

# Ratamacoups with different feels

M. Lemieux

This collection of exercises consists of just one ratamacue-based breakdown that will be taken in a few different directions to challenge your hands, feet, eyes, ears, and brain. Although the ratamacue rudiments are rarely written in modern battery percussion music, these patterns will have tremendous relevance and demand for stick control, doublestroke, roll timing, and singlestroke fundamentals. Working on these patterns will pay dividends for your more broadly-applied drumming skills, while also giving you a more comprehensive understanding of one of the classic 26 essential rudiments.

Foremost is the main skeleton pattern (“Variation O”), which consists of the rhythmic checkpoints around which the ruff ornaments will be placed. Adding ruffs to this pattern creates the ratamacue figures (“Variation Ø”): in measures 1 and 2, they are quintuple ratamacues, and in measures 3 and 4, they are double ratamacues. This notation, whereby the drags are written as grace notes rather than precise rhythms, affords for a variety of interpretations: from very open, connecting the space between the skeleton checkpoints, to very tight, being played only slightly prior to the skeleton checkpoints—and anything in between. Although the rhythm may not be precisely defined, the ruff timing must be consistent nonetheless, so you must ensure that the intent of your interpretation speaks clearly and reproducibly in your performance of these repeating figures.

## Variation O. Main Skeleton

Musical notation for Variation O. Main Skeleton. The notation is in 6/8 time and consists of 10 measures. The first four measures are grouped together with a brace. The first measure has a > above it. The second measure has a 3 above it. The third measure has a > above it. The fourth measure has a 3 above it. The fifth measure has a > above it. The sixth measure has a 3 above it. The seventh measure has a > above it. The eighth measure has a 3 above it. The ninth measure has a > above it. The tenth measure has a > above it. The notation is as follows: R r r r r r l r L l l l l l r l R r r r l r L l l r l R

## Variation Ø. Add Ruffs (Traditional Ratamacues)

Musical notation for Variation Ø. Add Ruffs (Traditional Ratamacues). The notation is in 6/8 time and consists of 10 measures. The first four measures are grouped together with a brace. The first measure has a > above it. The second measure has a 3 above it. The third measure has a > above it. The fourth measure has a 3 above it. The fifth measure has a > above it. The sixth measure has a 3 above it. The seventh measure has a > above it. The eighth measure has a 3 above it. The ninth measure has a > above it. The tenth measure has a > above it. The notation is as follows: R llr llr llr llr llr l r L rrl rrl rrl rrl rrl r l R llr llr l r L rrl rrl r l R

Successful execution in a drumline setting depends immensely on player-to-player uniformity of interpretation: of timing, dynamics, and even touch. The activity typically revolves around a time-constrained competitive “season” in which the demands of the performance repertoire are tailored to the skills and limitations of the ensemble, as well as the pedagogical aspirations of the instructional staff. For these reasons, musical contexts that imply a certain latitude for personal interpretation (such as doublestroke grace notes) have generally fallen out of favor in modern percussion writing, supplanted by rhythmically unambiguous and precisely defined written music. What is lost in terms of the organic character of the music is thought to be made-up-for by the excellence of execution that is achievable within the same finite amount of precious rehearsal time.

A more modern approach to ratamacues, then, would have the drags written as rhythmically precise doublestrokes (“Variation C”) around the skeleton pattern. Since this approach places the attacks of each doublestroke on a well-defined rhythmic partial, the filled-in “check” pattern (“Variation A”) becomes a more natural breakdown to rehearse on the path toward creating the ratamacue figures.

**Variation A. Add Fill-In**

R | r | r | r | r | r | r | r | r | r | L | r | r | r | r | r | r | r | r | R | r | r | r | r | L | r | r | r | r | R

**Variation C. Add Quantized Drags (Modern Ratamacues)**

R || r || r || r || r || r | L r r | r r | r r | r r | r | R || r || r | r | L r r | r r | r | R

Although this quantized approach demands a singular interpretation of drag timing, it is valuable to rehearse different interpretations of the drag timing in order to develop a mastery of the space between notes in a doublestroke, so that you may call upon the exactly correct doublestroke spacing in a given musical context. Since player-to-player uniformity is key, an interpretation that can be written precisely is especially desirable. Slurring the ratamacue figure into a consistent ninelet rhythm (“Variation D,” Page 3) offers an alternative interpretation of doublestroke timing that can be easily taught in an ensemble setting, and it additionally allows the doublestroke timing and sound quality to be checked against the timing and sound quality of the single strokes (which remain the same as in the other variations). You could, optionally, put additional weight on the strokes that comprise the initial rhythmic skeleton (“Variation O,” Page 1), and this might



for you, especially when an upstroke follows a tap or the second note of a doublestroke. Many players may find themselves in an “intermediate” place on their journey to greatness, whereby they “pound” taps and really dig into drags/diddles, but they do not allow an efficient rebound back to the tap height. The penalty of this inefficiency is usually small enough that intermediate players get away with it... until an upstroke is required. It is crucial, but challenging for sure, to achieve a strong attack from the low height while also allowing the stick to do as much work as it can for you.

With crushes, please don’t hurt yourself. In the case of a crush, you are intentionally countering the rebound of the stroke, and tempo will dictate the limits of how much pressure you can put into a crush while still playing efficiently and comfortably. The juxtaposition of playing crushes before low singlestrokes versus accented singlestrokes should create a greater muscular awareness of how these demands interact. Listen especially for the sound quality of those accented singlestrokes, as the second of the three notes will be most affected by fundamental issues in the execution of the final crush and the upstroke that follows it.

**Variation O”. Main Skeleton, Accent the Grouping of Three**

**Variation A”. Add Fill-In, Accent the Grouping of Three**

The next thing to do with all these handy variations is to chain them together into sequences, allowing the juxtaposition of different demands to teach you about your technique, endurance, sound quality, and timing tendencies. Feel free to deviate from the written sequences using others of the “canonical” variations listed below, or come up with your own useful variations. The first four sequences notated are all identical in execution, although the rhythmic feels are different. The final two sequences involve repeating one variation while walking through the different feels, either by varying foot tapping, mark time, marching, or metronome pulse.

CANONICAL VARIATIONS

- Variation O: Main Skeleton
- Variation Ø: Add Ruffs (Traditional Ratamacues)
- Variation A: Add Fill-In
- Variation B: Nonlead-Hand Crushes
- Variation C: Nonlead-Hand Drags (Modern Ratamacues)
- Variation D: Slurred Nonlead-Hand Drags
- Variation E: Lead-Hand Drags
- Variation F: Tap Roll
- Variation X”: Any Variation, Accent the Grouping of Three



### III. Feel Three: 12<sup>th</sup> Notes (Triplets)

**A**   
R | r | r | r | r | r | r | r | r | L | r | r | r | r | r | r | r | r | r | R | r | r | r | r | L | r | r | r | r |

**B**   
R | | | | | r | r | r | L | r | r | r | r | r | r | r | r | R | | | r | r | r | L | r | r | r | r |

**C**   
R | || r || r || r || r || r || r | r | L | r r | r r | r r | r r | r r | r | r | R | || r || r | r | L | r r | r r | r |

**D**   
R | || r || r || r || r || r || r | r | L | r r | r r | r r | r r | r r | r r | r | r | R | || r || r | r | L | r r | r r | r | r |

**E**   
R | r r | r r | r r | r r | r | r | L | r || r || r || r || r | r | r | R | r r | r | r | L | r || r | r |

**F**   
R | || r r || r r || r r || r r || r | r | L | r r || r r || r r || r r || r | r | R | || r r || r | r | L | r r || r r | r | R

### IV. Feel Four: Eighths

**A**   
R | r | r | r | r | r | r | r | r | L | r | r | r | r | r | r | r | r | r | R | r | r | r | r | L | r | r | r | r |

**B**   
R | r | r | r | r | r | r | r | r | L | r | r | r | r | r | r | r | r | r | R | r | r | r | r | L | r | r | r | r |

**C**   
R | || r || r || r || r || r || r | r | L | r r | r r | r r | r r | r r | r | r | R | || r || r | r | L | r r | r r | r | r |

**D**   
R | || r || r || r || r || r || r | r | L | r r | r r | r r | r r | r r | r r | r | r | R | || r || r | r | L | r r | r r | r | r |

**E**   
R | r r | r r | r r | r r | r | r | L | r || r || r || r || r | r | r | R | r r | r | r | L | r || r | r |

**F**   
R | || r r || r r || r r || r r || r | r | L | r r || r r || r r || r r || r | r | R | || r r || r | r | L | r r || r r | r | R

Use this sequence to walk through the different rhythmic feels by varying the foot timing as you repeat a single variation with your hands. “Mark time” may, of course, be as simple as foot tapping or as complex as actual marching exercises. “Hands” may be hands on legs, drumming on a pad, drumming on a drum, sticks or brushes, etc. Additionally, the “mark time” part could be different metronome patterns that an instructor switches between, as the performers repeat a pattern on their hands without reflecting any pulse with their legs.

### Mixed Feel: Variations O & Ø (And X’)

Variation O: Main Skeleton (As-Written)    Variation Ø: Add Ruffs (Traditional Ratamacues)

Variation X’’: Any Variation, Accent the Grouping of Three

The musical score consists of seven systems, each with two staves: 'HANDS' and 'MARK TIME'. The 'HANDS' staff shows rhythmic notation with accents and triplet markings. The 'MARK TIME' staff shows a sequence of notes corresponding to the rhythm. Below each system is a sequence of letters (L, R) representing the foot timing.

**System I:** HANDS: R r r r r r l r L | l | l | l | l r l | R r r r l r L | l | l r l | R r r l r L | l | l r l | MARK TIME: L R L R L R L R L R L R

**System II:** HANDS: R r r r r r l r L | l | l | l | l r l | R r r l r L | l | l r l | R r r l r L | l | l r l | MARK TIME: L R L R L R L R L R L R

**System III:** HANDS: R r r r r r l r L | l | l | l | l r l | R r r l r L | l | l r l | R r r l r L | l | l r l | MARK TIME: L R L R L R L R L R L R

**System IV:** HANDS: R r r r r r l r L | l | l | l | l r l | R r r l r L | l | l r l | R r r l r L | l | l r l | MARK TIME: L R L R L R L R L R L R

**System III:** HANDS: R r r r r r l r L | l | l | l | l r l | R r r l r L | l | l r l | R r r l r L | l | l r l | MARK TIME: L R L R L R L R L R L R

**System II:** HANDS: R r r r r r l r L | l | l | l | l r l | R r r l r L | l | l r l | R r r l r L | l | l r l | MARK TIME: L R L R L R L R L R L R

**System I:** HANDS: R r r r r r l r L | l | l | l | l r l | R r r l r L | l | l r l | R r r l r L | l | l r l | MARK TIME: L R L R L R L R L R

Same description as Page 7: Use this sequence to walk through the different rhythmic feels by varying the foot timing as you repeat a single variation with your hands. “Mark time” may, of course, be as simple as foot tapping or as complex as actual marching exercises. “Hands” may be hands on legs, drumming on a pad, drumming on a drum, sticks or brushes, etc. Additionally, the “mark time” part could be different metronome patterns that an instructor switches between, as the performers repeat a pattern on their hands without reflecting any pulse with their legs.

**Mixed Feel: Variations A, B, C, D, E, & F (And X”)**

Variation A: Add Fill-In (As Written)

Variation B: Nonlead-Hand Crushes

Variation C: Nonlead-Hand Drags (Modern Ratamacoups)

Variation D: Slurred Nonlead-Hand Drags

Variation E: Lead-Hand Drags

Variation F: Tap Roll

Variation X”: Any Variation, Accent the Grouping of Three

**I.**

**II.**

**III.**

**IV.**

**III.**

**II.**

**I.**