

2016 Percussive Arts Society International Convention  
**A Foundation for Practice: Snare Drum FUNdamentals**

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*In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities, in the expert's mind  
there are few. – Shunryu Suzuki, from Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*

Musicianship is intimately connected, one could even say grounded, to our aural and physical experience, our voice/language, and our human-ness. It is a combination of our body, thoughts/ideas, and sound. Development of an “organic” technique, one in which we pay attention to how our bodies work/move in tandem with an instrument, is a key element of good musicianship.

Musicianship may be broken up into three dimensions: Acoustical, Mechanical, and Artistic. This clinic is designed to develop the **mechanical dimension**: “how the body works with, around, and through our tools,” “understanding and feeling the relationship between time, space, and energy,” and development of an *organic technique*. The abilities developed here will crossover to a variety of percussive applications. We begin at the snare drum. This is our foundation for developing a practice.

**I. Developing “organic” technique—The drum and the stick tell us how to move—  
Awareness**

- a. The “neutral” fulcrum = natural shape of the hand: Study anatomy and pay attention to physics to arrive at the most relaxed and natural grip/stroke
- b. Try not to impose technique on the instrument: Think of control in degrees of “looseness,” rather than in degrees of “rigidness.” Or, think of control as a dial from 0%-100%—when more control is needed, dial it in, otherwise keep it dialed out.
- c. “The instrument teaches me what it needs from me. It’s not a matter of me imposing my technique on the instrument. The paradigm is exactly the opposite...– Allen Otte

**II. Control & Expression**

- a. **One-Level Control:** Playing evenly in time and balanced hand to hand.
- b. **Two-Level Control:** Learning to control rebound (accented and unaccented notes).
- c. **Shape/Phrase Control:** Learning to control various dynamic contours and shadings—sing and hear shapes.
  - i. “To develop expression, to breathe life into the notes, we must be able to play inflections, shapes...” –Buster Bailey
  - ii. Singing = Aural Imagery

**III. Rudiments/Rolls/Ornaments**

- a. Buzz/Orchestral Rolls:
  - i. Work on the edges of expression: soft and loud roll exercises
  - ii. Connecting/Expression/Shifting

- b. Ornaments:
    - i. 4-stroke ruff and drags
      - 1. Playing zones/acoustics
      - 2. Controlling the space between grace and primary notes
    - ii. Flams
      - 1. *Stick Control* Flams and *Wrist Twisters*
  - c. Other Rudiments/Double Stroke Rolls
    - i. Break down rudiments into component parts with the hands separate-hands together approach
    - ii. Grid patterns for double stroke rolls
    - iii. See “Daily Practice Routine” handout for more suggestions
- IV. Student of Motion – Time/Movement**
- a. “Move in time, play in time.” – Ed Soph
    - i. Modified Moeller Exercise – upper arm mobility, wrist looseness, and “neutral” fulcrum
  - b. Joe Morello’s “Table of Time” from *Master Studies*, p. 43
- V. Strength/Dexterity**
- a. Endurance before speed
    - i. “Stone Killer” Joe Morello’s *Master Studies*, pp. 54-65
    - ii. *Stick Control*, p. 9 (♩=100-120)
  - b. Finger Isolation Exercises – improve dexterity

### **CULTIVATING YOUR PRACTICE: “Goalless Practice”**

Technique is a means to an end. How we choose to apply our technique is what is important. To our Western minds *goalless practice* sounds like a impractical idea, perhaps even counterintuitive. How can we not have goals? How can we develop on an instrument with no end goal in mind?

Having goals is not inherently bad. Goals are helpful and allow us to mark our progress. In that sense, goals are simply technical benchmarks. The problems we may face in our practice are actually not with goals, but with our mind. We may think once we have attained some technical skill that we have really accomplished something, but we haven’t. In the intro to the book, *Zen in the Art of Archery*, D.T. Suzuki says: **“If one really wishes to be master of an art, technical knowledge of it is not enough. One has to transcend technique so that the art becomes an ‘artless art’...”** My hope for you is that you learn to cultivate a practice that carries you beyond your technique: a daily practice integrated into your life in a deep and meaningful way.

I like to think of the path of a artist as a railroad track. As one approaches a railroad track, there is no beginning and no end. There are stops along the way, there are mountains, valleys, and plateaus, and there is passing scenery. In the end what is most important is to stay focused on the journey.

# A FOUNDATION FOR PRACTICE: SNARE DRUM FUNDAMENTALS

John Lane

## ONE-LEVEL CONTROL

Repeat each exercise at least 20 times before moving to the next.

♩ = 80-100

①

R L R L R L R L      R R L L R R L L

L R L R L R L R      L L R R L L R R

②

R L R R L R L L      R L R R L R L L

L R L R L R L L      L R L R L R L L

③

R L R R L R L L      R L R R L R L L

L R L R L R L L      L R L R L R L L

④

R L R L R L R L R L R L R L      R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R

L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L      L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L

6

R L R L R L R L R L L R R L L R      R L R L R L L R R L R L R L L R

L R L R L R L R L R R L L R R L      L R L R L R R L L R L R L R R L

8

R L R L R L L R R L R L R L L R      R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L

L R L R L R R L L R L R L R R L      L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R

⑤

R L R L R L L R R L R L R L L R      R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L

L R L R L R R L L R L R L R R L      L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R

10

R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R      R R L L R R L L R L L R R L L R

L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L      L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L

12

R R L L R L L R L L R R L R R L      R L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L

L R L R L R L L R R L L R R L L R      L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L

⑥

R L R L R L L R R L R L R L L R      R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L

L R L R L R L L R R L L R R L L R      L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L

14

R L L R L R R L R L L R L R R L      R R L R L L R L R R L R L L R L

L R L R L R L L R R L L R R L L R      L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L

16

R L R L L R L R R L R L L R L R      R R R L L L R R R L L L R R R R

L L L R R R L L L R R R L L L L      L L L R R R L L L L R R R L L L L

⑦

R L R L L R L R R L R L L R L R      R R R L L L R R R L L L R R R R

L L L R R R L L L R R R L L L L      L L L R R R L L L L R R R L L L L



# Roll and Ornament Exercises

John Lane

## Developing the Multiple Bounce/Buzz Roll:

1. Soft Rolls - This exercise is intended to develop the quality of the soft buzz roll and should always be played at p-pp. Repeat each measure as many times as needed (at least 2-4 times) before moving to the next measure. Play at the edge of the head for a thinner texture. Strive to make buzzes as long and consistent as possible.

Concepts:

- A. Overlap the buzzes - i.e. After the RH buzz, leave RH on the head as the LH plays its buzz stroke; lift at the last possible moment
- B. Match the consistency of **attack**, **texture**, and **duration**.

(♩ = 50)

Buzz all strokes...

5

7

2. Loud Rolls - This exercise is intended to develop the quality of the loud buzz roll and should always be played at f-ff. Repeat each measure as many times as needed (at least 2-4 times) before moving to the next measure. Basing the loud buzz roll on a triple stroke creates a full and resonant/open sound. Studying the motion is also important:

Concepts:

- A. Try to get exactly 3 strokes per hand, but allow the first note to be accented and the others to bounce.
- B. Take advantage of ALL the overtones of the drum by allowing a very subtle lateral movement of the hands from off-center towards center.
- C. Be a student of motion! Play with mostly arm, even at the slower subdivisions. By doing this you are practicing a motion which is consistent with how you must move at a faster tempo.

(♩ = 120)

9

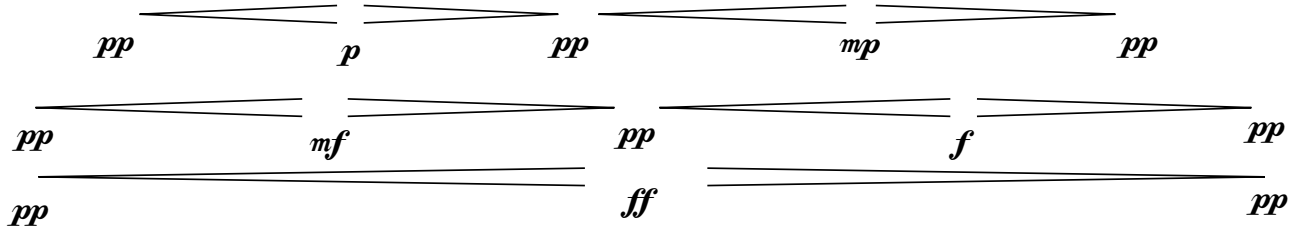
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13

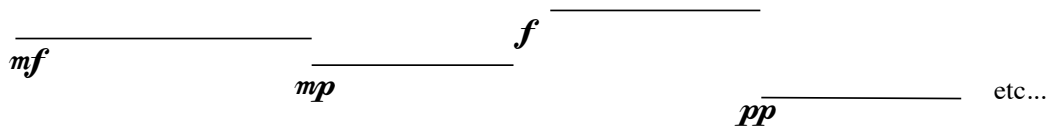
### 3. Working the Seams - Making Connections:

Once you have worked the extremes of loud and soft, it is time to practice making connections between the dynamics.

Try to move smoothly between the loudest and the softest roll. Use the "geography" of the head to help you create timbral difference, or play the roll just off-center.



Also, try making abrupt shifts in dynamics.



### Developing the 4-Stroke Ruff

Lt. Kije Ruffs - This exercise was designed to help navigate the snare drum part to Prokofiev's "Lt. Kije Suite." Even if you are not preparing that work, this exercise will greatly advance your abilities to control the 4-stroke ruff. Make sure to play as evenly as possible on the RLL patterns. In B and C be careful not to accent the RLL, only accent the release. Use more arm than fingers to help with speed.

14 (♩ = 120)

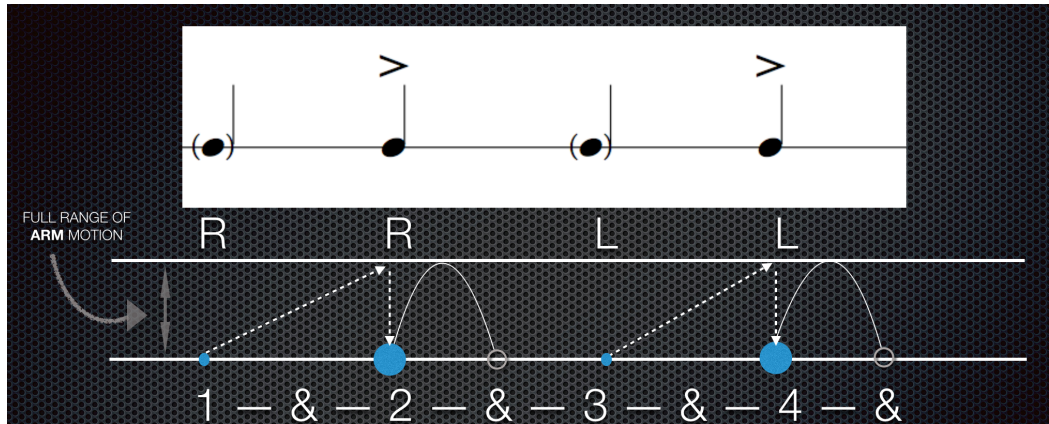
Musical notation for exercise 14, showing a 4-stroke ruff pattern in 2/4 time. The notation consists of two measures, each with a repeat sign. The first measure is marked *p* and the second measure is marked *f*. The pattern is R L L<sup>6</sup> R L L. The notation includes a dynamic marking *p* at the beginning and *f* at the end, and a repeat sign at the end of each measure.

16

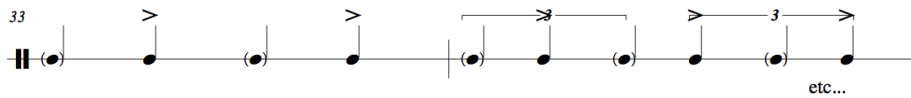
Musical notation for exercise 16, showing a 4-stroke ruff pattern in 3/8 time. The notation consists of two measures, each with a repeat sign. The first measure is marked *p* and the second measure is marked *f*. The pattern is R L L<sup>6</sup> R L L. The notation includes a dynamic marking *p* at the beginning and *f* at the end, and a repeat sign at the end of each measure.

# Modified Moeller Exercise

This exercise is designed to develop upper arm mobility, wrist looseness, and a neutral fulcrum. Practice slowly! (♩ = 40-60bpm)



In the above example, the rebound is "caught" on the "and." On the quarter note triplet, the rebound would be "caught" on a triplet partial. On the eighth note, the rebound is "caught" on the 16th, and so on.



## DAILY PRACTICE ROUTINE

The practice guide below represents an effort to build, not simply maintain, your hand technique. If you are in maintenance mode, or short on time for your daily practice, then you may work only the “essential” exercises and/or shorten the times in the left column. If you want to build, go for longer durations.

**REMEMBER:** Practice is cumulative, so it is best to practice every day. Use a metronome and track your progress. Use a timer to help stay on task. **Control** and **Endurance** are more valuable than **Speed**. Speed will come naturally with focus and attention placed on the other two.

TIME	EXERCISE
6-10 min	<b>*ONE LEVEL CONTROL</b> — Level Control Patterns 1-8; Stone: <i>Stick Control</i> , p. 1-7 (♩ = 80-100 bpm)
6-8 min	<b>*TWO LEVEL CONTROL</b> — Two Level Control Exercises A, B, and C Stone: <i>Accents and Rebounds</i> (p. 16, Lines 3-4, ♩ = 50-60bpm; pp. 4-6: ♩ = 80-130 bpm)
6-8 min	<b>*SHAPING A LINE</b> — Shape/Phrase Control Exercises 1-5; Buster Bailey: <i>Wrist Twisters</i> (pp. 22-43)
6 min	<b>*ROLLS</b> — Lane: Soft and Loud Roll Exercises
5-15 min	<b>*MODIFIED MOELLER</b> Modified Moeller Exercise; “Moeller 3’s and 4’s” at ♩ = 120-150bpm
6-8 min	<b>ORNAMENTS/RUDIMENTS</b> Choose from the following: Lane: 4-stroke Ruff Exercise; Break down rudiments with hands separate/hands together approach; Double stroke roll 16 <sup>th</sup> /triplet grid patterns; Bailey pp 46-66 or 113-120; Stone: <i>Stick Control</i> (pp. 22-23, ♩ = 70-90 bpm)
5 min	<b>TIME</b> — Morello: <i>Master Studies</i> , “Table of Time”
3-5 min	<b>ENDURANCE/STRENGTH</b> Choose from the following: Morello: “Stone Killer” (Morello: pp. 54-65); Stone: <i>Stick Control</i> (p. 9, ♩ = 100-120 bpm)

### \*ESSENTIAL DAILY PRACTICE



**BIO:**

**John Lane** is an artist whose creative work and collaborations extend through percussion to poetry/spoken word and theater. He has concertized with both solo and chamber music projects throughout the Americas, Australia, and Japan. Recent credits include performances at the 9e2 Festival in Seattle, the Percusión en Escena International Percussion Festival in Bogotá, Colombia, and concerto soloist with the National Symphony of Panama, and as a featured international guest artist at the Antarctica Music Festival at the Australian National University.

Commissioning new works and interdisciplinary collaborations are integral to John's work. Recent collaborators include visual artist John Roach; composers Graeme Leak, Peter Garland, Marc Satterwhite, Cara Haxo, Wenhui Xie, Christopher Deane, and Danny Clay; poet Nick Lantz; percussionist Allen Otte; dramaturg Victoria Lantz; dancer/choreographer Hilary Bryan; sculptor Jesus Moroles. John's trumpet/percussion duo Lungta, with trumpeter Amanda Pepping, is an ensemble-in-residence at Sam Houston State University.

John is an active and contributive member of PAS, having appeared as performer/clinician at PASIC, and serving on the New Music/Research Committee and as a reviewer for *Percussive Notes*. John was co-host, along with Terry Longshore (Southern Oregon University) for the PASIC Focus Day in 2014, Images of Sound: Innovations in Notation.

As an educator, he has presented clinics and masterclasses at PASIC, the Midwest Clinic, Texas Music Educators Association Convention and numerous university and high school programs. Currently, John is the Director of Percussion Studies and Associate Professor at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, TX. John is a Yamaha Performing Artist and is an Artist with Innovative Percussion, Evans Drumheads, and Zildjian Cymbals.

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