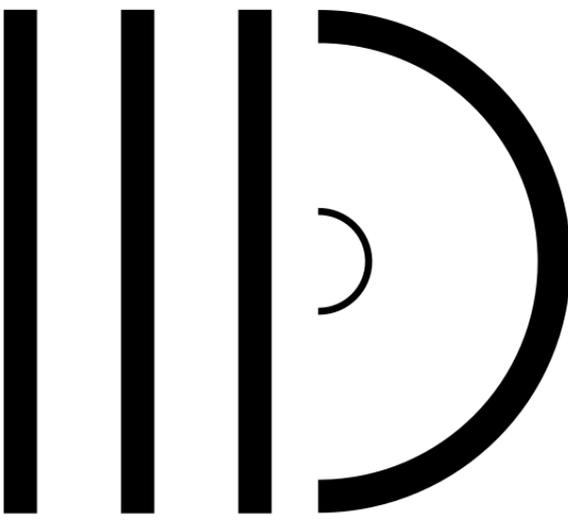


Lessons Learned in playing one of the World's Rarest Instruments:
My Three Stage Approach to Learning in Music.



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In 2013 when I first began my journey with the Handpan I had no idea what to do! With no Handpan books, tutorials, lessons, or many videos available I was put into a situation where I was *forced* to be creative. Through this journey of introspection I developed a three stage model of musical learning that I passed through and that I now apply today to how I learn any new things in both music and in life.

Stage 1: Discovery

Above all else the beginning of my journey was a stage of experimentation. I didn't know what the "right" way to play was so I just tried what felt natural. I remember playing a lot of things that sounded really, really bad, and a number of things that sounded pretty good too! Initially I didn't even think of the notes or the rhythms I was playing, instead I listened for what I thought sounded *good* and most importantly just tried to have fun. I tried certain styles and techniques I learned from other instruments and explored adapting them to the Handpan as well. Not having an expectation of what the "right" way of playing was freed my mind to be its most creative and liberated me from the fear of making mistakes. Although not everything I tried worked well, I truly believe I learned just as much from every "wrong" thing I played.

- Don't be afraid to make mistakes!
- There is no one right or wrong way to do something, only different
- Experiment constantly
- Don't initially concern yourself with other musicians, focus on developing your own musical voice

Stage 2: Analysis

After taking a very long period of discovering the Handpan I was curious what other players were doing themselves. This second stage, analysis, was a period of intense and consuming absorption. I immersed myself in everything and anything I could get my hands on, YouTube videos, CDs, DVDs, blogs, tutorials, and my colleagues. I studied. What things did I like? What

things did I not like? I began to develop a comprehensive musical toolkit that was a mosaic of these various inspirations. Most importantly this stage was a period of inspiration.

- Get inspired!
- Engulf yourself in the culture of what you are trying to learn (Nerd out!)
- Analyze and replicate things that you like
- Assemble your own musical toolkit

Stage 3: Communication

Stage three being the final stage, is *not* a level of mastery, but instead a complete fluency of the musical language. At this stage you have reached a point where you can communicate your musical ideas on a sonic and intellectual level. I view music as a language, literally, so appropriately a large part of this model parallels the same path we take as infants learning the “techniques” of how to talk. As a child no one tells you that you are wrong by babbling nonsense words, but instead you are allowed to verbally “jam” with other expert level speakers from the beginning and discover your own voice along the way. Did you practice speaking your native language? No, it came through a process of just speaking it, so most importantly don’t be afraid to just start speaking your music.

- Fluency of the musical language
- Being a Percussionist vs. being a musician vs. being *musical*
- The music is in you, not the instrument

Things you can start doing today:

- Start experimenting
- Improvise everyday
- Play with other musicians
- Analyze your heroes
- Be inspired
- Never lose sight of why you play music to begin with