PERCUSSIVE NOTES

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The Evolution of Drum Set in African-American Tradition

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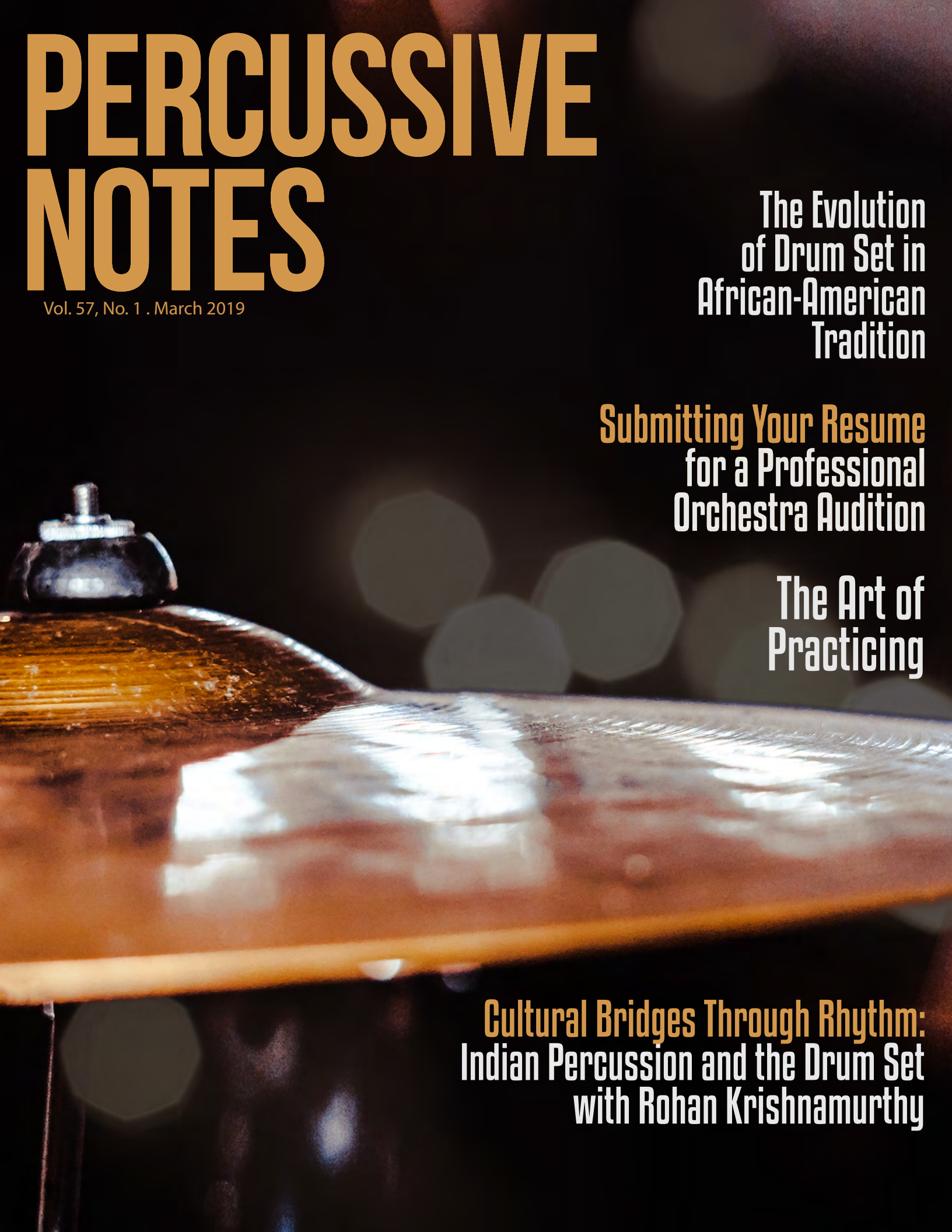

Cultural Bridges Through Rhythm: Indian Percussion and the Drum Set with Rohan Krishnamurthy

PERCUSSIVE NOTES

columns

Evolution of the Drumset in the African-American Tradition

By royal hartigan

This article is excerpted from the author's dissertation, Blood Drum Spirit: Drum Languages of West Africa, African America, Native America, Central Java, and South India*, a 1700-page analysis of world drumming traditions accompanied by 30 sixty-minute audio cassettes (Wesleyan University, CT, USA, 1986). The entire dissertation is viewable in the PAS Online Dissertation Archives, where readers will find several topics referenced within this article. Also, this section of hartigan's dissertation is largely based on excerpts from Theodore Dennis Brown's exhaustive dissertation,* A History and Analysis of Jazz Drumming to 1942 *(University of Michigan, 1976), and are used by permission from Dr. Brown.*

In addition, hartigan's article is based on numerous interviews and personal experiences with Dr. Brown, drummers Max Roach, Edward Blackwell, Leonard McBrowne, Beaver Harris, Clifford Jarvis, Harold Miller, John Betsch, Brubbi Taylor, Jonathan Samuel "Papa Jo" Jones, Wilfred Wannamaker, Keith Copeland, Clymer Dunbar, Horacee Arnold, Louis Hayes, Billy Hart, Thomas Deitlin, Robert Waltermire, Clifford Adams, and James Hartigan, as well as musicians Archie Shepp, Frederick Tillis, Reggie Workman, Arnold Hayes, Philip Mahony, Carl Tyler, Henry "Hank" Nadig, Frank Laidlaw, Frank Miller, Roy Superior, Paul Monat, Robin Fournier, Roland Wiggins, Ernie St. John, David Huxtable, Wei-Hua Zhang, Wu Wen-Guang, and Li Guang-Ming, which occured from 1964 to 1986.

The drumset is an ensemble of instruments coordinated in performance by one player. Throughout its history, it has been a multiple-percussion instrument whose constituent parts undergo change. It began in the latter part of the nineteenth century out of an economic, as well as musical, need to have all the percussion parts of theater and dance music performed by a single player. The bass and snare drums of the marching and concert bands common at that time formed the nucleus of the early drumset. According to Theodore Dennis Brown (1976), who traces the development of the early drumset and jazz drumming styles, the drumset evolved over a period of about fifty years (p. 95). African-Americans have been at the forefront of the instrumental, technical, and musical development of the drumset, an instrument regarded by Max Roach as a "truly American instrument," having originated in the United States.

Prior to the introduction of the drumset at the end of the nineteenth century, African-Americans had a long tradition of drumming. Despite the general prohibition of music making and instruments by White oppressors, there were certain areas, such as Congo Square in New Orleans (later named Beauregard Square and presently known as Louis Armstrong Park), where African-Americans could dance, sing, and perform on musical instruments. Although the music could not occur in the same form as it had earlier in Africa, African-descended people played cylindrical drums, log drums, calabashes, and other percussion instruments in the "Place Congo." One example Brown cites is Benjamin H. B. Latrobe, an engineer, whose *Impression Respecting New Orleans* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951, p. 31) describes playing techniques, varied sizes and shapes of drums, and strong outdoor dynamic power, which were decidedly African, not European. Brown also cites Lafcadio Hearn, who, in 1885, acknowledged the purely African origin of songs and drumming that he had seen in Congo Square (p. 80).

African-descended peoples also gathered in Hartford, Connecticut, during the second half of the seventeenth century on Governor's Parade days to celebrate the election of African-American leaders in the state. According to Brown (p. 56), this was customary in other New England states as well, and involved festivities, parades, and musical accompaniment consisting of drums, fifes, fiddles, clarinets, and many types of metallophones. This multiplicity and importance of metal percussion instruments may indicate a relationship to some drum orchestra music of West Africa, in which one or more metal bells play a central role in stating a time line or embellishment of the pulse in a repeating manner.

African-Americans also participated in yearly festivals in Albany, New York. Spring Pinkster Day celebrations attracted African-Americans from the Northeastern United States to drum and play music outdoors (Brubbi Taylor, p. c.). From many eyewitness accounts of these and other festivities, it is known that African drumming existed in seventeenth-, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century America, although in a modified form. Due to the restrictions of a racist legal and social system, the eventual availability of European instruments and the opportunity to perform, African-Americans also assimilated European musical instruments and musical forms, but with a non-European approach.

An example of this assimilation was the African-American fife and drum corps. During the Revolutionary War, African-Americans were often employed as fifers and drummers, and in the War of 1812, African-American males served as musicians in the United States Army (Brown, p. 56).

Jordan Noble (born October 14, 1800) was one of these musicians. He came to New Orleans from Georgia at age 11 and enlisted as a drummer in the Seventh Regiment of the United States Infantry. He drummed the Americans into line at the battle of New Orleans on December 23, 1814, the Florida War of 1836, and the Mexican War of 1846. By 1860, he was a battalion commander and became famous in New Orleans as both a drummer and a leader of his own fife and drum corps (Ibid., pp. 56–57).

Brown points out that the fife and drum corps kept rudimental drumming alive in this country, and by involving a large number of drummers, they afforded many African-American and White musicians the opportunity to participate in this musical form well into the twentieth century (Ibid, pp. 58–59). Rudimental drumming is a style originally used in marching ensembles. However, this approach may also be found in many individual drumset styles in general, and it is an important element of style in the African-American drumset tradition.

Other modes of assimilation for African-Americans since the War of 1812 were marching and concert bands. These ensembles included numerous brass and reed instruments, as well as percussion, thus giving African-Americans the opportunity to learn European and American instrumental and musical techniques. Brown notes that African-American percussionists acquired American drumming techniques on European-manufactured instruments such as cymbals, bells, triangle, and drums (manufacture being distinct from ultimate historical origin), and thus "established an African-American drumming tradition based upon an Afro-Euro-American drumming style that has been carried on by African-American jazz drummers ever since the beginning of this century" (p. 65). He cites Eileen Southern's *The Music of Black Americans: A History* (1971: 112–125) for

examples of well-known African-American marching and concert bands: Frank Johnson's band in the Third Company of the Washington Guarde was founded in 1812 in Philadelphia; Matt Black's marching band was formed in 1818 in Philadelphia; Dixon's brass band began in 1827 in New York: and a number of African-American bands were founded in Ohio in the 1850s, including the Scioto Valley Band of 1855 and the Union Valley Brass Band of 1859 (p. 68).

Dance bands were another medium of assimilation for African-American musicians. Brown notes that, by the eighteenth century, dance forms found in the American ballrooms included some with an African-American influence. He quotes Samuel Mordecai, author of *Richmond in By-Gone Days* (in Eileen Southern, 1971: p. 26) who recounts the 1854 Spring and Fall Horse Racing Festival Balls in Richmond, Virginia, at which two African-American musicians named Sy Gilliat and London Brigs played (pp. 70–71). Their music included *minuet de la cour*, reels, hornpipes, and *congos*. *Congo* was a general term for dances of African or West Indian origin. Mordecai recalled the reels from Sy Gilliat's fiddle and London Brig's flute as intense, "like a storm after the calm… pigeon wings fluttered, and all sorts of capers were cut…all life and animation" (Mordecai, in Brown: p. 71). This reveals that African-American musicians were incorporating their own music into the dance repertoire. They were also using an African-American approach to European dance tunes and injecting a non-European performance style into European or American music and dance forms. The result, as reported by Mordecai, was popular with, and the feeling shared by, the White dance audience.

The reel and the *quadrille* were especially popular among the nineteenth-century American dance forms, which included the waltz, galop, polka, and hornpipe. The reel is a square dance in a rapid duple meter with a repetitive rhythmic figure, while the *quadrille* alternates sections of 2/4 (duple) and 6/8 (triple) meter. African-Americans in America incorporated both dance forms into healing, mourning, and other types of ceremonies. Brown feels that this was a natural occurrence, since both ostinato rhythms and the combination of duple and triple meters are similar to West African musical practice (p. 72).

Dance bands at this time included strings, as well as brass, reeds, and percussion. Frank Johnson, who in 1812 had founded one of the original African-American bands in America, also became a popular dance band leader in the Philadelphia area in the first part of the nineteenth century.

An 1850 description of African-American musicians playing for dancing in New York City's Dicken's Place sheds light on the distinct approach the men brought to performance:

> In the middle of one side of the room, a shammy platform is erected, with a trembling railing, and this is the "orchestra of the establishment." Sometimes a single Black fiddler answers the purpose: but on Saturday nights, the music turns out strong, and the house entertains, in addition, a trumpet and bass drum. With these instruments, you may imagine that the music at Dicken's Place is of no ordinary kind. You cannot, however, begin to imagine *what* it is. You cannot see the red-hot knitting-needles spirited out by that red-faced trumpeter, who looks precisely as if he were blowing glass, which needles aforesaid penetrating the tympanum, pierce through and through your brain without remorse. Nor can you perceive the frightful mechanical contortions of the bass-drummer as he sweats and deals his blows on every side in all violation of the laws of rhythm, like a man beating a baulky mule and showering his blows upon the unfortunate animal, now one on this side, now on that. (Southern, 1971:129)

These intense, non-European musical practices are likened by Brown to the "hot music" of the 1920s New Orleans jazz, and indicate the existence of this characteristic, although in a different form, at a much earlier time (p. 74).

African-Americans also played in orchestras, stage shows, traveling shows, and accompanied silent movies. In New Orleans, the marching brass band tradition is a distinct part of the African-American musical heritage. During the nineteenth century, numerous African-American and White brass bands were hired for almost any kind of activity (Brown, p. 81).

One particular ceremony in which brass bands played an important role was the funeral. On the way to the cemetery, the brass band would accompany the mourners and play solemn music with a dirge-like accompaniment. Edward Blackwell related that a single percussionist would often play a steady, slow-paced succession of single strokes or flams on snare drum with the snares released. Following internment, the band would burst into joyful songs played at a fast tempo on the return from the burial ground. This might he signaled by a "roll-off." The drumming would mirror the fast, joyful music, with snare (snares on) and bass drums playing more dynamic and complex rhythmic patterns.

Brown notes that the bass drum was sometimes the only percussion instrument found in both marching and dance bands in the nineteenth century. The earliest, so-called "jazz" drummers were known for their abilities on this instrument (p. 82).

An African-American named Giles played bass drum for the Excelsior Brass Band and was famous throughout New Orleans. Another African-American percussionist, known as Black Benny, was a tall (6 foot 6) bass drummer who brought his own African style to the brass band. Brown cites Nat Shapiro (p. 83) and Nat Hentoff (1955: 52) on this well-known New Orleans musician:

> Black Benny was a great drummer. He had an African beat. He was something to see on the street with his bass drum that looked like a snare drum in front. You'd have to ask all the drummers how he did it, but he could move a whole band with just that bass drum. All the drummers could do it, but he had the reputation for being the best at it.

African-American percussionists also played in minstrel, circus, and vaudeville shows in the late 1800s. At about this time, ragtime emerged as an internationally popular music, and it provided the basis for the introduction of the drumset and the subsequent evolution of the style known as jazz drumming (Brown, p. 83).

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, ragtime drummers employed a basic combination of bass drum and snare drum, with the addition of various other percussion instruments, including woodblock, suspended cymbal, Chinese cymbal, Chinese tom-tom, and, to a lesser degree, cowbell. Other inventions included a suspended cymbal holder, wire brushes as an alternative to wooden sticks, internal drum mufflers, and a foot pedal and beater for the bass drum.

Early drumset players were often called "trap drummers," and the instrument was known as "trap drums" or simply "traps." The consensus among musicians interviewed is that this term, which is still used today, is associated with the numerous "trappings" or small percussion instruments the early drumset player would employ to create diverse sounds, timbres, and effects, often in an improvised manner, in accompaniment for shows and dances. Their comments also reveal a dual function for early traps or drumset players, which has continued to this day: the expression of time, either in an abstract or more literal metronomic sense, and the use of multiple timbres, instrumental textures, or sound effects to give shape or color to an ensemble. Brown also cites another possible meaning of "traps" from George L. Stone, a famous drum teacher and author, who stated in 1910 that the term referred to an early model bass drum foot pedal of the 1890s that resembled a bear trap (p. 97). Traps could include any combination of percussion instruments added to the basic bass drum and snare drum: one or more woodblocks, cowbells, whistles, suspended cymbals, and so on, with space and practical use often the only bounds of imagination.

Although there were many experiments with bass drum foot pedals in the late nineteenth century and the first two decades of this century, the most common method of performance was a technique known as double drumming. This lasted into the 1920s and involved striking both the bass drum and snare drum with drumsticks. If a cymbal was attached to the bass drum, as was the case in many marching and concert bands whose drums were also used in dance drumming, it would also be played with a stick. In concert bands, the drummer would be seated, with a bass drum to one side and a snare drum on a stand or chair to the other. The snare would be placed as close as possible and angled sharply to facilitate rapid motion between the two drums. The bass drum could be stroked with either the bead (smaller tip end of a drumstick normally used in playing) or the butt end, which can make the bass drum sound deeper and bigger. In this manner, the drummer would move from bass (and if used, cymbal) to snare drum and back. Bass drums were of varying sizes, although many were the large drums adopted from marching and concert bands, 28 or 30 inches in diameter. The double drumming technique could be used with the basic bass drum/snare drum setup or in conjunction with the various small percussion instruments added to this nucleus. Brown (p. 100) gives three common double drumming patterns, as gathered by J. M. Grolimund (1930: 7), and each is similar to West African support patterns. In each example, the lower bass drum tones alternate with higher pitched snare strokes in a four-measure phrase. The first two mirror the *totodzi* drum hand mute (high) and open (low) strokes in the *Bobena* section of *Lobi* in its adapted form from the harvest music of the Lobi people of northern Ghana. The third is the same as a common Highlife rhythm, similar to the *gankogui (ngongo)* bell pattern for *Kpanlogo*, a recreational dance music of the Ga people of southeast Ghana and parallel to the *son clave* of Afro-Cuban music. It is also identical to an African-American rhythm known as Juba.

Many early drummers in the African-American tradition used double drumming, including Baby Dodds. According to Brown, many drummers who employed a bass drum foot pedal also utilized the double drumming technique (p. 100). The author's experience is that the hand (stick) technique allows faster stroking than the bass drum pedal alone, while limiting hand technique on snare drum and other accessories, and that the bass drum pedal in conjunction with the hand technique of double drumming enables the drummer to perform the fastest stroking (pedal plus hand) as well as the greatest variety of bass drum tone colors—the mallet (usually cloth or leather) of the foot pedal and the bead tip or butt of the drumstick applied to a variety of areas on the surface of the bass drum head.

Many types of bass drum foot pedals were invented in the early twentieth century, some with an extra beater attached to strike a small cymbal fixed against the border of the bass drum rim. A floor model bass drum pedal, as opposed to an overhanging pedal, was patented by William F. Ludwig on April 7. 1914 and was eventually adopted by most drumset players (Brown, pp. 107–108).

The woodblock was an important element in the Ragtime and later New Orleans drum sound. This instrument, which is a hollow, oblong chamber of wood with slits for sound projection, was widely used by drummers (in many sizes and shapes) well into the 1940s. With its various sizes and tones, it can be seen as a descendant of African slit log drums, although Brown groups the woodblock with the Chinese tom-tom and Chinese cymbal as instruments with an Asian heritage. Weihua Zhang, a Chinese ethnomusicologist, related to me that the woodblocks and temple blocks she has seen in this country, the same as those used in the early drumset, are similar and perhaps traceable to hollow wooden blocks played with a stick in China. These blocks are of varying sizes and pitches and are used during prayer in Chinese Buddhist temples. Weihua also relates that the general onomatopoeic name for the sound of Chinese drums is *ton-ton shiang* or *ton-ton xiang* (literally, "ton-ton sound") in Mandarin and *tom-tom shiang* in Cantonese. The general name for snareless drums, such as tom-toms, obviously has a wide and international derivation.

Another Chinese ethnomusicologist, Wu Wen-Guang, informed the author that woodblocks (*bang-zi*), temple blocks (*mu-yu*), tom-toms (*tang-gu*), cymbals (*nao bo*), and large and small gongs (*da luo* and *xiao luo*) used in the early drumset years are all found in Chinese theater productions or Buddhist temple prayer rituals. A continuous bass drum/cymbal pattern in quarter notes is also used as a Chinese folk and parade rhythm. He identified a common African-American ride cymbal beat—a quarter note followed by two eighth triplets separated by an eighth rest—as similar to a rhythm found in Chinese drama. He also described two small, hand-held cymbals, sounding on alternate beats. The inclusion of woodblock, tom-tom, temple blocks, and Chinese cymbals in the early drumset indicates that jazz drummers heard and were attracted to the sounds of Chinese instruments.

Brown points out that the nineteenth-century immigration of Chinese people to the United States in large numbers and the music that remained a part of their festivities here—such as opera, theater, and parades—influenced American jazz musicians (pp. 110–115). He also points out that wooden slit drums, Chinese cymbals, and tom-toms are commonly used in Chinese theater productions and are traceable to the *Ch'ing* dynasty (1644–1911). The sounds of these instruments were adopted by African-American jazz musicians, as well as their White counterparts. The woodblock gives a hollow wood sound when played with a drumstick, and this timbre was matched by the deep voice of the large bass drums (often 28 x 14 or 30 x 11) and sharp snare drum tones inherited from the marching and concert bands.

The suspended cymbal was usually small (12 to 18 inches) and emitted a high, sharp tone, especially when muted rapidly or "choked" by one hand after being struck by the other. The Chinese cymbal has a raised central area and an upwardly curved circumference. Measuring about the same size as suspended cymbals, the Chinese cymbals of this early era emitted a low-pitched, intense sound unlike the clear tone of the suspended cymbal. Chinese tom-toms, usually 8 x 4 or 9 x 4 inches, had wooden shells with thick drumheads made of pigskin or cowskin tacked to the shell. Each head would have a Chinese design painted on its surface. Sometimes these tom-toms were tuned by heating the heads. Those tom-toms made in China had a small spiral spring inside their bodies that vibrated when the drum was struck (Brown, pp. 110–115). Mr. Wu related that this internal wire was used by Chinese musicians to alter or enhance the tone quality of drums, vibrating when the drumhead was struck. These drums gave a high, snareless sound to the drumset.

Temple blocks, another Asian instrument, were used by some African-American drummers. The ultimate additions of these varied percussion instruments to the drumset were seen in the work of Sonny Greer with Duke Ellington's orchestra at New York City's Cotton Club from 1927 into the 1930s. Known for his immaculate dress as well as musical artistry, Greer employed a full set of orchestral percussion in his setup: gongs, timpani, cymbals, woodblocks, cowbells, temple blocks, chimes, xylophone, bells,

tom-toms, bass drum, snare drum, and numerous other accessories or "traps."

Duke Ellington (left) with Sonny Greer

Wire brushes, also known as fly-swatters, jazz sticks, or synco-jazz sticks, came into use in the 1920s and provided the drummer with a soft, swishing stream of sound when the wire strands or fibers were continuously rubbed across the snare drum head. The first brushes for drumset were actually fly-swatters patented by Louis Allis and Adolph Wiens in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on May 20, 1912 (Brown, pp. 114–121) and were originally made to kill insects. By the 1930s, African-American master drummers, such as "Papa Jo" Jones, developed the art of playing brushes to a high degree.

During the 1920s, drummers would customarily have pictures painted on the front head of their bass drums and occasionally install lights inside for visual effect and tonal enhancement by the emission of heat (Brown, p. 123).

Despite changes in the many percussion accessories used by African-American drummers, the basic snare drum/bass drum combination remained as the center of the drumset during the Ragtime years (1895–1920) and the 1920s New Orleans and Chicago eras.

Later years of the Ragtime era, that is, the second decade of the twentieth century, witnessed the emergence of an all-African-American ensemble under the leadership of James Reese Europe, a Ragtime composer. His Society Orchestra and "Hell Fighters" bands made a mark, both in the United States and Europe, influencing the French composer Darius Milhaud, among others. Milhaud was especially inspired by James Reese Europe's drummer, Buddy Gilmore, whose percussion solos exhibited such varieties of tone color as to stand by themselves as written compositions (Brown, p. 156). Gilmore prominently used snare and bass drums and suspended cymbals in his drumset. He stood out among Ragtime drummers with his ability to freely improvise solos, and created excitement in ensemble sections by slightly altering the melodic rhythm and playing these drum patterns a fraction of a beat "off" the ensemble timing (Brown, p. 158). His style exhibited snare drum virtuosity and was copied by many New York drummers. Some observers, such as jazz historians Samuel B. Charters and Leonard Kunstadt, consider him to be the first jazz drummer. His solo on "Castle House Rag" (Victor 35372), recorded on February 10, 1914, is one of the first improvised drum solos on record (Brown, p. 157).

Another influential African-American percussionist was Louis "Old Man" Cottrell, who taught many younger musicians the New Orleans drumming tradition. He played in both marching and dance bands. His drumset included a large bass drum, snare drum, woodblock, two suspended cymbals, and tambourine (Brown, p. 195). One orchestra in which Cottrell drummed was led by violinist Armand J. Piron; this group was the first African-American ensemble to play at New York's Cotton Club. Cottrell, who was famous for his snare drum and woodblock technique, exemplified the New Orleans drumming style by varying the instrumental texture—snare drum, cymbal, woodblock—during the sections of a piece, or by not playing—referred to as "strolling"—on some choruses (Brown, pp. 197–198).

There is a controversy as to the rhythmic feeling of this early jazz music—whether the bulk of the New Orleans ensembles played in two or four. Frank Laidlaw holds the opinion that White New Orleans drummers tended to play with a 2/4 feeling, like that of the earlier rags, while African-Americans played in 4/4. Brown states that many New Orleans ensembles

from the 1920s played in both two and four at the same time, with banjo in four and bass in two (pp. 202–203).

Another central figure in the history of the African-American drumming tradition is Warren "Baby" Dodds, a link between the earlier ragtime style and the later Chicago jazz drumming style (Brown. p. 204). Brown notes an interesting fact regarding Dodds' exposure to his African musical heritage, citing Rudi Blesh's assertion in *Shining Trumpets* (1946, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, pp. 157 ff.) that Dodds' maternal great-grandfather played African talking drums for the family (Brown, p. 205). Dodds, the brother of clarinetist Johnny Dodds, worked with many dance hands, among them King Oliver and his Creole Jazz Band, which included trumpeter Louis Armstrong. He also played with the Fate Marable ensemble, which performed on the Strekfus Steamers (steamboats) running up and down the Mississippi River from New Orleans to Chicago. He used snare and bass drums, suspended cymbal, cowbells, and either woodblock or a substitute sound executed by striking the bass drum shell or snare rim with drumsticks. He later used a Chinese tom-tom, revealing an interesting fact noted by Brown: African-American New Orleans drummers did not extensively use the tom-tom until the late 1920s when they made contact with northern drummers (p. 212). Baby Dodds' artistry lies in his ability to generate excitement by complementing and supporting the ensemble and individual soloists (Brown, p. 217). He continued playing into the 1950s and is recognized as a seminal influence on many other drummers, such as Dave Tough, George Wettling, and Gene Krupa. The latter related his high regard for Dodds, stating that his solo ability and tuning of drums was part of a drum philosophy that changed jazz drumming from solely being a time keeper to being a melodic voice within the ensemble as well. Krupa related that Baby Dodds could play a tune on his drums—snare, bass, and tom-toms—and the listener could discern the melody (Gene Krupa, quoted in Rudi Blesh, *Eight Lives in Jazz*, 1971, Hayden Book Company, New York, p, 139; in Brown, p. 205).

Baby Dodds

Dodds improvised his first drum equipment as a youngster, using rungs from a broken chair as drumsticks (Brown, loc. cit.). This echoes Edward Blackwell's assertion that many young drummers begin by using pieces of wood and boxes for sticks and drums. The author has witnessed this practice in Ghana, West Africa, with children learning to play by using metal cans and wooden boxes for drums and bells. Dodds' influence continues today in the African-American tradition, with the drumset used as a melodic instrument having many timbral and tonal possibilities in addition to its time keeping role.

Another technique used on the drumset was vocalizing into the snare drum to create a roaring sound. One musician who used this technique effectively in the New Orleans era was Freddie Moore. While playing "Tiger Rag," Moore would sing or yell into the snare drum, bringing his mouth close to the drumhead, and producing a tiger's roaring sound (Hank Nadig. p.c.).

Two other African-American drummers, among many others who were known for their ability to push a band or make it "swing," were Andrew Hilaire, who accompanied Jelly Roll Morton, and Kaiser Marshall, who played with Fletcher Henderson's orchestra. One of Marshall's techniques was his use of the tom-tom. He would often strike the tom-tom on beats 2 and 4 in 4/4 time during a final chorus and play on the tom-tom during sections of a piece in a minor key or parts meant to signify mystery (Brown, pp. 327 and 381).

Chick Webb was an innovative African-American drummer who bridged the style gap between the 1920s New Orleans small ensemble and the 1930s big band "swing" era. He exhibited an uncommon ability to drive a big band, as well as solo in a virtuosic manner. Frank Laidlaw, who played with Gene Krupa, related that Krupa and George Wettling considered Chick their idol. Webb was one of the earliest big band drummers and possessed a tremendous technique that was emulated by Buddy Rich. Webb led his own big band, and this orchestra was the only major group of the Swing Era led by a drummer (Ibid, p. 425). His drumset included a large bass drum (28 inches in diameter), snare drum, woodblock (although he often used drum rims instead of woodblock), cowbell, temple blocks, cymbals, and at times, timpani, xylophone, and chimes.

Chick Webb

One feature of his style was his ensemble accompaniment. While other big band drummers would hit accents in unison with the melodic rhythm, he would often emphasize the spaces between ensemble notes. He used brushes as well as sticks and influenced a whole generation of big band drummers (Max Roach, p. c.). Arnold Hayes and Max Roach related to the author that Webb originated new drumming techniques that emerged in the bebop era 25 years later. His ensemble accenting, use of the cymbal (although not continuously), and solo style were precursors to the drumming styles of the 1940s and 1950s.

Although Webb (1909–1939) had a short life, his mark was indelibly made on the African-American drumming tradition. He came to New York from Baltimore in the 1920s and played throughout the l930s. He had a hunchback, yet possessed dynamic percussive power in his playing. Brown compares him to Bix Beiderbecke and Charlie Parker: He developed an original drumset style and opened up new areas for jazz musicians to explore (p. 425).

Arnold Hayes and Frank Laidlaw, two musicians who observed and played with African-American drummer Sidney Catlett, related that Catlett had the ability to play effectively in both small and large ensembles, each requiring a different drumming style. Known as "Big Sid," Catlett worked with Duke Ellington, among others, and was also famous for his showmanship, twirling and bouncing drumsticks during performance. Hayes noted the contrast between this tall, seemingly strong man with long arms and his gentle touch on drumset, asserting that Catlett was the best drummer he had seen, playing with the ultimate in taste.

"Big Sid" Catlett with Louie Armstrong

Phil Mahony told the author of an ageless drummer from the 1920s, Manzie Johnson, who retained that decade's style and possessed an impeccable sense of time. He worked in New York State with Billy Beyea and the Finger Lake Five in the 1960s. Manzie, an African-American, transported the room in which he was playing into the authentic sound of the earlier period.

In the early years of what is known as jazz music, most drums were constructed of wood with either wood or metal rims. Drumheads were made of animal membrane, which was sensitive to heat and humidity, yet capable of clear and delicate tones. In the author's experience and that of many other drummers, it is possible to play more sensitively and produce warmer, clearer, and more resonant drum tones with more variety and nuance using wood-shelled drums and animal membrane drumheads, especially when played with wood drumsticks, as opposed to the nylon-tipped sticks some percussionists use today. Natural materials yield a fuller, richer sound. This echoes the opinions of master drummers

Edward Blackwell and Freeman Donkor, who, when speaking of the beautiful sound of African drums, reasoned that their high qualities are attributable to a closeness to the earth: wood drums with animal membranes hand-crafted by artisans with a respect for nature.

Although there were no major additions to the drumset during the 1930s, two of its elements, tom-toms and cymbals, changed. While many drummers previously used a clear-sounding European-type suspended cymbal and a denser Chinese cymbal, during the 1930s they gradually replaced the Chinese cymbal with larger, clear, suspended cymbals. These ranged from 10 to 14 inches, and by the 1940s were 20 inches or more in diameter. Brown notes that this change was brought about by the transference of the time pattern from the bass drum and hi-hat to the suspended cymbal, also known as the top cymbal or ride cymbal (pp. 402–403).

One ancestor of the hi-hat, known as the "Snowshoe," was two cymbals attached to two hinged pieces of wood, one resting on the floor, the other attached to the foot like a snowshoe. A downward foot motion brought the cymbals together. A spring from an old couch kept the pieces of wood in tension. This device was patented by drummer Victor Berton in 1925, although he invented it in 1921 (Brown, pp. 289 and 403–404). Berton was a widely recorded symphony, studio, and jazz percussionist who used symphony instruments such as orchestra bells and timpani in his recordings. His techniques were known as Vic Berton's "hot cymbal" or "hot timpani" licks (pp. 289–290, 294, and 297).

Snowshoe pedal

A number of foot-operated cymbal mechanisms were used in the 1920s with the most popular being a foot-operated spring rod mechanism close to the floor. Because of its proximity to the floor (12 to 18 inches high), it was called the "low-boy" and co-existed with the hi-hat (basically the same instrument, but three-feet-plus high) until the late thirties (Brown, pp. 405-406). The ability to play the taller hi-hat with sticks as well as the foot eventually led to its adoption over the low boy. Although Brown indicates that the identity of the inventor of the hi-hat is unknown, "Papa Jo" Jones told the author in 1981 that he originated the idea and, like many other innovations initiated by African-Americans, was not recognized or rewarded for his invention. Instead, a drum company saw the mechanism and got the patent.

Lowboy pedal

The hi-hat first appeared in 1927 and came into more widespread use during the 1930s. It was used to produce closed "chick" sounds, open light crashes, and sizzling sounds executed by striking the slightly opened cymbals with a drumstick (Brown. pp. 407–408).

An interesting, ancient ancestor of the hi-hat, which Berton's mechanism resembles, is described by Edgar Brand Gangware in *The History and Use of Percussion Instruments in Orchestration* (Ph.D. Dissertation, 1962, Northwestern University, p. 45, as quoted in Brown, p. 404). A Roman instrument known as the scabellum was considered an important part of musical ensembles and used widely. It was made of two hinged pieces of metal or wood, with one on the floor or ground and the other fastened under a musician's foot, so the two pieces could be struck together. An entire ensemble would use these instruments, resulting in what Gangware feels was an overwhelming sound.

1920s hi-hat cymbals were known as Charleston cymbals and were made of brass with an exaggerated central cup. They were usually about 10 inches in diameter, but were later replaced by 12- to 14-inch cymbals with a smaller central cup (Brown, pp. 408–409).

The other drumset component that evolved in the 1930s was the tom-tom. By the end of the 1920s most drummers used a Chinese tom-tom as part of their drumkit. One disadvantage of the Chinese tom-tom was its inability to be tuned, except by punching holes in its head. Eventually, tom-toms were constructed with a tunable top head, and then later, tunable top and bottom heads. These heads were tuned by either hand screws or by lugs fitting a drum key. In 1937, the Leedy Manufacturing Company marketed a tom-tom with separate tension adjustments for both top and bottom heads by means of lugs connected to the rim and turned with a drumkey (Brown, p. 411). Various drummers employed from one to six tom-toms in their setup of snare and bass drums, suspended cymbals, and assorted accessories. These included both smaller tom-toms, eventually called mounted tom-toms (as they were often attached or mounted on the bass drum), and larger ones standing on the floor by means of legs or a stand. Adjustable legs or rods attached to the drum eventually became the norm, and this drum got the name of floor tom-tom. The standard tom-tom setup evolved into one mounted tom-tom—often 13 inches in diameter and 9 inches deep—and one floor tom-tom—often 16 x 16 inches (Brown, p. 411).

Following these developments, the drumset became standardized and remained so until well into the 1950s and 1960s: the original bass drum/snare drum nucleus inherited from the marching bands, mounted and floor tom-toms, suspended "ride" cymbals, crash cymbals, and hi-hat, plus whatever accessories the individual drummer might add, such as a woodblock or cowbell.

During the 1950s, the plastic drumhead was introduced on a wide scale, and nylon-tipped drumsticks were introduced at the end of the decade. Plastic heads allowed for greater durability and less vulnerability to heat and humidity, although the author and many others feel that animal gut or skin drumheads afford a more sensitive and higher quality of tone.

The equipment used by drumset players has been an important factor in the total sound of jazz or African-American music in the first half of the twentieth century and until the present. In other words, the make-up of the drumset can determine not only its own percussive possibilities, but the shape and style of African-American music at a given point in its history: the staccato, sharp, dry timbres of woodblocks and temple blocks, choked cymbals, and rudimental snare drumming suit ragtime and New Orleans styles, while the more legato, continuous, flowing sounds of ride cymbals and slightly open hi-hats is part of a sense of time that "swings," as in the 1930s. Snare, tom-tom, and bass drum punctuations of this time continuum in later years are a natural element of 1940s and 1950s bebop. Some funk and Latin-American-influenced styles since the 1960s reflect, in one sense, a return to the dry, sharp, staccato sounds of the Ragtime and New Orleans eras of the first three decades of the twentieth century, although in a much different musical context.

Interesting playing timbres and techniques that have cyclically returned from these early eras to contemporary styles are the reemergence of the Chinese cymbal in a larger size (usually 18 to 24 inches in diameter), use of a hollow wood sound in rim clicks/cross-sticks (as a vestige of hollow woodblock or temple block timbres), large-diameter bass drums (mostly in funk), and the addition of one or more accessories, such as cowbell, gongs, shakers or rattles, and bells to the basic drumset arrangement. The medium of equipment greatly influences drumset sound, and in the history of African-American drumming, some elements have remained relatively constant while others have constantly changed. This parallels a similar duality in the music as a whole—constancy of meaning and feeling surrounded by changes in the grammar and technical means of their expression (distinctions of the semantic, grammatic, and technical levels of music from Roland Wiggins, p. c.).

Another influential African-American drummer who changed the way the drumset was played is Jonathan Samuel Jones. Known as "Papa Jo," he was an innovator of hi-hat technique, brushwork, and general style. His artistry was so unique on the hi-hat that Max Roach created a famous solo for hi-hat alone, dedicated to "Papa Jo," which the author witnessed on numerous occasions.

Jo Jones joined the Count Basie orchestra in 1934 and developed a new rhythm section sound with

bassist Walter Page. Jones had played piano, trumpet, and saxophone, as well as sang and danced in his earlier years (Brown, pp. 443–444). He began a new approach to drumset in African-American music: stressing each beat in a four-four or duple time feeling instead of accenting the second and fourth beats; this equal stress among beats allowed the drums and bass to interact in a new manner—a flow of time continually pushing forward. He played the bass drum quieter (which he called "feathering the bass drum"), transferred the hands away from the snare drum to the hi-hat, and interlocked with the string bass (usually played by Walter Page), complementing that instrument with cymbal work as it began to assume rhythmic leadership in the ensemble (Martin Williams, *The Jazz Tradition*, 1970, American Library, New York, p. 96, as quoted in Brown, pp. 443–444). Whereas earlier rhythm playing had stressed the demarcation of time, Jones emphasized its continuity or flow, and by working with the sound of the slightly opened hi-hat, which could be more easily controlled than a suspended ride cymbal, he could use the ringing, sizzling sound of the hi-hat to express this flow of time as well as play cymbal crashes on them for purposes of accenting. This use of cymbals was a marked contrast to the earlier sharp, staccato sound of choked suspended cymbals (Brown, p. 445). "Papa Jo" used cymbals, especially hi-hats, and their ringing sound to make time flow.

Jones is also known for his brush artistry, using the continuous sound of wire brushes rubbing across a snare drum head to express time in a connected, flowing manner. During solos, he also used the bass drum in a different way: while most of his predecessors usually reinforced certain snare or cymbal strokes with bass drum tones, Jones used the deep drum as an independent voice, and to mark phrase endings (Brown, p. 452).

"Papa Jo" Jones

"Papa Jo's" solo phrasing was a new direction for drummers suggested by Chick Webb: his phrases were often not the standard two, four, or eight measure length but were of different lengths or overlapping different sections of a piece, thus resulting in an asymmetrical pattern (Brown, pp. 453-454). Jo Jones thus inaugurated a new function for the drumset in its solo possibilities and expression of time as a continuous flow, using cymbals to complement the rhythmic ascendancy of the string bass in an ensemble. This set the table for the musical and drum revolution known as bebop, and all the great players to follow would have to have breakfast in his kitchen.

Kenneth Clarke, known also as Kenny and "Klook," was a founder of bebop drumming. He was a native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and worked with numerous artists in the 1920s and 1930s before developing a drumset style that transferred the time keeping responsibility (often expressed on each beat) from the bass drum to the ride cymbal. This freed the bass drum for accenting as an independent voice, which had begun in the Jo Jones solo style. The choke cymbal, woodblock, and cowbell sounds of earlier decades were replaced by a smooth, continuous ride cymbal beat, snare and bass drum independence and accenting, and a hi-hat statement of beats 2 and 4 in a four-pulse grouping. Kenny Clarke engaged in rhythmic dialogue with the soloist, establishing a new drum-ensemble relationship that would become characteristic of the bebop era (Brown, pp. 476–493). He was also a master of brushwork on snare drum. Clarke's set, like "Papa Jo" Jones' set, included snare and bass drums, mounted and floor tom-toms, hi-hat, and one or more ride cymbals. This setup remained a standard for drummers throughout the bebop and succeeding eras.

Kenny Clarke

Another master of phrasing and brushwork is "Philly" Joe Jones, whose brush techniques included numerous patterns of stroking or rubbing the snare drum head, as well as brush rolls known as "ripple rolls." These are achieved by rapidly rubbing the brush back and forth on the drumhead in a repeating manner.

Max Roach was one of the first African-American musicians to consciously look to Africa as a source of African-American music. His public stands on political and cultural issues have earned him worldwide acclaim, while his music is an expression of those issues. He brought music and drumming to a deeper level, intimately connected to a world freeing itself from neocolonialist forces.

Philly Joe Jones

Max Roach

One important element of Roach's style involves the use of melodic patterns played among the snare drum, bass drum, and tom-toms in a manner that makes the drumset a melodic as well as a rhythmic instrument.

Chico Hamilton and Dannie Richmond, African-American percussionists, are known as innovators in the use of mallets on the drums since the 1950s. Mallets comprise another sound color possible in the drumset.

Since the 1940s and 1950s, the basic drumset has not changed greatly, despite the great variety of styles in the African-American tradition. However, three general directions of development among some players have taken place since the 1960s, although many drummers retain the basic drum setup. One development is the enlargement of the drumset. Some players have included multiple mounted and floor tom-toms and cymbals in their kit. Some of this is influenced by the showmanship and commercial effects of rock and other commercial styles. Max Roach revealed to the author that he observed many drummers using these expanded setups, and felt that, ironically, most drummers actually only play the

snare, bass drum, and hi-hat in an integrated manner. One musician who has successfully utilized an expanded drumsetup is Billy Cobham. One of his large sets includes two bass drums, three snare drums, and eight to ten tuned tom-toms, six to eight ride, crash, and China-type cymbals, and hi-hat.

Billy Cobham

The large number of tunable tom-toms allows a more melodic approach to playing, while double bass drums enable the drummer to execute patterns with two feet that would be impossible with one. Similarly, multiple cymbals and cymbal types (ride, crash, and Chinese) provide a wide spectrum of cymbal sounds. Thus, an enlarged instrumental setup seems to widen the timbral landscape, although the author has seen Art Blakey duplicate on his small, four-piece, 1950s-type drumset everything another drummer played on his huge set during a 1979 All-Star Festival concert, in which the two played simultaneously.

Another direction in the recent development of the drumset is the use of electronics. While this phenomenon, which began in the late 1960s and early 1970s, is also related to commercial and rock styles, there are musicians who have used electronics with drums in a jazz style. Billy Cobham is also at the forefront of this movement. The author has witnessed a drumset of Cobham's with multiple tom-toms and bass drums, each drum containing an individual internal microphone, and each microphone connected to one large synthesizer, which altered the sound of each drum when struck. Cobham controlled the nature of the synthesized drum sounds.
Other electric devices replace actual drums and cymbals with flat, disc-shaped plates connected to a central synthesizer, which may digitally reproduce the sounds of acoustical drums and cymbals or alter their sound to any degree desired by the player, including virtually any sound possible from nature or the human imagination.

A third direction in the recent evolution of the drumset is the addition of instruments from world cultures, especially those of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. There is a return by some Latin-American-style players to the use of cowbell in the drumset or the addition of timbales as tom-toms for a sharp, high, drum sound. Many drummers employ Asian gongs and bells in their setup. The author has witnessed a number of African-American drummers using African instruments, either as part of their setup or in addition to the basic snare drum/bass drum, tom-tom, cymbals, hi-hat grouping. Chris Henderson used an African wooden xylophone as part of his kit in the early 1970s. Milford Graves draped netted beads of the Ghanaian *axatse* gourd rattle of the *Ewe* people around each hi-hat cymbal to produce a strong swishing sound, similar to that of an *axatse*.

Winston Grennan, a Caribbean drummer who the author heard with the reggae group Toots and the Maytals in 1985, used a large set with multiple cymbals and drums, including conga drums, large African pot-shaped drums, and gongs.

The most remarkable additions of African instruments to the drumset that the author has found are those of Edward Blackwell, a major musician in this study. He played small handheld *shekere* rattles filled with pebbles, as well as the Ghanaian *axatse* or maracas with one or two hands, while playing bass drum and hi-hat with his feet. If one hand is free, he plays the other drums or cymbals with it in conjunction with the rattles. He also played the Ghanaian *donno* string-tension hourglass drum, holding it the traditional manner under one arm, to vary tension and pitch, and striking it with a curved stick in the other hand while playing bass drum and hi-hat with the feet. Sometimes, he plays *donno* alone.

Blackwell also adds the *Ewe* iron double bell known as *gankogui* to his drumset, attaching it to a stand in order to facilitate stick strokes among the bell and his mounted and floor tom-toms and snare drum.

The author has seen Blackwell play a slit log drum, both as part of his drumset with bass drum and hi-hat sounding, and separately, on its own as either a solo instrument or in dialogue with another instrument. It can be heard as a solo instrument on the album *El Corazon*, which he released with trumpeter Donald Cherry, in 1984.

The inclusion of African instruments with the standard drumset indicates that some percussionists in the African-American tradition are adapting drum sounds to express their African heritage. As we have seen, the drumset is a composite musical instrument, some of whose components have remained relatively constant—snare and bass drums, and to some extent, tom-toms—while others—cymbals, pedals, drumheads, and accessory percussion instruments—have changed, reflecting the American society, its diverse population, and changes in technology. While the drumset, as any instrument, is a means of expression, its timbral and tonal makeup affects a given musical style. It is a constantly evolving instrument whose style innovations are directly connected to the harmonic/melodic innovations of the African-American tradition: Buddy Gilmore with James Reese Europe, Baby Dodds with Louis Armstrong, "Papa Jo" Jones with Count Basie, Kenny Clarke and Max Roach with Charlie Parker, Elvin Jones with John Coltrane, Edward Blackwell with Ornette Coleman, and so on. It is what the players do with the drumset sounds of any period that makes the music live within that era and their own personal style.

It is expected that the evolution of the drumset in the African-American tradition will continue. One direction might be an extension of the process led by Edward Blackwell: tuning the drumset to African sounds, both in instruments and performance techniques, in order to reflect the music's connection with its ancestors.

The author's research in Ghana 1995–2007 included sessions with Kofi Ghanaba, who Africanized the drumset components, an example of returning the drumset to a totally African instrumental sound. He employed a number of lead drums of the Asante people of Ghana, with two huge *bomaa* played as bass drums with pedals, two to four large *atumpan* drums played as toms, and a single *oprenten* played in place of a snare drum. See his article on Ghanaba in the *Rutgers Annual Review of Jazz Studies*, 1997, published in 2002.

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