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DRUM PERFORMANCE 3

Unit 1

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|----|
| 1. | Pop-Rock Ghost-Note Grooves | 4 |
| 2. | Performance Notes and Sound | 6 |
| 3. | Pop-Rock Play-Along | 12 |

Unit 2

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|----|
| 1. | Two-Handed Swung 16th-Note Grooves | 15 |
| 2. | Performance Notes and Sound | 17 |
| 3. | Modern Rock Play-Along | 21 |

Unit 3

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|----|
| 1. | One-Handed Swung 16th-Note Grooves | 24 |
| 2. | Performance Notes and Sound | 28 |
| 3. | Hip-Hop Play-Along | 32 |

Unit 4

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------|----|
| 1. | Swung 16th-Note Grooves w/Ghost Notes | 34 |
| 2. | Performance Notes and Sound | 36 |
| 3. | Soul-Funk Play-Along | 44 |

Unit 5

- | | | |
|----|---|----|
| 1. | World Beat and Pad Triggering | 46 |
| 2. | World Beat Play-Along with Triggered Loop | 48 |

Unit 6

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|----|
| 1. | Slow Swing Grooves and Subdividing | 50 |
| 2. | Performance Notes and Sound | 52 |
| 3. | Swing Blues Play-Along | 57 |

Unit 7

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|----|
| 1. | Jazz (with Brushes) to Bossa Nova | 59 |
| 2. | Performance Notes and Sound | 62 |
| 3. | Swing Blues Play-Along | 67 |

Unit 8

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|----|
| 1. | Top 40 Pop with Samba Vamp | 70 |
| 2. | Performance Notes and Sound | 73 |
| 3. | “Timber Grooves” (Top 40 Play-Along) | 77 |

Unit 9

- | | | |
|----|---|----|
| 1. | New Orleans Second Line to Jump Swing | 79 |
| 2. | Performance Notes and Sound | 81 |
| 3. | New Orleans Second Line/Jump Swing Play-Along | 84 |

Unit 10

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------|----|
| 1. | Progressive Metal | 87 |
| 2. | Progressive Metal Play-Along | 92 |
| | About the Authors | 94 |

Chapter 1: Pop-Rock Ghost-Note Grooves

Pop-rock's primary focus is on big, catchy, and instantly memorable melodies alongside rock instrumentation, precise grooves and a strong, definitive backbeat. In addition, pop-rock also has an emphasis on the professional craft of songwriting and record-making. The songs are tightly constructed in both groove and melody, with no wasted space, extraneous notes or detours from the original theme. The production is clean, polished, and bright, which makes full use of current recording technology. Thus, pop-rock is polished, catchy and energetic enough to appeal to younger listeners, but clean and safe enough for adults to enjoy too. With its commercial accessibility, this genre produced some of the biggest stars of the 1980s, 90s and 2000s, such as Elton John, Sting, Avril Lavigne, Michelle Branch, Gavin Degraw and Sheryl Crow. Today's chart is in the modern tradition of Sheryl Crow and groove masters Shawn Pelton and Steve Jordan.

Structure: The ABC 24-Bar Form

This unique 24-bar form is comprised of three different sections, and each one is assigned a rehearsal letter (A, B and C). Similarly to previous performance books, each letter (section) represents three key musical attributes. They are (1.) a particular rhythm, (2.) a particular chord structure (and melody) and (3.), a specific phrase length. The A section is four bars long, the B section is 12 bars long (with the aid of a repeat) and the C section is eight bars long. Altogether, these three sections make up the 24-bar form. For example:

Ex. 1.1

A: 4bars

B: 12 bars (6-bar phrase repeated)

C: 8 bars

24 bars total

D. S. al Coda (with repeats)

Letter A

Letter A features a unique four-bar phrase alongside a very syncopated 16th-note based train groove. Not only does the bass drum have quite a bit of movement within the 16th note pulse, but also the snare drum is not your standard train backbeat either. In addition, you should now utilize a rim shot articulation on the snare drum. There are a few 32nd notes within this phrase and they should be played as double strokes as well.

Ex. 1.2

A

1

3

Snare Drum Train Variations

Although letter A is a four-bar phrase, there are snare drum variations within bars 2, 3 and 4. These measures are comprised of various rim shots (and 32nd notes), which add excitement to a normally stagnant train groove. The phrase ends with a five-stroke roll leading into a break on beat 3 (of bar 4):

Ex. 1.3

A

1

3

Chapter 2: Performance Notes and Sound

Letter B

Letter B features a two-bar, very syncopated eighth and 16th-note based groove, which utilizes the snare drum, bass drum and open and closed hi-hat voices. The snare drum employs a standard backbeat and a typical ghost note pattern that is performed on both the “e” of beats 1 and 3 – and on the “ah” of beats 2 and 4. These ghost notes are played extremely softly, which should be “felt rather than heard.” Please also notice the hi-hat opening on the “&” of beat 3 in bar 2 of the phrase.

Ex. 1.4



Letter B Ghost Note Exercises: The Hands – Hi-Hat and Snare Drum

Before attempting Letter B’s groove, it is extremely important that you understand how the snare drum ghost pattern fits within the eighth-note hi-hat pattern (and resulting pulse). Please make sure to practice this pattern slowly and evenly, while subdividing 16th notes. Once it becomes comfortable, you should gradually work up to this unit’s performance tempo: 86 BPM.

Ex. 1.5

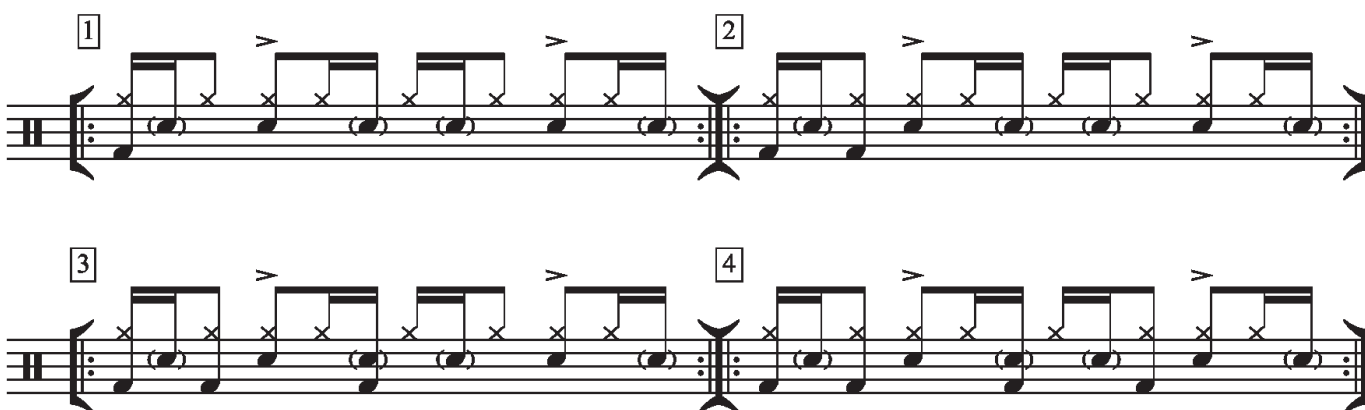


Letter B Preliminary Ghost Note Exercises: Isolate Each Bass Drum

At 86 BPM, it would be very easy to rush these ghost notes, play them too loudly, flam them with the bass drum and generally make the groove feel uneven. Therefore, we have compiled an exhaustive set of preliminary exercises that will help you to isolate each bass drum note against the ghost note pattern. Each exercise adds an additional bass drum, which will help you maintain your groove’s consistency and become comfortable with the required coordination as well. In order to play perfect unisons between the snare and bass drum, please make sure to subdivide these exercises within a 16th-note click at a slow tempo, before working up to 86 BPM.

Ex. 1.6

Development of Bar One (of the Two-Bar Pattern)



Ex. 1.7

Development of Bar Two (of the Two-Bar Pattern)

The image shows six variations of a two-bar musical pattern, numbered 1 through 6. Each variation is written on a single staff. The notation includes eighth notes, quarter notes, and rests, with various articulation marks like accents and slurs. The variations are numbered 1 through 6.

Both Bars Together:

The image shows a musical notation for both bars together, labeled 'B'. It is written on a single staff and consists of a two-measure phrase. The notation includes eighth notes, quarter notes, and rests, with various articulation marks like accents and slurs. The letter 'B' is in a box at the beginning.

Articulations

In addition to the normal “bury the beater” bass drum and snare drum rim shot backbeat articulations, Letter B will feature a chunky “shouldered” hi-hat sound and mezzo-piano snare drum ghost note sound. Lets take a look at how to achieve these new articulations:

Ex. 1.8 (below)

**Hi-Hat: Chunky “Shouldered” Eighths**

This one-handed chunky eighth-note hi-hat pattern should be played evenly and forcefully, at a dynamic of mezzo-forte (medium loud). In order to achieve this sound, you will use a loose grip and the shoulder of the stick to simultaneously play both the top and the bottom hi-hat cymbal. This technique (along with the snare ghost notes and syncopated bass drum pattern) creates a thick sound, which makes the groove feel fatter, and also gives the illusion that the song is faster than 86 BPM.



Important: Do not use the shoulder/tip motion on the hi-hat because it will only accent the downbeats! This will sound very old-fashioned! Example: Rather than an articulation of “chick-chick-chick-chick,” think instead of your hi-hat saying “chunk-chunk-chunk-chunk.”

Important: Do not use the tip of the stick on the top of the hi-hat. This can sound very corny and drum machine-like!

Mezzo-Piano Snare Drum Ghost Notes

The snare drum employs a standard backbeat and a typical ghost note pattern that is performed on both the “e” of beats 1 and 3, and on the “ah” of beats 2 and 4. These ghost notes are played extremely softly, which should be “felt rather than heard.” In order to achieve this ghosted sound, you will use the tip of the stick in the center of the snare drum with a light “drop” stroke. This “drop” stroke is achieved by loosening the fingers (which lets the stick drop and lightly tap the head)—rather than a full wrist-motivated down stroke (Ex. 1.9). For the next backbeat, re-grip the stick around the fingers, lift your hand (from the previous ghost note position) and strike your rim shot as you would normally (Ex. 1.10).

Please keep in mind that this technique will take a bit of effort to achieve. Be diligent and patient and you will be able to play these patterns successfully!

Ex. 1.9 (below)



Ex. 1.9 (above)

Letter C

Letter C features a one-bar phrase alongside a very syncopated eighth and 16th-note based groove, which utilizes the snare drum, bass drum and a medium eighth-note hi-hat voice. The snare drum employs the same standard backbeat and an additional typical ghost note pattern.

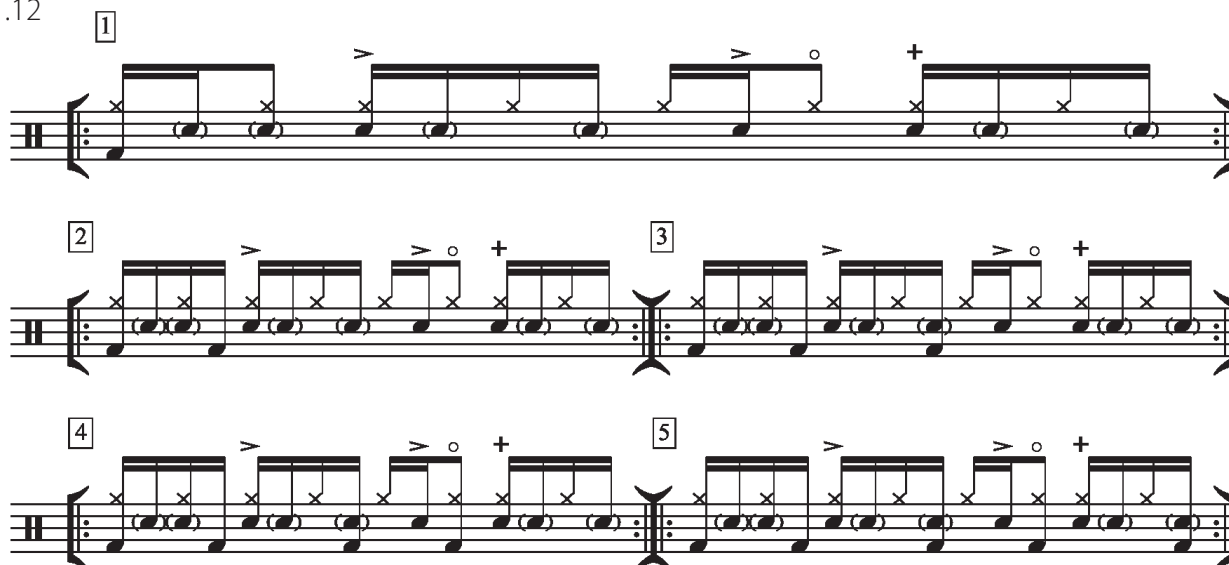
Ex. 1.11



Letter C Preliminary Ghost Note Exercises: Isolate Each Bass Drum

Just as in Letter B’s groove, it would be very easy to rush these ghost notes, play them too loudly, flam them with the bass drum and generally make them feel uneven. Therefore, we have compiled an additional set of preliminary exercises that will help you to isolate each bass drum note against the ghost note and hi-hat patterns.

Ex. 1.12



Letter C: Recurring Ensemble Figure

Letter C (and C2) has ensemble figures on the "&" of beat 3 and the "ah" of beat 4 within both bars 4 and 8 of the phrases. For example:

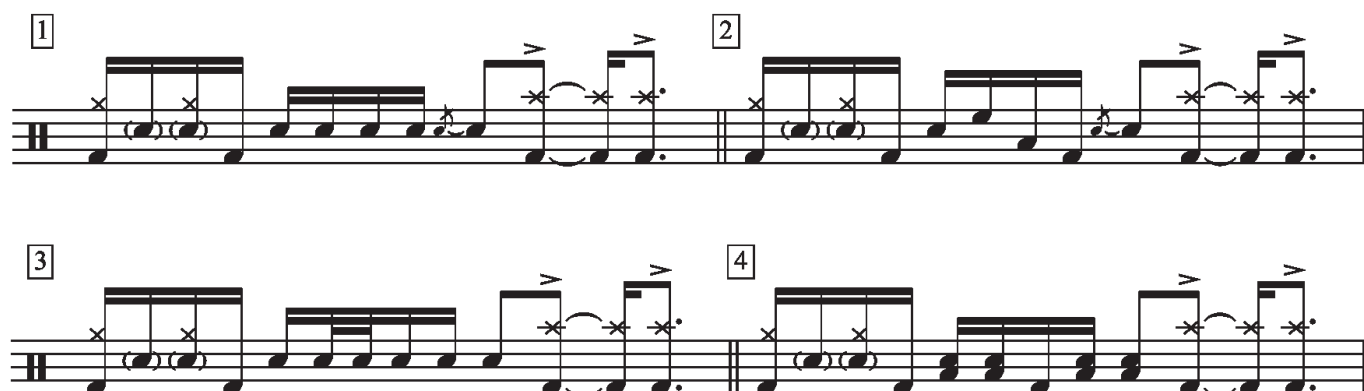
Ex. 1.13



Letter C: Setup Fills

The ensemble figures within letters C and C2 are preceded by a 1-1/2-beat fill marker. As these ensemble figures are very syncopated, you must be sure to play a very solid downbeat on beat 3, which will help to "set up" (and therefore telegraph) their arrival. Here is a short list of (possible) practical set up fills:

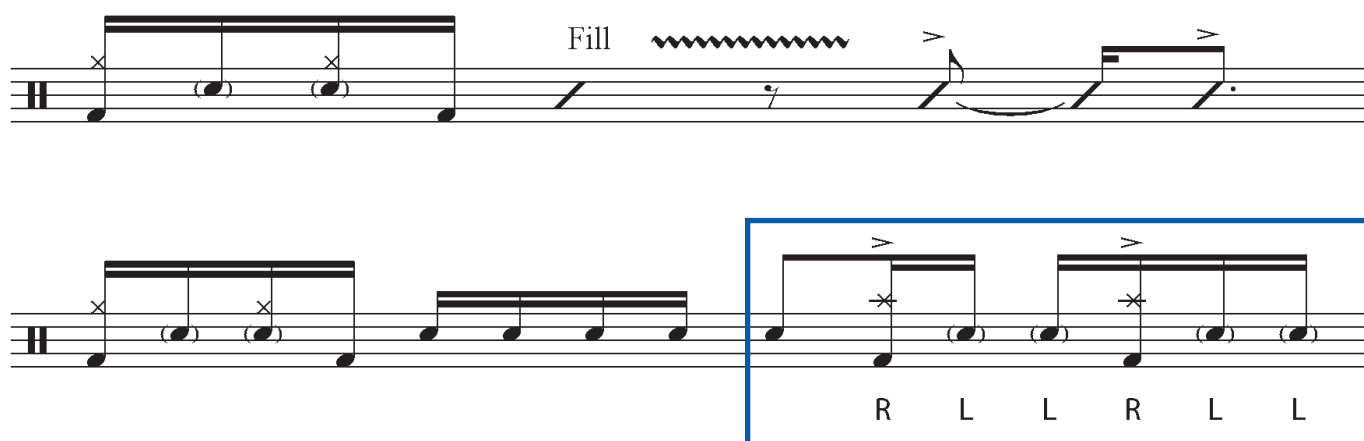
Ex. 1.14



Filling Between Figures

In addition to forecasting these figures, you must also make sure these figures are played properly (and consistently). To ensure proper beat placement of these notes, it is best to fill in the missing 16th notes (between the two figures) with ghost notes on the snare drum. For example:

Ex. 1.15



Ride Cymbal with Upbeat Eighth-Note Accents at Letter C2

Ex. 1.16



Ex. 1.17



The un-accented note on the downbeat: In order to achieve this sound, you will use the tip of the stick, just beneath the tip. Next, use this part of the stick to strike the body of the cymbal. However, because you are striking the bell on the downbeats, you will not be able to strike the ride in the normal spot! Your hand will not be able to reposition itself that quickly. With this in mind, you will use the tip of the stick in the left-hand center part of the cymbal (to the left of the bell itself). See Ex. 1.16 at left.

The accented note on the upbeat: In order to achieve this accented sound, you will use the shoulder of the stick, a third of the way down from the tip, as shown in Ex. 1.17.

Ex. 1.18



All Together

In order to play these two notes back to back, you must use your fingers (and partial wrist) on the quiet (unaccented) note on the downbeat, and your wrist for the loud (accented) note on the upbeat. Overall the motion is a small movement, on the side of the cymbal from left to right, as shown in the two photos of Ex. 1.18 above.

The Coda

The coda features a short five-bar breakdown section utilizing only the hi-hat (with accents) and bass drum. Notice that the fourth bar of the coda is a bar of 2/4. Be sure to count through the 2/4 bar and re-set your count back to 1 on the next bar of 4/4. There is a guitar lick on bar five followed by a written-out drum fill.

Ex. 1.19

