

# Gene Krupa's 'Drum Method'

interpreted by Robert Boundy

Gene Krupa's 'Drum Method' follows a format that is divided into fourteen key methods, which will be discussed in detail in the following text. The introduction states that:

'Music belongs to the order of principles capable of charging the atmosphere with power. By dividing the three-fold root of MUSIC we get Melody, Harmony and Rhythm. The purpose this book hopes to serve, will be a scientific approach to the dynamic field of Rhythm through the study of drumming'.<sup>1</sup>

In any area of learning, the sequence of instruction is of equal importance to the content. The beginning foundation is laid for effective drum set instruction set out in the following sequence in Krupa's Drum Method, beginning with a focus on the snare drum, exquisitely put in Krupa's own words, : "The Snare Drum, by virtue of its importance, will be studied first".<sup>2</sup> Each of the fourteen stages of learning will now be laid out.

- The first key method is that of the selection of a correct practice pad, so that beginners don't begin their development depending on the drum for rebound. Position and form are the first requisites of rudimental drumming.
- The second key method gives specific reference to the importance of selecting appropriate pairs of drumsticks, the important things are tone, weight and straightness, selecting a size of the model that most suits the individual.
- The third key method covers hand technique and stick grip, holding the sticks, and explains the different grips, both traditional and matched grip.
- The fourth key method covers The Rudiments of Music, Symbolism covering notes, Staff, Clefs, Measures and Bars. The Repeats signs, Dotted notes, dynamics and Tempo marks. The relative value of notes and rests, and comparative table of relative note values. Triplets and artificial note groups, time and the table of time.
- The fifth key method is Reading Exercises, incorporating note groups and technical skills to execute these groupings using the downstroke and the upstroke. Ted Reed went on to expand on this concept in 1958 with the release of '**Progressive Steps to Syncopation for The Modern Drummer**', created exclusively to address syncopation.<sup>3</sup> The text is somewhat dated, and modern music teaching methods are now deemed as more effective. When presented as written, this can be arguably

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<sup>1</sup> Gene Krupa, Introduction. *Drum Method* (New York, Robbins Music Corporation, 1938)

<sup>2</sup> Krupa, 37

<sup>3</sup> Ted Reed, *Progressive Steps to Syncopation for the Modern Drummer*. (Florida, Ted Reed Publications, 1958)

uninspiring, un-motivating and one dimensional for the learning student. Much of the focus is on teaching skills, and teachers develop many of their own examples from it.

- The Sixth key method covers the practical application of different groups of sticking that is referred to as Drum Rudiments- Single Stroke Rolls, Double Stroke Rolls, Paradiddles and their variations, Roll Studies, working at a suggested tempo of 140 beats per minute. The Roll Chart begins from The 3 stroke Ruff, 5 stroke roll through to the 15 stroke roll, Triplet Rolls, Cut Time applications of Rolls with Eighth Note hand movements. Even number rolls, drag paradiddles, single and double drags, Single stroke rolls incorporating the single stroke ruffs, Compound beats, Ruff Paradiddles, Paratriplets and Flams. Flamacues, Flam Tap, Flam Accent No 2, Flamadiddles, Double Flamadiddles, Triple Flamadiddles and Lesson 25.
- The Seventh key method present us with performance pieces for snare drum, “The Downfall of Paris”<sup>4</sup> a 2/4 march time 48 Bar solo arranged in 4 parts incorporating the Rudiments with sticking written in for clarity and accuracy of performance, “The Breakfast Call” is the next performance piece, in cut time, A US Army Field Music Service Call from the Civil War.<sup>5</sup> “The Three Camps” a comprehensive 28 bar roll study in 12/8 compound time<sup>6</sup>, and the final piece in 6/8 compound time 20 bar solo “Dinner Call”<sup>7</sup> also from the rich history of American Rudimental military drum solos.

After the first stage of development, the second stage of student development is the drum kit incorporating bass drum/s, Hi hat, crash and ride cymbals and tom toms. We continue on with the next group of key methods.

- The Eighth key method is study of the Bass drum. It is extremely important in contemporary music, and a great deal of time needs to be spent upon exercises to improve the coordination of feet and hands. Current teaching methods have embraced Gene’s philosophy in regards to seat height and leg and ankle freedom and relaxation. Krupa’s technical insight explains the need to be careful not to allow the beater ball to remain against the head after the beat, try to pick the beats off the drum, giving you a sharp, clean boom and improve your speed a great deal. Marvin Dahlgren and Elliot Fine from the University of Minnesota wrote in the 4 Way Coordination book,

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<sup>4</sup>Rollo Laylan, *The Downfall of Paris*, accessed August 22<sup>nd</sup> 2017

<http://vicfirth.com/ancient-rudimental-solo-downfall-of-paris/>

<sup>5</sup> Rollo Laylan, Field of Music US Army/Service Call ,*The Breakfast Call* accessed August 22<sup>nd</sup> 2017

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGAockidzRs>

<sup>6</sup> Rollo Laylan, *Three Camps*, Accessed August 22<sup>nd</sup> 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NgWfkbvbRt8>

<sup>7</sup> Rollo Laylan, *Dinner Call* Accessed August 22<sup>nd</sup> 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8I6YGO65ACU>

explaining that it was written for the development of coordination between both hands and feet.

The development of this technique will lead to complete independence.<sup>8</sup> Krupa stated that many drummers neglected to practise as much on their bass drum because of the disturbance caused by the loud sound of the drum. This could explain the Dahlgren's reference to the feet playing a subordinate part in a drummer's development. Krupa suggests that this can be easily overcome by getting a pedal practice pad, a forerunner to today's modern electronic drum kits and their popularity with new students and families that can suffer from the disturbance of a drummer's daily practice.

- The Ninth key method is the study of the foot cymbals or the Hi hat, played with the left foot. They were originally intended for the after beat for the offbeat cymbal effect. Krupa suggests that you select two eleven inch (1938 standards) Avedis Zildjian cymbals for your all around work, selecting one cymbal that is a little heavier for underneath and lower in pitch, and discouraging the use of cymbals with a strong fundamental bell tone. Instead, choose cymbals that are rich in harmonic overtones that splash instead of ring. The procedure for mounting the cymbals is then explained in exquisite detail, teaching the learner much needed skills in the importance of care and maintenance of this paramount section of the drum set. The development of the left foot in good Hi hat work suggests learning to work your left foot alone before trying to combine it with the right foot bass drum practice. Once you have mastered the use of the left foot for opening and closing the Hi hat, then proceed on to the use of both feet. The practice explanation given states: when the right foot, (bass drum) goes down the left foot (Hi hat) comes up, and when the left goes down the right comes up, an alternating foot movement like the single strokes on the snare drum. The height is indicated that an inch to an inch and a half opening between the cymbals gives the best results. This is at a recommended tempo of 110 beats per minute.<sup>9</sup>
- The Tenth key method involves playing the Hi hat with sticks incorporating what is now the whole drum kit. It introduces the rudiments – 4 stroke ruff on the Hi hat, and both feet using Bass drum and open Hi hat. The concept of building on the foundational work set on the previous page uses the previous foot exercises combined with the 4 stroke ruff and the next rudiment the 7 stroke Roll.

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<sup>8</sup> Marvin Dahlgren and Elliot Fine, *4-Way Coordination* ( New York,

<sup>9</sup> Gene Krupa, 57

- The Eleventh Key method is Cymbals and Cymbal playing. The recommendation is for four cymbals of different tones. Today, standard setup for the learner drummer still consists of this combination, e.g. a 20” Ride cymbal, 14” Hi hats, 16” Crash and 18” Crash. This gives a student a chance to develop right and left hand coordination as introduced in Jackson’s ‘The Complete Drummers Guide’, in adapting the accented 16<sup>th</sup> notes as drum set fills exercises.<sup>10</sup> This progressive structured learning is again reinforced by Krupa’s original insights and combined in the popular methods of today.
- The Twelfth Key method is playing with brushes, introducing the student to the art of playing swish or legato strokes. The first set of brush rudiments is then explained as the tap down and up, and swish stroke. The concept of playing the right hand on the Egyptian or ‘Greeko’<sup>11</sup> cymbal introduces the student to the beginnings of what is now referred to as ride cymbal playing, where the right hand plays the repetitive ostinato patterns holding the drum kit patterns together, supporting the ensemble setting a solid rhythmic foundation.
- The Thirteenth key method is the rim shot, defining accents and non-accents. Dynamics are introduced and technical execution becomes more refined. Technology plays an important part with visual aids to help the student develop accuracy with stick control and stick heights. George Lawrence Stone, author of the bestselling method, *Stick Control*, released the next book ‘Accents and Rebounds’, being an advanced textbook, designed to follow and reinforce student control and dynamic execution. Stone states that it is presented at the solicitation of many leading instructors, who having used the former book with such gratifying results, asked for material to follow in their daily workout. The drums, from their very nature, possess potential for accentuation far greater than any other musical instrument. Hence the drummer is looked to above all other for the utmost in dynamics.<sup>12</sup> Krupa’s method once again presents the dependable teaching strategy to be followed.
- The Fourteenth key method and final stage for student development is playing along to music. A great deal of practical knowledge can be gained by playing along with music presented with arrangements and scores. In this stage of development they are to be used as a guide to improve aural skills. The introduction of studying and transcribing scores and charts is the next step in the process of education, and music appreciation for the student.

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<sup>10</sup> Tom Jackson, *The Complete Drummers Guide* (Melbourne, DTB Concepts 2012) 33

<sup>11</sup> Gene Krupa, 69

<sup>12</sup> George Lawrence Stone, *Accents and Rebounds*, (Massachusetts, George B Stone & Son, Inc. 1961) 3

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