

## LaVergne High School Wolverine Band

LaVergne High School • 250 Wolverine Trail • LaVergne, Tn 37086

Band Boosters, Inc. • P.O Box 755, • LaVergne, Tn 37086

Telephone 615-904-3870 ext. 24142

# Front Ensemble



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Hello!

Congratulations on taking the first step to becoming a member of the Wolverine Band!

We are a group of musicians that aim to have fun through quality relationships, high quality performance, and musicality. The percussion section is one that works hard, plays hard, and enjoys success through teamwork. Being a part of this ensemble will entail high expectations, where you will be asked to show up prepared, work outside of rehearsal time, and always pursue excellence.

Thank you for your interest in the 2021- 2022 LaVergne Percussion Program! All the instructors are incredibly excited to begin the upcoming year, and we have compiled this introduction to help you come into auditions as confident and prepared as possible.

You are expected to bring the following items to each rehearsal:

1. This packet in a three-ring binder and sheet protectors with room to take notes and add any music that we may give you
2. Pencils / Highlighters
3. Sticks (Specified later in packet)
4. Practice pad if you have one, on a stand is even better.
5. Athletic clothing, shoes, and water. Prepare to be outside.
6. A great, focused attitude!

Simply follow the guidelines in this packet and the information given by the percussion instructors, and you will make incredible advancements as a musician and performer. You can be taught to play, but we can't teach drive or ambition.

If you have any questions, always feel free to reach out to me.

Have fun and good luck!

Sincerely,

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## Front Ensemble

### Front Ensemble Approach & Exercises

What is the front ensemble? The front ensemble (or pit) has evolved into a world of its own, encompassing virtually every aspect of percussion. From traditional concert keyboards and accessories to ethnic and world percussion and electronics, the possibilities are endless. The front ensemble is an integral part of the musical presentation, providing impact with the large drums, cymbals and gongs; color through the accessory instruments and electronics, and melodic and counter melodic lines with the keyboards.

The front ensemble also provides an opportunity to develop well rounded percussionists. The students can be exposed to a variety of techniques and instruments that they may otherwise never encounter.

Ensemble cohesiveness between the front ensemble, wind players and battery section is one of the more difficult issues encountered when performing in a marching band. Several problems can be fixed by listening back to the battery ensemble if they are midfield or closer. In some situations, the battery ensemble may be too far back and cannot be heard. In these situations, the front ensemble members should listen to the wind players.

### Keyboard Technique Guidelines

Posture! A great musical performance begins with great posture. Before you play a note, your audience and judges will make conscious and unconscious judgments of you based on the way you look behind your instrument. Our goal is to convey a sense of maturity and professionalism. Here are a few things to do to being creating that great musical performance.

- Stand with your feet shoulder width apart.
- Stand as tall as possible, imagining a string pulling you up from the top of your head.
- Imagine a straight line extending from your ears to your shoulders to your hips to your heels.
- Your upper body should be upright, rather than hunched over the instrument.
- Shoulders should be slightly back (although not tense) opening up the chest and creating a "big look" to your stance and body carriage.
- Keep your head up and look down at the keyboard through your nose.
- Upper arms should stay relaxed and "hang" down from the shoulders without tension.
- Although the distance between your body and the keyboard will vary based on the musical passage, in general you should stand in such a way that moving between upper and lower manuals is easy and fluid. We will move our body into the best position to play the passage versus leaning to reaching unnecessarily. This especially applies to 4 mallet passages.

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- As you shift to various body positions while moving around the instrument, it is often helpful to place one foot slightly in front of the other and shift your weight as needed.

### **2 mallets**

Two mallet technique is very similar to the matched grip the battery uses. Both hands are exactly the same, with the top of your hand facing straight up, and NO GAP in between the thumb and the stick. Approach to the instrument should be straight up and down, making sure not to slice out in either direction. As you move up and down the instrument, your position behind it should follow your motion on the instrument, so that you are never reaching far to play your notes.

Four mallet technique can be tricky at times. We use what is called the Stevens grip for all four mallet parts. When practicing Stevens grip, you want to make sure to practice moving them together, as well as individually. Individual movement should come by rotating the wrist only and not from the arms. Approach is the same as matched when playing chords.

### **Outside Mallet:**

- The outside mallet is gripped with the ring finger and pinky - these fingers curl back into the palm of the hand.
- The back two fingers are kept firm enough so that the outside mallet does not droop down.
- No more than a half-inch of the outside mallet extends beyond the back of the pinky.

### **Front ensemble/Keyboard Mallet players:**

- All mallets and instruments will be provided by the Seminole High School.
- Do not bring personal mallets or instruments.

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## Dynamics

### Dynamic Definition: Mallets

p – (3”) A full rebounded stroke! Mallets slightly above parallel to the ground and very strict. This will also be our prep height, which will be defined during or after auditions.

mp – (6”) Slightly below 45 degrees.

mf – (9”) From the wrist, mallets prep slightly past a 45 degree angle.

f – (12”) Wrist turn with support from the arm, lead with the mallet head. This height is vertical and will be referred to as “full out”.

ff – (15”) Vertical but higher up. The arm is used to create more height. This is mostly used for visual purposes, and you generally won’t use as much velocity when playing this

### Dynamic Definition: Snare and Tenor

p – (3”) A full rebounded stroke! Sticks slightly above parallel to the ground and very strict! This is where the “break” in the wrist shows up and should be present in every tap. The back of the hand DOES NOT open up!

mp – (6”) Slightly below 45 degrees. This height is considered part of the accent family, but can be interpreted as a tap for bigger moments.

mf – (9”) From the wrist, sticks prep up to a 45 degree angle.

f – (12”) Wrist turn with support from the arm, lead with the bead. This height is not quite vertical, and is where a lot of our accents will occur. This height will be referred to as “full out”.

ff – (15”) Vertical. The arm moves with the rebound of the beads, creating a fluid “bouncing basketball” type motion.

fff – (20”) As high as possible with extreme arm, follow the rebound of the bead with more arm and elbow.

### Dynamic Definitions: Bass Drums

p – (3”) Slightly past parallel to the drum head. This is where the “break” in the wrist shows up and should be present in every tap. It’s okay to engage the back three fingers to achieve a full sound.

mp – (6”) Slightly less than a 45 degree angle. You will likely not be able to see your mallet head.

mf – (9”) 45 degree angle to the drum head. You should be able to see your mallet head.

f – (12”) Almost parallel to the ground (but not quite) with a little arm. This height will be referred to as “full out”.

ff – (15”) Slightly past parallel to the ground, your arm will naturally be involved.

fff – (20”) As high as you can play, arm and lift will be implemented

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### Practice Tips

**“Practice does not make perfect. Only perfect practice makes perfect.” - Vince Lombardi**

- Always Practice with a metronome!
- Practice how you perform. Bad practice habits are bad performance habits.
- Start slow, work up to full tempo. If you can't play it slow, you can't play it fast.
- Practice small segments. Perfect one beat, one measure, one phrase at a time.
- Rehearsal is when we put everything together.
- Never practice what you're good at. Work on what you actually need to work on.
- Know the difference between practice and rehearsal. If you don't know your music, we can't tell you how to play it better.
- Count! You will never be above the basics. The best musicians in the world **STILL COUNT** and subdivide.
- It's easier to do the work than to not do the work. You will have a very bad time if you come to a rehearsal unprepared. However, if everyone shows up prepared, we can spend a lot more time having fun.
- Nervousness comes from a lack of preparation. Come into the audition knowing you can play everything perfectly, and you'll have nothing to be worried about.
- Relax! This probably seems like a lot of information, but everyone at the audition wants you to succeed. Again, you're not expected to be perfect on day one. A good work ethic and preparation will get you much farther than skill alone.