

Marching Percussion and the College Percussionist: Bringing the Marching Program into the Percussion Program as an Aspect of the Overall Curriculum

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“Teach percussion, NOT marching percussion”

Summary: This session will explore the development of an approach to marching percussion education that is in balance to the traditional percussion program set-up. With the continued growth of college band programs, WGI and DCI many students are working to balance their interest in the marching world with their collegiate percussion studies. Many college students spend the largest portion of their rehearsal hours on marching percussion, especially in the fall semester. This session will examine some of the benefits that can be derived educationally from their experiences in the marching world, as well as an approach to teaching the marching percussion ensemble both technically and musically that does not run as a contradiction to the concert percussion curriculum, but can actually enhance what is being taught in the studio. The goal is to make the marching program another aspect of the overall percussion curriculum and not a separate endeavor contained outside of the percussion program.

Benefits to the Program

Time: 10: 4: 4: 1

Exposure: 5,000-100,000: 500

Numbers: 45: 22

Buy-in and Excitement: This one is a major plus for any program!

Budget/Equipment: Many programs have successfully used the marching budget line to build inventory. It is often easier to get administrators to be able to picture buying mallet instruments etc. for the band than just for the percussion program.

Teamwork: So much of what we do as musicians involves our being alone, in a practice room, for hours working on our own stuff. Yes there are ensembles that we play in and that do involve some teamwork but there is a different spirit of teamwork in having to play EXACTLY precisely together, in the heat, while marching crazy drill across an uneven football field!

Consistency: We are in a field that is built around our capability to reproduce a physical, musical and emotional act the same way multiple times. Having to do that in a drumline teaches you that even the minutest change of ANYTHING can cause an inconsistency that can harm the overall product.

Timing: Drummers and percussionists have to have IMPECCABLE timing skills! We are expected to be able to keep and perform consistent time even when those around us cannot.

Listening: There is an acute awareness of how to make notes line up precisely that can only come from being in a snare line of 8 people have to make 32nd notes line up exactly or it sounds like white noise!

Memorization: the music has to be memorized. Students have to practice and figure out HOW they best connect to the memorization.

Physical Health: how many other times of the year do your students "work out" 6-10 hours a week.....

Discipline: *Always* the same; *Every* time.

Technique: 6-10 hours a week working on playing with a good technique fundamental rudimental exercises and pattern. Rebound, and natural fluid motions are the keys to life (and drumming!)

When students choose other places they want to march BE SELECTIVE and involved with their decision!

Tracy Wiggins is assistant director of bands and coordinator of the percussion program at **The University of North Alabama**. He has a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the HARTT School, University of Hartford. Dr. Wiggins holds a Masters Degree in Percussion Performance from the University of New Mexico and a Bachelors Degree in Music Education from Oklahoma State University.

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