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Introduction

The Complete Double Bass Drumming Explained is a combined and revised print edition of two previously available ebooks *Double Bass Drumming Explained: A Comprehensive Reference on the Art and Science of Double Bass* and *Double Bass Drumming Explained Part 2: The Workbook*. The ebooks were created in 2012 and 2013. The first book was intended to stand alone as a reference on technique and equipment settings, but numerous requests for more exercises resulted in the publication of the second book. After a few years of purely digital availability, the time came to create a paper version that can be placed on a music stand and worked through as well as written in and easily scrutinized without an electronic device. While the tablet ereader revolution has merits for novels and non-fiction works of a non-musical nature, there is an inherent benefit in having printed notation for practicing. Since the two books ought to be used together, it only makes sense that they be combined into one comprehensive edition. As with the original publications, the first part of this book is a technical guide with a few quick examples, and the second part is a practical, traditional drum book. With both books, the goal was to create an educational product that would be unique in its scope of coverage and applicable directly to the real world. The information that I present in this book comes from 20 years of my own experience taking lessons, practicing, studying, touring, and recording. That practical knowledge was then filtered through a classical university music education and tested in my teaching studio where I am constantly learning new things about drumming by watching the successes and failures of my students. My hope is that this edition will serve as the ultimate guide to double bass drumming for both students of the instrument as well as teachers of it. Whether you are a drum student looking to develop new skills or a teacher with skills ready to pass on, this book will help you with the mechanics and conceptual basis for many aspects of double bass. Any teacher knows that teaching a skill is different than simply being personally proficient. Armed with the background knowledge in this edition, an already solid drum teacher can further expand their ability to pass double bass on to others effectively and efficiently. In this way, the book is truly meant for players of all ability levels. Thanks for reading and happy drumming!

Part One

Part one of this book serves to fill the void in the currently available selection of instructional materials on the subject of double bass or double pedal drumming. There are many method books and workbooks available on this same double bass topic. Many of these books I like, use, and fully agree with. Unfortunately, I feel as though none of these materials go far enough into the fine details of how and why double bass playing works the way it does. Most instructional books on any drumming topic begin with a few pages of cursory information about the basic techniques or ideas contained within and then simply launch into a long list of well-thought-out and highly valuable exercises, examples, solos, or chops-busting passages. These books are great for providing raw material to work with, but require translation and the addition of vital background information by a qualified drum teacher to be of any real lasting value to a student. The few scant pages about equipment and technique for bass drumming in print today are unfulfilling and inadequate to address the full range of issues that arise while trying to learn to use your feet to play a percussive instrument. If you think about it, wiggling your feet around on mechanical pedals to produce a rhythmic and musically interesting beat is inherently unnatural and the muscles involved are in no way prepared for beginning this activity. A strong foundation of theoretical knowledge about what you should be doing and why you should be doing it is necessary to develop as a player and to utilize any workbook effectively. This section of the book is not a typical practice workbook. Instead of presenting a couple of lines on technique and then inundating you with beats and fills, I will provide the needed background information as a technical companion to the second section and to the great selection of popular practice materials already available on the market from other authors.

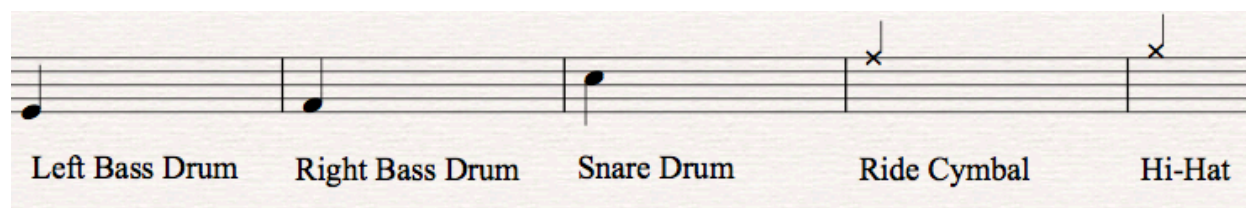
Double Bass Drumming Explained is for anyone wanting a truly in-depth explanation of how double bass or double pedal playing really works. In order to fully appreciate the information I have presented here it will be beneficial to already have some idea of how to play the drums in a general sense. If you have not played the drums before and do not have a basic understanding of rhythm, musical terms, or general percussive techniques then this book will be somewhat confusing. It is not meant to be an absolute beginner's introduction to drumming. There are multitudes of other resources available that will adequately bring you up to speed on the basic aspects of drum set playing. This book should be used only after a basic understanding of music and percussion has been achieved. If you can hold a beat and understand some general drum techniques and terminology then you will be able to follow along. If you have never tried a double pedal before, this book will prime you to begin learning. If you are an advanced single bass player, or already dabble in double bass, this book will provide you with tips to improve or streamline your techniques so that you can expand into the full potential of double bass. If you are a seasoned veteran of double bass this book can still highlight some ways to become more efficient or boost your overall performance.

How to Use This Book

The best way to use this book will be to acquire two bass drums or a double pedal and follow along closely with the text. Referring to your own equipment will allow you to get acquainted (or reacquainted) with it. A great deal of the time the difference between good double bass playing and great double bass playing has as much to do with arrangement and adjustment of the gear as it does with the playing techniques. Of course, the different playing styles I describe are applicable and correct for playing a single bass pedal as well, but the focus will be on combining them for two-footed playing. The techniques and equipment adjustments presented can be attempted not only with the exercises in the second section, but with any selection of beats and fills that you can come up with or find in another book. Because this section is essentially a companion collectively to all the of the practice materials already available, it should be used as a starting point from which you can continue to any other double bass book fully equipped with the knowledge to utilize the exercises, beats, and fills correctly and beneficially. This section can also be used as a reference for any questions or problems that arise in the study of double bass or its application in your own playing.

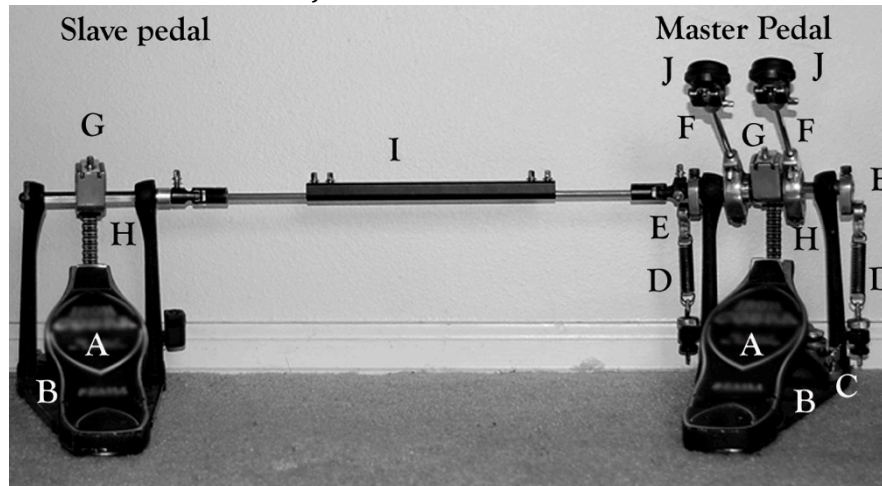
Notation Key

The musical examples in this part of the book will be notated in the following way.



Because this is a bass drum book, the cymbals indicated are merely a suggestion. The hi-hat and ride cymbal can generally be switched at any time or a completely different cymbal can be substituted. The right and left bass drums have been notated individually to eliminate any ambiguity. Any pattern here can be played as written or reversed for left-handed players or to develop the non-dominant side. Leading with either hand is acceptable in either case because the feet are the focus. Fills will be notated only on the snare drum and bass drums but can be distributed around the kit in any manner that sounds good to you.

The Major Parts of a Double Pedal



- A. Footboard
- B. Base Plate
- C. Hoop Clamp
- D. Spring
- E. Rocker/Bearings
- F. Shaft
- G. Cam
- H. Drive Chain
- I. Slave Arm
- J. Beater

A single pedal will have nearly identical parts but, obviously, only one of each part. Two single pedals are necessary to play on two separate bass drums. Refer to this image for clarification when reading below.

Techniques

Just as in any aspect of percussion, proper technique, drum setup, and body alignment are the foundational elements of great double bass playing. Proper stick grip is the first thing the average drum student learns because it is exponentially easier and safer on your arms and hands to play the basic, strokes, rolls and rudiments with the correct grip. The same logic holds true for a drummer's feet. Most dedicated drummers become very proficient with their hands, but many of these fine drummers are somewhat handicapped when it comes to their foot technique because it has been neglected. This section will introduce the proper form for the basic styles of playing two bass drum pedals as well as when to use each style. Learning these basics first will help avoid the development of bad habits or poor form that may limit speed or accuracy later. Experienced drummers and total beginners alike will benefit from this section and the more experienced players may require a bit of, possibly arduous, retraining if these techniques are unfamiliar.

Shoes vs. No Shoes

There is a long-standing schism between drummers who play barefoot or in socks and those who play in shoes. Neither is necessarily correct or incorrect. To play with or without shoes is a personal choice and the decision should be made based on comfort and practicality for your individual playing situation. One factor to consider is how the beater on your pedal is designed. On some pedals the back of the beater is smooth and on others it can have a protruding screw or another sharp implement (such as the pedal pictured above). Since the pedal is spring loaded and there exists a possibility of the beater recoiling into your foot, you may want to consider playing in shoes. This and the other inherent dangers of springs, chains, and moving parts near my toes led me to choose playing with shoes, though playing barefoot or in socks can allow for more feel and better feedback from the pedals. Light shoes with a thin, relatively smooth, flexible sole offer the best control and the closest analogue to playing barefoot and are a great compromise. Some types of shoes that fit the criteria very well are: skateboarding, dancing, wrestling, most general sneakers, and runner's racing flats. Clunky, heavy, or stiff shoes, such as boots or formal dress shoes, should be avoided, if possible, because they inhibit natural motion and control.

Rebound vs. Burying

Another schism exists between drummers who 'bury' the beater, i.e. leave it against the head after the stroke, and those who allow the beater to rebound off the head. There are certain playing types that are best suited to burying the beater, but in the double bass world there is a definite right and wrong on this issue. Saving time and effort at any stage of playing is the ultimate goal of all good technique and will yield higher speeds and greater stamina in the end. To be blunt, rebound is the right way and burying the beater is simply the wrong way if you consider the time and energy needed for each. One disadvantage of burying the beater lies in that leaving the beater against the head between strokes

necessitates an extra motion to pull the beater back in anticipation of the next note to be played. The buried stroke is a two-step process: one backward pre-stroke and one forward stroke. The anticipatory motion is unnecessary if the beater has already rebounded off the head in the previous stroke. The rebound style saves time and effort by only having a one-step stroke. Another advantage to rebounding stroke is that it involves altogether less time spent in the creation of the downward portion of the stroke. Since the beater is intended to rebound from the head, it is not necessary to continue applying pressure to the footboard of the pedal all the way from the beginning until the beater contacts the head. The active motion of applying pressure to the footboard can be abandoned slightly earlier in order to facilitate a good rebound from the bass drum head. This saves energy in the forward part of the stroke. By combining the lack of a preparatory motion with a slightly shorter stroke motion in general, the rebounding beater style is clearly the superior choice for fast double bass playing.

The Various Single Stroke Playing Styles

In this section I will go into extreme detail about several styles or techniques of bass drumming that I feel are essential: heel-down, heel-up, floating, and swivelling. Yet another classic debate rages in the drumming community between heel-up and heel-down playing as if those were the only possibilities. The first problem with the idea of choosing one or the other is that a competent double bass drummer must be able to play heel-up and heel-down. The second problem with this false dichotomy is that those two are not the only available options. A drummer must be able to play all available styles when and where the music demands it. Choosing solely to play in one style would be like a pianist choosing not to use the black keys – there are plenty of things you could play on the white keys alone but it's not the whole instrument. Choosing to play heel-down only, for example, is severely limiting to speed and maximum dynamic range whereas heel-up playing is limiting to both speed and control at the lower end of the dynamic range. A good drummer learns all the available techniques and chooses between them based on the individual playing situation. During all of the single stroke techniques listed in this book, the part of the foot that should be contacting the pedal most directly is the spot just where the toes attach to the rest of the foot. This is between the ball of the foot and the actual toes. When I refer to playing with your toes I mean way out on the tip of your foot, and not this position. When I refer to the ball of your foot I typically mean both the actual ball of the foot and this toe attachment area since they are difficult if not impossible to play independently.