

Method for

DARBUKA

volume 2



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Foreword

In this second book of the darbuka method we will further expand the previously learned techniques, as well as explore more advanced playing techniques, new variations and solo ideas. All of the new techniques are featured in the pieces at the end of this book, where they serve as both an exercise and a composition.

In this book, I have included a short introduction on some of the most important side percussion instruments. All of them are closely related to the darbuka. It goes without saying that a basic knowledge of these side instruments forms an indispensable addition to any serious darbuka artist.

You will also find new finger combinations and particular roll exercises. Talking about those finger exercises, I would like to make the connection with practicing scales on a piano. They serve as the necessary basic training, before being put into any musical piece. Remember, that the aim of this method is not just to developing speed and power, but rather to learning how to use the presented materials musically! Also pay a lot of attention to your individual sound and the correct movements. Additionally, sitting in front of a mirror can be very helpful in order to continually checking your position and technique.

This method basically serves as a theoretical guide to the practical situation. Apart from this theoretical background, a reasonable amount of playing experience forms an equally inevitable part of the basic foundation. When putting all of the materials into live situations (performances), you will eventually start developing your own personal sound. As for live performances, there are certain secondary aspects which should be regarded as well, such as: inspiration, emotions (adrenaline) and atmospheres.

FAQ - Frequently Asked Questions

- I'm not familiar with musical notation but I still want to study the materials presented in this method. What would you recommend?

We already saw that a basic theoretical knowledge is recommended before starting with this method.

As a matter of fact, I choose to write a method with a solid theoretical background. However, it's likely that there will be darbuka players interested in studying these materials, who are not at all used to the system of musical notation and sight reading. One option is to just study the explanations and pictures, to getting a clear idea of what a particular pattern is supposed to sound like. At the other hand, it is highly recommended to go and search for a teacher who is able to clearly explain the basics of music (rhythmical) theory.

- During my practice routines, I sometimes suffer from muscle strain and irritation in my wrists, which actually prevents me from playing relaxed. What can I do about this?

Practicing a musical instrument like darbuka can sometimes cause muscle strain and eventually lead to painful arms, wrists, hands or fingers, especially if one is not used to playing for a long period of time. As a basic principle, I would say that following your natural body movements is the best thing you can do, avoiding strange, unnatural muscle actions and/or body movements. Sit down in a comfortable way and just try to follow the principles of your body. Also try to feel relaxed inside your body, avoiding tensions and mental obstacles. It's all about finding the balance between the different important aspects: applying necessary muscle strain with a certain amount of relaxation.

- **I'm a piano/guitar player and I would like to study the darbuka. Will this eventually affect my finger technique?**

Practicing darbuka generally strengthens the fingers and wrists. Although instruments like piano and guitar each require very different finger motions, there is no need to worry about causing any damage to the fingers. However, one should always take care, since the fingers could get slightly more tensed when playing darbuka regularly.

- **I have a busy job which allows me very little time a day for practicing the darbuka. How can I setup a good personal practice schedule?**

A practice schedule is a very personal, individual routine. The duration of it very much depends on the amount of time per day or week one is able to spend on practicing his/her instrument. Besides this, most important is the way in which you divide your practice routine, in other words 'how you practice'. Even something like ten minutes a day can be a useful practice, provided that the following aspects are kept in mind: concentration, dedication, devotion and last but not least: fun!

An example of a five minute practice: pick one particular exercise and try to reach a certain level of comfort while practicing it over and over again. Subsequently record yourself and compare the result to the recording of your next practice routine.

- **I'm planning to go on holiday for a few weeks and I would like to keep practicing my fingers without my darbuka. How can I practice?**

There are certain ways to practicing your fingers when, for some reason, you don't have your instrument with you. Sitting on a chair, you can execute patterns on the front side of your knees, imitating the position on the darbuka. For strengthening your fingers even more you should practice on different, surfaces made of hard materials, like a table of marble, a polished stone or a piece of hard wood. Getting familiar with different touchés and materials will enable you to expand your experience and, once picking up the darbuka again, will make you feel more comfortable with the touché of the synthetic skin.

- **I practice darbuka every day but I keep having difficulties with the basic strokes: düm, slap and tek strokes. Do you have any suggestions?**

Obtaining a good and proper sound on a darbuka is not easy and will take a considerable amount of time, that's a fact. Especially the slap strokes and tek sounds may require some serious practice before eventually integrating into your natural technique. As a suggestion, you could try to slightly exaggerate the differences in sound between the strokes and techniques. For example, make sure that the crisp, non resonant sound of the slap stroke doesn't mix up with the resonance of the düm stroke.

Therefore, it is highly recommended to keep recording yourself on a regular base.

Introduction

In this chapter a survey of side percussion instruments is introduced. I have included a short description with each instrument.

A) BENDIR

The bendir is a circular frame drum (known as an accompanying instrument as well as a solo instrument) often with a resonating string against the back of the skin. It is recognized as being one of the most prominent percussion instruments in Middle Eastern music. Some types of frame drums feature a metal hoop/rim.



Position 3



Position 4

B) HOLLO

Being closely related to the bendir, the hollo (also dhollo) has a more basic function than the bendir. Generally, the hollo has a thicker structure and a higher edge, which provides a powerful tone.



C) BASS DARBUKA



The bass darbuka (see cover) usually accompanies the solo darbuka, while playing more basic patterns and less embellishments. Speaking of the size and tonal characteristics, it somewhat reassembles the African djembe.

D) EGYPT STYLE DARBUKA

The Egyptian darbuka model has a round edge and can be made of aluminium, metal, clay or wood. The drum head is often made of goat skin, fish skin or synthetic. The body can be decorated with ornamentations.



E) TURKISH STYLE DARBUKA



The Turkish model has a sharp edge and is often made of aluminium. It has a different body shape and a typical playing technique using finger snaps, different from the Egyptian darbuka technique.

F) DJEMBE

Although the djembe originally is a drum of African origin and requires quite different playing techniques, the djembe can serve as a good substitute for the bass darbuka. The open tones and sound qualities of a djembe usually mix very well with the other percussion instruments of the Middle Eastern rhythm section.



G) TEF & ZILLS

The tef (or riqq) and zills (finger cymbals) represent the essential layers of high pitched embellishments within the rhythm section.

The tef consists of a metal or wooden hoop with a natural or synthetic skin stretched over it, and several pairs of small cymbals attached to it. The instrument is tuned by tuning bolts.



Position 1



Position 2

Zills (zilli) are small finger cymbals) that are attached to and played with the thumb and middle finger. Together with the tef they are responsible for the high frequencies within the rhythm section.



About Control

Together with a few other important aspects of darbuka playing, such as independence and dynamics, control is one of the major items. Control actually indicates the level of one's mastery of playing techniques. Regarding the darbuka, it is developed by paying a lot of attention to the (finger) exercises. The exercises presented in this method are especially designed for reaching a good level of control after mastering them.

Besides of the exercises, below are a couple of obscure and funny exercises for the 'weak' (left) hand, which have proved to be quiet helpful with the development of the hands and fingers. Note: if you are a right handed player, these examples count for the left hand exclusively (and vice versa).

- Opening doors
- Turning keys
- Brushing your teeth
- Writing
- Eating with chop sticks (!)
- Playing your instrument

• Syllables ("sing what you play")

The ability of singing rhythms and patterns forms a very important aspect of being a percussionist (and any instrumentalist in general!). It helps you better to understand, hear and feel the rhythmic structures and patterns. In order to vocalize these patterns there are so called 'syllables': words representing a particular sound, stroke, technique. These syllables will eventually become part of your *rhythmic vocabulary*.

Notice that this chapter merely serves as an introduction guide on the subject.

You should take the next step and gradually develop and add your own vocabulary. As an exercise, try to sing along with the rhythms and patterns you have learned so far (including their embellishments and ornamentations).

Although rhythm can be considered as being both a personal and universal language, as for the darbuka there are some *basics* which you should master: *Düm, Tek, Ka*. Besides, there are a few *connecting syllables*, such as *DüMe, TeKe, TeKa*.

Example:

• *Semai*

Düm(R) Te(R) Ke(L) Te(R) Ke(L)