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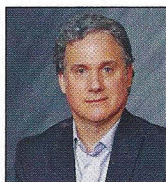
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Alfred's Drum Method Revisited

Twenty-Five Years of Percussion Pedagogy by Dave Black

It's hard to believe that twenty-five years have passed since the release of *Alfred's Drum Method, Book 1*. At the time, my coauthor, Sandy Feldstein, and I were simply trying to write what we hoped would be a comprehensive text that would inspire young drummers to continue studying music. I hope we succeeded on some level.

Over the years, many people have asked why I think the book is still so relevant, and why teachers and students have continued to use it as their first drum method. Aside from a certain amount of luck, and the fact that the timing was right for a new approach, there are a number of factors that I feel made this book different. I'd like to share some of them with you.

DOTTED NOTES

Prior to *Alfred's Drum Method*, many of the manuals on the market didn't teach dotted notes until the end of the book. As a result, there was very little opportunity to reinforce the dotted-note concept in the exercises and solos that followed. Because we introduced dotted notes early on (Lesson 6), we were able to continue reinforcing them throughout the book.

1 2 1 2 3 1 & 1 & 2

1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

R L L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

3/4 TIME

Although 3/4 time was used frequently in concert-band literature, many drum books taught 3/4 as if it hardly existed in music. We introduced it in a logical sequence, right after 4/4 and 2/4 time, and were able to utilize it throughout the book.

ROLLS

Unique to our method was the fact that we introduced the seven-stroke roll right after triplets. We felt it provided a logical extension of the rhythmic concepts taught in the triplet lessons, and over the years we've had many teachers tell us it was the most sensible way to approach seven-stroke rolls.

Primary strokes

3

3

7

7

7

7

R L R L R

L L R R L L R

L L R R L L R

R L - R

The last tied note becomes the 7th stroke of the 7-stroke roll

Played

As written



Also of note was the development of sustaining note values on the snare drum, which has the student working on a double-bounce approach first (not multiple bounces), to develop short- and long-measured rolls.



STICKINGS

At the time we wrote the method, sticking notation was printed in black. We felt this was a distraction, as students tended to focus on the stickings rather than concentrating on reading note values. As a result, the stickings in *Alfred's Drum Method* were printed in gray.

CONTEST SOLOS

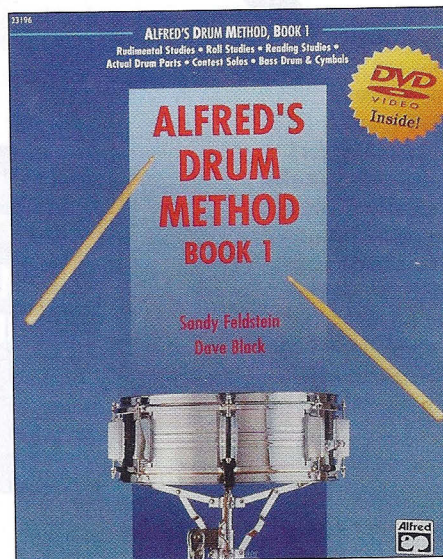
We included twenty-three solos throughout the method and made sure each was able to stand on its own as a complete musical composition suitable for solo and contest purposes. Each solo reinforced the concepts taught in the previous lesson. *Alfred's Drum Method* was also the first book to include the drum parts to famous Sousa marches, so students could see how rudiments, such as the five-stroke roll and flams, were used in actual drum parts.

VHS VIDEOTAPE

I think the most innovative aspect of our drum method was the inclusion of a VHS video that correlated with each page of the book. Our product was one of the first to offer that element. In keeping up with the changing technology, the video was later released on DVD and is now available digitally for the iPad and on SmartMusic (an online program used to help teachers assess their students' performance abilities).

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS LATER

No matter how worthy a book may be and regardless of which tools are included, it doesn't take the place of a good teacher. In a world of instant gratification, it's easy for young drummers to get distracted and lose sight of what's really important. In order to achieve any kind of success, we all have to start with the basics in order to build a strong foundation, and that's going to be achieved only through focused practice, determination, listening, and patience.



Dave Black is the author or coauthor of more than twenty books, including the best-selling *Alfred's Drum Method*. He currently serves as vice president and editor-in-chief of school and church publications for Alfred Publishing.

