

It's Your Move

Motions and Emotions

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*To Al Miller, for his unending dedication to drumming and
his unselfish desire to share it constantly,
and to all the past great drummers who experimented by trial and error and found the natural
path. They allowed us to learn from them and, ultimately, to open our own doors of expression!*

FOREWORD

At the millennium, Dom Famularo maintains his status as soloist extraordinaire, world- traveling percussion ambassador, and inspirational motivator to drummers everywhere. To those of us on the inside, it's clear how much Dom has had to do with the recent explosion in interplay between hands and feet. His skill is all the more surprising when you know he was about 30 when he started with the double-bass technique.

It's Your Move contains many of Dom's finest inspirations. I'm partial to the unison, or "togetherness" exercises. Obviously, there is much excellent practice material here. Even more unique is his exploration of the emotional side of drum-set artistry. I think that Dom has succeeded in communicating, on these pages, a large part of the pure joy and exuberance of his "big game" on the instrument.

Dom started originally as a member, with his brothers, of a successful family band. By his early teens, he was a most effective music player. Soon he began serious study with Al Miller, a Long Island legend. Later, he was lucky enough to get lessons with the great Joe Morello (of Dave Brubeck fame).

In the mid-seventies, Dom spent a year in Los Angeles, where he was taught formally by Colin Bailey (he of the fabulous right foot), and informally by the king of Hollywood jazz drumming, Shelly Manne.

On his return to New York, Dom was soon successfully leading a progressive, fusion-style band. At the same time, he began to perform drum demonstrations in stores, schools, and colleges. Soon, his dramatic soloing and potent personality qualities combined to move him away from Long Island and into the drum-clinic "big time." He supported both Billy Cobham and Simon Phillips, not taking a back seat to either of these superstars. His decade-long relationship with Sabian Cymbals has accelerated his touring: Oslo to Tel Aviv; Buenos Aires to Beijing; Cairo to Montreal. At home, Dom maintains a steady, if often interrupted, teaching schedule.

The emotional and inspiring part of drumming is fascinating to Dom, as is his dedication to the progress and welfare of all who play the instrument.

*If you're hurting or in trouble,
Dom comes hurtling on the double,
And he'll stick with you
Until the problems end!**

—Jim Chapin

* From Jim Chapin's CD, Songs, Solos, Stories. For more information visit www.domfamularo.com.

INTRODUCTION

It's Your Move is about achieving your maximum potential as a player. This book is the culmination of questions that have been asked of me globally during private teaching for 30 years, many masterclasses, clinics, large drum expos, and almost 40 years of professional playing. The exercises contained herein are vignettes to spark fun and creativity. This book is for your hands and feet, on pad and drum set. It will help you better understand the ability of your hands and feet. The title of this book means two things. First, it's up to you. Your desire to be a better player is like a chess game. I offer the seed of an idea, a "first move." Now react: it's *your* move. It is your choice alone. Second, it's your *movement*--the way you move your body when you play. The techniques in this book will challenge you to look at every detail of the way you play drums and *question it*. Drumming is a dance composed of our outward physical motions, which project our inner expression and emotion, hence the subtitle *Motions and Emotions*. Every drummer must find their own movement that suits the music they play and their own personal artistic expression.

During my early studies, I accumulated a lot of information and developed these exercises as a path to the capability of full artistic expression on the drums. These are not stylistic exercises; rather, they are applicable to all styles. My teachers, Ronnie Benedict, Al Miller, Joe Morello, Colin Bailey, and Jim Chapin, all shared a great amount of knowledge, and what they passed on to me is contained in a new form in this book. I would also like to acknowledge my classes with Joe Porcaro, Shelly Manne, Louie Bellson, Roy Burns, John Guerin, Charlie Perry, Jim Keltner, and Ralph Humphrey. All of these great artists have shared much with me and showed me the classic techniques of drumming. I have redesigned and adapted these techniques from classical and rudimental origins and applied them to the modern drum set. Early drum-set performers used thinner sticks and single-ply heads and played in acoustic bands in acoustically designed rooms with little or no miking. Today, we use heavier sticks, double-ply heads, amplified music in large halls (sometimes with poor acoustics), and the microscopic ear of close mikes on all of our drums! Thus we need to apply the tried-and-true concepts with a new eye toward the future.

The drum set as an instrument is very young. I feel we are still in a very exciting formative period for this art form of drum-set playing. To find out where we are going, I believe we must find out where we came from. As the new millennium begins, we must push our art form forward even further. The things I learned from my teachers are historic techniques. I felt the time had come to document them in a proper way. You will notice there are illustrations in this book. Gene Krupa, on being shown a manuscript for a book Joe Morello was working on, suggested Joe include pictures to clarify the techniques. Joe mentioned this to me long ago. Years later, I met wonderful artist Steve Leahy and remembered this idea of illustrations, so this book, years after Krupa's comment, now includes illustrations to show the concepts.

Making yourself better will take commitment, time, and perseverance. *For the most growth, you must take the path of most resistance. Practice what you do not know.*

Working on things you already know is *maintenance*. Although maintenance is important, it should constitute a smaller part of your practice routine.

Practice Tips:

1. *True practice is a re-programming process:* Everyone has old habits; being aware of them is very important. These habits sometimes unknowingly hold us back from achieving our potential. Bad habits must be understood. Then, as the new technique is learned, constant reinforcement is necessary to build new habits. Think of your bad habits as *misinformation*. First you must be aware of the old barriers; then break them down; *then* build new abilities.

2. *Go slowly at first:* Your mind learns and reprograms habits by constant repetition. When building technique, you are reprogramming your muscle memory. Slow, consistent, correct strokes will ensure that you are reprogramming your old habits with more effective ones. Practicing slowly actually *speeds up* the learning process!

3. *Use a mirror:* Practice in front of a full-length mirror to observe your form. You become the teacher and student! The student is in the mirror: carefully watch what is done and correct it with what you have learned. Teaching the technique to yourself can only reinforce you to program it as a habit! This goes for drum set and pad. Remember: *The consistency of how you sit is directly related to the consistency of how you hit*. Be sure to pay close attention to your posture as well. Sit up!

4. *Use a watch / Importance of time lengths:* Hang a watch or clock with a second hand next to your music stand. Assign a time length to each exercise. A minimum of one minute each is recommended. This serves two purposes. First, you must focus on each pattern long enough to assist the reprogramming process as you improve your technique. Repetition is crucial. Second, this will allow you to manage your daily schedule for maximum effectiveness. For instance, if you know you have 20 minutes to practice, you can choose exercises and know exactly how long each one will take, hence enabling you to plan various effective practice routines throughout your week.

5. *Use a metronome:* The metronome is a very effective tool for fine-tuning your time feel. But also think of it as a gauge to measure your improvement. It may frustrate you as you begin learning each exercise, but it will also inspire you as you see the tempo increase as you improve!

6. *Use audio and video taping to chart your progress:* Many of these concepts deal with movement. Taping yourself is the best way to check yourself. Although audio taping can tell you if patterns are being played smoothly, video taping is better for the overall picture: you can see where the tension points are or pinpoint any other obstacles that may need work.

7. *Stay relaxed at all times:* You should strive for complete relaxation. Stop if you feel tension or strain during an exercise. There is a major difference between *tension* and *intensity*. Tension is the tightening of your muscles. Intensity is full commitment and total focus. You must be totally relaxed to achieve a high level of intensity.

18. Stretch and Strengthen: One of the goals of this book is to improve your technique by physically conditioning your muscles. You will *stretch* for flexibility and fluidity and *strengthen* for endurance and power. Although you should be very relaxed, remember you can still push yourself.

9. Concentrate: Effective practice requires total concentration. There can be no distractions. If you practice at home, isolate yourself from the phone, other people, TV, and other interruptions. Schedule a time to practice and devote full time to it. Staying focused solely on the practice material is the only way to master these techniques. Concentration is defined as “to fix one’s attention” or “to focus one’s thoughts.” Only with full concentration can you maximize the rewards of practice.

10. Be patient: Don’t try to speed your way through the material in this book. It will take time to master these concepts. Digest the material over time, and be patient with yourself.

11. Seek out an instructor for the personal guidance of your talent. Attend drum and percussion events in your area, including those featuring artists with whom you are unfamiliar. Ask questions and take advantage of every opportunity to learn.

12. Left-handed players: Many of the exercises in this book are intended to begin with the weaker hand for greater challenge and development. If you come across patterns that start with the left, you should reverse the sticking and start with your right.

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, exercises are in 4/4 time.

A NOTE OF HISTORY:

George Lawrence Stone lived from approximately 1880–1960. He learned the Free Stroke technique from his father as it was passed down through generations of drummers. His book *Stick Control* was written with this technique in mind. Joe Morello was Stone’s protégé, to whom the book *Accents and Rebounds* is dedicated. Joe taught me the Free Stroke in the mid-1970s.

Sanford Augustus Moeller was also born in the 1880s and died in the 1960s. He observed many drummers including old soldiers from the Civil War who, in their nineties, still had great power and speed for drumming. This is when Moeller began to notice the correlation between motion and speed. Moeller is the S.A.M. referred to in the dedication of Jim Chapin’s famous book, *Advanced Techniques for the Modern Drummer*. Jim learned this technique from Moeller in 1938, and then Jim taught it to me circa 1978. Jim was Moeller’s best student, to the point that when Gene Krupa at the height of his career requested to return to lessons, Moeller, who wasn’t teaching anymore, recommended that Krupa study with Jim.

ELEMENTS FOR THE “RANGE OF EXPRESSION”

The overall goal of good technique is to achieve the widest degree of artistic expression possible. Real estate professionals say the most important thing is location, location, location. In drumming technique, the most important thing is freedom, freedom, freedom! The ultimate goal in the improvement of technique is *freedom of creativity--in the moment*. The fewer dynamics and less control someone has, the more restricted they are in expressing themselves. The diagram on page 5 shows the potential of a full range of expressive tools. A higher level of dynamics and control brings more choices from soft to loud and from slow to fast. When we have control over what we are saying, we have more choices in our expression. Then we have the option of saying whatever we feel. Think of the difference between a whisper and a shout. You can also go from speaking very slowly to speaking very fast. The greater the speed, the greater the excitement level and the efficiency of getting your point across. This is why we study technique--to achieve a *full range of expression*. The full range uses **speed, control, power, and endurance**.

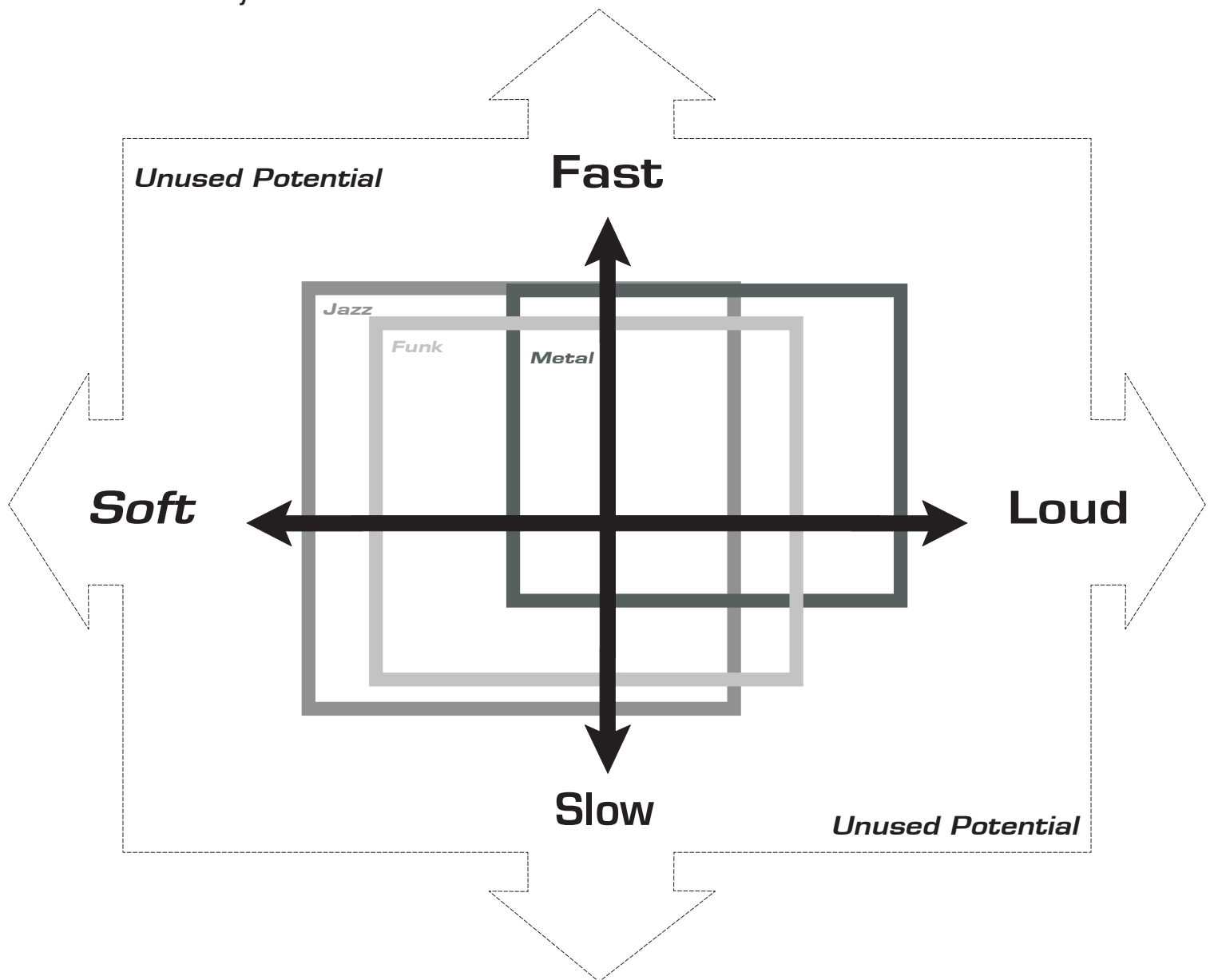
With the fullest range of expression, your choice of what is to be expressed is left only to your imagination. Many people don't use the full possible range. If a person speaks continuously at the same speed, and the volume of their voice does not change, they become monotonous. The same thing happens to drummers, trapping them in the middle of the graph shown on page 5. The graph shows the full range of what is possible in all styles of music. Many contemporary styles, if they are played exclusively, do not require the full range of possibilities. This is not a judgment or critique of the music, just an observation of the stylistic requirements. There are certain players in certain genres that do not need the full range of the graph for them to play that musical style effectively. Thus jazz, funk, or heavy metal players may have different needs to fill only their specific genre. This works fine for certain players.

For many of today's top players, however, one style is not enough. They strive for the *versatility* to play all styles, hence the focus on the larger range of expression. The outer box shows the full gamut. Remember that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. Where do you fit in? By looking at the graph, try to find out where you belong and what you could improve. Perhaps you lack speed or have not spent time playing softly. This would limit the size of your personal box on the graph. The space outside your box is your *unused potential*. When you look at the greats, they *all* have the full gamut. There are no limitations on their expression. That is what this book is about!

It is possible, with lots of practice and listening, to develop a full complement of expressive tools. These *elements* include playing fast to slow and loud to soft with a variety of techniques. You may not want to play loudly often. That's fine, but it's advantageous to have the ability when it is needed by the music. Strive to perfect all the elements for the full range of expression! Your ability to grow and improve is in your mind. It is up to you. These exercises are my moves to spark your range of expression. This is what I mean when I say, "It's your move!"

Elements for the “Range of Expression”

- The purpose of technique: To express what you feel—when you feel it!
- The goal: Constantly increase your vocabulary with elements including *dynamics*, *control*, *speed*, *endurance*, and *power*.
- Where do you fit in?



Goals of Technique:

- **Speed:** to call upon when needed.
- **Control:** to place the sticks wherever and whenever you want.
- **Power:** to have the ability to build to the highest dynamic level.
- **Endurance:** to play as long as the idea requires for its expression.

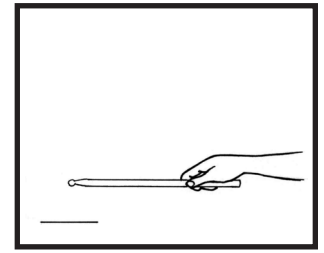
SECTION 1:

Technique – the Foundation



*Note: Unless otherwise indicated, exercises are in 4/4 time.
Lefty players reverse all stickings.*

Downstrokes: Control Strokes



Metronome marking ♩ = 40-76

Practice slowly, on pad.

Play each measure until smooth and clean.

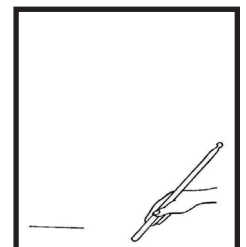
Play each pattern 4x with no accents, then 4x with accents.

Practice using both Formal and Informal Pull-Outs.

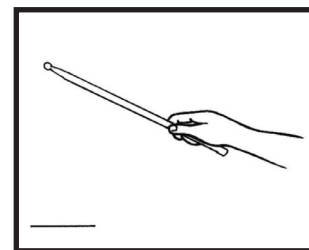
Suggestion: Play non-accents as low strokes, accents as full strokes.

A	Open Roll	<p>1</p> <p>R R L L L L R R</p>	<p>2</p> <p>R R L L L L R R</p>	<p>3</p> <p>R R L L L L R R</p>
B	Inverted Open Roll	<p>1</p> <p>R L L R L R R L</p>	<p>2</p> <p>R R L L L L R R</p>	<p>3</p> <p>R R L L L L R R</p>
C	Triplets	<p>1</p> <p>R L L L R R</p>	<p>2</p> <p>L L R R R L</p>	<p>3</p> <p>L R L R L L</p>
D	Double 4-Stroke	<p>1</p> <p>R R L L L L R R</p>	<p>2</p> <p>R R L L L L R R</p>	

Now mix the patterns from open roll into double 4-stroke into triplets. Use your own combinations.



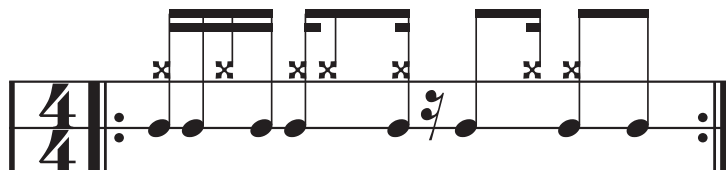
From Flam to Groove #2



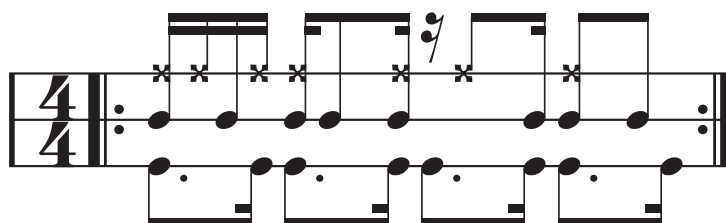
STEP ONE: Play flam pattern on snare:



STEP TWO: Split hands and play pattern open-handed; RH on snare, LH on hi-hat:



STEP THREE: Move RH to ride cymbal, and add Samba bass drum pattern:



STEP FOUR: Try alternate bass drum pattern:



STEP FIVE: Repeat this process with added accents:

