

Welcome

to the San Diego State University Winter Percussion Ensemble

Your staff for the 2011 season:

Bryan Ransom: Executive Director, SDSU Director of Athletic Bands.
Kendal Karch: Battery Caption Head, Design
Jared Andrews: Front Ensemble Arranger, Design.
Richard Legerrette: Front Ensemble Technician.
Anthony Porter: Snare Technician.
Lauryn Bremner: Bass Technician, Design.
Phil Kruse: Cymbal Technician.

Your staff has been carefully assembled and are some of the best people at what they do. As we hold you to very high standards, we also hold ourselves to very high standards. Helping our students grow as musicians and performers is our top priority. Don't hesitate to ask us questions.

Mission:

We're all assembed here because we believe that music has a significant intrinsic value in our lives. We believe that it's an important aspect of the individual, of our society, and of our world. In our humble opinion, a well executed piece of art demostrates one of the highest functions of human conciousness.

Our primary concern is extracting and distilling the collective experience of our staff to give our students the highest quality information. Our secondary concern is creating a show for our students to perform which is attainable yet challenges them to reach greater heights.

It is our mission to bring these elements together in such a way to create an environment that nutures growth as musicians, performers, and people. By holding our staff and students to very high standards, we prepare world class performers and pave our own road as a viable and successful ensemble.

Common Ground:

We've assembled people who are experienced, from that experience, developed their own philosophies regarding this activity. Because there are many ways to go about doing our activity, we have diversity within our very specialized field, and although people will apporach the activity from different angels, there is a set of objective realities that guide us.

We need an interpretation of these realities to bridge the gap between everyone's personal views and successfully weaving together a very complex arrangement. To this end we require that everyone adopt the guiding principals contained in this packet. We'll always leave room for individual style, but it is of chief importance that we lay down a mental ground work that everybody can adhere to.

With any philosophy, there will be proponents and opponents. To quote one of my favorite authors:

"I am not one who believes that it is any necessary virtue in the philosopher to spend his life defending a consistent position. It is surely a kind of spiritual pride to refrain from 'thinking out loud,' and be unwilling to let a thesis appear in print until are prepared to champion it to the death. Philosophy, like science, is a social function, for a man cannot think rightly alone, and the philosopher must publish his thought as much to learn from criticism as to contribute to the sum of wisdom. If, then, I sometimes make statements in an authoritative and dogmatic manner, it is for sake of clarity rather than from the desire to pose as an oracle."

Necessaries:

The worth of an ensemble is measured by the individual. Yes, we're looking for great musicians, but we're also concerned about the kind of people we allow into our organization. We want people who show up on time, people who are dedicated, people who are motivated by common purpose, and people who have positive interactions with others. Know that by your successful audition into the group, you are accepting the conditions contained herein. Not only technical specifications, but behavioral guidelines that ensure a prosperous existence for the entire group. Some of these conditions will be outlined in this packet, and some will be given vocally during the course of the season as needed.

About this packet:

The **Concepts** portion of this packet is designed to illustrate most of the fundamental ideas that you'll be dealing with throughout the season. Simply put, it is to let you see what we base our technical philosophy on.

Keep in mind that although these ideas are derived from real life, they are dissected to make them transcribable. This takes them out of any real context. Be sure that you go beyond just reading them. Apply them and see if they actually fit. What's important here is your ability think critically and independently. Make definite decisions about what you believe, but always be ready to change if something strikes a chord in you.

The Science lays out our physical technique and uses developmental exercises to model. It does not give any indications for a particular instrument, rather, it gives a physical process to follow which can be applied to any instrument. Our instructional staff will give you the bulk of information about instrument specific issues. While we expect you to be familiar with the information in this packet, we do not expect you to instantly change to, or know our technique if you've been taught something different. Your success is not entirely based on how much you play like 'us,' however, we do ask that you do your best to conform.

This section contains exercises that we refer to as developmental. Developmental exercises work on basic technique principals, and each one accomplishes a specific task. They are not extremely complicated as to avoid convoluting their purpose. When practicing these kinds of exercises, always bear in mind what function the exercises serves.

The Art is a compilation of etudes that allow each section in the battery to work on more complex issues that pertain to that section or commonly encountered ensemble issues. For these exercises, our goal is to increase your mental endurance and musical awareness. There is a lot of material to learn, but it is our hope to put you on a fast track to improve your reading, playing, and performing.

Ethics

by Lauryn Bremner

Mutuality: Encourage each other! Comments about an individual's playing are only to be constructive. Remember that what may not be a big deal to you may mean the world to someone else. If your brother or sister is having a hard time, build them up, don't bring them down. Unnecessarily harsh comments decrease morale, cause tension, cliques, and have adverse effects on the entire group.

Patience: Spend your time focusing on what you can be doing to get better. Contribute to the solution. Let staff be the commentaries, we can handle it. If someone's mistakes are directly affecting your performance, help them and give them time; it'll work out. Look at it this way, someone who tests your patience is giving you an opportunity to grow as a person.

Mercy: Forgive others. Don't hold grudges against someone. Things happen, but once it's over, let it go and move on. You holding onto something will subconsciously separate you from the line. Everyone has a right to feel whatever emotion comes. Whether you decide to react negatively or positively is your choice.

Courtesy: Respect each other's differences. Realize that we're all here for a common goal. We all want to experience something amazing. That's the only thing we NEED to have in common. Everything else is a bonus.

Authenticity: Approach conflict. If you need to say something to someone, and it's directed at a solution, go for it! Ignoring an issue creates a false sense of peace. We need to be open to comments from each other. Don't get butt hurt because someone is trying to make it better. That being said, frankness does not mean rudeness.

Honesty: If you have something to say and it fits into the criteria of authenticity, it logically follows that what you're saying has to be true. Make sure this is the case. When in doubt, don't say anything.

Humility: Your only job here is to earn the position given to you and try to set new standards for the people that come after you. We've all worked hard and sacrificed a lot to get here. Don't let that drive and passion for growth fade now that you have a spot. You represent so much more than yourself. Pride builds walls between people, while humility builds bridges. It isn't about thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less.

Confidentiality: We have a reputation to uphold. We need to appear to have everything under control at all times. People on the outside do not need to know our weaknesses, or see one member blasting another only for his or her own gratification. Confidentiality builds trust, and it allows for our weaknessess to become our strengths.

Dedication: There are countless hours of family time, free time, and school time put aside for this. Why? Because we love it, it's our passion! It's a chance to be a part of something bigger than ourselves. It affects the whole team when you're late to rehearsal or put us low on your list of priorities. Our time in the this group is very limited, take advantage of it.

Concepts

Time:

Since we deal with time everyday, we don't often think about the fact that time is an idea; a useful human construct.

When humans came to a consensus on dividing our days into hours, minutes, and seconds, we created a way to communicate with each other quickly and precisely. We do the same with music: break up the occurrence of a series of sounds into units, just like the day is divided up into hours, minutes, and seconds. This allows us to transcribe or explain a musical idea for others to pick up.

While time is a communication device, it is fundamentally a measuring device.

Generally, we marching percussionsists are especially adamant about dividing our time into *perfectly* spaced mathematical intervals. This means that not only do we have a consistent tempo, but every subdivision therein is also consistent.

Be aware that not everyone thinks this way. There are plenty of different styles of music whose groove and musicality would be lost if we applied our version of consistently divided time. Listen to a samba, sonata, or ballade, and you'll find that time is being bent and shaped on purpose. People are allowed to create their own version of time as we have, and use their experience to tell them if it sounds right.

More than just knowing about these differences, we have to know *why* we prefer one over the other. The answer is simple: Rhythmic clarity. Our activity is unique. We put on a show that has a lot of musical and physical demand with a very short amount of time to accomplish it. To achieve the level of execution desired, we need a rhythmic system that is not subjective. That is, a clearly defined, and easily understood way to approach rhythms such that everyone has a common set of rules to follow while they practice and perform.

It is our objective to apply the concept in a clear and consistent manner during rehearsal and individual practice time.

Time-Sense:

Aside from the concept of time, we need to deal with the actual sensation of time. When we say the words "groove" or "feel", what we are often talking about is a sense of consistent pulse inside you, which is then eminated by the instrument you play, and picked up by a listener.

We all posses a natural time-sense. That is, we are able to recognize and create a consistent pulse. The objective is to become more in tune with this internal pulse, and discover what you do to to actualize it. Some people hear it, some people feel it, and some people even visualize it. Discover which one you naturally gravitate to, but also work on using more than one.

Each method of learning music uses a different pathway in your body. You can strengthen your visual facilities by reading music, your auditory by learning by rote, and your kinesthetic by improvising. There are many ways to practice these different skills. These examples are just to show why varying your practice routine is beneficial. You'll learn much about what works best for you if you really tune in while you practice.

Suggestions:

Practicing with a metronome trains you in a very consise way. By giving you only an instantaneous point in time, the metronome helps you find a precise mathematical time center. Hit your downbeats at the exact same time as the sounding of the click. Think of it just as if you were aiming at a bullseye. Use your ears to fine tune your timing and always go for precision. It's really beneficial to cover a broad range of tempos when working on a particular issue.

Practicing with music develops your ability to derive tempo from a collage of sounds which may be based on a solid tempo origin but may not exhibit a clearly defined beat. Practicing this skill is invaluable to develop your sensibility as a musician. Since your actual performance will be with music, this is a great way to simulate actual performance conditions.

Energy

Like time, energy is an abstract reality. Many debate and hypothesize about it's properties, so we still can't say what is *absolutely* is. What we do know are the conclusions we intuitively draw from our everyday interactions with it.

What does it mean to us?

Understanding some basic things about energy will help clear the path to being able to play more expressively.

There are different classifications of energy; physical, chemical, atomic, etc. Physical objects have two physical energy states. They are potential and kinetic. Potential energy is the amount of energy an object posses, but is at the moment stable. Think of a rock on top of a hill. It's not moving, but if someone comes along and nudges it, it falls down releasing it's potential energy. Kinetic energy is the active release of potential energy. When the rock is falling, it's potential energy is now being realized as kinetic.

Kinetic energy is the energy contained in an object because of its motion. The volume and quality of a sound is determined by how much kinetic energy is applied to the drum. Two things come into consideration when talking about how much energy a stick has. First is how much mass the stick contains. Second is the velocity of the stick. (Velocity = *speed* + *direction*.) Mass and velocity determine how much energy an object has.

Here's the interesting part:

Kinetic Energy = (Mass x Velocity²) / 2

This means that, although a heavier stick will make it easier to produce a louder sound, the velocity of the stick is much more of a factor in the energy a stick has. To clarify, let's say that the mass of a stick is 10 and the velocity is 10. The energy released is 500. If we keep the same stick but increase the velocity to 20, the energy released is 2000. So even though we've only doubled the velocity, our energy payback is 4x. Tripling the velocity would've bought us an energy payback of 9x! Mass has a *linear* relationship to energy whereas velocity has an *exponential* relationship.

For this reason, we don't use height as *the* determining factor in volume. Height increases the *possibilty* of gaining more kinetic energy **only** if the extra time you have is used to increase the velocity of the stick. Therefore, we need a second factor, which we refer to as "touch."

Technique:

We'll need a set of instructions that provide an applicable method to harness energy in a useful way. This is where technique comes in.

The basic maxim that we base technique on is: if you apply energy to an object it will move in the direction you pushed. It may seem a succinct and obvious conclusion, but the need to have it in mind is very important because it's implications become multiplied in real life.

Technique is formulated by observing how an object behaves in particular situations. From these observations we can make assumptions about how the object will act in the future. From these assumptions we can then create a set of instructions that give us tools to manipulate sticks in a predicatble, repeatable, and reliable manner. Over the time that the art of drumming has evolved, many different and sophisitcated methods have been developed. Without this highly developed technique, it would be very difficult to play the complex and fast rhythms we have today.

As we drum, we have to pay attention to all the forces acting on our body. We want to autonomously take care of as many of the physical issues of drumming as possible. The more you frontload practicing proper technique, the less you'll have to actively think about it in the future, which frees you up to focus on other things.

A good example of this is running. When we run, our brains have a ton of information to take in, and while some of it may be taken care of conciously, by an early time in your life, most is being taken care of unconciously. Think about it. You rarely trip unless something you didn't see was in your way. You don't think about how to walk or run, you just know how to do it. You unconciously understand all the forces acting on your body because of all the practice you've had walking and running around.

Aesthetics:

As much of a science as this activity is, it's also an art, and everything about it, even the 'look,' should be attended to. In an activity with many different styles, technique has become the focus of much debate. While there is no right way, there is a scientific sensibility. If you follow the guidelines in this book, the way your hands look will be taken care of, for the most part. There is always room for individual style, of which I'm not aware of any real scientific way to describe, nor would I want to describe it if there were. When it comes to knowing when something is 'cool,' our intuition is the best judge.

The Science

Basic TECHNIQUE

This portion of the book defines our technique using three exercises as models for the four basic types of strokes.

The four kinds of strokes:

Natural:

Natural stroke simply means that after you've thrown the stick at the drum, you let it bounce back up to the desired height.

Down:

Everything about this stroke is the same as a natural stroke except how you end it. After you've hit the drum you stop the motion of the stick.

Up:

Actually refers to a portion of a stroke. When you're playing at a low height and you want to go to a greater height, use this technique.

Double:

This is a specialized stroke that is used for double strokes. It can also be used for other kinds of multiple strokes.

Eights

Focus: Natural strokes and down strokes.

Technique:

1. **Positive phase.** Starting from resting position, use your wrist to bring the stick up through the positive phase, leading with the bead of the stick. To ensure full extension of the wrist, the stick should stay very close to the palm, but do not squeeze. The stick should not pass vertical at the apex of the positive phase. Be sure that the stick takes a path that is perpendicular to the playing surface. You will use this "prep stroke" or initial positive phase almost every time you play.

2. Negative phase. Imagine throwing a ball. When you want it to travel a long distance, you give it an initial burst of energy and then you release it. You know that because of inertia, your initial application of energy will carry the ball through space until other forces such as gravity, air friction, or your friend stop it. The same principal applies when executing this phase. Throw the stick towards the playing surface using your wrist. If you throw it in the right direction, it needs nothing else to guide it to its destination. The last stroke of each hand will be a down stroke. To achieve a good down stroke, hold on to the stick after it contacts the playing surface only enough to stop the kinetic energy but not the vibrational energy. Once you master the down stroke you will find that it is not so much a "squeeze" as much as it is retaining the shape of your hand and using it as a shock absorber.

3. **Positive phase.** After the stick hits the playing surface, it naturally wants to bounce back, hence the term "natural stroke". Avoid interfering with the stick until it reaches the apex. Let it bounce and bring your entire hand with it. Your hand should look like the end of phase 1. Repeat from step 2.

Notes:

Interference is caused when your hand squeezes the stick. It adversely affects the sound quality you produce by dampening vibration. The more the stick vibrates, the better the sound. Listen for a tone while you are playing. Take note where the stick stops vibrating during the stroke, and work to decrease the amount of dampening you apply to the stick.

Bucks

Focus: Up strokes.

Technique: the sequence here is accent, tap.

1. Positive phase. See Eights number 1.

2. Negative phase. This is a down stroke, which is needed to achieve the proper height for the tap. Make sure to stay relaxed and do not over-squeeze.

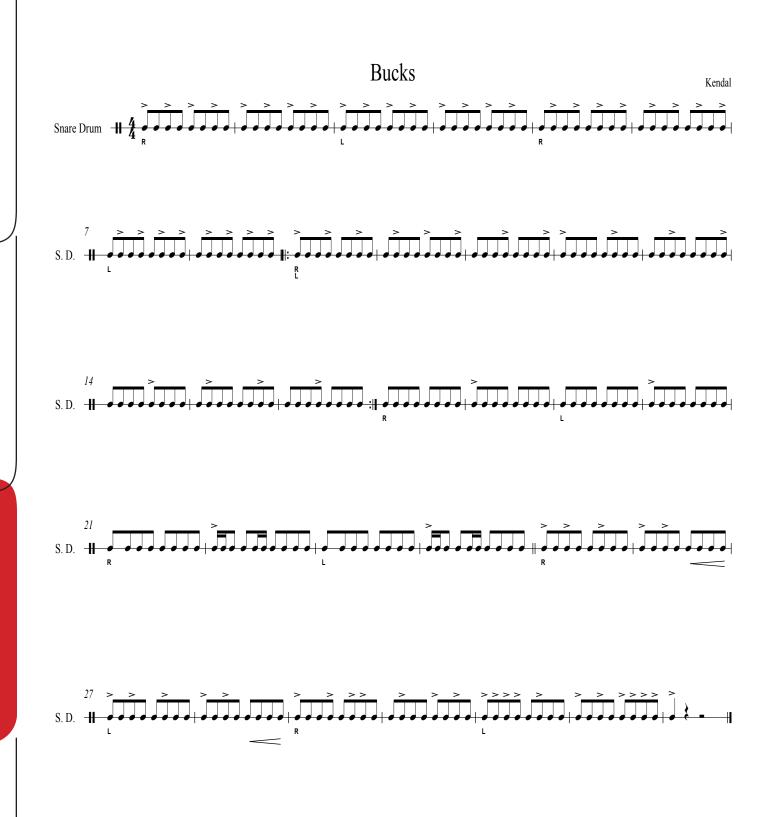
3. **Positive phase.** Same as step 1. Raise the stick to tap height. Lead with the bead of the stick.

4. Negative phase. Execute tap. This is actually a small natural stroke. Make sure not to squeeze. The interference rule applies even if the height is low. The goal of this phase is to produce a full tap sound. Utilize the weight and vibration of the stick to achieve a good sound.

5. **Positive phase.** After the tap is played, there is not enough kinetic energy in the stick for it to bounce back up to accent height. You need to "manually reset" the stick to the height required by the accent. This is the up stroke. Lead with the bead of the stick. Repeat from step 2.

Notes:

A few issues arise with this exercise. First, it is difficult to keep rhythm consistent through changing height. Second, it is difficult to achieve a consistent quality of sound through changing height. Third, it's easy to play stiff using this technique. Stay relaxed, there should be a bounce to your playing. When playing the accent, it is natural for the momentum of the positive phase to pull up your arm. A little bit of arm is actually necessary for a relaxed look and feel. Just be sure that the wrist is the primary motivator of motion.



Double Beat

Focus: Specialized Moeller stroke. (Double Stroke)

Technique:

- 1. Positive phase. See Eights number 1.
- 2. Negative phase. Hit the drum.

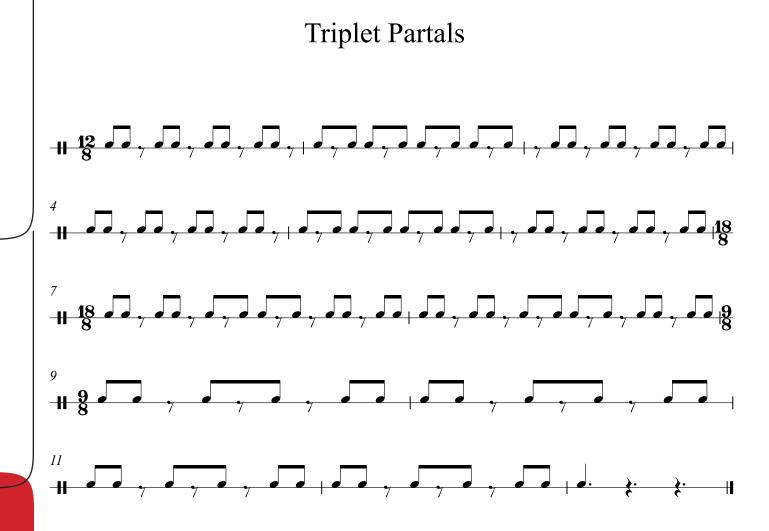
3. **Positive phase.** When the stick bounces, keep the wrist down and let the bounce of the stick open your fingers. Practice the sequence up to this point until it is mastered before moving on.

4. Negative phase. At the end of the previous sequence your hand should be open and the stick should be angled up so that there is space between the stick and your palm. To complete this phase, snap your fingers closed while you lift at the joint of your wrist.

5. **Positive phase.** The start of this phase actually starts while the end of the last phase is still occurring. Lift from the elbow and let the wrist drag along. This causes the characteristic whipping motion of the Moeller stroke. Repeat from step 2.

Notes:

The Moeller stroke has many different uses. It is useful here because it allows you to produce two notes using one arm stroke. This facilitates efficiency by dividing the workload between the wrist and fingers, power because it involves the arm, speed because it involves the fingers. All factors combined give you a great sense of control over the stick without an excess amount of effort. Once you become proficient with this technique, you'll find that the power you use to crank out a roll is sharply focused, and you'll have an increased control over your diddle interpretation.



Intermediary TECHNIQUE

Here, we'll put together basic strokes to create intermediary techniques that are commonly seen in rudimental music. These strokes are the result of combining our basic strokes from the previous section.

Think of basic technique as primary colors. In order to play more sophisticated phrases of music, we'll combine these primary colors to make different hues.

Common Strokes:

Roll:

When playing a roll, we use the specialized moeller stroke.

Single:

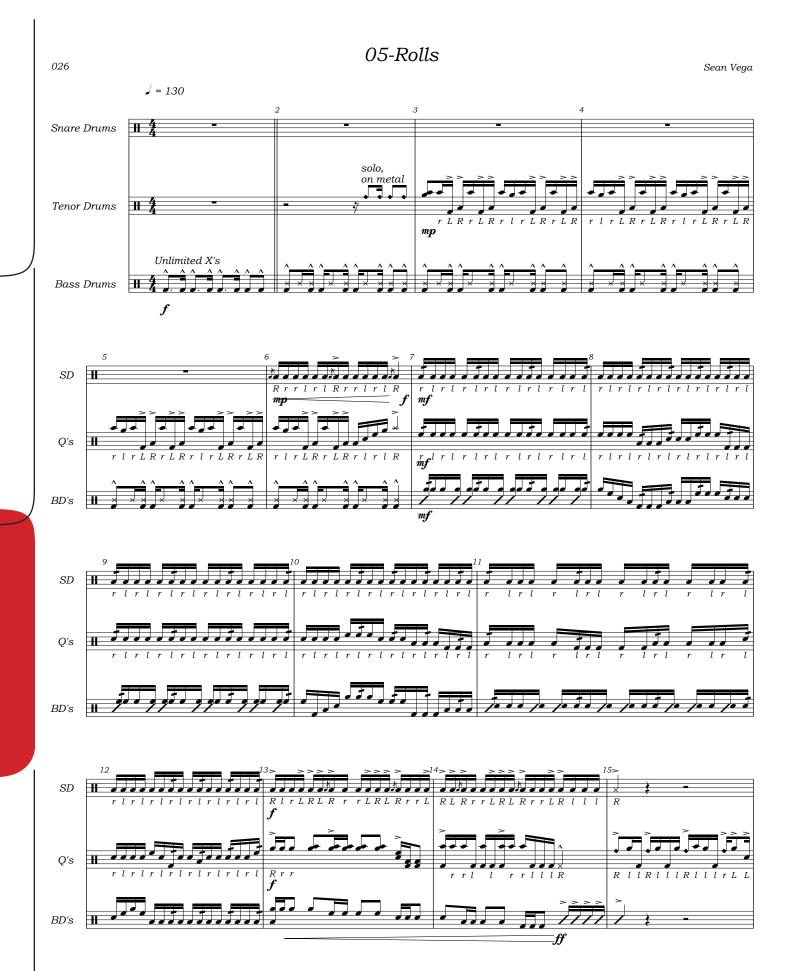
There are many ways to play single strokes. Speed and volume will determine the best way to go about it.

Flam:

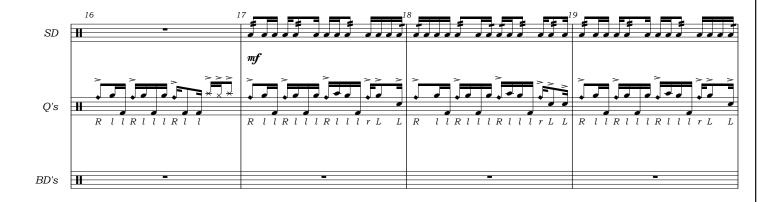
Flams are an integral part of rudimental percussion. They add a unique color, and are probably one of the most difficult elements of drumming to execute well.

Threes:

This category includes three and sometimes four strokes per hand. These use the same specialized moeller technique that we use to execute doubles.

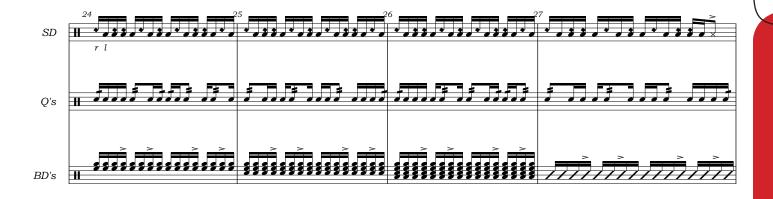


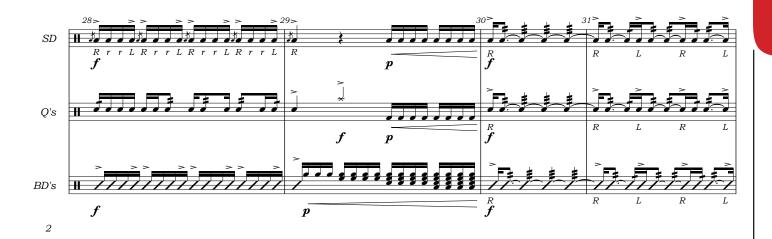
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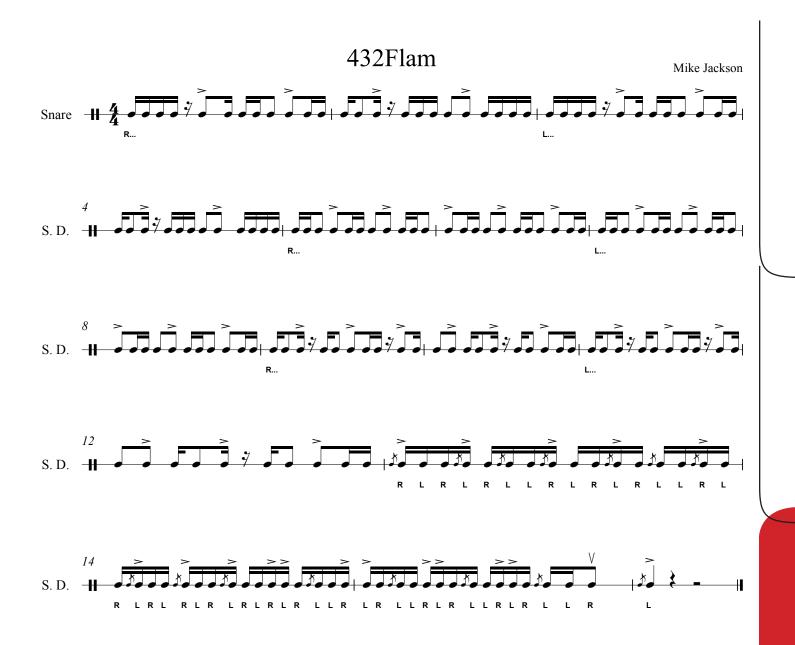


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The Art

Etudes

These exercises are designed to work on issues specific to the snare drum by itself, and as it relates to the ensemble.

Etude no. 1

A single hand workout. Works on hand strength and endurance, transitioning smoothly from hand-to-hand, and lining up the ensemble sound by way of a repetitive and easily discernible rhythm.

24

As the name implies, works on 24th note value rhythms. Works on legato technique at high speed and varied volumes. Contains both a dotted quarter and dotted eighth note feel.

Triplet Breakdown

An expansion and contraction of triplet phrases. The exploded phrases emphasize the relationship to the downbeat, while the compressed phrases bring you back to real life. Develops both speed and accuracy.

Midnight Oil

Continuing education on time signature and foot-fall.

Flams Are For Kids

Yup.... Flams. Lots of 'em.

Midnight On Blast

Single 5 and herta exercise.

Considerations:

1.

It's a good idea to work your way back and check if the basic ideas covered in the previous sections of this book show through when dealing with complex phrases. You'll often find that a problem with an advanced technique has its roots in a fundamental issue.

2.

Practice all techniques used for fast playing, slowly. This is an effective way to build proper muscle memory. If you rush through the learning phase of a technique, you may develop an irregularity. Practicing techniques at a slow tempo allows you to see what's going on and pinpoint irregularities before they become habit.

3.

Practice all techniques used for fast playing, fast-ly. Fast techniques are useless unless you practice them for their purpose... to go fast. Drumming is just like any other muscle building; put in the work.

4.

Practice all techniques used for playing anything, relaxed. Do not be flaccid, but do not over squeeze. The key is to find a balance between how much control you need over the stick and how much to let the stick do the work.

5.

Timing is everything. The more complex patterns become, the more we rely on grouping to remember them. For instance, a book report is a paradiddle with a drag on the first and last note and a flam on the third note. We group that combination of stuff and call it a book report so that it's easy to remember. The problem arises when we think of it only as a 'book report' and not a rhythm. Always think about what rhythm you are playing.

6.

Technique is information regarding how to move at distinct points in time. There is no way to completely document a set of movements since covering all points would require an infinite set of instructions. Beyond analyzation and rules, developing your technique comes from apprenticing those who are experienced and and coming up with your own way of doing things based within reasonable parameters.

7.

Repetition of good technique will give you good technique. No matter how awkard it may feel to change how you play, if you keep good form your priority, it will eventually feel normal.

8.

If anything from this book sticks to you, hopefully it's this: Nothing is better for improving your skill than repetition.

A student of Bruce Lee asked, "Master, how may I improve my kick?" to which the master replied, "Go throw 500 kicks!"

Etude no. 1



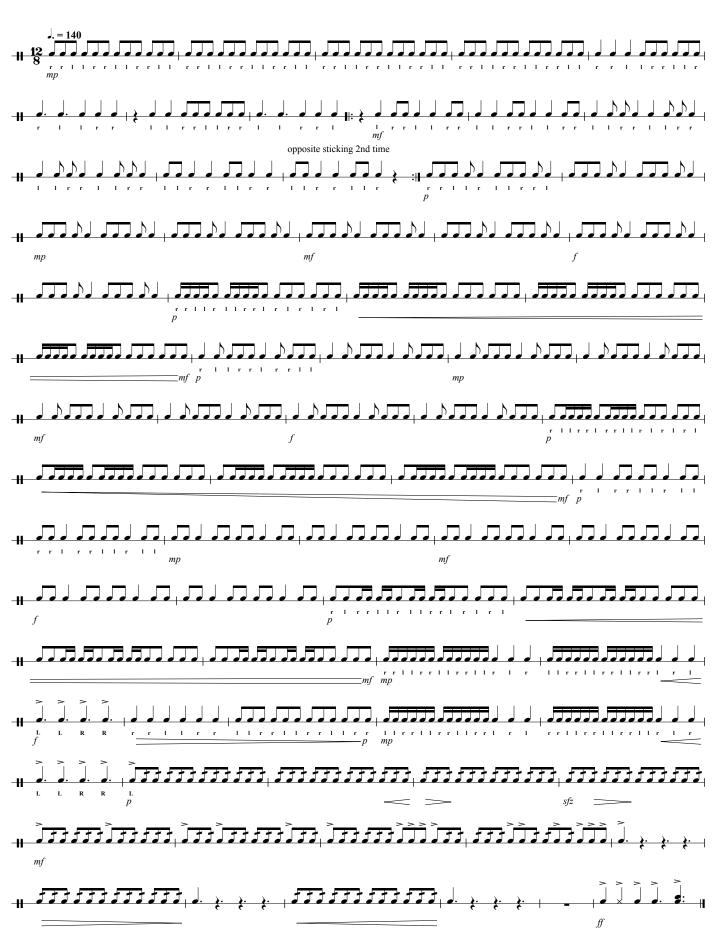


Snare



2011 Candescent Music

Triplet Breakdown



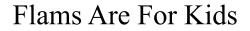
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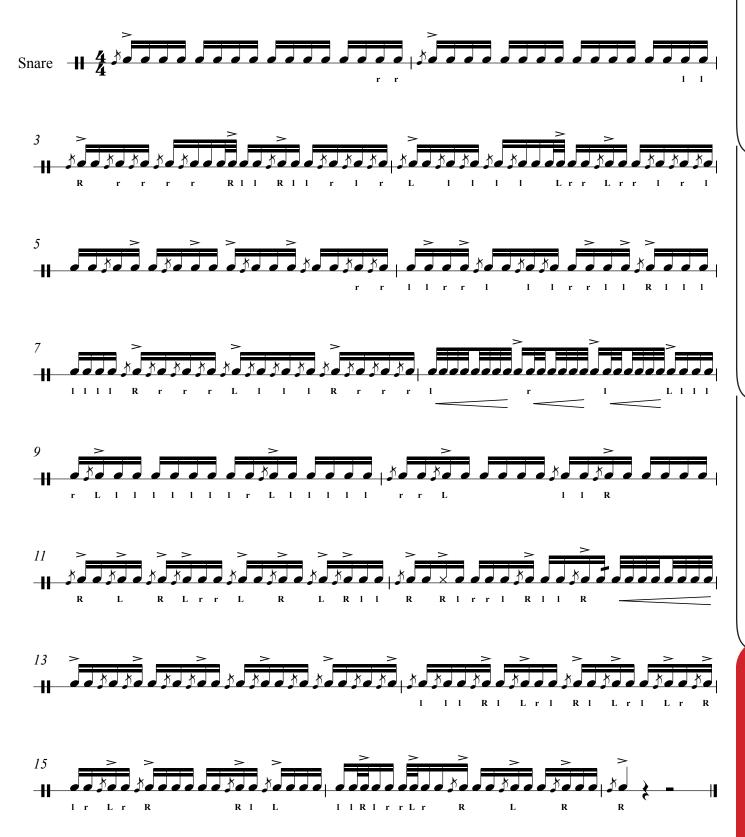
Snare

Midnight Oil



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Midnight On Blast



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San Diego State University Winter Percussion

2011