



This session will focus on a natural approach to playing any drum, as well as the age-old problem of sticking. It will address natural sticking to alleviate that issue. These techniques work for all ages to relieve tension, provide more mobility, and develop a foundation for more advanced techniques.

March 4, 2022
10:05 am Session
Room 212

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IT'S NOT ALL IN THE WRIST

HOW DO YOU BEGIN YOUR OTHER ENSEMBLE INSTRUMENTALISTS?

- When you start out any brass, strings, or woodwind players, what is the first articulation or style do you begin with?
- So why would we begin with wrists? Does this mimic what the other instrumentalists begin with?

LET'S KEEP IT SIMPLE...HOW DO YOU BOUNCE A BASKETBALL?

- When bouncing a ball, what is engaged in your arm? Do you or your students truly need to think about it? NO, IT'S NATURAL, RIGHT?!?
- If you have the opportunity, bring a basketball into the classroom (*if at all feasible*) and have your student(s) do a bouncing drill.
 - Few counts of dribble, pass ball, pickup stick and mimic movement on pad or drum...*this may be better for older students.*
- I have had success in not discussing too much of the “breakdown” of the anatomy of the stroke
 - Yes, the arm, wrist, and fingers are all engaged in some aspect; however, it is unnecessary to discuss in depth at begin as to muddy the water and draw too much attention to one part of the stroke

LEGATO STROKE

- Also referred to as a *Rebound Stroke* or *Full Stroke* because the stroke allows the stick to “rebound” (bounce) off of the drumhead and produces a “full” tone from the drum.
- Start in an up position (*see Figure 1.1*)...notice both sticks start at the same height (*think of the stick as an extension of your arm...we learn from big motion*)
- The player throws the stick toward the head, with the drum naturally rebounds the stick back to the upstroke position. JUST LIKE THROWING THE BASKETBALL TO THE GROUND AND RECEIVING IT BACK AT THE STARTING POSITION OF DRIBBLE.
- The key to playing legato is not restricting the rebound of the stick. The motion of the stick should never stop...it is always moving either toward or away from the drumhead. ALLOW THE DRUM TO DO THE WORK.
- For now, the fingers should remain on the stick; however, they should not hold the stick against the palm inhibiting the rebound.
- The arms, hands, and fingers remain relaxed, naturally moving with the motion of the stick.

Figure 1.1



TRANSFERABILITY...THIS ISN'T JUST FOR CONCERT SEASON

- The Legato Stroke can be used on all major instruments in the percussion family. For more information explore the following sources:
 1. Concert Snare Drum: Bill Meligari, "The Gladstone Technique," *Modern Percussionist* (August/September 1979): 42-43.
 2. Mallets: Stevens, Leigh Howard, *Method of Movement for Marimba*, Asbury Park: Keyboard Percussion Publications, 1990.
 3. Timpani: Hinger, Fred, *Techniques for the Virtuoso Tympanist*, Hackensack: Jerona Music Corporation, 1975.
 4. Marching Percussion: Bachman, Bill, *Rudimental Logic 3.0: A Guide to the Art of Rudimental Drumming*, Nashville: Row-Loff Productions, 2006.

DEVELOPING INTO OTHER STROKES AND CONCEPTS

- Down Stroke
- Up Stroke
- Tap Stroke
- My favorite...the "Push Pull" Stroke

STOP ALTERNATING

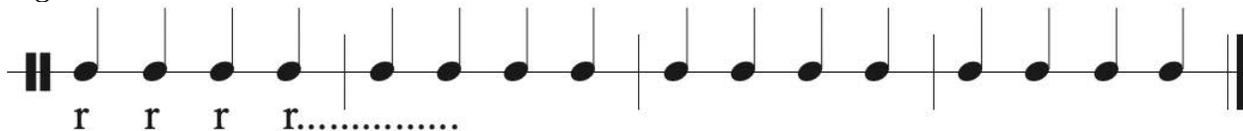
THINK ABOUT HOW DO YOU BEGIN YOUR OTHER INSTRUMENTALISTS?

- When you start out any brass, strings, or woodwind players, do you begin discussing alternate fingerings/positions?
- So why would we begin having our percussionists begin alternating on rhythmic note?
- I think most would agree that we need to build a foundation to build upon.
- Quote from Flack, E.W., *STICKING METHODS: Rudimental, Natural/Straight, and Alternating*, The Drumslingers Blog, Traditional and Modern American drumming, its history, theory, and techniques: Tuesday, October 5, 2021.
 - The natural sticking method... does not rely on the complex rudimental patterns of military drumming, although a mastery of basic rudimental technique is still important. The concept behind natural sticking is based on the observation that most people are right-handed and therefore the strongest beats which are the "pulse" beats should be played by the strongest hand which is the right hand. All subsequent up-beats are played by the left-hand which results in naturally flowing sticking patterns throughout. In his book, *Championship Concepts for Marching Percussion*, Thom Hannum wrote that the natural sticking system, "negates any awkward doublings of one hand or the other." Hannum then prescribes a series of 16th note timing exercises based on duple and triple beat check patterns. To explain their sticking he says, "All stickings are derived by eliminating the stroke of the note which is rested. Then play the remaining values in the sequence of natural sticking."⁽¹⁾ Natural sticking is generally easier for most people to learn; it enables less experienced players to more readily produce an even and consistent quality of sound. Natural sticking is an excellent option for marching band drum lines because the simple sticking patterns facilitate the ability to play at faster tempos while presenting a visually uniform style. Drum lines using the natural sticking system can more quickly adapt to changes in musical scores, requiring less rehearsal time.
 - Sight reading drum music is easier when using the natural sticking method compared to rudimental sticking because reading becomes a matter of visual pattern recognition which does not require anticipating and controlling unpredictable sticking patterns. Probably the earliest American advocate of natural sticking and the man who best explained and helped proliferate that system was Edward B. Straight (one of the original 13 founders of N.A.R.D.) Ed Straight wrote several books on the topic of modern drumming. [...] Ed Straight's strong influence in popularizing natural sticking is why it is often called "Straight Sticking." In the introductory pages of his book, Straight lists the following points to explain the foundation of his Natural Way System. (2)

BUILDING BLOCKS TO NATURAL STICKING

- Begin by putting every downbeat in the **Right Hand** (see Figure 2.1 below)
 - Though there is a belief that we should try to make our students hands equal, both hands will never truly be equal (*we all have a dominant hand*), and we shouldn't be worried about that in the beginning stages

Figure 2.1



- The next step is to add the upbeats in the **Left Hand**.
 - Consecutive eighth notes will alternate (see Figure 2.2 below)
 - Now to vary the eighth note/quarter note groupings
 - The key is to have students lock in on the downbeat all **Right Hand** and throw the **Left Hand** in when notated (see Figure 2.3 below)
 - Right Hand is the foundation

Figure 2.2

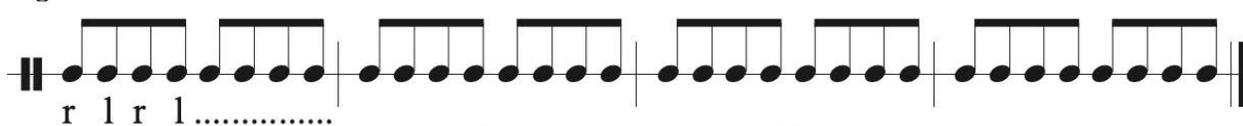
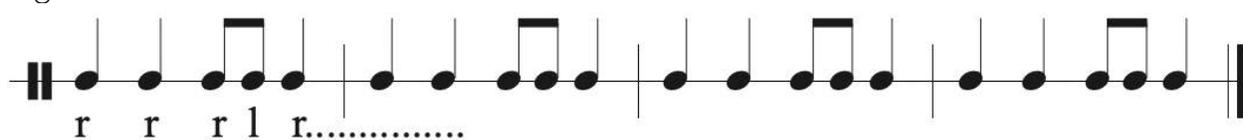


Figure 2.3



- How this will easily transfer into 16th note rhythms.
 - When beginning to incorporate 8th note with 16th note rhythms, the sticking has already been taught (see Figure 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6 below)
 - Students have already developed and learned muscle memory to transition into 16th note rhythms

Figure 2.4

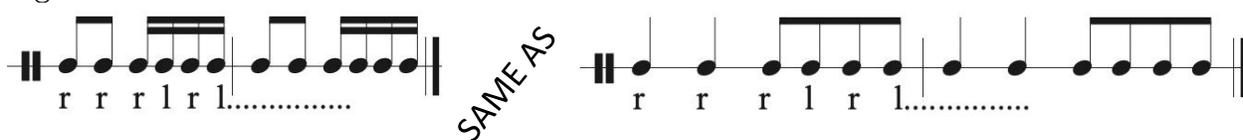


Figure 2.5

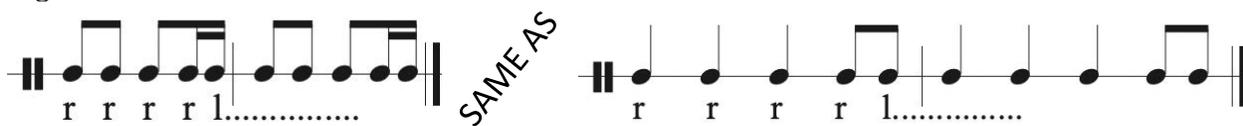
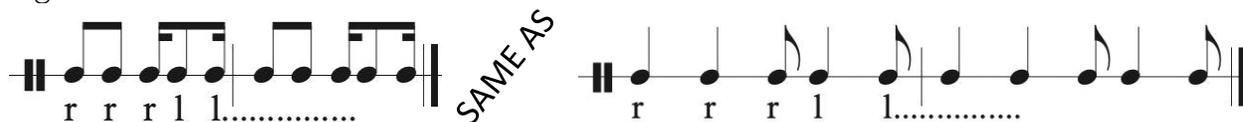


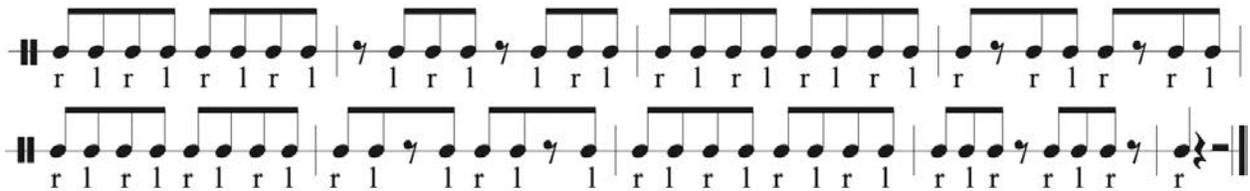
Figure 2.6



EXERCISES TO DEVELOP NATURAL STICKING WITH RESTS

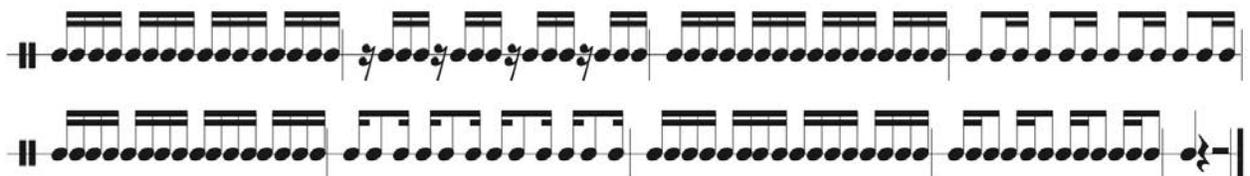
- Eighth Note Check Pattern
 - Eighth Note Check Pattern (pattern you always come pack to) while displacing Eighth Note Rests (see *Figure 3.1 below*)
 - Some things to try during rests:
 1. Hit rim on rest
 2. Air the rest
 3. Squeeze the rest
 4. No Movement

Figure 3.1



- Sixteenth Note Check Pattern
 - Same idea as the Eighth Note Check Pattern
 - Sixteenth Note Check Pattern (pattern you always come pack to) while displacing Sixteenth Note Rests (see *Figure 3.2 below*)
 - Some things to try during rests:
 1. Hit rim on rest
 2. Air the rest
 3. Squeeze the rest
 4. No Movement

Figure 3.2



BEGIN PUTTING IT INTO CONTEXT

- Here are random Eighth & Sixteenth Note Combination Patterns (see *Figure 4.1 & 4.2 below*)
 - These are random patterns I created, but can simple be created own your own
 - Once your students begin understanding the concept, try "Sight Reading Challenges"...it is fun to watch are partake in!!!

Figure 4.1



Figure 4.2





Mr. Jason B. Birch is currently the Director of Bands at Sherrard Middle School and the Director of Percussion Studies at John Marshall High School. Mr. Birch studied Music Education at West Virginia University and West Liberty State College. Jason has been the Director of Bands at Braxton County High School in Flatwoods, WV, Plum Borough High School in Pittsburgh, PA, Wheeling Park High School in Wheeling, WV, and Triadelphia and Warwood Middle Schools in Wheeling, WV.

During his time in Ohio County Schools, he taught K-12 General Music at Steenrod Elementary in Wheeling, WV. Mr. Birch has also taught at the collegiate level at Bethany College as Director of the Marching Stampede, Wind Ensemble, Conducting Class, and Percussion.

Mr. Birch is also a freelance musician in the Wheeling and Pittsburgh area and has had the opportunity to teach and perform abroad in Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Russia, and Slovakia. He has performed throughout Eastern Europe and Russia and taught at the Krakow School of Jazz and Contemporary Music Academy. He has studied percussion and drumset with Allison Miller, Dr. Glenn Schaft, Dave Throckmorton, and Al Wrublesky. Mr. Birch has performed with various groups such as the Real Silk Band, Curtis Johnson Quartet, Phoenix Jazz Project, 1170 Band, Roger Hoard Jazz Quartet, Hoard & Jones, Tim Ullom Band, Steel Cassa, Johnny Tillotson, and The Crystals.

Mr. Birch resides in Wheeling, WV with his wife and three sons.



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