

ETUDE #8

In some of the earlier etudes, we discussed the need for phrasing in order to bring out certain groups of notes—this becomes even more important when dealing with studies in mixed meter. When a composer writes in a meter such as 7/8, the very nature of the division of the notes presents unequal patterns within the measure. The most common groupings are 4 and 3, or 3 and 4. It is also possible, however, to have groupings such as: 2,2,3 / 3,2,2 / 2,2,2,1 / 3,3,1, etc.

If a composer takes time to divide notes into definite groupings, the performer should make sure they are heard. If all the notes are performed equally, the listener would not be able to distinguish the mixed-meter phrasing. Remember, we are talking about solo works; when we play orchestral parts, this is not always true. Many times, snare drum parts are played evenly and without phrases. It is an interpretive decision and the conductor will usually have an opinion regarding such matters.

The phrases are executed by, what I refer to as, "natural accents." The first notes of each group must be articulated with a small accent so the phrasing can be brought out. These accents should not be so heavy so they are heard as written accents. It is more appropriate to place a dot or *staccato* marking on the first note of each phrase to insure the articulation. The remaining notes are then played softer and with a subtle *diminuendo*.

OBSERVATIONS:

1. On line 2, measures one, two, and four, there are slow quarter-note rhythms. One of the more common practices in orchestral snare drum playing, if the tempo permits, is to perform all similar note patterns with one hand. These measures are a good example. After the first two eighth notes in the first measure of line 2, play the remaining notes (until measure three) with one hand. Repeat this again in measure four.

2. One of the most common errors students make in sticking is to double a stroke in order to begin on their strong hand. For example, in line 4, measures three and four, there is a roll followed by three eighth notes and then an accented sixteenth pattern. A right-handed player will probably play the pick-up note to the roll with the left hand and begin the roll on the right hand. I agree with this because it is wise to lead with the strongest hand.

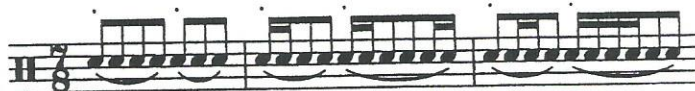
A normal execution for the following three eighth notes is to release the roll on the right hand and alternate the three notes. The eighth notes will, therefore, be played as R, L, R. When a player also wants to begin the accents with the strong hand, problems arise. Considering the previous sticking, the player will have to double the right hand in order to also begin the accents on the right hand. This may cause a slight distortion of rhythm and, many times, an unwanted accent because the last eighth note may be rushed and forced as it prepares for the next measure.

Solutions are as follows: (a) Release the roll on the left hand to prepare for the accents on the right hand. (b) Play the accents on the left hand. Players should not be so right or left-handed that they are unable to execute with either hand.

3. The triplet patterns in line 9 are followed by dotted sixteenth and thirty-second notes. When dotted notes and triplets are played together, be sure to play the thirty-second notes as short as possible so they do not sound like triplets.

INTERPRETATIONS:

1. As mentioned in the Introduction, groups of notes are to be phrased as written. Place a slight accent on the beginning of each group, allowing the phrases to be heard. A more accurate way of notating this passage is as follows:



2. Beginning at the second measure of line 8, there are groups of six, sixteenth notes over the three bars. The notes are connected over the barline in order to show the proper phrasing. This is a common practice in notation. This section could have also been written in 3/8 time. The same phrasing considerations in the beginning of the piece also apply here. The dynamics also help to shape this section.