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INTRODUCTION BY VIC FIRTH

I enthusiastically endorse this wonderful book, *Drum Lessons with George Lawrence Stone*, written by the great drum instructor Barry James and my good friend Joe Morello.

I had the privilege of taking lessons from George L. Stone, and he was truly a great inspiration. In all my years of teaching, the bible and the backbone of my teaching material were based on Mr. Stone's classic book, *Stick Control*. This new book is a truly accurate training guide and complete reference source for all serious-minded drummers who understand the importance of acquiring strong stick technique. Here is *Stick Control 2*.

While reading through these pages and playing the exercises, I had the feeling I was actually sitting in George Stone's studio, taking another lesson with the "master." It's no wonder that PAS inducted George Stone into its Hall of Fame, and that *Modern Drummer* magazine named *Stick Control* number one in their list of "The 25 Best Drum Books."

Finally, here is a book that is not written by someone who studied with someone who studied with Mr. Stone. Barry James and Joe Morello actually studied with George Stone—you are studying the techniques developed by Mr. Stone first-hand.

While *Stick Control* is arguably the best drum technique book of our time, this companion is sure to become the most important drum technique book for present and future drummers. Study it! Use it! You'll play better! And, you can believe, "This is set in *stone*."

Vic Firth is a revered name in the drumming community. The company he founded is the leading manufacturer of percussion accessories in the world. Before he founded the company in 1963, Vic taught percussion in the Boston area. He received a bachelor's degree and an honorary doctorate in music from the New England Conservatory of Music. His company supports and endorses many of the best professional drummers of our time.

BACKGROUND

Born in 1886, George Lawrence Stone was the son of drum teacher and drum manufacturer George Burt Stone. In addition to studying drums and xylophone from his father, he also worked in the shop where his dad made some of the best snare drums of that period. George Lawrence said, "If I have had my share of success in teaching others, its origin was in the way my father taught me, and in his counsel, so often repeated: 'If you accept a pupil you accept a responsibility.' In one way or another you've got to go through with them. There's no alibi if you don't."

George Lawrence also studied with Harry A. Bower and Frank E. Dodge, and studied music theory at the New England Conservatory of Music, where he eventually taught. Stone joined the musicians union at age 16, becoming its youngest member. By 1910 he was a xylophonist on the Keith Vaudeville Circuit and played timpani and bells with the Boston Festival Orchestra. He also played in the pit of Boston's Colonial Theatre under the baton of Victor Herbert, and was a member of both the Boston Opera Company and the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

After the death of George B. Stone in 1917, George Lawrence took over his father's drum factory, and became the director of the Stone Drum and Xylophone School in Boston. He also wrote articles on drumming technique for *International Musician* and *Jacobs' Orchestra Monthly*. In 1933 he became a founding member of the National Association of Rudimental Drummers (NARD), and served as its president for fifteen years. With the publication of *Stick Control*, George Lawrence became a much sought-after teacher for drummers such as Gene Krupa, Buddy Rich, Sid Catlett, George Wettling, and Lionel Hampton.

Active as a teacher through the 1940s, '50s, and early '60s, Stone taught percussion at Boston University. He is considered one of the first drum technique builders of the 20th century, and he felt it was very important to make music. His theory was that you can be a sculptor by virtue of owning a hammer and chisel, but you don't really sculpt anything until you have the technique to do it. Likewise, before you can do anything "shapely" in music, you've got to have the hands to do it with.

Over the next five decades, other notable Stone students, such as Joe Morello, Vic Firth, and myself, spread the word about Stones' incredible drumming method—teaching it to thousands of drumming enthusiasts.

George Lawrence Stone died on November 19, 1967, at the age of 81. In his eulogy, published in *The Ludwig Drummer*, William F. Ludwig, Sr. said, "George was always helpful to everyone; his motto was 'Service before self.' May he rest in the satisfaction that he did his best for the percussion field for many, many years."

JOE MORELLO ON GEORGE LAWRENCE STONE

I started studying with Mr. Stone in the 1940s, when I was still a teenager. I always looked forward to my trips into Boston. Mr. Stone had a dry, New England sense of humor. The time he spent with each student was all business until they got it right; then he would give a student just enough praise to get them motivated to go home and practice. Mr. Stone inspired me at every lesson and showed me the techniques to creative musical expression. *Stick Control* helped me strengthen my hands, and Mr. Stone also showed me how to apply his technique to the drumset! My books, *Master Studies* and *Master Studies, 2*, are my dedicated follow-up to what the master taught me. He called me his “star student,” and for that I am forever grateful.

Larry Stone’s basic studies were all about a natural approach to drumming. He insisted that there shouldn’t be any tension in your body while playing drums. From handholds to the normal rebounding of the sticks, every aspect of playing drums should be relaxed and stress-free.

Stone was also a master of the rudiments. Besides his technique books, *Stick Control* and *Accents and Rebounds*, he also wrote a book called *Military Drum Beats for School and Drum Corps*, and rearranged the famous *Dodge Drum Chart*. He would have me play all 26 rudiments as a warm-up before each lesson. At that time there were only 26 rudiments, but he referred to his book, *Stick Control*, as “A Book of Rudiments.” That, it is. You can play the exercises in the book open to closed to open, like a standard rudiment, if you want a challenge. Of course, these exercises, while intended for hand

development, can also be played with your feet to build pedal control. On the drumset, you might also try playing all the “rights” on one surface while playing the “lefts” on another. Or, “rights” on the bass drum and “lefts” on the snare. Use your imagination.

Finally, I want to express my gratitude to Barry James. He should be given all the credit for writing this book and bringing the teachings of George Lawrence Stone to a new generation of drummers. I hope I was able to help Barry and share my recollection of the lessons I had with the master drum teacher of our lifetime. Still this book, as originally intended, belongs to George Lawrence Stone. These lessons and lectures are his. In the following pages you will get to know and study with the “master,” George (Larry) Stone.

Joe Morello was a jazz drummer best known for his work with the Dave Brubeck Quartet. He was particularly noted for playing in the unusual time signatures employed by that group in such pieces as “Take Five” and “Blue Rondo à la Turk.” Popular for their work on college campuses during the 1950s, Brubeck’s group reached new heights with Morello. During his career, Joe appeared on over 120 albums, authored several drum books, including *Master Studies*, and also made instructional videos. Joe was the recipient of many awards, including *Playboy* magazine’s best drummer award for seven years in a row, and *DownBeat* magazine’s best drummer award five years in a row. He was elected to the *Modern Drummer* magazine Hall of Fame in 1988, the Percussive Arts Society Hall of Fame in 1993, and was the recipient of Hudson Music’s first TIP (Teacher Integration Program) Lifetime Achievement award.

BARRY JAMES...ABOUT THIS BOOK

The idea for this book started when I attended a clinic by Joe Morello, sponsored by Danny and Beth Gottlieb. After the clinic, Joe and I spoke of our affection for our drum teacher, George Lawrence Stone (or, as Joe called him, Larry Stone). Mr. Stone, we agreed, had trained us well for the careers we both enjoyed.

The discussion turned, of course, to Stone's classic book, *Stick Control*. Joe and I have had the same experience over the years of having to answer questions from students and drum teachers alike—"How do I play such and such page in *Stick Control*?"

Stone once told me "he never intended to publish his many exercises in a book." They were originally written as "handouts" for his private students. With encouragement from Bill Ludwig and others, we now enjoy what is referred to as "The Bible of Drumming."

Still, we are dealing with a book without any explanation on how to play these exercises. Joe jokingly said, "We should write a book on how to play the book." And, that was the beginning of an adventure that took many years and grew into a friendship with the great Joe Morello—one that I will treasure forever.

First, we agreed the teaching should be in Stone's own words, and so I started researching everything I could find that George Stone had written. Fortunately, there was an abundance of articles in the archives of several publications, and so I was able to collect many of them. We culled through Stones' teachings and had regular phone conversations regarding the best way to present these "Lessons with George Lawrence Stone." I also found that Joe Morello must have had a photographic memory. He would remember the details of his drum lessons with Stone, even 60 years later.

When Joe passed away in March of 2011, I put the half-completed manuscript on a shelf for a few years. But, with the urging of friends and family, I decided to finish this book as a tribute to both my beloved drum teacher, George Lawrence Stone, and my friend Joe Morello.

Here, then, are the teachings of George Lawrence Stone.

Barry James' musical career spans over 60 years as a percussionist with jazz groups, show bands, and symphony orchestras. He is recognized as a nationally respected teacher. Many of his students now perform professionally around the world. Barry has taught percussion instruments using The Stone Method throughout his teaching career.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank all who gave of their time, knowledge, and encouragement to make this book possible.

First, I want to thank Joe Morello. His friendship, dedication, and incredible knowledge of all things Larry Stone were invaluable. To my friends Adrian Zvorych and Dean Slocum, great musicians and scholars who helped me with the initial production of this book. To Stone Percussion Books LLC, Barbara Haines, and the Stone family, thanks for keeping your grandfather's life and work alive. Danny Gottlieb stood behind and encouraged this work for many years. My appreciation to Dave Black for his insightful final editing of this book; and to Alfred for bringing the teachings of Mr. Stone to new and future generations of drummers. Thanks to Tom Cook, webmaster. To the American Federation of Musicians for allowing me access to the articles by George Lawrence Stone published in their *International Musician* magazine.

And, a special thanks to my many students and family for their help, encouragement, and gentle prodding that helped get this book finished. I owe you all. A special thanks to my wife and best friend, Elaine, my sister and brother-in-law, Gayle and Bob, Mom, Betty, Chris and Susan, Tim, Barry, and Dan. And, to my grandchildren, Brian, Kayla, Richard, Michael, Joshua, and little Chris.

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM GEORGE LAWRENCE STONE

There was a poster on Mr. Stone's studio wall, inconspicuous, yet plain enough for all who entered to read. It delineated the three progressive steps for either the student or professional to follow in attaining maximum stick control. The message is reprinted below.

Progressive Steps Towards Stick Control

1. **Precision**, gained through slow motion study and practice.
2. **Endurance**, through endless repetition of figures at normal tempos.
3. **Speed**, and even this practiced below capacity and not until fully warmed up.

"Rhythm is the foundation of all music. The drum, above all others, is the rhythm-producing instrument. Without comprehension and control of rhythmic structure, the drummer cannot maintain tempo and interpret precisely intricate rhythmic patterns. And, if anyone finds it impossible to do two things at once, they should never try to become a drummer. For this individual is constantly over their head, in one way or another, every time they play."—*George Lawrence Stone*

The George L. Stone drum method has become world-renowned for over 80 years since the publication of his classic book, *Stick Control*. It is said that Stone's techniques are considered the gold standard for those who want to master their drumming skills. Indeed, many of the best percussionists in the world have credited Stone's method for their success.

THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF THE STONE METHOD

Always play in a relaxed, comfortable, and loose fashion. Control of a drumstick begins with a muscularly relaxed action. The sticks should move as if they were a natural extension of your hands. The shoulders, upper arms, forearms, wrists, and fingers should be free to move as needed to produce various dynamics and tempo. Your limbs should feel like well-oiled hinges moving gracefully and smoothly without allowing any tension whatsoever to enter your body.

The Power Stroke Versus the Rebound Stroke

While there is certainly a place for the "power stroke," particularly for *fff* (loud) musical phrasing, Stone preferred the rebound stroke. Like bouncing a rubber ball, the drumstick, when dropped onto a surface, will rebound back up to you. There is a force of nature at work here. For every action there is a reaction. Using this concept, you only need to control the hit and to rebound with the proper handhold. The very nature of a looser hold will help relieve tension. Stone also suggested practicing in a continuous motion while "bouncing" the sticks. This can be accomplished first by using the wrists as well as the fingers. Next, work out your rebounding skills using your arms, as well as your shoulders. Stone believed that a drummer should not keep their arms still and rely only on the wrists and fingers. He taught a composite movement for the basic strokes in which all the parts (shoulders, arms, wrists, and fingers) moved together.

Placement of the Snare Drum

Stone suggested that the snare drum, whether you're in a standing position or performing on a drumset, should be placed approximately 1 to 2 inches below "belly-button" height. In addition, the snare drum should be flat (if playing matched grip), or tilted so the higher side of the drum is on the left side (for a right-handed drummer) using traditional grip. This will allow the sticks to strike at the same angle, regardless of your favored grip. Next, Stone taught the importance of playing at the same volume with both hands; be sure the distance between your strokes is precise and even, and control your strokes to get a consistent volume and rhythm between the hands.

Many Ways to Study *Stick Control*

Stone referred to his *Stick Control* book as "a book of 1,000 rudiments." And, because of his approach teaching from his book, many thousands of exercises can actually be produced.

First and foremost, practice each exercise 20 times. This will build your endurance and muscle memory. If you make a mistake, go back and start over.

Next, Stone had his students play each page of exercises three times. For instance, we would be assigned to practice page 5 (first for accuracy). Then, at the next lesson, we would go on to page 6 (for accuracy) but would again practice page 5 (this time for speed). The tempo used to replay page 5 would depend on our comfort level. We would always use a metronome to not only check our accuracy, but to help push up the tempos as we progressed. Then, on the third week, we would go on to page 7 for accuracy (while practicing page 6 for speed), and then practice page 5 once again, but this time with our feet (see below, “Speed on the Pedals”). So, as you can see, each page was practiced for three consecutive lessons. First, for accuracy, next for speed, and then again to train our feet. This process was consistent throughout the entire *Stick Control* book.

Additionally, students were encouraged to play each exercise in the mode of a standard rudiment (for example, open to closed to open). We would start slowly, then gradually and evenly get faster until we reached our fastest ability. We would hold that tempo for at least 10 seconds and then gradually and evenly slow back down to the beginning tempo. This is a great endurance builder.

For extra practice, Stone would have his students combine the exercises in *Stick Control* by turning two-measure exercises into four-measure exercises, and then those four-measure exercises into eight-measure exercises, etc. For example, we would take page 5 and combine exercise 1 with exercise 13. Or, exercise 1 with exercise 24, etc. You get the idea! By combining the many exercises in the book, thousands of possibilities can be produced. Stone would also have his advanced students purchase a second copy of *Stick Control* so they could open any page in the first book and, beside it, open any page in the second book. By using this method, we could combine any exercise on any page in one book with any exercise on any page in the second book.

Speed on the Pedals

Many of today’s drummers are arming their drumsets with two bass drums. This allows them to play rolls and other rudimental flourishes with the bombastic effects only double bass drums can produce. The question then becomes, “How can you train your feet to perform as well as your hands?”

The number one method is through concentrated practice on the action of the foot itself, by operating your pedal at various tempos for an extended period each day. In case a daily diet of several thousand thuds from your bass drum disturbs your neighbors, tap your foot similarly on the floor.

It is important to set up your bass drums so that both feet reach the pedals comfortably, without stretching them out or crowding them in too close. It is generally understood that the spring on your pedals should be loose rather than tight.

The muscles employed in pedaling are neither accustomed to, nor prepared for, the terrific bursts of speed called for in modern up tempos. Consequently, special practice routines are called for.

Cramps in the involved muscles are quite common in the beginning, but an occasional gentle massage when the going gets tough will aid in “rubbing the cramps out.”

Some of the current two-bass drum experts have found they can attain great two-foot speed by playing exercises primarily intended for the hands (drumsticks) with their feet. Try “footing” instead of “sticking.” And, practice both with your heels down on the pedal board and then heels up with the balls of your feet.

Try the exercises in *Stick Control* and see what I mean. Obviously, not all the exercises in the book can be played with your feet, specifically those pertaining to closed (buzz) rolls. Most of the other *Stick Control* exercises, however, are doable with your feet.

Now you can see how *Stick Control* holds an infinite number of possibilities. For this reason, I strongly suggest that students master these techniques.

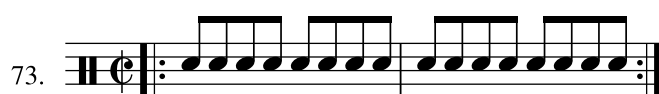
NOTE: The lessons and lectures presented in this book are “composites” of George Stone’s actual lessons. Stone would spend an hour lesson detailing a particular aspect of a given subject. He would then continue his teaching of this subject at the next lesson (or even a month later). Here, we are combining his teachings on a given subject into one or more sections of our composite lessons. Therefore, it’s best that you go through this book slowly and methodically. These combined lessons are not intended to be studied in one sitting. Take on each aspect of each lesson, and don’t bite off more than you can chew.

NOTE: Stone hand wrote all the drum exercises for his published articles and student handouts. Unfortunately, due to their age and condition, we were not able to use all of these handwritten exercises. We did, however, reproduce them exactly as originally written using music software. And, we have included some of Stone’s handwritten exercises in the back of the book for you to see.

NOTE: Over the years drummers have speculated if there are more single-beat combinations than just the 72 exercises on pages 5, 6, and 7 of *Stick Control*. Yes, in fact, there are. On the next page, (thanks to Joe Morello) you’ll find a fourth page of single-beat combinations that Stone intended to be a handout for his private students.

Single-Beat Combinations...The Missing Page

Read downward



R R L R R L L L L R L R R L L



L L R L R R L L R R L R L L R R



R L R L R L R R L R L L R R L L



L R L R L R L L R L R R L L R R



R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R



L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L



R L R L R L L R L L R L L R L L



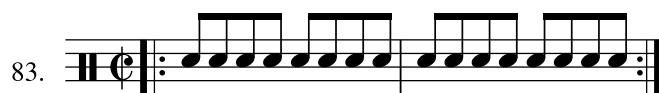
L R L R L R R L R R L R R L R R



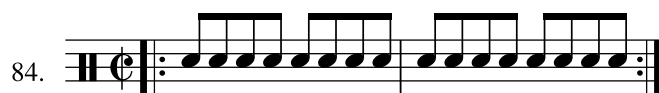
L L R L R L L L R R R L L R R R



R R L R L R R R L L L R R L L L



R L R L L R L R L R L R R L R L



L R L R R L R L R L R L L R L R



R R L L R L R L L L R R L R L R



R R L R L R L R R R L R R L R L



R L R L R L L R L R L L L R L R



R L L R R L R R L R L R L L R L



R L R L R L R L L R L R L R L R



L R L L R L R L L R L L R L R L



L L R L R L R L L R L R L R L L



R L R R L R R L L R L L R L R



R R L R L R L R R R L R L L R R



R L R L L R R L R L L R L R L R



R L L R L R L R R L L R R L R L



R R R R L L L L R L R R L L L L