MTSU Drumline Audition guidelines and criteria 2011

Thank you for your interest in the MTSU Band of Blue Drum line! We take great pride in the Band of Blue and are really looking forward to a terrific year with the 2011 Drum line. All participants should be prepared with solid fundamental technique on the instrument or instruments they plan to audition for. Additionally, it is highly recommended that the auditionee adhere to the following guidelines listed below and prepare the exercises (memorized) for auditions. Materials may be added throughout the remainder of the summer, so please check back periodically to be sure you have all the posted materials prior to the audition. Remember that auditions are much like a job interview. Applicants that demonstrate qualities of preparedness, focus, diligence towards technique, rhythmic accuracy, solid time control, positive attitude, and stick control will have the strongest advantage. The audition process will include an individual assessment as well as group evaluation. In the individual portion of the audition, applicants might be asked to play with a metronome and/or mark time while performing any or all the audition material. Come to the audition prepared and ready to learn. Auditions can be very busy and we may move very quickly at first, but we will do our best to help you to learn.

Do not be intimidated. We all have our strengths and weaknesses. Show us your strength and we will help with your weakness. Try to stay relaxed, learn, and have fun. Please, do not be afraid to ask questions.

General Fundamentals check list

- Good posture while wearing the instrument
- Feet together
- Maintain proper playing areas (see below)
- Fulcrum and hand posture
- Knowledge and ability to manipulate the four stroke types: Full, Down, Tap, Up
- Good sound quality and flow
- Knowledge and accuracy of rudiments
- Ability to play a wide variety of dynamic range
- Tempo and pulse control / practice with a metronome
- Mark time while playing
physical stamina to wear the instrument for long periods of time
stay relaxed

Snare:

We play traditional grip at MTSU. Students should not try out for snare if they have not played and studied traditional grip prior to the audition. However, if you do not have experience with traditional grip you are welcome to audition for many of the other positions in the MTSU drum line that do not use traditional grip. The following bullet points are recommended guidelines when preparing and practicing for the audition.

* Good posture
* Keep beads together : 1/2” a part, 1/2” inch off the head in the middle of the head
* Hands should be parallel to each other and when in playing position, the shafts should set approximately 2 fingers width from the rim.
* The sticks should form a slightly smaller than 90 angle
* Hands should set slightly above the bead.
* The left thumb should connect at the first joint of the pointer finger
* The stick in the left hand should rest at approximately the cuticle or just above the first joint of the fourth finger.
* The fourth finger in the left hand should follow the motion of the stick and not drop off
* The thumb in the right hand should remain on the side of the stick and be across from the second joint of the right hand pointer finger
* All fingers should follow the motion of the back of the right hand stick and stay in contact with the stick at all times. The stick can disconnect from the palm or center of the hand, but not from the fingers
* The initiation of the stroke should begin with the wrist motion, (not by opening the back of the hand and dropping the butt of the stick)
* Elbows should remain relaxed and naturally under the shoulders
* Students should know and be able to skillfully manipulate the four stroke types included in the audition material.
* Students will be expected to read music
* Tempo control will be essential / practice with a metronome
**Tenors**

* Good posture while carrying the drums  
* Control and diligence to the designated playing areas  
* Control of horizontal and vertical responsibilities  
* Hands should set slightly above the bead.  
* Elbows should remain relaxed and naturally under the shoulders  
* Students should know and be able to skillfully manipulate the four stroke types included in the audition material on drum two and around the drums  
* Students will be expected to read music  
* Tempo control is essential / practice with a metronome  
* Students should be able to maintain good sound quality and phrasing of accents and unaccented notes while moving around the drums  
* The initiation of the stroke should begin with the wrist motion, (not by opening the back of the hand and dropping the butt of the stick)  
* All fingers should follow the motion of the back of the right hand stick and stay in contact with the stick at all times. The stick can disconnect from the palm or center of the hand, but not from the fingers  
* Students should be able to play all exercises and audition material on drum 2, as well as know all the splits

**Basses**

* Good posture while carrying the drum  
* Students should have a solid foundation in executing rhythms accurately and in time.  
* Students should have a solid foundation in understanding syncopated rhythms  
* Students should know and be able to skillfully manipulate the four stroke types included in the audition material both vertically on a snare or practice pad and additionally utilizing horizontal motion (like bass technique)  
* Fingers and Thumbs should maintain a fulcrum position at all times. Do not allow the thumb to slip off the stick  
* Fingers should remain in contact with the back of the stick at all times. The stick can disconnect from the palm or center of the hand, but not from the fingers
* The elbows should remain relaxed and maintain position below the shoulders
* In most cases, the forearm and upper arm should be set in a 90 angle
* The bead of the mallet should maintain position in the center of the head
* The motion of initiation and pathway of the stroke should be like turning a key in the door
* Students should be able to play the exercises in unison (snare part) and the split written part
* Good reading skills is essential in being a participating member in a bass line
* Tempo and pulse control are essential / practice with a metronome
* Students should be able to mark time and play all exercises and audition material

Front Ensemble

* Good posture is essential. Stand with your feet shoulder width apart.
* Your torso should be upright, not hunching over the instrument.
* You should generally try to stand where both manuals are easily reachable.
* You will have to shift your body weight forward, backward, and sometimes even sideways. So be conscious of your body orientation at all times.
* Whenever possible, we try to play every note directly over the resonators, in the center of the bar.
* Playing in the center isn’t always possible. When situations come up when you can’t play in the center (this should only be for accidentals) then we can play on the edge.
* Two mallet technique, the motion is initiated with the head of the mallet. We begin camp utilizing a full stroke, by starting up (with the bead at the highest point of the stroke) and ending back to where it began. This will help ensure a full quality of sound and efficiency of motion.
* We utilize the concept of the piston stroke: The recovery of one stroke is the preparation of the next.
* Students should know major scales
* Hands should not be completely flat with the palm down, there should be a slight angle.
* Students should maintain a fulcrum, or guide point between the thumb and index finger
* Four mallet technique: we sometimes utilize both Stevens grip and Burton grip depending on the application. Marimba players most often utilize Stevens and Vibes utilize Burton.
* When playing Stevens grip, attention will be given to stroke fundamentals: single independent, double vertical, single alternating and double lateral
* The following is grip guidelines:

  Grip - Open your palm and find your lifeline that curves around the base of the thumb. Place the tip of the mallet on the this lifeline close to the center of your palm. Now make a hand shaking position with your hand and curve your fingers so they point to the left. Keep the mallet in contact with the lifeline and rotate the mallet so it rests on the 1st crease of your index finger. Let go of the mallet. It should balance itself on the index finger with the tip resting under the base of the thumb. Now take your thumb and simply rest it on top of your index finger, over the 1st crease where the mallet is. This creates the fulcrum. Now we take our middle finger and bend it into the palm so it makes contact with the mallet tip. This keeps the mallet in constant contact with the palm. Keeping the inside mallet in place, bring another mallet over the top of your hand and place it in-between your middle and ring fingers keeping about 3 inches of the mallet sticking out. Wrap your ring and pinky fingers around the shaft and take control of the outside mallet. Finally, slide the mallet up so that there is only about an inch is sticking out of the pinky. Be sure at this point to make sure you have the correct wrist position. Your thumb should face the ceiling or sky at all times and you should be holding a comfortable interval like a 4th or 5th. At this point make sure to go back through the steps and make sure you are doing everything correctly.

* The following is stroke definitions and recommendation:

  The wrist is low to the keyboard and you bend from the wrist to create the height, do not raise from the elbows or shoulders. The general idea is that you perform each stroke in a quick motion and end back where you started. This is all from the wrist. Think “turn the door knob” for the inside mallets 2 & 3 and think “knock on the door” for the outside mallets 1 & 4. There is no preparation and no lift, perform a stroke by performing a fast stroke straight down into the bar and bring the mallet right back to the same position. Be careful not to tighten the wrist to do this quick, sharp motion, but still remain relaxed in nature. We will wait to talk about a more legato stroke until after we solidify a good execution and understanding of the
piston stroke. In time we will add more arm into the stroke, but for now let’s just say the stroke is completed with all wrist. The double-vertical stroke is where both mallets play at the same time using a wrist motion. You can do this without mallets in your hand. Keep a hand shaking position and bend from the wrist vertically as if your forearm is frozen. This is unnatural and takes time to develop a comfortable feeling. Keep the down and up stroke fluid and continuous. The single-independent stroke is used when playing any one mallet alone hence the name single-independent. Again, think “turn the door knob” for the inside mallets 2 & 3 and think “knock on the door” for the outside mallets 1 & 4. Take some time to notice that each mallet rotates from the other. For the inside mallets, the axis for the rotation is the outside mallet and the same for the outside mallets. The double-lateral idea is that you get two for the price of one. This is done when performing a combination of 2 mallets, one after the other in the same hand. This is similar to playing double strokes on a snare drum. First rotate from the wrist, then quickly turn the wrist to use the other mallet, and then be sure to rebound at the end of the stroke. With this concept there are only 2 options, out-in or in-out. Remember to rebound as quickly as possible.

Cymbals

* Good posture while maintaining control of the plates
* Good understanding of rhythms and reading skills
* Tempo and pulse control are essential. Practice counting and clapping rhythms with a metronome while marking time
* Good upper body strength
* It would be helpful for students to know how to properly tie the cymbal straps
* Energetic attitude is essential in the MTSU cymbal line

Multi’s

Multi’s are a unique set up of color instruments. They consist of a set of bongos, a repinique, a timbale and several mounted items like blocks and cowbells. These performers have similar skills that a tenor player might have in regard to horizontal motion. Reading skills are necessary and these performers must have a solid sense of
pulse control as they are instrumental to the groove of the Band of Blue. Those interested in Multi’s should consider looking at the guidelines for Tenors.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your audition or participation in the MTSU Drumline, please do not hesitate to email me at jdavila@mtsu.edu

I look forward to meeting you in the fall, and have a terrific summer!

Julie Davila