Building A Better Percussionist
Mixing Technique, Movement, and Ear Training for Optimal Learning

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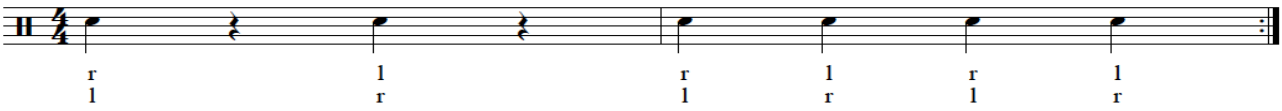
The Six Stroke System

Rob Sanderl

Set Position: The performer should have the drum or pad at a comfortable height with the sticks centered in the middle of the head. The sticks should form approximately a 90 degree angle. The tips of the sticks should be held approximately one inch above the head. The performer should begin and end each exercise from this position.

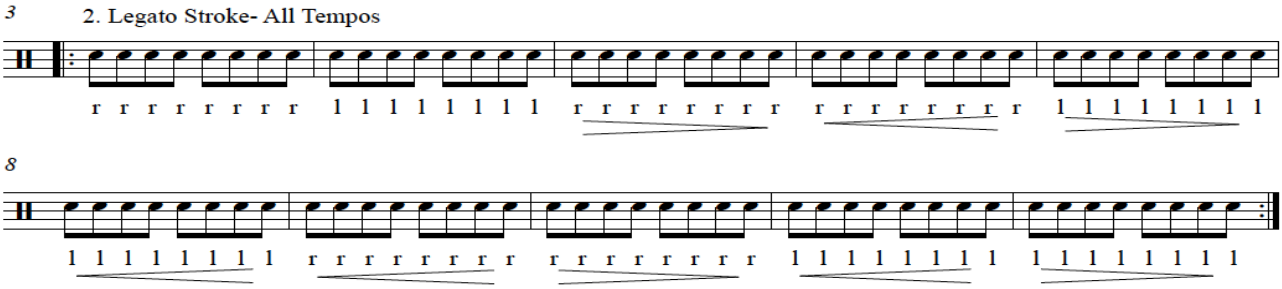
Playing from Both Sides of the Body: Each exercise is executed beginning with both the Right and Left hands. This is critical to build equal ability and strength in both hands.

1. Staccato Stroke- All Tempos



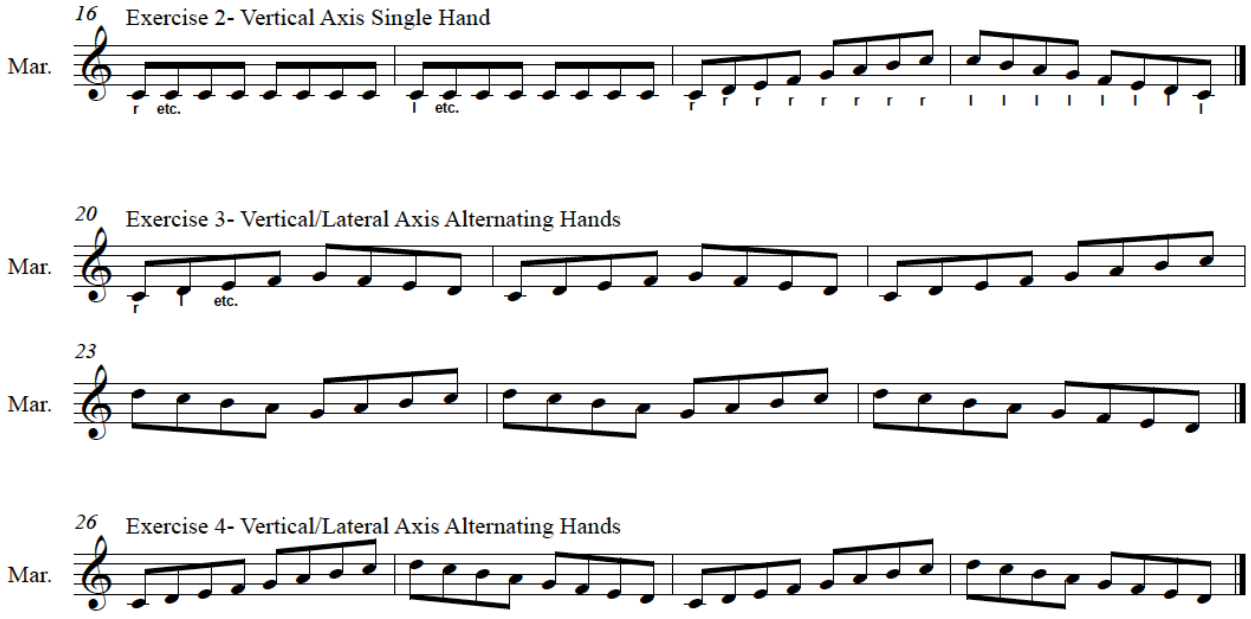
The stick starts from the set position. The player performs one wrist stroke with the stick ending up in set position. This stroke serves as the period at the end of a musical sentence. The back fingers remain on the stick to keep the stick from rebounding. Relax as always.

2. Legato Stroke- All Tempos



The stick starts from the set position. The player performs a wrist stroke, yet in this instance the stick is allowed to fully rebound vertically. The idea is to fully use the natural energy created from the impact of the stick and the drum. This is *free* energy, therefore the more a player draws from this source the less of their own energy is needed, and they can play for longer periods of time without fatigue. The fulcrum is maintained, yet the plam of the hand is allowed to open so the stick can access the return energy of the impact.

Basic Keyboard Exercises



A Pedagogical Approach for Rudiments

Group 1- Diddle Rudiments

Diddles should be taught first since they represent rudiments where the primary note is not embellished by a grace note or double stroke. It also makes pedagogical sense to teach all the diddle rudiments at the same time since they require the same techniques to perform. The *single stroke roll, single stroke seven, and single stroke four* should be introduced later at a time when the students can perform them at a speed that is realistic in a performance situation. This idea should be applied to the diddle rudiments as well. For example, many books teach the paradiddle early on, notating it as slow quarter notes. This is not realistic, as a competent percussionist would not use a paradiddle sticking in a situation where there are four slow quarter notes. Therefore, this is teaching the rudiment out of context.

Important Points to Remember:

1. Accent the first note of each paradiddle.
2. Keep the unaccented beats low- 1-3 inches. This is important for consistency and ultimately speed.
3. Listen closely to the unaccented notes; these need to be even and consistent. If they are consistent, then the accents will be correctly placed.

Combining Timpani Tuning and Ear Training

By Rob Sanderl

Using the following system, a student can not only enhance their ability to recognize pitch relationships, but also tune timpani and work on their solfege skills as well (movable "DO"). The student will use common solfege syllable relationships to set the pitches.

Step 1.
Tune the 29" drum to A using a tuning fork. Regardless of the tuning configuration that is required on the drums we start with an A-natural since the rest of the group will also tune to this note, that way the timpanist is using the same reference pitch. It also works well because A-natural is at the center of the strongest playing range for the 29" drum (F-C).

Step 2.
Tune Perfect Intervals P4-P5-P8 The human ear hears these intervals easiest.

Step 3.
Tune Major and Minor 2nds and 3rds

Step 4.
Tune Larger Intervals A4-M6-m6-M7-m7