TIMPANI: THE BASICS
Dr. C.A. Grosso

I. STORAGE
   A. Hard covers should always be on the drums when they are not in use.
   B. Soft covers should be on the drums at the end of each day. On weekends, do not assume others will practice the drums and subsequently cover them.
   C. Pedal should be at approximately half tension when not in use.

II. MOVING
   A. Make certain all wheels are unlocked and the stabilizing peg is not in contact with the floor.
   B. Move the drums by pushing or pulling on the black, iron struts. NEVER move the drums by pulling or pushing on the aluminum tension rods, even if you are just making a minor position adjustment.

III. SET-UP
   A. The largest drum is on the left graduating to the smallest drum on the right.
   B. Overlap the counterhoop of the 29" drum with the tuning gauge of the 32" drum and the counterhoop of the 26" drum with the tuning gauge of the 23" drum to position them as close together as possible. Determine the arc of the drums so each drum is the appropriate distance for sitting or standing and in consideration of your arm and leg length.
   C. Lock all of the wheels and adjust the stabilizing peg so it securely contacts the floor.

IV. HEAD CARE & TUNING
   A. Know the fundamental pitch of each size drum; the fundamental pitch occurs when the pedal is in the lowest heel-down position, but not less than three notches from the close end of the ratchet disc. 32"=Low C, 29"=F, 26"=Bb, 23"=D
   B. The head is in tune when the pitch/pressure is the same at each tension rod. A Drum Dial can help in this process.
   C. If the head needs only minor adjustments, you may tune in a circular manner from tension rod to tension rod.
   D. If the head is quite worn in the beating areas, it will need to be removed, spun, reseated, and tuned. In this situation, cross-tuning procedures should be employed until the head nears the proper tension of the fundamental pitch. At this point, you may tighten the head in a circular fashion.
   E. Wipe the heads with a clean, soft cloth at least once per week. This will keep the heads clean from debris, and consequently, improve the tone and elongate the life of the head. It will also increase the life of your mallets.
V. PEDAL TUNING
   A. The left foot operates the two largest drums and the right foot operates the two smallest drums.
   B. To operate the pedal, center your foot on the pedal, move your heel toward the drum until the pedal-lever disengages; your left heel must move to the left and your right heel to the right.
   C. With the pedal-lever fully disengaged from the ratchet disc, you can freely change the pitch of the drum by moving the pedal keeping your heel in the “kicked-out” position. Pushing your toes down will raise the pitch of the drum.
   D. When you have reached the desired pitch, bring your heel in, engaging the pedal lever; this will hold the pedal in the proper vertical position.

VI. PLAYING AREA
   A. The normal playing area is the distance in from the edge equal to 1/4 to 1/3 of the diameter.
   B. The distance in from the edge will vary depending upon the head tension and sound you want to produce.
   C. Hitting very near the rim will produce a thin tone and hitting in the center will produce a deal and hollow tone. These are legitimate alternate tones that are used only when indicated in the score.

VII. MALLET CHOICES & CARE
   A. Select mallets based on the speed of notes. Rapid passages generally require harder mallets. While rolls consist of many rapid notes, rolling passages are best played with softer mallets.
   B. Medium and medium-hard mallets can be considered general-purpose. Remember, the drums sound less articulate the further you are from them. Clarity of notes must reach the audience.
   C. Timpani mallets are somewhat fragile compared to yarn or cord wound mallets. Dirt destroys fibers. Thus, they should be kept covered when not in use. I suggest keeping them in plastic bags even inside of your mallet bag. The smooth surface of the plastic will not grate against the felt.