

In This Book

The Language of Drumming / INTRODUCTION	3
Drum Key	4
How To Use This Book	5
How To Use The Online Tracks	6
CHAPTER 1: Letters / Part A - WARM-UP	7
Letters/Introduction 8 ■ The Rhythmic Alphabet 9 ■ Time Letters/Warm-Up / Binary A-P 10 ■ Warm-Up/Ternary Q-X 11	
CHAPTER 1: Letters / Part B - SNARE AND PAD EXERCISES	12
Time Letters/Snare and Pad Exercises/Binary A-P 13 ■ Time Letters/Ternary Q-X 14 ■ Dynamic Letters/Snare and Pad Exercise /Binary A-P 15 ■ Dynamic Letters/Ternary Q-X 16 ■ Sticking Letters/Snare and Pad Exercises/Binary A-P 17 ■ Sticking Letters/Q-X 18 ■ Rudimental Letters: Diddles 1/Snare and Pad Exercises/Binary A-P 19 ■ Diddles 1/Ternary Q-X 20 ■ Rudimental Letters: Diddles 2/Snare and Pad Exercises/Binary A-P 21 ■ Diddles 2/Ternary Q-X 22 ■ Rudimental Letters: Flams/Snare and Pad Exercises/Binary A-P 23 ■ Flams/Ternary Q-X 24 ■ Rudimental Letters: Double Note Singles/Snare and Pad Exercises/Binary A-P 25 ■ Double Note Singles/Ternary Q-X 26	
CHAPTER 2: Letters / Part C - DRUMSET LETTERS	27
Bass Drum Letters/Binary A-P 28 ■ Bass Drum Letters/Ternary Q-X 29 ■ Hi-Hat Letters 1/Binary A-P 30 ■ Hi-Hat Letters 1/Ternary Q-X 31 ■ Hi-Hat Letters 2/Binary A-P 32 ■ Hi-Hat Letters 2/Ternary/Q-X 33 ■ Hi-Hat Letters 3/ Binary A-P 34 ■ Hi-Hat Letters 3/Ternary Q-X 35 ■ Stepped Hi-Hat Letters/Binary A-P 36 ■ Stepped Hi-Hat Letters/ Ternary Q-X 37 ■ Ghosting Letters/Binary A-P 38 ■ Ghosting Letters/Ternary Q-X 39 ■ Ghosting Letters Swing/Ternary Q-X 40	
CHAPTER 2: Words	41
Words/Odd Groupings 42 ■ Words: Introduction/Threes, Fives, Sevens/First Position 43 ■ Words/Accent Patterns/Threes, Fives, Sevens/First Position 44 ■ Rudimental Words/Threes/First Position 45 ■ Drumset Words/Threes/ FirstPosition 46 ■ Rudimental Words/Fives/First Position 47 ■ Drum Set Words/Fives/First Position 48 ■ Rudimental Words/ Sevens/First Position 49 ■ Drumset Words/Sevens/First Position 50 ■ Rudimental Words/Threes/Second Position 51 ■ Drumset Words/Threes/Second Position 52 ■ Rudimental Words/Fives/Second Position 53 ■ Drum Set Words/ Fives/Second Position 54 ■ Rudimental Words/Sevens/Second Position 55 ■ Drumset Words/Sevens/Second Position 56 ■ Rudimental Words/Threes/ Third Position 57 ■ Drum Set Words Threes/Third Position 58 ■ Hi-Hat Words/Three, Five, and Seven 59 ■ Hi-Hat Words/Five and Seven/Ternary 60 ■ Words Recap Sheets 61 ■ Independence Words 65	
CHAPTER 3: Syntax	66
Syntax/Binary 67 ■ Syntax/Ternary 68 ■ Syntax/Application Examples 69	
CHAPTER 4: Advanced Language	70
Advanced Language/Linear Language 1/Linear Letters/Binary 71 ■ Linear Language 1/Binary 72 ■ Linear Language 1/ Ternary 73 ■ Linear Language 1/Ternary 74 ■ Linear Language 1/Binary 75 ■ Linear Language 2/Binary 76-77 ■ Linear Language 3/Binary 78 ■ Quick List/Hi-Hat/Ride Cymbal Patterns 79 ■ Accent Language/Speaking With An Accent 80 ■ Combined Rudiments/Letters 83 ■ Syntax Revisited 84-85 ■ The Tuplets/Introduction 86 ■ Quintuplets 87 ■ Septuplets/Ninetuplets 88 ■ “Greb Fruit” Drum Solo Key 88 ■ “Greb Fruit” Drum Solo 90	
Conclusion	92
Online Track List Guide	93
Acknowledgments	96

The Language of Drumming

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this book. We have a fantastic journey ahead of us.

This book will not only enable you to play differently, but (more importantly) to think differently, and get a better understanding of rhythm. With the systems contained in this book, you could write a million more books. This material will give you the freedom to decode a lot of the other educational material out there, and (even more importantly) by having that ability, you will be free to come up with your own exercises, and have more freedom to make choices on the spot while playing music.

Why? Because we will work with the DNA of rhythm. You will find the ideas and concepts in this book present in all the music that surrounds you, and you'll see through things that were a mystery to you before. That's why the information here is timeless.

The system and principles I present in this book were part of music even before the drumset was invented, and I believe they will remain core principles of music for many, many years to come. This book is not restricted to a specific style of music or a way of playing. It will help you to widen your perspective of rhythm and will benefit your playing no matter what you are working on at the moment.



The Goal

When I was six years old and started to play the drums, I already had a clear vision of what I wanted. I wanted to be able to play whatever I wanted, whenever I wanted, in any dynamic, and at any tempo. Well, at that age, when I referred to dynamic, I meant as loud as possible, and when I talked about tempo, I meant, of course, lightning speed. But with experience, I also realized the power and beauty of quiet, whispering sounds and slow tempos. By adding these extremes to the spectrum, we really have the definition of total freedom to express yourself on the instrument as a goal. And I always thought—and still do—that's a very good goal to have.

Needless to say, I'm not quite to the point where I can play “whatever I want, whenever I want,” and so on, but I've made a lot of progress since then, and I'm working on it more efficiently than ever—and in this book I will share with you how.

The Inspiration

From the beginning, there were two things that fascinated me most about music.

The first is how music makes me feel; how it communicates feelings. Think about a film score. Sometimes you don't really hear the music—you just feel it. If you watch the same scene without the music, much of the mood and emotion is lost.

The second thing is how beautiful it was (and is) to watch great musicians play—and it seems to me that “playing” is the perfect word. How they seem to be able to have a complete musical conversation with little or no effort. I wanted to be inside the music and to feel it like them. I didn't want to have to think at all—especially not about where to put my hands or feet, and at what time. I wanted to have my playing at a level like talking: not having to think about how to shape my mouth or how to first put the words together before saying something, but feeling something and just saying it—without thinking about technique.

I started to play the drums without any system. I picked up certain things here and there: a two-bar rock groove with a suitable fill, and so on. Standard things that I was told should work. But when it came to expressing myself and interacting with musicians, I often felt very limited. I thought I needed even more standards. I tried to broaden my vocabulary, which was a good idea, but I still didn't have an overview of what the options were—again, because I didn't have a system. And I often had the same problems over and over.

The only way to solve a problem like this, no matter what the subject, is to understand how the whole thing basically works. If you understand the principles behind what you are trying to do, only then will you come up with solutions yourself. And I think we can use a metaphor from another field that all of us already use naturally: language.

Learning the Language

I'm from Germany. English is not my first language. I began to learn English like a lot of people first learn a new language. I learned a few phrases, like "Can you tell me the way to the train station?", or "Two coffees, please." (These should get you through London, even if you don't have a clue.) It was like learning a handful of licks for a certain musical style that "always fit"—but in music and language there are no licks that always fit. When I lived in the U.S.A. for a half-year when I was twelve, I learned quickly that I wasn't able to communicate with other people in this way, because they didn't answer like the examples in the phrasebook.

I understood that I had to learn the language the proper way from the very beginning: learning the letters (thankfully they are the same as the German ones), putting them together into words, making sentences, and slowly gaining the ability to have a conversation. It was easier and way more efficient than I expected, and it enabled me to eventually express myself freely in both German and English. Most importantly, I am not restricted to talking at people (like with the "lick" approach, where I prepare something in order to fire it off later) but communicate with people. Isn't that also what music should do?

So why don't we approach drumming the same way, since the drum was the earliest tool for communication? And to do that, we need the alphabet of rhythm.

I tried to find a system that includes every rhythmic phrase, figure, pattern—everything that appears rhythmically on this planet. I wanted to collect them all, write them down, and practice them: the millions of little components of which all the music around us is made. Totally thrilled about the utopia of my enterprise, I analyzed countless pieces of classical music, funk, rock, pop, and jazz—but along the way I came to the conclusion that there are not millions of little musical components. In my concept there are 24 of them.

So here we are.

If you really want to express yourself and be creative as a musician, don't try to find shortcuts. That will get you nowhere. This book shouldn't give you any "can-you-tell-me-the-way-to-the-train-station" kind of licks (although you can get many licks out of it, if that's what you're after).

My hope really is to give you a vocabulary, and ways to use it, so you can say what YOU want to say in the language of drumming.



Benny Greb

DRUM KEY



CHAPTER 1: *Letters*

Part A - WARM-UP



Letters

INTRODUCTION

A letter is the smallest element of Latin-descent languages. Of course we can make other noises with our voice, but to be a letter it takes more than just a noise: it's a short sound which contains information so that it will have a specific meaning when combined with other letters.

When I just hit the drum, it doesn't necessarily mean anything. It's how the sounds are organized—the context—that provides the meaning. This context consists of a rhythm's relation to time/the quarter-note pulse and it's subdivisions. **VERY IMPORTANT:** You have to make sure that you always feel/know where the quarter note is. It's not only important for the exercises to sound right; they must also feel right.

This is what I call the Rhythmic Alphabet. Together they are the 24 patterns I promised you earlier. The vast majority of what appears rhythmically in the music around us is derived of these elements. These are the puzzle pieces of every rhythmic picture.

Warm-Up/Clap Exercise: I call this chapter “warm-up” because you don't need good technique or a drumset for these exercises. You can practice them anywhere. You don't even need sticks! But actually this is way more than a warm-up. It's a mental workout that is the basis of all following exercises, so check it out.

Let's take a look at these letters. The binary letters shown here, A-P, have four possible spaces in which a note could be played. The dots in these diagrams represent a note that is played, while a dash represents silence or space between the notes. First we have the four possible one-note letters, followed by those with two notes, three notes, and finally all four notes.

The same applies to the ternary system (Q-X). Here we have all the possible permutations of three notes or rests on one beat.

Once you understand the basic rhythmic alphabet, we can then add some of the elements that we need to create music:

- **Tempo/Quarter-Note Pulse**
- **Subdivision**
- **Instrumentation**
- **Form**

Drumset Words

SEVENS / FIRST POSITION

Finally, we have the “listen to the radio” grouping of seven applied as bass drum, right hand, and left-hand drumset parts.

DATE:	TEMPOS:

BASS DRUM



RH (HH OR RIDE BELL)



LH (GHOST NOTE OR TOM)



Here the backbeat and ghosting pattern fall on the same beat. When you play the ghostings on the snare, play an accent/backbeat here. When you play the ghostings as a pattern with your left hand on another drum, play the backbeat with your right hand on the snare at the same time.