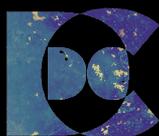


THE 8 P'S OF MUSICIANSHIP

First Edition



The 8 P's of Musicianship

“Dont’e’s music is breathtaking, soul stirring and edgy. I love it!”

— Isaiah D. Thomas, Recording Artist, Producer

“Dont’e is an incredibly talented soul who makes music fun and interesting to hear and sing! His creative arrangements both original and remakes testify to his obvious passion for music. Let me get his autograph now!”

— Heather Martin, Recording Artist/Vocalist in Virtue

“Dont’e is the hidden gem you don’t want to tell your friends about. Because once they realize how dope the guy is, he’s not gonna have time for us little folks. The way his brain works with music makes everything just sound better, cleaner, and more musical.”

— Kunlei, Recording Artist/Songwriter

“Dont’e is definitely a one-of-a-kind musician. The way he approaches music is next level genius to me. I’m a musician myself and I learn so much from watching and listening to him!”

— Stephen Manders, Recording Artist/Producer

The 8 P's of Musicianship

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First Edition

DONT'E CARR



The 8 P's of Musicianship

INTRODUCTION

Whether you are an instrumentalist, vocalist, audio engineer, or music director, and looking to take your skills to the next level, or perhaps a novice dreaming of performing on stage, recording in a studio, or writing your own music; welcome to the book that will get you there.

This book is for anyone who is passionate about music and wants to improve their craft and improve themselves. If you're just starting out on your musical journey, and even if you're a seasoned professional looking to brush up on or enhance your skills and mindset, there *is* something here for you. Inside these pages, you'll find a wealth of analytical information and analogous inspiration to help you out on your way. From tips on practice and performance to advice on discovering and uncovering your own voice and sound, this book is a complete and comprehensive guide to becoming a better musician. With dedication, hard work, and a decent portion of belief, you can reach your ever-expanding potential and achieve your next musical dream **over and over.**

There is a certain science behind the art of musicality, and an elegant art within the science of musicianship, and in this book I will reveal both to you. As you read the words on these pages, we will explore a concept that embodies these two very important aspects of musicianship and

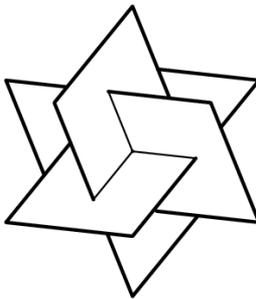
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musicality. It's a concept I like to call *The 8 P's of Musicianship*.

They are as follows:

1. *Purpose*
2. *Perception*
3. *Position*
4. *Pulse*
5. *Pocket*
6. *Placement*
7. *Practice*
8. *Performance*

Understanding these 8 factors will open your mind to possibilities you were certain were impossible, and now you hold the key right here in your hands.



I believe the creation of anything is found at the consistent intersection of three things: the head, the heart,

and the hand. What does this mean? This means that when your thoughts, beliefs, and actions all line up and stay lined up over time, real creation occurs. The 8 P's of musicianship delves into the head, heart, and hand, and speaks to the consistency required in these components to create lasting success in musicianship. And it doesn't stop there.

Traditionally in music, people are taught what to play, what to tune to, what to record with, even what to wear, or what muscles to use - essentially *what to think*. New age instructors will teach their students how to play, how to sing, how to network, how to use a DAW, or *how to think*. The 8 P's concept explores a pivotal shift in the traditional and neo-contemporary approaches to music by encouraging the individual formation of *how to learn, and how to stay a student*; creating learned practitioners in the realm of music and in the realm of life. So get ready to think, be ready to create, always stay a student; and since we're here,

WELCOME TO THE NEXT LEVEL.

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PURPOSE

Why are you reading this? Why do you think music is important? Why do you want to get better? Why would anyone want to get better? What makes you different? *No, really though.* It's going to be crucial to figure out your big **why** as soon as possible. If you don't know why you're doing something, the "how" doesn't matter. The very first thing you need to figure out before going to your destination is what that destination is. To take this analogy one step further, the destination determines the vehicle; you won't attempt to visit Iceland traveling in an SUV, using that as the only mode of transportation. No matter if it can fit all of your bags, has the best gas mileage, your favorite color, or is armored; it's simply the wrong vehicle. The destination also determines whether that vehicle's supply is adequate or not. You wouldn't prepare 50 miles worth of fuel for a 400-mile trip.

Although the destination is not the most important aspect of a journey, in this quest through the vast universe of organized sound and silence we call music, the purpose for that journey will absolutely be the first level of mastery for you. Do you want to become a better artist? Are you seeking to become a non-traditional musical educator? Do

you want to just understand the music you listen to a just little bit more? If you are strong in this from the onset, the progression to the mastery of the other seven P's will be much smoother, I assure you.

Finding purpose in musicianship can very well be a challenging and personal journey, but there are a few small but highly effective steps you can take to help you discover your motivations and goals as a musician.

Reflect on your passions and interests. What do you love *about* music? What genres or styles or *feelings* of music speak to you the most? When you think about your musical pursuits and others' musical pursuits, what excites you the most? What excites you the least? By identifying your passions and interests, and recognizing who you are, you can begin to narrow down your focus and discover what it really is that drives you to study, create, and perform music.

Consider your goals and aspirations. What do you want to achieve as a musician? Do you want to perform professionally, write and record your own music, or simply play for your own enjoyment? By setting specific goals for yourself, you can create a roadmap for your musical journey and stay motivated as you work towards your aspirations.

Seek out mentors and role models. Surrounding yourself with experienced and successful musicians will provide valuable guidance and inspiration. Look for mentors or role models who can provide guidance and

feedback on your musical journey, and be open to learning from their experiences and insights, be it negative or positive.

Practice regularly and consistently. Consistent practice is key to improving your musicianship and building skills on your instrument. Set aside dedicated practice time each day or week, and try to make it a regular part of your routine. As you practice, focus on specific areas of improvement and set small, achievable goals for yourself.

Take lessons or attend workshops. Working with a teacher or attending workshops can help you learn new techniques, gain new perspectives, and receive personalized feedback on your playing. Look for opportunities to learn from experienced musicians, and be open to trying new approaches and techniques.

Find ways to connect with other musicians.

Collaborating with other musicians can help you grow and learn as a musician. Look for opportunities to perform with others, join a band or ensemble, or simply jam with friends.

Stay open to new experiences and learning opportunities. Keep an open mind and be willing to try new things. Don't be afraid to take risks or step outside your comfort zone - these experiences can help you grow and develop as a musician.

These experiences will without a doubt immerse you into music in a way you've never been exposed to music before (if you're not already doing these things), and throughout these experiences, there's a good chance your

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purpose will be revealed, refined, rediscovered, or even retracted. Your journey as a musician will be unique, and what works for one person may not work for another. Keep in mind that your purpose may change along the way, but if you trust your instincts and stay true to your passions and interests, you will find that you're already on the path toward purpose in your musical pursuits.

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PERCEPTION

Once you have mastered the music in your heart by exploring and discovering your purpose in this, the next level of mastery is perception. Perception is probably the one aspect of musicianship I'm most passionate about, and that is because it goes beyond just partnering with the other 7 P's, but it shapes their characteristics and tailors them to you (not unlike Purpose does.)

We've all heard "your perception is your reality," but what does this look like in practice, specifically in a musical setting? Well, let's talk about the difference between perspective and perception, as their interconnectivity could potentially be confusing. Perspective is the appearance of something relative to your (in most cases) spatial distance from, or position to, it. Conversely, Perception is the capacity within which one can hold his or her perspective, and it's also the awareness itself of that capacity.

So going back to the "Perception = Reality" idea, if you can control how you perceive, you can become aware of how others perceive, and then you can control that too. And therefore you can control reality itself. This is pretty difficult to master, as there can be multiple different

I want to be clear on what I mean by the word
"perception:"

noun (pər-'sep-shən)

1 a: a result of perceiving :

OBSERVATION

b: a mental image : CONCEPT

2 obsolete : CONSCIOUSNESS

3 a: awareness of the elements of
environment through physical
sensation

color perception

b: physical sensation interpreted in the
light of experience

4 a: quick, acute, and intuitive cognition :

APPRECIATION

b: a capacity for comprehension

Perception, then, can be summed up like this:

How you sense the world around you;

More pertinently, how you *hear*;

But most importantly *understanding* what you hear.

perspectives of an audience to be aware of, and consequently multiple angles to create one reality, but the best part of something being difficult is it being possible. This is one of the many wonders of the vastness of the patterns and randomness of sounds and silence we all call music.

Let's dive deeper, shall we?

As a basic law of the universe, there are only 2 perceptions: positive and negative. These perceptions can shift the perspectives of truths we learn or lies we unlearn. For example, say I informed you of a spider being present on the front of your shirt. Would you be excited? The answer that question would almost always be yes, but whether or not that 'excitement' was positive would be based on your perception. Let's now say that Steve Erwin was in the same situation. It would probably be safe to assume his 'excitement' would be very positive. Maybe even elation. Now lets say this spider was on your four-year-old daughter's shirt, but the spider is actually a sticker. What then?

What I'm illustrating here is that you can, even with words alone, build context around given information to shape the perceptions of the observer. These negative and positive perceptions can also be right and wrong [notes], good and bad [sounds], excessive and inadequate [improvisation], and the list goes on. But you can make anything positive/right/good/enough, simply by the context you choose to create around it. We'll talk more about this later on in the book.

One thing that we constantly perceive is our environment. Our subconscious picks up everything, but our conscious mind *decides* whether or not it's relevant to life, and the same can be said for our inner ears. Our inner ears decide what is sonically relevant to be processed in

the musical parts of our brains. So begin practicing actively and *obsessively listening to absolutely everything* in your surroundings. Furthermore, you always want to surround yourself with what you want to become, because all of your respective senses will perceive until they've then created your very reality.

This particular aspect of musicianship creates an awareness that I call **observer relatability**. Because we want to be understood, first we've got to understand, and a musical performance is merely the communication of ideas you either want to come to an understanding around, or you want to create deception around. I've heard it said that communication itself is a 'cycle of understanding.'

You can practice this perception with exercises that involve melodic dictation and melodic recitation, or even musical prediction (predicting what will occur next based on musical context) and musical foretelling (creating musical context for your listener to expect what you want them to expect). Perception is like a neurological muscle than can be developed to be very strong over time.

So wait, lets back up a bit. We're talking about perception and everything, but let's talk about just hearing and hearing correctly. How can you hear what the V chord or vi chord even is? How can you hear what key a song is in without looking at the key signature? Well the tonic (the I [one, 1]) is mainly based on, you guessed it, intent. Lots and lots of times the composer will communicate this intent

based off of the mere scale he or she is using at the time. Other times it is implied through other factors like resolution or even sometimes meter. The bottom line is that the tonic is the center of the universe for that moment, and is the point that all musical 'matter' is drawn toward.

If this sounds completely foreign to you, and you are a person who struggles with recognizing the tonic, fear not. I've compiled a list of ear training exercises and practices you can implement as quickly as immediately. Ear training is a skill that is essential for any musician, and there are a few key steps you can take to improve these areas:

Practice listening to music regularly. One of the most effective yet underrated ways to improve your ear is to simply listen to a lot of music. Pay attention to the different instruments and how they work together, and try to identify specific instruments, chord progressions, melodies, and harmonies. This trains your mind to become ever-aware of music at the very least.

Sing, hum, or scat along with songs you are listening to. As you listen to music, try vocalizing along with the songs you are listening to. This will help you internalize the melodies and harmonies, and build your ear for pitch and rhythm — and this is why I said to vocalize and not play. And since you won't have your instrument on hand, literally pretend that you do. Playing the "air guitar/keyboard/bass/drums/sax/whatever" is the same thing to your brain as playing a real one; so long as you know the anatomy well enough to be at least 80% accurate on the physical side of

instrumentation, and the basic playing skill well enough to be 100% accurate on the physical location from which a specific note is produced.

Experiment with different musical styles and genres. Listening to a wide range of music from all over the world, written by all ages, can help you develop a more diverse musical palate and improve your ear for different styles, feels, and genres.

Take lessons or attend workshops. Working with a teacher or attending workshops can provide valuable guidance and feedback as you work to improve your ear training and musicality. Look for opportunities to learn from experienced musicians and try new approaches.

Practice regularly and consistently. As with any skill, consistent practice is key to improving your ear training and musicality. Set aside dedicated practice time each day or week, and try to make it a regular part of your routine. We'll talk about what the best practice will look like in chapter 7.

I hope these suggestions are helpful as you work to improve your perception. Remember that developing the ears you want will take time and patience, and it will be important to be consistent and stay focused on your goals. With consistent practice and a dedication to learning, you can make steady progress and become a more musically proficient and highly expressive musician.

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POSITION

As I stated before, in a group environment it's important to have the same collective purpose while recognizing your own individual purpose. Your purpose can't be taught, only understood. Once that purpose is realized, and your perception is recognized, you can then properly understand Position.

Position is the role that you fill in a band, in a song, and in the feel of a song. Depending on what instrument you play, you can almost guarantee the living organism that is music will depend on your own function for the music to work effectively.

Here are some common positions that may be a good idea to become familiar with:

- **Lead vocalist:** The lead vocalist is the main singer of the band and is responsible for singing the melody of the song. They are typically the most visible and prominent member of the band and often play a key role in defining the band's sound and style. The lead singer is also responsible for signaling where he or she will be taking

the band next in the song (if the song is malleable in such a way that there can be ambiguity)

- **Background vocalist:** Background vocalists provide harmonies and backing vocals for the lead vocalist. They may also sing solo parts or perform spoken word sections in a song.

- **Lead instrument:** The lead instrument is the primary instrument that carries the musical lines of the song (not to be confused with the song's melody, which is normally monophonic). When I say musical lines, I mean the sub-melodies that move beneath the lead vocalist. A great example of this would be the song Untitled by Dont'e Carr, referring to the guitar line that begins the song, which repeats itself during each verse. This could be a guitar, piano, or really any other instrument depending on the style of music being played.

- **Pianist:** A pianist is a musician who plays the piano as their primary instrument. They are responsible for playing the piano parts in a song, and it's not uncommon for them to contribute to the arrangement and composition of the music. This is understandable because the dynamic and tonal range of a piano makes creativity more possible than most other instruments.

- **Keyboardist:** A keyboardist is a musician who plays an electronic instrument that combines the functions of a piano and a synthesizer. They may play a variety of keyboard instruments in a single song, such as a grand

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piano, electric piano, or synthesizer; sometimes even simultaneously.

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Before we get into more keyboarded instruments, let's add some clarification to the difference between them and between the ones who play them. Namely the "pianists" and the "keyboardists." While a pianist may also be a keyboardist, the terms are not interchangeable. A pianist specifically plays the piano, while a keyboardist may play any type of keyboard instrument.

A pianist is a musician who plays the pianoforte (everyone just calls it piano for short), which is a keyboard instrument that produces sound by striking a series of hammers against strings when keys are pressed. The piano has a range of 88 keys, which are arranged in a linear fashion, with the leftmost keys producing lower pitches ascending towards the rightmost keys which produce the higher pitches.

A keyboardist, on the other hand, is a musician who plays any keyboard instrument; that's any instrument that is played by pressing keys to produce sound. This can include a wide range of instruments, such as synthesizers, electric pianos, and organ. Keyboard instruments can have a variety of different sounds and features, and can very often be played considerably more flexibly and expressive than a traditional piano.

- **Auxiliary keyboardist:** An auxiliary keyboardist, or 'aux,' is a keyboardist who plays additional keyboard/synth parts in a song. They may be called upon to play specific parts or to add texture and depth to the music with lead synths (usually monophonic synthesized sounds) or pad synths (typically polyphonic, and can be soft sounding and mellow, or hard sounding and

energetic). The opening melody line of my song "God First" is a hard lead synth, and it would be played by an aux player.

- **Organist:** An organist is a musician who plays the organ, which is a keyboard instrument with pipes or electronic synthesizers that produces sound. They may play a variety of organs, such as a pipe organ, electronic organ, or synthesizer organ.
- **Synthesist:** A synthesist can be a musician or sound designer who specializes in creating electronic sounds or music using synthesizers. Synthesizers are electronic instruments that generate sound by creating and manipulating electronic representations of sound waves called waveforms. This can be analog or digital. The main difference between analog and digital is digital synths use a discrete set of numerical values called bits to replicate waveforms and generate a digital signal, while analog uses continuously variable electrical signals through an analog circuit. Synthesizers can create a wide range of sounds, from simple sine waves to complex, multi-layered timbres, and can be played and controlled using a variety of methods, including keyboards, sequencers, and controllers. Synthesists may also use other electronic music equipment such as samplers, drum machines, and effects pedals to achieve the sound they want.
- **Drummer:** A drummer is a musician who plays a set of percussion instruments that include the bass drum, snare

drum, cymbals, and other percussion instruments. This set is called the Drum Set. The drummer is responsible for keeping time, setting the rhythm for the band, and setting the band up for different breaks and tags.

- **Bassist:** A bassist is a musician who plays the bass guitar or the double bass. The bassist is responsible for providing the low-frequency foundation for the music, the ground on which the music stands chord by chord. Because the bass itself can be the only one responsible for the foundation, a bassist's creativity could change the face and color of the band whenever something is changed. This makes it highly important to be aware of where the song is emotionally and energetically at any given moment. This could also explain why a bassist may also greatly contribute to the arrangement and composition of the music, from the onset or on the fly.

- **Acoustic guitarist:** A rhythm guitarist is a guitarist who normally plays an acoustic guitar (a guitar that produces sound without the use of electronics), and plays a supporting role in a band or ensemble, typically by providing underlying chordal accompaniment and rhythmic structure for the music. The rhythm guitarist plays chords, using a variety of strumming and picking patterns. In a rock or pop band, the rhythm guitarist may also play percussive power chords (chords that are composed of a note, it's fifth, and it's octave. Ex. B, F#, B.) to add drive and energy to the music. The rhythm guitarist could also play melodies and solos, but their

primary role is to support the lead instrument or vocalist and provide that structure for the overall sound of the band or ensemble.

- **Electric guitarist:** An electric guitarist is a musician who plays the a guitar with a solid body that is electronically amplified by a pickup. Much like an auxiliary keyboardist, they are responsible for playing guitar parts in a song that contribute to the arrangement and composition of the music.
- **Lead guitarist:** The lead guitarist is the primary guitarist in a band and is responsible for playing the guitar parts that carry the melody of the music. They may also play solos and contribute to the arrangement and composition of the music.
- **Percussionist:** A percussionist is a musician who plays percussion instruments, which are any type of instrument that is played by being struck, shaken, or scraped. Percussion instruments can include drums, cymbals, maracas, pianos (yes even pianos), basses, and many others. The percussionist is responsible for adding rhythmic texture to the music.
- **Lyricist:** A lyricist is a songwriter who writes the lyrics, or words, of a song. The lyrics of a song often convey the theme or message of the song, and can be very influential in shaping the overall mood and emotion of the piece.
- **Composer:** A composer is a musician who creates original music by combining melodies, harmonies, and

rhythms. A composer may write music for a variety of different instruments and ensembles, ranging from solo piano to a full orchestra.

- **Arranger:** An arranger is a musician who takes an existing piece of music and rearranges it for a different instrumentation or ensemble. For example, an arranger might take a song written for a rock band and rearrange it for a brass quintet. The arranger is responsible for adapting the original music to fit the new instrumentation and style or performance, while still preserving the integrity of the original piece.

- **Music producer:** A music producer is responsible for overseeing the creative and technical aspects of music production. This includes working with the artist to develop and refine the music, selecting session musicians, and managing the recording, mixing, and mastering process. The music producer plays a key role in shaping the final sound of a record.

- **Recording engineer:** A recording engineer is responsible for capturing and preserving the sound of a performance during the recording process. This includes setting up and operating recording equipment, such as microphones and mixing consoles, and ensuring that the sound being recorded is of high fidelity.

- **Mixing engineer:** A mixing engineer is responsible for taking all of the recorded tracks from a session and combining them into a cohesive whole. This involves Includes gainstaging, re-amping, vocal pitch correction,

time flexing, vocal comping, environmental production, balancing, equalization, compression, and blending into/ from a following/preceding work.

- **Mastering engineer:** A mastering engineer is responsible for the final stages of music production, including preparing the final mixes for release and ensuring that they are sonically consistent across different playback systems. This includes industry standard leveling, volume, treatment, cleaning, coloring, and any other post-production. The goal of mastering is to enhance the overall sound quality of the mixes and prepare them for distribution.

Understanding the musical significance of each instrument or role in a band or production can be a valuable skill for any musician, as it can help you better understand how to work with others and create a cohesive and balanced sound. Here are a few key points to consider when thinking about the significance of different working parts within a production, whether it be a performance or recording:

Each instrument has its own unique timbre, or tonal quality. The timbre of an instrument is determined by its shape, size, and materials, as well as the way it is played. Understanding the timbre of different instruments can help you understand how they contribute to the overall physical sound of a band.

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The balance between instruments is important. In a band, it's important to find a sonic balance between the different instruments so that they all have a chance to be heard and contribute to the overall sound. This can involve adjusting volume levels, panning (stereo placement, or physical placement in acoustic settings), and other factors.

Remember that each role has its own unique characteristics and capabilities, and understanding how they fit into the overall sound of a band can help you become a more effective and cohesive musician.

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PULSE

So now you know why you do what you do, how to do it, and where it fits in. Awesome. What's next? Since we've tackled the heart with our purpose, trained the head with new perception and with the knowledge of our position, let's go back to the heart. Rhythm is one of the most crucial parts of musicianship, but even deeper than that, I believe the foundation of rhythm itself is something I call Pulse.

Pulse can be described as the pattern or frequency at which a song **breathes**. Bear in mind that these breaths can change pace *without the song changing tempo*, or even without the actual beats changing. Pulse can be expressed using standard music notation, but it is measured with your own energy. A great example of this is Kissed by a Rose by Seal: the time signature is 6/8, meaning there are six 8th notes within one measure; but the song has a heavy pulse every 3 beats. This ONE-2-3-TWO-5-6 pulse structure brilliantly indicates the difference between the song's meter and the song's feel. The meter is in the music, the feel is in you. Meter merely describes in technical terms how to convey the feel, but communicating the *feel* was always the goal.

Another beautiful thing about pulse is that, depending on its weight, it can indeed be subjective. In the same song one could say that they feel pulses every beat, and another could say every 2 beats. I would disagree with them of course, but this sort of subjection only allows for more “creations of reality” with each different perception of the pulse, and makes the performance much more exciting!

Developing a strong sense of rhythm and internal tempo is critical for any musician to have a keen sense of pulse, and there are a few actionable steps you can take to improve these skills in order to truly master it:

Practice identifying the pulse in music, and the changes of pulse within the music you hear. As with any skill, consistent practice is key to improving your sense of pulse, rhythm, and the internal metronome. This brings me to another action step:

Use a metronome. Using a metronome or drum machine can help you develop a stronger sense of timing and internal tempo. Start by playing along with a steady beat, and gradually increase the tempo as you improve. Set aside dedicated practice time each day, and try to make it a regular part of your routine and thinking. And I really hope this sounds familiar to you by now.

Experiment with different time signatures and rhythms. By exploring different time signatures and rhythms, you can expand your musical vocabulary and develop a more diverse sense of rhythm. And as always, look for

opportunities to learn from other musicians and never be afraid to try new approaches.

Explore polyrhythm.

Polyrhythm is the use of two or more rhythms simultaneously within a musical piece. It can be a challenging concept to understand and execute, but with practice and a solid understanding of rhythm, you can develop your skills in this area. Here are a few suggestions you can consider in order to improve your understanding and execution of polyrhythm:

Review the bare basics of rhythm repeatedly. It's important to have a strong foundation in the basics of rhythm before diving headfirst into polyrhythm. Make sure you understand time signatures, meter, and basic rhythmic patterns and subdivisions.

Practice clapping and counting rhythms. One of the best ways to internalize rhythms is to practice clapping and counting them out loud. Don't be afraid to look like a fool. Some of the highest paid musicians sometimes seem like they're having convulsions if they're trying to work out a rhythm; just embrace it. Really. Start with simple rhythms and gradually increase the complexity as you become more comfortable.

Experiment with different rhythms and combinations. As you become more comfortable with basic rhythms, start experimenting with different combinations and see how they sound together, and most importantly, how they feel

together. You can try layering different rhythms on top of one another or alternating between two different rhythms.

Once you feel comfortable with clapping and counting polyrhythms, start practicing playing them on your instrument. This will likely involve dividing your focus between two or more rhythms at the same time, so it may take some practice to get the hang of it.

Work with a buddy or fellow drummer, or even the teacher or mentor I keep mentioning. Another human can provide valuable guidance and feedback as you work to improve your execution of polyrhythm. They can provide specific exercises and techniques to help you develop your skills.

I expect these suggestions are beneficial when practiced consistently. The idea here is to create much more cognitive room for creativity by ingraining in your spirit the pulse of the music. Remember that developing this skill takes time and practice, so be patient and stay focused on your goals. With consistent practice and a dedication to learning and absorbing, you *will* become one with pulse of all sound, and you can become more comfortable and proficient with this challenging and rewarding musical concept.

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POCKET

Let's stay on the head.

Stevie Wonder once said "Just because the record has a groove, don't make it in the groove." Many say that the pocket in music can refer to the groove of a song - the driving force that holds the music together and gives it a sense of swing or groove. It's said to typically be created by the drums and bass, leaving room for every instrument in a band to contribute to the overall pocket; but I believe that pockets go a bit deeper (Haha).

The pocket is a base pattern for any specific instrument (not just drums), that combines with the patterns of all the other instruments playing, to create the very identity of that song or section. In a work that is not well known, the pocket is established at the first time a section of that work is played. In a song that is very well known, the pocket can be abandoned to add color and flavor, then usually played normally when everyone joins in, or the second or third time the section is played. And again, every instrument has its own pocket essential to the overall message/energy of that section. Furthermore, the sheer awareness of the pockets of your band members can help you deliver energy and musicality in a much better way.

This Christmas by Donnie Hathaway is a great example of this. In the first verse Donnie establishes the pocket of the verse's melody, and by the second verse (the first official 'repetition' of the melody), his choice of notes and rhythm deviate ever so slightly, drawing the audience even further in than they were before. But more on deviation in the next chapter.

I cannot stress enough that staying in the pocket helps you develop your maturity in musicianship: Playing a song "like the record" allows you to learn new techniques and musical concepts from the ones who recorded it, such as phrasing, dynamics, voicing, and tone. It can also help you improve your ear for music, as you'll need to listen closely to the recording in order to recreate it accurately. It allows you to play with others more easily: If you're playing in a band or with other musicians, it's important to be able to play songs accurately in order to stay in sync with the rest of the group. And by playing a song like the recording, you'll be able to easily join in and contribute to the overall sound. Also, if another band member deviates from the pocket, or even approaches the pocket in a way you've never heard before, you have the opportunity to learn *and apply* it right there on the fly.

Understanding the pocket helps you learn new songs more quickly: If you're learning a new song, playing along with the recording can help you get a feel for the song's structure and arrangement (as long as you are not playing *over* the song, the goal is still to hear it). And honestly

playing a song like the record can be a fun and rewarding challenge for any musician. It allows you to test your skills and see how closely you can recreate the original performance.

Staying in the pocket is an important skill for any musician, as it helps to keep the rhythm of the music tight and consistent. Here are a few actionable tips that may help you improve your understanding of the pocket:

Listen to music with a strong pulse: Pay attention to how the drums, bass, and other rhythmic instruments interact to create a solid groove. Try to mimic this feel and their interactions on your own instrument.

Play with other musicians, this is the ultimate challenge: Playing with other musicians can help you develop a better sense of timing, as you'll need to stay in sync with them. Chances are if you are found 'out of pocket,' then someone's going to let you know that, as my wife would say, "This ain't it." Find musicians to play and shed with and practice staying in the pocket together.

Now let's talk about Flow. This is mainly for vocals, although the concepts here can apply everywhere. I would define flow as a metric vocal pocket that deepens the pulse of the song, or intentionally dances around the pulse of a song. Sadly what I hear in a lot of today's rap music is an apparent lack of awareness of pulse, and thus a disparity in flow. Tell me if this sounds familiar: a rapper is rapping on a beat, they let the beat breathe for 8 bars and the rapper is rapping over an empty shell of the beat (that is, everything

except the kick, snare, hats, and percussion is playing), then they bring the beat back in, but the beat sounds like it's behind by an 8th of a beat and the artist is a little too far ahead. So what happened here? The artist, not having a full grasp on the pulse or tempo of the instrumental, pushed the meter of his or her flow in a way that misaligned it with the pulse.

Please understand I am not saying that you must quantize your rapping on the beat, what I am saying is that if your intent is to flow, then the lack of awareness of pulse really hinders you from creating flow. Remember that it's okay to dance around the pulse with your vocals but there is a monumental difference between dancing and merely moving. Flow is essential to the pocket of a vocalist, and one must understand it to fully appreciate the pocket.

The pocket is like a prophesy, and it feels like home sweet home when that prophesy is fulfilled. Now with that said, there are some cases where it feels like a well needed vacation when the prophesy is abandoned, disproven, and debunked. And this leads us to our next point, Placement.

The 8 P's of Musicianship

The 8 P's of Musicianship

PLACEMENT

As a creative, it's tough to talk about 'rules' without talking about breaking them. In the same way, it's difficult to speak about the pocket without speaking about leaving the pocket momentarily, or even indefinitely. However, it is important to note that your audience's ears must know the rule that you're breaking in order to know that you're breaking it in the first place, and thus an established pocket is needed. The actual times that you choose to abandon the pocket are much more significant than the decisions themselves, made outside of the pocket. This choice of tasteful timing is what I call Placement.

There are a few different factors to consider when it comes to placement:

Structure: One important factor to consider is the structure of the song. 'Improvising' during the verse or chorus of a song might be less effective than improvising during a solo or instrumental break, as these sections often provide more room for creativity and expression.

Melody: Another important factor to consider is the melody of the song. Identifying the key and tonality of the song can help you choose where to improvise and what

scales and modes to use. You can also consider the melody of the song itself, as improvising over a catchy or memorable melody can be more effective than improvising over a less memorable one.

Dynamics: The dynamics of a song can also be an important factor to consider when improvising. For example, improvising during a loud or energetic section of a song might be more effective than improvising during a quieter or more subdued section.

Emotion: Finally, think about the emotion of the song and how you can use your improvisation to enhance it. Improvising in a way that reflects the mood and feeling of the song can help to create a more powerful and effective performance.

Here's a great time to dip our toes into the rabbit hole of music theory, so let me take this opportunity to talk about substitutions. Every note, chord, melody, phrase or stanza can be substituted with a related or non-related counterpart. so when you think about structure, melody, dynamics, and emotion, these factors will have weight in your decisions of subbing whatever you're subbing.

Chordal substitutions, for instance, are chords that can be used in place of other chords in a song, while still maintaining the overall harmonic structure and progression of the piece. They can be used to add variety, complexity, and interest to a chord progression, and can also be used to create different tonal colors and textures.

Lets talk about Figured Bass.

Figured bass is sometimes referred to as the Roman Numerals, or the Nashville Number System, or the Number System, or literally just The Numbers, or Thoroughbass even less frequently; whatever you wish to call it, this will be pivotal to understand if you want to communicate effectively with other musicians. Some say it was created by a man named Neil Matthews, Jr. in the 1950's. I need you to know that I highly disagree with this claim as this concept has been around since before Neil was a name. No rhyme intended.

When you sing a major scale, you sing 7 pitches, and then the 8th pitch is just the 1st pitch sounded at a higher octave (that is, the first pitch has the same name as the eighth pitch). If you were to sing this major scale, instead of singing "la la la la la la la la," or "doo doo doo doo doo doo doo," or "mmm mmm mmm mmm mmm mmm mmm mmm," you would sing "one two three four five six seven one" (because the eighth note the same as the first note remember?).

Congratulations, you now know figured bass.

Sort of.

You've just learned a simple method to identify the scale degrees, but when using this system, the numbers represent a chordal function, usually indicated by the bass of a chord. The simplest way to really understand this concept is with using triads (a chords each containing three notes that are thirds away from the notes in the chord, like 1+3+5 or 5+7+9 {9 is like 2, but an octave higher}). The 1 function would be 1+3+5, and 2 would be 2+4+6, and 3 would be 3+5+7, and so on. Every degree is either major or minor until you get to 7, which is naturally diminished (look up diminished, minor, major, and augmented chords).

In most modern music, when people call out a 7, they mean a 5 chord with a 7 at the bottom; and 3 goes between an authentic 3 or a 1 chord with a 3 at the bottom. These are called inversions, and the inversion does not change the degree of a chord at a base level. These numbers are usually written in Roman numerals, with major being uppercase, and minor being lowercase; and when necessary, with sharp (*b*) and flat (*#*) symbols. We will also indicate what style a chord it is with a number. So in E major, Amaj7#5 = IVmaj7#5.

There are several ways that you can use chordal substitutions in your music:

Tonic substitution: A tonic substitution is a chord that can be used in place of the tonic (I) chord in a chord progression. For example, you could substitute a iim7 chord for a Imaj7 chord in a major key, or a Im7 chord for a I7 chord in a minor key.

Dominant substitution: A dominant substitution is a chord that can be used in place of the dominant (V) chord in a chord progression. For example, you could substitute a V7sus4 chord for a V7 chord, or a V7alt chord for a V7 chord.

Modal mixture: Modal mixture is a technique in which chords from a different mode are used in place of chords in the original mode. For example, you could use chords from the Dorian mode in place of chords from the major mode, or chords from the Mixolydian mode in place of chords from the minor mode.

Alterations: Alterations are chords that contain altered notes, such as flattened or sharpened notes. For example, you could use a b9, #9, b5, or #5 chord in place of a regular dominant chord to add complexity and interest.

Please be advised, these are just examples. By experimenting with different chordal substitutions and using your *own* musical judgment and ear, you can find the ones that work best for your music and help to add variety and interest to your chord progressions in that song, and at that time.

These methods can be used even on broken, rearranged and inverted chords, or melodies, or anything tonal. The real fun, however, happens in atonality and rhythm. *Rhythmic substitutions* are a technique in which you replace a specific rhythm with a different rhythm, while maintaining the overall feel and groove of the piece. They can be used to add variety, complexity, and interest to a rhythm pattern, and can also be used to create different rhythmic textures.

There are several ways that you can use rhythmic substitutions in your music:

Subdivisions: One way to create rhythmic substitutions is to use different subdivisions of the beat. For example, you could replace a quarter note rhythm with an eighth note rhythm, or a half note rhythm with a dotted quarter note rhythm.

Syncopation: Syncopation is the technique of placing accents on off-beats, or weak beats, in a measure. By using

syncopation, you can create rhythms that are displaced from the main beat, which can add interest and complexity to your rhythms.

Displacement: Displacement is the technique of shifting a rhythm forward or backward in time, relative to the main beat. For example, you could displace a rhythm by one eighth note, so that it starts on the "and" of a beat instead of on the beat itself.

Polyrhythms: Polyrhythms are rhythms that involve two or more conflicting rhythms being played simultaneously like we spoke about earlier in one of the the previous chapters. By using polyrhythms, you can create complex and interesting rhythmic patterns that can add depth and texture to your music.

By experimenting with different rhythmic substitutions and using your musical judgment and ear, you can find the ones that work best for your music and help to add variety and interest to your rhythms. The main concept around substitutions is that the **function** of whatever your substituting must be reserved, unless your intent is clearly to change the function of that specific chord or rhythmic phrase

Another large part of placement is pocket (again, yes); but more specifically, your *approach* to the pocket. It is very possible to play or sing a single song 15 different times, and in those times the song be played or sung 15 different ways, and they all still remain in the pocket. This goes back

to the concept of function. Every beat, note, chord, pause, riff, block, and otherwise musical element of a song or work has a function. The understanding of that function will allow you to approach the pocket beautifully and authentically. Furthermore, the mere awareness of functions changes the way a musician approaches the pocket altogether. I always say that oneself will be revealed on the way they play or sing, and approaching the pocket as the real you only makes the music more expressive and just absolutely remarkable.

So let's explore some basic functions and discuss examples to paint a clearer picture on approach.

There are 2 overall basic functions of any element in music. Those basic functions are stability and instability. Based off of this notion, you can say that each chord in a major scale is simply named by its function. For example, the tonic is the chord that possibly provides the strongest sense of stability. The subdominant helps to create a sense of movement towards the tonic and can also provide a sense of stability, and this doesn't always have to be the IV chord. The dominant typically creates a sense of tension and instability, as it usually 'wants' to resolve to the tonic. There's also the pre-dominant (typically moves toward the dominant), modulatory (chords that are used to temporarily shift the tonal center), color (adds dissonance, tension, or other interest that creates a specific mood or energy), and

cadential (normally indicate finality, or the end of a phrase or musical path).

In addition to their harmonic functions, chords can also have rhythmic functions, like these:

1. **Stabilizing:** These are chords that are played for an extended period of time and help to provide a sense of stability and continuity in the music.
2. **Transitioning:** These are chords that are used to smoothly move from one section of a piece of music to another. They may be played for a shorter duration and may not necessarily have a strong functional role harmonically.
3. **Punctuating:** These are chords that are played for a short duration and are used to mark the end of a musical phrase or section. They may have a strong sense of finality and resolution, similar to cadential chords.
4. **Color:** As with harmonic functions, chords can also be used for their rhythmic color, adding interest or variety to the rhythmic texture of a piece of music.

It's worth noting that these functions are not mutually exclusive, and a chord can serve multiple functions at the same time. The specific functions of a chord will depend on the context in which it is used.

These ideas also carry over to monophonic instruments like a saxophone or bass guitar (ignoring the fact that a

bass is actually polyphonic with *mostly* monophonic functions). A basic ii-V-I progression could be approached a number of different ways and remain in the pocket. On a bass, for example, it could be played with the 9th and 10th from their root, consecutively (ii-9-10, V-9-10, I). It could also be played with simple rhythmic passing notes between each chord, like (ii [7-9-5], V [5-R-5], I) your choices between downward or upward movement, simple or complex, fast or slow, repeated or drawn out, or any combination would depend on the context of the song or section.

Let's talk more about rhythm. The rhythms and licks played on the drums can serve a number of different functions in a song as well. The most obvious function is providing the pulse or groove of the music, but a function that sometimes gets overlooked is the support of the rhythm of other instruments: The drums can help to support and reinforce the rhythms played by other instruments in the band just with the pocket he or she establishes, helping to create a cohesive and tight ensemble sound.

Another function that can be overlooked or even misconstrued is filling in empty spaces in the arrangement: The drums can be used to fill in empty spaces in the arrangement and add interest and variety to the rhythmic texture of a song. But this can be done without the use of a

drum fill. An ever-so-slight shift in the pocket often does an even better job at filling space than a fill could ever do.

More rhythmic functions include accents and emphasis on important parts of the music (creating momentum and excitement), contrast and variation (from the ever-so-slight change like I mentioned before to a drastic alteration directly opposing whatever was changed), and mood or atmosphere setting (highly subjective and contingent upon the show, but for example: using subtle and understated rhythms for a ballad, or by playing more aggressive and energetic rhythms for a rock song).

MUSICAL SAMPLE ANALYSIS
"ABUNDANT" BY DONT'E CARR



❖ This song opens up with an original sample of a freestyle by my daughter Clara Carr, over the chords IV, ii, vi, and V in the key of C. Simple enough. It's good to note here that the V in this sample is actually a G+9+13 (a simpler way to write this would be G6+9, but the intent is for the 13 [or 6] to add instability and for the 9 to add stability to this chord). This chord adds a touch of ambiguity to the destination of the progression until you hear it is a simple four-chord loop, and is

very much a metaphor for humans expectancy of complication from life when life is simple at its core. Let's continue listening

❖ Just before the first words are rapped and beat drops, a filtered background vocal riff runs over an Am7+9, landing on the 7 (of the root). The last 2 notes, root and 7, are sang during a chord change to the V, making those notes the root and 9. This simultaneous shift of root function downward into the dominant creates a hefty amount of stable tension, and the desire to resolve in to the tonic.

❖ The beat drops with the drum loop starting, the kick pattern emphasizing the current quarter-note-pulse of the song, and the tonic is avoided. Instead, a monophonic synth embellishes the sample-loop's chords starting with the IV.

❖ Just before the start of the second subphrase, we hear a synth in the background embellish the chords, moving downwards, in the opposite direction of the mono synth. This also emphasizes the pulse with the rhythm at which it is played.

❖ The second phrase begins with the omitting of the kick on the first and strongest beat of the phrase, leaving an empty space energetically for the listeners moving body to fill for the rest of the song, until the pulse is changed. The vocal flow also slumps right behind half of the pulse (or halved subdivisions thereof), simultaneously leaving a feeling of assuredness in pulse and 'listener participation' in the beats' movement.

❖ During the first V of the second phrase, that synth melody actually hints at the tonic, pulling even stronger toward the

IV. Also this is the first time this synth repeats the same note consecutively during a supposed arpeggiation, debunking that expectation.

❖ The beat drops, even further, and the bass enters the song strongly and assuring. The sample loop also comes back in, and the flow returns to the pulse melodically.

❖ During the entire second phrase, the movement of the bass introduces subtle substitutions, and this continues throughout and into the hook.

❖ The hook begins, and every melodic and chordal element creates a Maj13 from each major chord, and a min11 chord from each minor chord, unless the bass changes the name of a chord with its substitution.

Overall, the best places to place deviations from the pocket in a song will depend on a large variety of factors, including the structure, melody, dynamics, and emotion of the song. Also the function of everything in the pocket you want to deviate from of will need to be considered when making these decisions. By considering these factors and using your creativity and musical skills, you can choose the most tasteful places to improvise and create a memorable and effective performance. But before we hit the stage, there is one thing you must master as a musician.

The 8 P's of Musicianship

The 8 P's of Musicianship

PRACTICE

Practice doesn't make perfect, it makes automatic.

There is a wealth of research and evidence demonstrating the benefits of practicing anything. Here are a few key points that demonstrate why practicing is so important for improving your musical abilities:

Practice helps you build muscle memory: When you practice a piece of music, you are physically training your muscles to move in a specific way. This muscle memory helps you play the piece more smoothly and accurately over time.

Furthermore, If you're a vocalist, there are a number of physical exercises that can help you improve your vocal ability in music. Here are a few suggestions:

Warm up your voice: Before singing or speaking, it's important to warm up your voice to avoid strain or injury. There are many different vocal warm-up exercises you can try, such as humming, lip trills, or sirens (gliding through a scale while making a "woo" sound).

The 8 P's of Musicianship

Build breath control: Strong breath control is essential for singing. You can improve your breath control by practicing deep breathing exercises or by singing scales or other melodies while focusing on your breath.

Strengthen your diaphragm: Your diaphragm is a muscle that helps you control your breath and support your voice. You can strengthen your diaphragm by doing exercises such as belly breathing or singing scales while taking deep breaths.

Practice vowel sounds: Vowels are an important part of singing, and vowel sounds can be improved with practice. Try singing scales or melodies while focusing on maintaining a clear, resonant vowel sound.

Work on your diction: Clear diction is important for singing, especially when singing lyrics. You can improve your diction by speaking or singing along with recordings of songs or by practicing tongue twisters or other exercises designed to improve your enunciation.

Overall, it's important to remember that vocal exercises should be done gradually and with proper technique to avoid strain or injury. It may also be helpful to work with a vocal coach or singing teacher to learn proper technique and develop a personalized exercise plan.

If you play an instrument that involves your hands, there are certain things you can do to improve your physical dexterity and hand-eye coordination:

Practice hand and finger exercises: These can help you improve your overall hand strength and control. You can try exercises such as finger stretches, hand grippers, or finger tapping drills.

Play sports or engage in activities that require hand-eye coordination: Sports such as tennis, basketball, and baseball can help improve your hand-eye coordination and overall physical dexterity.

Learn a new skill that requires manual dexterity: This could be something like playing another musical instrument, woodworking, or knitting. Practicing these activities can help improve your overall hand control and dexterity.

Do brain games and puzzles: These can help improve your hand-eye coordination, problem-solving skills, and overall brain function.

Take breaks and stretch regularly: It's important to take breaks and stretch during activities that require manual dexterity to prevent fatigue and injury.

Remember that it takes time and consistent practice to improve physical dexterity, so be patient and be consistent in your training. It's also important to consult with a healthcare professional before starting any new exercise or training program.

Your full dedication to practicing is the most important part of the 'practicing process.' But don't confuse "full" with "perfect." There will be days you miss, or hours that get cut

very very short, but just understand that in order to unleash the cognitive space in your mind dedicated to mechanics and begin using it for creativity, automation must occur. And in order for automation to be possible, practice must be a priority. When you practice, you can focus on specific skills or areas that you want to improve. This targeted focus can help you make more rapid progress in those areas. Not to mention playing a musical instrument can be physically demanding, and practicing can help you build up the physical stamina and endurance needed to play for longer periods of time.

Let's pause here and highlight the importance of correcting as you practice. Before you repeat a set of physical or mental exercises, be sure you are moving and thinking correctly. As you practice, you will come across new techniques and musical concepts that can help you expand your musical skills, but if they are being achieved in your sessions by straining your body, this can come back to bite you in the long run. (Straining is an exaggerative illustration to drive a clear point, but even incorrect fingering could have a lasting negative effect on your body and ability to learn new things quickly. So just keep that in mind.)

Now I want to highlight two essential forms of learning you'll always encounter in music: learning music, and learning instruments/how to play an instrument.

LEARNING MUSIC

Before the song plays, Play a reference tone (unless you have perfect pitch) to be prepared to anchor yourself in the tonic without noodling. (Noodling is a term used to describe the way an instrumentalist plays his or her instrument musically detached from any song or work. Its typically done before a line check as musicians wait for a sound tech, or immediately after a performance if no breakdown is required. To be clear, noodling in front on an audience almost always sounds like chaos, and is not normally recommended.) As a new song begins, confirm the tonic and anchor yourself in it. The only other times you want to use your hands is to confirm a movement you heard with your ears that you cannot visualize.

Now the first thing you want to listen for in a new song is the pocket, rhythmically and harmonically. Visualize yourself playing with the music correctly, and really feel what the music is doing. Try and reason why the composer or songwriter is making the decisions he or she is making, and attempt to predict (in real time) future decisions he or she will make. You become that song. If by the second time around, you're not able to at least play the entire pocket in real time on your instrument with the music, keep practicing this skill. The second listen I like to reserve for any band hits I did not catch the first time around, and the

same concept applies here: reason with the song, predict the song, become the song. Generally speaking, by the third time around you should have the song down, and know it like the back of your hand.

LEARNING HOW TO PLAY

Instruments often intimidate new players, and the time commitment may scare most people, but I will reveal a method that will benefit you in a time-efficient and effective way. It's good to note here that this section is not written for beginners, but rather people who play an instrument, but want to learn another in the fastest, smarter way possible. Just going through the P's:

Purpose - know the reason why you're learning something new now

Perception - ensure you're able to mentally isolate that instrument from a full song.

Position - be certain you know the role that instrument plays in a group or band.

Pocket + Placement - find some famous grooves to play, play those pockets, and make up your own.

Practice - learn the anatomy of that instrument, how to tune and adjust all hardware on the instrument, and the ability to physically create sounds from the instrument (that is, the most basic way to hold, sound, and silence a note on the instrument.)

Performance - learn a song and play it for someone.
More on this in the next chapter.

One of the most important values practicing helps you build, if you do it consistently to any degree, is discipline. Practicing regularly requires discipline and commitment. By developing this discipline through practicing, you can apply it to other areas of your life as well. It's important to point out that your brain has more resilience and can learn faster and with less limitations than your body, so training your physical body to be better than your brain can utilize is a healthy goal in my opinion. This way you will place your physical skill and mental creativity on a never ending race against themselves, which I think is very beneficial.

As a rule, practicing is a vital component of improving your musical skills. It allows you to focus on specific areas for improvement, build muscle memory and endurance, and learn new techniques. With dedication and consistent practice, you can make significant progress in your musical abilities.

The 8 P's of Musicianship

PERFORMANCE

Let me just say this: if there were a way to effectively stand and play the drum set or organ, I would do it. I believe that you convey and transmit energy most effectively when your whole body is involved, and because of that, I like to stand when I play. Keyboards, bass, raised grand piano; if you see me playing on one of these, then you see me standing. But energy doesn't stop at stance, you'll see me dancing. Again, a great deal of this whole philosophy is the efficient use of cognition, so if you can essentially offload mental tasks to different parts of your body, that would lead to a more effective performance. Having your dancing body be 'in charge' of feeling the pulse, then all the P's after that become so much easier to master.

Revisiting the concept of pocket and placement, once established, the pocket can be abandoned as far as you like. The trick here is to make sure your audience isn't left behind, so make thoughtful decisions and be tasteful with your placement. Performing is not unlike defensive driving in that your goal is to communicate intent. Once an intent is communicated, it's up to you to decide whether or not

reality and intent matches, and whether or not you want the audience to feel it consciously or merely subconsciously.

Performing should physically and mentally be similar to your practice in only one way: your body and mind should know how to execute ideas and concepts you create on the fly because you've practiced effectively. I would like to point out the difference between practice and rehearsal: rehearsal is for a specific show or gig, practice is for you as a musician. This is why doctors practice medicine and they don't rehearse them (well they may while in school or something, but you understand the difference). If you practice something, that something is a part of you now. If you rehearse something, that something is separate of you that you *give to* or *give away*.

Both rehearsal and practice are essential to an effective performance, as it served as adamant apt preparation. Preparing includes getting familiar with the venue and equipment there, and it also includes making sure you have everything you need for the show. This can be done by writing and delivering a **Technical Rider** to the coordinator of the event. A Technical Rider is an agreement that specifies technical, production, and sometimes hospitality requirements for a performer at a specified venue. A Tech Rider is an addendum to a Talent Contract, which is a binding agreement between a performer, their agent, the venue, and all parties involved in the booking of that show.

There are several more factors that can contribute to a successful performance including the *belief* in yourself, in your ears, and in your abilities. Confidence like this can help you relax and focus on the music, rather than stressing about mistakes or negative thoughts or whether or not the audience is judging you.

In addition to musical ability, there are certain *performance skills* that can help you deliver a great performance. These include things like stage presence. Stage presence refers to your ability to command attention by using body language, facial expressions, and movement to convey emotion and connect with the audience. Audience engagement is also a basic performance skill. Engaging an audience can be done through eye contact, smiling, and interacting with the audience through gestures or flat out talking to them. Don't be afraid to have a full blown conversation with them if you need to. I suggest studying some of your favorite comedians or public speakers [who often speak to audience members].

Remember that performance skills are something that can be developed and improved over time with *practice, rehearsal, and experience*.

A good performer has a healthy dose of adaptability. Adaptability is defined as is the ability to adjust to changes or new situations in order to achieve a desired outcome. Be prepared to adjust to any unexpected issues or changes that may arise during a performance, like technical

difficulties or even changes in the audience's mood. Being adaptable and knowing you have developed this skill of adaptability will help you maintain your composure and still deliver a great performance.

Here are a few strategies for developing adaptability as a performer:

1. Here it is again, ***practice***. Obviously the more you practice, the more prepared you will be for unexpected issues that may arise during any performance.
2. Stay flexible in life: Be open to making changes or adjustments to your life, this translates very well to performances if necessary.
3. Stay calm in life: Maintain a calm and positive attitude even in the face of unexpected challenges.
4. Keep your options open in life: Have a contingency plan in case things don't go as expected. This is *especially true* in musical performances, always have a plan B. And in a lot of cases, you can make your mistakes the new plan.
5. Learn from your mistakes, quickly: When things don't go as originally planned, take the opportunity to learn from the experience and use it to improve your performance skills. Record every performance, and study them after every performance to determine what needs to improve, what needs to be eliminated, what does not need to be focused on as much, and anything else you deem beneficial to your next performance.

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Overall, the best performance incorporates your purpose for being there, your perception, and your position, and how well you place what you've practiced in and around the pocket. Be prepared, confident, and aware, and you will be able to shine through the music you play or sing.

The 8 P's of Musicianship

PROFESSIONALISM

This isn't officially one of the 8 P's of musicianship, but I would be remiss if I didn't mention professionalism as a musician. This includes punctuality, knowing your music, punctuality, being prepared for rehearsal or a show, punctuality, and being on time. It also includes punctuality. When a musician, or anyone for that matter, is late for a predetermined meetup at a mutually-agreed-upon time and date, what you are communicating is that your time is more valuable to you than everyone else's time who agreed to the same time and date. Notice how I didn't say everyone else is on time; no matter what everyone else does/says/feels, you can be accountable to your word.

If for some reason you cannot make an engagement at a time you previously said you could for whatever reason, **communicate**. Communication with the event coordinator, music director, executive producer, praise team leader, your mom, or whoever the contact is is critical if you are running behind. Lots of times they care much more about your communicating that you're late and their opportunities to make adjustments far more than the reason you were late. So be punctual.

Moving on to knowing your music: I've made the mistake before of abusing my gift of learning songs

quickly. Many years before the publishing of this book, I played piano at an American high-end department store; and what set me apart in this store from the other pianists (who played on different shifts) was that I played popular music [arranged on the fly for piano] *by ear*. There would be plenty of times when I would get requests of songs I've never heard, and they would pull it up on their phone and play it in my ear *as I'm still playing another song*, and be able to play it back on the piano afterwards. Now this is very challenging, but I loved to do it because it was challenging. The only thing about that skill of learning things efficiently and quickly that I don't like is that it can be so easily abused.

Every experienced musician has had to learn a song on the way to a gig before. This happens sometimes, but it should not be treated as the standard of operation. So don't abuse your ability to learn fast by not taking time to learn your music. Being aware of the details is pivotal as you move up in music, and details require relatively more time to learn. Make sure listening time is set; it doesn't have to be set aside, but as long as you can listen actively you are golden.

Okay so you're there on time, and you know all the music. What else do you need? Well here's what I bring to every gig:

- A toothbrush. I'm glad we could come to this understanding.

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- Hand Creme/Lotion. People will be staring at your fingers trying to learn from the way you play, let not our hands be like the Utah snow.
 - A pair of in-ear monitors. This is standard now, if you don't have a pair, go ahead and get some.
 - Ear cleaners. For your ears (We're not actually supposed to use cotton swabs for our ears) and for your in-ear monitors.
 - A TRS 1/8" extender cable. This is for the in-ear monitors. You never want to be in a situation where everyone has in-ears except you because yours don't reach the personal monitor output provided.
 - A TRS 1/8" to 1/4" adaptor. I actually bring around 9 or 10 of these because they *can* grow legs and walk away. Protect them at all costs.
 - An iPad. Nowadays there are plenty of ways to control monitor mixes, and tablets are just one of them I like to be prepared for
 - An instrument cable.
 - A camera capable of capturing 4K video at 24 fps. This is almost every phone in the market at the time of publishing of this book. Don't forget the mount or tripod.

Plus drumsticks, microphone, merchandise, or whatever else is pertinent to whatever instrument I'm on that day, I want to have these things on hand at the gig or rehearsal.

The 8 P's of Musicianship

I forgot to mention punctuality, but let's go back to appearance really quickly. Let's ensure that while we are expressive with our appearance, we are also clean with it. We are able to express ourselves in whatever way we want, and this includes the way we look, but we all know the difference between executing a look, missing the mark, and showing that you don't care. Being a musician in a lot of ways is being a leader both sonically and visually, so let's always set the right examples, on and off the gig.

The 8 P's of Musicianship

The 8 P's of Musicianship

CONCLUSION

Largely, this book is meant to highlight the aspects of musicianship that make up the foundation of the path to better. This is why anyone can pick up this book at any stage and keep it as reference to come back to, over and over and over again on different parts of their own musical journey.

The foundation of this path is deeply rooted in your purpose, which I assume may have something to do with music in some way. These roots expand out into the way you perceive music, and your awareness of how others perceive music. This is to include the sonic, rhythmic, and musical expectations of each band member, vocalist, and production team member.

Once this perception has been established, do not be afraid to renew its bases as you learn new things. The choices you make will change over time. When you embrace that growth, you will fall in love with the way you travel the path, the way the path changes, the difficulty of the path, the work it takes to begin on the path, and the journey itself.

This path, ladies and gentlemen, is musicianship. The admiration of the destination is what gets us started, but the love of the journey keeps us running, ever new and anticipating what lies ahead.

Now, where will your path take you?

There is finally a field guide for true musicianship. For the ones who want to take their musicality to new levels over and over again, this book is your answer. The 8 P's of Musicianship.



Dont'e is a musical entrepreneur with strong backgrounds in piano, keyboards, drums, bass guitar, and organ. He also is a music director, recording artist, and music producer. He's been a leader of his field for over 2 decades, and has always had deep passion for letting others experience music the way he does.

Born in 1991, Dont'e Carr learned to use his voice to sing before he even learned to speak. Since then he's acquired skills in the drums, keyboards, piano, organ, marching drums & percussion, bass guitar, acoustic and electric guitar, and many DAWs such as Reason, Logic, ProTools, Cubase, Nuendo, and many others. Because of the way he perceives music, he was able to pick up on instruments very quickly (for example, he taught himself the bass guitar in 3 weeks). He also has such a sharp ear for the functions of different compositions & their structures and orchestration, no matter the genre. This makes him a special type of composer, with the capability to emulate any genre with his creative process of writing or arranging.

In addition to his creative work and studio services, Dont'e is a hard working musician. He's widely known to learn new things swiftly and conceptualize clearly even on the fly, while maintaining the proper discernment to change when necessary. He's also been known to demonstrate the ability to adapt to new environments, and always exhibits staggering unprecedented productivity in client interactions, collaborations, and in partnerships. Because of his particular experience in the field of music, he's highly motivated to deliver professionalism that yields successful outcomes and lasting relationships.

Dont'e is obsessively dedicated to the art, science, and craft of fine acoustics & musicality. From the conception of a musical idea to the performance of the final product, he approaches every project as a unique opportunity to apply new theories and techniques to sound and music, forging the next generation in sound.