

TIMPANI FUNDAMENTALS!

WITH BRAD MEYER

The Set-Up

1. Adjust the throne/seat so your legs are slightly bent when touching the floor and have your feet about one to two feet apart. Use the seat to lean against rather than sitting on top of it.
2. Set the two middle timpani (26" and 29") so the pedals are directly under your feet.
3. Put your mallets above each timpani in a relaxed manner. If the mallets are not in the optimal beating area for each drum, then adjust the individual timpani accordingly.
4. Place the outside two drums in their respective places.
5. Turn your body from the torso, without moving the drum throne. Note the position of where the mallets end up, and then move the outside two drums' so the optimal beating areas are directly under where your mallets ended. (Make sure the pedals are slightly angled inwards).
6. If there is a fifth drum (20"), apply the same process for setting the drum. Make sure to have the drum turned where the beating area is closest to the player, instead of facing the beating area into the "center" of the "circle."

The Beating Area

Normal, Edge, Center

Normal: Clear pitch, full sound/resonant - a.k.a. "OPTIMAL BEATING AREA"

Edge: Lots of overtones, thin, "ringy"

Center: mostly the fundamental pitch, short, "thumpy"

Hands Spread Apart ("Open") vs. Close together ("Closed")

Closed = more **articulate**

Open = more **legato**

Approaching The Attack

The Power Triangle – start up, end up

1. Start up (practice by touching heads together lightly)
 2. End up (practice by touching heads together lightly)
 3. Make sure that the mallet doesn't freeze for an instant either on the bar or right above the bar. Look for "floating mallet" an inch above the bar, if that is seen, then the mallet is not rebounding correctly.
- ⇒ **Practice Tip:** make sure to **practice at a full height** as a beginning student, and then as one progresses through their education, practice as different heights with the same discipline as at the full height.

Two Main Stroke Types

- Legato** (starts up and ends up) - full sound
 - loose/relaxed hand
 - used for general playing and rolling
- Staccato** (starts lower than it ends, “quick up”) - articulate
 - light squeeze of the fingers
 - quick wrist “pop up”
 - used for clarifying quick rhythms

Mallets

Every timpanist should have at least three pairs of mallets: soft, medium, and hard

Soft mallets are for passages that move slowly (longs rolls, whole notes, and half-notes)

Medium mallets are for general playing (passages that contain a wide variety of rolls, quarter notes, eighth notes, etc.)

Hard mallets should only be used for specific passages where precise articulation is required (lots of sixteenth notes, thirty-second notes, etc.)

Advanced timpanists use numerous pairs of mallets available of differing density and weight

Moving Around The Drums

Shifting - moving the hands quickly from drum to drum without crossing the mallets

- Preferred method: more consistent beating areas and mallet position

Crossing-over - crossing the mallets to facilitate intricate musical passages

- Use only when absolutely necessary: less accurate and causes inconsistent sound quality

Dr. Brad Meyer (www.Brad-Meyer.com) is a percussion artist and composer with an extensive and diverse teaching background. Dr. Meyer often tours to universities and high schools throughout the Southern and Midwestern states presenting recitals and workshops on topics such as electro-acoustic percussion, contemporary marimba, marching percussion, and world music. Brad is the Vice President of the Kentucky Chapter of the Percussive Arts Society as well as a member of the PAS's Technology Committee. Dr. Meyer completed his Doctorate of Music in Percussion Performance and Pedagogy of Music Theory certificate in 2011 under James Campbell at the University of Kentucky, where he also graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Music Performance in 2006. Brad is a proud endorsee of Vic Firth Stick and Mallets, Evans Drumheads, and Tycoon Percussion.

