



USC University of Southern California

MPWP_440 Drumset for Classical Percussionists 1 unit

Section # 46815, Tuesdays @ 4 – 4:50 p.m.
(Course hours: 1 x 50-minute session per week)

Course Instructors: Peter Erskine, Aaron Serfaty
Class Room: *on-line*
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Course Description

The purpose of this 13-week course is to build upon a basic level of drumming competency, strengthening the foundation upon which any student can increase their understanding of rhythm, promote further mastery of physical and musical coordination, and learn more skills on the drumset. Graduates of this class should expect to be able to play the drums in any number of band and musical settings, with particular emphasis on the students mastering drumset styles and displaying a sense of “ownership” in any performance or audition setting.

Students will be taught and tested on the following:

1. Ability to play a variety of basic drumming styles, in the form of specific patterns and beats (performance examination). The musical connecting devices known as “fills” will be studied, tested and graded.
2. Ability to play the drums in an ensemble context, i.e., with other musicians (performance examination). “Comping” (accompaniment) vocabulary will be developed in several genres or styles of music, most importantly jazz and pop.
3. The ability to play basic beats with brushes in jazz and non-jazz styles.
4. A broad and sophisticated level of understanding of the role and development of the drumset in contemporary music (aural and written examination). Music styles other than jazz or pop will be studied, incl Afro-Caribbean and Brazilian drumming styles, Broadway “show” tunes, etc.)
5. Ability to read and understand notated rhythms, and the ability to interpret “typical” drum charts, i.e., music for drumset that is representative of the professional music norm outside of typical orchestral repertoire.
6. The ability to read and interpret written drumset music for standard orchestral repertoire, including such works by Bernstein, Adams, Milhaud, Turnage, et al.

Course Materials

1 pr. Drumsticks for drumset playing (Vic Firth “Big Band” Stick)
1 pr. BRUSHES (suggested model: Vic Firth “Heritage” brush)
“Drumset Essentials, Vol. 3” by Peter Erskine (Alfred Publishing)
“Essential Drum Fills” by Peter Erskine (Alfred Publishing)
“Bass Drum Control” by Colin Bailey (Hal Leonard Publishing)

All of these items, i.e., sticks & books, are available from amazon.com, etc. Please see ADDENDUM to this syllabus

USC technology rental program

We realize that attending classes online and completing coursework remotely requires access to technology that not all students possess. If you need resources to successfully participate in your classes, such as a laptop or internet hotspot, you may be eligible for the university’s equipment rental program. To apply, please submit an application. The Student Basic Needs team will contact all applicants in early August and distribute equipment to eligible applicants prior to the start of the fall semester. Also: let us know if you need any assistance with your acquiring the necessary drumming supplies, etc.

USC Technology Support Links

[Zoom information for students](#)

[Blackboard help for students](#)

[Software available to USC Campus](#)

Synchronous session recording notice

Synchronous sessions will be recorded and provided to all students asynchronously.

Sharing of course materials outside of the learning environment:

Reminder: USC has a policy that prohibits sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

SCampus Section 11.12(B)

Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is a violation of the USC Student Conduct Code. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the Internet or via any other media. (See Section C.1 Class Notes Policy).

Because of the unprecedented situation wrought upon the School due to COVID-19, all classes will be held on-line this semester. Students are not expected to have a drumset available in their living environment. If the school can provide access to a drumset in one or more of the planned "lesson broadcast studios," then the instructors will work with the students to coordinate class and broadcast room access times, etc. Depending on where the students in this semester's course are located, the school may be able to provide a basic drumset or reasonable facsimile for both practice and class activities. Otherwise, please rest assured that you will be taught to the best of our imaginations and abilities, with most all drumbeats playable on a practice pad with cymbal. All to say: we'll figure and work this out ... the situation is fluid at the moment, thank you for your understanding and patience.

Grading and Exams

- **Aural and Written Mid-term examination (25%)** Examination of aural and written materials pertaining to drumming styles and history presented in the first 7 weeks of class.
- **Drumming Skills Exam #1 (25%)** Students must demonstrate a mastery of basic drumming skills on the practice pad as well as drumset “time” playing, i.e., beats that involve the steadiness of tempo and a measure of drumbeat competency.
- **Final Exam/Drumming Skills Exam #2 (50%)** All students will perform in a jury type of setting for the Instructor. They may be asked to play basic drum rudiments on the practice pad, as well as a beat in any of the styles, tempos that have been studied throughout the semester on the drumset. Drumset chart reading will also be part of the final examination.

Attendance

Attendance is expected for all classes. Attendance for examinations is mandatory. Please review Final Exam schedule in the Schedule of classes to avoid potential conflicts. Three or more unexcused absences will result in a half-grade reduction from the final grade. Five or more unexcused absences will result in a full grade reduction.

Netiquette Considerations

"Netiquette" or "internet etiquette," describes the recommended communication and behavior of online communication. Students are expected to be dressed appropriately for class. Class time is not snack time. You'll do your best work by approaching the course as if you were taking it in-person/on-campus. Simply put: the study of music is, in great measure, the study of being professional.

Please consult this [Menu of Discussion Norms](#) resource for guidance on how best to receive instruction, interact constructively and enjoyably get the most out of your study of drumming.

Also note: the use of mobile phones or other technology during class is not allowed.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to Professor Erskine (or to your TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in GFS 120 and is open 8:30am – 4:30pm, Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: sarc.usc.edu

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. equity.usc.edu

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. dsp.usc.edu

Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

Diversity at USC

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. diversity.usc.edu

USC Emergency Information

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. emergency.usc.edu

USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime.

Provides overall safety to USC community. dps.usc.edu

Summary of class structure

(All descriptions below predicated on the assumption that most students will be right-handed, i.e., it is assumed that most students are right-handed. Students will be asked to swap right-for-left instructions if they are left-handed. Left-handed students will be asked to play on a right-handed drumset utilizing an "open" grip (this is the recommended solution, preparing/allowing left-handed drummers to play on any kit in the future).

Week 1

Review of Basic Drumming Techniques

1. Grip (of sticks)
2. Physical relationship to the drumset (promoting efficiency as well as safe drumming habits). Alexander Technique seating health taught.
3. Alternating hand rhythms, with an emphasis on proper technique utilizing a proper combination of arm, wrist and finger involvement and movement.
4. SUMMARY: Intro to class: overview presented by Professor Erskine
5. Review of basic pop and jazz beats.
6. ACOUSTIC KIT INTRO with emphasis on bass drum (control)
7. Review of basic techniques (grip, physical relationship to drums, proper stroke technique-arm, wrist, finger); single stroke roll, double-stroke, 8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8 (repeat); flams, drags, ruffs, multiple-stroke rolls (5s, 6s, 7s) on the drumset. ALTERNATE STICKINGS for basic beats (other than L-R-L-R, etc.) will be explored, with a look at how a beat's "feel" can be enhanced by utilizing such alternative stickings.
8. HOMEWORK: Colin Bailey Bass Drum Control, pages to be assigned ... **(Pages from the Colin Bailey book will be assigned each week!)**

Week 2

TONE PRODUCTION from the cymbal, hi-hat, snare, toms and bass drum

1. Page 3 of "**Drumset Essentials, Vol. 3**" ... discussion and use of graph regarding tone production:
2. Cymbal-playing technique
3. Teacher > Student A /B comparisons on sound, examining arm, wrist and finger motion; stick rebound height; the amount of "give" in the hand; consistency of tone
4. Quarter-note to jazz ride pattern exercises on closed hi-hat and open ride...
5. Basic stick/on/hi-hat technique, with left foot pedal open/close timings and techniques
6. Getting the best sound from a drum
7. Examining velocity, stick-height and rebound
8. BALANCE on the entire kit while playing basic jazz and pop beats

The class will LISTEN to notable and differing examples of tone production on the drumset by way of teacher-provided recordings and video demonstrations

Week 3

Classroom study and playing of the following:

FILLS, Jazz 1 ("**Essential Drum Fills**" text)

Page 10: Triplet-based fills in 4/4 swing time, Rhythmic Destination Point = 4+ (i.e., the "and" of beat 4)

Page 11: Triplet-based fills in 4/4 swing time, Rhythmic Destination Point = 1

Page 12: Triplet-based fills in 4/4 swing time, Rhythmic Destination Point = 1+

Page 13: Triplet-based fills in 4/4 swing time, Rhythmic Destination Point = 2

Page 14: Triplet-based fills in 4/4 swing time, Rhythmic Destination Point = 2+

Page 15: Triplet-based fills in 4/4 swing time, Rhythmic Destination Point = 4

Page 16: Triplet-based fills in 4/4 swing time, Rhythmic Destination Point = 4 (w/ quarter-note set-up)

Page 17: Sixteenth-note-based fills in 4/4 swing time, Rhythmic Destination Point = 4 (w/ quarter-note set-up)

You will be encouraged and directed to work on expanding and creating your own "fills" vocabulary, building upon the exercises above. Inexperienced drummers betray their lack of drumset hours when it comes to fills.

Week 4

Classroom study and playing of the following:

FILLS, Jazz 2 (“Essential Drum Fills” text)

Page 18: Sixteenth-note-based fills in 4/4 swing time, Rhythmic Destination Point = 4 Page 19: Sixteenth-note-based fills in 4/4 swing time, Rhythmic Destination Point = 1

Page 20: Sixteenth-note-based fills in 4/4 swing time, Rhythmic Destination Point = 1+

Page 21: Sixteenth-note-based fills in 4/4 swing time, Rhythmic Destination Point = 4+

Page 22: Eighth Notes, Triplets, Sixteenths & Beyond (Advanced fills, jazz context)

Week 5

Classroom study and playing of the following:

FILLS, Straight 8th (Pop) 1 (“Essential Drum Fills” text)

Page 24: Sixteenth-note-based fills in Straight Eighth-Note Feel, Rhythmic Destination Point = 4 (w/ quarter-note set-up)

Page 25: Sixteenth-note-based fills in Straight Eighth-Note Feel, Rhythmic Destination Point = 4

Page 26: Sixteenth-note-based fills in Straight Eighth-Note Feel, Rhythmic Destination Point = 1

Page 27: Sixteenth-note-based fills in Straight Eighth-Note Feel, Rhythmic Destination Point = 1+

Page 28: Sixteenth-note-based fills in Straight Eighth-Note Feel, Rhythmic Destination Point = 4+

Page 29: Sixteenth-note-based fills in Straight Eighth-Note Feel, Rhythmic Destination Point = 2

Week 6

Classroom study and playing of the following:

FILLS, Straight 8th (Pop) 2

Page 30: 8th-note-based fills/Straight Eighth-Note Feel, Rhythmic Destination Point = 4

Page 31: 8th-note-based fills/Straight Eighth-Note Feel, Rhythmic Destination Point = 1

Page 32: 8th-note-based fills/Straight Eighth-Note Feel, Rhythmic Destination Point = 4+

Page 33: 8th-note-based fills/Straight Eighth-Note Feel, Rhythmic Destination Point = 2

Page 34: Fusion-style fills on top of medium-slow VAMP (repeating phrase) ~ from simple to complex!

REVIEW of tone production from Class #2 with stylistic/historical overview of the drumset’s evolution and change in sounds aesthetics, etc.

Week 7

Aural and Written Mid Term examination; this exam’s results will comprise 25% of the student’s final grade.

DRUMMING SKILLS EXAM #1 (2nd hour)

Students must demonstrate a mastery of basic drumming skills on the practice pad as well as drumset “time” playing along with FILLS from the course of study. Questions will be asked about acoustic drumming, tone production, etc.

This exam’s results will comprise 25% of the student’s final grade.

Week 8

DRUMSET ESSENTIALS 3

Play-Along performances in class by all students (to strengthen confidence and ability to play “in front of others”). Including “Cats & Kittens,” “Meanwhile,” “Horn of Puente” and/or “Summer’s Waltz” from the jazz realm... will compile list of R&B, pop and rock tracks (play-alongs)

Week 9

BRUSHES (Drumset Essentials 3)

NB: instruction to take place on acoustic snare drum and kit!

1. Left Hand & Right Hand basic motions
2. Which direction of hands? Discussion of options and choice ...
3. Legato versus Tap sounds
4. Drumset Essentials 3 pp 9, 10, 11 no "point" or tap
5. Drumset Essentials 3 pp 9, 10, 11 w/ "point" at start of each stroke
6. Pages 12 + 13 w/ discussion of appropriate use of double-time inflection in ballad playing, etc.
7. Drumset Essentials 3 page 14 / up-tempo brush playing / jazz context
8. Rudiments with brushes, pp15, 16 & 17, snare drum and toms, b.d.
9. Non-jazz applications: listening to musical examples and demonstration/teaching of pop beats w/ brushes, introduction to bossa-nova and samba, etc.

We will focus on fill and soloing techniques, plus fast-tempo performance. We will also focus on the "less is more" concept of playing (i.e., how to steer a large ensemble without sounding like a bull in a china shop).

Week 10

GENRES / STYLES 1 (Drumset Essentials 3)

Samba (pages 19 – 25)

Bossa-Nova (pages 26 – 31)

1. discussion of rhythmic subdivision ("feel") of both styles/genres above
2. ability to accent beat "2" on bass drum while maintaining basic beat with hands and hi-hat, etc.
3. specific beats
4. history and developments of these beats and the music.

Week 11

Afro-Caribbean musics

1. FEEL (pg 33)
2. Clave (pg 34)
3. Salsa (pp 35 – 38)
4. Cha Cha (pg 39)
5. Merengue and Calypso (pp 40-41)

Assign the following pages for reading / study: **Pp. 49 – 69**

Week 12

The study of written drumset parts

1. How to read a basic drumset part
2. How to write a basic drumset part

The Percussive Art Society standard of drumset notation (i.e., which part of the kit is notated on which line or space of the musical staff) will be presented and studied. Handouts will be provided.

(PDF) HAND OUT of "THE RHYTHM METHOD" and "WALTZ OF THE FLOWERS" big band drum charts with music (Blackboard download) and study of written style, students can take these home and practice along with them, etc.

Study and analysis of various drum chart writing styles by different composers, used in different settings (big band, small group, recording sessions, i.e., film vs. album vs. jingle vs classical [w/ orchestra], etc.)

Listening homework to orchestral drumset parts and various interpretations...

Week 13

ORCHESTRAL LITERATURE FOR DRUMSET

Bernstein "Symphonic Dances from West Side Story," "Prelude, Fugue & Riffs"

Turnage "Blood on the Floor," "Scorched," "Fractured Lines," "Erskine"

Adams "Chamber Symphony"

Various "Pops" drumset parts

Discussion of various interpretations from listening homework.

Week 14**Final Exam (according to Final Exam Schedule in Schedule of Classes)**

Final Exam / DRUMMING SKILLS EXAM #2

All students will perform in a jury type of setting for the Instructor. They may be asked to a beat in any of the styles, tempos that have been studied throughout the semester on the drumset, incl brush-playing, Brazilian and Afro-Caribbean styles, as well as performing excerpts from orchestra repertoire written for the drumset.

This exam's results will comprise 50% of the student's final grade.

SYLLABUS ADDENDUM

For drumstick, books and practice pad STAND purchases, we recommend amazon.com. sweetwater.com is an alternative music industry on-line retailer.

BOOKS

<https://amzn.to/2ZQE9kW> Drumset Essentials Vol. 3
<https://amzn.to/3eT7FdU> Essential Fills
<https://amzn.to/3fPBDk9> Bass Drum Control

PRACTICE PADS

Here are some links for practice pads, we recommend pads made by ProLogix ... they have agreed to offer all students in the MPPM-340 class the following:

Our 8" pads are \$39.99, but with the 20% discount, the students will be looking at \$31.99.
Our 12" pads are \$59.99, but with the 20% discount, the students will be looking at \$47.99.

NOTE: YOU WILL NEED TO PURCHASE A SEPARATE PRACTICE PAD STAND @ AMAZON!

[Here is the link](#) to view our entire catalog. Students can select the product, pick the size (if applicable), and enter the USC discount code at checkout. We are planning to launch our new website during the first week of August. If this link does not work or changes, I will send you a new one ASAP.

[Here is the link](#) for the Thunderkick. [Here is the link](#) for the Practikit.

Discount Code: USC20

For all general inquiries please direct students to www.prologixpercussion.com

PRACTICE PADS and PRACTICE PAD STANDS

Here are some amazon.com links for practice pad stands (which you will need for any practice pad), etc.

Practice Pad Stand / \$53.95
<https://amzn.to/2CxLsF2>

Pad AND stand / \$64.95
<https://amzn.to/2WJZJp5>

RealFeel by Evans pad stand / \$50.43
<https://amzn.to/3fPuH6R>

Ahead Practice Pad Stand / \$31.47
<https://amzn.to/30ygchh>

DRUMSTICKS

<https://amzn.to/2Czjl2Z>

<https://amzn.to/3fPBQUJ>

<https://amzn.to/2WlqsSU>

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