



PA-2: Percussion Basics



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Snare Drum

Snare Drum technique represents a sound basis of grip and technique that transfers easily to most of the percussion family. Click on the buttons below to learn more.

Stance

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Snare Drum Stance

Posture is key on any instrument. Stand at snare drum with feet shoulder-width apart and arms relaxed down at your sides. Relax shoulders and only rely on skeletal structure to hang in balance from your head to your feet.

Be sure to stand 4-6 inches behind the drum and adjust the height so that the top of the drum is just below your belt-line.

Back

To Grip



To start, lay stick across palm of the dominant hand from base of pointer finger across the crease of palm to the opposite corner of wrist. Vic Firth SD-1 General sticks (shown in picture) are a great starter snare stick and also work well with multi-percussion applications.

Snare Drum Grip

Next



Keeping stick across palm, wrap fingers around stick and place entire thumb print parallel to the stick. Try to get as much of the thumb print touching the stick as possible.

Snare Drum Grip, cont.

Next



Turn at the forearm so the stick is flat and the wrist and palm are exactly parallel to the floor. Check that there is minimal to no gap between thumb and first finger.

Snare Drum Grip, cont.

Next



The fulcrum is the place on the stick that provides maximum bounce with minimal pressure. This is approximately 1/3 of the way from the butt of the stick to the tip. The thumb and side of the forefinger between the top two knuckles is where the fulcrum should be. To test fulcrum, drop the stick freely with only thumb and forefinger and experiment with fulcrum placement until maximum bounce is found.

Snare Drum Grip, cont.

Next



Finally, match the fulcrum and grip found on the dominant hand to the non-dominant hand, and you have achieved "matched" grip. This grip is useful in most other percussion instruments involving sticks or mallets. Sticks should form a 75-90 degree angle and forearms should angle downward towards the floor from the elbow to the wrist. Stick beads should be together and just in front of the center of the drum.

Snare Drum Grip, cont.

Back

To
Stroke



Stroke

Stroke should be natural and free of tension. Be sure stance and grip are correct before moving on.

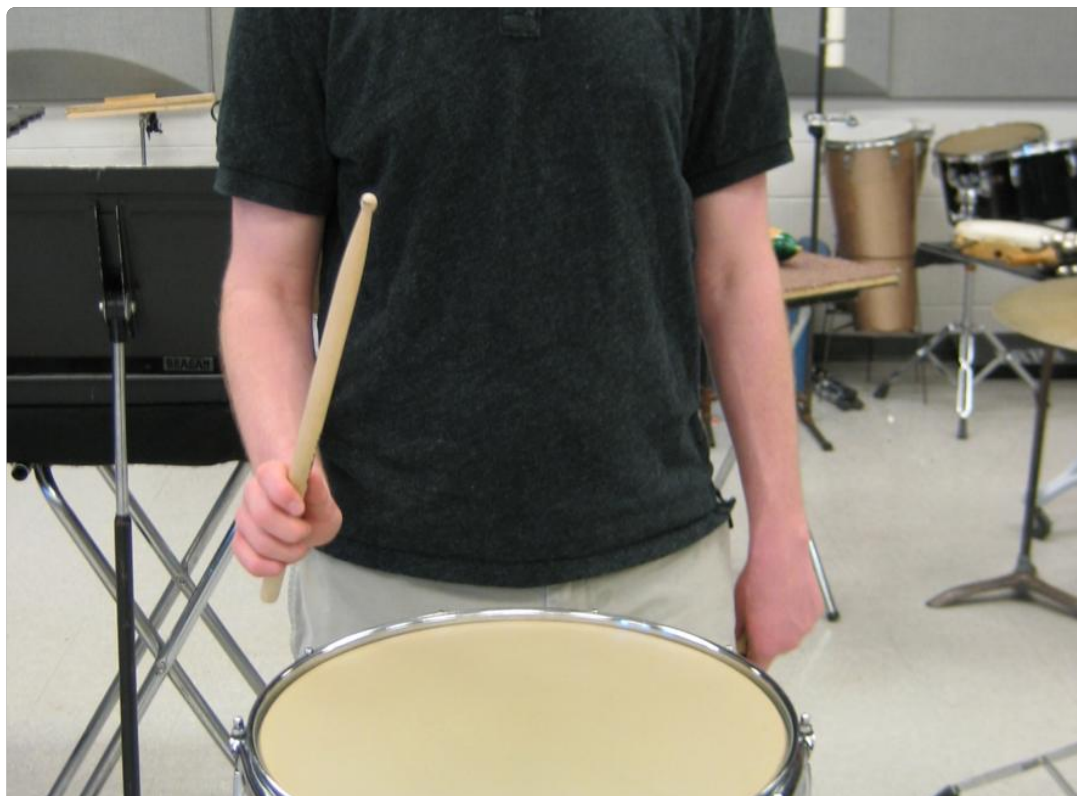
Next



Start with good matched grip. Be sure palms are flat and forearms are angled downward. If the forearms are parallel, lower drum until a natural, tension-free downward angle occurs. Stick beads should be together and a few inches in front of the center of the drum.

Stroke, cont.

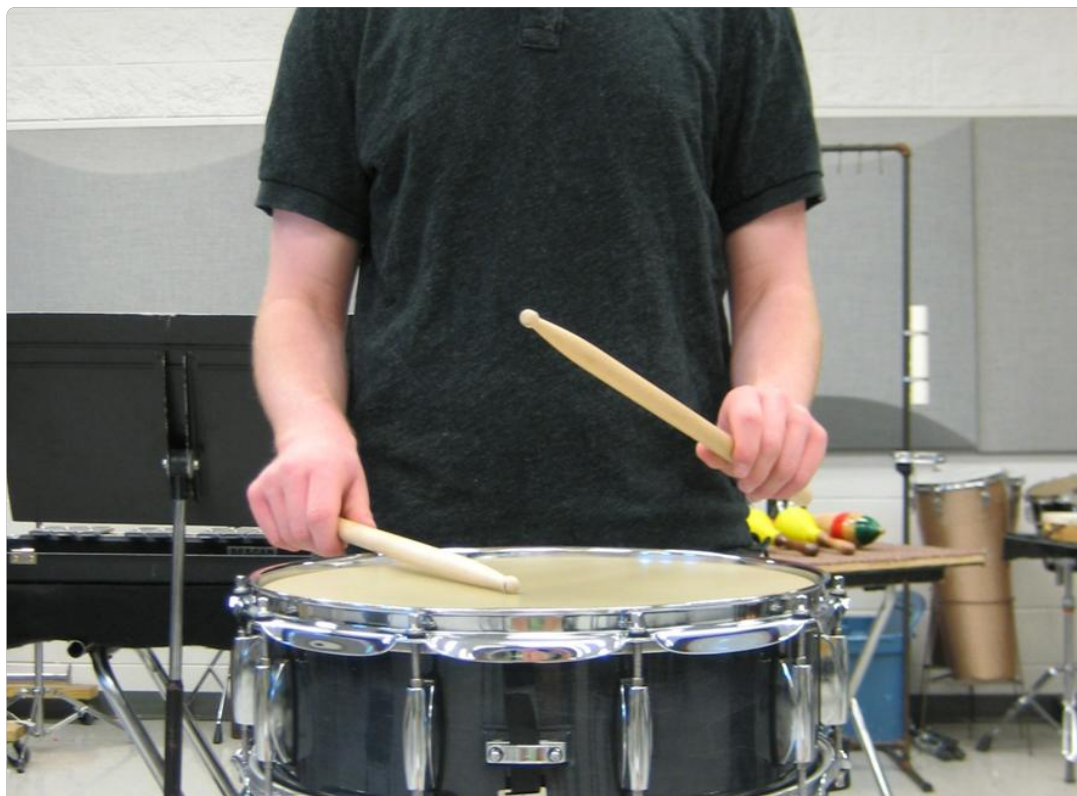
Next



Start with a full stroke. Raise stick to a comfortable, yet stretched height and let the stick naturally bounce back to the same position. Think of pulling the stick back towards the same shoulder. Try to achieve at least a 45 degree angle between drum head and stick at full height. Do not stop stick on head, and do not make any twisting motions with the wrist or arms. Keep arms still and maintain fulcrum. Fingers remain on the stick at all times.

Stroke, cont.

Next



Match the same full stroke with other hand. Always maintain stance, grip, and relaxation. The stick should be in a constant, fluid motion throughout the stroke. Aim at a spot just below the head of the drum to achieve a fuller sound. Do not accelerate the speed of the stick as it approaches the head (also known as whipping the stick).

Stroke, cont.

Back

To What
to Avoid



Sticks starting too high. Start with sticks less than 1 inch from the head. This is quite common in beginning percussionists.

What to Avoid

Next



Thumbs are not flat. Be sure to place the entire thumb print on the stick. Take note of the tension in the forearms that this creates.

What to Avoid, cont.

Next



Back fingers not on sticks. This is very common when learning to roll. Back fingers aid in controlling the stick and therefore the stroke. The stick does not need to touch the palm at all times; however, the fingers never leave the stick.

What to Avoid, cont.

Next



Wrists turned so palms are not flat. This is more closely related to timpani technique, but not conducive to good snare technique. Note that elbows are too far in – turn elbows out and rotate forearms until palms are flat to the floor.

What to Avoid, cont.

Next



Elbows too high; arms not hanging freely from shoulder. This creates tension in the arms and the performer will tire quickly. This also creates too large of a stick angle.

What to Avoid, cont.

Next



Snares are not centered (note the shadow of the snares running diagonally from the upper right to lower left corner). The throw lever should be directly in front of the performer. Playing off the snares gives a dull sound and a fuzzy response from the snares. Do not adjust drum by where the brand sticker is on the head in front of you; always adjust by placing snare lever by your belt. You can also adjust to soft dynamics by playing towards the rim and still play over the snares.

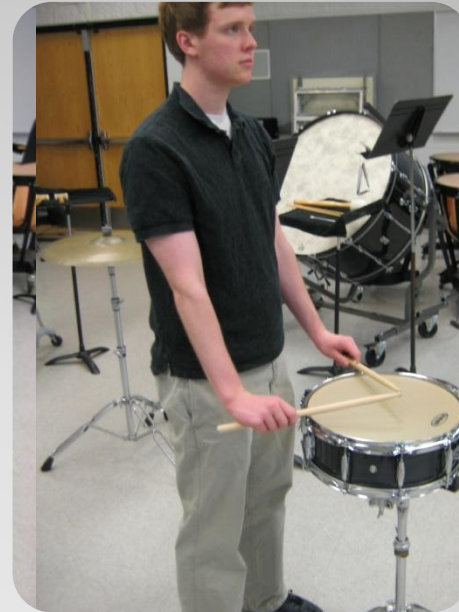
What to Avoid, cont.

Next

Drum too high, too much tension in wrists, forearms not angled downward.



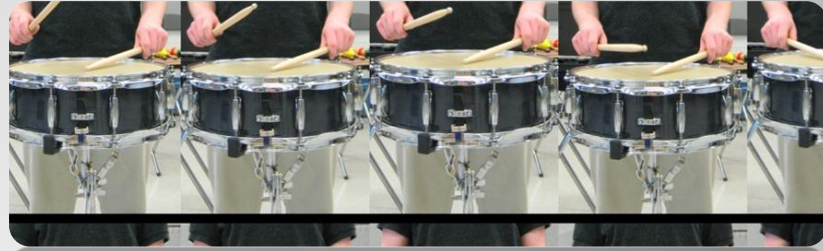
Drum too low, tension in forearms, elbows not bent, forearms angled too far downward.



What to Avoid, cont.

Back

To
Technique



Snare Drum Technique

Now that we have basic stance, grip, and stroke under our belts, it's now time to learn the techniques associated with Snare Drum playing.

Next

Tap: lower stroke, 1-3 inches above the head. Also used in pp-mp dynamics.



Accent: higher stroke, 3-6 inches above the head. Also used in mf-ff dynamics.



Two major strokes

Next



A flam is when one stick is higher than the other and are dropped simultaneously to the head creating two sounds – a soft sound followed immediately by a louder sound. It should sound like it is spoken “fl-AM.” A Right Flam is where the right stick is higher, and the reverse is true for a Left Flam.

Flam

Next



A great place to start learning a buzz roll is the fulcrum test found earlier in this presentation. When you find the spot with the maximum number of bounces, simply place back fingers on the stick and try to take away the first 2-3 wide bounces and get straight to the smaller, quick bounces. The stick will likely drop lower in the hand as it falls away from the palm (remember to keep the back fingers on the stick!).

Multi-stroke (buzz) roll

Next



Once a long, smooth buzz occurs in one hand (sounds like zzzzzz), try to overlap with the other hand so you cannot hear the change of sticking. A good concert snare drum roll at a medium dynamic is a 3-stroke roll (RRR, LLL). Keep the stroke closed and pump arms at elbow to keep the roll speed fast.

Multi-stroke (buzz) roll, cont.

Next



This type of roll is reserved for certain marches, rudimental drumming, and the marching field. The Open Roll or double-stroke roll (RR, LL) is a controlled, single bounce of the stick. In very slow motion, the stick goes through a full stroke, then the hand catches the stick for a stroke using the energy from the full stroke. This is called a Diddle (RR), and is the core of an open roll. Again, pump arms at the elbow to keep roll energy fast and smooth.

Open Roll

Next



Lay the non-dominant stick across the rim and rest the neck of the stick in the center of the drum. Use dominant hand to strike the non-dominant hand to achieve the "shot" sound. Do NOT do a single-stick rim shot in a concert ensemble setting! Single-stick shots should be saved for marching band.

Concert Rim Shot

Next

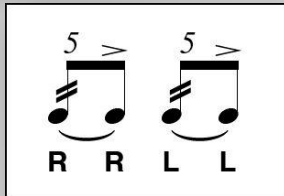


Normally used in swing and Latin jazz drumming, lay the stick across the rim with the butt of the stick just off-center on the head. This gives a full “rim-knock” or “clave” sound. If a piece of music demands a rim click, experiment with this technique to give a fuller sound that has more projection. Ask the conductor what his or her preferred sound is.

“Clave”

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[To Rudiments](#)



Snare Drum Rudiments

Use this menu to navigate through the 40 Percussive Arts Society International Drum Rudiments

Roll
Rudiments

Diddle
Rudiments

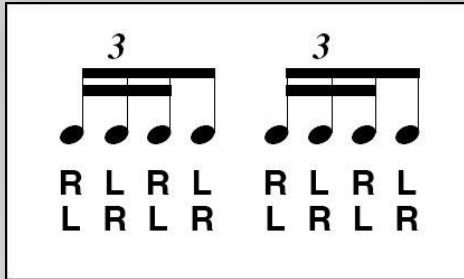
Flam
Rudiments

Drag
Rudiments

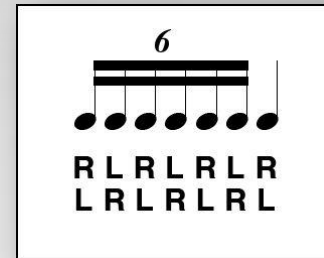
Back



Single Stroke Roll



Single Stroke Four



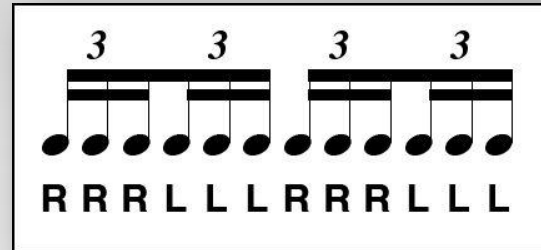
Single Stroke Seven

A. Single Stroke Roll Rudiments

Next



Multiple Bounce Roll



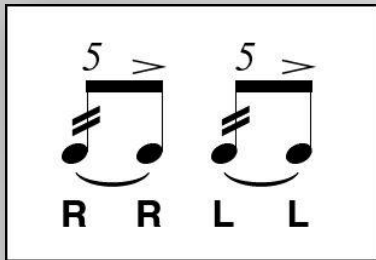
Triple Stroke Roll

B. Multiple Bounce Roll Rudiments

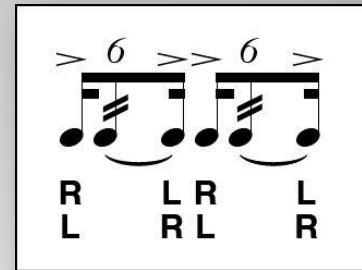
Next



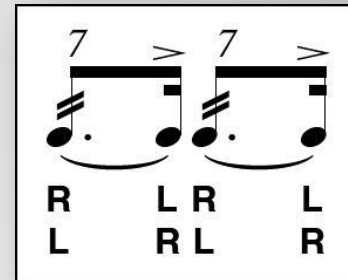
Double Stroke Open Roll



Five Stroke Roll



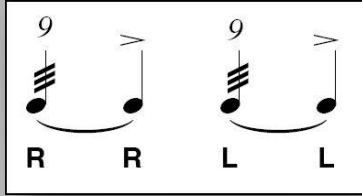
Six Stroke Roll



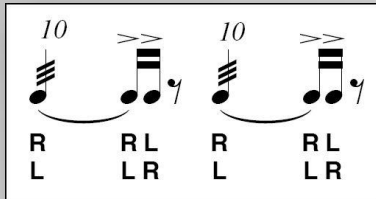
Seven Stroke Roll

C. Double Stroke Open Roll Rudiments

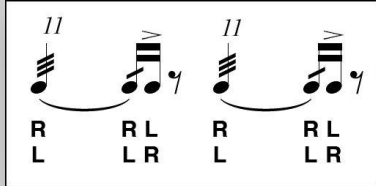
Next



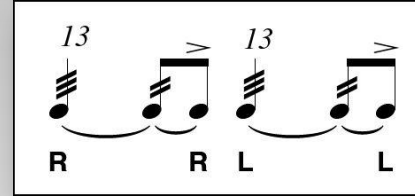
Nine Stroke Roll



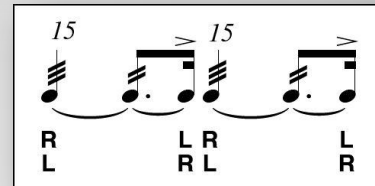
Ten Stroke Roll



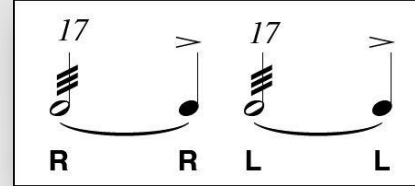
Eleven Stroke Roll



Thirteen Stroke Roll



Fifteen Stroke Roll

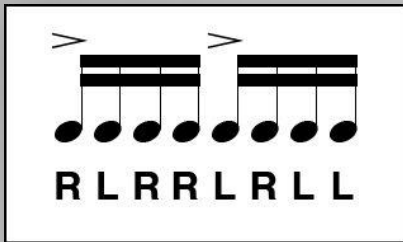


Seventeen Stroke Roll

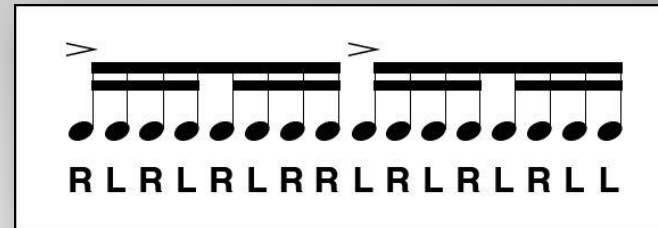
Double Stroke Open Roll Rudiments, cont.

Back

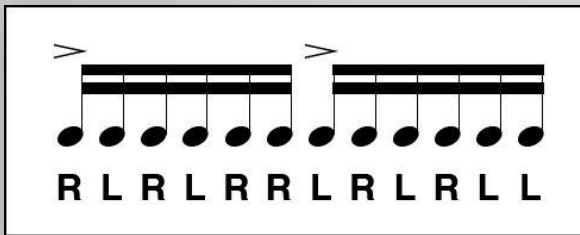
To Diddle
Rudiments



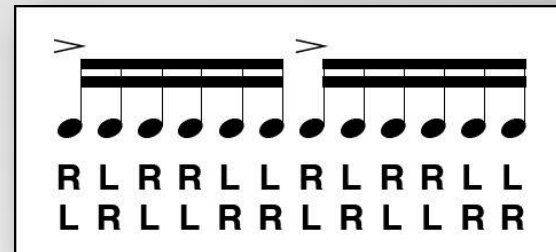
Single Paradiddle



Triple Paradiddle



Double Paradiddle

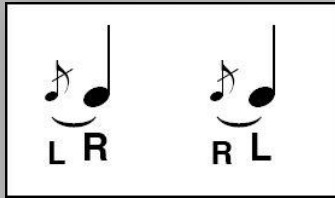


Single Paradiddle-diddle

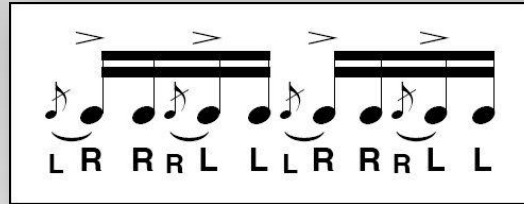
Diddle Rudiments

Back

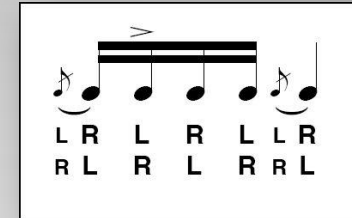
To Flam Rudiments



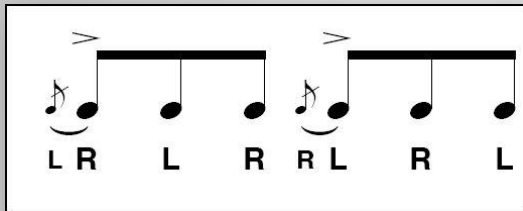
Flam



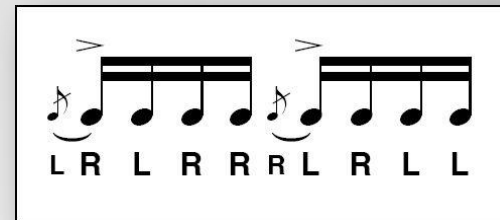
Flam Tap



Flamacue



Flam Accent



Flam Paradiddle

Flam Rudiments

Next

Musical notation for Single Flammed Mill: A single eighth note followed by a pair of beamed eighth notes (flam), then another eighth note, followed by another pair of beamed eighth notes (flam), and finally another eighth note. The rhythm is represented by the letters L R R L R R L L R L.

LR R L R R L L R L

Single Flammed Mill

Musical notation for Swiss Army Triplet: A triplet of eighth notes followed by a pair of beamed eighth notes (flam), then another triplet of eighth notes, and finally another pair of beamed eighth notes (flam). The rhythm is represented by the letters L R R L L R R L R L R L.

LR R L L R R L
RL L R R L L R

Swiss Army Triplet

Musical notation for Flam Paradiddle-diddle: A pair of beamed eighth notes (flam) followed by a pair of eighth notes, then another pair of beamed eighth notes (flam) followed by a pair of eighth notes, and finally another pair of beamed eighth notes (flam) followed by a pair of eighth notes. The rhythm is represented by the letters L R L R R L L R L R L L R R.

LR L R R L L R L R L L R R

Flam Paradiddle-diddle

Musical notation for Inverted Flam Tap: A pair of beamed eighth notes (flam) followed by a pair of eighth notes, then another pair of beamed eighth notes (flam) followed by a pair of eighth notes, and finally another pair of beamed eighth notes (flam) followed by a pair of eighth notes. The rhythm is represented by the letters L R L R L R L R L R.

LR L R L R L R L R

Inverted Flam Tap

Musical notation for Pataflalfa: A pair of beamed eighth notes (flam) followed by a pair of eighth notes, then another pair of beamed eighth notes (flam) followed by a pair of eighth notes, and finally another pair of beamed eighth notes (flam) followed by a pair of eighth notes. The rhythm is represented by the letters L R L R R L L R L R R L.

LR L R R L L R L R R L

Pataflalfa

Musical notation for Flam Drag: A pair of beamed eighth notes (flam) followed by a pair of eighth notes, then another pair of beamed eighth notes (flam) followed by a pair of eighth notes, and finally another pair of beamed eighth notes (flam) followed by a pair of eighth notes. The rhythm is represented by the letters L R L L R R L R R L.

LR L L R R L R R L

Flam Drag

Flam Rudiments, cont.

Back

To Drag Rudiments

LLR RRL

Drag (Ruff)

LLR L R LLR L R
RRL R L RRL R L

Lesson 25

LLR LLR L RRL RRL R

Double Drag Tap

LLR L RRL R

Single Drag Tap

RR L R R LL R L L

Single Dragadiddle

Drag Rudiments

Next

R LLR L R R L RRL R L L

Drag Paradiddle #1

LLR L R L RRL R L R

Single Ratamacue

LLR LLR L R L RRL RRL R L R

Double Ratamacue

R LLR LLR L R R L RRL RRL R L L

Drag Paradiddle #2

LLR LLR LLR L R L RRL RRL RRL R L R

Triple Ratamacue

Drag Rudiments

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To
Timpani