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Bio

Ray was born into a musical family and began playing drums at the age of 11. No sooner did he grasp the basics of his first rock beat than he was unfortunately involved in a camping accident that left him fighting for his life in a burn unit and dreaming of playing the drums once again. After spending six months in the hospital and undergoing many surgeries, he had to relearn how to hold the drumsticks all over again and deal with limited mobility, as well as missing digits on both of his hands.



Ray's dad made him a promise to get him a new drum set after he was released from the hospital. When that day came, his father kept that promise, and Ray received his first new drum set. With the support and encouragement of his parents, Earle and Emily, he began drum lessons with a local teacher, Sal LaRocca. Under Sal's guidance, he started working diligently on rudiments, developing his hand technique, coordination, and reading studies on the drum set. Ray began playing in local rock bands in high school and, in 1990, he enrolled in the jazz program at William Paterson College with John Riley and Horace Arnold as his teachers, eventually receiving his B.A. in jazz performance. After school, he moved to New York and began working as a freelance drummer to further develop his skills as a session player.

Ray continued his studies privately with Sal LaRocca, as well as other teachers such as Keith Crane, Jeff Kraus, Jojo Mayer, Marvin "Smitty" Smith, Lenny White, Dom Famularo, Adam Nussbaum, Frank Katz, Kim Plainfield, Kenny Washington, and Tommy Campbell.

Since then, Ray has recorded and played with a wide spectrum of world-class musicians, including John Abercrombie, Mike Stern, Randy Brecker, Paul Shaffer, Fred Lipsius, Oz Noy, Will Lee, Joe Locke, Dave Binney, and many more. He released a solo album on Origin Records in 2010 and performs as a band leader. In addition, he's been a sideman to jazz singer-songwriter KJ Denhart for the last twenty-four years, with a residency at the 55 Bar in NYC. He is the co-producer and co-founder of a successful film and TV production company, composing tracks for a wide range of networks such as TLC, The History Channel, Animal Planet, Food Network, ABC, NBC, Fox Sports, ESPN, etc. He conducts this work, records drum tracks for other artists, and also teaches privately and Zoom lessons at his production recording studio in Nyack, NY.

Introduction

In today's fast-paced world, where constant technological interactions prevail, maintaining focus and concentration can be a significant challenge for individuals across various disciplines. As drummers, the ability to cultivate stillness and concentration is of paramount importance, enabling us to keep impeccable time and remain fully present in our performances. This book aims to explore the powerful synergy between drumming exercises and breathing techniques, providing a comprehensive guide to acquiring a calm mind and achieving a state of flow. By incorporating breathing exercises into our practice sessions, performances, and everyday life, we will enhance our concentration, balance, and overall ability to be creative in any situation. Additionally, this book will offer valuable insights and strategies to help drummers overcome stage anxiety and enter a focused state before playing.

We will delve into the profound impact of breathing on our retention and focus skills. By incorporating specific breathing techniques while drumming, we will learn to anchor ourselves in our bodies and quiet the mind simultaneously. Drawing from scientific research on breathing, meditation, and brain function, we will explore the correlation between a focused state of mind and the ability to process and retain new information rapidly. Furthermore, we will examine the neurochemical functions of the brain, such as dopamine, serotonin, and adrenaline, in relation to goal rewarding, focus, and the development of brain plasticity for accelerated learning.

To foster a positive mindset and encourage self-motivation, each chapter will commence with an inspiring quote from renowned drummers, artists, philosophers, or composers. Additionally, we will dedicate a page to affirmations, providing a valuable resource for drummers who may experience moments of negativity, self-doubt, or lack of motivation. The "Page of Positivity" will serve as a reminder to embrace self-belief, resilience, and a growth mindset, ensuring that drummers remain dedicated to their personal growth and artistic development.

We will explore the concept of deriving maximum mileage from a single idea. Through permutations, rudiments, stickings, linear studies, and syncopation, we will lay the foundation for developing voicings, melodies, and grooves on the drum set. By expanding our vocabulary and personalizing our ideas, we will nurture our unique voice as drummers. This will foster the development of creative and improvisational skills essential for excelling in various musical styles.

Drumming in Flow offers drummers a comprehensive framework for integrating breathing techniques into their practice routine, performances, and everyday life. By unlocking the power of concentration and focus, drummers will elevate their timekeeping abilities, cultivate a calm mind, and tap into a state of flow. Through scientific insights, inspiring quotes, and practical exercises this book will empower drummers to overcome anxiety, enhance their creative expression, and nurture their individual musicality. With a strong emphasis on personal growth and artistic development, *Drumming in Flow* is an essential resource for drummers seeking to unlock their full potential on the drums and beyond.

Drum Key



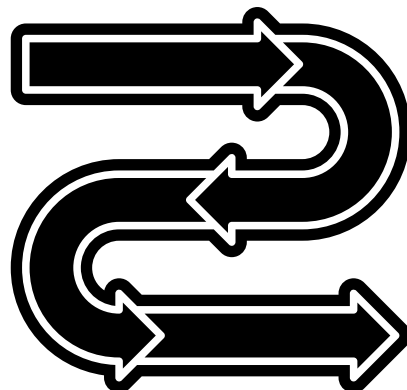
What Is Flow State?

What exactly is a flow state, and how does one attain it?

Research defines flow as a state of optimal performance, where one establishes a seamless and effortless connection with their instrument. It involves intense focus, complete absorption in the music, and a sensation of being in the zone. During flow, self-consciousness fades, replaced by heightened awareness and control over one's playing. The music appears to flow naturally from hands and feet, creating an almost effortless performance, as if we're witnessing the music unfold rather than actively trying to shape it.

Have you ever found yourself playing effortlessly, devoid of all thoughts regarding right or wrong, good or bad? Perhaps it happened in the solitude of your practice room, where your playing transcended to an entirely new level, leaving you bewildered about how you reached that point. Or maybe it occurred during a stellar gig when everything seemed to align perfectly? I've grappled with these fleeting moments, and it seems that the more I try to return to that elusive place, the further I stray. It's this pursuit of the elusive state of flow that inspired me to attempt to make those moments more accessible. This inquiry led me to seek answers and methods for inviting flow into our playing and our lives, and it is this necessity that motivated me to write this book.

We will anchor our thoughts through breathing techniques to keep our minds more focused on the task at hand and explore how breathing can help our nervous system learn new skills. We'll also explore the science of meditation as a tool for a state of calm focus, hence the term "a calm mind is a ready mind." Thirdly, we'll look into research on how the brain assimilates new information and how we can learn new skills faster through understanding the brain's neurochemical processes.



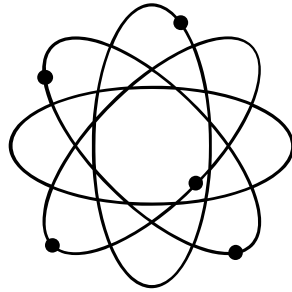
Vinnie's Words on Flow

One drummer who consistently appears to embody a flow state is the renowned Vinnie Colaiuta. In an interview by Rick Beato, Vinnie emphasizes the significance of flow in his playing, stating that thought is the enemy of flow. He underscores the importance of being fully present in the moment, especially in an improvisatory context, asserting that even a nanosecond of thinking disrupts



the flow. Vinnie believes that overcoming the inclination to think allows everything to naturally fall into place, diminishing the concept of mistakes and transforming them into creative moments. He distinguishes between performers who fear mistakes and those who embrace the flow, asserting that true creativity manifests in the latter. Here are his exact words from that interview:

“How important is flow in your playing? It's tantamount to me, and I have this mantra: Thought is the enemy of flow. I believe that you really can't be fully present in the moment, especially in an improvisatory sense, if you're thinking, even for a second— a nanosecond. It just isn't going to happen. So you're shooting yourself in the foot. Then, when you overcome that and don't succumb to that sort of ‘I'm going to think now,’ and you're just in flow, everything takes care of itself as it should be. In a sense, then, there really aren't any mistakes; there are just events and creative moments whereby you are striving, or better yet, you're just creating, and things just happen. If the thing that happens is a bit funky, you just keep moving; you don't stop, and you don't even think about it. So, I think that there is a tendency – and I'm not saying this is the only tendency that exists – but there can be a tendency to think, ‘I better not make a mistake, and when I put my stuff out there, it's going to be so on that nobody can criticize me.’ Then there's this whole other legion of performers who embrace the flow, and it really doesn't matter, and that's great. But I'm just saying that if you're of the former persuasion, then I don't see where the real creativity is evidencing itself.”



THE SCIENCE OF MEDITATION

THE SCIENCE OF MEDITATION

If you're having trouble focusing on your drumming and stress has you anxious, tense and worried, consider trying meditation.

Meditation has been practiced for thousands of years. Meditation originally was meant to help deepen our understanding of the sacred and mystical forces of life. However, I'm more concerned about how to use it for relaxation and stress reduction in regards to being a better musician and person. Everything we do in life is a form of meditation. When we drive we meditate on the road and if we go to a movie we meditate on the screen and the plot. Meditation doesn't have to be related to a spiritual practice. It can if you want, but I want to talk about the science of it and how it relates to better concentration, focus, and performance. Just know that even a few minutes in meditation can help restore your calm, inner peace, and focus, which is a huge part of being a drummer and in dealing with the stressors of day to day life circumstances. Quite simply, when you meditate, you may clear away the information overload that builds up every day and contributes to your stress that might inhibit our learning process.

Anyone can practice meditation. It's simple and inexpensive. And it doesn't require any special equipment. You can practice meditation wherever you are – whether you're drumming or out for a walk, riding the bus, waiting in line, or in the middle of any difficult situation. Meditation is considered a type of mind-body complementary medicine. Meditation can produce a deep state of relaxation and a tranquil mind. During meditation, you focus your attention and eliminate the stream of jumbled thoughts that may be crowding your mind and causing stress. I call it de-fragging the hard drive. This process can result in enhanced physical performance and emotional well-being and we can all use some of that.

BENEFITS OF MEDITATION

Meditation can give you a sense of calm, peace and balance that can benefit both your emotional well-being and your overall health. You can also use it to relax and cope with stress by refocusing your attention on something calming. Meditation can help you learn to stay centered and keep your inner peace. And these benefits don't end when your meditation session ends. Meditation can help carry you more calmly through your day.

