

"PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT"

AND OTHER OUTDATED PHRASES

BY MARK FORD

1. **Practice Makes Perfect:**

Practice everyday. Have long and short term goals for your music. A long-term goal could be your aspirations for your career in music after school. A short-term goal could be perfecting your material for an upcoming lesson. The best goal you can set is the one for the present. "What am I doing right now?" An answer could be "perfecting these eight bars before my next class." Mindless practice will not make anything perfect.

2. **Speed Kills**

Go slow! Development of technique and expression needs time to develop. Work with a metronome to pace yourself and shoot for 100% of the notes in the practice room. If you can't play all of the notes consistently then simply slow down. Gradually increase the tempo as your confidence grows. Expect the best of yourself.

3. **Eat One Piece of the Pie at a Time**

Strive to know all of the details on the page and work on your weakest areas. The following quote from Noah Adams' book *Piano Lessons* illustrates this point perfectly: "I am now looking you straight in the eye and I am speaking slowly and rather loudly: I believe in marking off, in every piece we study, all passages that we find especially difficult and then practicing these passages patiently, concentratedly, intelligently, relentlessly - until we have battered them down, knocked them out, surmounted them, dominated them, conquered them - until we have transformed them thoroughly and permanently, from the weakest into the strongest passages in the piece."

4. **Third Time's A Charm**

OK, it may take four or five times.... After you prepare a piece of music the worst thing you can do is only perform it once. Performing a piece of music needs to mature on stage just as it did in the practice room. Give yourself every opportunity to get in front of people and make music. Contacting High Schools, Churches, and Civic Organizations can create a variety of performing opportunities. Your music and your confidence will be stronger for the experience.

5. **The Sky's the Limit**

In music there is really no limit to your potential. Contrary to popular belief, there are no rules. The only limit you will encounter is your imagination. If you can visualize a way to learn a certain passage or a certain piece of music then you can do it. Working with an established teacher can help you to expand your thinking, but in the end each of us has to make our own decisions. Find out as much as you can about your art and work for your own concept of sound and expression. It's up to you!

Mark Ford is Coordinator of Percussion activities at the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas. He is an active performer and composer and he serves on the Percussive Arts Society Board of Directors.