

Marching Bass Drum Guide

THE ROLE OF THE BASS LINE

The role of the bass drummer is one that requires many levels of accountability in the following areas: Individual performance, percussion ensemble and full ensemble responsibilities. The bass line consists of five (sometimes 4) individuals with exact interpretation of rhythm, space, volume, touch, sound quality, and flow. All of these elements combined create a seamless individual bass line with all of the qualities desired for perfect blend, balance, and articulation. The bass line, within the full marching battery, serves as a foundation for all of the sounds around it. It is the “bass voice” of the battery “choir”. While intensifying impacts, adding volume, and doubling other voices in the ensemble, it can also serve as a soloistic voice. All of these aspects can be utilized in their fullest potential. Along with being the unyielding support of the marching battery, the bass drum section also plays a major role within the entire music ensemble. Providing rhythmic and spatial reference points along with volume, impact, and motion are just some of the main character traits of an effective and impressive bass line. Ensemble cohesion often depends on exact clarity in all fundamental aspects of the bass line. This section is considered by many to be perhaps the most important of a marching battery.

GOALS

By defining five key physical requirements of playing the bass drum, the bass line as a whole will reach performance at the highest level. Exact uniformity in technique, touch, sound quality, rhythmic and dynamic clarity are the main ingredients required to establish the perfect sound. There are two aspects of these that must happen simultaneously: Individual accountability and full bass line ensemble awareness. With all of this in place, the bass line will function as a single voice, unnoticeably performed by a quartet (or quintet).

GRIP

The grip used is very similar to that of a snare drum matched grip, except the hands are rotated so that the wrists are vertical instead of horizontal. The thumb and index finger form a “fulcrum” on the mallet. There should not be a gap between the thumb and the third knuckle of the index. The rest of the fingers should be wrapped around the mallet very naturally. It’s very important to not introduce tension in the hand. This grip should be approached with relaxation in mind.

INTERPRETING 2's and 3's

Making sure that the members of the bass line all understand how to interpret 2's (ex. 16th notes) and 3's (ex. 24th notes, half of a sextuplet) is crucial to their success. Here are four general rules that must be applied in the order presented:

1. The first thing that must happen when approaching 2's and 3's is that the figure is started in the precise point in time that it is written to begin sounding. If the figure starts on the "&" of the beat, then the player needs to make sure that this happens first. If he/she plays a "3" perfectly spaced, not too open or too closed, and it is balanced and blended perfectly with the other players but the starting point of the figure is misplaced slightly in time, all chance of smoothness and continuity of the musical phrase are lost.
2. The next step is to make sure the rhythm played after the starting point is correct. The tendency that most players have is to play the rhythms too closed. Sometimes, if the player is playing their figure on the downbeat, it is more difficult to properly space out the rhythm than if it was started on the "&" because there is not as strong of a beat after it to play to. When starting on the "&" the figure usually continues up to the next downbeat, which is where the foot hits as well.
3. The next skill to master must be articulation. To get each note to speak clearly, the player must slightly crescendo each one. When a bass drum is struck it has a resonance that can last up to 1 ½ to 3 seconds until it completely dies away. If someone is playing a "3", the attack of the second and third notes will be slightly covered up by the resonance of the note played before it. So if the player plays all four notes at exactly the same volume he articulation will sound "muddier". From farther away it's almost completely unnoticeable. Using this technique allows each note to be clearly heard over the constantly resonating head and it helps smooth out the musical phrase. The worst habit many bass drummers acquire is accenting the first note of the figure because they are so focused on starting it at the correct point in time.
4. Once the bass drummer has mastered starting the rhythm in the correct place, spacing out the rhythm correctly, and articulating the right way, he/she can now begin to notice how they are blending in with the bass line around them. One cannot really begin to analyze how they are playing with the other musicians until all 5 (or 4) of them have mastered the first 3 steps. Balance and blend is not possible at the highest level unless the more basic skills are second nature to the players. If the first 3 steps are mastered, now we do small adjustments to certain phrases to make sure that each player is contributing musically to the entire ensemble.

EQUIPMENT AND IMPLEMENTS

When rehearsing at stand-still (no drill) the line will utilize Stadium Hardware stands for their instruments. It will be each musician's individual responsibility to transport their own stand to and from the rehearsal area. Additionally, when the group travels each musician will load and unload his/her own equipment which will include drum(s), carrier(s), and stand(s).

The bass line will utilize Vic Firth "Corpsmaster" Bass Drum Mallets in the following sizes: Bass 1 & 2 – MB1H; Bass 3 & 4 – MB2H; Bass 5 – MB3H. All mallets must be taped with white electrical tape in the following manner: bare wood from the butt end to apx. 5 inches up the mallet; remainder of mallet taped to end of wood, just below the felt. These exacting standards will ensure a uniform look and sound throughout the line.

All bass line members must have the following items for every rehearsal/class/performance:

- 1 roll white electrical tape
(available anywhere)
- 1 pair Vic Firth "Ralph Hardiman" sticks – WOOD TIP
(available anywhere)
- "Gummed" type practice pad
(available anywhere)
- 1 flip folio (for stand/pep-band music)
(available through band office)
- 1 BLACK 3-ring binder (1/2 inch) with apx. 25 sheet protectors
(available anywhere)
- Travel stick bag (zipper type recommended)

Please note that additional items may be required for camps and more information will be forthcoming.

EXERCISES

1. **8 On A Hand**

This is the primary “loosen up” exercise for the line. The KEY is to maintain a steady tempo and stroke velocity throughout.

MM=80 up to MM=160.

2. **Double Beat**

This is a variation on the standard double beat exercise. Pay particular attention to making all 16th notes/patterns evenly spaced out.

MM=80 up to MM=160

3. **Unison Warmups**

These exercises are varied but there are NO split parts for tenor or bass lines. Concentrate on nice, even strokes and tempos.

MM=80 up to MM=160

4. **Green**

This exercise is our standard full percussion ensemble exercise and will incorporate the front ensemble.

MM= 80 up to MM=130

CADENCES

1. **Street Beat 2011**

This is the standard street cadence for the 2011 EPCHS Drum Line. This cadence is divided into 6 distinct sections, with each section capable of running in a stand-alone role.

MM=120

2. **EP Backbeat**

This is a secondary cadence that will primarily be used when entering the football stadium for games. This may also be used for homecoming “through the halls” as well as in the stands and at pep-rallies.

MM=120

3. **2011 Field Cadence ***bass line only*****

This is the cadence that will be played every time the band exits the football field after completing the competition field show.

MM=120

4. **Roll-off 2011**

Forget what you’ve heard in the past, this is the new and improved EPCHS roll-off. Only 20 counts long from start to finish, it must be played strong and with confidence.

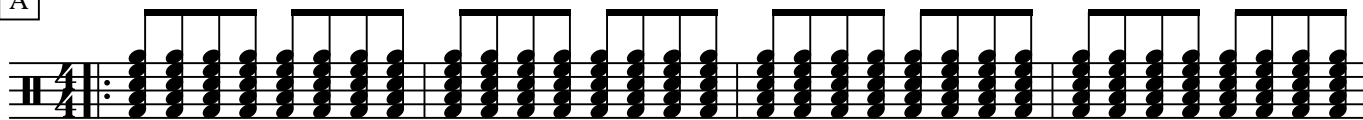
MM=120

8 ON A HAND

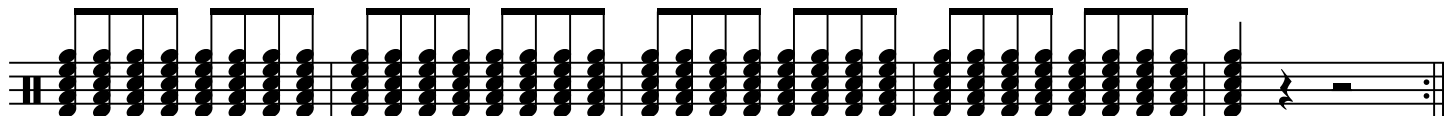
Bass Drums

B Gregory

A



R _____ R _____ L _____



R _____ L _____ R _____ L _____ R

B



R ... _____ L ... _____ R ... _____ L ... _____ R ... _____



L ... _____ R ... _____ L ... _____ R

Unison Warmups

Score

B Gregory

A

Snare Drum

R R R R R R L R L L ...

B

R L ...

C

R R R R ...
L L L L ...

D

R ... L ...

E

mf

R L R ... R R L ... R L L ...

L R L ... R L ... R L ...

ff

Green

Basses

B Gregory

7

13

19

25

31

37

43

EP Street Beat '11

Bass Drums

B Gregory

The musical score is written for Bass Drums in 4/4 time. It consists of eight staves of music, each starting with a measure number (4, 8, 12, 17, 21, 25, 29). The score includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, triplets, and complex multi-measure rests. Dynamics are indicated by *mp*, *f*, *mf*, and *ff*. Articulation marks such as accents (>) and breath marks (+) are used throughout. The piece concludes with a final measure marked *ff*.

mp *f* *mp* *f*

mf

mf

mf

f

f

ff

f *ff*

EP Backbeat

Bass Drums (5)

B Gregory

R R L R L L R L R _____ R R _____

4

8

13

3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

Field Cadence

Basses (5)

B Gregory

The musical score for Basses (5) is titled "Field Cadence" and is composed by B Gregory. It is written in 4/4 time and consists of three staves of music. The first staff contains measures 1 through 3. The second staff begins at measure 4 and contains a complex rhythmic pattern characterized by numerous triplets. The third staff begins at measure 8 and continues with similar triplet patterns. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

2011 EPCHS Roll-Off

Score

B Gregory

Musical score for Snare Drum, Quad Toms, Bass Drums, and Cymbal Line. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of three measures. The Snare Drum part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents (>) and triplets (3). The Quad Toms and Bass Drums parts feature a similar rhythmic pattern with accents and triplets. The Cymbal Line part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents and triplets. Dynamics include *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *f* (forte).

f

Musical score for S.Dr., Quads, B. Dr., and C. L. The score is in 4/4 time and consists of three measures. The S.Dr. part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents and a triplet. The Quads, B. Dr., and C. L. parts feature a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents and a triplet. Dynamics include *f* (forte).