

In Tune With Your Timpani

Bill Shaltis

Principal Timpani, Boise Philharmonic Orchestra

The Tuning Problem \ What Makes Tuning Difficult?

- Insufficiently developed ear
- Inconsistent access to instruments
- Inconsistent methodology

The Basics \ What You Need to Know

- The ability to *audiate* pitches
- The ability to *match* pitches
- The ability to hear *intervallic relationships*

Practicing the Basics \ Singing

- Singing is crucial to developing your ear
- Developing/expanding range
- Don't be afraid of falsetto!

do re mi fa so la ti do do ti la so fa mi re do

- Play and sustain any pitch within your singing range and match that pitch
 - try singing just above and below pitch to further develop "in tune-ness"
- Play scale within your singing range and match pitches using solfege syllables
- Sing short stepwise melodies and duets

Example #1

do re mi re do re mi fa so so fa so la so fa mi re do ti do re mi re mi re mi fa so so fa mi re do re do ti re do

Example #2

do re mi do mi do re mi fa re fa re fa re mi fa so re mi fa so so do

Example #3

do ti do re mi re mi fa so fa re mi do re do ti re do
do re mi fa so la ti so la so fa la so fa mi so fa so do

Practicing the Basics \ Other Tools

- www.sightreadingfactory.net or www.thepracticerroom.net
 - Generates sight reading exercises tailored to your reading ability - melodically and rhythmically
- College sight singing book
- Hymnals
- Video games

Practicing the Basics \ Interval Training

Four Step Process – Start with P4, P5, P8, then 3rds/6ths, 2nds/7ths, tritones

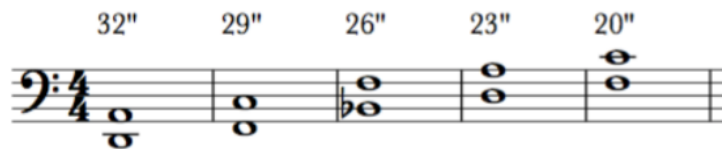
1. Sing scale between pitches while simultaneously playing pitches on keyboard
2. Sing and play only intervals
3. Play tonic drone and sing scale up to top pitch, then only interval
4. Play tonic pitch, sing interval without keyboard and check top pitch



Smartphone Apps/Software

- TonalEnergy Tuner (\$3.99 iOS, \$1.99 Android)
- ScoreCloud (Free - iOS, PC, Mac)
- Practice steps 1-3 with TE Tuner
- Practice step 4 with TE Tuner, then ScoreCloud

Tuning the Timpani \ Ranges



- Memorize above ranges; develop sense of where each pitch lies on the pedal (low-mid-high)
- Audiate/sing pitch; audiate what it will sound like on the timpani

Ballpark Tuning

1. Start with head detuned (heel down, toe up)
2. Lightly strike head with mallet or finger
3. Gliss up to desired pitch
4. Check with keyboard or tuner

Sound Concepts \ Which Drum? Which Mallet?

- In general, I prefer pitches on tighter membranes, especially if timpani part is rhythmic
- Mallets
 - What is the function of the timpani? Rhythm, color, or both?
 - Who is the timpani scored with?
 - Historical context? Size of ensemble?

