

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN HS DRUMLINE

*Audition Guidelines and Materials
For the 2016-2017 School year*

Parents and Students,

Hello, my name is Jordan Garza and I am the Director of Percussion at Stephen F. Austin High School. The Bulldog Band and Angels Dance team is excited to see some new faces coming into the program, along with the outstanding members who are returning for another season.

Our percussion program is growing and becoming more successful each year. I look forward to continuing the tradition of excellence that has started due to the hard work and determination of the current and past members. Here are some notable achievements earned by the SFA Percussion section:

1. Invited to perform at the Texas Music Educators Association Convention 2016.
2. Consistently ranked among the top drumlines at all festivals, including several 1st place championships.
3. Invited to perform concerts with Texas State University

In order for this success to continue there will need to be a collective dedication to this organization throughout the year. *This starts during the audition process.*

As you can probably tell, the drumline is one of the most noticeable parts of the band and community, so placing the students on the correct instruments is vital for the success of the entire program, both marching and concert ensemble settings. Over the next couple of weeks you will be auditioning for a position in the 2016-2017 SFA HS Drumline. As of now, no spots other than the potential leadership candidates have been decided. The cumulative progress we see each individual make through this process, along with past personal history (*ie, eligibility, attitude, work ethic, attendance, punctuality and overall commitment to the program*) will be contributing and deciding factors to your placement within the drumline.

Please trust and understand that the percussion staff, through this audition process, will make sure that every individual is placed in a position that will not only help you to progress musically as an individual but also help the drumline benefit all of its members and succeed to its fullest potential. It becomes more important that members take this process seriously and put forth the effort they would like the staff to see.

Be on the look-out for additional music for the upcoming season such as exercises (*which we will cover throughout the year*), cadences and/or etudes for both parts of the drumline. I'm looking forward to another great season!

Jordan Garza

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Follow us on Twitter @SFApercussion and stay up to date with our progress and performances!

Important Dates

Here are the audition/ “chop out” and summer rehearsals for the upcoming drumline season. **All auditions will be from 4:30 – 6:30PM** (unless noted next to the dates) and will be held at Austin high school. *Eighth grade percussionists that are enrolled in band must attend ALL of the drumline audition events if they wish to be considered for a ‘varsity’ spot. If students are not in attendance they will be automatically placed in our ‘junior varsity’ band.* If you have a school conflict, please email Mr. Garza at Jordan.garza@fortbendisd.com and we can find a solution. Attending our practice sessions will be one of the most beneficial tools available to you during this process. You will get help and experience behind the instrument before we start auditioning everyone. All of these events and more information can be found on our *band calendar* at www.sfaband.org. Feel free to sync the calendar to your mobile device and stay up to date with our calendar and all band events. This website is updated constantly with all of the important information pertaining to our band program. (*chop outs are for building muscle)

You can also follow us on Twitter @SFAPercussion

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Event:</u>	<u>Location:</u>	<u>Notes:</u>
March 30, 2016 4:30-6:30	“chop out” and practice session	Austin HS – outdoors, you will need a binder, large rubber band and sheet protectors!	Bring pad and stand, sticks/mallets, binder and all drumline music. Everyone will be on pads/drums this day.
April 7, 2016 4:30-6:30	“chop out” and practice session	Austin HS – outdoors (weather permitting)	Bring pad and stand, sticks/mallets, binder and all drumline music. More rotating
April 13, 2016 4:30-6:30	“chop out” and practice session	Austin HS – outdoors (weather permitting)	Bring pad and stand, sticks/mallets, binder and all drumline music. More rotating Split battery/ front (tentative)
April 18, 2016 4:30-6:30	“chop out” and Round 1 of Auditions	Austin HS – outdoors (weather permitting)	Bring pad and stand, sticks/mallets, binder and all drumline music. Rotating and begin placements Split battery/ front
April 25, 2016 4:30-6:30	“chop out” and Round 2 of Auditions	Austin HS – outdoors (weather permitting)	Bring pad and stand, sticks/mallets, binder and all drumline music. Rotating and continue placements Split battery/ front
May 4, 2016 4:30-6:30	“chop out” and Round 3 of Auditions	Austin HS – outdoors (weather permitting)	Bring pad and stand, sticks/mallets, binder and all drumline music. Rotating and continue placements Split battery/ front
May 6, 2016	Auditions Results Posted	Austin HS and email	Stay with Positive Attitude!
July 21-22-25-26-27 8am—5pm	Percussion Camp (NEW Layout)	Austin HS	Everyone required to attend
July 28	Summer Band Begins	Austin HS	Everyone required to attend

Frequently Asked Questions:

What instruments make up the Drumline?

The drumline is the term we use to call both large groups of the percussion section; the battery and front ensemble. This word is often interchangeable.

What is the battery?

Here is an overview of the instruments in the BATTERY SECTION: All of these instruments are on the field and march with coordinates during our show. These students are typically more coordinated/ have more experience.

Marching Snare: This is probably the most demanding instrument musically in the drumline. They must line up multiple notes in one beat with each other throughout the entire performance. Failure to meet these requirements usually results in low percussion scores for the entire group. The center snare drummer, along with the drum major is responsible for keeping the tempo for the other 180 performers on the field.

Tenors: This instrument consists of five drums that are bolted together and are played with sticks or tenor mallets. Tenors are the melodic instrument of the battery and are arguably the most physically demanding instrument in the drumline. Their music is as demanding as the snare drums but must split their targets across five (sometimes six) surfaces.

Basses: The bass drums are played by five performers, each of whom carries their own different drum. The melodic line is separated between five people and must be kept track of by each performer. The parts are not always similar to the snare and tenor lines but they must be able to count accurately and play their set of notes in perfect time. Five people performing as one instrument.

Front Ensemble?

The next large section of the drumline is the FRONT ENSEMBLE: The front ensemble consists of instruments you find in a normal percussion ensemble. These groups carry the melody for the percussion section and add general effect to the overall show performance.

Marimba: The most experienced keyboard players tend to hold these positions. Most the parts are more difficult and often require four mallets. The center marimba player is in charge of keeping time for the front ensemble.

Vibraphone: The vibraphones are often outside of the marimba players so they can listen in. These parts are often melodic and also require four mallets.

Xylophone: The instrument is the high voice of the front ensemble and usually double all the fast notes in the woodwinds and marimbas. The xylophone player should be able to play everything the marimbas players do.

Bells/Chimes/Crotales: These instruments are used to color the different sections of the front ensemble. The performer must have good timing and the ability to line up notes with multiple members at different times. These instruments are sometimes attached to other instruments in the front ensemble.

Percussion/Auxiliary Pods/Synths: These instruments consist of cymbals, gongs, bass drums, sometimes synthesizer, brake drums, sizzles, and anything else the music requires. Percussion Pod players learn to have good timing and counting skills and be able to play many instruments with minimal time to switch in between. The synth players usually have some piano experience and are responsible for a large portion of our electronic output on the field. The synth player usually plays a very important role.

Does this take up a lot of time?

On a first glance this commitment will appear to take up a lot of your free time. Student's grades are typically higher when they are required to stay busy. This teaches the students to organize their time and be reliable for others. All the great drumlines in the state of Texas practice this often, if not MORE. Many of them even set the drumlines in November and perform in winter drumline competitions as we mentioned earlier. We do an extensive percussion ensemble concert. Each chapter of your life involves you having to grow personally and work harder to achieve and meet your goals. In the drumline, you get to grow with great people around you, learn how to better balance your schedule, learn about work ethic, be committed to a team, and have fun doing it....and play percussion!!

How does the audition process work?

The audition will take place in a group setting and all members will be a part of the percussion section. Selecting their specific instrument will be done through a rotation process that will help us identify where they will find a good balance between pushing themselves and having optimal success as a percussionist. Students, here's what you need to do to get started! I'm here if you need help. You will need to schedule a time to get help from me if that is something you are wanting. I also have a percussion private lesson teacher who is nearby and still has some availability. I highly recommend people taking lessons. Private instruction is almost invaluable to a growing musician. Email me at Jordan.garza@fortbendisd.com if you're interested in starting private lessons with our HS instructor.

All materials should be kept in a (new) black binder with sheet protectors (so we can rehearse outside). Students will need to purchase their own sticks and or mallets for auditions and practice in between camps. We use *outdoor* mallets which are weighted differently and we use them to build the appropriate amount of muscle. Please label your sticks so if they get misplaced we know where to send them. We have some in case of emergency but definitely not for everyone and the sticks are not of the highest quality because they are used. Any percussionist knows that damaged or broken sticks can potentially affect your sound. Always have a pencil and extra blank paper to take notes about your performance.

Stick model(s) from Salyers Percussion (www.salyerspercussion.com):

For marching percussion we will use:

MAS3 – Marching Snare Sticks {battery audition}

MAM40 – Marimba (2 pairs = 4 mallets) {front ensemble only}

***** students will need to purchase these items at least once, but can use what SFA has until their order comes in.**

These items are available for purchase for your audition at:

www.lonestarpercussion.com

www.steveweissmusic.com

www.percussiononline.com

Here are a few tips ...

Probably the most important thing to remember is that the entire percussion staff wants you to be successful, but you must do the work.

While you should spend some time practicing without a metronome, the MAJORITY of your time should be spent using one. Don't teach yourself to play these exercises the wrong way because that would reflect poorly on your actual ability.

Be prepared and know the exercises thoroughly. There aren't many other things more disappointing than someone who is obviously a talented player but is unsuccessful at their audition because of lack of preparation. Be able to play these exercises at **slow AND fast** tempos.

Spend some time playing the exercises on a variety of surfaces. Battery, you can literally practice anywhere (i.e. the ground, a table, a practice pad, different drums). Front ensemble this means on either a marimba or a vib or a xylophone. You can do a lot of conditioning/training this way and it will come in handy if you have limited access to an instrument.

Use the correct implement. We use outdoor sticks/mallets for the marching season and they are significantly heavier and bigger to provide us with a bigger sound. Your hands won't be strong enough if you practice with baby drum set sticks. The list we provided above gives the correct model numbers of sticks to purchase for marching and concert percussion use.

Be open to new ideas. Our approach to percussion is not the only one, just the one that works best for us, while allowing us to move through the semester. If you want to be a part of this percussion program there will be times where you have to adapt your 'style' of playing to the way we play to provide the ensemble with a uniform approach. There is always a technique category for anything related to marching percussion.

Music over matter. We often get into periods of building muscle and the technical chores of becoming proficient on our instrument. Although these aspects are important we have to stay in touch with why we're doing it in the first place. LISTENING is a very important part of expanding your musical palette. Listen to a variety of music both percussive and not. It is equally as beneficial in becoming more intuitive behind your instrument.

Practice with a metronome!!!! While learning all these exercises you need to start slow and focus on rhythmic accuracy. Battery, you can even practice with popular music you like to listen to as long as it has an easily identifiable pulse. While using a metronome also listen to how a certain sticking can have a noticeable effect on your rhythmic integrity. Once you've heard it, eliminate it.

You need to start building more chops. We play a lot and you must be constantly attaining new levels of muscles in your hands. Use the tracks we have provided for you.

Come with confidence. At the levels we are trying to reach, our performances must be authentic and can't have people trying to 'fake' anything. Confident players accept change with grace and apply those changes almost immediately. Confident players also play with a level of calmness and relaxation that should feel reassuring to both the players and the listeners.

Practice marking time. Rarely will the battery ever play without moving your feet. We start with our left foot and alternate feet to the quarter note pulse. It's important that you begin moving your feet while you play the exercises.

General Technique Guidelines

Posture

Before you ever play your first note, you are judged on the way you look behind the instrument. The way we look not only sets us up to be successful players, but it also creates an atmosphere of professionalism to the listeners.

You should be standing tall. Shoulders and legs relaxed and your torso should be tall and straight. Battery will have feet together and Front will have their feet shoulder width apart. Unless you are reading music, your head should be floating above your shoulders.

Instrument Height and Arm Placement

First, let your arms hang down by your side (with good posture). Bring your hands up to the instrument either to the drum or the keys. Your forearms should be nearly flat while keep your shoulders low and relaxed. The height of [almost] every percussion instrument is adjustable so we want to fit the instrument to you, and not the other way around. Always make sure your instrument is adjusted before you play in the ensemble. More instrument specific technique will be addressed during our “chop out” and practice sessions.

Quality of Sound/ Dynamics

You must play through the drum/ keyboard while being as RELAXED AS POSSIBLE with consistent velocities in order to achieve a good quality of sound. Sometimes players will change their approach to the drum when asked to change their dynamic level. Our dynamics will essentially come from stick heights and will be defined as follows:

P = 2-3 inches and often near edge/guts

mp = 4 inches

mf = 6 inches

f = 9 inches

ff = 12-15 inches and often incorporates arm

Listening

In any percussion ensemble, especially in the marching percussion aspect, each player will have to develop a fundamental sense of listening within their respective sections and ensemble. When you practice, listen to the actual sounds you are making. Are they appropriate? Are they at the correct dynamic? Do you have good accents vs. taps?