

HaMaR LESSON SERIES
Performance Techniques for Crash Cymbals

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INTRODUCTION

Crash Cymbal performance in the concert band or orchestra, is a process that entails multiple steps and considerations. After properly selecting the right cymbals for the gig (size, color, etc.) this lesson sequence includes my recommended considerations when playing.

TERMINOLOGY English - *Cymbals*; Italian - *Piatti, Cinelli*; French – *Cymbales*; German - *Becken, Tellern*; Russian - *Tarelki* .

ALIGNING THE CYMBALS

Placement should start at approximately 45-degree angles for the *mf* crash (the top cymbal begins at a 45-degree angle onto the bottom plate). Maximize amount of contact between the surfaces.

HOLDING GRIP AND STANCE

Hold the strap between the first finger and thumb close to the bell with the other fingers wrapped around for support. Remember, no pads for concert/orchestral playing, but pads for outdoor/marching venues. Place the lighter cymbal in the right hand-top, and the heavier cymbal in the left hand-bottom. Stand with feet shoulder-width apart. Keep the upper body relaxed.

PRIMING

Have both cymbals in motion before you crash. Prime the moving cymbal (similar to priming a gong/tam tam before the initial strike). This will likely prevent an air lock and produce a full, resonating sound.

DOWNWARD MOTION CRASH

Leave the left hand/cymbal stationary, and allow the movement in the right hand/cymbals (mostly).

GRAVITY: Use gravity when executing the crash. Have the student think of an elliptical circle- counter clockwise, with their right hand (cymbal), glancing into the left hand while maintaining a 45-degree angle in the left hand/cymbal. Additionally, the student needs to achieve a flam with the top cymbal (bottom edge leading) moving into the bottom cymbal, without glancing as to cause an „air pocket“.

DAMPENING AND ARTICULATION

An effective method to determine the length of the cymbal crash after having examined the notation (slur marking for ringing/vibrations; staccato or other articulations to indicate short sounds, etc.) is to listen and/or study a printed score. Examine carefully the winds and/or strings in the music. Make appropriate decisions on length in the music. The players can muffle by bringing the cymbals into their chests

HORIZONTAL OR VERTICAL

The cymbal vibrations extend directly outward from the tip of the plates. Holding the crashes at a 45-degree angle from the ground will allow the cymbal vibrations to cut-through directly from the player to the audience (or at least with that line of sound). If you hold them upward in a “flare” manner after crashing, with the inside of the cymbal facing the audience (used often in marching band for visual effect), the sound vibrations will now travel upward or downward.