

THE RUDIMENTS OF TWO-MALLET KEYBOARD PERFORMANCE

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INTRODUCTION

The standard keyboard percussion family of instruments includes the marimba, xylophone, vibraphone, orchestra bells (glockenspiel), and chimes (tubular bells). These instruments share a commonality, namely their similarity of design to a piano keyboard. The first two fundamental areas with which a beginner deals are technique—posture, body movement, grip, stroke, playing area—and visual pitch recognition—the ability to “read” music. This handout gives some cursory information regarding these fundamental areas.

FUNDAMENTAL TECHNICAL CHECKLIST

(The following technical tips are widely practiced but certainly may differ from other valid approaches used by some teachers and performers. When trying any technical approach to an instrument, one should consider whether the outcome will enhance or inhibit facility and/or sound production.)

Height: When possible, adjust the instrument to appropriate height where your forearms are a little less than perpendicular to the instrument keyboard.

Body Movement: Strive for consistency of upper body position to region of notes played; thus, body movement should be in a side stepping fashion, or by keeping feet planted and lunging sideways from knees. Also, avoid standing too close to the instrument since poor mallet placement and stroke may occur.

Grip: The two-mallet grip is essentially similar to the matched snare drum grip. Place palms parallel to floor, grip mallet with thumb and first two fingers, let third and fourth fingers curl lightly around shaft. The base of the shaft should come out the “fat” of the hand, avoiding the extremes of the knuckles or the center of the wrist. Check fulcrum (balance point) so that the weight of shaft and mallet head yield a full tone while avoiding “heaviness” or lack of facility; generally this fulcrum is between the thumb and forefinger about 5/8 down the shaft from the mallet head.

Stroke: With the wrists at the level of the keyboard, a full stroke consists of beginning with the wrist cocked up, striking the bar, and then immediately returning to the starting point— all in one motion. As with all percussion instruments, it is helpful to conceive of drawing the sound out of the instrument rather than hitting into it.

Playing area: Playing all bars just slightly off center produces the strongest fundamental pitch and provides consistency of sound between manuals.

FUNDAMENTALS OF READING PITCHED MUSIC

1. Staff and

Corresponding

Keyboard Placement:

Pitches on a grand staff (with bass and treble clef) and their corresponding position on the piano keyboard is given at right. The black keys on the piano correspond with the upper manual of keyboard percussion instruments.

2. **Steps/Scales:** Traditional scales are collections of pitches with consecutive letter names. A half-step occurs between a given bar and its closest neighbor (fully incorporating upper and lower manuals). A whole-step equals two half-steps. An ascending major scale consists of the following arrangement of whole (W) and half (H) steps: W, W, H, W, W, W, H.

3. Accidentals/Key

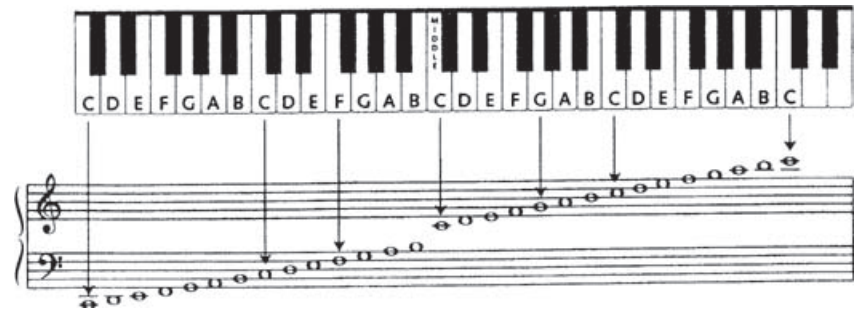
Signatures:

A sharp (#) in front of a note raises it one-half step.

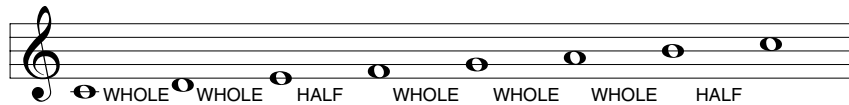
Conversely, a flat (*b*) lowers the pitch a half-step.

When an accidental is placed in the key signature at the beginning of the piece, it controls all pitches on that line or space (and octave equivalents) within the piece. A natural sign, then, cancels out this global accidental from the key signature—but just for the measure in which the accidental occurs.

The Grand Staff and the Keyboard



C Major Scale in Treble Clef



Accidentals and the Keyboard



- 4. Pitch Recognition:** Learning and memorizing new information often requires extensive repetition of a small amount of material in order to acquire familiarity. Thus, for a beginner to learn how to “read” pitches fully and expediently, drilling on a restricted range of pitches is recommended. When all pitches within a restricted set are instantly identifiable—that is, “learned” rather than “figured out”—then a new overlapping set is introduced. A worksheet employing this method for treble clef pitches is given below.

Pitch Recognition Exercises in Restricted Range Sets

The image displays five musical staves, each representing a different restricted range of pitches in the treble clef. Each staff begins with a sequence of four eighth notes ascending by one pitch, followed by a double bar line. After the double bar line, the notes are presented as quarter notes in a sequence that includes the original range and overlaps with the adjacent ranges. The ranges and their corresponding notes are:

- C, D, E, F:** C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6.
- E, F, G, A:** E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, B6, C7.
- G, A, B, C:** G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, B6, C7, D7, E7, F7, G7, A7, B7, C8.
- B, C, D, E:** B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, B6, C7, D7, E7, F7, G7, A7, B7, C8.
- D, E, F, G:** D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, B6, C7, D7, E7, F7, G7, A7, B7, C8.

Rudimental Ragtime

Hard Yarn or Medium Rubber

by David Steinquest

♩ = 96

The score consists of 33 measures of music in 2/4 time, marked with a tempo of quarter note = 96. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The piece is divided into several sections with dynamic markings: *f* (measures 1-4), *mf* (measures 5-8), *f* (measures 17-21), and *f-ff* (measures 22-25). Measures 9-16 and 26-33 contain various rhythmic patterns and fingerings. Measure 20 includes a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.).

Measures 1-4: *f*. Fingerings: 1. L R L; 2. L R L; 3. R L R L R L R L; 4. R L R L. *sfz* marking above measure 4.

Measures 5-8: *mf*. Fingerings: 5. L L R R L L R R; 6. L L R R L L R L; 7. R R L; 8. R R L L R.

Measures 9-16: Fingerings: 9. L R R L; 10. L L R R L L R; 11. L R L; 12. R L R L R; 13. L L R R L L R R; 14. L L R R L L R L; 15. R R L; 16. R R L L R R L L.

Measures 17-21: *f*. Fingerings: 17. R L R L R L R; 18. R L R L R L R; 19. L R L R L R; 20. L L R L R; 21. L R L. First ending (1.) and second ending (2.) markings above measures 20 and 21.

Measures 22-25: *f-ff*. Fingerings: 22. R R... L; 23. R... R...; 24. R L R L R...; 25. L L R L R L.

Measures 26-33: Fingerings: 26. R L R L R...; 27. L R L R L R L; 28. R L R L R...; 29. R L L R L L; 30. R R... L; 31. R... R...; 32. R L R L R...; 33. L L R L R L.

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The Rudiments of Rudimental Ragtime

1. Flam (m.1) **2. Single Stroke Roll** (m.3)

LR RL LR R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

3. Double Stroke Roll (m. 5) **4. Five Stroke Roll** (m. 8)

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

5. Seven Stroke Roll (m. 10) **6. Single Stroke Seven** (m. 17)

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

7. Single Stroke Four (m.20) **8. Inverted Single Paradiddle** (m. 25)

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

9. Single Paradiddle (m. 41) **10. Swiss Army Triplet** (m. 62)

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

11. Single Flammed Mill (m.63) **12. Single Paradiddle-diddle** (m.99)

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

The Layers of Learning

♩ = 60 **1. Basic Rhythm**

Two staves of music in 2/4 time. The first staff contains four measures of eighth-note patterns. The second staff contains four measures of eighth-note patterns, including some with ties. Fingerings are indicated by 'R' and 'L' below the notes.

RLRLRLRL RLRLRLRL R RL RLRLR R RL LRLRLRL R RL RLRLR
 RLRLRLRL RLRLRLRL R RL RLRLRLRL RLRLRLR RLRLRLR RLRL LR R R

♩ = 72 **2. Best Stickings/Right Notes**

Two staves of music in 2/4 time. The first staff contains four measures of eighth-note patterns with some accidentals. The second staff contains four measures of eighth-note patterns with some accidentals and ties. Fingerings are indicated by 'L' and 'R' below the notes.

LL RRL RR LLRR LLR L R RL RRLR R RL LLRRLR L RL R LRLR
 LL RRL RR LLRR LLR L R RL RRLRR LL RLRLRLR RLRLRLR LRLR LRL R

♩ = 84 **3. Ornamentation/General Dynamics**

Two staves of music in 2/4 time. The first staff contains four measures of eighth-note patterns with ornaments (trills) and dynamic markings. The second staff contains four measures of eighth-note patterns with ornaments and dynamic markings. Fingerings are indicated by 'L' and 'R' below the notes.

LL RRL RR LLRR LLR L R RL RRLR LRL LLRRLR L RL R LRLR
mf
 LL RRL RR LLRR LLR L R RL RRLRR LL RLRLRLR RLRLRLR LRLR LR
f

♩ = 96 **4. Final Tempo/Finishing Touches**

Two staves of music in 2/4 time. The first staff contains four measures of eighth-note patterns with ornaments and dynamic markings. The second staff contains four measures of eighth-note patterns with ornaments and dynamic markings. Fingerings are indicated by 'L' and 'R' below the notes.

LL RRL RR LLRR LLR L R RL RRLR LRL LLRRLR L RL R LRLR
mf (more!) (big!)
 LL RRL RR LLRR LLR L R RL RRLRR LL RLRLRLR RLRLRLR LRLR LR
mf *f* (more!) (most!)

PRACTICE SUGGESTIONS

The old adage “practice makes perfect” is fundamentally true. An educator’s expanded version of this phrase reads “consistent, concentrated, correct practice contributes significantly towards improvement.” Here are a few tips:

- Plot your day and week; it’s wise to look at your week and determine when and how you can maintain a regular practice routine.
- Have a plan for your practice period; an example for a forty- minute session might be to do technical exercises for 10 minutes, solo music for 15 minutes, ensemble music for 10 minutes, and sight reading for 5 minutes.
- Choose a time and space that is free from distraction and full of concentration.
- Avoid just playing through pieces; real practice occurs when you focus on difficult parts, isolate them, slow them down, create fun exercises which develop the necessary technique, and then put them back into their context.
- Develop your kinesthetic/spatial skills by keeping your eyes on the printed music; refrain from memorizing everything or repeatedly looking down at the instrument.
- After you have learned the piece, it’s a good idea to “practice performing.” You can tape record yourself and critique the playback, or play for others to get feedback from them. Also, performing in different rooms allows you to respond to acoustical variations.

RECOMMENDED FUNDAMENTAL KEYBOARD PERCUSSION METHOD BOOKS

Teaching Percussion (reference book) by Gary D. Cook (Schirmer)

Modern School for Xylophone, Vibraphone, and Marimba by Morris Goldenberg (Chappell)

An Instruction Course for Xylophone by George Hamilton Green (Meredith)

Fundamental Method for Mallets by Mitchell Peters (Alfred)

Fundamental Studies for Mallets by Garwood Whaley (JR Publications)

Primary Handbook for Mallets by Garwood Whaley (Meredith)

And beginning piano, flute, and violin books!

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