



**MARCHING  
THUNDER**

**HERD BEATS**

**Marshall University Bass Technique Packet**

**2020**

## **Presence**

- Confidence and determination are key to everything we do. This approach fosters continuous, positive growth
- We maintain an upright posture during set position. Core muscles need to be engaged with a relaxed chest and arms. While playing it is essential that we continue breathing in order to maintain relaxation.
- The “performer” creates the atmosphere around them. We are not simply drummers, but percussive musical performers. Your presence and engagement will draw in the audience around you. The energy you put into the performance will create energy from the audience. (This is not an excuse to over-hype.)
- Energy and engagement are crucial at all times when in a performance setting. You will be the first and last thing the audience hears on game day.

## **Quality of Sound**

- The first enemy of proper sound quality is tension in any area of the body. Learn the difference between muscle tension and muscle engagement.
- The body, working as one relaxed system, will allow the performer to maximize both control of the instrument and resonance.
- Allow both resonance of the head and the implement by maintaining a relaxed approach to playing.
- Commit to a consistent set position with beads securely in the correct playing zone, as defined for your individual instrument. Bead placement is an integral ingredient to sound production

# *Definitions*

## **Stroke Types**

### 1) Legato/Up Stroke

- A relaxed stroke with a smooth up motion to maximize rebound.
- The fingers are relaxed, but remain on the stick. Do not allow excess space in the back fingers.
- The wrist initiates stroke, not the fingers.
- The stick rebounds fluidly with the grip serving as a guide, avoid the use of excess or artificial motion.

### 2) Staccato/Down Stroke

- A strong, aggressive motion. Do not mistake aggression for tension.
- The bead will be stopped at the drum head with wrist, not tension in the front fulcrum.
- Play into the drum head with resonating the drum being the objective. This is still achieved with a relaxed hand.

### 3) Marcato/Controlled Stroke

- A combination of Legato and Staccato stroke
- The bead is not completed as a 'down stroke' but is approached in a similar manner while still rebounding.
- In the Marcato stroke, the arm will follow the wrist up naturally as an extension of the stroke. Do not "create" motion that doesn't naturally exist.
- The grip remains relaxed.

## **Dynamic Definitions**

- PP - 1.5”
- P - 3”
- MP- 6”
- MF- 9”
- F- 12”
- FF- 15”

# *Technique*

## **Grip**

The mallets should be held similar to matched grip on the snare drum, with only a few slight changes. The back three fingers of each hand should wrap around the mallet shaft so that the mallet is even with the base of your hand; no extra mallet will extend past your hand. The pad of your thumb and the middle portion of your index finger should connect to form a ‘t’ shape. Place the mallet between those fingers so that your thumb is in line with the mallet shaft. Lastly, when in the playing position, your thumb should rest on top of the mallet and your thumb nail will face up toward the ceiling.

## **Playing Position**

When forming the playing position, start with your arms relaxed down at your side; be sure that your mallets are parallel and not angled in toward your toes. We won’t necessarily use a true 45 degree angle, but we also will not play flat. There is some leeway with the angle to account for anatomical differences in the player to an extent. The goal is to achieve a natural product by attaining more physical comfort and reduced restriction by eliminating indirect tension.

## The Prep

The thumb should stay on top of the mallet. The wrist will break/extend back in a knocking type motion. Velocity should account for any use of natural forearm and slight wrist turn at maximum height without rotation being a deliberate motion. Make sure the angle of the wrist stays relatively consistent while not allowing the thumb to pull up into the forearm.

