

Developing the Weaker Hand

Exercises to Balance Your Technique, Part 1

by Albe Bonacci

Often in lessons I'm asked, "How do I develop my weak hand?" I usually suggest that students focus on the weaker hand more and begin leading with it. Although the concepts I give them may not end up being employed on a gig, students do begin balancing their hand technique. In this lesson we'll explore some exercises to develop our weak hand. If you normally lead with your left hand, practice these examples with a reversed sticking.

Generally for right-handed players, the left hand takes care of diddles, drags, and buzzes when playing grooves. Meanwhile, the right hand carries the weight of playing cymbal crashes and leading phrases around the kit. When these roles are reversed, it quickly reveals the ineptness of the right hand. I first started noticing this with some students when playing an exercise like the following:

1

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

Often when the left hand reached up to play the crash, it resembled trying to throw a ball with your weak hand. The ball may not even leave your hand, but even if it does, it doesn't look or feel comfortable. The right hand, even though obviously stronger, also looked befuddled when playing, especially when moving around the kit like so:

2

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

A paradiddle-diddle sticking works well when practicing the left-hand-lead idea.

3

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

Also practice these smaller triplet cells for more variation. Repeat each figure to create four-beat phrases.

4A

R L L R L L

B

L R R L R R

C

L R L L R L

D

L R L R L R

We can also orchestrate the paradiddle-diddle around the kit. Remember that the left hand always plays the cymbal.

5A

L R L L R R

B

L R L L R R

C

L R L L R R

In this next exercise, all of the right-hand strokes start on the snare and subsequently move around the toms on each beat.

