

DRUM TUTOR

1 The Rudiments

The twenty-six standard American drum rudiments mentioned above are the basis for our ancient style of drumming. The patterns for these rudiments are shown as the first item under "Drum Beatings". The rudiments may be played for themselves by starting to play the rudiment slowly and then repeating the rudiment over and over, a little faster each time. Once the fastest speed at which the rudiment can be played cleanly has been reached, the process is reversed, slowly decreasing the speed to the beginning pace. This is known as the "open, close, and open" method of practicing the rudiments.

*The rudiments are also combined to form beatings for tunes. They are the ancient drummer's "notes". Each of these "notes" is a combination of strokes which must be painstakingly memorized so that our hands know how to play them without having to think about the motions. Therefore, it is easy to understand why a drummer must be willing to practice at least **one continuous hour a day, every day, no excuses**, if he or she ever wants to become proficient. Drum recruits must understand that their fellow fife recruits will be playing songs before they can. However, if the recruit sticks with an hour-plus practice every day, he should become an acorn drummer by the end of one year.*

2 The Drummer's Stance

Our music is of a martial marching style. This should be reflected in your stance and attitude. Stand at attention when you practice and play. Put your heels together, your toes slightly apart; this is so you don't fall over. Keep your shoulders back, your eyes front, so you can see where you're headed, and receive commands from the drum major, fifemaster, or drum sergeant. The time to learn these habits is while you are practicing, not when you've embarrassed your corps.

3 Gripping the Sticks

If you are still reading, the next lesson is on holding your sticks. We use a traditional grip, which was designed to make playing on a drum (offset to the drummers left side) easier. The right stick is gripped much like a hammer. Just behind the balance point the stick is gripped firmly between the thumb (just forward of last knuckle) and the index finger (just forward of the first knuckle) with the rest of the fingers lightly curled around the stick. The left hand is a bit more difficult at first. Hold your left hand at about waist height, palm up, fingers together, as if you were trying to cup water in your palm. Now raise your thumb slightly away from your hand. Separate the ring and middle fingers (keep the fingers bent like when you began). Now slide the drum stick into your hand, over the ring finger, under the middle finger and under your thumb. The stick is held firmly at the base of the thumb and slightly less firmly between the ring finger and the middle finger. The stick rests between the second and third knuckles of these latter fingers. Your hand should still look as if you are trying to cup water. This will make your index finger curl slightly over the stick. Make sure your wrist is straight and that you haven't clamped your ring and little fingers against your palm. Either of these mistakes would cause your arm to become cramped. Your ring finger should be against the stick just behind the balance point.

4 Learning the Rudiments

When you begin to play most of the rudiments, your hands should be at eye height, with the sticks pointing straight up. Keep your hands out over your drum. Each elbow should be the same distance away from your side. Don't let your left elbow stay in front of you while your right elbow sticks out from your side. You should not be able to see the fingers on your right hand. You should be looking

into the palm of your left hand.

When your hands are at rest just above the drum head, your upper arms should hang from your shoulders. The tips of the sticks should almost be touching, poised over the center of the drumhead. The two sticks should form a ninety degree angle. When actually in contact with the drumhead, the stick and head should form a forty-five degree angle. Your left hand should again try to cup water. Your right hand should be palm down. Both wrists are straight.

To get from the upper position to the drumhead you swing the stick down, rotating your arm and then wrist in a gatelike motion. First your upper arm swings down from the shoulder. As this motion is ending, your forearm rotates down from the elbow and in over the drum. As your hand nears the drumhead, your wrist should snap down to hit the head cleanly. The whole motion should be smooth and sure. Try to keep the tip of the stick pointed upwards until the final wrist snap. Once the drum is struck, the stick is returned to the beginning position by reversing the motion. Begin with your wrist, follow with your forearm and then end with your upper arm moving back to the starting position.

5 The First Rudiment

The first rudiment you will learn is the single stroke roll. This rudiment is played by alternating strikes on the drum from one hand to the other. Each stroke should be of equal loudness. The timing of each stroke should be even, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc. When beginning, have your sticks at eye height. Play one clean left stroke. Stop. Now is the time to check:

1. Are the heights of your sticks the same?
2. Are your sticks pointing straight up?
3. Are your elbows the same distance away from your sides?
4. Are your heels together and toes slightly apart?
5. Are you looking ahead?
6. Are you standing at attention?
7. Did you hit the center of the drum?

Once you've checked each of these, and made any necessary corrections, strike the drum with your right stick. Bring the stick back to eye height and check the above list again. Do not increase your speed until you can play each stroke without corrections. Once this point has been reached, slowly increase your speed until you begin to make mistakes. Now slow down until you are no longer making mistakes. Hold this speed for a while before trying to increase again. Finally, decrease your speed slowly to match the beginning pace.

6 Other Rudiments and Exercises

After mastering the first rudiment, each of the others must be practiced similarly and mastered in turn until one is able to play every one of the 26 with confidence and ease. Many drum beatings employ variations on these standard rudiments. As a consequence, these beatings are not always easy to play without having first practiced the variations as rudiments.

7 Street Beats and Roll-Offs

From their inception through the 1980s, the Sudbury Ancients have usually played the 6/8 Long March as a street beat, and have used the Long Roll-Off (8 bars, no less) as an introduction to tunes. Somewhere along the line, the more commonly heard 2/4 Long March was introduced as well as several

shorter roll-offs -- preferances and usage vary.

8 *Drum Beatings for Tunes*

When the basics are mastered, the student may move on to learning the beatings for thr tunes.