



# FUNDamental Keyboard Percussion

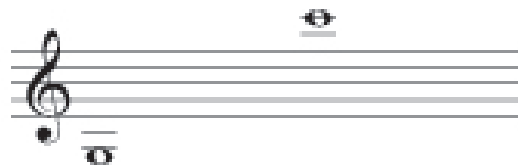
by Sherry D. Smith

Advancement on any instrument can be directly linked to a good foundation of basic skills. For this fundamental clinic we will cover basic information regarding grip, stroke, playing area, mallet selection, and sight reading. With thorough, disciplined practice and good beginning skills you should have a successful and enjoyable experience with the keyboard percussion instruments!

## THE INSTRUMENTS

### (ORCHESTRA) BELLS OR GLOCKENSPIEL

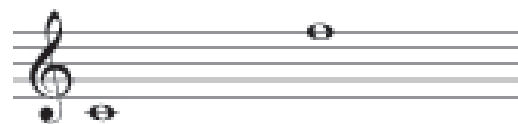
- Range: 2 1/2 Octaves
- Transposition: Sounds two octaves higher than written pitch
- Material: Steel bars (sometimes aluminum)
- Mallets: Brass, lexan, polyball, hard rubber



Bells Range (written)

### CHIMES OR TUBULAR BELLS

- Range: 1 1/2 Octaves
- Transposition: Nontransposing
- Material: Steel tubes; damper pedal
- Mallets: Rawhide or arcylic hammer



Chimes Range (written)

### MARIMBA

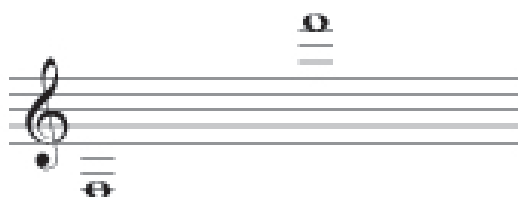
- Range: 4 1/3 Octaves; also 3 1/2, 4, 4 1/2, and 5 octave models
- Transposition: Nontransposing
- Material: Rosewood or synthetic bars
- Mallets: Yarn, cord, soft to medium rubber



4 1/3-Octave Marimba Range (written)

### VIBRAPHONE

- Range: 3 Octaves
- Transposition: Nontransposing
- Material: Aluminum bars; damper pedal, motor-driven oscillating flaps in resonators create a vibrato effect
- Mallets: Cord



Vibraphone Range (written)



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## XYLOPHONE

- Range: 3 1/2 Octaves
- Transposition: Sounds one octave higher than written pitch
- Material: Rosewood or synthetic bars
- Mallets: Lexan, polyball, hard rubber



## FUNDAMENTALS

### GRIP:

The two mallet grip is basically the same as the matched snare drum grip. The mallet is held between the thumb and first finger with the other fingers gently wrapped around the mallet for support. Palms are parallel to the floor and the end of the mallet should extend from the 'fatty' part of the hand.

Two types of four-mallet grips are the cross grip and the independent grip. The Burton and Traditional grips are popular cross grips, and the Musser and Stevens grips are widely used independent style grips.

### BODY PLACEMENT:

Height of the instrument is important for ease and accuracy of playing. When possible, adjust the instrument height so that forearms are a little less than perpendicular to the keyboard. Many instruments are now height adjustable. Blocks of wood or PVC piping can also be used.

Avoid standing so close that the elbows are behind the mid-line of the body. This can cause stress to the shoulder area and inhibit flexibility. Movement should be in a side stepping fashion. Lunging or shifting weight from one leg to the other is also appropriate. Good posture is necessary for free movement of the arms. Be careful not to slouch or let the head hang down or forward.

### STROKE:

A full stroke with basically one motion from the wrist is generally recommended. The mallet should start in an up position, strike the bar, and immediately return to the starting position. It can be helpful to think of the motion used when dribbling a basketball or playing with a yo-yo.



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## PLAYING AREA:

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

## PRACTICING:

Schedule practice time at regular intervals so that it becomes a part of your daily routine. Organize the time carefully! For example; before school starts schedule 10 minutes of technical exercises, during study hall spend 20 minutes on solo music, then after school work another 20 minutes on ensemble music and 10 minutes on sight reading.