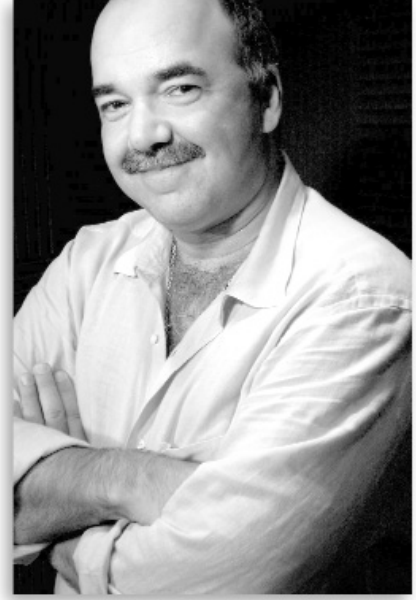


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About the Author

Peter Erskine has been a student of the drums since the age of four. He is known for his love of working in different musical contexts. He has recorded 400 albums, including several on his own Fuzzy Music label. His playing and recording credits include the big bands of Stan Kenton, Maynard Ferguson and Bob Mintzer; groups such as Weather Report, Steps Ahead, Steely Dan and the Yellowjackets; vocalists Diana Krall, Joni Mitchell, Kurt Elling and Kate Bush; and jazz artists such as Chick Corea, Michael Brecker, John Scofield, Freddie Hubbard, Joe Henderson, Kenny Wheeler, John Abercrombie, Eliane Elias, Sadao Watanabe, Gary Burton and Pat Metheny, as well as his own trio. He has appeared in concert as soloist with the City of Birmingham and BBC Symphony Orchestras, Ensemble Modern, and the L.A. Philharmonic New Music Group. Mr. Erskine conducts clinics, classes and seminars worldwide, and teaches at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles and the Royal Academy of Music in London. He was awarded an honorary Doctor of Music degree from the Berklee School of Music, has been the recipient of a *Drum! Magazine* "Drummie" award, the winner of *Modern Drummer Magazine's* Readers' Poll in the Mainstream Jazz Drummer category numerous times, and has won a Grammy. Mr. Erskine is a member of the Percussive Arts Society and the International Association of Jazz Educators. He plays Yamaha drums, Zildjian cymbals, Evans drumheads, and Vic Firth sticks and brushes.



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Tempos and Subdivisions

Throughout all three volumes of *Drumset Essentials*, students are consistently encouraged to practice the exercises and rhythms at a variety of tempos, notably at 60, 90 and 120 bpm. However, in work situations, I have been asked to play at tempos ranging from ♩ = 20 to 320 bpm!

The realm of possible tempos is enormous, and we should be able to play basic jazz and pop styles *anywhere* on the tempo map while keeping a steady beat. This requires CONFIDENCE. The best way to become confident is by EXPERIENCE, and the best way to get experience is to play and PAY ATTENTION to what's going on, musically and otherwise. In other words, CONCENTRATE.

Slow Tempos

The goal when playing at a slow tempo is to not speed up or slow down!

Slow tempos can be challenging, but I think they're a lot of fun. You can really enjoy the musical scenery as it's passing by, and the space in the music gives you a terrific chance to take stock of your sound and touch, as well as your innate sense of time.

An Experiment:

Sing the following melody with words, or play it at a piano. *Record yourself* if possible. Pick any tempo, but **don't** use a metronome for now!

Oh, Shenandoah, I love your daughter,

Away, you rolling river.

Oh, Shenandoah, I love your daughter,

Away, I'm bound away, 'cross the wide Missouri.

Shenandoah

Traditional

Oh, Shen - an - doah, I love your daugh - ter A - way, you rol - ling

4 ri - ver. Oh, Shen - an - doah, I love your daugh - ter A -

7 way, I'm bound a - way 'cross the wide Mis - sou - ri.

Now, go back and listen to the pickup to measure 3 (the "A" in "Away"), or the second syllable (the "way" in "Away"). Do they fall squarely and comfortably on the downbeat of the measure? Or, was there any "cheating" of the beat? Be honest. (Next measure, too!) Typically, most people, including musicians who are not paying attention, will omit some of the stated rest or space between the notes, especially when crowds of people are singing.

Questions:

1. Should we also be aware of the relative dynamics of the music when we play a fill? In other words, should the fill be played loud or soft?
2. Is there a difference between the type of fill that occurs during or between an ensemble's musical phrases and a fill that occurs all on its own without any other instruments playing? In other words, what's the difference between a *fill* and a *solo*?
3. What kind of inner dynamics can we utilize in a fill? In other words, how many accents should we add to a rhythm, and where?

Answers:

1. If we're truly listening to the music we're playing, then we're aware of the relative dynamics, and we would honor and observe these dynamics. I call it "meeting the energy of the style of music" that we're playing. The

use of loud or soft can have a musically dramatic effect, and contrast can be a good idea. Short answer: use your ears.

2. Short answer: Everything is timekeeping, and it's all music! Longer answer: A fill is much like the next step you take when walking, while a solo is more like doing a tap dance.
3. Notes without accents are like syllables or words without inflection (or, like food without spice). In other words, boring. Accents bring music to life. Listen to the way jazz drummer Elvin Jones mixes up the dynamics within the triplet fills he plays during timekeeping. There is nothing monotonous in his drumming! Try this: While playing a series of triplet-based figures on the drumset, mix up the dynamics and vary the accents around the kit, so as to make a sort of "wave" of velocity, setting off mini-explosions of rhythmic vitality.

Fill Examples

Triplets around the drumset:

RL RLR etc.

Alternate sticking (à la Elvin):

RL LR LR RL LR RL LR RL LR

Displaced bass drum beat of triplet:

H.H. >
R L R L R L R L R

Accents give shape to musical phrases.

So does density, or being busy. In other words, consider the musical factors of fast fills with lots of notes, slow fills with lots of space, or something in between. Just like all of the other instantaneous drumming decisions you'll be making on the bandstand or in the studio when you play, listening and playing experience will be your best guide.