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Drumset Notation Guide

The diagram shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff contains six notes with stems pointing up, labeled from left to right: R. foot bass drum, L. foot bass drum, R. hand snare drum, L. hand snare drum, Ghost notes (two notes with stems pointing down), and R. hand hi-hat (a note with a stem pointing down and an 'x' above it). The bottom staff contains eight notes with stems pointing down, labeled from left to right: L. hand hi-hat (note with 'x' above), R. hand open hi-hat (note with 'o' above), L. hand open hi-hat (note with 'o' above), Hi-hat with foot (note with 'x' above), Ride cymbal (note with 'x' above), Bell of ride cymbal (note with a circle above), R. hand crash cymbal (note with 'x' above), and L. hand crash cymbal (note with 'x' above).

NOTE: When you see “voc.” this tells you to subdivide a figure—or a set of figures—with your voice.

THE IMPORTANCE OF VERBAL RECITATION TO MASTERING TIME

The “Above the Neck” Concept

This concept is based on the notion that a musician’s time is best mastered in his or her mind. When we practice mastering time with the mind we can learn to *internally activate and simultaneously manage the pulse, the space and the shape of a rhythmic structure*. In this state our limbs assume a passive role adhering to what the mind dictates; this is, of course, assuming that technique (execution) is not hindering the process.

In my experience I have found that a lot of students generate time with their limbs and don’t have a strong enough *conception* of time. I find this often results in someone’s time feeling awkward, or out of control to greater and lesser degrees, and sometimes “weighted down” – as in, it’s just not driving and floating enough.

I know that, for me, when I’m generating time internally, and my limbs are following and flowing with that “signal,” the time feels good. When I play I want to feel like I’m riding on something just as much as I’m powering the ride. Ultimately, I want to feel like my mind is creating the time and my limbs exist for no other reason than to provide a conduit from my perception of the time to it manifesting on the drumset.

In this book our time *and* our technique can be improved at once if we follow some guidelines and we **practice slowly**. The goal is to so thoroughly train the mind and body as to eventually be *free of the task of having to think about generating consistent time*. This is another skill that all great musicians possess.

Subdividing

The principle practice in this book to reach this goal is to subdivide with our voice the figures we will master with our limbs. Subdividing—*especially* when done slowly—improves our ability to see time internally (no notation needed), and internally *account* for the pulse, space, and shape of the time because we are *naming each component* as it flows by. This *intelligence* being planted in the mind by the voice gives us an awareness and control of time that the body cannot facilitate.

When the disciplines in this book require us to subdivide and play simultaneously, we engage in a practice of mastering time from within *while* improving our ability to more effortlessly create and execute ideas. This practice helps us on the way toward the ultimate goal of playing great time with effortless execution *while* hearing and responding to the other parts of the music.

Please see the “Above-the-Neck Disciplines” on the following page for details as to how you will apply your voice to your training.

