

Lesson 1

TIMPANI FACTS

The timpani are the only drums which play specific pitches rather than just high and low. A basic set consists of two drums which are played by one player. They are placed with the larger drum to the player's left and the smaller one to the player's right. The larger drum plays the lower notes and the smaller one plays the higher notes.

PRACTICING TIMPANI

Tuning practice: this should be done at the drums themselves. You will have to arrange your time so that you can use timpani for practicing.

Certain technique practice: may be practiced at the drums or on pads at home.

PRACTICE PADS

Two practice pads placed next to each other are needed to practice timpani. Ones of different sizes that will produce a high and low sound would be best. They should be mounted on a stand that will be adjustable in height. Practice drums made of two tom toms or two timp toms or roto toms (small tunable tom toms) could also be used for practice.

TIMPANI STICKS

1. For normal playing you should have 3 pair.
a) hard b) medium c) soft In the beginning a medium pair is enough.
2. For practicing on pads you may use snare drum sticks, (cover the tips of the sticks with cloth and secure with a rubber band). You may also use marimba or vibre mallets. The timpani mallets may also be used but they tend to produce a thuddy sound on a hard pad.

HOLDING THE STICKS

The right hand grips the stick between the thumb and 1st joint of the index finger. (fig. 1) This is called the fulcrum. The other three fingers are wrapped around the stick. (fig. 2)



Fig. 1

The left hand grips the stick the same as the right. The grip (fulcrum) is between the thumb and the 1st joint of the index finger. The other three fingers are wrapped around the stick.

Note that the stick is parallel to the arm and acts as an extension of it.

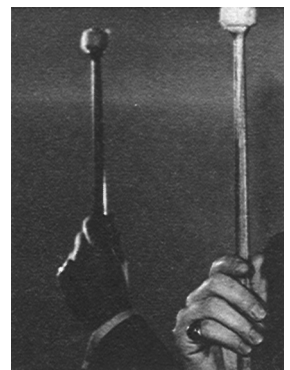


Fig. 2

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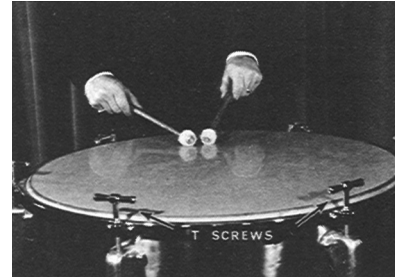
POSITION AT THE TIMPANI

Stand in back of the two drums or pads so that the middle of your body is in line with the spot where the drums or pads meet. (fig. 3) Notice the angle that the sticks form on the drum. (fig. 4)

Fig. 3



Fig. 4



HOW THE DRUM SPEAKS

The sound a drum produces is made by the vibration of the head, the air within the drum and the bowl of the drum. To allow this vibration to take place you must allow the stick to come in contact with the head for as short a time as possible.

PRODUCING OUR FIRST SOUND

1. Grip the right stick, check the picture on page 3, and place the tip or head of the stick on the drum head or practice pad with your palm down. (fig. 5)
2. Turn the wrist up so the tip or head of the stick is away from the drum. This is called the "up" position. (fig. 6)
3. In one motion turn the wrist so that the tip or head of the stick strikes the head and bring it immediately back to the up position. (fig. 7)

The entire stroke is called the down-up stroke (↓↑) and looks like a snap of the wrist.

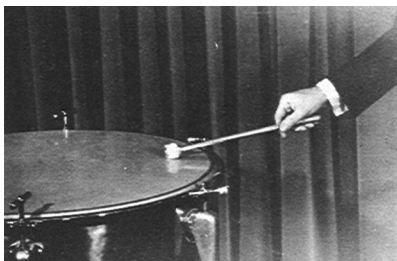


Fig. 5



Fig. 6

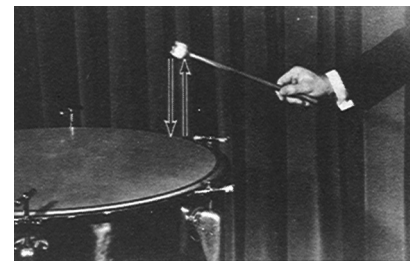


Fig. 7

Notice that the mallet head strikes the drum 2" - 5" from the edge. This is the normal playing area.

Play this stroke four times and check your hand position.

REMEMBER: do not use your arm, turn your wrist.

Follow the steps above to produce your first sound with the left hand.

Play this stroke four times and check your hand position.

We are not going to worry about tuning the drum yet, so when practicing at the timpani play any note or notes. When we do start to tune later, we will need to know where the T screws are. Locate them on the picture above and remember what and where they are.