about what others think" and every other cliché you see on Instagram.

This deserves reiteration: our mental health is directly impacted by our physical health. It actually doesn't matter how those parts are ordered; the relationship is bidirectional. This idea was shown empirically by Stanford Psychologist Alia Crum in a now infamous study titled "Mind over Milkshakes."<sup>2</sup> In this experiment, the researchers gave all the participants the exact same milkshake. However, half of the participants were told it was a sensible, low-calorie shake, while the other half was told the opposite: it was a high fat, high sugar, high calorie, indulgent shake. They measured the participants' hormone levels in anticipation of the shake, and afterwards, and observed that there were in fact *hormon-*



# Our mental health is directly impacted by our physical health.

al differences in-between these groups. People's actual, measured, *biochemical response* was different, irrespective of the nutritional content of the milkshake. These differences were mediated by their attitudes about the food they consumed.

Consider the best performance or practice session you remember having. Now consider any other around that time frame. You might instantly realize that, in fact, the differences between those were very small, if even noticeable. What made your best gig your best gig was very likely how you felt about it. However, the thing is, how you felt about it is *also the thing that made that performance one of your best ones*.

How we feel is not trivial. Feelings are our way of interacting with and experiencing the world. They have profound consequences on every moment, including one's ability to hit things with sticks.

## LIFESTYLE CHANGES

I have made numerous changes in my lifestyle over the past six months. Everything in this list has had a positive effect on my biology, psychology, cognition, in how I interact with others, and beyond. The ones I highlight below appear to be the most effective of these, both based on my own experience and in what the experts say. Although I have ordered them partially based on the weight of this evidence, and partially based on what I think is realistic for those reading this, please do not interpret the order as having any significance. Try to do what you can. I hope these suggestions help.

### Change your relationship with time

Have you ever been running late to a meeting, appointment, or whatever, and felt frustrated? Obviously; we all have. The reality is, however, that there's not

much you can do. You might drive 5, or 10, or 20 MPH faster, but a cost comes with that – a real danger. And considering it, how much faster does it *actually* get you there? A minute? Two? I'm willing to bet you were running more than two minutes late anyway.

The most impactful book I read this year was Oliver Burkeman's *Four Thousand Weeks: Time Management for Mortals*.<sup>3</sup> I have recommended it widely. If you read nothing else this year, or in the next five years, make it Burkeman. This book helped me make the most difficult decisions in my life, and while reading it, they not only felt easy to make, but they also occurred extraordinarily quickly.

We live in a society dominated by time and our relationship to it, feeling a consistent pressure to get an unrealistic amount done. In fact, this pressure itself prevents us from doing these things. It really is possible to do the things that you truly want to do and relax into them. This requires accepting the fact that they will take the amount of time that they will take. It also requires accepting the fact that you won't get everything done – not today, nor this week, nor in the coming years, and in fact, not before you die. But that's not a bad thing; it's a very good thing.

Paying attention to this fact allows one to pay attention to what matters, which is why I said it is possible to do the things that you *truly* want to do. This requires relinquishing control in some areas of your life to serve another purpose. And most importantly, it requires changing your entire outlook on time, and once this idea clicks, it will renew you.

You can listen to an interview with Burkeman,<sup>4</sup> and he also has an audio series with snippets of advice in the *Waking Up* app, but neither of these is any substitute for reading the book.

## Sleep

Getting your sleep on track is the number-one thing you can do for your physical and mental health. In fact, when deprived of food, water, sleep, or exercise for a short period of time, lack of sleep has the most detrimental effects.<sup>5,6</sup>

Poor sleep throughout one's lifespan leads to serious metabolic and cardiovascular consequences. Recent science in circadian biology has furthered this, showing that our circadian rhythms, which run approximately 24 hours and are comprised not only of when we sleep, but also when we eat, when we exercise, when we feel energized or not, have an impact on every cell in our bodies from day to day.<sup>7</sup>

Importantly for percussionists, sleep is crucial in learning, both physically (think "muscle memory," which is really neuromuscular connection) and mentally (learning your notes, memorizing music). It is crucial in muscle repair and growth. So, the next time you're working on learning a hard passage, and it's getting late and you're hitting diminishing returns, don't push on, just get some sleep. If you manage to get good sleep, you will often find that you will master that passage the next morning.

For essential behaviors in optimizing sleep, I recommend the HubermanLab podcast. There are many episodes on sleep, especially the first four or so of the series, but an overview happens in the episode *Sleep Toolkit*.<sup>8</sup> To get deeper into the neuroscience of it, as well as for key behavioral protocols, I recommend Matthew Walker's book *Why We Sleep*.<sup>5</sup>

Two things I will highlight now: ensuring you get sunlight in your eyes in the first hour upon waking (which will impact your sleep later that night), and regularity of timing of sleep.

Regarding sunlight exposure, Huber-

# It really is possible to do the things that you truly want to do and relax into them.

man discusses this in exceptional detail, but briefly: do not wear sunglasses, but do wear regular eyeglasses or contacts if you use them. Do not do this through a window, which makes the sunlight significantly less bright, and do not stare directly at any light that hurts to look at. Indirect is fine. It also doesn't have to be when the sun rises, just in the first hour after you wake up — which for musicians is often on the late side, especially after a gig, and that's fine!

The stimulus of sunlight in our eyes results in activating melanopsin cells, which then send signals to the brain's suprachiasmatic nucleus,<sup>7</sup> which is the part of the brain typically described as that which operates our internal clock. This has implications for every cell in our body, including our digestion, ability to focus, and sleep/wake cycles.

Second, regularity is extremely hard for musicians due to unpredictable schedules. This is also why your relationship to time matters; do your best to be regular, but on the days when things diverge from your schedule, that's okay. Many of my friends are jazz musicians, and when they express concern about their sleep, the story often goes that they want to be in bed around 10 p.m. and up by 7 a.m., like the rest of the world. I suggest you abandon this idea. If you're a gigging musician, and often arrive home at 2 a.m., then try making your regular bedtime around 2-3 a.m., and wake-up time around 10-11 a.m., if that's possible for your schedule.

Of course, most percussionists also teach, which often requires getting up early. If you have any control over your teaching schedule, try to balance this in order to get some regularity, but I know this is not possible for many people. Going to bed late and waking up late is not lazy; in fact, it is one of the best things

you can do for your overall health, particularly if it's consistent.

## Surround yourself with good friends

One of the biggest predictors of physical illness later in life, not just life satisfaction, is the quality of your friendships. For me, being around good people required a move to a city with the highest concentration of my closest friends. This is not easy for many people, and you really only need one or two excellent people around for the positive effects to come through.

However, I want to stress the importance of this. Initially, I found it embarrassing to admit that the main reason why I moved was to be around friends, but that was misguided. It truly is a profound reason, and has knock-on effects in every aspect of one's life.

## Exercise

Start by abandoning the idea that you must be a runner or that you must go to a certain gym or that you must do whatever popular thing everyone else is into nowadays. Any exercise is good exercise. Also try and reframe the view that exercise is hard and unpleasant, and approach it as something fun. At the very least, focus on how you feel after you exercise, which tends to be a pleasant feeling for most people. Again, mindset matters, and Alia Crum did another study that looked at mindset and exercise, which showed that those who found exercise appealing were more likely to do it<sup>9</sup> — no surprise there!

## Other things I've personally benefitted from

*Cutting out alcohol* — albeit not completely, but almost. This sounds like it has a cost, but in fact I truly enjoy how well

my mind works. It has also positively affected my mood. I still have fun when socializing, simply with fewer consequences. It might feel awkward at first, particularly if you are not drinking in certain settings, but it has improved my sleep, my energy, my psychology, and my biology.

I've also *deleted all my social media apps and changed my phone's content settings to restrict access to these*. It was painful at first, and I kept thinking of clever tweets that I couldn't post. Boredom arose with the amount of time that was freed up when I would habitually pick up my phone and realize there was nothing to check. After about a week, however, my time was filled with the things I actually care about doing — and I truly enjoy them! Needless to say, my productivity has flourished.

If you dare, *delete your email app from your phone*. I can (and still do) access mine on a browser, but this action led me to realize how only about one in every 100 or so emails actually requires a response. This varies by individual, of course, and by profession, but it has helped me focus on the things that are worth my attention.

*Meditate*. This calls for an entire article. In terms of psychology (specifically, how I react to the things that happen to me, how I engage with my thoughts, and how long I spend ruminating or anticipating or in some other form of thought-based contraction), meditation has been the most impactful practice for improving my internal state. I recommend the *Waking Up* app. I also highly recommend attending a silent meditation retreat, even if you have no experience with meditation; these are where the transcendent benefits happen. I recommend Spirit Rock Meditation Center (California) and Insight Meditation Society (Massachu-

setts) in the U.S., and Gaia House in the U.K.

A quick note for those concerned about the cost of a retreat, most of these places have sliding-scale pricing which can work with your budget. Additionally, if you are under 26 in the U.S. or 25 in the U.K., they offer steep discounts, which I highly recommend taking advantage of.

## CONCLUSION

To close, I encourage you not to worry too much about any of the above – a mistake I made when first getting my sleep on track, increasing my exercise load, and trying to optimize my circadian rhythms. This is why, again, one’s relationship with time, in which these tasks and activities happen, is of crucial importance. Enjoy your health journey. It is, after all, your life.

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# Confronting Writer's Block for Composers

By Josh Gottry

A blank score can be a terrifying sight for many composers. Before our creative self can even begin to consider the dots and lines that might grace the page, our editor self begins the criticism process, halting any forward progress and stifling the creative juices that might potentially generate a new work.

Writer's block is a very real thing for established composers and those who are just beginning to explore their creative voice. It can strike at any time: while staring at the blank staff, just after the first idea has been realized on the page, or even up until that point where you just need one more phrase to make this piece pop. Ask any composers and they'll give you a list of strategies that sometimes work for them, in the hopes that their trials and errors might help others minimize the impact of writer's block on their own composition efforts.

To that end, I facilitated a conversation, by means of a shared Google Doc, among myself and several of my percussion composition colleagues. Combined, the seven of us represent over 500 published works, including numerous self-published pieces along with titles in the catalogs of several respected percussion publishers. Each of us has had a work performed at PASIC, but each of us has also struggled with writer's block. It is the hope that our shared experiences might equip emerging percussion composers with techniques

and approaches to successfully confront their own encounters with writer's block.

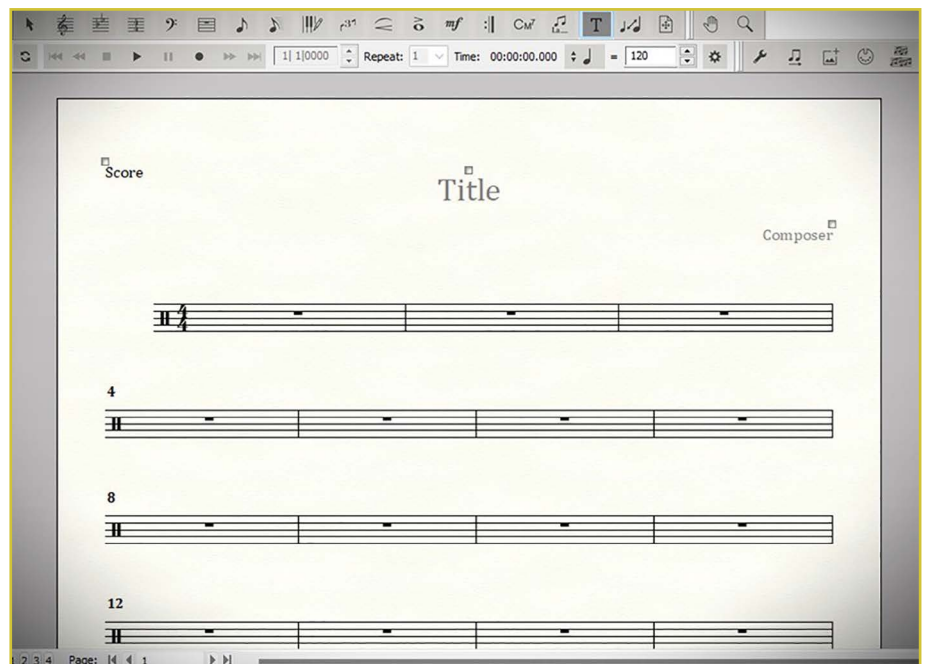
**Josh Gottry:** *What's your go-to solution for writer's block?*

**Brian Nozny:** Usually the best thing I can do is try and get some distance from the project. I'll take a few days and not touch it, then come back with hopefully fresh ears that I can then evaluate and see where things need to go next.

**Angela Kepley:** When I'm not sure what to write, it's generally because I've given myself too many possibilities. Boiling it down to specific instruments, number of players, and an initial theme to work with usually gets me moving.

**Joe Moore III:** Listening and exploring other pieces of music is typically where I start. I'll attend or view more concerts virtually to get the creative ideas flowing. Additionally, just writing something down, whether I think it is good or not, will get me started.

**Josh:** And even if you are just writing to get yourself started, save everything! I typically have a dozen or so "starts" that I can go back to when I'm struggling to originate an idea. Even just a short phrase or the sketch of a groove that's sat unattended for months or years can easily become the start for a great composition when I view it in a different light after time has passed.



**Nathan Daughtrey:** If I'm having trouble getting started, I often utilize some indeterminate tools to randomly generate ideas. If I'm in the middle of the



I typically have a dozen or so “starts” that I can go back to when I'm struggling to originate an idea.  
—Josh Gottry



If writing the piece is really hard, it's often because the initial ideas I had weren't that great.  
—Brian Nozzy

piece, trying to get from point A to point B, I try to get out of my office and go on a walk to do some problem solving in my mind.

**Jim Casella:** Since composing is often such a stationary and solitary practice, one of the best ways to regain some creative energy in the face of writer's block is to move. Like Nathan, I find that going for a walk, run, or hike while contemplating my creative goals can often dust off some of the cobwebs that come from staring at a screen for too long.

**Josh:** *How many projects do you have in progress simultaneously? Are they typically at the same point in the process or at different stages?*

**Ivan Trevino:** I do my best when I work on one project at a time. There's a self-awareness about my own idiosyncrasies that I've learned to accept. I'm not a good multitasker, so my brain operates best when I have space to singularly focus on creative projects. I've gone so far as to split my workdays up in this way: teaching days vs. creative days. It doesn't always fit perfectly within this framework, but it's in my best interest to work within that focus.

**Nathan:** I try to have no more than two projects going simultaneously, but they need to be rather contrasting in instrumentation, difficulty level, style, etc. If I do have multiple composition projects going, they are usually in different stages.

**Brian:** I try to spread my commissions out so that I'm only working on one at a time. Then I'll typically have a personal project of my own going at the same time, be it another piece or an arrangement of some kind.

**Angela:** I typically work on one project at a time. I would rather hyper-focus on one piece than spread my creativity over multiple projects. I feel that if I write more than one piece at a time, they begin to meld together in my mind. I like to think of each piece as its

own entity, and my goal is to discover it.

**Josh:** *Do you compose on a schedule or when time and inspiration allow?*

**Brian:** For me it's always as time allows. As a deadline looms, I'll go into crunch mode, but I can usually make the time happen to finish what I need.

**Joe:** I typically compose when the inspiration comes, but there are times that I feel a schedule is needed. Scheduling helps me balance my compositional world with my life as a performer and teacher.

**Ivan:** I compose on a schedule and limit my writing to a few days a week. On off-days, I'm passively composing, letting the ideas bake, grow, and change in my head. It's not uncommon to find me taking a walk around campus, singing into my voice memo, and just walking and thinking. That's composing, too.

**Jim:** I have to schedule it; too much other stuff will eat up that time if I don't specifically carve it out. This reinforces a practice of consistency so I know that, no matter what, these two or three hours each morning are sanctioned for this type of work. It takes discipline, but over time it can be hugely helpful.

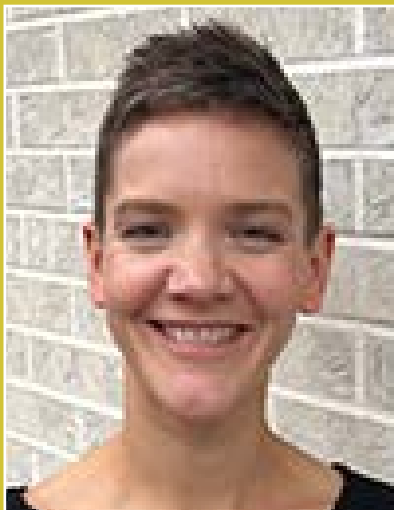
**Josh:** *I find that commissioned projects tend to reduce my issues with writer's block because they typically come with pretty clear objectives and constructs. Do commissions help with your writer's block or make it worse?*

**Angela:** Commissions help me immensely! Having a specific goal, group, and vision all help me with motivation, inspiration, creative or educational goals, and deadlines.

**Nathan:** The limits set by a commission — duration, difficulty, instrumentation — usually help to make the blank page look a little less so. However, if the limitations are too specific or even too broad, it makes the process tougher.

**Joe:** Knowing what I am writing for

and the parameters requested helps me get going creatively. I'm always thinking, "How can I push the limits of the requested limitations?"



When I'm not sure what to write, it's generally because I've given myself too many possibilities.  
—Angela Kepley



Just writing something down, whether I think it is good or not, will get me started.  
—Joe Moore III

**Ivan:** The parameters of a commission project can be helpful. Knowing your instrument and color options, the number of players, the duration, having a deadline, etc., helps me plan the project from a bigger picture standpoint. At the same time, it's nice to have a commissioner willing to be flexible and open to small-scale change.

**Josh:** *Improvisation, listening to music, and attending performances have always been critical tools for me as a composer. The more I do of any of these, the more inspired and productive I am as a composer. What role do these activities play for each of you in creating ideas for compositions?*

**Brian:** Improvisation is good for me right at the beginning, but once I have material I'm excited about, I get away from the instrument and try to rely on developing that material.

**Joe:** Listening, studying scores, attending virtual or in-person concerts, and experiencing music daily helps keep the creativity flowing, even if I am in a rut on a particular piece.



The limits set by a commission usually help to make the blank page look a little less so.  
—Nathan Daughtrey

**Jim:** Attending performances and listening to all types of music is probably one of the primary forms of inspiration that's always fueled me. Improvisation is also a great way to cook up "idea nuggets" that can later be turned into something bigger. Whether on a keyboard, a pad, or simply singing into my phone, there's always some form of this happening when I'm starting out on a project.

**Josh:** *What do you keep with you to write notes to yourself when inspiration strikes?*

**Jim:** I use Evernote on my phone to record audio of ideas that pop up at pretty random times. There's a ton of embarrassing little audio notes in there where I'm shyly whispering ideas into the phone in hopes of not being noticed by people around me.

**Ivan:** What Jim said! I'm known as the neighbor who wanders around the neighborhood singing quiet falsetto into my voice memo.

**Angela:** I have a notebook at my desk where I write ideas, but if I'm out, I'll usually make a note on my phone or audio/video record when possible.

**Nathan:** I have a composition journal with a light grid on the pages so I can write text, draw staves, and so on. There's almost as much narrative on these pages as there is notated music. I will use my phone if something pops into my head while away from the journal.

**Josh:** *What's one additional tip or suggestion that you've used or shared with students to help confront writer's block?*

**Brian:** For me it's better to spend the initial time finding a really good idea that has legs as opposed to trying to make a so-so idea work. If writing the piece is really hard, it's often because the initial ideas I had weren't that great. When a piece "writes itself," it's usually because the initial ideas I had were really strong.

**Joe:** How you start is how you should finish. The basic idea of your piece should contain enough material to build the entire work. When in doubt about what should come next, return to your original idea and see where it is telling you



Improvisation is a great way to cook up “idea nuggets” that can later be turned into something bigger.  
—Jim Casella



I do my best when I work on one project at a time.  
—Ivan Trevino

to go or what it is telling you to explore moving forward.

**Nathan:** At the front end of writing a piece, I put in a lot of work generating ideas, manipulating them as many ways as I can think of, and tucking them away in my compositional toolbox. I also try to map out the overarching form of the piece, much like a research-paper outline. I can then work those toolbox ideas into the framework of the piece as I go. Outside of that, I just try not to let a day go by that I’m not using my creative muscles, whether it’s for the compositional project at hand or otherwise.

**Jim:** When possible, before you end a writing session for the day, try to leave yourself with a good idea to start on the next day. It can be tempting to carry it out while the moment is fresh, but leaving yourself a solid idea is a great way to jumpstart your next writing session.

**Angela:** Write down or record everything! You never know when a seed from one day will turn into a whole composition.

**Ivan:** If you’re a student reading this, your journey as a creator is not subject to the one riff you can’t figure out what to do with. There are more riffs and hooks and motives in you, and part of this composing journey is being open to all of your ideas, good or bad, and understanding that this is a process-based activity that needs nurturing, time, and openness. Keep trying, keep taking walks, and keep talking to yourself. Most of all, be open to all of your interests, whether they fit into the traditional pathways of classical music, or live far outside of them. Thinking in this broader way might not only help you with your writer’s block, but could help you find your own pathway in our space.

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# Magnesium Sulfate: Benefits of Epsom Salt for Percussionists

By Andrew Naughton

**M**usicians experience many different injuries throughout their careers. A vocalist may inflame a vocal fold and need to take time to rest with some warm tea, while trumpet players may need to put ointment on their lips because they have been playing for a long period of time. Percussionists use their hands, so this is typically where their injuries arise. Percussionists experience injuries to the muscles and skin of their hands, leading to issues such as calluses, contact dermatitis, carpal tunnel, tendonitis, bursitis, and focal dystonia.<sup>1</sup> This article will look at the non-pharmaceutical method of Epsom salt soaks and the benefits on common skin, muscle, and joint conditions in the hands and wrists of percussionists.

## JOINTS

The human hand is quite fragile; it is made up of small bones connected by flexible cartilage called joints. The joints in our fingers are called ellipsoidal joints, which allow all types of movement other than pivoting.<sup>2</sup> These joints have a membrane with sticky fluid to help lubricate movement, and within that fluid we find two important chemicals essential for the lubrication to function properly for the joint: sulfate and magnesium.<sup>3</sup> Sulfate is one of the major components of the cartilage and lubrication of the cartilage.

If your body doesn't have the sulfate it needs, your joints are at risk of such future joint diseases as osteoarthritis or rheumatoid arthritis, or even joint injuries like a ligament tear. One example of a ligament tear is a condition informally called "Jersey Finger," which is a rupture of the tendon.<sup>4</sup> This could eventually lead to much more serious issues and makes it much easier for these issues to arise the longer it isn't taken care of. You can talk to your doctor to monitor the health of your joints. It would be beneficial for a professional percussionist to make a yearly appointment.

Injuries to the hand happen through incorrect technique, excessive practicing, or constant striking that vibrate through our hands and arms each time we make an impact on our instruments. The type of materials used for keyboard instruments are not made to absorb vibration but rather to create pitch and tone. The mallets absorb more than the bars, but ultimately, our hands, wrists, and arms absorb the majority of the vibrations moving through the mallets.<sup>5</sup> These vibrations, depending on their intensity, wear down your joints and tendons and break up the chemicals that make up the lubrication of joints and walls of cartilage. If left untreated over time, these breakdowns can result in injuries, or joint and bone diseases.<sup>6</sup>

## TENDONS AND MUSCLES

Hands also have tendons and muscles that are key for the delicate movements we make in the percussion field. A series of small taps on a triangle and consistent stroke velocities for each note, particularly on quieter dynamics, require a very subtle but controlled use of your tendons and muscles.<sup>7</sup> Sulfate is incredibly important for the function and health of the tendons and muscles.<sup>8</sup> When you begin losing sulfate in your tendons, they begin to hurt when you move and use your fingers or wrists, potentially leading to arthritis, carpal tunnel, and tendonitis.<sup>9</sup> Magnesium is just as important for joint, muscle, and tendon health. For joints and tendons, a loss of magnesium can result in painful cramps, lead to tendonitis, or more serious issues.

## SKIN

Percussionists run into skin conditions after excessive playing and throughout their long-term performance careers.<sup>10</sup> One of the most common issues percussionists may run into is called irritant contact dermatitis, which is caused by repeated physical trauma, and may lead to calluses.<sup>11</sup> There have also been cases of pigmentation abnormalities in spots of the hand that make friction between the skin and the mallet or drumstick.<sup>12</sup>

Another common skin disease found in



percussionists is caused by contact allergies, also called allergen-inducing allergic contact dermatitis.<sup>13</sup> Some people are allergic to types of wood and metal, and when they come into contact with these materials for long periods of time, their bodies begin to react negatively. The condition of allergic contact dermatitis, is the result.<sup>14</sup>

## EPSOM SALT

Of course, changing your diet can greatly change your intake of sulfate and magnesium, and eating sulfate-rich foods like grains and nuts.<sup>15</sup> Epsom salt is another great way to get these important chemicals into your body through a relaxing soak. It should be noted that ingesting magnesium sulfate, unless specifically and medically prescribed by your doctor, can lead to serious health issues including kidney failure.<sup>16</sup> It can also cause very serious heart disease and heart failure.<sup>17</sup> This article does not promote or encourage drinking or ingesting of Epsom salt in any form.

Epsom salt is a compound with three main chemicals: magnesium, sulfur, and oxygen. Epsom salt is magnesium sulfate, and this has played a role in pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical treatments. Some pharmaceutical examples include treatments for seizures, such as eclampsia, which are seizures that happen during or shortly after pregnancy.<sup>18</sup> It is also used for kidney conditions in children, with those that have a magnesium deficiency, and has even been used to help with pregnancy cramps and contractions because it is used to relax the muscles.<sup>19</sup>

According to studies, magnesium and sulfate can be absorbed by the skin.<sup>20</sup> Some therapeutic uses have been successfully employed, such as a cold, wet compress of a magnesium sulfate solution in water, applied using a towel or wrap, used to treat various skin disorders and sometimes used to treat deep infections.<sup>21</sup> When your skin absorbs these chemicals, your body can then use them to alleviate the deficiencies.

The increase in magnesium and sulfate in the joints and muscles helps to soothe pain and ease tension. The absorption of the magnesium sulfate into the skin has also helped ease various skin conditions and has been applied in many ways, from putting a T-shirt in a warm Epsom salt soak and then wearing it to help with infections, to bathing in a tub of the salt for 10 to 15 minutes. Studies have shown through urine samples that after 12 minutes of soaking in a tub, the subjects showed a rise in magnesium concentrations. After studying the plasma of the subjects from the same test, the study also showed that their sulfate levels rose in everyone.<sup>22</sup> Salt dehydrates you, so drinking water during or after you use the salt is strongly encouraged.

There are many methods for applying Epsom salt to your skin to be absorbed and used by your body: soaking in the bathtub, using a bucket if you want to focus on just the wrists, or using an Epsom salt lotion such as Dr. Teal's Epsom Salt lotion.<sup>23</sup> The most common way is through soaking with warm or room temperature water that has the salt absorbed. The typical amount in a full bath is between two and four cups.

As a percussionist, you do not have to take a bath to feel the effects. The author of this article uses Epsom salt and soaks his hands and arms in a bucket or a deep kitchen dish for approximately 10 minutes. Epsom salt bath bombs are sold in retail stores, and they can be dropped into a tub and contain a healthy amount of magnesium sulfate. These are beneficial after an exhausting day of marching band, or even from just having to stand and teach all day. The Epsom salt helps decrease inflammation by providing magnesium and sulfate through absorption and eases pain by allowing your muscles to relax.<sup>24</sup>

You should ask your doctor if you can benefit from using it with certain medical skin, muscle joint, or bone conditions. Epsom salt typically comes with directions on how much to use and for

how long; please refer to that if you decide to use the salts.

Epsom salt is beneficial for percussionists due to our body being able to absorb the magnesium sulfate and use that to improve our joints, tendons, muscles, and skin. After a long day of practice, soak your hands in Epsom salt and see if that eases the pain or relaxes the muscles. If you have calluses or dry skin, soaking in Epsom salt can help heal and rejuvenate the skin. If you are a percussionist looking for ways to prevent future issues and alleviate pain and swelling as they come naturally through practice, consider using Epsom salt in your routine. Talk to your doctor if you have concerns due to medical afflictions, and refer to the directions on the product, or online, with how much and for how long to use Epsom salt.

## ENDNOTES

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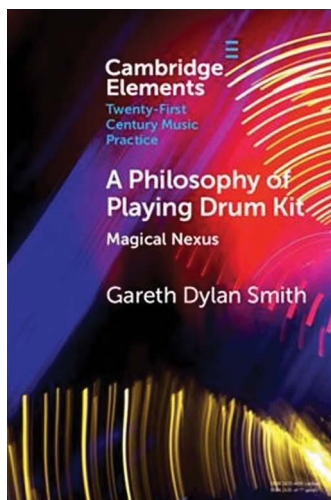
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# New Percussion Literature and Recordings

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## Difficulty Rating Scale

I-II	Elementary
III-IV	Intermediate
V-VI	Advanced
VI+	Difficult



## GENERAL REFERENCE

### A Philosophy of Playing Drum Kit: Magical Nexus

Gareth Dylan Smith  
\$22.00

Cambridge University Press

This book presents an intellectual, analytical, and emotional look at drum set performance and practice. It begins with a thorough introduction

featuring the author's philosophy of playing the drum kit, largely based on the concepts of June Boyce-Tillman and Kevin Shorner-Johnson. The foundation of the author's philosophy (or "magical nexus") consists of four main concepts: materials, construction, values/culture, and expression.

The first concept, materials, includes inanimate objects as well as the performer's body and the playing environment. The author discusses these "materials" in relation to practice, performance, and recording. The next concept focuses on the construction of a musical piece. Improvisation, groove, composition, dynamics, and creativity are examined in detail, often embellished with personal anecdotes. The third concept pertains to value and culture. The author discusses his performing experience as it relates to cultural authenticity. The fourth concept, expression, emphasizes listening skills and overall enjoyment.

While this book relays the author's experiences through the view of a rock drummer, the reader can apply the concepts to just about any style or instrument. Links to recordings are included, solidifying the concepts discussed in the text. Those looking for inspiration should find this to be an interesting read.

—Jeff W. Johnson

### Show Drumming: An Expert's Guide to Theatre and Touring

Paul Hannah

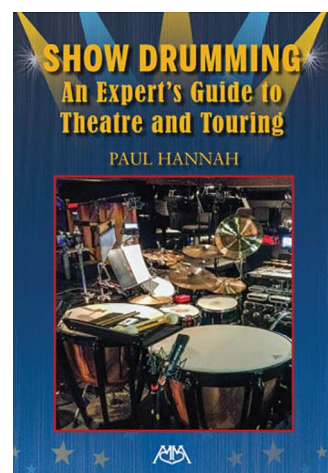
\$24.95

Meredith Music Publications

This new reference text from Paul Hannah offers up a slew of insider tips for those looking to pursue a career in theatre or show drumming. Hannah uses his extensive history of touring and Broadway percussion experience to guide the book. Although titled as a guide, the book reads more like a memoir, using stories from the road or audition experiences to illustrate the various points being made.

The book is broken up into 25 short chapters that deal with specific topics, including "Getting Your Playing Together," "Auditions," "Touring Tips," "Interpreting Drum Charts and Drum Parts," and many others. One of the more interesting chapters is "West Side Story: My Thoughts and Approach." This chapter deals with Hannah's first-hand experiences performing the musical, and his interpretations of the different percussive aspects.

This book does not serve as a how-to



guide for actual playing in the pit, with exception of the *West Side Story* chapter. Instead, it acts as an overall guide on the many aspects that go into performing with a touring Broadway show. While an excellent resource for those looking into the profession, it is based on the experience of only one person, and would benefit from the inclusion of other performers' experiences as well. However, Hannah does have an impressive list of shows under his belt, and the information is useful. Even instrumentalists outside of the percussion world would benefit from his tips on touring and auditioning.

—Josh Armstrong

## KEYBOARD PERCUSSION METHOD

### Dampening Studies III-VI

Oliver Mayman

\$29.00

### Keyboard Percussion Publications

Advertised as "A comprehensive method for dampening and pedaling on the vibraphone," this book looks to expand upon the knowledge contained in David Friedman's classic book, *Vibraphone Technique: Dampening and Pedaling*. Oliver Mayman's book not only succeeds in expanding upon Friedman's classic but does so with Friedman's blessing (the foreword to the book was written by Friedman).

While *Dampening Studies* covers all the usual bases in terms of vibraphone pedaling and dampening, this book shines in its explanations of these basic techniques as well as the extension of these techniques into more advanced methods. Pedaling is the first section of the book, breaking down the concept into legato, staccato, and half-pedaling, while also discussing the idea of pedaling rhythm. All these concepts are then utilized in three short etudes.

The rest of the book is broken into three sections discussing mallet dampening. Mayman does a great job in explaining the various ways that mallet dampening can be executed. An etude is provided for each technique, allowing students to explore and develop these techniques within short musical settings.

While much of the information discussed in *Dampening Studies* has been covered in previous books, the final section covers seven advanced dampening techniques, some of which are the author's own invention. Some are relatively simple concepts such as chordal dampening, which discusses dampening two to four notes instead of just a single note. Others, such as pitch-bending dampening, explore new areas of expression on the instrument. As with the rest of the book, each of these concepts has an etude associated with it that focuses on developing that particular skill.

Mayman has created a worthy successor to the Friedman book in terms of being able to codify and expand the foundational skills needed on the vibraphone. The materials presented in this book are clear, concise, and help to not only clarify how to develop these techniques to someone new to the vibraphone but can expose an experienced performer to new ways to approach the instrument.

—Brian Nozny

**Glockenspiel Method I-II**

Evelyn Glennie  
\$14.99

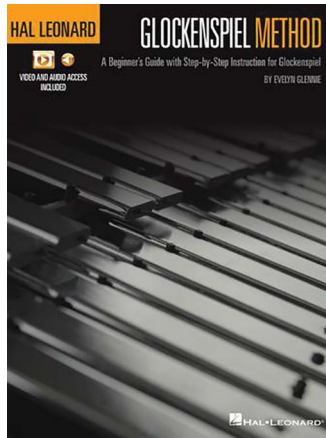
Hal Leonard

Web: [score sample](#)

*Glockenspiel Method: A Beginner's Guide with Step-by-Step Instruction for Glockenspiel* single-handedly solves all of the problems and gaps created by the percussion books of standard beginning concert band methods. It is "designed for anyone just learning to play the glockenspiel. This easy-to-use guide provides step-by-step lessons and meticulously graded music by leading percussionist Dame Evelyn Glennie. Video tutorials, demonstration audio, and accompaniment backing tracks are also included, making this book ideal for individual or group learning."

It is obvious that *Glockenspiel Method* has been meticulously planned. The pictures, diagrams, and descriptions are clear, and have the perfect amount of information. Of particular note is how basic concepts such as rhythm, sticking, elements of the staff, and counting are gradually introduced. Students are delicately eased into everything, allowing for self-guided study.

The book comes with very well-produced digital assets (videos, audio, and backing tracks) as



well. As an added bonus there are piano accompaniment parts for most etudes. The engraving is perfect for beginners: everything is large, and there is nothing extra to distract extra curious students.

I highly recommend this book. It needs to be on every beginning mallet student's music stand.

—Joe Millea

**Jazz Vibraphone III+**

Giovanni Perin  
\$59.00

Marimba Productions

Giovanni Perin's new method book, *Jazz Vibraphone*, is the first installment in a three-volume series. It explores the basics of jazz vibraphone, including fundamentals and style required at the instrument. As stated by the publisher, "Giovanni Perin shares his musical journey to help players gain a holistic understanding of the vibraphone from history to theory, technique, and beyond." While attainable for students of most skill levels, it is recommended to those who have a solid foundation as mallet players and an understanding of basic music theory.

Perin explores a number of essential components through this first volume. He begins by discussing the basics of improvisation, the fundamentals of jazz music, and how to understand various chordal and scalar notations. He details a number of vibraphone-specific techniques such as pedaling, dampening, and more extended techniques like bowing, pitch bending, and harmonics. From there, he introduces a number of forms commonly found in jazz and how to best execute these as a vibraphonist.

What struck me most was the content presentation. It feels like an anthology of the ideas, teachings, and exercises Perin developed over the years. This gives the text a personal touch and makes it really enjoyable to work through. Additionally, I found the exercises to be challenging, digestible, and directly applicable — providing practical ways of practicing improvising and additional resources for study. This is a great addition to the collection of method books for jazz vibraphone, and I look forward to working with it more.

—Danielle Moreau

**The Piper Study Guide to Seven Songs for Vibraphone VI**

John Mark Piper  
\$39.00

Marimba Productions

*Seven Songs for Vibraphone* is one of those rare instances where a follow-up anthology edition of preexisting music truly does result in an item that is greater than the sum of its parts. Frankly, this collection is more method book than solo repertoire folio, and I mean that in the best possible way. The entire book is clearly intended to help guide performers who are at least a little familiar with the basics of four-mallet technique, vibraphone technique, and jazz improvisation, but would still benefit from some extra advice in one or more of those areas.

The tunes themselves are, of course, delightfully pleasant and full of potential for improvisatory exploration, but this is no mere catalog of charts; each of the seven pieces is prefaced by some behind-the-scenes explanations by composer John Mark Piper, along with a list of musical topics to be included (an incredibly useful tool for jazz vibraphone pedagogues who take repertoire sequencing seriously). Piper then provides a fully-fleshed-out solo arrangement (à la fake book) as well as a more traditional lead sheet (à la *Real Book*) in order to allow for solo or group improvisation, a choice that truly makes this one of the most accessible collections available to professional and hobbyist vibraphone players alike.

However, the biggest added value is what comes after the sheet music for each chart: several pages of written-out ideas for improvisation, lessons in jazz harmony, and technical studies specific to the needs of the piece, all accompanied by thoughtful explanatory essays and examples. Thanks to this added content, *Seven Songs* (the collection) far surpasses the original seven individual songs as a truly meaningful and comprehensive resource that bridges some very important educational gaps between student and gigging pro. I could easily see a hobbyist or college student (or maybe even a very serious high school student) bringing this book to a gig and playing it as a set.

This is one of the most creative, informative, and complete jazz vibraphone resources I've seen in quite a while, and is certainly worth having on the shelf (or in the gig bag) of any jazz vibraphone teacher, student, or hobbyist.

—Brian Graiser

**KEYBOARD PERCUSSION SOLO**

**Caravan IV**

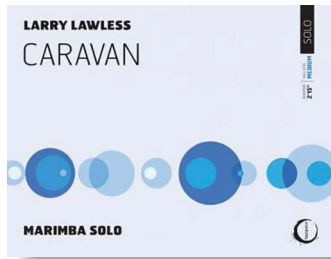
Larry Lawless  
\$11.00

Tapspace Publications

Instrumentation: 4-octave marimba

Web: [score sample](#), [audio recording](#)

A comfortable groove with various musical interjections creates the groundwork for Larry Law-



less's newest marimba solo. "Caravan" features a frequently repeating pattern with interesting fills used to create melodic motion and musical direction throughout this short work. As a companion piece to his work "Escape," this particular piece relies less on melodies and focuses more on the interest within the interruptions as the main musical material. Lawless's use of octatonic scales and chromaticism creates some exciting non-traditional sonorities within a developmental piece.

The piece plugs along smoothly with constant forward motion, intending to create an image of a pacing camel, with various interjections that serve as the real meat of the material. The opening theme reminds me of a slower version of "Spanish Dance" by Kai Stensgaard, using a major second in the right hand against a slightly varied left-hand bass motion. Many of the figures used as fill material are designed for single independent technique growth using various scales, including octatonic, major, and minor variations. One repeating idea incorporates some quick double laterals, but the motion is simple and chromatic with comfortable intervals, creating an idiomatic phrase that should be playable by most developing four-mallet marimbists.

"Caravan" is well suited as a teaching piece for many developing percussionists. With the frequency of interval changes and various rhythmic variations, it is more challenging than a true beginner piece for four mallets, but fits well in a four-mallet curriculum working on double stops, groove with variations, and independent strokes. This fun, catchy two-minute groove can help players develop as they prepare for lengthier repertoire.

—Matthew Geiger

#### **D Profundis IV**

Johannes Steinbauer  
€16.00

**Edition Svitzer**

**Instrumentation:** 5-octave marimba

**Web:** [score sample](#), [audio and video recordings](#)

Slightly off the beaten path of permutation-driven compositions, "D Profundis" is Johannes Steinbauer's new marimba solo derived from double stops, major seconds, and slow-moving harmonies. Steinbauer references the Latin phrase *De Profundis* — meaning "out of the depths" — by utilizing the lower octaves of the marimba to generate much of the content for the solo as the piece develops. "D Profundis" offers listeners a slow burn through a variety of mesmeric patterns that gradually grow and fade, starting and ending with dark, ominous tones.

Much of the solo stays harmonically static, relying on rhythmic development and subtle changes to create impact and movement. Implying D minor throughout the majority of the piece, Steinbauer moves slowly from one idea to another, often repeating ideas numerous times

to help create more thematic material. The solo begins with a soft chorale that crawls back and forth between conjunct melody notes above a relatively stationary lower harmony. After some simple arpeggiations, the work picks up steam incorporating a "Keiko Abe-esque" left-hand ostinato against interjecting right-hand double stops. These double stops form the basis for the next major section of the work featuring a repeating four-over-three polyrhythm. The double stops continue to form the bridge between sections as the ostinato returns, giving the solo one final push of energy before dying away with swaying block-chord patterns reminiscent of the melody motion at the very beginning.

With a focus on a more relaxed, dramatic atmosphere over fast-paced linear passages, "D Profundis" fits well for a change-of-pace piece within many undergraduate recitals. At around nine minutes in length, it would work well in the middle of a recital, between two faster paced works featuring drums or more active material. The reflective, repetitive nature suits a recital hall with plenty of reverb and an audience patient enough and willing to enjoy the resonance of the many block chords permeating this piece.

—Matthew Geiger

#### **Dream III**

Adam Tan  
€13.00

**Edition Svitzer**

**Instrumentation:** 4.3-octave marimba

**Web:** [score sample](#), [audio recording](#)



Played with two mallets, "Dream" is a tremendous piece that, as the composer describes, "reflects on the idea that while many of our dreams and wishes may not work out, continuing to dream big and thinking of a better future will always help us grow and become stronger."

In addition to being a gorgeous composition, "Dream" is a much-needed addition to contemporary marimba pedagogy that will allow younger players to focus on musicality instead of technique. The composer insists on this being performed with two mallets to "take away the complications of four-mallet grips, laterals, and other advanced techniques, leaving you to focus on the quality of your sound and the intent of your melodic expression." This allows the performer to focus on being musical, which is often sorely lacking in the current repertoire.

I highly recommend "Dream" as a pedagogical tool for learning musicality, but also because it is simply an excellent composition for the marimba. There is nary an audience alive who won't enjoy this gem by Adam Tan.

—Joe Millea

#### **Kosmos: Anaximander V**

Valentin Kervadec

€16.00

**Edition Svitzer**

**Instrumentation:** 5-octave marimba

**Web:** [score sample](#), [audio recording](#)

"Kosmos: Anaximander" is an expansive, virtuosic piece for the marimba meant to evoke all the wonder and vastness of the cosmos. As Valentin Kervadec says in his program notes: "The cosmological concepts exposed here are reproduced in the piece, as its introduction builds and creates the musical skeleton undergirding the whole rhythmic and melodic structure of the next two parts." The hauntingly simple opening melody, played in open octaves in the high register of the marimba, paints an airy, atmospheric texture. The high-register octaves continue to be a theme throughout, almost as if there were heavenly voices singing.

The piece develops the melodic theme, first adding a simple accompaniment in the left hand and gradually fleshing out a more lush arpeggiated accompaniment. The texture is very pianistic, with the octaves in the right hand serving as melody while the left hand plays accompaniment material, usually arpeggiated figures or a chorale-like setting. While not exactly a theme-and-variations structure, the piece is made up of discrete sections with vastly different tempi, dynamic ranges, and structure, giving it a rhapsodic or toccata-esque feel. There is much room in this solo for a performer to showcase individual musicianship and expression, with numerous virtuosic runs up the marimba, sections of rubato, and expressive chorales.

This piece would be best suited for an advanced undergraduate student or graduate student. The technical demands include one-handed rolls over acrobatic runs, extended passages with the hands interlocking in octaves, and fast runs up the whole length of the instrument. In addition to the technical control required to master this piece, the performer needs a mature sense of pacing and phrasing to be able to sculpt the rapidly changing sections and tempos. It would serve as a lovely recital piece or competition piece, as it showcases both technical and musical prowess.

—Hannah Weaver

#### **Sonata in C-Minor V-VI**

Edzard Locher

€25.00

**Edition Svitzer**

**Instrumentation:** 5-octave marimba

**Web:** [score sample](#)

"Sonata in C-Minor" is a virtuosic marimba solo written in a classic piano style. It has the standard four sonata movements played through as a single piece, and it relates closely to piano sonatas by Franz Liszt, with quotes from works by Carl Nielsen.

The piece has all of the elements one expects from a classical sonata: a large dynamic range, rubato opportunities, challenging technique, changing key signatures, layers of articulation and phrasing, and ornamentation, just to name a few. The piece has several cadenza-like moments and a lot of quick flourishes. Any player wanting to tackle this sonata will need excellent independent rolls, stellar hand independence, and no shortage of chops. This piece frequently calls for independent rolls in one hand while the other plays a part that in an easier piece would be written for two hands.

"Sonata in C-Minor" uses the entire range of the 5-octave instrument, sometimes within a single phrase, and calls for the performer to execute precise articulation while accomplishing large leaps and wide intervals. At one point the player has to hit the highest C and the lowest C within the same beat.

As a percussionist himself, Locher knows the technical limitations of the marimba and pushes them to the limit. The compositional elements are irreproachable and give performers a lot of room to make the piece their own. At almost 20 minutes long, "Sonata in C-Minor" would be an ambitious addition to a graduate or professional recital.

—Marilyn K. Clark Silva

#### Soarirang IV

Kyungtaek Kim

Arr. Se-mi Hwang

€16.00

Edition Svitzer

**Instrumentation (1 player):** 5-octave marimba, voice

**Web:** [score sample](#), [audio recording](#)



This solo arrangement of an ensemble piece blends the voice and marimba playing of a single player in a lovely, natural way. The flowing, lyrical marimba part seamlessly complements the vocal notes, especially if sung in a soprano range (as written). The melodic content that is mainly reinforced in the higher, right-hand upper range of the marimba combines with the soprano voice to create a timeless beautiful effect.

The notation is reminiscent of piano music, with the bulk of the melody notated in the right hand, in treble clef, and the accompaniment in the left hand, in bass clef. This creates an especially demanding left-hand part, but adds to the virtuosic nature of the piece. There are minimal performance instructions, but the fluid, yet precisely notated nature of the work lends itself well to individual expression, while still keeping with the composer's intent. The variety of techniques called for, including one-handed rolls, chorale-style fast arpeggiation, a wide dynamic range, playing mallet handles on the bars, changing keys, and vocalizing while playing truly make this piece a tour-de-force that is a perfect opener or closer on any professional performance or advanced student presentation.

For those who wish to play the marimba part only, or for those who cannot render the vocal part in its notated octave, acquiring a vocalist to sing the text at the end of the piece would still make for an excellent performance. The tender, poignant lyrics, sung in Korean, translate to:

Arirang, Arirang, Arariyo  
 Crossing over Arirang Pass.  
 The one who abandoned me

Shall not walk even 4 kilometers before their feet hurt.

—Cassie Bunting

#### Sonata in F Major VI

Edzard Locher

€25.00

Edition Svitzer

**Instrumentation:** 5-octave marimba

**Web:** [score sample](#), [audio recording](#)

This is an incredible piece of music! No gimmicks, no frills, just a meticulously crafted work of art that will offer advanced marimbists an amazing piece to explore. With "Sonata in F-major," Edzard Locher has created a single sonata-form movement using what he refers to as a "double-function-form," which means this piece can stand alone as a modified sonata form without the repeats and a truncated recap, or as a part of a three-song cycle with its sister pieces, "Sonata in A major" and "Sonata in C-minor."

In addition to its carefully crafted form, "Sonata in F major" pushes the technical limits of the instrument, calling on the performer to voice chorale-like polyphony with many moving voices between the hands, often with intricate rhythms overtop sustained chords. Beyond the rapid flourishes and prevalent octaves now common in advanced marimba repertoire, Locher calls on the performer to execute musically challenging textures such as oscillating figures with changing interval sizes in one hand with long legato melodies underneath, and or nimble polyphonic melodies in each hand with the pair of hands moving in similar or contrary motion. While these textures are common in piano and organ literature, they are less prevalent in solo marimba music. Locher also takes full advantage of evolving marimba notation conventions with a plethora of notational symbols to aid the performer with interpreting the piece.

While Locher's sonata does place technical demands on the performer, much of the piece is idiomatic and lays comfortably on the marimba. "Sonata in F-Major" is best suited for advanced marimbists. This piece would work well on a graduate or professional recital and is accessible for most audiences who are familiar with the chromaticism of the Romantic-era harmonic language, and the piece would likely stand out on a recital as a stunningly lyrical piece of music.

—Quintin Mallette

#### Sonata No. 1 in A Major V

Edzard Locher

\$26.50

Edition Svitzer

**Instrumentation:** 5-octave marimba

**Web:** [score sample](#)

Edzard Locher describes his "Sonata in A Major" as being written in a "double-function form." He states, "It's to be read as a single movement in sonata form and as four movements in classic order at the same time. A third form layer occurs when looking at the two sisterworks, sonatas in F-major and E-minor. All three have the same formal structure and are thematically connected via a recurring 'sister motif.'" This sonata is beautiful in its musical output and simultaneously daunting in its technical and musical difficulty.

Locher includes very specific notation for rolls, described at the beginning of the score, including mandolin rolls, one-hand rolls, and a specific hand with which to start or end the roll. This takes

some artistic freedom away from the performer but allows a performance that is accurate to the composer's intentions. These specific aspects of notation, rapidly changing time signatures, complex rhythms, and other challenges combine to present a large, but exciting, challenge to any performer.

I recommend this piece for an advanced university or professional marimbist. There are significant technical and musical challenges, but the result is a beautiful, large-scale work for solo marimba.

—Justin Bunting

#### Soundscapes V

Kyle H. Peters

\$35.00

TapSPACE Publications

**Instrumentation:** 4.3-octave marimba

**Web:** [score sample](#), [audio and video recordings](#)

Soundscapes is a collection of 18 short musical etudes that help marimbists focus not only on technical aspects, but musicality as well. While each piece can be performed as a stand-alone work, the composer encourages performers to mix and match the etudes into their own performances, creating a longer work. The number of etudes performed, as well as the order, are left completely up to the performer.

The movements progress in difficulty throughout the collection, and specific techniques are prevalent in each; however, this is not a method book or even a technical manual. Instead, these pieces can stand alone as well-constructed works.

Each piece contains a descriptive title that is meant to help inform the feeling of the piece to the performer. For example, the etude "Butterfly" utilizes triple lateral strokes in the left hand that mimic the butterfly's wings, while the right hand plays a simple melody. This is reversed later in the piece with the right hand performing the triple laterals. Other descriptive titles include "Stroll," "Good News," "Lullaby," and "Downpour."

This collection would be great in any teacher's library and would allow them to give their students strong musical pieces that can work specific technical aspects. It would also give students the opportunity to perform a multi-movement work that they can program themselves with any of the movements. Kyle Peters has given educators a wonderful resource and piece of music with which to help further students' technical, as well as musical, abilities through the study of quality music.

—Josh Armstrong

## KEYBOARD PERCUSSION SOLO WITH ACCOMPANIMENT

#### Azure V

Emil Kuyumcuyan

€30.00

Edition Svitzer

**Instrumentation:** 5-octave marimba, fixed audio playback

**Web:** [score sample](#), [audio recording](#)

"Azure" is an advanced, nine-minute work for solo marimba and tape suitable for a professional player or advanced university student. Commissioned for the 7th World Marimba Competition in

Stuttgart, Germany (2022), it requires the performer to groove comfortably in constantly changing odd meters along with a click track. While the marimba part does not present an overwhelming technical challenge, it requires a substantial level of musical maturity. Along with the score, the player is granted access to the backing track with and without click track.

The composer cites a longing, or *Sehnsucht*, for the sea as the primary influence for the piece. The music immediately puts the listener on an island coast, with the first 40 seconds of tape introducing a soothing aquatic timbre and distant bird calls. After a short ritardando, the marimbist enters into a duet with the tape, which now presents the sounds of fleeting waves and a thick, resonant bass line reminiscent of electronic dance music. The audio playback becomes increasingly intense and unapologetically electronic, while the marimbist continues unrelentingly for several minutes, until a sudden arrival at a slower, more ominous middle section, during which the performer plays more lyrical single-line passages. The marimba part gradually picks up steam, supported by increasingly aggressive electronic bass. Finally, there is a brief return to the soothing sounds of the introduction, while the marimbist restates the opening material, carrying the listener to the end.

Emil Kuyuncuyam masterfully combines different influences to create a piece that is soothing, exciting, intense, and stunningly beautiful. I would not be surprised to see "Azure" become a staple of the marimba repertoire.

—Marco Schirripa

### Enigma VI

Marta Ptasińska  
\$45.00

#### Edition Svitzer

**Instrumentation (4 players):** 5-octave marimba, B-flat clarinet, horn in F, cello

**Web:** [score sample](#)

Marta Ptasińska is a well-known Polish composer within the contemporary percussion community, having written numerous works featuring percussion such as "Concerto for Marimba," "Spider Walk," "Katarynka," and many others. She was tasked with composing the feature piece for the World Marimba Competition Stuttgart this past year and created "Enigma" — a three-movement quartet featuring a solo marimbist throughout.

The first movement is written using modal, Renaissance-era counterpoint styles. The second movement is heavily influenced by chromaticism and 12-tone techniques. The final movement features the fastest moving lines and virtuosic techniques from the soloist within the entire work. Putting it all together, this piece is a tour-de-force for the featured marimbist and an excellent addition to the chamber repertoire.

Looking at the technical requirements for the marimbist, this piece has it all. The first movement is written using thirty-second notes almost exclusively, with a few cadenza-style moments where the lines traverse the keyboard in sextuplets or sixteenth notes. The second movement features more diverse technical demands, from various tremolos to triple laterals to other quick moving lines with varied dynamics and intervals. The final movement showcases linear triplet patterns that help provide the momentum to the end through various key centers. One last flourish finishes the work in a triumphant manner.

The remaining members of the quartet — clarinet, horn, and cello — serve to generate and move the harmonies while providing a blanket of sound over which the marimba can sing. Although the second movement uses some linear passages from each instrument, much of the piece features long tones from all instruments that slowly shift and blossom with the changing marimba patterns.

"Enigma" is an exciting new work, perfect for a graduate or professional chamber recital with three uniquely interesting movements to help audiences and performers engage throughout.

—Matthew Geiger

## KEYBOARD PERCUSSION DUO

### Lunation III-IV

Chad Heiny  
\$28.00

#### Tapspace Publications

**Instrumentation:** vibraphone, 5-octave marimba

**Web:** [score sample](#), [audio recording](#)

"Lunation" is a 4½-minute duet for vibraphone and marimba. Written in two movements, the piece is inspired by revolutions of the moon — specifically, the time from one new moon to the next. Labeled as a medium-level work by the publisher, it is appropriate for advanced high school or younger undergraduate students.

The first movement, "Old Moon," is subdued and reflective, allowing each player some liberty with their phrasing. The second movement, "New Moon," is much more energetic, requiring the players to flawlessly align. While the first movement uses four-mallet technique and a strong sense of line, I would argue the second movement is more difficult, as it is very rhythmically and technically demanding.

"Lunation" is a great work for any younger percussion duo, presenting achievable and worthwhile challenges from beginning to end. It would be an excellent addition to a chamber recital, jury performance, or department showcase concert.

—Danielle Moreau

## PERCUSSION ENSEMBLE

### Candlesticks II

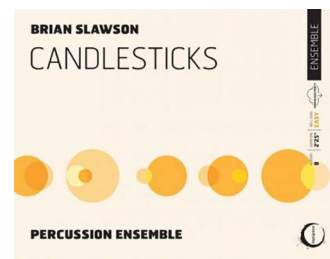
Brian Slawson  
\$32.00

#### Tapspace Publications

**Instrumentation (8 players):** glockenspiel, xylophone, vibraphone, 4.3-octave marimba, chimes, 3 timpani, drum set

**Web:** [score sample](#), [audio and video recordings](#)

This 2½-minute piece is groovy in its presentation of the minor-key melody, driving rock beat, and rhythmic compliments. Written for beginning groups, this work will keep heads bobbing in the ensemble, as well as the audience, thanks to the heavy 2 and 4 backbeat being laid down by the drum set player. The timpani do not require any tuning during the work, the keyboard parts are all played with two mallets, and they can



easily be doubled/tripled depending on the size of your ensemble.

In addition to the easy-to-grasp melodic and harmonic material, this piece will also help the players work on ensemble awareness via moments of rest and recapitulation. The composer states that with the piece being written in A-minor with "a hint of Middle Eastern flavor," this work "is also a suitable selection for holiday programs in search of Hanukkah material."

—Joshua D. Smith

### Crossing the Threshold IV

Chad Heiny  
\$45.00

#### Tapspace Publications

**Instrumentation (12 players):** glockenspiel, crotales, xylophone, 3 vibraphones, two 4.3-octave marimbas, 5-octave marimba, piano, bongos, doumbek, field drum, mounted kick drum, piccolo snare drum, tamborim, small crash cymbal, 2 caxixi, claves, Mark Tree, sleighbells, small tambourine, sonic energy bell, 2 triangles

**Web:** [score sample](#), [audio recording](#)

This piece, commissioned by the Park City Education Foundation for the Park City High School Percussion Ensemble in Utah, was inspired by Joseph Campbell's monomyth as outlined in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Chad Heiny creates a musical image of a journey, either personal or of an object through generations. In just over five minutes, the listener is taken on this journey through a range of musical textures.

"Crossing the Threshold" is scored for 11 percussionists and a pianist. Some extended techniques that are called for are explained clearly in the performance notes. These techniques include crotales played like finger cymbals (struck, choked, and swirled) and the use of a sonic energy bell. The piece includes sixteenth-note runs in some of the keyboard parts. There are a few passages of three-mallet playing in various parts, but the keyboard parts mostly consist of two-mallet work. No individual part is overly difficult, but the resulting sound is complex and evocative of the tension and release of a long journey. Thus, the challenge is in the musical and expressive presentation of the piece.

I recommend this piece for an established high school or university percussion ensemble. It is accessible and satisfying to players and audiences. It would work well anywhere on a concert program.

—Justin Bunting

### Espresso II

Kyle H. Peters  
\$32.00

#### Tapspace Publications

**Instrumentation (4-5 players):** 3 toms, bass drum, suspended cymbal

**Web:** [score sample](#), [audio recording](#)

"Espresso" is a short and energetic work for non-pitched percussion. Lasting just under 2½ minutes, its small setup and straightforward musical ideas make it a great choice for young high school ensembles. The composer also notes that the Player 4 part, which uses bass drum and suspended cymbal, can be split in two, allowing a fifth player to participate. All other players play only on their single assigned tom.

The musical material consists almost entirely of quarter-, eighth-, and sixteenth-note rhythms in 4/4, flanking a 6/8 middle section that keeps the quarter note consistent but presents a triplet feel. The piece is full of "hocketed" rhythms and dynamic changes, but the individual parts remain simple, allowing the music to sound a bit more complex than it is. Kyle Peters keeps listeners on their toes by getting the most out of the small instrumentation.

—Marco Schirripa

### **Fife & Drum II**

Brian Slawson

\$35.00

#### **Tapspace Publications**

**Instrumentation (8 players):** glockenspiel, xylophone, vibraphone, chimes, 4.3-octave marimba, 4 timpani, drum set

**Web:** [score sample](#), [audio recording](#)

This work is based on a French Christmas carol from the 1700s ("Pat-a-pan") and set for a young percussion ensemble. With a classic instrumentation and performance time of 3½ minutes, it can be easily accessible to many high school or middle school programs.

The form is set up like a pop tune that begins with an introduction by the drum set and timpani, with the timpani acting as the bass player. The "Pat-a-pan" quote serves as the verse, which is then modified and traded between keyboard players throughout the work. The melody trades between players until the final larger section of the piece where all players are in.

If your percussion ensemble has a wide range of talent and ability, this piece could work in your favor. The keyboard parts all use two mallets with very simple rhythms and melodies. Since melodic material is traded between players, there's really not that much that the individuals need to learn. It could even be a great memorization exercise. If you have students that are new to timpani and drum set, those two parts play the exact same thing throughout most of the piece, which could be good practice and give them moments to shine.

Although the suggested setup has all of the performers in one line with drum set and timpani in the middle, I suggest having keyboard voices in the front with drum set and timpani behind them. Since this piece is geared towards younger players, this may better aid with timekeeping.

—Ben Cantrell

### **Flash Mob IV**

Robert Clayson

\$36.00

#### **Tapspace Publications**

**Instrumentation (4 players):** 4-octave marimba, vibraphone, large tom (muffled), hi-hat, splash cymbal

**Web:** [score sample](#), [audio and video recordings](#)

"Flash Mob" is a fun and accessible quartet written for minimal instruments and appropriate for intermediate-level players. Groovy and dancelike, it would be perfect for a run-out

concert or opener on a more formal program. The composer cites the inspiration of a flash mob as being "something exciting and accessible that will grab and hold the audience's attention." Another interpretation might be the minimal resources required, evoking a sort of "pop-up concert" in the middle of a crowd.

The piece begins with solo marimba and is subsequently joined by layering of vibraphone and the two percussion parts. One percussion player utilizes splash cymbal and hi-hat, while the other performs on a muffled tom-tom — creating a makeshift drum set. The keyboard percussion parts move in constant counterpoint with each other throughout the piece, frequently swapping melody for rhythmic accompaniment, while the percussion parts execute more repetitive groove rhythms. Sections recur in a manner reminiscent of a pop tune, including a set of two-measure "breaks" for each instrument in the middle of the piece. At three minutes in length, it will satisfy a wide variety of listeners — from musicians who can appreciate the clever interlocking rhythms to those who enjoy catchy melodies and a constant beat.

The marimba and vibraphone parts utilize two mallets throughout with a fair amount of repetition. The percussion parts are also repetitive and mostly use eighth- and sixteenth-note rhythms. However, all players must execute their part with minimal, if any, doubling from the others, making this a true chamber-music experience for younger players. This confidence is also necessary to navigate the constantly shifting roles of melody and accompaniment, as well as the solid, dancelike style of the music.

—Jason Baker

### **The Harrison Modes IV**

Christopher Whyte

\$49.00

#### **Tapspace Publications**

**Instrumentation (9 players):** crotales (both octaves), glockenspiel, 2 vibraphones, 4.3-octave marimba, 5-octave marimba, bongos, doumbek, low conga, djembe, concert bass drum, opera gong, 2 suspended cymbals, sizzle cymbal, tam-tam, Jal tarang (ceramic bowls tuned with water), temple blocks, high-pitched metal, maracas

**Web:** [score sample](#), [audio and video recordings](#)

This beautiful homage to the compositional stylings of Lou Harrison blends the sounds of classical percussion instruments such as marimba and vibraphone with Eastern influences such as doumbek, opera gong, and Jal tarang. This wide collection of timbres is heightened by the use of unusual implements, such as fingers on vibraphone, tin foil on vibraphone, bows on marimba, and metal dreadlocks on cymbals. The composer further evokes the sonic world of Harrison through the use of the four pentatonic modes that Harrison utilized for many of his compositions: 1-flat 3-4-5-flat 7, 1-2-flat 3-5-flat 6, 1-3-4-5-7, and 1-2-4-5-flat 7.

Beginning with a cantabile solo line played with fingers on the vibraphone, the piece builds slowly in intensity. Bowed vibraphone and marimba sounds join the solo line, and then cymbals and drums begin to interject. The energy continues to build as the mallet parts become more active and dense, until the piece erupts in a cascade of sixteenth notes in the mallets while the drums play polyrhythmic gestures of 4:3 and 3:2 (another nod to Harrison and his fascination with

Pythagoras and just intonation).

The piece evolves through the use of modes, with each new formal section marked by a different mode. After a dramatic climax and grand pause, the piece gradually fades away, mirroring the opening. The vibraphone and marimba players have sparse, improvisatory gestures played with fingers, and a final chord on bowed crotales closes the piece in an ethereal manner.

"The Harrison Modes" was originally written for the Mountain View High School Percussion Ensemble. While the technical proficiency required for the piece could be achieved by high school students, some of the gear required will likely not be available to high school programs. However, the piece is an excellent introduction to one of the most significant composers in the percussion canon and would be a valuable pedagogical tool for intermediate to advanced high school and college students.

—Hannah Weaver

### **Heartland III**

Jean-Philippe Rameau and Antonín Dvořák

Arr. Brian Slawson

\$32.00

#### **Tapspace Publications**

**Instrumentation (6-8 players):** glockenspiel, chimes, vibraphone, 4-octave marimba, 4.3-octave marimba, optional crotales, bell tree, 2 triangles, Mark Tree, suspended cymbal

**Web:** [score sample](#), [audio recording](#)

Brian Slawson has combined "Entrée de Polymnie" by Rameau and "Cavatina" by Dvořák into a shorter work for percussion ensemble. While the piece can be performed with only the keyboard instruments, the optional accessory parts add an element that would be missed, although the musical integrity would not be compromised.

The work is set at a slow tempo and incorporates nothing more than eighth notes in some parts. Slawson creates a wonderful antiphonal feel, with the marimbas passing eighth-note passages between each other in the first section, requiring the players to be cognizant of each other. The metallic instruments provide harmonic support in the beginning. In the second section the metallics provide the melody while the woods provide the underlying ostinato. Throughout the work, the players need to be aware of whether they are performing the melody or accompaniment, and how to blend the melody seamlessly between themselves.

While short in duration and not overly complicated, this type of work is what the percussion ensemble genre seems to be lacking. Students will learn the different roles that exist in an ensemble and how to perform them effectively. Along with the technical elements, it will also expose students to the music of the masters, often not available in other ensemble outlets. Slawson has created a wonderful "mashup" that would be great on a junior high or high school concert. It is sure to please audiences and performers alike.

—Josh Armstrong

### **Not in Jest IV**

Robert Sanderl

\$32.00

#### **Tapspace Publications**

**Instrumentation (2 Players):** 4.3-octave marimba, 5-octave marimba, 2 hi-hats, 2 kick drums, splash cymbal



**Web:** [score sample, audio and video recordings](#)

"Not in Jest" is inspired by the music of Armenian pianist Tigran Hamasyan — specifically "The Court Jester." Not being familiar with Hamasyan's music, I checked it out, and I'm glad I did! It's well worth seeking out if you're not already familiar with it. Robert Sander's intent was to write a "fun, groove piece that drives hard from start to finish, with a strong pulse, tangible harmonies, and infectious rhythms." He certainly succeeds!

"Not in Jest" is a marimba duet with each performer playing a few additional instruments (hi-hat, splash cymbal, kick drum). The kick drum part is optional for Player 2, as it only plays in unison with Player 1 near the end of the piece. Along with Hamasyan's music, I also found "Not in Jest" to have similarities with Graham Fitkin's percussion quartet "Hook," particularly its rhythmic and harmonic language as well as its repetitive patterns and instrumentation.

Each performer needs four mallets and a good amount of coordination to perform the piece. There is significant movement among instruments, as well as challenging coordination between the marimba and kick drum in Player 1's part. As far as marimba technique goes, single-mallet playing, rotation strokes with different permutations, and double stops are called for. There is also a lot of tricky rhythmic coordination between the two parts. I recommend this engaging work for undergraduate or graduate recital performance.

—Joseph Van Hassel

### **The Rule of Three IV**

Clif Walker

\$55.00

#### **Tapspace Publications**

**Instrumentation (20 players):** high-octave crotales, glockenspiel, chimes, xylophone, 2 vibraphones, two 4-octave marimbas, two 4.3-octave marimbas, 4 timpani, bongos, snare drum, 2 congas, 4 concert toms, 6 hand drums, 6 large drums, bass drum, splash cymbal, 5 suspended cymbals, China cymbal, ride cymbal, tam-tam, finger cymbals, 2 triangles, Vibraslap, claves, shaker, castanets, 2 Zil-Bels (high/low), 3 woodblocks, 4 cowbells, sandpaper blocks, 2 brake drums, wind chimes, slapstick, temple blocks, bass guitar, piano

**Web:** [score sample, audio recording](#)

Admittedly, there is something special about the "rule of three." For those unfamiliar with this literary device, it focuses very generally on the repetition or emphases of three things. The devices can be seen across poetry, novels, and religious texts, and in many ways are ubiquitous. In "The Rule of Three," Clif Walker explores the contrapuntal possibilities of three percussion sextets, each focusing on one of three tone colors within the percussion soundscape: drums, woods, and/or metals. Given these parameters, my expectations were an experiment somewhere between drum corps and Ferneyhough. What Walker delivered was something much more reminiscent of a post-minimalist percussion orchestra à la Phillip Glass or John Adams.

In "The Rule of Three," Walker writes a piece that is as technically and musically accessible as a percussion work for 20 players can be; while it has four marimba parts, they can be played on two 4-octave and two 4.3-octave marimbas; while it uses a truckload of percussion accessories, the

most niche instruments are two Zil-Bels and a high octave of crotales.

The rhythms can largely be played by advanced middle-school percussionists, although given the independence required to play within an ensemble of this magnitude, it is probably most appropriate for high school or college ensembles. In short, this piece is a breath of fresh air; it is big and bold, and approachable for a wide variety of music programs with the number of percussionists to play it.

Sometimes, when a work is accessible, it can be difficult to rehearse, as you don't want to over-rehearse the piece to the point of boredom. However, given the size of the orchestration, there are many layers of musical texture within and across the three sextets, leaving room to refine balance, blend, and articulations in a way that will challenge ensembles at all levels.

While "The Rule of Three" can be gaudy and in your face at moments, it is also subtle and spacious; it is the percussion orchestra piece I didn't know I was missing, and I am grateful to have come across it. Whoever programs this is sure to have a show-stopping piece that could work great as a concert opener or closer!

—Quintin Mallette

### **Saturn's Rings IV-V**

Heng Liu

€50.00

#### **Edition Svitzer**

**Instrumentation (4 players):** 5-octave marimba, 4 tom-toms, 2 bongos, splash cymbal, crash cymbal

"Saturn's Rings" is a unique percussion quartet that, at this writing, has yet to be premiered. Like all of Heng Liu's works, it takes a traditional structure and adds an interesting and well-planned spin. All four players share a single setup and rotate around it as they play, just like the rings of Saturn. The piece is carefully choreographed with precise instructions and diagrams telling the performers how to enter the stage, where to stand, and which direction to walk. Once they reach their final spots they stay for the rest of the piece — two players on the lower manual side of the marimba, and two on the upper manual side.

In addition to the marimba and other percussion, the piece calls for extended techniques to create a rich sonic palette. The performers strike with both the head and shaft of the mallet, play on the rims and shells of the drums, and do dead strokes and rimshots. The performers also click their mallets together and stomp their feet. With all of this, the texture could suffer from being too dense, but Liu makes ample use of space to keep the themes clear and the parts interesting.

While the individual parts are not overly difficult, the performers will need excellent ensemble skills, and almost certainly will need to memorize the piece in order to execute the choreography. "Saturn's Rings" would make an interesting and cool addition to a percussion ensemble concert, and with the shared setup would likely be doable by most percussion departments, as it doesn't require a lot of equipment and would not take up too much space on the stage.

—Marilyn K. Clark Silva



### **A Sky Full of Stars V**

Heng Liu

€60.00

#### **Edition Svitzer**

**Instrumentation (12 players):** tubular bells, glockenspiel, xylophone, vibraphone, 3 marimbas (one 4.3 or 5-octave, two 5-octave instruments), 3 tom-toms, 2 bass drums or large floor toms, concert bass drum, 3 cymbals, tam-tam, ride cymbal, sizzle cymbal, 2 trash cymbals (or see score for substitutions)

Composer Heng Liu states, "Each of us is a star in the sky. Because of music, we are connected. Different stars, like our tutors and ourselves, (are) connected and handed down from generation to generation." These sentiments are reflected in Liu's composition, as individual musical fragments appear discreetly and are combined gradually over the course of this 10-minute work. The harmonies are largely tonal throughout, creating a complex web of sound characterized by interlocking rhythms across the ensemble. The final section of the piece features unison statements from non-pitched instruments with the keyboard percussion instruments executing repetitive figures whose counterpoint almost invokes a Steve Reich-like texture on a grand scale. Liu offers two codas from which the conductor can choose: one ending softly and the other loud.

While the scoring is dense, especially in later sections of the piece, all parts are idiomatically written to be playable by intermediate to early-advanced players. Four-mallet writing is chordal (either as block or broken chords) with the exception of a brief passage featuring an eighth-note melody and accompaniment in one of the marimba parts. Many of the non-pitched parts are unison or easily coordinated with the aid of a conductor.

"A Sky Full of Stars" would make a good "cornerstone" piece on an intermediate/advanced college percussion ensemble concert. In addition to the programmatic beauty of the music, it will provide a strong vehicle for ensemble playing and listener engagement.

—Jason Baker

### **Tenebrous Paradigm IV**

Darrien Spicak

\$50.00

#### **Tapspace Publications**

**Instrumentation (14 players):** glockenspiel, crotales (2 octaves), chimes, 2 vibraphones, xylophone, two 4-octave marimbas, two 5-octave marimbas, 4 timpani, bongos, 2 concert bass drums, 5 concert toms, djembe, 4 impact drums, snare drum, 5 toms, hi-hat, suspended cymbal, tam-tam, Zil-Bel, brake drum, egg shaker, Mark Tree, rain stick, sleighbells, 2 woodblocks, wooden

patio chimes, waterphone (may substitute bowed cymbal)

**Web:** [score sample, audio recording](#)

This work for 14 percussionists is appropriately named: with its mysterious tones achieved through use of special techniques and intriguing instrumentation, “Tenebrous Paradigm” creates an enigmatic soundscape that draws the audience into it. Especially helpful is the included information at the front of the score. There is a detailed instrumentation, listed per player, as well as a notation key and suggested setup. The setup diagram is a great addition, since it clearly conveys the composer’s intent and saves the leader of the ensemble the work of making a setup that works well.

There is an interesting juxtaposition of the drum sounds with the keyboards and accessories. The result is an effectual piece of music, rather than a linear one. It might remind the listener of a film score, with its interjecting drums, bowed/rolled/sustained/repeated notes and patterns in the keyboards, and overlapping polyrhythms in all instruments. The composer uses the instruments included to great effect, and each player in the 14-member ensemble has an important voice that contributes meaningfully.

“Tenebrous Paradigm” would be perfect for a college or professional ensemble. This one is sure to intrigue the audience and keep them engaged for the duration of the piece.

—Cassie Bunting

#### **Twenty-Four IV–V**

Tyler Tolles

\$40.00

**Tapspace Publications**

**Web:** [score sample, audio recording](#)

**Instrumentation** (5 players): vibraphone, 8 concert toms, 4.5-octave marimba, crotales (high octave), chimes, triangle, glockenspiel, tenor drum, concert bass drum, ride cymbal with rivets

“Twenty-Four” draws inspiration from the military bugle call “Taps” and takes its name from 24 notes that are organized into eight sets of three-note phrases. Each of the five players (with the exception of player 5) has a mallet percussion instrument and two concert toms. The parts tend to alternate between *moto-perpetuo* passages on the mallets and drumming passages on the toms. There is a wide dynamic range and use of syncopated accents to break up the repeated melodic notes. Because of the driving rhythm, this requires the players to have good control of their strokes. The mallet parts are fast, but only Percussion 1 and 2 require the use of four mallets, and the patterns repeat often. The concert-tom rhythms are often played in unison, requiring the players to have an excellent sense of time and ensemble playing.

At eight minutes, “Twenty-Four” is a little on the long side, but the texture is a nice combination of metal, membrane, and wood, and has pleasant moments of sparsity as well as density. The piece would lend itself well to players with a drumming background who want to transfer their skills to mallet instruments. The parts require good stroke control, but due to the thematic structure, the parts are often ostinato and would be doable by someone with good chops but less mallet experience.

While “Twenty-Four” doesn’t reinvent the wheel of percussion ensemble pieces, it has a nice, straightforward concept and structure,

and it would be a good addition to a percussion ensemble concert.

—Marilyn K. Clark Silva

#### **We Are Heroes**

Adam Tan

\$30.00

**Edition Svitzer**

**Instrumentation** (3 players): two 5-octave marimbas, 2 medium-low drums, drum set, cowbell

**Web:** [Score sample, audio and video recordings](#)



This exciting work for three percussionists uses minimal instrumentation to achieve maximum expression. The composer writes: “We Are Heroes’ sounds like it could be representative of fictitious superheroes, like the Avengers, the X-Men, or even Saitama from One Punch Man. However, the true meaning of ‘heroes’ in ‘We Are Heroes’ is intended to represent everyday people who do things for others, rendering them ‘heroes.’ For example, during COVID-19, the sacrifice of medical and other frontline staff on a daily basis made us look up to them as heroes. I also consider educators and even parents to be heroes to their students and children respectively. Everyone can be a hero to someone in their own way.”

This medium-advanced piece includes interesting voicing in the marimbas, as well as cool and groovy drum set parts. The form is clear, beginning with the thematic material, a drummy section, and a reprise at the end. This piece would be great for a professional recital or a showcase concert for advanced students, as it requires not only four-mallet marimba skills (including one-handed rolls) for two players, but also drumming abilities and vocal percussion. Although it includes very challenging moments, the simpler, understandable rhythms and thematic material are memorable and accessible to a wide array of listeners. Included in the score are valuable notes from the composer regarding style and performance preferences and intentions, which are always helpful to have as a performer.

—Cassie Bunting

## **SNARE DRUM METHOD**

#### **Stickness**

Johannes Steinbauer

€35.00

**Edition Svitzer**

**Web:** [sample pages](#)

Stickness is an 87-page, spiral-bound

publication that is designed to increase snare drum technique at various levels of abilities, from intermediate to advanced. There are four chapters of instruction: Chapter One – single, double, and multiple strokes; Chapter Two – grace notes; Chapter Three – one-handed buzz roll and closed roll; and Chapter Four – grace notes and rolls. A final section is titled “Mephisto Study” and is an advanced combination summary of the previous four chapters – intended to be quite challenging.

This snare drum technique book is designed to be both a manual and a mental technique development tool for the snare drummer, taking the tradition of George L. Stone’s *Stick Control* to a whole new level.

—Jim Lambert

#### **Wham Bam Flam IV**

Joel Rothman

\$15.96

**JR Publications**



Joel Rothman’s new snare drum method book is aptly subtitled “The Drummer’s Bible of Embellishments (Flams, Drags & Ruffs).” Like many of Rothman’s books, *Wham Bam Flam* consists mostly of pages of *Stick Control*-esque patterns for snare drum. In this case, the patterns are different sticking combinations (including those based on paradiddle rudiments) utilizing flams, double strokes (drags), and single-stroke fours (ruffs).

The organizationally minded part of me finds these patterns quite appealing. I especially like the different rhythms, including quintuplets, that Rothman applies to the sticking and embellishment patterns. A couple of pages apply some of the patterns to drum set in both straight and swung eighth-note situations.

Although numerous method books cover the same topics, this book would be an interesting and engaging addition to the percussionist’s library, as it will certainly help with technical development and timing.

—Joseph Van Hassel

## MULTIPLE PERCUSSION SOLO

### Get In (the Second) Line V

Rob Sanderl

\$12.00

**Tapspace Publications**

**Instrumentation:** concert snare drum, kick bass drum

**Web:** [score sample, audio and video recordings](#)

This solo provides insight into the traditional New Orleans funeral-procession style of drumming where the life of the deceased is celebrated in parade form while the mourners accompany the casket to the cemetery. This 97-measure solo reflects the development of early 20th-century drum set performance – continuing even up to today. The snare drum sticking is clearly notated, and advanced rudimental sticking technique is a requirement for performance. The tempo remains quarter-note equals 110 throughout. In his prefatory remarks, composer Rob Sanderl describes the tuning of his 5 X 14-inch snare drum as well as his tuning of the 18-inch bass drum.

This could be an effective solo concert snare drum/bass drum presentation for a percussion recital. Congratulations to Sanderl for his creativity in composing this historically influenced work.

–Jim Lambert

### Tricolon C V

Maximilian Wolfgang Schwarz

€25.00

**Edition Svitzer**

**Instrumentation:** bass drum, o-daiko, hi-hat, 4 Octobans, 3 tom-toms, 2 stacked splash cymbals, trash crasher, accompaniment track

**Web:** [score sample, audio and video recordings](#)

What exactly is a Tricolon? This question first came to mind when I was asked to review this new work by Maximilian Schwarz. To spare readers a similar deep dive into rhetoric, a tricolon is a three-part structure where each part builds on the previous part for emphasis. This is the perfect title for this piece! Through his manipulation of this rhetorical device, Schwarz has managed to create a multi-percussion solo that is technically virtuosic, groovy, and provides plenty to satisfy both the audience and the performer.

While Schwarz is known as an emerging classical percussionist and composer with his previous work for marimba, "Constellations I," earning second prize in Edition Svitzer's Stellar Competition, he is also accomplished as a composer for film, avant-garde-pop, and as a drummer for bands CozmicRip and maTrigal. These diverse influences are evident throughout "Tricolon C" as he seamlessly weaves layers of pop-inspired groove with Xenakis-like counterpoint.

"Tricolon C" is excerpted from Schwarz's larger work, "Tricolon for Solo Percussion." As implied by the letter C, this work was derived from the third movement, previously titled "con follia" ("with fury"). Musically, there are several allusions to the title through both large and small structural units. The overall structure evokes three distinct musical emotions: a drum-loop-inspired groove from the beginning to measure 72, followed by a spacious and thematically loose section, and ending with a furious and contrapuntally dense section from measure 107 to the end. Within these sections, many phrases are repeated three

times, creating gratifying tension and release throughout the piece.

I highly recommend "Tricolon C" to advanced students or professionals looking to diversify their repertoire with an exciting work that is audience friendly and technically engaging. While this work features a fixed electronic accompaniment, many of the sections feature loose alignment between performer and electronics, leaving ample room for interpretation.

It should be noted that this piece calls for a few unique instruments: o-daiko, Octobans, and a trash crasher. While substitutes for the trash crasher can be easily created, o-daiko and Octobans are less accessible for many percussionists. A performer without these niche instruments might consider borrowing within their network or substituting with more common instruments. The o-daiko could be substituted with a small bass drum, while the Octobans could be substituted with bongos or a more substantial alterations of the seven drum voices organized with a lower timbre three-drum and higher timbre four-drum family – for example, three Roto-Toms and four small toms.

–Quintin Mallette

### When the Sun Goes Down V

Heng Liu

€35.00

**Edition Svitzer**

**Instrumentation:** shaker, finger bell (Tibetan bell), 2 wind chimes, 2 splash cymbals, bass drum, djembe, 3 congas, 2 bongos, doumbek, optional vibraphone, audio track

**Web:** [score sample, audio recordings](#)

This work for multi-percussion and audio was premiered in 2019 by Shiqing Zhong in Carnegie Hall. The physical copy is beautifully constructed with wonderful cover art that evokes the spirit of the composition. The piece begins with a slow simmer between the audio and performer, concentrating on instrument introductions and improvised effects. Quickly, the audio and performer start to heat up and begin to change time signatures with the wide array of instrumentation, allowing the performer to display many variations of texture and dynamics. The time signature begins to alternate sections of 3/8, 2/8, and 6/16 that lead to a tumbao style in 7/4 that's written for conga. This section also has an optional vibraphone solo line that is written to make the performer sound like a genius improviser. This solo can easily be the climax of the piece, and it constantly continues to grow in excitement. It eventually leads to the final section, which is mostly improvised by the performer, whether they choose the vibraphone or conga track.

Although the score comes with a suggested setup and list of required instruments, the composer suggests that the performer is free to use different setups or instruments. He also adds that one is free to play what is written or may improvise the entire thing along with the audio. Through interesting instrumentation and an endless amount of creative potential, this new work allows the performer to take an audience on a journey through one large crescendo of energy and musicality. What else could one ask for? At the time of this writing, a performance recording was not readily available online. You could be the first!

–Ben Cantrell

## MULTIPLE PERCUSSION DUO

### Two Dragons II

Wes Stephens

\$22.00

**Tapspace Publications**

**Instrumentation:** bongos, 2 congas, 2 opera gongs, bass drum

**Web:** [score sample, audio recording](#)

I didn't realize how much I wished for a beginner-level multiple-percussion duo in the vein of "Trio per Uno" until I found it manifested here in "Two Dragons." When I say "beginner level," I mean exactly that: from a technical and musical standpoint, this two-minute piece can be successfully performed by pretty much anyone who has been a percussionist for a couple of months. Please don't mistake this for derision, though; the percussion world *needs* pieces like this bite-sized miracle, which throw open the gates of the big, wonderful world of percussion for students who, even as beginners, can often crave something beyond the standard snare-keyboard-timpani educational canon.

All of the important chamber music and multiple-percussion hallmarks are there, albeit with protective padding: grappling with the (minimized) challenge of producing even sounds on unevenly responsive instruments, negotiating ensemble dynamics and cohesion, etc. I should also point out that, other than calling into question the titular dragons, this piece could just as easily be played on any five drums (besides bass drum, bongos, and congas) and any two contrasting, prominent sounds (besides opera gongs), and still retain nearly all of its effectiveness, making it a supremely accessible and adaptable tool in an educator's belt, which I could see being employed year after year.

Philosophically, I adore any experience that allows percussionists to ask the question "What is percussion?" early in their education, and "Two Dragons" provides exactly that opportunity while also providing students with something fun and engaging to perform. I strongly encourage any middle-school educator looking to go beyond the conventional areas of beginner percussion education to check this piece out.

–Brian Graiser



## MIXED INSTRUMENTATION

### Fusion & La Buena Vida V

Daniel Berg

\$26.50

**Edition Svitzer**

**Instrumentation (2 players):** guitar, 5-octave marimba

**Web:** [score sample, audio and video recordings](#)

Daniel Berg is well-known for his chamber music for percussion and other instruments. This piece is a wonderful example of that. "Fusion & La Buena Vida" is scored for 5-octave marimba and guitar. Much like marimba and cello, the timbres of the two instruments go together quite well. The conversation, as it is composed, between the two parts results in a beautiful and exciting piece of music.

"Fusion" was purposely composed, according to Berg, to have "two parts that seem to be on equal terms. The finger technique on guitar and playing with four mallets on marimba also have their similarities, and therefore the two parts are very similar to each other." The music is composed mainly in 4/4 and 3/4 with interjections in 5/8 and 12/8. Both parts are written as a mostly steady stream of sixteenth notes, though clearly delineated from phrase to phrase.

For "La Buena Vida," Berg writes, "I wanted to write a work where the rhythm is in focus and the harmony, so to speak, plays the second violin." Thus, the music here is more esoteric and experimental in nature. Berg uses 12-tone technique, as well as more varied time signatures and complex rhythms. The "fusion" of the first half of the work is gone until the very end of the piece when both parts come back into unison for the final three measures.

I recommend this piece for a graduate or professional recital as a unique addition to the program. The combination of instruments is not commonly heard by audiences. The sound is accessible to the audience and the piece is technically and musically satisfying for the performers.

—Justin Bunting

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## RECORDINGS

### Arkinetics

Dan Kurfirst

#### Neuma Records

This album takes the listener on a meditative journey through the use of vamps, odd-time signatures, and airy solos. The first track, "Peace In," features a hypnotic, vamp-based groove in 21/16 with a spoken-word voiceover. "Birth Beats 2" is reminiscent of Miles Davis' electronic-based music, featuring Daniel Carter on trumpet and Roshni Samlal on tabla. "Meditation Groove" is appropriately named, with a light, rhythmic feel.

"Birth Beats 1" is a short track with a drum solo over spoken word. "Ghost Killers" starts with a bass vamp by Damon Banks. It soon develops into a moving full-ensemble piece. "Dreamscape" features Daniel Carter again on trumpet, with moving keyboard lines added by Alexis Marcelo. "Two Chants" is another drum solo with spoken word. "Not Yet" is felt in seven (7/8 or 7/4), featuring interplay between Carter and Marcelo. Kurfirst gets a chance to stretch out a bit on this track. "Peace Out," is a restatement of the first track, "Peace In."

The odd meters and rhythmic interplay between Kurfirst and Samlal especially make this an album of interest for drummers and percussionists. Although meditative, this is not

background music. In fact, the listeners will probably find themselves meditating on the music instead of meditating to the music!

—Jeff W. Johnson

### Ilta

Stefanie Abderhalden and Kyle Flens

#### Neuma Records

*Ilta* is a fabulous collection of works performed mostly by Stefanie Abderhalden (flutes) and Kyle Flens (percussion). Everything is expertly played, and the recording quality is superb. I especially enjoyed hearing many works with which I was not previously familiar. This includes two works by Northern Illinois University professor David Maki: "Ilta" for flute and percussion and "Inertia" for steelpan and marimba duet. It is most impressive that both of these recordings are from live performances.

"Inertia" does not include Abderhalden or Flens. It is performed by percussionists Malika Green and Katie (Wiegman) Burdett. There are also two musique concrète fixed-media works by Robert Fleisher, both featuring tape-manipulated sounds of Fleisher's friend Thomas Loretto improvising on found percussion instruments including a tree, pots, pans, pipes, and more.

The recording concludes with another work by Fleisher, "Five Pieces for Flute and Percussion" composed for and premiered by Abderhalden and Flens. Three of the movements in this lengthy piece are duets, with the other two being solos for each performer. Fleisher utilizes the instruments of the flute family, from the contrabass flute to the piccolo, and the percussion music is exclusively on metal instruments (crotales, vibraphone, gongs, brake drums, etc.). The first movement, "Recollections," is somewhat conversational between the percussion and flute. It is mostly slow, soft, and spacious, moving briefly into more lively contrapuntal music, with some nice parallelisms in the vibraphone, before concluding with the opening texture. The second movement, "Reconstruction," is a percussion solo inspired by John Cage's percussion ensemble "First Construction." The third movement, "Sarabande," is a flute and vibraphone duet with elements of the Baroque-era dance suite section as well as more modern sarabandes by Debussy and Satie. The fourth movement, "Elegies," is a solo for the rarely heard contrabass flute. The final movement, "Ensemble" is a kind of summary of the previous four movements.

*Ilta* also has wonderful recordings of Flens performing the multiple-percussion solo "Rebonds A" by Iannis Xenakis and the "Chorale" movement from Robert Honstein's "An Economy of Means" for solo prepared vibraphone. I highly recommend this album!

—Joseph Van Hassel

### More Touch

Patricia Brennan

#### Pyroclastic Records

Vibraphonist/marimbist Patricia Brennan listened to all kinds of music as a young child in Veracruz, Mexico. The music on this album reflects her musical influences without actually being confined to a specific style. There are hints of jazz, Latin, classical, and modern music throughout the album. Brennan is joined by bassist Kim Cass, drummer Marcus Gilmore, and percussionist Mauricio Herrera.

"Unquiet Respect" is a soca-inspired track based on the party music of Veracruz. "More Touch" represents being in touch with the present. The musicians also had to be in touch with each other to create a piece that begins in an airy fashion and progresses to a musical frenzy. "Space for Hour" explores the space between notes, allowing the listener to experience both silence and the full decay of notes.

"El Nahualli" is based on spirit animals. Brennan gets a chance to stretch out on this track, showcasing her musicality. "The Woman Who Weeps" is dedicated to Brennan's grandmother. It conveys a sense of loss and despair. "Square Bimagic" has a montuno-style feel with rhythmic interplay between the members of the quartet.

"Convergences" is based on the oceanic convergence zones, where different currents meet. The ensemble utilizes two rhythmic themes to musically recreate this concept. "Robbin" was inspired by the contrasting seasons in Robbinston, Maine. The first part of the piece has a mellow feel (representing winter) while the second part has an upbeat, grooving feel (representing spring/summer). "Sizigia" represents syzygy, the alignment of three or more celestial bodies. This concept is recreated through the use of three rhythmic layers. "And There Was Light" is a short piece that starts with Batá drums, followed by a long crescendo and decrescendo by the ensemble.

Brennan shines throughout this recording. Cass, Gilmore, and Herrera are integral members, adding to the music without overplaying. In this album, Brennan succeeds at combining her musical influences into a sound that is her own!

—Jeff W. Johnson

### Self-Titled

Matthew Lau

#### Self-Released

As soon as I learned that Matthew Lau was releasing his first album, I knew it was going to be fantastic. His virtuosity as a soloist is electric, especially when performing works for vibraphone. Furthermore, his musical interests have led to some of the most creative artistic projects I have seen in recent years. Both of these are on display throughout his self-titled album.

The CD features compositions for solo vibraphone and electronics by three composers. The first track, Daniel Almada's "Linde" for vibraphone and fixed media, has been a staple on Lau's concert programs throughout his career. The remaining two works are pieces Lau commissioned from Von Hansen and OZNO James Boznos. "Gr@wfix" is the second movement of Hansen's work "LOOPS" written for solo vibraphone and live-interaction electronics. It requires the performer to create a series of live loops similar to DJs and other live performers. The remaining five tracks are movements from "22.4" by OZNO for vibraphone, speech, and tape. The piece is reminiscent of orchestral works with a quirky, theatrical twist.

While I am quite fond of the first two works on the CD, "22.4" is my favorite. The stylistic changes in each of the movements really captivate the listener. Movements 1, 3, and 5 are charismatic in nature, while movements 2 and 4 are more subdued. I found myself eager to hear the next one but patiently waiting for each to end. Furthermore, the vibraphone part is insane, truly exploring the limits of the instrument

and the player. It is masterfully performed by Lau, with so much of his personality, finesse, and musical touch coming through in every track.

—Danielle Moreau



### Shadows in the Forest

Gábor Palotás

MZK Publishing

Gábor Palotás brings together a masterful set of marimba works by Hungarian composers with *Shadows in the Forest*. The diversity of styles represented on this album are a joy to listen to, and Palotás's incredibly sensitive performance is an inspiration to marimba performers. This is especially evident on the 4th track, "Toccatà" by Lajos Huszár. The ostinato rhythms in the first and third parts are steady, yet the tension continues to build. The middle chorale is haunting and beautiful, and the way Palotás varies the roll speed adds a layer of musicality that is rare.

The subject matter covers a bevy of topics including the theorized underwater continent of Lemuria in "Lemuria: The Lost Civilization," a cat on the marimba in "Cat on Marimba," the poetry of Dávid Simon in "Örkény István" and James Joyce in "The Song of the Cosmos" and "Öi-(JJ)," the Roman God Janus in "Janus," and more.

The title track, "Shadows in the Forest" by Palotás, is absolutely stunning and terrifying. It was composed in 2015, "the same year as the terrorist attacks in Paris. The action taken against humanity may have reminded many of us how fragile life is. Imagine someone getting lost in a forest, yet there is a feeling they are not alone. They try to ask for help, but the threat remains, no help arrives." To say this is thought-provoking is an understatement. The work is very well composed and is reminiscent of the works of Fredrik Andersson. Palotás's sensitive playing comes through crystal clear in this very tense work. The tension is achieved through mostly soft playing that continues to build throughout the piece.

*Shadows in the Forest* needs to be in every serious marimba player's library, and I consider it a triumph. The compositions, performance, recording, and album artwork are of the highest quality, and it is not to be missed.

—Joe Millea

### Works for Violin and Percussion Orchestra

Nicholas Kitchen and the New England Conservatory Percussion Ensemble

Naxos

New England Conservatory Percussion Ensemble Director Frank Epstein has come up with a refreshingly thoughtful and meaningful recording project in his *Works for Violin and Percussion Orchestra* album: he presents a

new recording of a beloved masterwork, and surrounds it with newly commissioned music inspired by that masterwork in a presentation that is thematically, artistically, and sonically sensible.

The "masterwork" is Lou Harrison's three-movement "Concerto for Violin and Percussion Orchestra," and the inspired sequels (or, perhaps more fairly, "musical responses") are Robert X. Rodriguez's five-movement "Xochiquetzal" and Kati Agócs's four-movement "Concerto for Violin and Percussion Orchestra."

I'll admit that I'm a bigger fan of Harrison's "Suite for Violin and American Gamelan" than this concerto, but I wholeheartedly agree with this piece's significance. To the point: Harrison's concerto doesn't get performed nearly enough, and it certainly deserves emulation and creative response. I was fascinated to hear that, while the two new works are very clearly informed by Harrison's concerto, both of them went in different geographical directions than Harrison's gamelan-inspired approach. Rodriguez evokes Mayan culture by drawing on his familiarity with Mexican folk music, while Agócs leans into European folk dance at times. The percussion orchestration is similarly varied, almost to the

point of "everything-and-the-kitchen-sink," but the colors are deployed with such precision and care, and performed with such poise and control, that the sheer number of instruments used never becomes a distraction (or, as can sometimes be the case in modern percussion orchestra writing, an excuse to be overwhelming for the sake of spectacle).

Solo violinist Nicholas Kitchen plays with a necessary extroversion and largely succeeds in keeping pace with the extremely large collection of varied percussive textures and colors that accompany him. If anything, I found the balance between the violin and percussion ensemble to lean a little too heavily away from the percussionists during the Rodriguez tracks, but I'm guessing that reviewers for violin publications will disagree. In any event, the entire album is tastefully planned, excellently performed, and well worth a few listens.

—Brian Graiser

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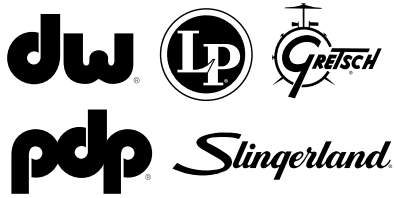
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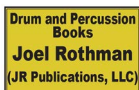
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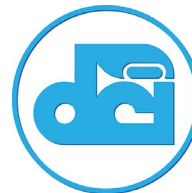
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# From the Rhythm! Discovery Center Collection

## Gretsch Renown Model X4103 Snare Drum

Gift of Stephen Montalvo. 2008.12.01

The Fred Gretsch Company, founded in Brooklyn, N.Y., in 1883 by German-born Karl Friedrich Wilhelm "Fritz" Gretsch, is a family-owned business celebrating its 140th anniversary as a musical-instrument manufacturing company in 2023. Primarily known for its drums and guitars, the company went through a period of 17 years where it was owned by several music conglomerates, but since 1984 it has been owned by Fred W. Gretsch, the great-grandson of the founder, with manufacturing facilities currently located in Ridgeland, South Carolina.

Gretsch snare drums are prized by collectors and performers for their high-quality of construction, durability of their shells, and premier tonal characteristics. The designation "Renown" as one of Gretsch's snare drum models has appeared in numerous configurations and styles from the 1930s until present day. This drum's "round-badge" Model X4103, available in a pearl finish, appears in Gretsch catalogs between the years of ca. 1961 to 1968.

Likely manufactured in 1962, this 14 x 5-1/2-inch drum features a white marine pearl wrapped 6-ply shell with angled bearing edges, widely-cut snare beds and a silver painted interior. Its double-flanged counterhoops and eight separate-tension lugs (#5472) are both die-cast and chrome plated. The drum also features the Gretsch 12-strand "Responso" wire snares (attached by cord to a Renown #5385 four-point, knurled-knob strainer and #5386 rear snare bracket), as well as a chromed vent-hole where a drum key can be stored. The drum has Ludwig WeatherMaster drum heads mounted on both sides, which are not original to the drum.

—James A. Strain, *PAS Historian*



Interior view from bottom showing transparent Ludwig snare head, silver-painted interior of 6-ply shell, and "Responso" 12-strand snares. Note the partially-shown snare bed cut into the shell's bearing edge.

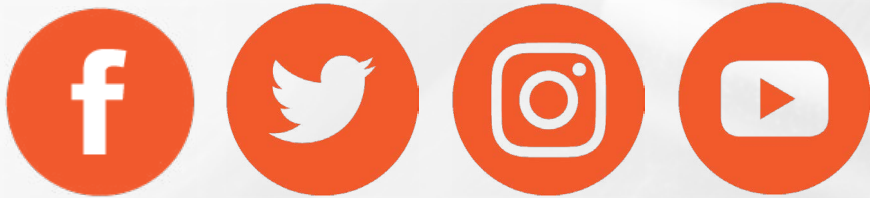


Gretsch Renown four-point, knurled-knob strainer #5386. Note the chromed vent hole for drum key storage to the right of strainer.

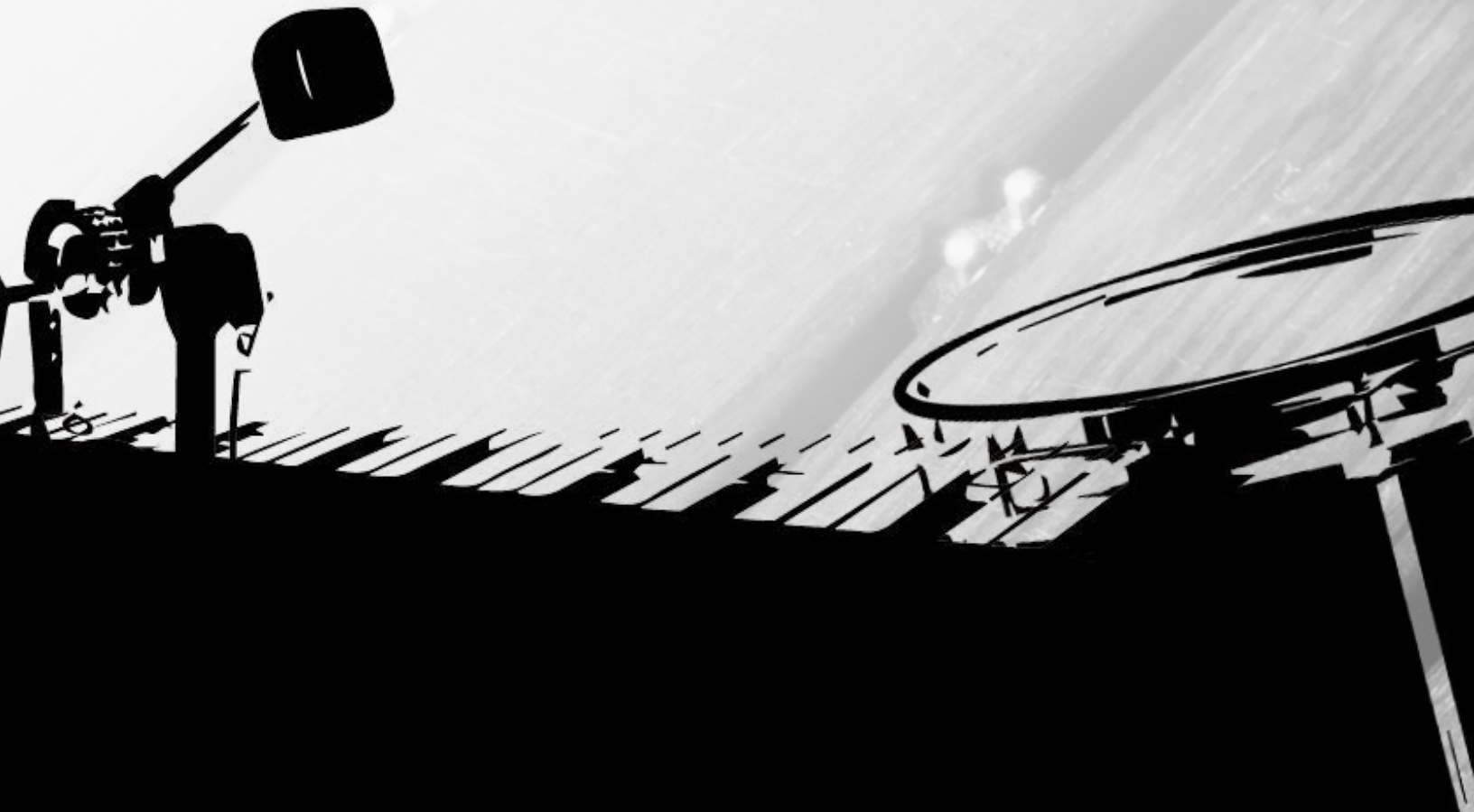


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