



Sound Enhanced

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The Clock Says

BY NEAL H. FLUM

As is the case with most, if not all, marching percussion ensembles, how we engage our rehearsals has much to do with how much time we have available to do so. At the University of Alabama (as in the college marching band environment everywhere) time is of great concern, as our students not only participate in the percussion section/marching band, but also pursue rigorous and challenging degree programs and university-related activities above and beyond their academic responsibilities. In fact, with an increase in the scheduling of classes, recitations, and laboratories between the hours of 3:00 P.M. and 6:00 P.M., it is becoming increasingly more difficult to find any day during the week when all of our marching percussion section members are present. When they are all present, it is imperative that the percussion staff has a well-planned approach to our use of time. Even so, the dynamics of a typical marching band rehearsal make focusing on the percussion section's needs a challenge.

Indeed, our marching band rehearsal itself is also a challenge from a use-of-time perspective as we allocate part of our schedule each day to football-game cheers, stand tunes, the halftime show, and the pre-game show. Admittedly, where we are with our halftime show often affects the other things we work on in rehearsal. Typically, we learn a new halftime show about every three to four weeks, which includes new music and drill. Often, there is not a lot of time to address the percussion section's needs.

So in order to better address fundamental performance issues and to improve the ensemble's performance skills, particularly in the area of vertical alignment between the front ensemble and battery, we warm up together before band rehearsal each day. Beginning at 3:30 P.M. and going until 4:00 P.M., the front ensemble and battery typically warm up using a basic single-beat type exercise, stick control patterns, the check pattern and duple variations, and our three warm-ups, one of which is included with this article. (The others are a form of a single-double-triple beat and accent-to-tap.)

Sometimes, we will vary our warm-up routine if a specific performance needs to be addressed. For example, if we sense that the percussion section needs to improve its rhythmic accuracy, we will spend more time on the check patterns and duple variations and shorten the time we engage the other elements in our warm-up. After our warm-up, if we have time, we usually run through our halftime show music.

Our warm-ups are written to address fundamental performance skills and to provide entertainment for fans of our football team that gather for our warm-ups before each home football game. The warm-up provided here addresses diddles, drags, and rolls with some sense of patterned-writing, but it is also written with a sense of "groove" to appeal to those individuals who attend our games and want to enjoy our warm-up.

This exercise in particular also provides our cymbal players with an opportunity to work on their timing as well as practice different techniques: orchestral crash, choke, hard choke, sizzle choke, taps, etc.

The keyboard part was written so our students can play it in any key. We take that approach with all three of our warm-ups. It basically emphasizes the root, third, and fifth of a major scale. We have our front ensemble students play the exercise as is and in the Circle of Fifths (including flats), minor keys, and sometimes in different modes. If the show music we are working on has a key signature or mode we do not typically encounter, then we will spend time on that key or mode when engaging our warm-ups.

To provide the front ensemble with different listening orientations and challenges, we sometimes use a mixed-instrumentation approach or have the battery move during our warm-up exercises. We begin the performance of any of our exercises in the traditional battery arc with multi-tenors to the left of the snares and bass drums to the right. The cymbal players stand directly behind the snares centered on the 50-yard line.

For another approach, we then have the battery set up in a mixed instrumentation with the multi-tenors integrated into the

snares and the bass drums behind the integrated snare and multi-tenors centered on the 50-yard line, and the cymbals behind the bass drums. We then have pre-designated pods of snares and tenors march around in an improvised manner staying between the 35-yard lines with the bass drums and cymbals centered on the 50-yard line. Often, during our warm-up, when the battery is stationary, we have our snare-tenor pods position themselves in different locations behind the front ensemble for a different listening orientation/challenge. Next, we will have all the snares and multi-tenors individually move around on their own, staying in between the 35-yard lines. We encourage them to improvise (their movement) but maintain visual or aural contact with the bass drums and cymbals.

The one constant in the on-the-move performances of our exercises is having the bass drums and cymbals centered on the 50-yard line about 15 yards behind the front ensemble. Having the bass drums and cymbals anchored give both the front ensemble students and battery performers an aural source for their tempo cue and it gives the battery performers, at times, both an aural and visual source for their tempo maintenance. As little time as we have to address our percussion section's needs, having the battery performers move not only helps us work on vertical alignment from front-to-back as well as balance, but it also gives the battery performers an opportunity to work on their marching technique.

After our warm-up, if the front ensemble has specific needs to attend to (like learning new show music), then they go off on their own and engage in that process. If the marching band rehearses its pre-game show, which does not involve the front ensemble, then the front ensemble has additional time to work on performance issues specific to it.

The clock does dictate greatly how we use our rehearsal time, and because the majority of our typical rehearsal is geared toward the marching band, as it should be, we usually have to address our percussion section's needs during our warm-up, and

so we write our warm-up exercises to serve many purposes. Those purposes include providing the opportunity for the front ensemble and battery to warm up together. We have found that the necessity of doing so helps produce a much more fundamen-

tally sound, more musical, and more vertically aligned ensemble. It also builds a better sense of "team," something we always consider as we engage the teaching process with our students.

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"SOUTHIE DAVE"

Dedicated to Mr. David E. Fox (of Waltham): dear friend, talented percussionist, and gifted teacher.

Arranged by ©Neal Flum April 2006

(A) ♩ = 114

Section A (Measures 1-8):

- Snare:** *ff*, 12''/6''
- Tenors:** *ff*, 12''/6''
- BD's:** *ff*, 12''/6''
- Cymbals:** *ff*, 12''/6''
- Key:** *ff*, 12''/6''

(B)

Section B (Measures 9-16):

- SD:** L L R R L L R L L R L L
- TN:** L L R R L L R L L R L L
- BD's:** R R L L R R L L R L L
- C:** R R L L R R L L R L L
- Key:** L L R R R L R L R R

SD

R RLLLR L L RRL L RRL

R LLRL L RRLLR

R LL R L RRL

TN

R RLLLR L R L RRL R L RRL

R LLRL L RRLLR R L

R LL R L RRL

BD's

R R L R R L RRL R R R LLRL R RLRLR R L R R L

C

Key

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

SD

R LLRLRRLRLRLRL

R LLRLRRLRL L

RRLRRLR R RRLLRRL

TN

R LLRLRRLRLRLRL

R LLRLRRLRL L

RRLRRLR L L RRLLRRLRL L L

BD's

R R RLRLRLRL L R R R L RLRLRRL L RLRLRLRLRL L L

C

1 1 2 2 1 2

Key

R R L RLR R R L R LR LRL L R L R L R L L

