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Drumset Key

Bass Drums Snare Drum Tom 1 Tom 2 Floor Tom Ride or Hi-Hat as indicated Hi-Hat w/foot Both hands on the same Hi-Hat

R L

New Classifications for the Flam

The Seven Common Flams

1.) The Traditional Flam

2.) The Power Flam



3.) The Broken Flam

4.) The Reverse Flam



5.) The Open Flam

A.) Forward Open

and

B.) Reverse Open

6.) The Double Flam


L R L

The Evolution of the Flam on the Drumset

Today at least 50 percent of the drummers playing the drumset are playing the traditional flam differently from the original agreed upon version of its execution. These differences fall into two categories: (1) Dynamics of the grace note and (2) the exact mathematical spacing of the grace note in relation to the principal note.

The main styles of drumming that have contributed to this evolution of the flam are rock, Latin (Afro-Cuban), and fusion. But before we look at these new observations of the flam, let's first review the traditional flam. To my knowledge, the standard traditional flam has not been truly analyzed in any mathematical way because of the flam's own inherent gray areas.

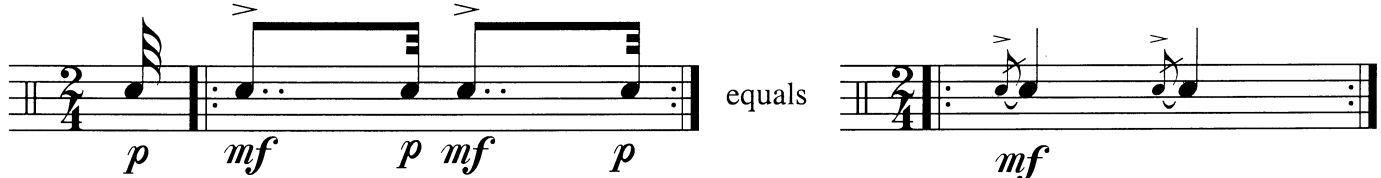
After reading this more exact description of the traditional flam, I hope you will understand its gray area and that its grayness should remain so. But as you will see later, any time there is a gray area, there exists the likelihood for alterations.

The definition of the traditional flam at mezzo forte  is a soft tap (grace note) played quickly before a principal note (usually a downstroke).

When trying to establish by way of counting syllables to represent a mathematical division for the placement of the grace note, the result is very impractical. Here is why. A safe mathematical description for counting flams where a quarter note equals 150 beats per minute is as follows:

$\text{♩} = 150 \text{ BPM}$

A 1 e+A+e+A 2 e+A+e+A



p *mf* *p* *mf* *p* equals *mf*

Since the grace note belongs to the previous pulse, this means you would be counting 32nd notes at the rate where one quarter note equals 150 BPM and only hit the last 32nd note out of eight per pulse, plus the principals. This in itself is truly a feat for one mouth to verbalize!

Now for the gray area. For a lot of tempos (depending upon which part of the tempo spectrum you are in), you will have to use a different type of note to represent the grace note. For example, if one quarter note equals 75 BPM, then the grace note becomes a 64th note.

$\text{♩} = 75$

The image shows two musical staves in 2/4 time. The left staff is divided into three sections. The first section has a single note with a grace note above it, marked *p*. The second section is labeled "1e+A+e+A+e+A+e+A" and shows a sequence of notes with grace notes, marked *mf*. The third section is labeled "2e+A+e+A+e+A+e+A" and shows a similar sequence, marked *p*. The right staff is labeled "equals" and shows a single note with a grace note above it, marked *mf*.

So to count 64th notes (16 per pulse) would be absurd.

I hope we will now appreciate this gray area. Therefore, we learn the flam by sound and feel. With this method of sound and feel, the flam has changed over the years. Yes, right in front of our noses! Drummers have created new versions of the flam plus added the Afro-Cuban flam (reverse flam). I think these observations are important because the flam is no longer just traditional.

New Classifications and Notation for the Flam

1.) The Power Flam



Its creation originated in rock drumming. The traditional flam sounded too weak for rock and roll. In the rock idiom, it is best to play the grace note just as loudly as the principal note. Following is an example of the power flam:

$\text{♩} = 100$

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time with a tempo of 100 BPM. It contains a sequence of notes with grace notes above them, all with accents (>).

The accented grace note is the notational marking for the power flam.