

# ***BRUSH TEXTURES***

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The physical aspect of brush technique is complimentary to every percussionist's arsenal of facility, experience, talent, training, and diversity.

The consideration of two factors - legato and sustain - are not always associated with snare drum technique, but serve as essential requirements for the development of functional skills in brush work. The investigation and pursuit of these factors can provide a significant (perhaps essential) dimension to the cultivation and adaptability of the musical percussionist, conceivably influencing the performer's performance psyche.

The intent of this solo is to attempt documentation of idiomatic brushwork, striving for a notation method that will promote adequate interpretation, hopefully derived through detailed indications, instructions, and descriptive text. As a visual aid, the accompanying DVD demonstration is provided to help reduce or eliminate questions of technique and notational interpretation.

A relaxed, elegant musical flow with a solid feel of pulse, and smooth, effortless physical gesture are suitable goals for a work such as this. Appropriate sustaining sound production, with a clear palette of articulations, also is desirable.

A plausible performance environment for this work, within the recital venue, could be as a trilogy component of snare drum solos, technically or historically based; perhaps coupled with Eugene Novotney's *A Minute of News* (Noble Snare, Vol. 4; 1990) or similar work, and a rudimental showcase selection. Alternatively, the solo could be employed simply as a vehicle for brush study.

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## **PERFORMANCE NOTES**

(Duration: @3:00)

### General

Although the tempo indication is ♩ = 108, any tempo that can support a jazz-like feel is acceptable. With a number of exceptions, the general weight of the brushes on the drum head is relatively light, perhaps slightly more than the weight of gravity, alone.

The snares can be turned on or turned off, as desired. A sitting position is recommended (i.e., use of a drummer's throne). On occasion, the left foot plays a hi-hat "part" in a floor-tapping or foot-stomping manner. Alternatively, a Gajate (floor-mounted pedal) may be used, incorporating a Ribbon Crasher or other effective metallic sound (or even a hi-hat).

A traditional-grip left hand method is recommended, while the right hand is positioned with the thumb facing upward (i.e., a "French" grip or typical jazz drum set approach). Other approaches may be adequate.

- Right hand plays all notes above the single staff line.
- Left hand plays all notes below the single staff line.
- Right hand typically follows a counter-clockwise motion when sweeping across the drum head.
- Left hand typically follows a clockwise motion when sweeping across the head.
- When a longer note value requires a brush slide, a rounded path following along the outer edge of the drum head (near the counter-hoop) is generally used, following a direction which provides for smoothness and comfort while anticipating any required positioning for connected phrases and smooth motions and gestures.

- Some rhythmic figures may require the development of specific back-and-forth directional movements or gestures in the hands (e.g., m. 23; the first half of the measure can use a right-hand movement toward the left – across the body – for accents; and a movement back to the right – returning to a 2 o’clock starting position – for the *tenuto* sweeps).

### Markings/Articulations

Z (on note stems) = Oscillation roll (brush rapidly sweeps back-and-forth on the drum head - primarily initiated by quick finger movements) - similar to a *tremolo* in sound quality. Technically, this skill is easily acquired in the left hand with a traditional-grip approach. As a suggestion, it may be fluently executed in the right hand with a palm-up approach (with back of hand facing downward).

*Tenuto* (–) = Indicates a general brush stroke (any slide/sweep on the drum head) or “push” rhythm.

*Staccato* (·) = A general vertical stroke with a crisp, stick-like sound (played as if the drum head surface was one inch above actual location; the wrist stops the brush near the one-inch point, producing a crisp snap as the wires flick downward to the head).

— = “Dead-stroke” (no-rebound of the stroke; perhaps a slight pushing into the drum head).

Parentheses ( ) = “Ghosted” stroke (very light attack; a “swallowed” sound).

*Marcato* Accent with *Staccato* (^/·) = A strong accent which may be produced with a flat-surface (brush) stroke, executed by quickly flicking the wrist and causing the majority of the brush surface to strike the drum head all at once (perhaps described by a “duck foot” or swim fin slapping effect).

Arrow Up (↑) = The brush sweeps away from the body; usually in the left hand (the brush moves from approximately a 6 o’clock position on the head toward an 11 o’clock position).

Arrow Down (↓) = The brush sweeps toward the body; usually in the left hand (the brush contacts the head at approximately the 11 o’clock position & slides toward the body, lifting at a 6 o’clock position).

Arrow to Right (→) = The brush or brushes slide from left-to-right on the head (the brush contacts the head at approximately the 9 o’clock position and slides to the right, lifting at the 3 o’clock position).

Arrow to Left (←) = The brush or brushes sweep from right-to-left on the head (the brush contacts the head at approximately the 3 o’clock position and sweeps to the left, lifting at the 9 o’clock position).

Arrow, Left and Right (↔) = *Legato* (if marked *tenuto*) horizontal sweeping oscillations on the head (in one hand), clearly expressing the printed rhythm; or crisp, stopped/controlled (if marked *tenuto* with *staccato*) horizontal sweeping oscillations, clearly articulating the printed rhythm with a drier sound.

↻ ↺ = Directional indicator of a brush’s sweeping movement (clockwise; counter-clockwise).

### Measures 28-42

[L.H. Lift] / with combined *staccato* and *accent* marking = The note is approached with a left hand lifting motion (slightly away from the head), clearly articulating the note with a light accent attack.

[L.H. Push] / with a *tenuto* mark (dash) = The note is played with a moderate pushing (wires bend somewhat) into the head, producing a subtle thickening of the sound without a new articulation.

[L.H. Stops] = Indicates a dry, crisp rhythm where the brush motion literally hesitates (slightly) in motion.

## Other Notes

- M. 4 – “2 rotations” suggests the note value to be filled with two full clockwise sweeps on the head.
  - M. 6 and 25 – both strokes in same direction; lift and return (approximately 11 o’clock to 2 o’clock).
  - Some up and down arrows could be reversed if more comfortable for the performer.
  - M. 17 and 21 – sweep direction should be pre-determined and consistent (marked) – moving away from or toward the body.
  - M. 37 – each left hand stroke figure should begin in the same direction (recommended: outward, away from the body; approximately from 6 o’clock to 10 o’clock and return without lifting).
  - M. 39 – the three sixteenth-note figures must move in opposite directions (recommended starting point: outward, away from the body – but either direction can be effective).
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## “Eyes” Pattern

Right Hand: pulses on the quarter-note, following a track of horizontally-flattened ovals in a counter-clockwise direction. All four beats are placed at or near the 12 o’clock position, with a slight quickening of the sweep into each beat. The brush (left hand, too) may remain on the drum head at all times, or may lift slightly (almost imperceptibly) to articulate more distinctly each quarter-note beat.

Left Hand: also pulses on the quarter-note, following an opposite track of horizontally-flattened ovals in a clockwise direction. Again, all four beats are placed at or near the 12 o’clock position, with a slight quickening of the sweep into each beat. The “gathering” motion of both hands moving together in an inward/toward-center direction, requires the left hand to sweep under the right hand, on each pulse (quarter-notes), with the right hand crossing over the left.

## “Windshield Wiper” Pattern

Right Hand: makes small clockwise circles in the lower-right quadrant of the drum (between 3-6 o’clock), pulsing on every beat (quarter-notes). The pulse occurs at the 12 o’clock position for each small circle.

Left Hand: produces quick, eighth-note like sweeps (followed by eighth-rest), stopping momentarily at the end of each straight-line sweep before returning to the starting position. On beat one, the left hand is located at 2 o’clock (approximately), the starting position; on beat two, the brush pushes toward and stops at 10 o’clock (approximately). Repeat positions for beats three and four. Beats two and four are somewhat accented, with a slightly quicker sweeping motion than beats one and three.

Both hands move in opposite directions – away from each other – on beats two and four.

## “3/4” Pattern

Right Hand: attacks beat one from an off-the-head position, starting from across the body (somewhat near/from the direction of the left shoulder). Making head contact at 12 o’clock (beat one) and sweeping downward along the right side of the counter-hoop (producing a backward “C” figure), the brush reverses course at the 6 o’clock position (beat two) and follows, in reverse, the right side counter-hoop in an upward sweep, releasing (lifting) at the 12 o’clock position (beat three). During beat three, the brush lifts off the head, moving across the body toward the left shoulder, and again attacks beat one at the 12 o’clock position. The 6 o’clock position (beat two) can be pulsed with a slight push or a slight lift/attack; similarly, beat three can be pulsed with a quickening of the brush speed just before lifting.

Left Hand: beat one begins on the drum head at the 3 o’clock position (with right hand positioned above the drum, crossed-over the left hand) and sweeps along the counter-hoop in a clockwise motion, moving through clock positions 4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11. The brush lifts at the 12 o’clock position (beat two)

and moves in the air toward the re-entry attack (tap) position at approximately 8 (or 9) o'clock. Upon the attack (the third note of the triplet of beat two; "swing" feel), the brush quickly scribes a small inward loop (toward the center of the head, clockwise). The brush continues rotation, producing a second inward loop (somewhat larger than the previous loop), creating a "push" rhythm (toward the 3 o'clock position) on the third note of the triplet of beat three, just before re-entry of the lifted right hand.

### "Slide-Tap" Pattern

Right Hand: taps beat one near the 3 o'clock position of the drum, then moves in the air toward the 10 o'clock position for a re-entry on beat two. From the re-entry point, the brush sweeps along the counter-hoop in a clockwise direction until lifting slightly to produce a tap at the 2 o'clock position (or very near the 3 o'clock position), executing the third note of the triplet of beat two. After immediately tapping beat three at the 3 o'clock position, the pattern is repeated for beats four and one.

Left Hand: remains on the head at all times, sweeping from beat one at the 9 o'clock position toward the 3 o'clock position (beat two), following a clockwise motion along the far counter-hoop. Continuing in a clockwise motion, the brush sweeps through the 4-5-6-7-8 clock positions, returning to the 9 o'clock position for beat three. The movement continues toward 3 o'clock for beat four, similar to beats one and two. For a smooth flowing feel, the speed of the sweep can accelerate slightly toward beats two and four, while relaxing in speed when moving toward beats one and three.

Both hands cross on beats two and four, right hand over left hand.

### "Zorro" (or "Z") Pattern

Right Hand: on beat one, the brush begins at the 8 o'clock position and sweeps in a straight line toward the 4 o'clock position (moving to the right), lifting off the drum head at approximately the third note of the triplet of beat one. The brush travels through the air to beat two, making re-entry contact at the 10 o'clock position. From this position, the brush sweeps in a straight line toward the 2 o'clock position (moving to the right), again lifting there, but at approximately the second note of the triplet of beat two. The third note of the triplet of beat two is executed by a re-entry contact with the head approximately at the 2 o'clock position (very near the same release position) and sweeping toward the 8 o'clock position (diagonally across the drum) and lifting at that point. The brush immediately re-attacks/taps the drum head for beat three, starting at the original point in the pattern – the 8 o'clock position, continuing in a sweeping motion. The pattern is repeated for beats three and four.

Left Hand: remains on the head at all times, starting (beat one) at 12 o'clock and sweeps toward the 6 o'clock position (beat two), following a clockwise motion along the counter-hoop (through clock positions 1-2-3-4-5). From beat two (6 o'clock position), the sweeping motion continues in a clockwise motion back toward the 12 o'clock position (through clock positions 7-8-9-10-11) for arrival at beat three. The pattern continues in a flowing, continuous motion for beat four (at the 6 o'clock position). Essentially, the left hand stays out of the path of the right hand; the right hand lifts and crosses over the left hand for the approach of beats two and four.

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The snare drum as a clock face:

