

DRUMMERS COLLECTIVE SERIES

ADVANCED CONCEPTS

**A Comprehensive Method for Developing Technique,
Contemporary Styles, and Rhythmical Concepts**

By Kim Plainfield

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INTRODUCTION

A sense of rhythm exists in every person. What sets drummers apart from the rest is that for some reason, we are more responsive to its call. My goal is to help you discover the rhythms around us, to help take some of the mystery out of the more difficult rhythms, and to demonstrate how we can use these rhythms in a musical way.

It seems to me that as drummers we learn our craft in three steps. The first is simply by being aware of rhythms. Second, and perhaps most difficult, is by spending hours and hours practicing and learning our instrument. And the third involves playing with other musicians—acquiring our musical experience. The first and third steps cannot be learned from a music book. My goal is to help you with the second step—practicing and learning our instrument—which is what any dedicated musician spends most of his or her time doing. In this book we will cover most of the areas that I think a serious drummer needs to learn.

The first chapter is based on **Technique** and covers fundamental strokes, rudiments, foot development and balance at the drumset. The techniques covered in this chapter will greatly help your progress in the chapters that follow.

The second chapter explores **Contemporary Styles**, including funk, jazz, fusion and rock as well as Brazilian and Afro-Cuban rhythms. Numerous conceptual development exercises are included which will help you develop the necessary coordination and independence to make your playing more comfortable and natural. Rather than just working on the feel of each particular style, the structure is broken down to help you understand the rhythmic logic behind each.

The third chapter examines **Rhythmical Concepts** which will help further your understanding of rhythm and various rhythmical structures. Included in this section are discussions and exercises involving cross rhythms and polyrhythms. As with the other sections of this book, the goal is to internalize the rhythmic

concepts, which will then allow you to make practical use of the ideas by creating your own patterns and phrases.

In the back of the book you will find pages of rhythmic notation. These are used as rhythmic reading material (**Sources**) and are applied to different examples throughout the book. These examples include the **Quarter and 8th-Note Source, 16th-Note Source Groups of I and II, Accented 8th-Note Triplet Source** and **Top and Bottom Exercises in 16th-Notes**. It is necessary to refer to these sources whenever they are indicated. If you only play the examples in the book and fail to use the notation, you won't gain the full benefit of the exercises and concepts being explored.

Any exercise, whether technical or conceptual, needs to have a practice procedure to make better and more practical use of it. You will notice that many of the exercises are accompanied by a recommended practice procedure. Using these practice procedures with their accompanying metronome markings will help you keep track of your progress and provide you with some additional incentives for your own development.

The CDs/audio cassette contain examples of the majority of the exercises found here. Before each example, you will hear a brief explanation which will help you reference the written examples. You will also notice that the examples in the book having corresponding examples on the CDs/audio cassette will have an indication that reads **Audio Example**. It's a good idea to reference them whenever an exercise is giving you trouble.

By reading the explanations before each exercise, examining the clearly notated rhythmic examples and listening to the CDs/audio cassette, I think you will be able to grasp the concepts in much the same way as if we were working on this material one on one. If you have any further questions on the material, please feel free to write me c/o Drummers Collective, 541 Avenue of the Americas, New York NY 10011 USA.

KEY

BD Snare Cross Brush Hi Alternate Mid Floor Hi-Hat Open Closed Closed Ride Cymbal Cowbell
Stick Tom Tom Tom Tom Hi-Hat Hi-Hat Hi-Hat Cymbal Bell
(L. Foot)

1 Technique

All types of musicians possessing high levels of coordination and agility acquire these skills by developing their *technique*. As a drummer, the better your technique is, the easier it will be to express yourself on the drums. Weaknesses or inadequacies in technique will immediately translate into tension and lack of comfort on your instrument. Strong, well-rounded technique allows for comfort and relaxation, and then to freedom of movement, ease of expression and spontaneity. Technique is not binding and restrictive of one's style. On the contrary, technique provides us with the tools to make our ideas come alive on our instrument.

This chapter focuses on developing speed and endurance in both the hands and feet. There are a few sections involving coordination, but the more sophisticated coordination and independence exercises appear in the later chapters.

Correct movement is essential for good technique. As human beings we all have the same physical construction; it is only in size and proportion that we are different. Therefore, I think it is safe to

say that when playing rudiments or combinations, the movement of the limbs will be similar, regardless of the individual who plays them. Consequently, many of the exercises in this chapter are intended to help you internalize movements necessary for the execution of various rudiments and combinations. Even though there may be different movements among different drummers, you can still find similarities and certain movements which can be considered fundamental for playing the drums.

Observing an athlete will help establish this point. Short-distance runners all move in basically the same way. Long-distance runners also move basically the same, but their movement is radically different from that of short-distance runners. There are fundamental physical characteristics necessary for the most efficient performance, and this holds true for swimmers, gymnasts, bicycle riders, ball players, etc. Regardless of the individual performing a specific physical task, the movements will be similar when the task is being done efficiently.

▲ PRACTICE PROCEDURE

The exercises and concepts discussed here will be much more useful if there is a means of assimilating them. In order to properly internalize and make practical use of the exercises in this book, I have included a method for practicing them. After many of the exercises you will find a *Recommended Practice Procedure* and a progress chart containing all the standard metronome markings.

The metronome markings are simply a way of checking your progress on the different exercises. In the progress chart boxes you will find as many as eight metronome markings, slow to fast, i.e., 100, 104, 108, 112, 116, 120, 126, 132, etc., in **bold** numbers. Always begin these exercises at the slowest speed and work up to the fastest, playing *each* of the eight speeds. When it is possible to play faster, the slowest speed should be crossed out and the next fastest speed added. Always maintain a block of eight speeds.

Example:

Eight metronome markings (slow to fast):

100, 104, 108, 112, 116, 120, 126, 132

When you are able to go faster than 132, cross out the slowest speed, in this case 100. Now you have: 104, 108, 112, 116, 120, 126, 132, 138

The progress chart for this exercise would look like this:

40, 42, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 63, 66, 69, 72, 76, 80, 84, 88, 92, 96, **100, 104, 108, 112, 116, 120, 126, 132**, 138, 144, 152, 160, 168, 176, 184, 192, 200, 208

After increasing your tempo the progress chart would look like this:

40, 42, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 63, 66, 69, 72, 76, 80, 84, 88, 92, 96, ~~100~~, **104, 108, 112, 116, 120, 126, 132, 138**, 144, 152, 160, 168, 176, 184, 192, 200, 208

Where they are not indicated, you can determine for yourself the eight metronome markings (or however many are indicated by the Recommended Practice Procedure). You should take care to set an appropriate starting speed which will insure the proper development of the exercise. Remember, playing an exercise cleanly, evenly and with precision is just as important as playing it fast.

^ SINGLE-STROKE ROLL EXERCISE

A precise and dynamic single-stroke roll is an essential part of strong technique on the drums. Mastering this will enhance all facets of your playing.

A teacher of mine, Jerry Granelli, along with Joe Morello, devised an exercise for developing a single-stroke roll at different tempos while increasing your endurance and speed. Ultimately, it will help you gain a *reserve* of speed and endurance, and as a result, any playing situation will be less taxing physically. The goal is to reach *100 counts* with the metronome while playing 16th-notes with each hand separately, and finally to reach 100 counts of the metronome playing *alternating* 32nd-notes (all metronome markings in this exercise are equivalent to the quarter-note).

Example: Quarter-note = 80

Play 16th-notes with each hand separately (four notes to the beat), and count 1E+A, 2E+A, 3E+A, 4E+A, 5..., 6, 7, 8, 9, etc. up to 100.

After this is accomplished, play alternating 32nd-notes up to 100 counts.

At faster speeds this becomes virtually impossible. When 100 counts of the metronome can't be played, three attempts should be made with each hand separately. Record the *best* of those three attempts on the accompanying chart. Then, using the result of the weaker hand, play both hands alternating (32nd-notes) up to that amount. When you have completed these steps, move on to the next metronome marking.

The following is a description of how this exercise works in theory. Two situations are described: in the first example, 100 counts of the metronome are accomplished, and in the second example, 100 counts are not.

Example 1 Quarter-note = 88

Right hand reaches 100 counts while playing 16th-notes. Left hand reaches 100 counts while playing 16th-notes. Now play 100 counts alternating (32nd-notes).

Example 1

MM	Right Hand	Left Hand	Hands Alternating
88	100	100	100

Example 2 Quarter-note = 116

Right hand reaches only 38 counts while playing 16th-notes. Left hand reaches only 33 counts while playing 16th-notes. Two more attempts need to be made with each hand.

Right hand (second attempt) reaches 41 counts; left hand (second attempt) reaches 35 counts.

Right hand (third attempt) reaches 37 counts; left hand (third attempt) reaches 31 counts.

On the chart, record 41 counts for the right hand and 35 counts for the left hand (the best attempts for each hand). Now play 35 counts alternating 32nd-notes (35 counts was the lowest of the best attempts between the two hands).

Each time you practice this exercise, be sure to play it at each metronome marking. The slower markings are just as important as the faster ones because they provide the necessary warm-up to play the faster speeds accurately. You should be striving to continually increase your speed and endurance. After a relatively short time, you will find that the metronome marking at which you are able to reach 100 counts will increase. You will also find that your top speed will begin to increase. Don't ignore the faster speeds. Even if you can only play one count of a metronome marking (i.e., quarter-note = 126), play that one count.

Eventually you will be able to play more counts and move on to faster speeds. If you can play 100 counts alternately at 100, your single-stroke roll is in good shape. The goal of this exercise is not only to develop the ability to play fast but also the agility to play clearly and with control at a *full range of speeds*.

Example 2

MM	Right Hand	Left Hand	Hands Alternating
116	41	35	35

^ BALANCE

I have heard students complain that while executing certain grooves or figures involving both feet, they feel awkward or off-balance at the drumset. Obviously, they need to overcome this awkwardness in order to play naturally and effectively. My solution is to approach the way we use our feet at the drumset in much the same way as we walk and run. When we walk, we have to have both feet on the ground momentarily as we switch from one foot to the other. If we don't, we will lose our balance. When we run, it is no longer necessary to have both feet touching the ground as we switch from one foot to the other. Our speed creates momentum that enables us to switch in mid-air without losing our balance. In effect, we are making innumerable small leaps.

To me, walking is much the same as playing slower tempos or figures that have a lot of space. In order to help maintain balance, I leave my bass drum beater on the head or put my heel down on my bass drum pedal between notes. When I open my hi-hat for long notes, I put my heel down. If I were to open my hi-hat with my heel up on a long note, while playing the bass drum, I would feel like I was falling towards my hi-hat due to a momentary lack of support. However, if I keep my heel down

while opening my hi-hat, I have support and balance. Just as in walking, when the period of transition (space between the notes) is long, we need the stability of our feet on the ground.

Playing faster tempos or figures that have little space is like running. In these instances, it is not necessary to leave the beater on the bass drum head, or put your heel down when opening the hi-hat. The next note, or combinations between the feet, will soon follow and there isn't time for gravity to take effect and put one off-balance. Because the period of time between opening and closing the hi-hat is short, the drummer, like the runner, uses his momentum to help carry him along.

The remaining section of this chapter, and parts of the other chapters, are devoted to developing speed, coordination and balance between the feet. There will be many times in working on this when improper movement of the feet will result in imbalance. Try to remember: on long open notes, put your heel down on your hi-hat and/or rest the bass drum beater on the head, or leave your heel down on your bass drum pedal. On short notes, keep your heels up.

^ PRELIMINARY HI-HAT/BASS DRUM EXERCISE

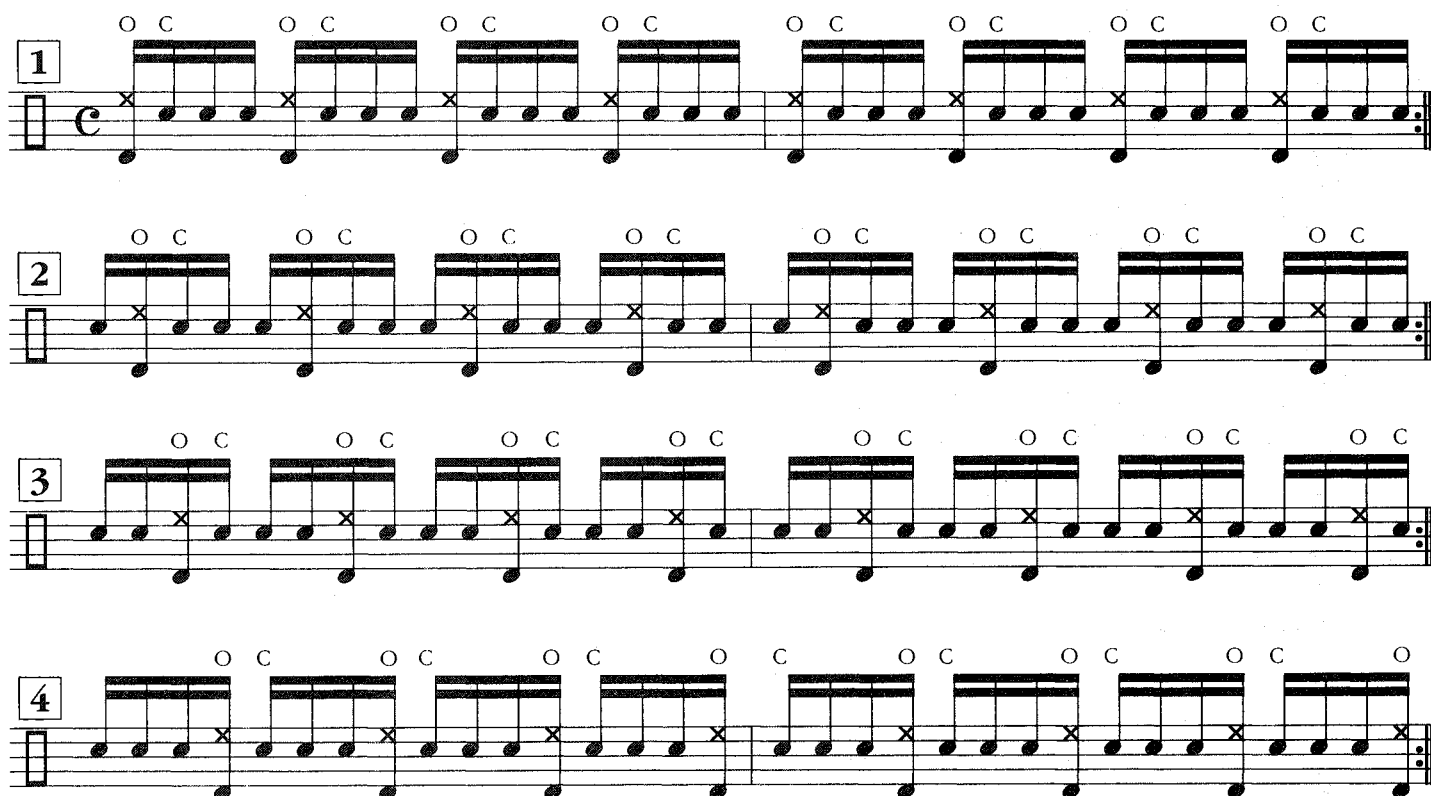
AUDIO EXAMPLE

The three previous sections addressed bass drum technique, hi-hat technique and balance between the feet. This exercise is designed to coordinate all three concepts.

The accompanying exercise is based on playing alternating 16th-notes on the snare drum. When you see the hi-hat and bass drum written *in unison*, play the hi-hat instead of the snare. The hi-hat is opened at the same time (*with your foot*) and closed on the following 16th-note. All downbeats and "&'s" will be played with the right hand, and all "e's" and "a's" will be played with the left hand.

Repeat each line and play the entire exercise at quarter-note = 60 as a warm-up; then play the exercise straight through with no repeats. The recommended practice procedure is eight metronome markings (slow to fast), playing the entire exercise two times at each metronome marking.

When there are two hi-hat/bass drum combinations in succession, don't close the hi-hat in between the notes—leave it open, i.e.:



This exercise incorporates an accent on the third beat of each bar in order to create a “backbeat.” Incorporating a backbeat in every bar will make this application sound much more like a groove. If you are already playing a note on the snare drum on beat 3, simply accent it. If, however, as in the second bar of the example,

the note on beat 3 is on the hi-hat, you must accent it *and* re-orchestrate the note onto the snare. Remember that all unaccented snare drum notes are to be considered ghost notes. Play them softly. This example uses the same two bars as the previous example.

Without Backbeat

With Backbeat

ADDITIONAL LINEAR GROOVES

Here are three additional linear grooves that you might enjoy: