

This document is intended to be used in conjunction with the Official Rulebook and Evaluation Criteria, and not as a substitute for either. Download the Official Fine Arts Rulebook and the Evaluation Criteria at www.faf.ag.org/rules.cfm.

PERCUSSION

1. GET A COACH AND REHEARSE.

Obvious right? The difference between a well-coached and well-rehearsed entry is...well...obvious. The more time you spend together in rehearsal is directly related to how tight you'll be. Your coach should be an experienced, skilled musician who is willing to pour their life and experience into your lives. They should be wise enough to guide you through meaningful rehearsals where you develop, and stick to the plan.

2. BE TEACHABLE.

Why does Derek Jeter have a hitting coach? Why does Tiger Woods have a swing coach? And why does Michael Phelps have a swim coach? No matter how developed your skills become, there is always room for improvement. Not only can you learn from your coach, you can learn from your contemporaries. Watch and listen closely to other drummers/bands. What are they doing more effectively than you? Don't be afraid or too proud to take the evaluators' constructive criticism to heart. That evaluation sheet is more than just a score. It's filled with helpful insights that are tailored specifically to you.

3. KEEP IT SIMPLE, KEEP IT CLEAN.

Remember the 2012 Olympics in London? Whether it was gymnastics or diving, athletes performed technically challenging routines without extending themselves too far beyond their skill sets. One of the most common errors on any Fine Arts stage is over-reaching or attempting difficulty levels beyond current skill sets. Evaluators would rather see you excel at basic percussion technique (clean single-strokes, tight double-strokes, proper stick placement, etc.) than have you drag a double-bass pedal onstage and make a total mess of things. Lean on what you do well, practice until you do it great, and go be awesome.

4. BE DYNAMIC!

Picture a heartbeat monitor. Peaks and valleys, right? Great percussion entries, and subsequently great arrangements, happen in waveform. And the further the peak is from the valley, the more dynamic a song is. Let swells in volume and intensity create interest in your arrangements and playing.

5. GROOVE YOUR TEMPO.

As a percussionist/drummer, what could be more basic than tempo? It's the glue that holds your entry together. But how much effort are you really putting into internalizing that rock-solid tempo? A metronome will help you do this. If you've never practiced with one, prepare to be shocked by your tempo fluctuations and inconsistencies, but don't let it scare you. The more you rehearse with a metronome, the more unwavering your tempo will become. You'll be way ahead of the curve.

6. TAKE A BREAK FROM 4/4.

Let's face it. You need to find ways to make your percussion entry interesting. The majority of entries will start in 4/4 and end in...you guessed it...4/4. If drums weren't so loud, half the room might fall asleep from boredom. Experimenting with alternate time signatures can be a great way to add interest and stretch your skill set in the process. Try working in a few measures of 5/4. Or how about a couple bars of 7/8? Even 3/4 can be just enough to keep it fresh.

7. IT NEEDS STRUCTURE.

There's a great reason that most songs are built with a few verses, a chorus, and a bridge. It's a combination that keeps the song interesting without overcomplicating things. Your percussion entry would do well to adopt that same winning combination. Develop 3 distinct sections that are recognizable, repeatable, and complimentary of one another. This will give your entry the structure it needs to be dynamic. Getting up there and winging it benefits no one, and could potentially put you over your allotted time. So build it like a song.

8. MAKE YOUR ADJUSTMENTS.

It's pretty unlikely that you'll ever see an NBA basketball player driving a Mini-Cooper. Likewise, drum-sets and percussion gear are not one-size-fits-all. You've got plenty of time to make adjustments to your instrument before you start your entry. Whether its gear you brought with you, or the stuff already on stage, pay close attention to height settings. For example, a snare drum that's too high makes it difficult to play properly. Simple adjustments like these are often overlooked, but can make a critical difference in your overall presentation.

9. KEEP IT IN PERSPECTIVE.

Fine Arts isn't a Christian talent show. Cee Lo Green isn't going to turn his chair and beg you to be on his team. So why are we doing this? Simply put, Fine Arts exists to help equip you to better function in your gifting. Another way of putting it is...you're here to learn and grow. Let that be your motivation.

10. RELAX.

It may sound cliché to hear someone say, "Go up there and have fun!" But the truth is that having a blast on stage is just as important as getting every beat right. It's the very thing that separates musicians from robots. Emotion and music are inextricably tied together, and in the case of a live event, they are co-dependent. So go ahead, enjoy it!