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Technique of Percussion / January 1950

GEORGE LAWRENCE STONE
for *International Musician Magazine*

THE SIDE FLAM (Unalternated)

MORE about flams—this time concerning deviation from their generally accepted hand-to-hand alternation:

It often is found expedient to play a series of consecutive flams “to the same hand” rather than alternately. Art music furnishes many examples of this, particularly where such flams must be executed with considerable speed and accuracy. A comparison between hand-to-hand execution and the side execution shown below will demonstrate the advantage of the latter style:

SIDE FLAM EXAMPLES

(♩ = 132)

(♩ = 96)

An interesting and productive study of contrast in execution of hand-to-hand and side (alternated and unalternated) flams is shown below. Practice each exercise many times over at normal speed, taking care to poise the low stick of each flam at, say, two inches from the striking surface and the high stick at, say, twelve inches.

FLAM EXERCISES

In the pattern of the
DOUBLE PARADIDDLE

LR RL LR RL LR RL LR RL LR RL LR RL

In the pattern of the
SINGLE PARADIDDLE

LR RL LR RL LR RL LR RL

In the pattern of the
LONG ROLL

LR LR RL RL LR LR RL RL

Technique of Percussion / July 1951

GEORGE LAWRENCE STONE

for *International Musician Magazine*

UNLESS you are one of those rare birds who nurse the opinion that they have reached the top and that therefore further practice is unnecessary, here is a thought for your daily workout:

PRACTICE THE THINGS YOU DON'T LIKE!

Ten to one the reason you don't like them is because you can't do them. One often wastes precious time going over and over some easy figure (or a difficult one already mastered) when he really should be working on one that seems unattainable. Don't let the daily practice period degenerate into an aimless banging around of sticks or mallets. Go after something tough, and don't let go until you have mastered it.

BILLY DORN

Billy Dorn of Newark (need I add "New Jersey") is certainly a busy performer on the sounding surfaces. Played percussion since the age of eleven; played first movie houses in Newark; Green Brothers' Novelty Orchestra; practically all New York phonograph and radio jobs; New York Philharmonic; N. B. C. Orchestra under Toscanini; teaches; operates a music store. If Billy hasn't already developed ulcers from all this, he'd better watch out.

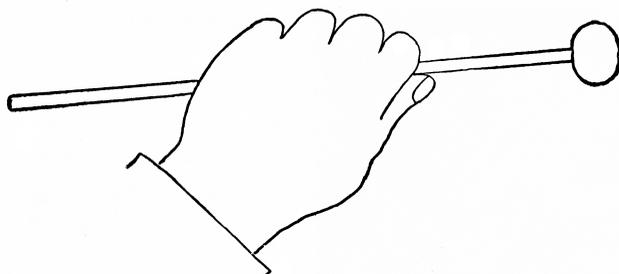
Reference to the Green Brothers recalls a pleasant association with George Hamilton Green, both in New York and in Boston. I knew his late brother Joe, too, but not so well. It was George who was responsible for my altering a style of mallet playing which, up to the time of our first meeting, I had considered tops. This was many years ago, when I was touring over the then famous Keith Vaudeville Circuit, being billed as *Wizard of the Xylophone*. Naturally I considered showmanship to be an important part of my act and naturally, too, said showmanship included a free and easy style of throwing the mallets down onto the instrument from high levels with all the abandon, *sang froid*, and what have you that I could muster. This went well with the audiences, but it sometimes happened that the great *Wizard* became so engrossed in his showmanship that (speak it in whispers) he would strike a *clinker*.

George Hamilton, on the other hand, was chiefly engaged in making records, by himself and with his All-Star Trio, and, since there were no recording studio audiences to worry about, he could dispense with showmanship and concentrate all his efforts on what he was playing. Thus, and by such devices as striking from relatively low levels and elimination of lost motion, he reduced mistakes to a minimum—in fact, so far as I could ever hear from his live playing and his waxing, there were no clinkers at all. It didn't take long for a great white light to shine down upon me, and thereafter I began to dwell more upon scientific production and less upon theatrical gestures.

Now the Mallet Handhold

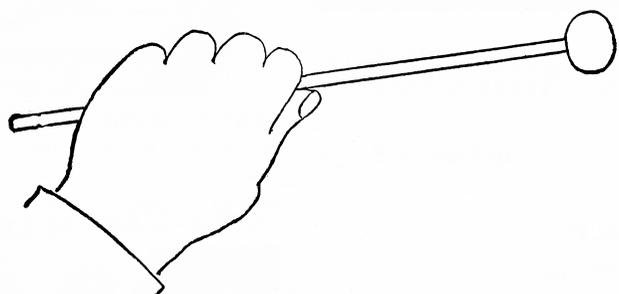
This is a follow-up to the brief discourse on drumstick holding which appeared in this column in the May, 1957, issue, entitled *Handholds—not how but where*. It concerns the *seesaw* versus *drumstick* fulcrum, now applied to the mallets used on the xylophone, marimba and vibes.

Example 1, below, shows a careless, inadequate handhold that I frequently see, with mallets held at or near the seesaw fulcrum—practically at the center of the shaft.



It will be apparent that even with the added weight of the mallet head, there is insufficient preponderance of weight—overhang—length of shaft—for a mallet to do its full share of the work.

Example 2 shows the mallet properly held (subject to hand characteristics and length of shaft) at what might be called the *mallet* fulcrum.



Check your own handholds (those of you who still have aspirations) against those in the sketches above, and compare. Of course, the same principle applies equally to left and right handholds.

Beating the Egg

A reader asks the meaning of the term “beating the egg,” as applied to concert band conducting.

This is a backstage colloquialism, referring to the way a leader might wield his baton when in trouble.

Leaders have been known, believe it or not, to lose their place in the music while conducting. When a maestro so flounders while the opus is going full blast—call it a mental block if you will—his baton is apt to go haywire, and often he will find himself beating in circles, leaving it to his band to carry on until he catches up with the beat.

This rotary “where am I?” beat may be said to follow the pattern long used by grandmaw when she breaks an egg into an old fashioned mixing bowl and stirs it up with a spoon until

Technique of Percussion / March 1958

GEORGE LAWRENCE STONE

for *International Musician Magazine*

From a current South American drum method written in Portuguese with English translation comes a dilly, and new, to me at least, wherein a snare drum with snares disconnected is translated into a "dumb drum."

Following along with the gag, why couldn't we call a vibe with muffled bars a set of "dumb-bells," or a waiter who stumbles over his feet and spills the coffee down the back of a diner's neck, a "dumb-waiter?"

THE CHOKE CYMBAL

Quite a few inquiries have been received recently about the *choke cymbal*—*what it is and how it is choked*. This item is nothing new to the drummer; it has been called for in stock sheets and special arrangements for lo, these many years. Like the boy from the sticks who, visiting the big city for the first time, was surprised at the number of people who had never heard of his own home town, East Gwonk, Idaho, I am similarly surprised at the number of supposedly hep drummers who seek information on this simple gimmick. However, here it is.

Usually a Small Cymbal

The choke cymbal is a small one, usually seven to eleven inches in diameter. Veteran cymbalsmith Avedis Zildjian lists it as a *splash cymbal*. It is thin in weight and normally used for fast cymbal crash work. When the tone is choked (stopped) immediately after the cymbal is struck it becomes a choke cymbal for the time being.

Prolonged Cymbal Tone Versus the Choke

For a prolonged cymbal tone we generally use a big *crash cymbal* (fourteen through eighteen inches in diameter), striking it and letting it ring throughout its notated value or thereabouts, as shown in Example 1, below.



For a choked cymbal tone we strike the smaller cymbal and immediately thereafter stop its tone, making its duration correspond approximately to that of the cymbal note appearing in Example 2.

I had discovered the calibre of the new sounds produced from merely wiping one brush across the drumhead while swatting down and around with the other, and for months I demonstrated this new and exciting method to all who would listen. However, the consensus of opinion of those who bothered to listen was that “Stone is beginning to lose his marbles.” However, you can’t keep a good idea down, and finally, through the years, jazz brushes have caught on to the extent that today’s modern would feel lost without this now-so-important tool of his trade.

While mentioning drum gadgets, it might be interesting to note that cloth drumheads, also the process of coating heads with celluloid to make them waterproof, date back as far as 1880, according to patent office records. There are records, too, of fibre drum shells, ones of papier maché, and ones of solid celluloid. The *tone control* is not the johnny-come-lately it is cracked up to be, either, the first one of its kind having been patented (hold your hat) in 1896. Nothing new under the sun, as they say.

Aim Before You Shoot

It has been said that a picture is sometimes better than a thousand words. The picture at the left is dedicated to the drummer-to-be who unthinkingly, unconsciously or unsomething-or-otherly, habitually drums with his brawny right arm held aloft to wave in the breeze, forgetting that normally both sticks should be poised at the same striking level.

This work of art (no comments, please) is in answer to a wottle-I-do letter from an exasperated instructor whose sentiments regarding proper poising levels are not shared by some of his pupils.

Hold everything, *exasperated*. Paste a picture like this up on your studio wall for the aspirants to gaze at and ponder. Maybe it will do the trick.

In the meantime relax, and hark back to those happy care-free days of your own youth, when *you* didn’t think *your* teacher knew anything, either.



“Rolling In Rhythm”

Charley Wilcoxon, ace instructor of Cleveland, Ohio, has done it again with his latest published drumming textbook, “Rolling in Rhythm.” It is dedicated to the drummers’ rolls—and who among us doesn’t need a brush-up on these?—and it is based on the standard rudimentary stroke rolls set to various rhythmic figures and under various musical signatures.

The advanced performer looking for trouble in his conception and control of the various roll-forms encountered in every-day music will find in this book all the trouble he expects and then some.

Good luck, Charley, in this your latest contribution to the technical department of the art.

Now in contrast, for something combining accentuation with hand and finger action, try the following set of conditioners entitled “Accented Triplets” from my latest textbook, “Accents and Rebounds” [see next page].