Creative Integration of the Modern Percussion Section

TN Day of Percussion Clinic
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Matt Jordan
Front Ensemble Arranger - Music City Mystique

Planning Stages-
- **Music Selections**
    - **Discovery Stage**
        - Listen to as much music as you can, especially outside of your comfort zone.
        - Find Music that you truly enjoy, without worrying about practicality... These choices will often lead to things that do work!
        - Great resources for new music include Pandora, Spotify, iTunes Genius, and YouTube, among many others.
        - Involve your whole staff- most music selections come from a group you might not have known before.
    - **Analyze Music for percussion practicality**
        - Music with built in idiomatic percussion forces (soundtrack, modern wind ensemble, chiptune, contemporary percussion works)
        - Music with usable extra voices (orchestra music with keyboard appropriate string parts, piano parts, or extra WW lines)
        - Music with no real percussive source material
        - Music with no real wind source material (Vanguard Stained Glass)
    - **Appropriateness of tempo for use on the field**
        - Slower is ok, as long as it is placed in the right segment of the show with regards to pacing.
        - think about variety of tempos, meaning half/double tempos for layering options.
    - **Being realistic**
        - A small band will not make "epic" music work well, so take that into account when trying to program Hans Zimmer-ish music that relies on quantity and volume to be effective.
        - it's very important to play to your strengths when picking music. A good small band can play with more precision than a larger band, but a larger band has the volume and impact capabilities.

-Arranging Process
- **Initial Cuts**
    - Create a "mix tape" of sorts to try out different cuts in the music. Use GarageBand or Audacity to slice up music and try different combinations of pieces/orders/etc.

-Decide whether the show needs recurring motives based on show theme (amazing grace for example, or Regiment's East of Eden) and map out the timeline of the show to determine where in the music they should happen.

-Initial Arrangement

    -Mapping out phrase structures and their importance

        -5 types of phrase balances

            -Winds Alone

            -Winds Primary, Percussion Secondary

            -Equally Balanced- every voice equally important

            -Percussion Primary, Winds Secondary

            -Percussion Alone

        -All 5 types should be present within a show, within a "standard deviation"

    -Reductions

        -The wind arranger should include at a minimum- woods, metals, percussion/timpani.

        -Without this, the cohesive element is gone, and does not allow for effective percussion integration musically.

        -leaving 8 bars blank during a harmonic transition for example, leaves the next arranger clueless as to the intentions of the structure.

        -a simple melody and chord structure is plenty for these windows.

        -Save some source material for the front ensemble! if it sounds good and complete with the winds only, then complete integration is impossible! There are many instances where I've gotten a wind book and wondered what I was going to do besides double the woodwinds.

-Percussion Arrangement(s)

    -1 arranger or 2?

        -One can be more cohesive, but two is generally more creative

    -Instrumentation

        -Depends on show, size of band, instrument availability.

        -This is where creativity really comes into play. What instruments do you have available that help accentuate the conceptual color palate of the show?

    -Percussion Writing Process

        -Generally, I like to have the battery arranger do their work first, then the front ensemble arranger. This allows the front ensemble parts to rhythmically color the battery parts, making it more effective. This can change based on the intent of the movement.

        -The percussion arrangers must together decide what to make important within each phrase, and decide what the role within the ensemble will be.

-What is the goal of the phrase?
- **-Impact**
- **-Drive**
- **-Harmonic or rhythmic motion**
- **-Transitional**
- **-Punctuation**

-With that in mind, I generally find the phrase that I feel the strongest about, and start there.

Technology Integration
- **-Amplification**
  - -Micing Keyboards
  - -Micing Sound Effects
  - -Micing wind players
- **-Electronics**
  - -Synths
  - -Trigger Pads
  - -Samplers
  - -Live Effects
  - -reverb
  - Test

Music City Mystique's Setup -

We use 2 audio computers at MCM - One deals with a synth and a sampler, and one deals with a synth and a 2 octave bass synth. Both are running through firewire interfaces that allow for 4 outputs through bus powered interfaces, allowing them to be mixed as discrete channels on the mixer (especially important for iPad control in the stands!)

Here's basic setup-

Synth and Sampler-

MacBook Pro (mid 2012) w/8 gigs RAM and 256 Crucial SSD
Mainstage Software Exclusively
MOTU Ultralite MK3 Hybrid interface (8 1/4" outputs, bus powered)
Synth running out of channels 1 and 2
Sampler running out of channels 3 and 4 (we also are using channels 5 and 6 to do some surround sound things this year).
All is running off 1 instance of Mainstage.
Akai MPK88 Controller (bus powered)
M-Audio Axiom 25 (bus powered)

Synth and Bass-

MacBook Pro Retina 13" (One of our member's computers)
Mainstage and Omnisphere
Focusrite Saffire PRO 14 (4 1/4" Outputs, bus powered)
Synth running out of channels 1 and 2
Synth Bass running out of channels 3 and 4
All is running off of 1 instance of Mainstage
Roland Fantom G8 (not bus powered)
M-Audio Axiom 25 (bus powered)

We also do some video, so we're using the following-

Video-

MacBook Pro (mid 2010) w/8 gigs RAM and 256 SSD
QLab Software
Triple Head To Go Video Interface for 3 DVI streams
3 Vizio 55" TV's
Battery Backup

As we get closer to finals, I will be setting up a new user on my own personal computer that has the files/drivers/configurations for all 3 computers on it... so if anything acts up, we have a backup computer loaded and ready to go. Redundancy is important!

The biggest benefit to the above setup is that EVERYTHING is bus powered, so we can check everything behind the curtain and make sure it's working. Nothing like being in front of the audience and then having to troubleshoot audio!

Sound Reinforcement System (5.2 system this year!)

Presonus RM32AI Digital Rackmount Mixer
2 Presonus 315AI 15" Powered Speakers
2 Presonus S18AI 18" Powered Subwoofers
1 Presonus 328AI 3x8" Powered Speaker (Center Channel)
2 Presonus 315AI 15" Powered Speakers (Rear Speakers)
All keyboards use Audio Technica AT2035 Large Diaphragm Condenser Mics

Hope this has been helpful. Let me know if there are any questions!
mattjordanpercussion@mac.com
Matt would like to thank the following companies for their wonderful support-