MARK

TIME

MARK

HOLISTIC EXERCISES FOR THE HANDS & FEET

MATTHEW LEMIEUX

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MARK TIME MARK! HOLISTIC EXERCISES FOR THE HANDS AND FEET

Background

Welcome to **Mark Time Mark! Holistic Exercises for the Hands and Feet**, a modern approach to the quintessential drumline training packet. These ten exercises are designed to establish and reinforce the fundamentals of drumming mechanics while also strengthening performers' sense of timing, rhythm, and groove.

This book's main twist (or gimmick, if you prefer) is that every exercise includes a written "Mark Time" component to be performed by the feet. In practice, this part could be performed as a simple foot tapping, as a proper mark time, or even as marching exercises that extend the training program into the physical and "simultaneous responsibility" demands that are characteristic of contemporary marching percussion.

On the other hand, the "feet" component can be ignored entirely in favor of prioritizing the "hands" aspect of each exercise. The different pulses of the written mark time can be applied to the metronome or click—independent of any footwork assignments—so that the same musical content can be heard and experienced by the performers in multiple ways. A "middle ground" approach might then have the footwork gradually introduced and developed over the course of a rehearsal season. At their core, the exercises are very simple and will be broadly useful "right out of the box," while the noted breakdowns, variations, and footwork serve as an invitation to enhance the demand and the potential for growth as your performers rise to conquer the previously established challenges.

As you adapt this material to the needs of your line, keep the following in mind:

- **Each exercise is notated twice**: first with a *pulse change notation* style, where the tempo remains constant throughout the exercise, and the timing of the feet changes relative to a constant click; and then with a *tempo change notation* style, where the rhythm of the feet is notated consistently as quarter notes, and the timing changes in the feet are notated as tempo changes. The first style will be the most conducive to learning and understanding the exercise; however, once the exercise is learned, it can be further understood by performing it while reading the second notation style. The tempo markings can also facilitate better use of the metronome.
- The release of each exercise occupies a measure by itself, without any rests to imply the meter of what comes next. Apart from saving ink and space, this simplification makes the exercise agnostic with respect to what comes after the

release... Is it a halt? Is it another repetition of the exercise, without any break? Is it marking time, and if so, what meter? Just imagine the possibilities!

- These exercises will be extremely beneficial even if performers rehearse them individually, or sitting in chairs (marking time or not), or without pad or sticks (literally just drumming with hands). That said, once the mark time is solid and the drumming is comfortable, it is time to get moving!
- Each exercise may be combined with marching assignments tailored to the count structure. That said, do not be surprised when everything looks and sounds like you are back at square one; the added demand of actually moving can be a significant one, even if the timing of the feet is well rehearsed. Ease performers into this demand by starting with small step sizes and simple assignments. Some exercises will work great with 8-step moves, 8-to-5 step size, and dressing to the yard lines. Other exercises will be better suited to assignments that ignore yard lines or which change step sizes to accommodate count structure.
- Every exercise can be rehearsed with a metronome at a constant click. Using the pulse change notation style, the constant click would be set to the quarter note (i.e., if the time signature is 6/8, the click will feel like quarter note triplets in 2/4 time). When setting the constant click to different pulses, results may vary, with some lining up cleanly within the exercise and others shifting the click onto different counts as the written pulse changes. The latter need not be avoided (it is one great way to use a metronome), but be aware of what you may be getting into.
- Many of these exercises employ *cloning*, whereby both hands play the same part at the same time. This description is synonymous with playing what are commonly called "doublestops," but it places emphasis on the fact that you are duplicating motions across the hands. Cloning enables the strengths of one hand to highlight weaknesses in the other and allows the brain to more easily relate both hands to each other in time and motion.

Use the doublestops as an opportunity to match stick motions between the two hands, but be mindful of how each stroke is being achieved physically; the motions of larger muscle groups are the easiest to match between the two hands, and one solution for dirty doublestops is to rely more on arm motion and less on wrist turn. While this approach eliminates undesirable dirt in this one scenario, it builds bad habits for every other scenario! Prioritize correct motion over clean doublestops!!!

If you have never practiced cloning before, getting the doublestops to speak cleanly may take a considerable amount of time: not necessarily more practice, but more **actual time**: you sleep, and your brain takes time rewiring itself in response to the 20–30 minutes that you spent doing something unfamiliar to you. Certainly work hard, but also give your self/performers time to sleep on it before expecting results.

The ten exercises in this book constitute a cohesive training program of time, motion, grip, and groove fundamentals for the battery percussionist. Flams are conspicuously missing from this collection; however, applications with grace notes can easily be incorporated into many of the provided exercises as they become relevant, and a standalone flams builder at the appropriate difficulty level would be needlessly derivative and redundant among the exercises already comprising this book.

Half Time Real Time (Legatos)

This book opens with a version of 8 on a Hand because almost everything in battery percussion relates to this exercise. Defining your line's approach to legatos will define your line's approach to many other things, and mastering your line's approach to legatos will prepare you to master many other things. Consistency of timing, motion, and sound quality are crucial to every rudimental application, but this exercise provides a uniquely convenient vehicle for eliminating variability across those dimensions because every stroke should look and sound exactly the same. That is, all nonuniformity that you can see or hear is undesirable and should be eliminated; the same cannot be said of exercises with any sort of written contrast or shaping.

Despite the overwhelming simplicity, there are some notable pitfalls here:

- The first two strokes of each hand must establish the timing that the rest of the notes will follow.
- The last stroke of each hand will cushion instead of rebounding; however, sound quality and timing must not be affected by what happens (or doesn't happen) after the stick hits the drum.
- Each measure simply follows from the previous measure. Legatos must transition seamlessly across the hand changes.

There are other pitfalls, but these are the big ones addressed by the "Crucial Notes" variation, which isolates the beginning and end of each hand/measure. The "Cloning" variation increases the focus on consistency by putting 24 strokes on each hand and having the two hands play concurrently during some measures.

Although 8 on a Hand is most commonly an 8-measure exercise, this version consists of only four measures of legatos. Abridging the exercise allows the student to be more focused (fewer notes with the same list of demands), allows more breaks in between repetitions for self-reflection, and allows issues occurring within a repetition to more easily be singled out. At the same time, including one bar of rests and mark time allows the exercise to cleanly map to 8-step moves, and it furthermore forces engagement and focus through the end of the legatos by requiring an additional release.

Big Leg's (More Legatos)

Legatos are important enough to deserve another exercise, and understanding the relationship between dotted eighth notes and quarter notes is important enough to be the basis of that exercise. At the end of the day, this is still just 8 on a Hand.

Alternator (Singles)

The physical demands of this exercise are identical to those of the legatos exercises, but now the left and right hands are directly compared with each other for your ears to really dig into. A common tendency is to overplay the right hand and underplay the left hand, so ensure evenness of sound as before.

For additional utility from this exercise, try different stickings (e.g., doublestroke RRLL) while striving for the same uniformity of sound. Add diddles/drags, grace notes, and/or accents to different partials; decide how to handle the pulse change (e.g., with downbeat drags, just keep the drags on every foot, so the music actually changes with the pulse change).

Afro-Cuban (Doubles)

This exercise combines doubles with legatos in an Afro-Cuban rhythm. The doubles are more sparse than, say, a *Sanford*-type double beat, so focus on making them feel like the legatos. Strive for maximum rebound on the first note *and* the second note of each double while simultaneously striving for maximum power on the second note. As tempo increases and the doubles are no longer achieved through two completely identical sequences of motion, use the doublestops to unify your approach between the hands. As you incorporate forearm assistance to achieve the doubles, keep striving for wrist turn, velocity, and rebound. As you strive for more rebound, velocity tends to suffer. As you strive for more velocity, rebound tends to suffer. The mission of the battery percussionist is to achieve a great deal of both, thereby maximizing efficiency.

Giblet Diddles (More Doubles)

This exercise applies doublestrokes in a more roll-relevant context, where there is more "hang time" after each doublestroke than in the previous exercise. In the pursuit of both velocity and rebound, the equation tends to change a little bit when the hang time after the doublestroke is varied. It feels even less natural to hit a powerful second note and let it rebound efficiently and let the stick hang comfortably as it waits for the next attack. Additionally, this exercise breaks down triplet rolls in a way that emphasizes the offbeats/upbeats played as the second notes of some doublestrokes.

B'ounces (Threes)

This exercise works on fulcrum control via *hugadigs*, the one-handed breakdown of flam-taps. Unlike the doubles exercises—where you are trying to achieve two equal-sounding notes—this exercise challenges you to achieve correct timing and a full sound quality across multiple bounces and a desired dynamic decay.

Some schools of thought advocate also practicing *triplebeats* (series of three equal-sounding notes) in order to enhance doublestroke quality. The thinking is that if you can play three notes pretty well, then you can certainly play two notes well. Aside from that approach, triplebeats also apply to fast singlestroke patterns; at the low dynamic, they have relevance to flam and singlestroke patterns.

8 and 25 (Rolls)

Now that the requisite fundamentals are fully in place—wrist turn, rebound, and fulcrum—it is time to cook with some rolls. Putting a cloth or towel on the drum or practice pad can help with building endurance and wrist turn (velocity), but it is important to also remove the towel and become reacclimated to using rebound efficiently.

A common piece of advice for the stock 8 and 25 triplet rolls exercise is to focus on beats 2 & 4, really driving the right foot into the ground (if marking time); the idea is to keep the feet on top of the metronome, and play the hands to the feet in order not to lose speed on the rolls. Robust timing is important at every tempo and in every time signature; therefore, an energetic commitment to correct timing must be maintained with every pulse during the footwork variations to this exercise.

Variations that remove certain doublestrokes from the pattern (e.g., downbeat drags, tap drags, five-stroke rolls, tap-fives) and/or add accents to the pattern should also be rehearsed.

Cushions on Deck (Accent Tap)

This exercise begins as a straightforward "bucks" exercise with repetition of the cushion stroke motion and legatos at the low dynamic. The second half of the exercise adds accents to the pattern that will further test your accent-tap fundamentals. It is important to stay relaxed on the accents: the first should comfortably rebound, and the second simply shouldn't, but it should still sound the same and look exactly the same as the first (until after the stroke lands). It is also especially important to be relaxed on the isolated taps, as these must speak cleanly in time and not slow down the upstroke to the next accent. Take this one very very slow at first, and eliminate all extraneous (wasteful) motion from your approach; then maintain that approach as the tempo increases.

Pocket Dubs (Paradiddle Diddles)

This exercise provides a convenient backbeat structure in which to work on consistency and endurance with doublestroke and accent-tap fundamentals. Play along to music to make the experience more interesting. You can also try variations in the sequencing of the footwork patterns to raise the demand for focus and awareness. Also, try it with no mark time while someone experiments with different patterns on the metronome.

Buck 'o Five (Tap Fives)

This exercise follows very much the same ideas as the previous exercise, but it provides an opportunity to work on fivelets and slurred roll sticking (in addition to doublestroke and accent-tap fundamentals). Feel free to experiment with different "five-note" rudiments in the written pattern: e.g., alternating sticking, flams on the accents, other variations with drags and flams, eggbeaters (RRRII), Chocolate Mitchells (RIrrL), and slurred flam-fives. Adapting this exercise to work on flam patterns will nicely round out your warm-up repertoire and provide a convenient excuse to explore fivelet feels.



Matthew Lemieux is a musician, composer, and educator with a background in battery percussion. Originally from Cary, NC, he was first exposed to rudimental drumming on the drumline at Cary High School, under the tutelage of Will Goodyear.

He was a performer with the world-class WGI ensemble Constitution in 2008, and as an undergraduate student, he marched with the NC State Power Sound of the South marching band, serving as drumline captain for two years. During this time, he worked closely with instructor John Antonelli to develop and refine the line's exercise program and

performance repertoire. Outside of school, he assisted John as a battery instructor for the Athens Drive High School marching band and indoor drumlines from 2009–2011. Matthew received his Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering from North Carolina State University in 2011.

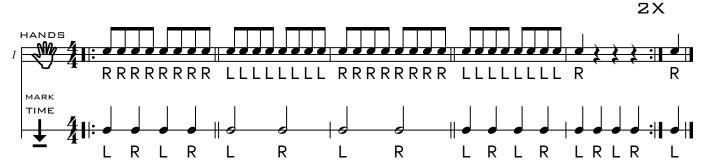
Since moving to Utah to continue his education, he has remained involved in the marching arts, serving as the snare drum instructor for Weber State Indoor Percussion (now *Gold Spike Percussion*) for the 2014 and 2015 seasons, consulting for high school programs in the Carolinas, and curating *FatMattDrums.com*, a massive repository of original drumline cadences, ensemble warm-ups, and rudimental exercises. Matthew earned his Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering from The University of Utah in 2017 and now works as a research & development scientist in the medical device industry, enjoying his free time with his wife, Jessica, and their two amazing children.

HALF TIME REAL TIME

= 80 - 200 Legatos

M. Lemieux

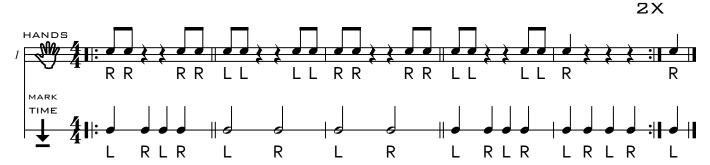
Including the measure of rests, this exercise accommodates marching assignments consisting of 8-step moves; a step size of 8-to-5 (8 steps per 5 yards) will map to the yard lines.



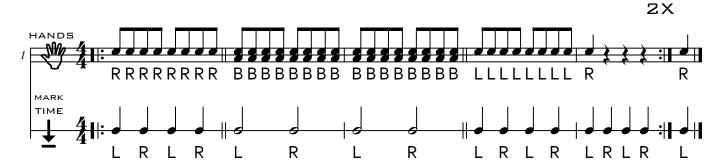
Fulcrum Variations: Perform this exercise variously with only the fulcrum, fulcrum plus certain fingers, "back fulcrum" (no front fulcrum, just back of grip), full grip, etc.

Feet Variations: Maintain a constant pulse in the mark time through the whole exercise. Both of the feels in the written exercise are suitable for this assignment.

Variation: "Crucial Notes"



Variation: "Cloning"



HALF TIME REAL TIME

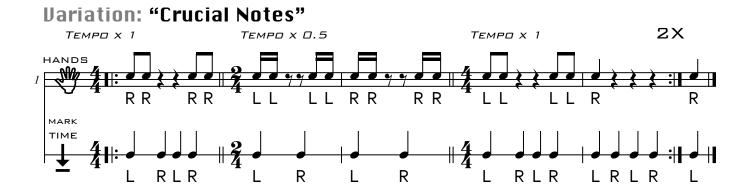
_ = 80 - 200 **Legatos**

M. Lemieux

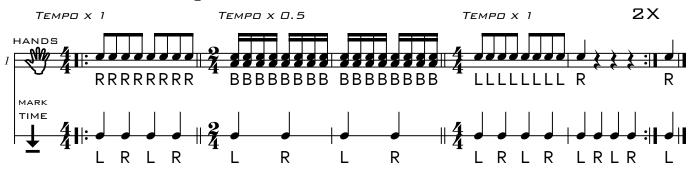
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Fulcrum Variations: Perform this exercise variously with only the fulcrum, fulcrum plus certain fingers, "back fulcrum" (no front fulcrum, just back of grip), full grip, etc.



Variation: "Cloning"

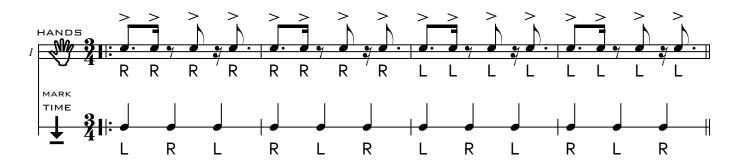


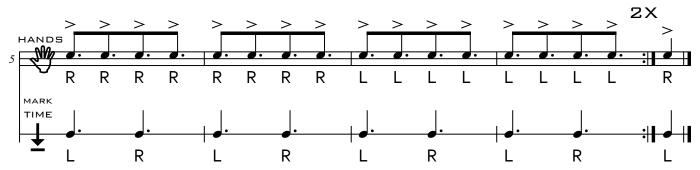
BIG LEG'S

More Legatos

= 120 - 160

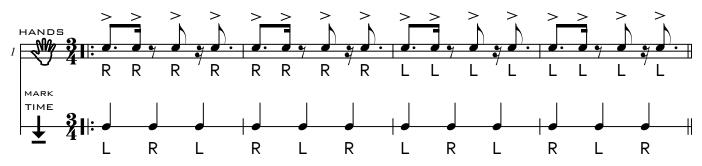
M. Lemieux

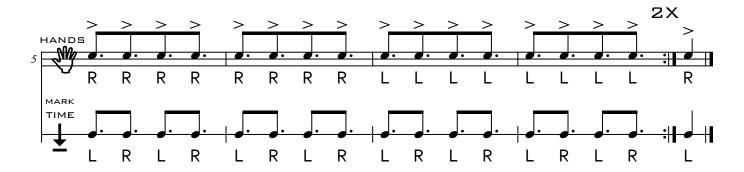




Feet Variations: Maintain a constant pulse in the mark time through the whole exercise. All of the feels in the written exercise are suitable for this assignment.

Variation: "Step on the Gas"



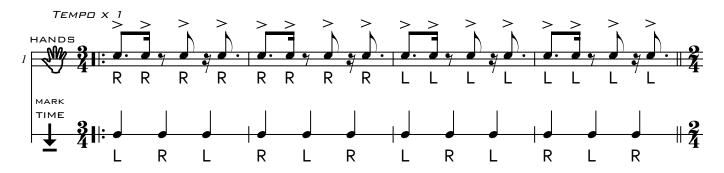


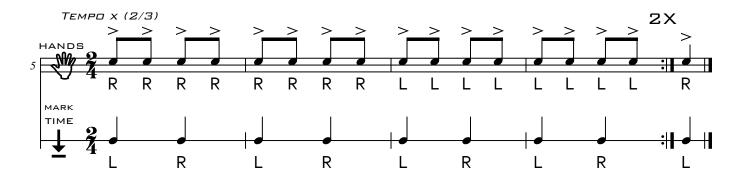
BIG LEG'S

More Legatos

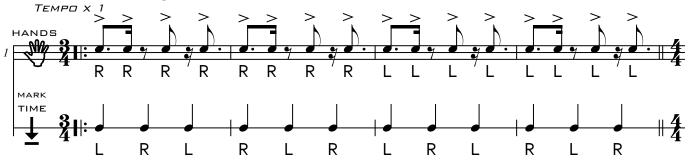


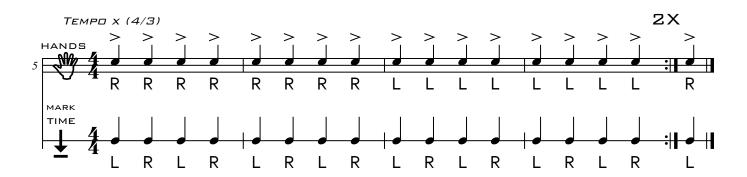
M. Lemieux





Variation: "Step on the Gas"





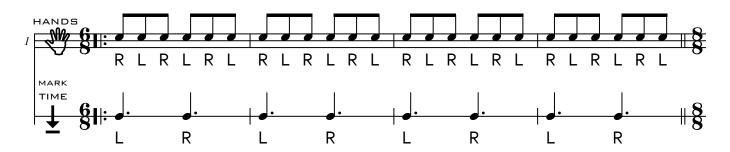
ALTERNATOR

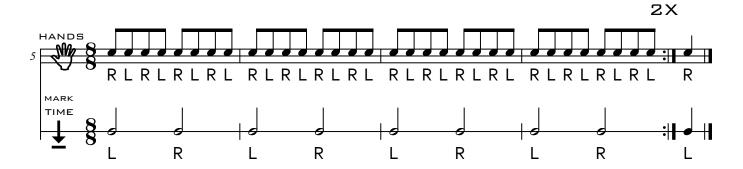
Singles

= 88 - 152

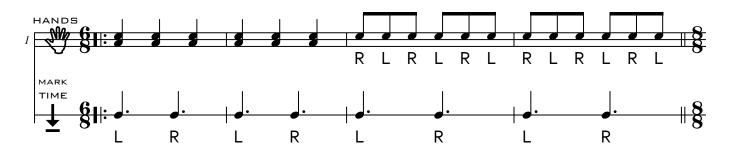
M. Lemieux

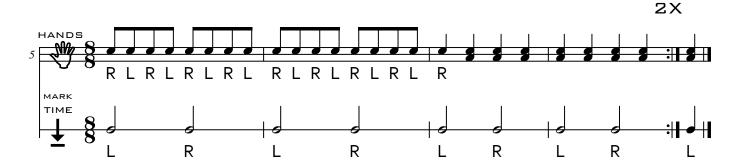
Since each line of this exercise is 8 steps, this exercise accommodates marching assignments consisting of 8-step moves; a step size of 8-to-5 (8 steps per 5 yards) will map to the yard lines.





Variation: "Cloning"





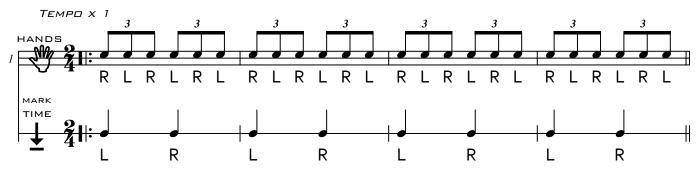
ALTERNATOR

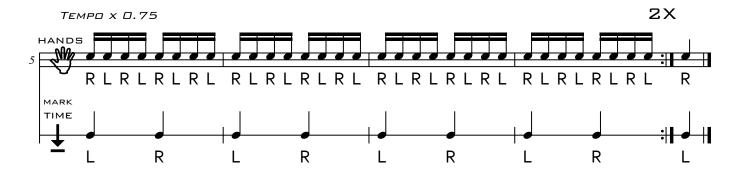
Singles

_ = 88 - 152

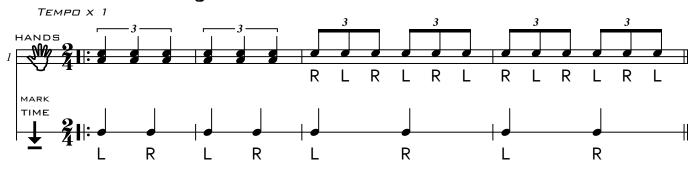
M. Lemieux

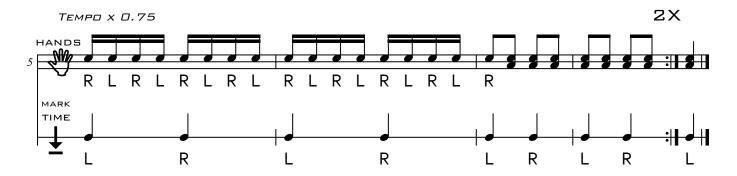
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Variation: "Cloning"



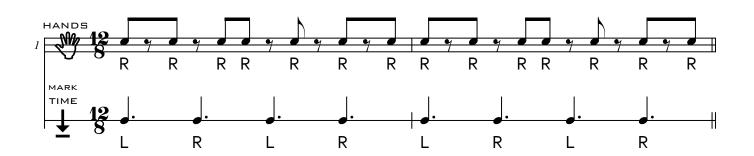


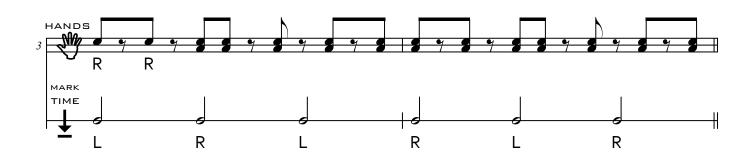
AFRO-CUBAN

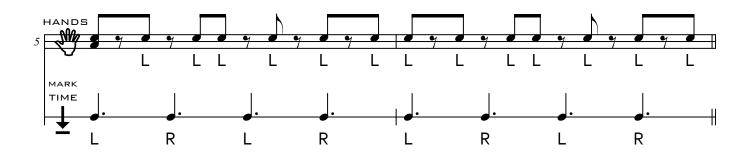
Doubles

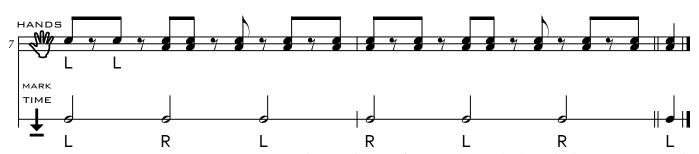
_ = 88 - 200

M. Lemieux





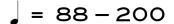




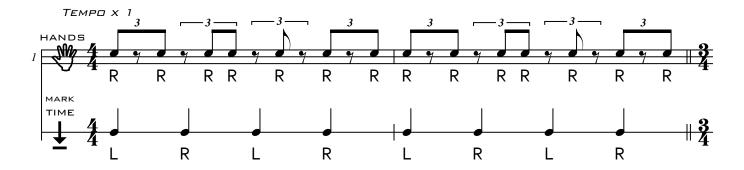
Feet Variations: Maintain a constant pulse in the mark time through the whole exercise. Both of the feels in the written exercise are suitable for this assignment.

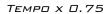
AFRO-CUBAN

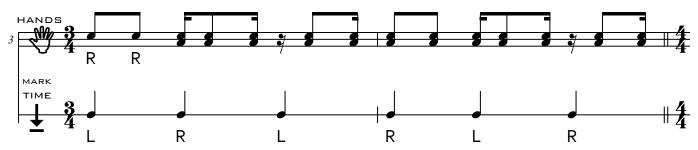
Doubles

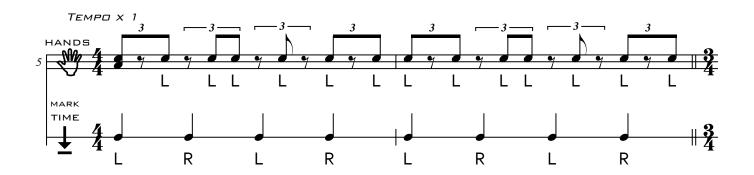


M. Lemieux

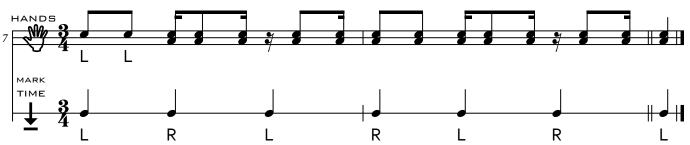








ТЕМРО X 0.75

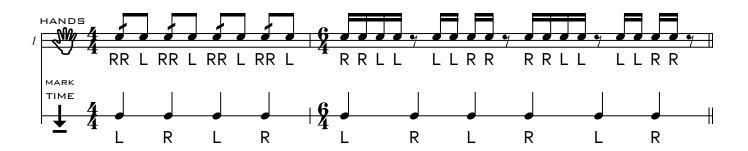


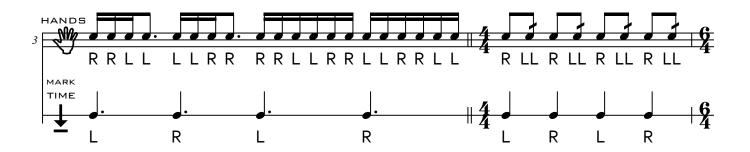
GIBLET DIDDLES

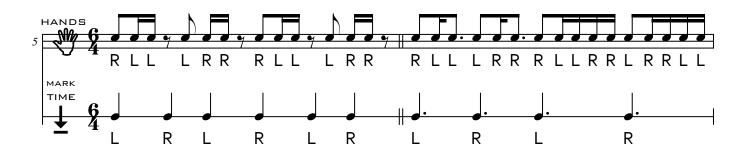
More Doubles

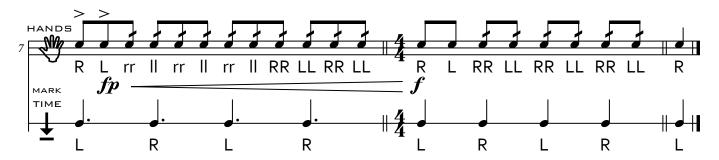
 $\rfloor = 72 - 200$

M. Lemieux









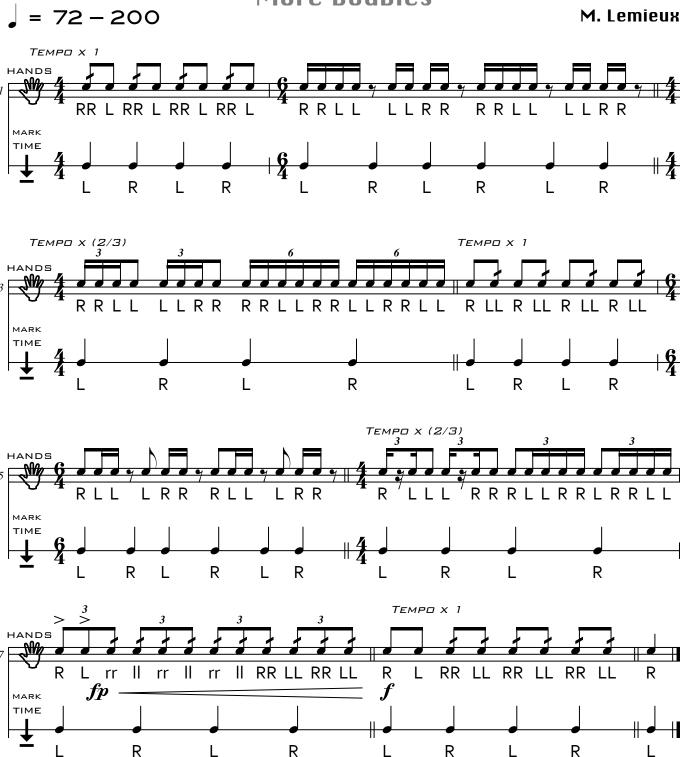
Maximum Rebound Variation: Maintain the attack height as your tacet height; fully rebound every stroke. Ignore the dynamics and accents in measures 7–8.

Breakdowns: (1) Play only the 4/4 measures. (2) Play only the 6/4 measures.

Feet Variation: Maintain a constant quarter-note pulse in the mark time throughout exercise.

GIBLET DIDDLES

More Doubles



Maximum Rebound Variation: Maintain the attack height as your tacet height; fully rebound every stroke. Ignore the dynamics and accents in measures 7–8.

B'OUNCES

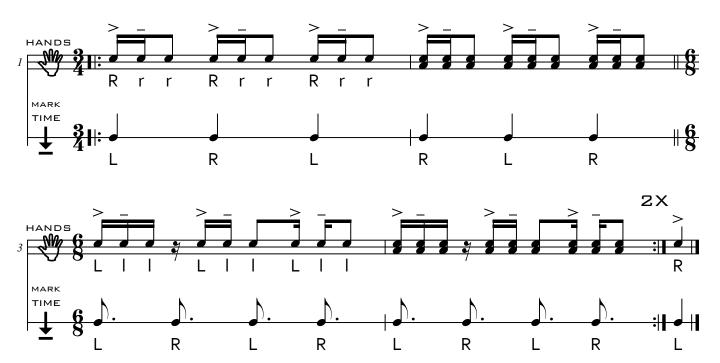
Threes

= 88 - 136

M. Lemieux

As-Written: Hugadigs (One-handed breakdown of flam-taps)

Monotone: Triplebeats (Three equal strokes)



Fulcrum Variations: Perform this exercise variously with only the fulcrum, fulcrum plus certain fingers, "back fulcrum" (no front fulcrum, just back of grip), full grip, etc.

Buzz Variations: Replace the attacks with single crushes... long, short, and in between.

Feet Variations: Maintain a constant pulse in the mark time through the whole exercise. Both of the feels in the written exercise are suitable for this assignment.

B'OUNCES

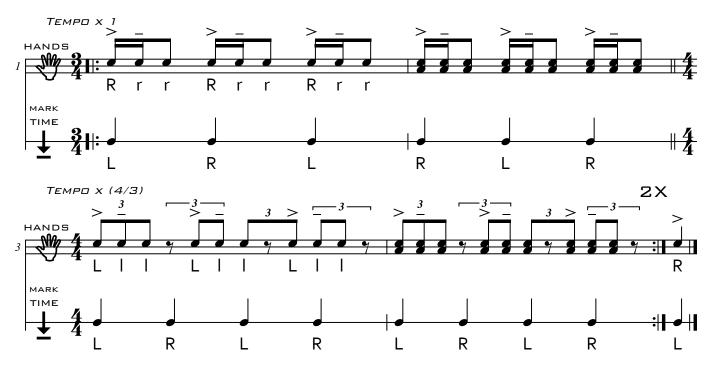
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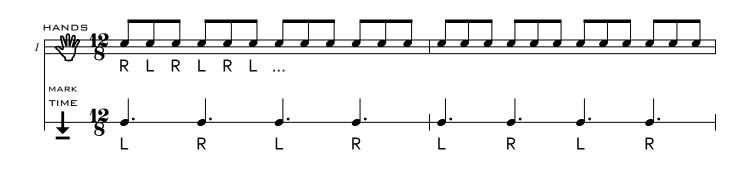
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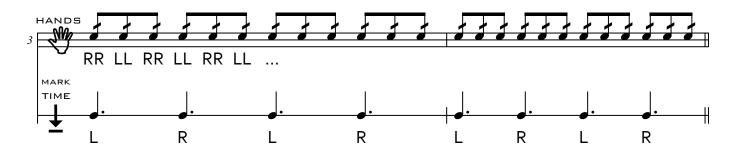
8 AND 25

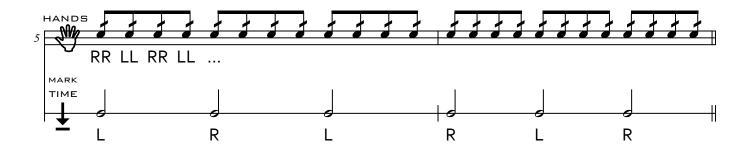
Rolls

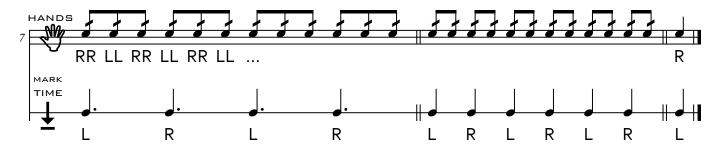
= 72 - 160

M. Lemieux









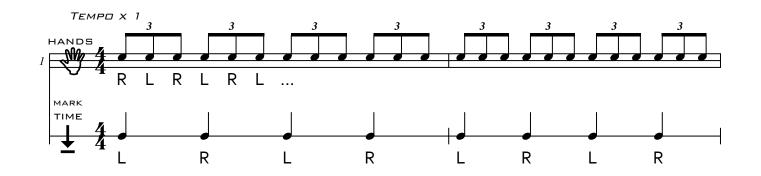
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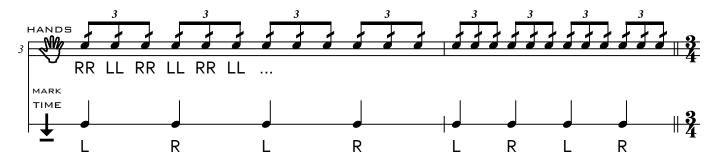
8 AND 25

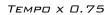
Rolls

= 72 - 160

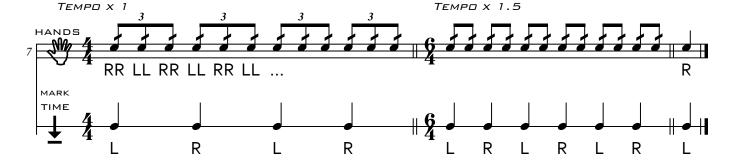
M. Lemieux



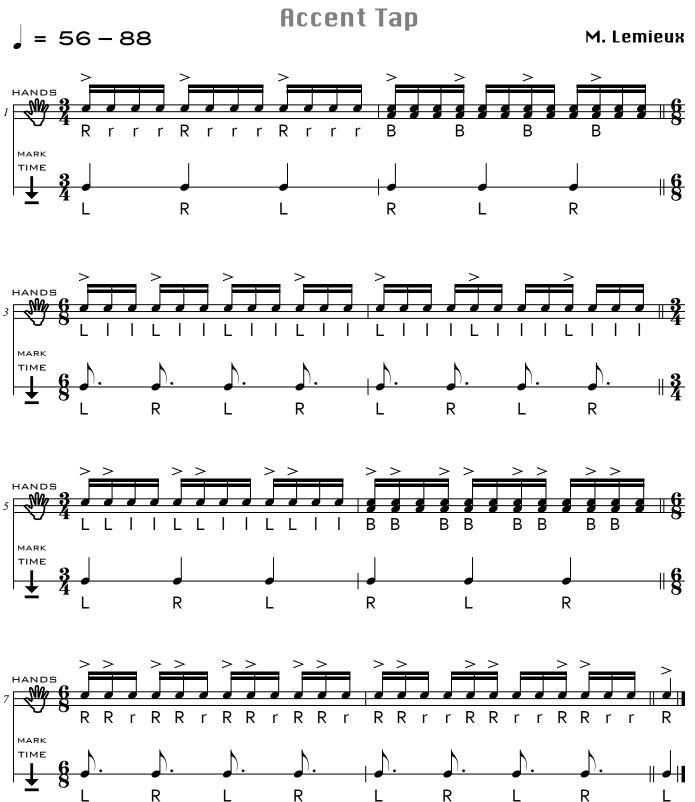






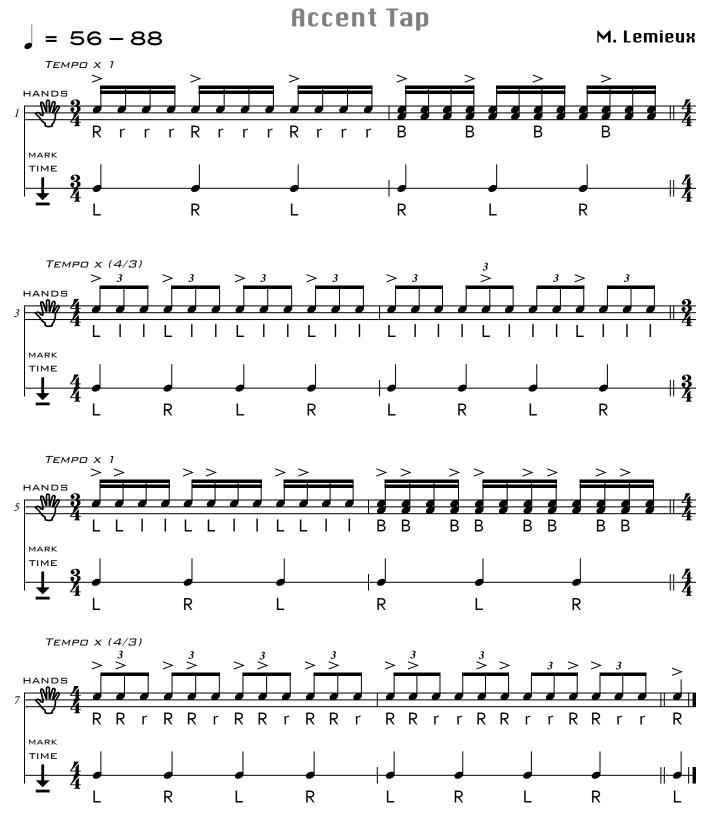


CUSHIONS ON DECK



Feet Variations: Maintain a constant pulse in the mark time through the whole exercise. Both of the feels in the written exercise are suitable for this assignment.

CUSHIONS ON DECK

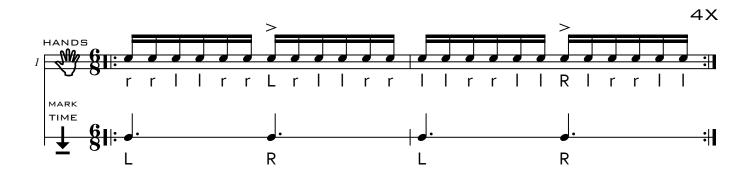


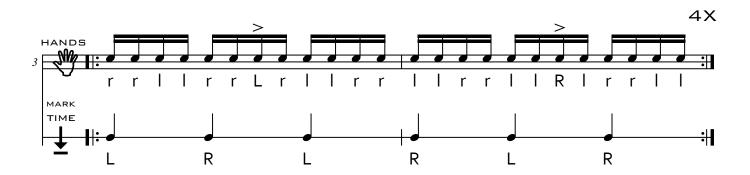
POCKET DUBS

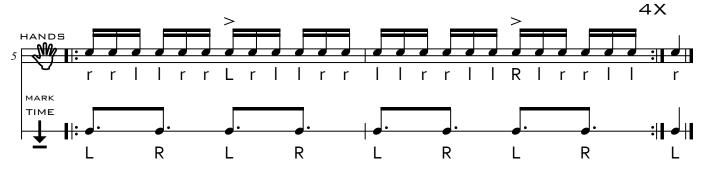
Paradiddle-Diddles

= 56 - 104

M. Lemieux







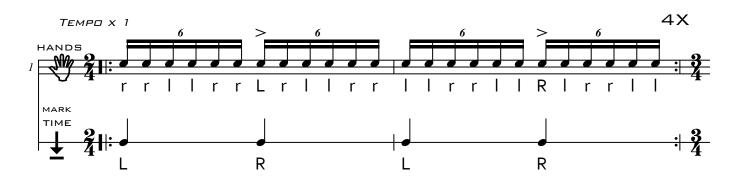
Recommendation: Split your hands between different-sounding surfaces to listen for consistency of timing and sound quality of each hand.

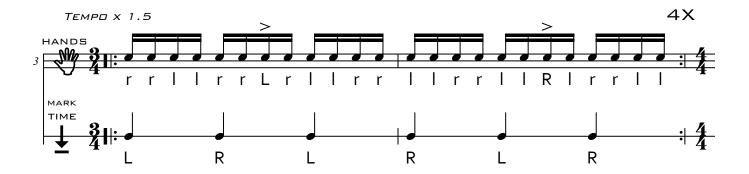
POCKET DUBS

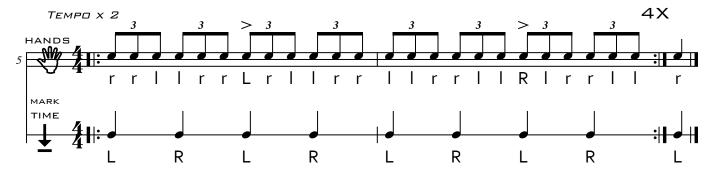
Paradiddle-Diddles

= 56 - 104

M. Lemieux







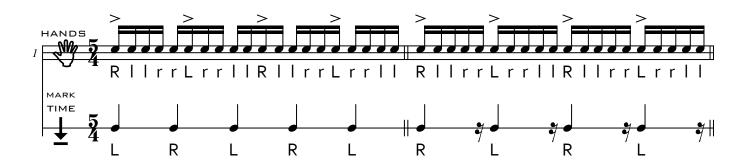
Recommendation: Split your hands between different-sounding surfaces to listen for consistency of timing and sound quality of each hand.

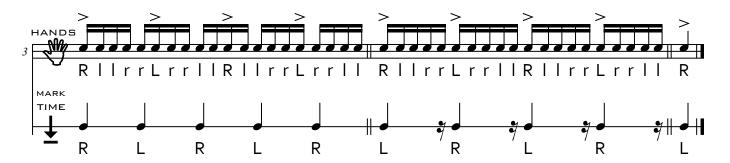
BUCK 'O FIVE

Tap Fives

= 72 - 176

M. Lemieux





Recommendation: Split your hands between different-sounding surfaces to listen for consistency of timing and sound quality of each hand.

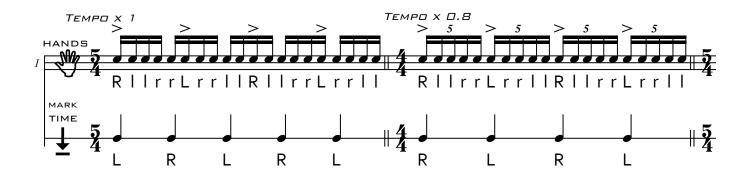
Feet Variations: Maintain a constant pulse in the mark time through the whole exercise. Both of the feels in the written exercise are suitable for this assignment.

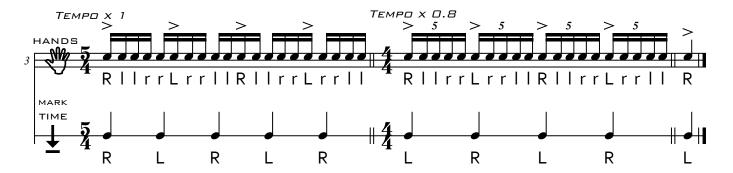
BUCK 'O FIVE

Tap Fives

= 72 - 176

M. Lemieux





Recommendation: Split your hands between different-sounding surfaces to listen for consistency of timing and sound quality of each hand.

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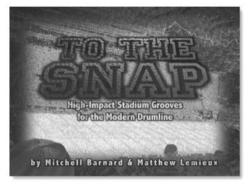
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