



# Timpani Ranges and Sizes

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## ***Standard Ranges and Sizes***

The physical design of timpani has experienced its greatest growth during the past 150 years. Experimentation with pedal mechanisms, bowl design, structural support components, and head types have produced instruments which will produce optimum sound with full resonance and clarity. It is very important for the player to fully understand each instrument's pitch range in order to develop a tuning scheme for a particular piece of music.

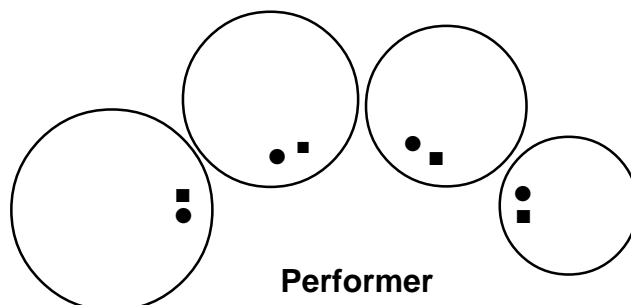
Thirty years ago, the common sizes for timpani diameters were normally 30-28-25-23 inches, respectively. Today the industry standard is accepted as 32-29-26-23 inches. Conventional safe playing range of each size drum is the interval of a perfect fifth, with the fundamental pitches of each of the four drums spelling out a Bb Major triad in first inversion (D-F-Bb-D). If a 20" size piccolo timpani is utilized, its fundamental should be tuned to the pitch "F" extending the Bb Major chord. The exact ranges of each drum will be affected by the drum manufacturer, model, extended vs. non-extended collar, tuning mechanism, condition of the drum itself, and the head type.

## ***Playing Area***

Also called the beating spot, this is the area on the head which produces maximum resonance and clarity. The area of the head containing ideal beating spot should be identified when putting on the head. It should then be located in the area of the drum closest to the performer. This will allow the player to easily reach and maintain consistency of the playing areas. The exact placement of the mallets on the head depends upon a variety of factors, including size of the drum. The optimum playing area will produce the maximum amount of sound with a natural rebound. This area should be located approximately one-third (2 to 5 inches) in from the bearing edge of the drum toward the center. When moving between drums be certain to maintain consistency and accuracy when striking each beating spot. With careful listening and playing experience, one will learn how to make subtle variations in the basic playing area in order to shade the tone color and various articulations.

## **Playing Area Configuration**

● = Left ■ = Right



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