

Suspended Cymbal Techniques

By Steve Hearn

Selection

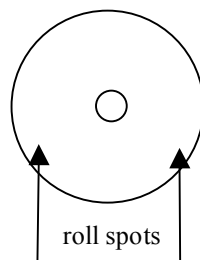
- Suspended cymbals are usually thinner and lighter in weight than crash cymbals. The standard sizes, which respond very quickly when struck with a mallet, are usually 16” to 18” in diameter.
 - **Smaller cymbals** offer a thinner texture and respond quickly. Rapid response for crescendos and diminuendos.
 - **Larger cymbals** offer a thicker texture and deeper sustained sound.
- Utilizing small and large cymbals simultaneously, even for one written note, offers multiple timbre nuances.
- Suspend the cymbal with a strap from a boom or goose neck cymbal stand. This allows the cymbal to vibrate freely and eliminates stand noise and interference. (Note: The cymbal may also be placed on a regular cymbal stand by ensuring proper felts and rubber sleeves are used.)

Mallet Selection

- Rubber, soft wound yarn or cord mallets allow the cymbal to respond quickly and initiate fundamental and overtones.
- Other implements include snare drum sticks, triangle (metal) beaters, brushes, etc.
- Rolls specified with sticks are played as a buzz roll on the outer edge of the cymbal.

Playing Techniques

- Strokes are made on the edge of the cymbal unless otherwise specified in the score.
- Two mallets striking simultaneously offer a darker full timbre and wide attack.
- One mallet striking individually offers a brighter thinner timbre and narrow attack.
- A roll is controlled by placing the mallets on the edge at approximately 4 and 8 o’clock.



- The louder the roll – the slower the roll speed.
- Additional effects call for different areas of the cymbal to be struck, scraped, or rubbed by triangle beaters, coins, a bass bow, etc. A sizzle effect is obtained by holding a thin triangle beater on the cymbal and striking the cymbal with another mallet.

Muffling and Musical Techniques

- Muffling is used to articulate rhythmic figures.
- For slow tempos, use one hand to muffle and one hand to play.
- For fast tempos or when both hands are needed to play, use your midriff or another player’s assistance to muffle.
- Composers and arrangers are frequently not familiar with proper cymbal techniques and accurate notation. Thus, written note values are often not consistent with the rest of the ensemble.
- Players must listen and interpret the written part to match ensemble articulations. Check the full score for the proper note values, as shown below:

Cymbal Part

Brass Part

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled "Cymbal Part" and the bottom staff is labeled "Brass Part". Both staves are in 4/4 time. The Cymbal part consists of a series of notes with stems pointing up, some with flags, and some with a 'z' symbol above them, indicating a roll. The Brass part consists of a series of notes with stems pointing down, some with flags, and some with a 'z' symbol above them, indicating a roll.