



he years from 1937 to 1942 proved to be the "Golden Era" of rudimental snare drumming.

Why were stand still rudimental snare drummers of the 1930's and 1940's more accomplished than today's rudimental stand still drummers?

What was the big difference between then and now? The 1930's and 1940's were years of highly competitive drumming and nothing brings out the best in drummers more than competition.

That is one reason, but not the main reason.

There was one man in those earlier years who raised the Quality-Calibre of rudimental snare drumming to its highest level. This man was the master drum instructor Earle Sturtze of New Haven, Connecticut. He produced the finest champion rudimental snare drummers of the day and to me of all time.

In the 1930's the term "Quality-Calibre" drumming did not exist. If you could play rudiments you were a rudimental drummer. It was only in 1946 when I designed a new drum score sheet for the New York State Fife & Drum Corps Association did the word "Quality" appear.

This score sheet was a radical departure from score sheets previously used and is still in use today. In 1970 in order to more completely describe the ultimate in rudimental drumming technique and sound I added the word "calibre". So in using the expression "Quality Calibre" drumming you were saying:

Quality is the degree of excellence of anything played especially rolls

Calibre is the ability to maintain quality at all levels of expression from soft to very loud or piano to double forte, even to triple forte.

It is this calibre of drumming that I find missing from today's stand still drummers and this is where I find the big difference to be. The inability to maintain quality to the highest ranges of expression and this is most evident in the rolls - short and extended.

To me you can always measure a drummer by his rolling ability. Of course, if he doesn't also have a good sense of rhythm and time he'll be a total failure as a musician of any sort.

I mentioned before the importance of competition in the development of drummers. When you get involved with competition there are two very important areas to consider:

1. Competent score sheets
2. Competent judges

Let's discuss score sheets first. Probably the largest area of concern on a drum score sheet deals with the caption EXECUTION. The philosophy of judging and scoring a drum line's execution (or individual's) over the years has always been a divided one. There are basically two ways to go: Evaluation or Deduction. My thinking has always been that "Evaluation" is the better way to go, for the following

reasons:

1. Evaluation considers all the Quality-Calibre and variables of a performance in order to arrive at an overall numerical value for that performance (with a maximum point allowance).

2. Deduction only considers variable errors as they occur and are simply deducted (from a maximum point allowance).

Now the following logic is of utmost importance. Always present in every performance is that variable level of quality and calibre of a drum line or individual that must be evaluated and yet is never done when numerical deductions are the sole basis for scoring execution.

Think About It

By Eric Perrilloux

I had about 20 years' experience in stand still drumming before I went over to Marching and Maneuvering (M&M) in 1953 and in stand stills all judging and score sheets were an evaluation or build up. At a contest a couple of knowledgeable drummers could be watching a drum line in competition and comment between themselves "that's not a bad drum line and should score in the mid-eighties" (100 point allowance total) or they could watch an individual contestant run down the long roll and agree that roll wasn't worth more than a 22.5 (25 point allowance).

When I came to M&M and saw how drums were scored, strictly on "tick mark" deductions, tenths of points per, uniformity with absolutely no regard for quality calibre I was amazed at such a narrow concept.

Every one is the same except for the number of errors they make - RUBBISH!!

In time they added a difficulty caption which did little to change the situation.

They did, of course, have another sheet which was judged for up in the stadium stands called G.E. (General Effect Drumming which dealt with the pro-

gram you played and its effectiveness) but an impossible distance to judge execution.

I found that after some 55 years of stand still and M&M experience that M&M people are ingrained with that thinking of errors, tick marks, tenths of points or equivalents - DEDUCTIONS.

I can understand why they thought that way since this is how they were brought up from the time they competed in junior corps. They knew nothing else. This was the system in M&M corps (American Legion). Anyone can be a judge. It's simple to even a layman corps director to understand, you hear a mistake, put a mark on the paper then add them up and deduct.

I'm surprised that in recent years, about 1990, the Junior D.C.I. M&M Drum & Bugle Corps have been using an evaluation system. So the M&M Junior and Senior corps finally adopted a system of scoring that has been in use by stand still corps for at least 60 years, probably earlier, since the inception of drum corps contests in the 1880's.

A combination of both evaluation and deductions is a thought I once considered but dismissed since the more numbers involved on a score sheet the more you can go wrong.

Let the judge be a judge and make a judgment according to the highest standard in an individual contest in a rudiment being run down the judge should use check marks to simply indicate a deficiency here or there. If a severe deficiency use double checks or circle a group of checks however these only serve as a reminder to the judge as information when it comes time to evaluate all the plusses and minuses, intangibles and nuances of a performance. The same approach should be taken in playing a drum solo or an entire drum section playing their competition piece on the main stand - simple check marks having no numerical value but indicating deficiencies to be analyzed and balanced in a judge's mind as to the importance in the overall scheme of achievement.

I used the word standards before, and when all is said and done this is what it is all about!

What is the judge's standard of excellence that he must have in his background, his experience that he uses as a yardstick to measure all drummers against? Has he the ability to recognize the highest standards of drumming? Has he seen and heard the highest standards? Has he the ability to study and listen to a line of five snare drummers, for example, who are not all equally proficient drummers but vary in degrees? This can be seen and heard but can he evaluate their overall worth because this is the real world of judging! Not simply counting obvious mistakes.

All judging is a matter of comparison. Someone says "Willie Jones" is a good drummer - compared to who? A judge is continually comparing in his mind's eye to his own Standard of Excellence.

No matter how well designed a set of score sheets may be they are only as good as the judge behind them. Different standards and backgrounds will

produce different results and this is understandable - but is this acceptable?

I would like to relate a true experience in this regard that took place on the weekend of April 22, 1989.

A newly formed organization called the International Drumming Association was holding their first convention outside Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The purpose of this organization was to build a membership of drummers interested in perpetuating traditional rudimental drumming much like the famous N.A.R.D. (National Association of Rudimental Drummers) of the 1930's, '40's, etc then sponsored by the Ludwig Drum Co. The newly formed I.D.A. had plans to sponsor Individual Drumming contests in the future and at this convention they were going to have a trial individual contest to test out some newly devised score sheets. Before the contest started I had pointed out some inconsistencies in the sheets pertaining to the use of tenths of points in places and full points in others. I was asked to straighten out the sheets so the contest could take place. This I hastily did.

The result of the contest was a split decision. Three judges - Bob Redican from Connecticut, Hugh Quigley from Connecticut and myself, Eric Perrilloux from New Jersey. These three judges placed Contestant A in first place.

Four other judges (names unknown to me, but from the Pennsylvania area) placed Contestant B in first place - consequently Contestant B became the winner.

Why the difference in results? The answer is different backgrounds.

Redican, Quigley and Perrilloux used as their standard the best drummers they had ever seen in Individual Snare Drumming in Individual Competition throughout New England and New York dating back to the 1930's in addition to their own experience in high level Individual Competition.

Snare drumming champions such as Frank Arsenault, Sig Trybees, Mickey Stefanowicz, Wally Fulton became the standards not to mention themselves, Redican and Quigley and many others of that time. Therefore in making a judgment they felt that Contestant A came closer to that standard than Contestant B.

On the other hand the four other judges were not of that era or location and did not experience that standard to measure against - consequently, different results.

The I.D.A. seeing the problems of their score sheets asked me to design a new set of sheets for judging individual snare drumming contests of the future, which I did, and these were accepted by the I.D.A. in September 26, 1989. The sheets were based on my Quality-Calibre concept I described earlier.

In an exchange of correspondence with I.D.A. that controversial word "style" of drumming came up - low and high. I explained as follows: Substitute for a moment the word "SOUND" for "STYLE". In order for a drum corps drummer (I am not using the word percussionist for specific reasons) but in order for a

drummer to produce the ultimate sound of fullness, body, volume, authority, command, you must use the so-called full motion "style" to get this sound. Unknowledgeable drummers incorrectly refer to this as the "open style". It involves the fluid motion of both wrist and arms to reach the top volume without losing quality speed and power.

This should not be confused with the expression "POUNDING". Pounding is volume without quality.

I have yet to hear the ultimate sound without seeing the full arm motion "style" to produce it. But this is not easy to achieve.

What made the great individual champions, like Bob Redican, Hugh Quigley, Frank Arsenault, Sonny Lyons, great drummers was their ability to produce that Quality with Calibre sound. Not everyone could do this.

I do not feel the phrase different styles of drumming to mean we must accept one to be as good as the other in its own way, for it's not - the low style is simply a limited achievement of the complete sound range.

There is only one complete scale to measure against as you would use a perfect graph.

I have always compared the requisites of good drumming to a three-legged stool. You need the following three factors to be a superior drummer:

1. Quality - degree of excellence, especially rolls - extended
2. Power - Calibre volumes ranges from pp-fff
3. Speed

This pertains to all phases of drumming i.e. running down rudiments - solos or general tempo drumming even concertized M&M drumming.

If you are deficient in any one of the three factors, like the three-legged stool with one bad leg, you will fall down and this in its infinite measurement of scale of each requisite is what makes one drummer better than another.

To put it even more simply the man who comes closest to doing it all is the best. Therefore style is a misunderstood and misused word.

When considering a judge's actual working procedure the question arises should a judge do his own tabulation? Absolutely - not only tabulate but keep a worksheet record of contestants' scores he gave. This is necessary if he is to be consistent throughout the contest so the better performance does indeed receive the higher score. It is a check on himself when dealing with numerical scores and is an important aid to fairness.

It is not to be misconstrued as trying to control the results but rather to insure that results will be more accurate from start to finish. I would suggest that before a judge enters his score on a score sheet he should compare with other contestant scores issued, using recall and comparison to verify in his mind's eye - yes, this score does make sense, it should for example be higher than Contestant #7 but not as high as Contestant #3 who so far played the best. If he is not satisfied with this check point score, now is the time to re-think his score before he enters it on the official score sheet.

Today's tape recorders can be of great practical

use for both judge and contestant.

A judge can comment more completely on what he sees and hears than trying to write it all down. Every time a judge wants to write down a comment his attention is diverted from the drum line both visually and mentally.

A score sheet then would not need individual caption point scores at all just a total score entered for overall performance based on the various captions: for example a pre-amble:

Performance to be judged on Quality and Calibre of Execution especially rolls - Variable mistakes as different from Quality uniformity of stick work - Expression and Rhythm difficulty.

Total of 100 pts

There were far more competing drum corps in the 1930's and 1940's than there are today (1996) and probably because of the larger numbers there were better drum corps and drummers.

Wouldn't it be nice if this could happen again. The big M&M Drum & Bugle corps are progressing drum corps to near extinction. They are becoming a combination of marching concert band and orchestra - no longer a drum corps - the expense is impossible! But stand still drum corps could flourish and make it work and consider what it would do for today's youth and juvenile delinquency!

Think about it !!! ❖

Eric Perrilloux is a member of the Company and a member of the Drum Corps Hall of Fame.

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The 13th annual free concert series will begin on Tuesday, July 10 and will continue every Tuesday through August 21. Concerts begin at 7:30 PM and will feature one or two drum corps at each performance.

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