

Lesson 1

SELECTING MALLETS

To produce a variety of sounds on keyboard instruments, a mallet percussionist should have three pairs of mallets:

- a) hard b) medium c) soft

In the beginning one pair of medium mallets is enough.

If most of your practicing and playing is done on a Marimba or Vibe use medium chord or yarn wound mallets. If most of your practicing and playing is done on a Xylophone or Bells use medium rubber mallets.

PRACTICING KEYBOARD PERCUSSION

Although most practicing should be done at a keyboard percussion instrument, theory study and certain technique practice may be done without an instrument. A Bell Lyra (field bells) may be used for beginning keyboard study.

HOLDING THE MALLETS

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

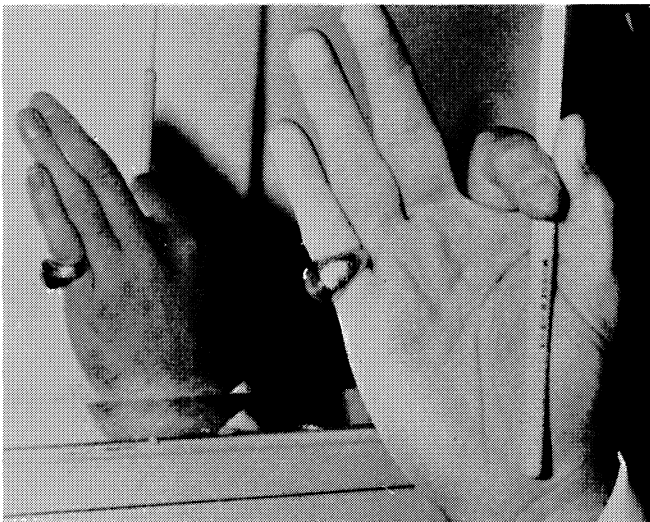


Fig. 1

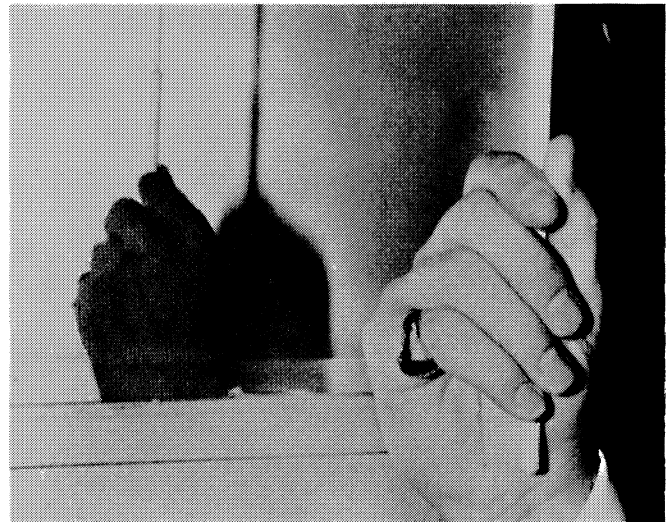


Fig. 2

POSITION AT THE KEYBOARD INSTRUMENT

Stand with your weight evenly distributed on both feet. Position your body in the middle of the section of the instrument on which you will play. For most playing the left mallet should be placed in front of the right. (further away from the player.)

HOW THE INSTRUMENT SPEAKS

The sound a keyboard percussion instrument produces is made by the vibration of the bar, the air below the bar, and the resonating chamber. (Bells and xylophones do not always have resonators.) To allow this vibration to take place you must allow the mallet to come in contact with the bar for as short a time as possible.

© 1969 (Renewed 1997) Belwin Mills Publishing Corp. (ASCAP)
All Rights Assigned to and Controlled by Alfred Publishing Co., Inc.
All Rights Reserved including Public Performance. Printed in USA.

PRODUCING OUR FIRST SOUND

1. Grip the right mallet, check the picture on page 3, and place the head of the mallet on the keyboard bar. (fig. 3)
2. Turn the wrist up so the head of the mallet is away from the keyboard. This is called the "up" position. (fig. 4)
3. In one motion turn the wrist so that the head of the mallet strikes the bar and bring it immediately back to the "up" position. (fig. 5) The entire stroke is called the down-up stroke (↓↑) and looks like a snap of the wrist.

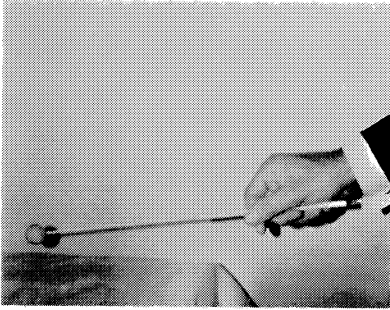


Fig. 3

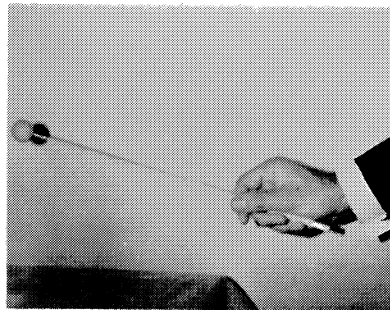


Fig. 4

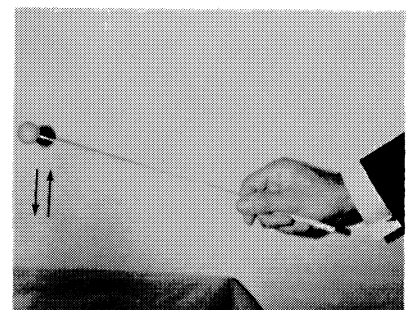


Fig. 5

Notice that the mallet head strikes the bar in the center. When playing on the raised notes (sharps and flats or black keys on the piano), the mallet head strikes the bar near the edge.

Play the down-up stroke with your right hand 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 your left hand. Play this stroke four times and check your hand position.

Play these studies slowly trying to make each stroke the same volume.

Count: ↓↑ ↓↑ ↓↑ ↓↑ | ↓↑ ↓↑ ↓↑ ↓↑ | ↓↑ ↓↑ ↓↑ ↓↑
 R R R R | L L L L | R R R R | L L L L ||

Count: ↓↑ ↓↑ ↓↑ | ↓↑ ↓↑ ↓↑ | ↓↑ ↓↑ ↓↑ | ↓↑ ↓↑ ↓↑
 R R R | L L L | R R R | L L L ||

Count: ↓↑ ↓↑ | ↓↑ ↓↑ | ↓↑ ↓↑ | ↓↑ ↓↑
 R R | L L | R R | L L ||

You may practice any of these studies without the keyboard instrument or with the instrument. When playing at the instrument you may play any notes you wish.

Count: ↓↑ ↓↑ ↓↑ | ↓↑ ↓↑ ↓↑ | ↓↑ ↓↑ ↓↑ | ↓↑ ↓↑ ↓↑
 R R R | R R R | L L L | L L L ||

Count: ↓↑ ↓↑ ↓↑ ↓↑ | ↓↑ ↓↑ ↓↑ ↓↑ | ↓↑ ↓↑ ↓↑ ↓↑ | ↓↑ ↓↑ ↓↑ ↓↑
 R R R R | R R R R | L L L L | L L L L ||

Practicing in front of a mirror will help you watch your hand position.