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- 3) 2199, Music for the Balinese shadow play
- 4) 2200, Music from the morning of the world
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- 6) 2215, Gamelan Semar Peguligan

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### ONE APPROACH TO THE ANALYSIS OF DRUM SET PLAYING

By  
**Jon A. Krosnick**

#### **About the Author:**

*Mr. Krosnick is presently an undergraduate student in Psychology at Harvard University. He has studied with Fred Hinger since 1974, and has attended the National Music Camp at Interlochen, Michigan for the past nine summers. Most recently, he has studied with Niel DePonte. Mr. Krosnick has performed as a soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1976 and with the University of Michigan Orchestra in 1977.*

One of the undesirable consequences resulting from a surfeit of teaching methods, improvisation books, and other educational aids has been the virtual disappearance of the player who accelerates learning by playing along with records.<sup>1</sup>

David Baker uses this sentence to begin his article entitled "How to Transcribe from Records". It is often said that the best way to learn, in Baker's words, "subtlety, correct use of inflection, a feeling of swing, interpretation, style, etc. (is through) repeated hearings of those players who first defined the music."<sup>2</sup> Mr. Baker would probably agree that all innovative players, young and old, are worth listening to and analyzing.

Since so many recordings of contemporary drummers are available these days, they provide an excellent tool with which a student may study the art of drum set playing. I would not suggest that the student

transcribe drum "beats" primarily to incorporate them in his own playing; rather, I would advise that transcribing "beats" can help the student to see new ways of approaching both music and the drum set. Specifically, I would suggest that the student transcribe many examples of a particular drummer's playing so that he can begin to identify and understand the idiosyncrasies of that drummer's style of playing.

Drummers are recorded playing many different kinds of music in many different contexts. One very specialized context which provides many vehicles for learning is 'studio music'. In Don Heckman's words, "studio musicians do all the tough work for the stars: framing the action, filling in the colors, sometimes serving as "ghost" instrumental voices . . ."3 There are four kinds of studio music: phonograph recordings, television backgrounds, movie backgrounds, and commercials. Thus, in any given situation, a studio musician may be asked to play any style or even to create a new style. The procedure almost always involves seeing the charts for the first time and recording the final takes within one three- or four-hour recording session. I will demonstrate below how a student might analyze a transcription of a studio drummer's playing. I have selected studio drumming because one drummer can be found playing a wide range of styles, and the music is typically well-recorded, sophisticated, and organized. First, however, I will present a bit of information about how these recordings are made and the job of the studio drummer.

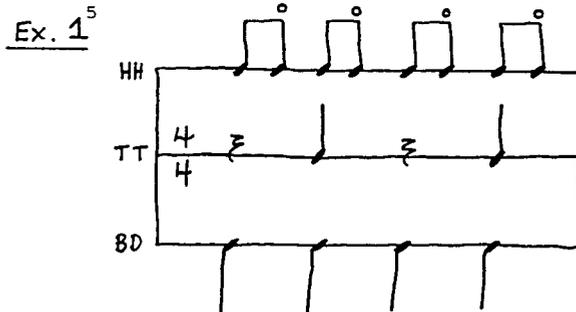
Studio recordings are usually done in "layers", beginning with the rhythm section (piano, bass, and drums). The next day, the brass section over-dubs its part; the following day, the strings add their part, and finally the soloists improvise their contributions. For the studio drummer, there exists a unique challenge in this work. On that first day, he must reinforce the ensemble passages and the soloist's statements before these players arrive at the studio. Certainly, the drummer's playing has an influence on the soloist's improvisations.

The studio drummer is also partially responsible for creating the "feel" of each tune. The "feel" is a result of the underlying melodic and rhythmic patterns that define the style of the music; these patterns are most often played by the rhythm section. The patterns are ostinatos, i.e. clearly defined phrases that are repeated persistently, usually in immediate succession.<sup>4</sup> Within the rhythmic patterns are accented notes and unaccented notes. The accents may be agogic (accents of length) or dynamic (accents of volume). Also, a simple concept of sound vs. silence may be used to design a pattern of accents. For the studio drummer, the drum set provides certain primary tone colors (snare drum, bass drum, hi-hat, and ride cymbal) as well as secondary tone colors for embellishment (tom-toms, other cymbals, etc.), so choice of tone colors and the use of silence help to place emphasis on certain notes. The drummer can organize agogic accents, dynamic accents, and tone colors to form a pattern, giving it direction and shape; this pattern is what

is called the drum "beat". In a musical context, the drum "beat" creates the "feel" and therefore establishes the style of a tune.

For any particular tune at a recording session, some of the patterns are established in advance by the arranger, while others are improvised by the rhythm section players. Sometimes these musicians coordinate their accents and on other occasions they do not; the artistic judgement is made by both the musicians and the arranger.

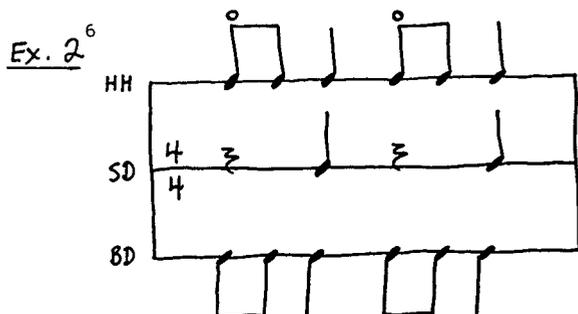
Steve Gadd is a studio drummer who, in appropriate artistic settings, composes a drum "beat" for each tune to give it its own identity and "feel". His style is outstanding among those of present-day studio drummers, and he is one of the busiest of them. Many different recordings of Gadd's playing are available, so they make a good vehicle with which to study his drum "beats" and to see how they function in a musical setting. To determine the component parts of each drum "beat", we will use the tool of transcription. Rather than call the drum pattern a drum "beat", which might suggest a connection between the structure of the drum pattern and the meter or bar-line position as we perform the analysis, I will call the pattern a "phrase" that is repeated.



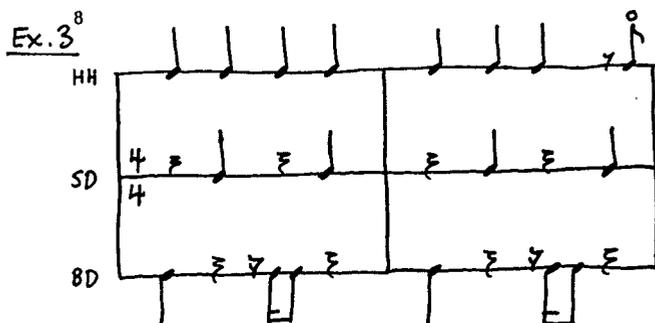
In the first transcription, the bass drum and the tom-tom play simple rhythms. The hi-hat plays straight eighth notes, but the second eighth of each beat is an open hi-hat note, which acts as a leading tone to each beat of the measure because of its tone color, creating a continuous flow from beat to beat. Although the essential phrase is two beats long, there is no special emphasis on the beginning of each two-beat phrase. Instead, the emphasis is on the back beats (beats two and four), created by the snare drum. Gadd has used this pattern on a number of recordings in the bridge of tunes in AABA form, where the chord changes at least once a bar, most often on the first beat of each measure. This harmonic emphasis on the downbeat of each bar, coupled with the bass drum's quarter notes, prevents the listener from thinking that the open hi-hat notes are on the beat, which might easily be done otherwise. This pattern also helps to announce the B section of the tune, since it contrasts with the A pattern which usually does not flow as continuously.

Example 2 uses the open hi-hat device for weight rather than as a leading tone to the subsequent beat. The phrase here is two beats long

like the previous example, but the open (strong) hi-hat note is on the first beat, and the line of three notes (two eighth notes and one quarter note) leads to the second beat of the phrase.



Example 3 is eight beats long, and we see that the snare drum plays a simple pattern of quarter notes on the back beats. The bass drum lands on the downbeat of each measure and plays a syncopated rhythm on beat three which creates an "imbalance in the listener's feeling of rhythmic security."<sup>7</sup> This imbalance is partially resolved on beat four by the snare drum (a primary tone color which is on the beat) and com-



pletely resolved on the downbeat of the following measure by the strong bass drum anchoring. This partial suspension of rhythmic flow helps to lead into the downbeat of the following measure by phrasing into it and thus giving it extra weight.

The hi-hat has a simple quarter note rhythm until the last beat of the pattern. The open hi-hat note here also suspends the rhythmic flow, just as the syncopation on beat three in the bass drum line does, and serves to lead into the downbeat of the next measure. The last beat of this phrase carries a little more weight than the previous back beats since the tone color of the snare drum projects for the only time in the phrase without the added high pitches of the hi-hat. This heavy note leads to the beginning of the pattern, also. This device, as well as the open hi-hat note and the syncopation on the third and seventh beats, act as leading tones to important beats in the pattern.

One device Gadd often uses in creating drum "beats" is the passing of sixteenth-notes from instrument to instrument around the drum set.

Ex. 4<sup>9</sup>

HH

SD

TT

BD

He uses agogic and dynamic accents to place emphasis; open hi-hat notes and silence (breaks in the sixteenth-note pattern) act to phrase the pattern. Example 4 shows this passing of notes. The syncopation of the hi-hat on the first beat and the snare drum on the second beat leads into beat three. The absence of the last three sixteenth-notes in beat three frames the emphasis on that beat, which is actually the end of the phrase. The high-pitched notes on beat four (after the silence) are felt as an upbeat to the rest of the pattern because of their position on the fourth beat and because they lead to the accented low sound of the bass drum on the downbeat. That leading effect is facilitated by the descending pitches at the end of the bar, i.e. hi-hat, then snare drum, and then bass drum. From an overall perspective, beat four actually begins the phrase, which ends solidly on beat three. We see here clearly all of the notes in the phrase moving in one unified line.

Ex. 5<sup>10</sup>

HH

SD

TT

BD

Example 5 shows Gadd's use of another device for phrasing into a beat: a burst of notes, either in the form of a roll or as rapid single strokes. The sixteenth-note flow of the hi-hat on beats one and two leads to beat three because of the sudden break after the seventh note. The weight on beat three is further framed by its tone color and the space that follows it before the next beat. Beat four jumps out with rapid notes to pick up the flow again, acting as a connecting upbeat, just as the fourth beat did in example 4. On beat eight, the tom-tom sets up the roll, and the roll leads into the beginning of the phrase. From the overall perspective, the notes come most rapidly on the fourth beat, and they gradually slow down to a stop on beat three of the following measure.

We have seen in these examples how Steve Gadd designs drum "beats" with accents in certain places and with certain devices to create direction toward certain notes. He controls the flow of the pattern and phrases into certain notes by using devices like bursts of notes, open hi-hat notes, silence, and syncopation.

When analyzing transcriptions of a drummer's playing, the student can examine the structure from certain perspectives. This organized approach will facilitate the identification of devices present and their uses. The first step is to determine the length of the phrase, as well as its starting point and ending point. Next, the shape of the phrase (i.e., how the notes proceed from the beginning of the phrase to its end) can be studied. It is at this point that the effects of accents, tone colors, and rhythmic structures become central to the approach. After studying a number of transcriptions of the same artist's playing, the student can begin to identify the devices a player uses and the ways in which he uses them.

The student may then use this knowledge as a guidepost as he creates his own drum "beats". Once the student decides upon the shape of his phrase, he may use devices like those we have examined to give his notes direction that corresponds to that shape. To understand the possible shapings of phrases in different musical contexts and to discover new techniques for creating the phrase, transcription is a valuable tool; this sort of analysis serves best as a way for the student to broaden his horizons of creativity.

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>David Baker "How to Transcribe from Records," *Downbeat Music Handbook '77*, 1977, pp. 65-87.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Don Heckman "L.A.'s Most Valuable Players," *High Fidelity* 27 (July 1977): 142-147.

<sup>4</sup>*Harvard Dictionary of Music*, Second Edition, s.v. "Ostinato," by Willi Apel.

<sup>5</sup>"Keep Your Eye on the Sparrow," *Finger Paintings*. Earl Klugh. One 12" 33-1/3 rmp disc. Blue Note BN-LA737-H.

<sup>6</sup>"Captain Caribe," *Living Inside Your Love*. Earl Klugh. One 12" 33-1/3 rpm disc. Blue Note BN-LA667-G.

- <sup>7</sup>*Harvard Dictionary of Music*, Second Edition, s.v. "Syncopation," by Willi Apel.  
<sup>8</sup>"Undecided," *Romeo and Juliet*. Hubert Laws. One 12" 33-1/3 rpm disc. Columbia PC 34330.  
<sup>9</sup>"Sea Lion," *Feels So Good*. Grover Washington, Jr. One 12" 33-1/3 rpm disc. KUDU KU-2451.  
<sup>10</sup>"50 Ways to Leave Your Lover," *Still Crazy After All These Years*. Paul Simon. One 12" 33-1/3 rpm disc. Columbia PC 33540.

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## MOTIVATION IN PERCUSSION TEACHING

By

**William J. Schinstine**

**Editors Note:**

*Excerpts from a speech given before the Percussive Arts Society's Second National Conference.*

Motivation might be defined as the art of getting a student to want to do what you want him to do.

The means of accomplishing this are many and diverse.

Creating the atmosphere of good learning is a most essential beginning. Motivation begins from the first contact with a student.

The first contact is usually with the parents, either on the phone or in person. This is the time to get some preliminary information upon which to prepare plans for the first lesson. Name, age, school, grade, previous musical experiences, other persons in the family who are musical, reasons for selecting you as the teacher, all are valid questions. Write these things down and place them in a roll book. Be sure the parents know your name, phone number and how to find your studio. Establish a lesson time, your fee, if a private lesson, and what you expect the student to bring to the first lesson. One might also include the cost of new books, sticks, etc.

All new students will not be beginners. However, at this point we will discuss the beginner and later the more advanced new student.

The studio or place where one teaches should, if at all possible, be a place that will help motivate the student. The equipment owned will tell something of one's ability. Drums, mallet instruments, practice pads, record player, tape recorder, records, tapes, pictures of previous musical activity, diplomas, pictures of successful former students, pictures of famous drummers, unusual percussion instruments, all will add to the atmosphere. What must be done is to feed the natural curiosity of the students. Further, one must periodically add to this list and share the discoveries with the students. One of the best ways to do this is to read the P.A.S. magazines and especially the ads. The teacher must become something of an expert about new methods, solo books and new equipment; keep looking for the new and better way to get the job done.

When that beginning student arrives, one must understand that he or she is usually somewhat frightened of the unknown. Most children