

# FRANCK AGULHON

# DRUMBOOK

*A (RE)CREATIVE APPROACH*

*transcribed, co-written and edited by **Didier Ottaviani***

*Translation by Guilhem Flouzat*

*édition II corrigée - 2015*



**Franck Agulhon** is an essential musician on the international jazz scene, lending his exceptional drumming to numerous first rate projects at the heart of today's music: he's been working closely for years with the likes of Biréli Lagrène, Pierrick Pédron, Eric Legnini, Flavio Boltro, Sylvain Beuf, David El-Malek, Christophe dal Sasso, Pierre de Bethmann, Baptiste Trotignon, Pierre-Alain Goualch, Stefano di Battista, Olivier Ker Ourio, Vincent Artaud, Géraldine Laurent, Diego Imbert.

He has also worked with a long list that includes Archie Shepp, Dave Liebman, Toots Thielemans, Tom Harrell, Bunky Green, Bob Mintzer, Enrico Rava, Sylvain Luc, Ambrose Akinmusire, Tigran Hamasyan, Stéphane Belmondo, Henri Texier, Michel Portal, Magic Malik, Julien Lourau, Hugh Coltman, Yael Naim, Krystle Warren, Till Broner, Mustapha Bakbou, Kyle Eastwood, Danyel Waro, Thomas Dutronc among others.

Franck teaches at the International Music Academy in Nancy, where he first workshopped his unique artistic and pedagogical approach, from which the "Solisticks" project springs. Solisticks is a series of solo pieces allowing to apprehend the drumset as a whole. Every piece illustrates a certain musical period, a given approach, a musical style, a rhythm or melodic motif that triggers a spontaneous improvisation. Franck has also been giving workshops and master classes at the Centre des Musiques Didier Lockwood, founded by the illustrious violinist.

A much in demand sideman for his listening skills, versatility, work ethic and creativity, he's also embracing the leader's role, and has three records under his own name: «Solisticks» (2008), «Solisticks 2» (2010) and one that he co-lead with pianist Pierre-Alain Goualch: «Tikit» (2005).

*"Drums are a great source of joy and satisfaction to me, for many reasons: I get to play with artists from completely different backgrounds, live and in the studio, to teach in music schools and conservatories, to give master classes for TAMA, solo concerts and of course to practice very regularly."*



**Didier Ottaviani** is a drummer, musician and educator. After studying classical percussion, he chose the drumset, and more specifically jazz. For the past twenty years, he has been very active on the Bordeaux scene. He paid his dues touring with bands of a wide stylistic spectrum, such as Post Image, Minimum Vital (in Brazil, Mexico, Poland, Belgium, Croatia, Netherlands), Djangu Gandhal in TV shows and festivals across France, the Zazen trio. He recorded with Randy Brecker in the Cross-border Big Band «Pirineos Jazz Orchestra», with guitarist Frédéric Favarel in the "Jumbazz" project of organist Patrick Villanueva. He's also a sideman for american vocalist Cunnie Williams

for his European tours, and executive producer for singer Monique Thomas' "Voice of Praise" project. He's crossed path with musicians such as Dave Blenkhorn, Manuel Marchès, Fred Couderc, Carl Schlosser, Eric Séva, Lionel Fortin, Alessandro Golino, Martin Jacobsen...

He mainly plays jazz at this juncture in time, but his versatility allows him to freely express his talent in many different styles, from singer songwriter Zedvan to gospel music.

This jack of all trades teaches at the CIAM since 1998, alongside his first drum teacher, Mickey Fourcade. Didier created and developed two mobile apps for drummers : myDrumApp and ptrrN for Drummers (iOS and Android more on [www.mydrumapp.com](http://www.mydrumapp.com))

«**I** am extremely happy and proud to present you with my drum method, the FRANCK AGULHON DRUMBOOK

Alongside my musical career, I've been teaching in numerous structures and giving private lessons since 1991. I was lucky to get to know exceptional people as well as musicians.

Some have become friends, and for many of them, we often run into each other at concerts or master classes across the country. I've always been very focused on respecting every student's unique personality, and the adaptation of the teaching to the student has only been honed with time.

It's never easy when faced with a class of 2 to 25 students to understand the expectations, strength and weaknesses of each student... It is because of that difficulty that I've always looked for exercises, systems or principles that could adapt to every student. I believe there's no such thing as a silver bullet, a perfect method or an infallible process.

There are however some necessary indispensable foundations to master. After these, to each student his own path, according to his abilities, tastes, choices, and mostly the time he devotes to his instrument, none of all that being set in stone! As an educator, it seems essential for me to give a solid foundation of understanding and perception of the nuts and bolts of drumming, which will allow to each individual to grow and evolve at his own pace, in his musical universe, following his intuition.

The most important thing is always the work method! I personally have always worked in fragments:

- The mechanics (relaxing the wrists, arms, forearms, ankles) without the sticks
- The technique (applied relaxation holding the sticks) with hands only
- The phrasing (stickings, silences, subdivisions, accents...) which is the musical application of the technique.
- The sound (the gesture, holding the sticks tight or loosely, playing closer or further from the drumheads, using a lot of finger strength or none at all)...a lifetime worth of practice
- The tempo (with or without metronome, being aware of your breathing, changing by 1 or 2 bpm, decomposing or not... 2 lifetimes worth of practice! Tempo is one of the ways to access groove.
- Independence (see the concepts chapter)
- coordination (see above)
- Groove (the balance between the different elements, the general volume, with or without ghost notes)
- The time feel (how you place yourself on the tempo). Every drummer has his own feel. This will also define each person's groove.
- Styles (listen to broad spectrum of musical styles.)
- Transcribing (transcribing 8 bars yourself gives you a better perspective on how a musician thinks.
- Listening to every album several times, first as a whole, then focusing on the drums.
- Playing with these same albums, simply marking time, then trying to copy the drummer's approach, work with the radio, why not even improvise over the news channel...
- Try to play a harmonic instrument, piano or guitar
- Develop your own intuition, which is a very broad topic! There are several ways to do it:

First, every exercise must be practiced in full awareness, intellectualizing every step of the way.

Second, use the subject studied (technique, system or pattern) over a rhythmic text, trying to play with it, focusing on the text.

The following phase is to use the subject without text, creating your own melodies and physically integrating how the studied subject feels. This phase is crucial, because it allows to place the studied subject in an improvisatory subject, without chart to hold on to, this step turn the exercise into music.

The last step, which takes the longest to master is to make this mode of play (system, approach, sticking, independence) an integral part of your musical vocabulary, without resorting to any intellectual process. It needs to become completely intuitive, a part of your playing.

The whole process is here, it's about making everything you learn over the year part of your musical intuition!

When I decided to synthesize 23 years of teaching, it wasn't easy to choose amongst the hundreds of more or less formalized papers I had been using since I started.

The chapters were relatively easy to design, but choosing the exercises which I considered most representative of my methodology was much more difficult. Once again, I must say that the 26 American rudiments aside, which are the Bible for technique, there is no miraculous method.

Meeting Didier OTTAVIANI a few years ago was instrumental in conceiving the drumbook as a whole.

Didier helped me sort through the exercises, he transcribed and put the material into form, which is a herculean task. He is a former student of mine, a first rate drummer and educator from the Bordeaux region, who knows all the principles, systems and concepts of my teaching better than anyone.

Without him, this book would have never seen the light of day. Thanks buddy!

The first chapters will help improve your musical language. In your daily life, vocabulary helps us express our thoughts, our emotions and communicate with others. There is often a gap between the wealth of feeling and the lack of words to express it. By enriching our vocabulary as time goes by, it becomes possible to express an idea or emotion in increasingly precise fashion. The same goes for the drums, improve your vocabulary little by little and the possibilities will naturally expand, your playing will gain fluidity and relevance.

In the spoken language, the same sentence with a different accent will not sound the same (This is from personal experience, as a native of Marseille I've often had trouble making myself understood in the north east of France). I've since become bilingual.

Seriously, when it comes to drums, listen to the advice of drummers with different backgrounds, learn their language, their posture, their attitude, blend different styles, different cultures... It's that blend that will help you build your own universe, even though I consider it barely conceivable to *invent* anything from scratch, the process of learning from many sources will create a path that will be *yours* only.

The last part about concepts is the least formal of this drumbook. It's up to each student to find his own path and things to explore. It was also for me the easiest thing to include in the method, because in private lessons or small groups, I try to perceive in each student's playing (his grip, posture, tempo, phrasing...) what type of exercise or concept could enrich his approach. To make a general chapter isn't actually the most logical thing to do!

Inspite of that, take time to read each concept time and again, to zero in on the mechanisms at work in each of them.

You can also go see the videos on [www.franckagulhondrumbook.com](http://www.franckagulhondrumbook.com) so you get a more precise idea. It is more effective for concepts to see their actual application, rather than writing pages of unplayable things.

I hope with all my heart that this book will help you move forward in your life as a musician, a drummer and a teacher, and that you'll enjoy working on the proposed material.

## Franck AGULHON

I would like to thank several families without whom this Drumbook wouldn't exist:

\*\*\*All the musicians with whom I've had the privilege to share the stage all these years, without whom I couldn't have put all these concepts into music.

A very special thanks to those with whom I've been playing for 15 years.

My mentors!!!

Vincent ARTAUD, Pierre De BETHMANN, Sylvain BEUF, Thomas BRAMERIE, Christophe DAL SASSO, David EL MALEK, Pierre Alain GOUALCH, Valérie GRASCHAIRE, Diego IMBERT, Olivier KER OURIO, Eric LEGNINI, Pierrick PEDRON.

\*\*\*Thank you all the students I've crossed path with during all these years, who nourished me as a human and musician, and helped me improve constantly my approach of teaching!! I am currently still trying to improve.

\*\*\*I want to express all my gratitude to the teachers I've had the fortune to study with, and who allowed me to grasp the endless diversity of approaches available at the drumset

André CECCARELLI : for all the precious little advices over the years.

André CHARLIER : thanks to whom I found out about words like systems, polyrhythm, polyvalence, and who got me started by recommending me for replacements that changed my life.

Alain GOZZO : For the trust place in me since the very beginning, and who's always accompanied me in my path as a musician. Thanks to TAMA France and their team.

Philippe LEVAN : My first teacher who accompanied me on piano during classes after showing me a rhythm to play! Thanks also to Christophe LEVAN who dropped by during lessons and played double bass with me !!!

Christian MARIOTTO : My friend since childhood, without whom I still wouldn't know about jazz, and who gave me his energy and hunger for work: thanks brother!

Richard Paul MORELLINI : For his technique classes, and teaching me to stay demanding in every circumstance!

Denis PALATIN : For his friendship, and for always encouraging me to go above and beyond in class and outside.

\*\*\*I wish to pay tribute as well to all those who supported me by supplying a benevolent outside look throughout the redaction of the drumbook.

Once again, the one and only Didier OTTAVIANI

Fabrice MOREAU (My drum brother and a tremendous artist)

Christian MARIOTTO (for so many things...)

Philippe LEGARE, Dawoud BOUNABI and Jean Baptiste PERRAUDIN, for their careful reading and most valuable advice right in the middle of the 2013 summer)

David GREBIL (for his friendship and his enthusiasm when I started this, which helped me a lot)

Nicolas HILD (for the web design)

\*\*\*Last but not least, a gazillion thanks to my family

My parents who always believed in me and withstood the hours of practice under their shop:  
those endless fills (don't worry Mom I got better!)

Papa we'll talk, but not quite yet!

My wife Valérie, my daughters Romane and Garance, the three loves of my life who accept my  
choices, my absences, my moods and anxiety.

THANK YOU for your unrelenting support and for your love in every circumstance.

\*\*\*Special thanks to Philippe Canovas and Reno Di Matteo

\*\*\*Finally, a list of drummers I've seen or heard play a lot, they are the source of this method. In a  
consciously non alphabetical order:

Manu KATCHE, André CECCARELLI, Daniel HUMAIR, Christian VANDER, Lolo BELLONZI,  
Simon GOUBERT, Philippe SOIRAT, André CHARLIER, Stéphane HUCHAR, Fabrice MOREAU,  
Karl JANNUSKA, Dré PALLEMAERTS, Martin VINK, Hans Van OOSTERHOUT, Benjamin  
HENOCQ, David GREBIL, Tony RABESON, Christian MARIOTTO, Lukmil PEREZ, Julien  
CHARLET, Chris DAVE, Marcus GILMORE, Eric HARLAND, Greg HUTCHINSON, Elvin JONES,  
Tony WILLIAMS, Jack DE JOHNETTE, Mike CLARK, Jim BLACK, Mitch MITCHELL, John  
BONHAM, Brian BLADE, Jim KELTNER, Steve GADD, Dave WECKL, Vinnie COLAIUTA, Jeff  
PORCARO, Ben RILEY, Billy HIGGINS, Art TAYLOR, Philly JOE JONES, Papa JOE JONES, Buddy  
RICH, Earl PALMER, Zygaboo MODELISTE, Steve JORDAN, Idris MUHAMAD, Ed  
BLACKWELL, Justin FAULKNER, Keith CARLOCK, Franckie DUNLOP, Jeff BALLARD, Travis  
BARKER, Mark GIULIANA, Jeff TAIN WATTS, Bill STEWART, Al FOSTER, Billy HIGGINS,  
Clarence PENN, Dave GROHL, Paul MOTIAN, Harvey MASON, David GARIBALDI, Dafnis  
PRIETO, Ignacio BERROA, Kenny WASHINGTON, Mike MANGINI, Jonathan BLAKE, Billy  
HART...



# SOMMAIRE

## I. TECHNIQUE

I.1 WARM UP	16
I.2 Loosening Up and balancing the hands	21
I.2.1 Loosening Up	21
I.2.2 Rolls	24
I.2.3 Paradiddles	26
I.2.4 Flás, Ras et mixed sticks	32
I.2.5 Loosen up on the kit	36
I.3 TECHNIQUE & SYSTEMS	38

## II. STRAIGHT 8's

II.1. STRAIGHT 8's INDEPENDENCE	48
II.2. WORK WITH VOICE	54
II.3. DEVELOP A GROOVE	55

## III. JAZZ

III.1. Preparatory Exercises	62
III.2 Jazz Looseners	66
III.2.1 Left Hands	66
III.2.2 Coordination	68
III.2.3 Movement and Orchestration	76
III.3 Develop your Phrasing	82
III.3.1 Systems and textes	82
III.3.2 Creative Systems	90
III.3.3 Fast Jazz	92

## IV. GROOVE

IV.1 Funk, AfroBeat	110
IV.2 Afro, Latins...	118
IV.3 Odd Meters	120

## V. POLYRYTHMS

V.1. SUBDIVISIONS	128
V.1.1 Introduction	128
V.1.1.1 Internalizing the subdivisions	128
V.1.1.2 Silences	132
V.1.2 Applications	133
V.1.3 Mixing the subdivisions	136
V.1.4 Practical Applications : Fills in 4/4	141

V.2. NOTE GROUPINGS	146
V.2.1 <i>Grouping in 16's notes (3,5,6,7,9)</i>	146
V.2.2 <i>Silences in the Groupings...</i>	171
V.2.3 <i>Mixed groupings in 16's notes</i>	172
V.2.4 <i>Groupings in triplets</i>	175
V.3 Subdivisions over several beats	179
V.4 Shifting Subdivisions	185
V.4.1 <i>Shiftings based on groupings</i>	185
V.4.2 <i>Shifting Subdivisions over a text</i>	187
V.5 Shifting Subdivisions on grouping	188

## **VI. CONCEPTS**

VI.1. Linear	
VI.1.1 <i>Introduction</i>	192
VI.1.2 <i>Examples</i>	195
VI.2 Independence	197
VI.2.1 <i>Introduction</i>	197
VI.2.2 <i>Examples</i>	197
VI.3 Right Hand Lead	205
VI.4 Dependence	207
VI.4.1 <i>Introduction</i>	207
VI.4.2 <i>«Everything with the Cymbal»</i>	207
VI.4.3 <i>«Hands Lead»</i>	210
VI.5 Interdependance	211
VI.5.1 <i>Introduction</i>	211
VI.5.2 <i>Examples</i>	212
VI.6 Recap, Mixing Up	215

## **VII. ODD METERS**

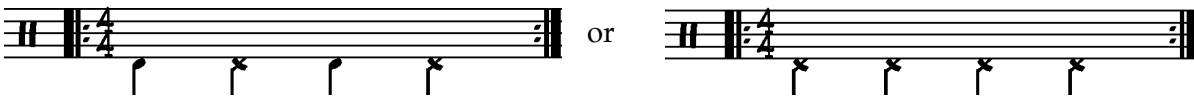
VII.1. Introduction	220
VI.1.1 <i>A little theory</i>	220
VI.1.2 <i>The different approaches + the voices</i>	221
VII.2 Examples	224
VI.2.1 <i>7/8</i>	225
VI.2.2 <i>Compound Meters 4/4 + 3/8</i>	231
VI.3 Applications	233

## **APPENDIX** 238



# I.1. WARM-UP

Unless otherwise noted, you can practice this whole chapter with:



Let us start with single strokes starting with the LH on the second bar. Make sure your flow is steady and each stroke equal, play the center of the snare head!

EX.1 : ♩ = 90—150



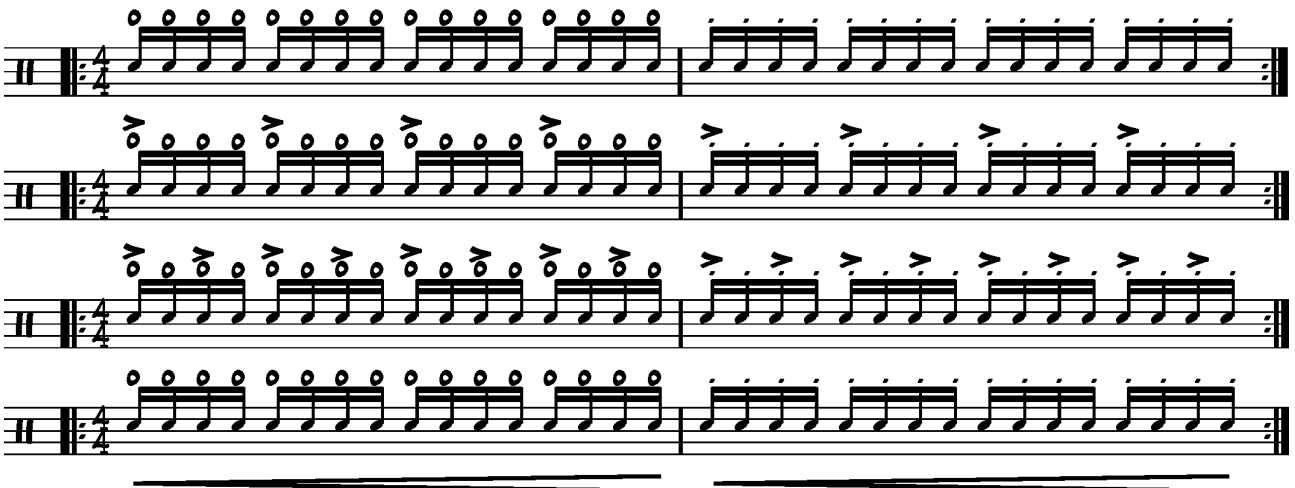
Now working on the accents, all non-accentuated strokes have to be soft. Watch out for the end of the 2nd and 4th line, you have to play a paradiddle to switch to the other hand.

EX.1BIS : ♩ = 90—150



A series of 16 unaccentuated strokes with each hand. Try using wrists only first, then fingers only. A good thing to practice is getting the most sound out of the snare without raising the sticks, trying to stay as close as possible to the head.

EX.2 : ♩ = 70—100



Follow with 4 strokes on each hand in 16th notes, then 3 each in triplets. Finally, start it all with a bar of 8th notes.

EX.3 :  $\text{♩} = 70-100$

Groups of 4 strokes and 3 strokes on a constant subdivision.

EX.4 :  $\text{♩} = 70-100$

Same exercise, with accents at the start of each group:

EX.5 :  $\text{♩} = 70-100$

With accents at the end:

EX.6 :  $\text{♩} = 70-100$

With Flams:

EX.7 :  $\text{♩} = 70-100$